Highly-Skilled Labour Migration in Switzerland: Household Strategies and Professional Careers

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Bio-note

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Abstract

The article investigates household strategies in the context of highly-skilled labour migration. It focuses on the ways highly-skilled migrants are taking up residence in Switzerland. The analysis shows different household strategies based on the perception of a further professional move. The perceived likeliness of a further move implies household strategies characterized by a high motility: the household remains ready to move and mobilises dedicated organisations (like outplacement agencies or international schools). When a further move is neither perceived nor wanted, the household develops more anchored strategies which are often cheaper. In order to cope with frequent mobilities, the analysis shows that household strategies are deeply gendered.

KEY WORDS Career strategies, gender, family strategies, highly-skilled migration, international work

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Introduction

Nation-states of the global north maintain an ambivalent relation regarding the mobility of human beings. Not all forms of mobility are treated equally in the policy-making agendas of nation-states. Therefore, the experience of mobility and of settling somewhere crucially depends on who you can show you are (through passport, diploma, family situation, economic capital and so on). While some forms of mobility are recognised as valuable for growth and economic development, others are perceived as a threat. Some are wanted and supported, others are unwanted and hindered (Shamir 2005, 199). Highly-skilled migration is "increasingly recognised as an important factor generating growth, innovation, and employment" (Lavenex 2007, 40). It reflects a liberalised labour market and strongly contrasts with the political response to unwanted forms of migration. This can be seen as an expression of the "regimes of mobility" (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013), where the socially constructed categories of wanted, naturalised *versus* unwanted, problematized forms of migration play a central role in shaping human movements. The European states safeguard their sovereignty regarding unwanted migration, so they develop multilateral policies which allow wanted migrants to move with diminished judicial and administrative treatments. As a country of the Schengen zone, Switzerland opens its boarders to intra-European professional mobility and extra-European highly-skilled mobility, and at the same time, nearly closes them to extra-European lesser qualified forms of mobility. This is known as a two circles policy; a preferential inner-circle ruled by the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons and a restrictive and selective outer-circle ruled by the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals (Amarelle 2015).

This paper deals with the household strategies (Massey 1990) of (wanted) highly-skilled labour migrants in Switzerland. More specifically, it focuses on the household strategies while taking up residence in a new local space. Many scholars underline the importance of the meso-level of household and family in migration studies (Faist 2010; King et al. 2006; Timmerman, Hemmerecht, and De Clerck 2014). This claim primarily aims at embedding "social relations (social ties) between individuals in kinship groups (e.g. families), households, neighbourhoods, friendship circles and formal organisation" (Faist 2010, 60) in the study of migration. The household is a central agent to understand migration strategies. These critics argue that households or families are the principal agents of decision-making and that migration should be viewed as part of

broader strategies for sustenance and socioeconomic improvement (Massey 1990, 4). In the case of this study, I am confronted with different forms of household mobilities linked with different forms of families, such as the 'transnational family' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002) or the 'whole-family migration' (King 2006, 252). However, while speaking of the New Economics of Migration (Stark and Blackwell 1991) and recognising its contribution to the field, King (2012) criticises the lack of analysis of the intra-family relations themselves:

> The family or household is treated as a black box without acknowledging the tensions or conflicts that are contained therein – such as patriarchal practices or inter-sibling rivalry for example – which might lead to 'distorted' decision making (ibid., 23).

Therefore, the present study inquires the tensions or the conflicts and the ways of solving them inside a household when taking up residence in a new local space. A closer look at the household strategies shows the mobilisation of specific organisations while settling. These organisations provide services for highly-skilled migrants and their family members at various levels, such as helping the partner to find an occupation (outplacement agencies, head-hunters, dual-career networks), finding a place to live (flat-hunters) or providing children with an education (international schools). Besides the households and the families, other organisations (at the meso-level) play a specific role in the case of highly-skilled labour migration in Switzerland. An analysis of the 'organisational inclusion' (Bommes 2012, 26) of the household reveals dedicated organisations, which precisely aim at supporting them in their moves. The regimes of mobility towards highly-skilled migration imply a modification of the role of the state, which aims to attract highly-skilled migration (Hercog 2008). Following Favell's argument, it does not mean that highly-skilled migration becomes 'frictionless but rather a differently tracked mobility with its own costs and constraints' (2014, 136). Therefore, this paper uses the concept of household strategy to address various ways of coping between mobile work, private and family life by focussing on the "regimes of mobility" (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013).

My main claim is that the way a household settles in a local space is strategically thought and influences the motility. The analysis of the various forms of conciliation between mobile work, private and family-life shows that inequalities (Amelina and Vasilache 2014) and gender processes (Lutz 2010; Erel and Lutz 2012) inside the households can have an important impact, even for the ones whose mobility is

facilitated and supported. The household strategies aim at reconciling mobility and immobility as much as possible. Mobility and immobility are interrelated and interdependent (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). They evolve in a dialectical relationship (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006; Urry 2003). When a household takes up residence, the possibility of a further move is taken into consideration. In other words, the choices made to settle reflect the household strategy as the way of settling indicates a negotiation or a coordination inside the household. For a mobile household, I argue that the main topic of discussion within the development of household strategies is what Flamm and Kaufmann (2006) understands as motility:

> Motility can be defined as how an individual or group takes possession of the realm of possibilities for mobility and builds on it to develop personal projects (ibid., 168).

