

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

"Of all the laws of the migration pact, I think the most necessary and important, in my view, is the law on skilled workers (...) You will see: It will bring balance in the migration issue, because legal opportunities are now available for the people we undoubtedly need in the German economy. The Federal Minister of Economics always points out to me that the lack of skilled workers has become a real obstacle to growth in the Federal Republic of Germany. I would therefore ask you to approve this bill."

Horst Seehofer, German Federal Minister of the Interior, June 7th 2019

"A Temporary International Orientation Visa is also created, which must also be applied for outside Chile and which may be granted for a period of 12 months, also extendable, making it possible to apply for Permanent Residence for those foreigners who have a postgraduate degree from universities of the highest prestige and quality in the world, ranked among the 200 first places of the QS World University Ranking, and who wish to start a business and work in our country, which will allow us — for example — to attract doctors, specialists, scientists and other people who are very necessary in our country."

Sebastián Piñera, Chilean President, April 9th 2018

What Horst Seehofer's and Sebastián Piñera's speeches have in common is the idea that there are migrants and there are wanted migrants. What a country needs is not any migrant to come and settle down, but "skilled workers" in the words of Seehofer or "doctors, specialists, scientists" in Piñera's words.

Even though Germany and Chile are completely different countries in terms of geographical and sociopolitical positionings, and taking into consideration that both nation-states have different economic structures and, therefore, different necessities in terms of labor force, it is interesting that both politicians share the same discourse, namely, that economic growth and, thus, the consequent supposed wellbeing is not possible without skilled migrants. Beyond their differences, however, both countries continuously receive growing numbers of migrants. Given the interest that migrants have to move to these nation-states and because of the lack of professionals in certain labor markets, both countries have recently reformed their migration laws. The main idea behind these reforms is to

see highly skilled migrants as wanted migrants and, therefore, to promote this kind of migration by lowering the barriers to enter and stay in the country.

Even though these policies may help professionals move from one country to another, it still remains to be seen if they guarantee the transferability of their knowledge and skills, which are supposedly wanted. It is not news that many (highly skilled) migrants end up working jobs that do not match their abilities and skills (Akan Ellis, 2013; Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Pietka et al., 2013), which shows that the proposed laws may not lead to the intended goal, but to the underuse of migrants' knowledge and skills.

So why do these deskilling processes happen if countries want to attract and incorporate highly skilled migrants? This research starts from the premise that the valuation and recognition of migrants' cultural capital is not only based on legal policies, but also on social dynamics of stratification and market closure. When understanding these sets of knowledge and skills as social constructs, as depending on the contexts where they were acquired and are being put into play (Nohl et al., 2014), it is possible to understand that what an individual knows and can do cannot be separated from the individual him/herself and from the conditions under which these skills were acquired. This makes it harder to transfer them from one social context to another, and eventually to transnationalize their value.

With this as the starting point of this research, the main goal of this study is to understand how different institutional contexts shape the strategies of highly skilled Latin American migrants in order to enter and rise in foreign labor markets. Taking this problematic into consideration, this study uses two countries and two professional fields as the basis of its analysis and focuses on the migration of Latin American professionals. Given the complex institutional and professional framework migrants are embedded in, studying a culturally similar group enabled me to better understand professions and institutional frameworks. Even though the main focus of this research is not on ethnicity, my own experience as Latin American migrant and the command of the Spanish language helped me when conducting interviews with 17 Latin American migrants and analyzing the biographical narrations of my interview partners. Latin American migrants are however a heterogeneous group and they constitute a majority in Chile but a minority in Germany. Furthermore, different rules apply to them in both countries. Within a comparative method these differences can also shed light on how professional trajectories are structured and shaped. Being part of the same profession, Latin American migrants in Germany and Chile share a specific

knowledge and are positioned within the same (trans)national field. The comparison therefore is focused on how migrants positioned in two professional fields develop different strategies taking into consideration the different country institutional framework they experience in Germany and Chile.