This paper develops a continuum to express the various ways of dealing with mobility and immobility. The continuum emphasis the orientation of a household strategy. The strategies span from *local oriented strategies* to *mobile oriented strategies*. While some households decide to maximise their motility, others opt for a more anchoring solution. A local oriented coping strategy develops conditions for a long stay in Switzerland. A mobile oriented coping strategy maintains the capacity of a family to be ready to move. The continuum aims to overcome a sedentary bias where mobility is the exception and sedentariness the norm (Amelina and Vasilache 2014, 114) by reconciling these two notions. I argue that a mobile oriented strategy requires the inclusion in specific organisations like an international school for the children. The way of settling today or the present mooring (Hannam, Sheller, and Urry 2006), encompasses the possibilities of a further move. Indeed, the same curriculum for the children will be available abroad if the family has to move again. The mobile oriented strategy can be seen as an attempt to maintain the motility of the family as a whole.

The aim of this study is threefold: contributing to the existing literature on highly-skilled migration on the one hand (Nedelcu 2004; Liebig et al. 2015; Shinozaki 2014) and on expatriation on the other hand (Al Ariss et al. 2012; Bartlett and Ghoshal 1999; Bochove and Engbersen 2013; Ravasi, Salamin, and Davoine 2014; Salamin and Davoine 2015; Fechter 2007; 2012; Känsälä, Mäkelä, and Suutari 2014; Mérignac 2009; van der Heijden, van Engen, and Jaap 2009), developing the household's dynamics within 'dual earner' or 'dual career' family strategies (Pixley 2008) in a mobile context (Selmer et al. 2011; Lauring and Selmer 2010), and pushing forward the concept of

motility to explain contemporary migrations (Kaufmann, Bergman, and Joye 2004; Flamm and Kaufmann 2006).

Methodology and Method

I conducted 30 interviews, 22 with highly-skilled labour migrants or their partner and 8 with key-informers, such as state-body officials or professionals working for relocation offices or international dual career networks for this research. In this paper, I focus on the analysis of the 22 qualitative semi-directive interviews, conducted in the French speaking part of Switzerland, between April 2014 and May 2015. The interviews lasted between 30 and 87 minutes. 12 interviews were conducted in English and 10 in French, which can be interpreted as a hint towards the household strategies at play. Acquiring the language of the place of destination is an important strategy to settle down in the long run.

The method used for the interviews is a combination of open-biographical and semi-structured questions. The interviews start, in a first step, with an open question at the biographical level, where the respondent is asked to narrate the journey which lead him or her and his or her family to Switzerland. This first part aims to get relevant information on the 'mobile background' of the interviewees and their families. In a second step, I ask more specific questions on the daily-life in Switzerland, typically linked with the activity of the partner, the schooling of the children and the social life of the family. Thus, the interviews encompass both the former trajectory until today (the social processes and physical movements of the respondents) and the different modalities of settling in Switzerland.

The selection of the interviewees was done with an open strategy (snowball), which comports the advantages of being able to grasp a large variety of cases that would have otherwise remained 'under the radar'. This was especially important for this research, since the objective is to show the variety of dynamics and coping strategies between an international career and a family-life. Such an open choice allows looking for similarities in cases that would be ignored when having a more restricted focus. In fact, the aim is to get a bigger picture of highly-skilled migrants in Switzerland, with a working-contract, in an internationalised organisation. Not all the mobile employees of a multinational corporation in Switzerland are expatriates. I use the term of highly-skilled labour migrant, to underline four criteria recurrent for all the people I

interviewed. They are in Switzerland since at least over one year, came legally for professional reasons, in many cases with a working contract signed prior to their arrival in Switzerland, with a university degree (or equivalent), and are born outside of the country.

The reason to move is professional. At least one partner of the family came to Switzerland already with a working-contract before arrival. Most of them are working for highly-internationalised organisations, which are primarily multinational corporations. Moreover, they are skilled, meaning that the interviewees have a degree (university or equivalent) or a working position for which it is demanded (OCDE 2014). It does not mean that they are, or believe to, be part of an elite; even if they are privileged. Furthermore, none of the respondents is born in Switzerland, even though all live in Switzerland since one year (at least). In that sense, they all do have at least one experience of mobility and respectively of settling in a new locality.

In addition to my understanding of highly-skilled labour migrant, the concepts of household and family are central to this research. The concept of highly-skilled labour migration does not take the household, or the family for granted, but rather questions it. I do not only take into consideration traditional heterosexual households. This article opens the analysis to more diverse forms of households. The entry point through the professional dimension enables to escape from a heteronormative bias, where non-traditional types of households such as LGBT, mono-parental or blended ones could have been forgotten – as it could have been when entering the object of investigation through the traditional family unit. Moreover, the open strategy adopted, also brings me to encounter different forms of living together, or apart. The case where the whole household moves at the same time and lives at the same place is not the only configuration encountered. This challenges the traditional notion of mobile heteronormative families with a male breadwinner and a trailing-spouse. Even if this configuration is still usual, other types of household organisations do exist and need to be taken into consideration. The interviews conducted show a heterogeneous panel of situations because of this broad definition. The different experiences of mobility are very diverse corresponding to the different life-paths, related to education, familial situations and working positions.