I have decided to analyze the biographies of highly skilled migrants that were able to position themselves in their professional field in the host country after migration. In this sense, I am looking at those migrants who “successfully” negotiated the cultural capital that they acquired abroad. By doing this, I was able to uncover the strategies they have developed to reach these positions and therefore, to understand how different countries and institutional regulations shape these strategies. The deskilling of highly skilled migrants in host countries’ labor markets has already been well studied and we can find many examples in the literature (e.g. Creese & Wiebe, 2012; Siar, 2013; Bauder 2003). But how highly skilled migrants manage to negotiate their knowledges and skills within a (trans) national field and to reach a similar position than the one they had before migrating is still an open question.

Germany and Chile can be seen as two poles of a continuum of countries with regard to migration and labor market regulation. As it is already well-known, Germany represents a welfare state with strict controls and regulations towards newcomers as well as workers (Brücker et al., 2014). On the other hand, Chile shows a neoliberal approach to social and economic policies which, in turn, leads to low levels of regulation and to a social system based mostly on the power of the economic system (Solimano, 2012). The two selected professional fields, namely medicine and the information technology (IT) sector, follow the same line of analysis. Medicine is a highly regulated professional field worldwide (Bynum, 2008) and, therefore, national barriers to the exercise of the profession are not a surprise. On the contrary, IT is a much newer professional field that is characterized by its freedom, versatility and dynamism in the labor market (Chang et al., 2012, p. 309), and it shows a low level of regulation and constraints (Steinmueller, 2002) within the professional group.

Scholars working in the field of highly skilled migration usually study these professionals under the human capital paradigm (Boeri, Brücker, Docquier, & Rapoport, 2012; Borjas, 1989). In this approach, migrants hold a certain amount of years of education and experience, as well as other characteristics such as command of a given language (Iredale, 1999, p. 90). The position they can reach in a foreign labor market can be seen as the economic return to this education and experience (Borjas, 2016, p. 232). This economic approach has been widely used

as a basis to understand what happens in the home as well as the host countries when migration occurs. Under the ideas of brain drain and brain gain, scholars have analyzed the costs, benefits and externalities that highly skilled migrants impose on both the sending and the receiving nations (Boeri et al., 2012; Cinar & Docquier, 2004; Grubel & Scott, 1966). But this approach is not able to understand the social negotiation processes behind the transferability of knowledge and skills. Therefore, this research proposes to understand the position within a foreign labor market as the result of a negotiation process where capital acquired abroad has to be reevaluated in a different socio-geographical context (Nowicka, 2014; Weiß, 2017, p. 88).

Migrants live and work during their lives in different countries. They have friends and family in at least two nation-states and many of them still move or will move again between different geographical places. In order to understand how their knowledge and skills are valued and are put into play in different labor markets, one cannot think within the “container society” (Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, p. 307). Even though this research is not positioned within the transnational paradigm that has been developing in migration research (Faist, 2006; Glick Schiller, 2010; Levitt et al., 2003; Pries, 2008b), it uses the idea of (trans)national fields as a way to understand the negotiation process that highly skilled migrants go through when trying to work and rise in a foreign labor market. The multi-sited social spaces (Pries, 2001, p. 23), proposed by the transnational paradigm, allow us to expand the idea of social negotiation that is at the core of the integration of highly skilled migrants, taking into consideration different socio-geographical levels but without forgetting the importance of the nation-state. This helps us think about the relevance of educational titles, experience and skills and their value in different transnational spaces. The transnational paradigm also allows us to see that these spaces shape and reshape the knowledge and skills that migrants have, meaning that the value that is assigned to the capital they possess changes as migrants acquire more and different knowledge and skills and as the context changes because of the influence of migration (Erel, 2010). In this sense, the transnational paradigm allows this research to think methodologically beyond the classical nation-state container and to enrich the classical social theory approach by looking at (trans)national fields and capital.