Household strategy as coping strategy

The coping strategy I focus on aims to reflexively deal between mobility and moorings. It helps to take decisions in respect of the multiplicity of localities possible, while having to choose one. In a familial context, this implies also negotiations between the different members of a household, in order to cope between work, private and family life. To develop a coherent household strategy, the members of a household seek to maintain coordinated orientations. The highly-skilled labour migrants have an experience of settling locally, because they do have an experience of mobility. The modalities of settling and the mobility thus are deeply interrelated. Being mobile for professional reasons implies settling in a new local space to carry out a professional activity. This calls for a dynamic concept able to reflect this dialectic, which is possibly ambivalent and conflictual. Retrospectively, professional success may be explained with the international experience gained through mobility; however, the capacity to adapt to new local spaces is at least of the same importance as it is not possible to escape from the necessity to settle somewhere. This is usually unspoken and hidden by a discourse on the values of mobility. The other side of the coin – the necessity to be somewhere – is, nevertheless, equally relevant to explain the household strategies towards mobility. In other words, mobility is not floating in the sky; mobility needs anchors. The household strategy targets to bridge various *modalities of settling* with *mobility*. That is to join in a comprehensive perspective the necessity to settle in a local space for a limited time, with the need to remain mobile.

The *modalities of settling* are how households create moorings when settling in a new local space. On the one hand, the modalities of settling reflect the decisions regarding the professional situation (and the possible further professional moves) *i.e.* the wish and/or necessity to move again for professional reasons. On the other hand, they express the choices on the layout of the daily-life in a new local space. To take an example, nomads have tents because the tent, that is a central artefact in their way of settling, enables the nomadic way of life. A Mongolian *ger*[2] can be built (and unbuilt) in a few hours. It is because of the *ger* that the Mongolian nomads maintain their motility. This

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2 '**yurt**, also spelled **yurta**, Mongol **ger**, tentlike Central Asian nomad's dwelling, erected on wooden poles and covered with skin, felt, or handwoven textiles in bright colours. The interior is simply furnished with brightly coloured rugs (red often predominating) decorated with geometric or stylized animal patterns. The knotted pile rug, first known from a nomad burial at the foot of the Altai Mountains (5th–3rd century bc), probably developed as a fur substitute to provide warmth and sleeping comfort in the yurt.' (Encyclopedia Britannica 2016, "Yurt, Shelter")

process is quite similar in the case of highly-skilled labour migrants – even if I do not understand them as contemporary nomads. Hotel rooms and corporate flats enable further moves faster and easier than other kinds of accommodation, such as owning a house. The modalities of settling are the whole set of practices and representations developed by highly-skilled labour migrants and their partners when arriving in a new local space to take up residence. The modalities of settling are assumed to be as coherent as possible with either the perceived possibility of a further move or the wish to set up in a local space for a longer time. Thus, I take into account both sides of the dialectic to analyse the household strategies. The choices they make are strategic but subjective; their impacts on further mobility are considered when taken.

The household strategies are coordinated at an intra-familial level. The dilemmas and ambiguities raised by mobile careers are more salient in the cases of whole-family mobility. Choices related to the schooling of the children, the type of housing, the coordination of the activity of both of the partners, or the social network to be developed are closely linked with the perceived possibility of further moves. A former French expatriate who relocated in Switzerland, for instance, told me she does not want 'expat-friends' because they usually leave after three years. She would rather stay in Switzerland in the long run. Therefore, she would prefer to develop friendships with people who also intend to stay in Switzerland.

A single highly-skilled migrant has to deal to a lesser extent with these tensions. They are more likely to happen when coordination between different members of the same household is needed. To take into account both of the partners' and the children' situations requires a stronger coordination between the members of the household. A move, which can be seen as an opportunity for one of the partners can imply constraints and even sacrifices for the other one. The conceptualisation of the household strategies as coping strategies within a household reveals different manners of dealing with gendered tasks.

The analysis of the interviews enables to develop two poles to structure the concept of household strategy. The two poles define a continuum. The continuum spans from the *local oriented coping strategies* to the *mobile oriented coping strategies*. What varies in intensity between the two poles is the capacity and the will of a household to be more or less motile. It spans between stasis and mobility (see figure 1).
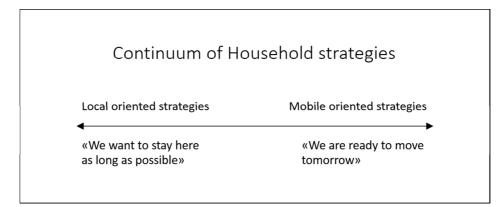
Figure 1: Continuum of Household Strategies

In most cases, the members of a household try to coordinate their orientations towards motility. Strategies aiming to develop the conditions for a long-time stay in Switzerland – namely local oriented strategies – are at one end of the continuum. At the other end, the strategies seek to maintain a maximal motility for the different members of the family. They reflect the will to be ready to leave and to respond to opportunities elsewhere. Both ends can be seen as sets of orientations distinguishable from the field, but very unlikely to be found in a single case. The two poles are homogeneous, non-contradictory logical structures. It is very unlikely that an expatriate in Switzerland spends 1 million Swiss francs for a house when he or she intends to stay for 3 years, even if it remains possible. In a very practical sense, one can always be, at various degrees, more-or-less ready to leave a local space. This is what the household strategies as an explicative concept express. They show different ways of making a stay meaningful in a local space, regarding the perceived propensity to move somewhere else. The household strategies are put into place to maintain coordination and meaning, while settling *and* being aware that a further move is more-or-less possible.

They are concretely developed in regard to various dimensions of life (e.g. finding a place to live, choosing a school, finding a new job). The dimensions of life need to be rearranged when such strategies take place. Some of them need to be rearranged when arriving in a new local space. The dimensions are inductively grounded and strategically dealt with. In the following section, I will discuss two central domains, the working situation and the situation of the children. Each of these situations intrinsically contains a tension - if not a dilemma - for the respondents. They are typical situations where coordination is needed in order to make their stay in Switzerland coherent.

Household Strategies and Work

The main reason for being in Switzerland is a professional one; either because one or both partners got a position there. The professional activity is central; it justifies the mobility and the stay, enables the residence and working permits and provides an income. Moreover, the loss of the professional activity may lead to the expiry of the residence and working permits. Therefore, the professional activity is a keystone to the whole stay. Yet, highly-skilled migrants shape the way of arriving in Switzerland, in order, for him or her, to orient and coordinate the household strategy. He or she makes the geographical movement meaningful (Adey 2010; Cresswell 2006; Urry 2007) also by interpreting the type of contract they are having when arriving in Switzerland. A relevant information they use to make their mobility and modalities of settling meaningful is the type of 'move' they make.

Two major types of moves can be distinguished, namely the 'expatriate move' formalised in an expatriate contract and the 'local move' formalised in a local contract. The types of move, which are two different ways of making mobility meaningful, refer, primarily, to the different kinds of support received when arriving. Hence, mobility is captured in its dialectic with the modalities of settling. It also shows how a movement is made meaningful through the organisational inclusion in which it takes place. In that sense, highly-skilled migration is unequally experienced. When the company financially supports the mobility, the possibilities in the modalities of settling are vaster. This, in turn, gives more choices to develop coherent household strategies. The support the employee, and in some cases, even the household, receives from the company is variable; it has an impact on the various modalities of settling. Some companies provide nearly all-inclusive support to their employees while others *quasi* not at all.[3] Some multinational corporations do not have any expatriate contracts, even though their staff in Switzerland is primarily constituted of highly-skilled labour migrants.

In expatriate contracts, the support is commonly known as an 'expat package'.[4] The company offers support to maintain the motility of the employee with both money and organisational help. These packages aim to soften the arrival of an employee or the household in a new local space. As for Martin, a French marketing manager in a

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3 Salt and Wood (2012) shows how the support diminishes with 2007 economic crisis– a point that my interviews tend to confirm.

4 In the following part of the article, the term 'expatriate' refers exclusively to highly-skilled labour migrant with an expatriate contract.

multinational corporation who lived in France, in the United-States of America, in Great-Britain and in Taiwan:

> In expatriation, there is still more benefit locally uh, they spin you a company apartment for two or three months, just until you find yours, because the goal is that you stay long and feel well. They also give you a budget for the accommodation. There are also benefits at the level of tuition fees, then, yeah it's still good well supervised (Martin, 37, married).5

For the expatriates I interviewed, the constraints in the modalities of settling remain in the background because of this support. The modalities of settling are seen as a technical detail for which service providers such as relocation agencies are specialised in. An expatriate and his or her household tend to develop mobile orientations in their strategy for two reasons. First, the support itself plays a crucial role. For instance, the taking over of tuition fees by the company offers a 'free' opportunity for the children to be in an international school. Second, the expatriate is working for the same company in another country but is still linked legally to the home-country, particularly regarding the social security system and the pension subscriptions. This is an important element when one looks at the life path and professional career in the long run. The present affectation is perceived to be one step in a broader career context.