Within the classical nation-state approach, the sociology of professions has been studying the formation and constitution of professions and professionals for more than 70 years. During this time, different schools of thought have flourished in order to explain what makes professionals and professions different from other occupations. Some scholars have emphasized the personal characteristics of

professional practitioners (Greenwod, 1957; Parsons, 1937, 1939, 1968), others have put the focus on the division and stratification within and between professions (Abbott, 1988). The idea of power and market control has also been highlighted (Freidson, 1986, 1989; Larson, 1990). What all these different approaches have in common is that they stay within the country level, not including migrant professionals and remaining incapable of seeing professions beyond these limits. Here again, the transnational paradigm — as a navigation tool — can be useful to expand the idea of professions and to include professional migrants as part of the research arena.

Migrant professionals have to deal with different constraints when trying to enter and rise in the labor market of a foreign country. This is not only the case for skilled migrants, but it can be highlighted within this group of people since, as it was explained before, the knowledge and skills they have are based on specific values and cultural practices that are shared by a given group of people which may not be the same in a different social context. This may lead to a loss of value when switching contexts, because the stratification system varies from one place to another (Erel, 2010; Nohl, Schittenhelm, et al., 2010). This potential loss of value and the strategies that can be developed in order to avoid or face it can be explained by using the concepts of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986, 2008a) and field (Bourdieu, 1985; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and by taking a relational approach, focused on the social space in which the position of each actor is relevant, both as the result of a common order and as a contribution to the preservation of it.

This research proposes understanding the medical and the IT labor markets as professional fields that may overcome the national borders and, thus, be seen as (trans)national fields. Given that each field develops its own rules and stratification systems, giving more or less relevance to specific forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), the valuation of foreign knowledge and skills, seen as cultural capital, will vary depending on the professional field as well as on the social context where migrants are located.

When seeing professions as potential transnational fields, the problem presented in the sociology of professions can be overcome. Simultaneously, Bourdieu's concept can be applied beyond the nation-state limits. By doing this, the fields of medicine and IT can be comparatively analyzed by looking at their stratification logics and (trans)national limits. On the one hand, medicine is a highly nationally regulated profession, but the shared knowledge and the idea of profession can still be seen as transnational. Physicians around the world share a specific technical

knowledge and believe in the Hippocratic Oath. Therefore, the field of medicine can be studied as a (trans)national field, where the nation-state still plays an important role. On the other hand, the IT field is much less nationally regulated and, since the very beginning, it was developed as a field that overcomes national borders. The flow of information and technologies presupposes the possibility to cut across spatial and geographical limits and the profession is, therefore, transnationally organized. These two professional fields allow us to maximize the contrast between the possibilities to transnationalize the notion of field. Therefore, they work as ideal types and their differences are at the core of this research.

In order to understand how Latin American highly skilled migrants negotiate their capital within these (trans)national professional fields, being located in different countries, biographical narrative interviews (Schütze, 1983a) were conducted. These interviews were used to collect narrations of highly skilled migrants as a way to approach their experiences before, during and after moving from one country to another. Important moments in their life regarding their labor market experience, as well as other related topics, were of special attention. In order to grasp the social structure behind these biographical narrations, the documentary method was used (Bohnsack, 2007a; Nohl, 2006, 2010a). This method, based on Mannheim's sociology of knowledge (Mannheim, 1972a, 1980), distinguishes between a-theoretical/implicit and communicative/explicit knowledge and seeks to make comparative analyses of cases in order to find similar structures that can be developed as typologies. The idea of orientation frames helps us to uncover the social and, in particular, the institutional structures behind the negotiation of cultural capital acquired abroad, narrated throughout the interviewees' migration processes. The goal of the method is to access the guiding knowledge of the actors and, therefore, to reconstruct their practice of action (*Handlungspraxis*). At this level, habitualized incorporated orientations can be reconstructed (Bohnsack et al., 2013).