The local contract is linked with the location in which the highly-skilled labour migrant is actually situated. Specific supports, like paid international schools and outplacement agencies for the partner, are usually not part of the contract. The modalities of settling in this configuration tend to be more rooted, since the contract usually does not come with either financial or organisational support. In this case, highly-skilled labour migrants who opt for mobile oriented strategies are maintaining their motility by themselves. Among other, self-initiated expatriates could be distinguished here (Al Ariss and Crowley-Henry 2013). The working contracts are tied with the local space. Julia, a senior manager in a pharmaceutical company, divorced while being in Switzerland. In order to continue to see her child, it was important for her to be on a local contract in Switzerland:

> I might have to / I mean this is the international fit / I might have to leave for a few years, but I've asked the company to consider that Switzerland is my home-country

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5 Dans l'expatriation (…) il y a quand même plus d'avantage euh localement, ils vous filent un appart de compagnie pour deux ou trois mois juste le temps que vous trouvez le vôtre, parce que le but c'est que vous restiez longtemps donc d'être bien et ils vous donnent une enveloppe pour vous loger, y a des avantages encore une fois au niveau des frais de scolarité, enfin, ouais on est quand même bien bien encadrés.

to expatriate me out to come back. Not to consider the UK as my home country and take me back there (Julia, 42, divorced).

This means she may be mobile again and she knows it, but the strategy she develops aims to construct Switzerland as her drop point. Hence, she puts into place a local oriented strategy to coordinate her career with the rest of her family.

To sum up, the type of contract is a first element that makes a move and the settling meaningful in a specific case. Indeed, the type of move implies more or less support and different contractual localisation. These two pieces of information help the respondents to make mobility and immobility meaningful.

Negotiations and Attempts of Coordination

The meaningful mobile professional project of one individual is not enough to make the whole household mobile project meaningful. The highly-skilled labour migrant himself or herself is facing fewer challenges than his or her partner. The highly-skilled labour migrant (who has a working position *prior* to his arrival in Switzerland) sees the move as coherent for him or her. The stay in Switzerland is thus coherent for the pursuing of one professional career. The one who follows, even though not passively, still does not have this coherence given by the professional activity.

For a whole family to be mobile, higher income and advancement in the career of only one of the partners is not always seen as sufficient; especially since the other partner can refuse to move when he or she perceives a flagrant lack of opportunities in the new locality: a way of reducing risks inside the household (Stark and Blackwell 1991; Stark and Bloom 1985). The 'following partner' can negotiate the conditions of the move, even with the employing company of the other. He or she also aims to be supported for his or her own career. I do not understand the partner as a passive follower.[6] Christine arrived in Switzerland, because the company of her husband relocated the headquarters in Switzerland. She received financial and organisational supports:

Because my husband might have moved for a few years but if I had not found a job… maybe we would have returned (Christine, 55, divorced).[7]

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6 Nevertheless, for a sake of clarity, I will refer to him or her as a following partner.
7 Parce que mon mari aurait peut-être déménagé pour quelques années mais si moi je n'avais pas trouvé bon ben peut-être qu'ils seraient revenus.

At that time, she is actively trying to maintain coordination within the household – thus, an intra-familial negotiation regarding mobility. Her aim is to coordinate her husband's reason for staying in Switzerland with her own interest. Thus, the household strategies are seen through *constraints* and *opportunities* for individual members of a household, which, in turn, have to be discussed and coordinated between them. As for Linda, who was looking for a job at the time of the interview:

> Do you know why [you came to Switzerland]? [>R1]: A couple of reasons, the job itself was more interesting and more in the direction he wanted to go in and also for me we felt that being close to Geneva would probably grant me more opportunities as the specific location in Spain in the other job even though I speak Spanish and not French (Linda, 26, married).

When both are working or want to work, these discussions typically concern the multitude of localities possible to pursue their careers. Each partner has also his or her own. The will to maintain a bound with a specific local space is restricted by the constraints of the professional activity. In order to stay coordinated, often one of the partner leaves his or her professional occupation to follow the move of the other one – and often it is the woman who does so[8]. For Alberto, working in a biological research institute:

> I mean there are many people in our work that has to quit even though they really like the project simply because their partner is moving elsewhere and there are also new people that come here and very qualified to be elsewhere but have to be here because of the partner. I think this is the life for many people (Alberto, 38, married).

In order to maintain coherence in both individual paths, both partners try to be coordinated with one another. In other word, they develop a coordinated household strategy with a more-or-less mobile or local orientations. An important distinction to understand the need of a coordinated strategy is the will and the capacity both of the partners to continue working.

Professionally Active Partners

The situation where only one of the partners has a working contract before arriving in Switzerland is the most common one. Yet, the one without a working contract is not only a passive follower. The following partner will have either to coordinate his or her present job abroad with the new local space – by commuting for instance – or to find a

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8 This corroborates the results of Känsälä et al. (2014), when they met more 'hierarchical strategies' with a 'male expatriate' and a 'female partner' in their typology of the types of career coordination strategies.

position in the new local space, that is, in Switzerland. The partner can, therefore, develop a mobile oriented strategy to maintain coherence and meaning while coming to Switzerland. He or she can choose to maintain his or her motility and thus diminishing the anchors with Switzerland. Some partners will commute between two or more local spaces – for instance to go for the week in London and back to Switzerland for the weekend. This implies coordination between the partners as for Julia when her former husband was relocated in Geneva:

> I was working for a company called ****, which is an American company in the UK, in the European headquarters, which is based in London and my ex-husband he was working for a Swiss pharmaceutical company called **** which is based in Geneva. He was relocated to the global or the international office in Geneva and so I came with him as his spouse, which meant that I was then living in Switzerland and commuting back to London for my European job, which was fine because it is a lot of travel anyway (Julia, 42, divorced).

This strategy to maintain coherence and coordination is a typical example of a mobile orientation. Some others decide to stop temporarily their professional activity in their home-country and use this possibility in order to follow their partner elsewhere. Examples of that are maternity leaves or sabbatical years; or both:

> My husband had been transferred by **** into Italy to lead the Italian subsidiary and at that time I was pregnant with my third child and so I said: 'I will take a parental leave for two years.' So, for two years I stopped working, in fact, I followed my husband to Italy so that was at the end of / in France parental leave stops with the third year of the child and after three years I said, 'I must go or I have to find a job in Italy otherwise I go because I will not stop working!' So I returned to France and he followed me. Six months later, he was back to France (Christine, 55, divorced).9

The insurances and/or the paid leaves provide a strong motility for a household. They enable mobile oriented strategies, because the anchors with the new local space are not moorings. The cost of leaving is not going to be important for the partner, since it did not imply him or her to make a sacrifice. This period can be used to find, or at least to look for a new job. On the mobile end of the continuum, the settling in a local space implies no link within the new local space. The organisational inclusion is located abroad. The financial support comes from the French social security system in this case.

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9 Mon mari avait été muté en Italie par **** pour diriger la filiale italienne et à ce moment j'étais enceinte de mon troisième enfant et donc je me suis dit : "pourquoi pas ? Je vais prendre un congé parental pendant deux." Donc pendant deux ans je me suis arrêtée de travailler, enfin j'ai suivi mon mari en Italie ce qui fait qu'au bout de / enfin en France le congé parental s'arrêtait aux trois ans de l'enfant et au bout de trois ans je lui ai dit : "moi il faut que je rentre ou il faut que je trouve un travail en Italie ou il faut que je rentre parce que je ne vais pas m'arrêter de travailler !" Et donc je suis rentrée et lui m'a suivi six mois après il est revenu en France.

Here too, as in expatriate contracts, the judicial *fori* stays in the 'home-country'. The central point is to see how mobility and moorings are managed inside of a family. On the mobile end of the continuum, a household maintains its motility. The coordination in the household is achieved through strategies oriented towards mobility. Households without children tend to have fewer constraints to develop such mobile strategies.

On the other side of the continuum, partners with a local orientation, who wish to maintain a professional activity, are looking for a job. The long, difficult and not always successful journey to find a job in Switzerland is often narrated in the interviews. For the following partner it implies rearranging his or her own professional career in order to settle in Switzerland. The position may very well be in a multinational corporation – in an English speaking environment – but in the same local space.

When it comes to find a new position abroad, the language plays a central role. Language is constitutive of the experience of mobility. Respondents not able to speak French need to find a job where the working environment is in English, that is, for Switzerland, mostly a multinational corporation, a research institute or an NGO. Due to the large number of internationalised organisations in Switzerland, it is possible to find a job in an English speaking environment. For the interviewees, the fact that many English-speaking positions are available in Switzerland supports the choice of coming to this specific local space. This is often seen as an opportunity for the partner when he or she does not speak French.

The fact remains that the difficulty and sometimes inability for the partner to find a job in the new local space can lead the whole household to return to the home-country. John, who is himself a highly-skilled labour migrant, but also the manager of a team, is aware of several cases such as the following one:

> I have the case, a colleague who came from England, his wife and children left after a year here and he left there two days ago. He returned to join them, so he works in the same company, but returned to England. I think it is actually mainly what I saw as a problem, in short, it is for families with children, problems are actually the language, the difficulty of finding a job for the partner and then to get education for the children (John, 49, married).10

The language is not the only a challenging point for the partner. Even French native speakers do have problems to find a job. The recognition of the diploma is an issue,

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10 J'ai le cas, là, un collègue qui venait d'Angleterre, sa femme et ses enfants sont repartis au bout d'un an et lui il est reparti il y a deux jours. Là il repartit les rejoindre, donc il travaille dans la même société mais il est revenu en Angleterre donc voilà. Je pense que c'est effectivement, principalement ce que j'ai vu comme problème, pour résumer, c'est pour les familles avec enfants, les problèmes sont effectivement la langue, la difficulté de trouver un emplois pour le partenaire et puis et pui:::s les cours pour les enfant.

which comes back very often in the interview, as a barrier for the partner to find a job. Many of them find a position in an international organisation or a multinational corporation because these organisations seem to be more looking at the experience than merely the diploma. The language and the problems of diploma recognition often orient the partner towards international organisation, because they feel that the local labour market is closed to them.