This praxeological approach enables us to approach the ideas of capital and field empirically and to transnationalize these concepts. By reconstructing highly skilled migrants' cultural capital negotiation strategies, it will be possible to see how different countries, as well as professional field regulations, shape and constrain the possible spaces of capital negotiation, giving more or less freedom to highly skilled migrants when trying to put their knowledge and skills into play. Given the configuration of the analytical lines of this research, namely two opposed countries and two opposed fields, their combination gives rise to a wide range of possible scenarios for negotiation. When adding the notion of biographical time included in the interviews, a complex typology of trajectories

and cultural capital negotiation possibilities arises. The resulting typologies regarding the logics of capital recognition within the fields, and the trajectories and orientation frames that are presented in this book, are read following a Bourdieusian approach and, therefore, contribute to the potential transnationalization of a body of theory often criticized because of its methodological nationalism (Nedelcu, 2012, p. 1353; Nowicka, 2015a, p. 18; Wimmer & Glick Schiller, 2002, p. 304). Opening up the possibility to see field and capital beyond national borders helps us to understand how professional labor markets organize themselves transnationally (Quack et al., 2018) and the value they give to different forms of capital, while stratification systems within the field are still mediated by national regulations. This allows us to understand how country and professional field dynamics open (or close) opportunities to enter and rise in a foreign labor market.

Seehofer and Piñera may be very sure that the modifications they are introducing in the migration laws of their countries are a step towards higher growth rates and improved social wellbeing. What this research shows, however, is that this may not be the case. Letting migrants enter and stay in a given country based on their knowledge and skills does not necessarily mean that their knowledge and skills will be highly valued and therefore “useful” in the new social context. The problem is not only the migration regulatory framework but much more the dynamics that result from the interaction between this framework and the logics of the professional fields, which in some cases may lead to the devaluation of foreign cultural capital, therefore not fulfilling the worn-out promise of growth and wellbeing.

The structure of this book

This first chapter aims to introduce the topic of the present research and to situate it in a broader debate. It also presents the main issues that will be discussed in the next pages.

The second chapter introduces the sociology of professions, as well as Bourdieu’s social theory, especially the concepts of field and capital as applied to professional labor markets and knowledge and skills. These ideas will be present during the whole work and are central to the understanding and analysis of the empirical data. Other concepts, such as professional habitus, are also included in the chapter,

along with the possibility to understand Bourdieu's relational theory transnationally.

The third chapter deals with the existing literature regarding highly skilled migration and positions this research in the debates that exist in the literature. The economic as well as the transnational paradigms are presented as part of the field of research. Taking the transnational paradigm approach as a theoretical-methodological reference, this research draws on the literature of highly skilled migration and transnational knowledge and skills to show how the medical and IT professions value cultural capital and how highly skilled migrants are positioned within these fields. The chapter presents the ideas of knowledge and skills as context-bound, explaining the different regulations present in Germany and Chile with regards to migration and the practice of the two studied professions. In this sense, it sets the analytical framework that, together with the theoretical conceptualization explained in the previous chapter, will guide the rest of the work.

In line with the previous chapters, chapter four introduces the methodological considerations and processes that were conducted throughout this research. First, Mannheim's ideas of shared spaces of experiences are explained in order to, second, introduce the documentary method and its controlled process to reconstruct these spaces. The data collection method, namely biographical narrative interviews, is presented and the fieldwork is described.

The fifth, sixth and seventh chapters present the results of this research. In chapter five, a typology shows the different logics of capital recognition reconstructed from the narrations of interview partners in the different (trans)national professional fields. Chapter six summarizes the trajectories of Latin American highly skilled migrants in the German and Chilean labor markets. Here, different dimensions of analysis are combined, thus giving rise to a multidimensional typology which helps to reconstruct and understand the paths that interview partners undertook in their migration processes, placing special emphasis on the negotiation of their cultural capital. Chapter seven presents the last typology based on the orientation frames that structure the scope of action that interview partners had during the migration process. These three reconstructed typologies show different levels of analysis and approaches to the same issue, namely, the experienced constraints and developed strategies when putting into play cultural capital acquired abroad, highlighting the possible spaces of capital negotiation.

The eighth and last chapter concludes this research by showing that the possibilities that Latin American highly skilled migrants have to negotiate their

cultural capital highly depend on the interaction between the national institutional context and the transnational professional field they are embedded in. In the end, social structure predominates over individual agency.