The support of a dedicated organisation, such as an outplacement agency can be a crucial help. For all the partners looking for a job, the situation is challenging; but some are supported by organisations which give tools and know-how to find a job in Switzerland. Success is not guaranteed but such a help is precious. When Christine arrived in Switzerland, her husband had a key management position and his company 'really wanted things to go well'.[11] At the same time, Christine was having a marketing position in Paris and did not want to stop working. The employing company of the husband paid for her to be supported to find a new job in Switzerland:

> Thanks to this outplacement agency that took me really in charge. And of course, it was paid by the company of my husband. They really took care from A to Z. Let's say they guided me so for me it was a bit of a challenge. (…) They did all that was needed to find a job in Switzerland. This does not mean that I was resting on them. I looked for all the recruitment firms I contacted all which could be contactable (Christine, 55, divorced).12

This gives precious indications on the structure of the regimes of mobility. The support companies can give to their employees and their family change the way mobility is surrounded and therefore experienced. In order to find a new professional occupation, the partner is sometimes supported by dedicated organisations such as outplacement agencies. These organisations deserve further studies since they show private and semi-private actors shaping the experience of mobility for privileged, wanted, migrants. These organisations help on many aspects, as for the different contacts with state-bodies (inhabitants control, taxes administration), the knowledge of the housing market, and their knowledge of the local labour market.

To sum up, for the following partner who wishes to find a job in Switzerland, three points are crucial: the language, the recognition of the diploma and the possibility to

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11 Que ça se passe bien.
12 Donc c'est grâce à ce cabinet d'outplacement qui m'a pris vraiment en charge. Et bien sûr, c'était payé par l'entreprise de mon mari qui m'a vraiment prise en charge de A jusqu'à Z, enfin, oui qui m'a reguidée donc pour moi c'était un peu un challenge. Ils ont fait tout ce qui était nécessaire pour retrouver un emploi en Suisse. Ce qui ne veut pas dire que je me reposais que sur eux. Après moi j'ai regardé tous les cabinets de recrutement, j'ai contacté tout ce qui pouvait être contactable pour essayer (…).

receive a dedicated support. Even for French native speakers with a recognised diploma and a dedicated support, finding an occupation in a specific local space is challenging. When the following partner finds a professional activity in the new local space in his or her own field, he or she will develop a local orientation. The relocation of the household somewhere else can imply the loss of this newly found professional activity. Therefore, if a highly-skilled labour migrant (initiating the move towards Switzerland) with mobile oriented strategies, accepts to move elsewhere for the company he or she works for, then it may be difficult to coordinate both orientations. Indeed, an important tension between the orientations in the household strategy arises, possibly until a rupture. The loss of coordination in the household strategies can lead to divorces or separations, since it becomes difficult to maintain bounds. In order to maintain these bounds, the strategies need to be coordinated again in a new configuration. This may imply new sacrifices. Neither the household strategies, nor the household are fixed once for all. In many cases, and in order to maintain the family unit, one partner (and very often the woman) stops her professional activity: sometimes by choice, but more often because of the difficulty to maintain this necessary coordination and to have a job. In this respect, household strategies in a mobile context are in many cases deeply gendered. The will to maintain the household implies in many cases the wife's waiver of the labour market.

Bread-Winners and Trailing Spouses

So far, I spoke about household strategies where both partners maintain a professional activity. In many empirical cases though, only one partner works. The one who does not work is often (if not always for the people I interviewed) the spouse. Gender is central to understand these situations. Some households develop a traditional model with a clear separation of the tasks inside of it; this is a model with a single (male) breadwinner and a supportive (female) partner. For Känsälä, Mäkelä, and Suutari (2014), this strategy is a 'hierarchical strategy': a strategy where "male careers tends to be prioritized and family responsibility tends to rely on the woman" (ibid., 8). Together with researches on highly-skilled migration and gender, my research shows that gender inequalities are profoundly shaping the experience of mobility. The two most frequent cases I encountered are when the spouse cannot to find a job and when she is not looking for one. Many of the spouses do have an upper education but were not able to find a position in Switzerland. The constraints in the local space seem to block them to

find a professional activity. Central in this concern are the children. Supports for the care of the children are especially difficult to find in Switzerland and the households I present are no exception to this. Places in kindergarten are rare and when one is straight away available it is usually expensive. As for Maria, an Indonesian Doctor in molecular biology, who left her working position in Switzerland to take care of her two children:

> It was insane to keep two kids at the crèche*13 with that salary, because I wouldn't have anything at the end. It is really expensive and difficult because they were not so many, they are more now but still it is not. It is not sufficient. I know because I am still in the network of these mothers who are always looking for a garderies* and also with the school, also, with the para-scolaire* activities, so they can't leave the kids all day at school, so yeah that was the reason why I stopped and I will wait until they are older because/now because I have to be home at lunch time because they go back home at lunch (Maria, 35, married).

The inability to maintain a professional activity is embedded in the inability of the household to find a place in a dedicated structure for their children. Here again, the financial support of the company shows how mobility is hierarchically structured. The capacity to pay (or to be with a company which pays) for dedicated private services gives broader choices in the modalities of settling. This problem is even more crucial for mobile professionals, since the extended family, such as the grand-parents, the uncle or the aunt, are not able to help. In fact, they are simply not here to help! Strategies implying an *au-pair* to take care of the children are not available for non-French speaker[14] and paying a maid is also very expensive. The schedule of the school days in Switzerland, with a break for midday, implies a lot of coordination, especially for non-native speakers on a local contract, with a few or no support at all. The opportunities are scarce and difficult to combine with two professional careers. This corroborates the result of Liebig et al. (2015) who show how places also shape gender inequalities. In this context and without financial or organisational support, one partner stops working. Relationships of power (especially based on the income) are at play here. The women often earn less than the men. In all my cases, the spouse will be leaving, at least temporarily, the professional world. During the interviews, no case of a reverse situation has been encountered.

Next to these cases, where the situation is perceived as problematic, due to the constraints in the local space, others decide – willingly it is said – that one partner is going to stop working in order to support the professional project of the other partner.

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13 * in French in the interview
14 Since the purpose of *au-pair* is to learn a new language and not to be a maid

These cases are usually found in *highly* mobile families with many relocations during their lives. The spouse (in all my cases) decided long ago not to work. We are here in the common case of the 'trailing-spouse'. She has side activities in volunteer organisations, networks, making new formations and/or taking care of the children. Robert was expatriate in Latin America for 10 years and his spouse stopped working there. Supported by the company she was able to do a complementary formation. She also took care of the children.

> My wife is on the parents and teaching association, the PTA (parent-teacher association) so she is very active in school now because we've been here for some years. She is very well, so she very much takes a leadership position in that school community, of integrating people (Robert, 46, married).

In such situations, the household strategies are easily coordinated since the motility of the spouse is not hindered by any own anchoring professional activity. The highly-skilled labour migrant moves and the partner adapts and supports. The professional activity of the husband determines the local space. When everything goes well, the family is perceived as a decisive support. Many interviewees speak of a shared project. The household is seen as a stable, but gendered, entity which can be relocated.

> It was a lifestyle choice, we knew that I will probably want to have this life and, if she agreed, that meant we had to define our priorities, and based on that, our priorities were that we wanted children, to have several children and also to be mobile. That means one of the two needs to handle the supply and she assured this for many years. (...) The second point that is important is that it is easier in my family I think. In the end, the family, if your priority is the family you can move it and if it works well, it brings, that's your base (Nicolas, 50, married).15

The family in a context of mobile career can be a central support. This does not mean that the choices regarding mobility are easy to be taken for the partner or the household as a whole. In many cases, the partner goes back home, which often leads the highly-skilled labour migrant to return, too. In that sense, a return in the home country is not only a matter of lack of professional opportunity. The difficulty to adapt, to socialise, to 'survive' in a new locality, for the partner can lead to returns. The discourses of the 'trailing-spouses' reveal difficult moments while settling in a new local space. The

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15 On a fait un choix de vie, on savait que moi j'allais sans doute vouloir avoir cette vie-là et donc elle, si elle était d'accord, ça voulait dire qu'on définissait nos priorités et en fonction de ça, nos priorités ça a été on voulait des enfants et en avoir plusieurs enfants et être mobile, ça veut dire qu'il faut que l'un des deux assure l'intendance et elle a assuré l'intendance pendant de nombreuses années. (…) Donc ça c'est important. Le deuxième point qui est important c'est que c'est plus facile en famille moi je trouve. Finalement en famille, si votre priorité c'est la famille vous pouvez la bouger et si elle fonctionne bien, elle apporte, c'est ça votre socle.

husband works the whole time. For him, he is in a familiar environment: his company. She has to deal with daily-problems where the language plays a central role. In the situation of a traditional hierarchical family, the need of a coordination between two professional careers does not exist, since both understand to have a shared project. The trailing spouse supports the professional career of her husband.

Education Arrangements

The situation of the children[16] and how the parents are dealing with it is central to see these attempts of coordinated orientations between the different members of a family. The choice in the type of school is a main concern. It is conceptualised here through this continuum between *motility* and *mooring,* which structured household. In a sense, it is a strategy for the children, even though the parents are taking the decision. The choice between, either, a public or a private school, or an international English-school and a French international baccalaureate, for instance, leads to different modalities of settling – respectively more-or-less anchoring. Here, it becomes clear that the household strategies need to be coordinated, in order to make the stay in a locality coherent with further projects. Thus, choices regarding the education of the children do have different orientations in respect of the envisaged motility of the family. The current orientation of the parents – based on the way they perceive their stay – informs the choice of a school. As for the professional choices, the aim is either to maintain the motility of the family or to develop a project more oriented towards the wish to stay in a specific locality. Thus, they are strategical choices for a household. Mobile orientation in the schooling aim to maintain the motility of the children. They take place when further moves are perceived possible in the years to come. Here, the parents take the choice to go for an international school in Switzerland, or even a boarding school in the home-country. The boarding-school is at the motile end of the continuum. It means that the children stay in the home-country and do not interfere with the strategies of the parents. The parents maintain a maximal motility, since it does not modify anything for their children if they have to move. Such a solution is however not always wanted neither possible. More often, the parents with mobile oriented strategies opt for an international school. Indeed, it makes further moves easier for the children, while they can stay with their parents. The central point in order to maintain the motility of the children is the availability of

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16 In the following section I will use the plural, for reading purposes, even though it can be a single child.

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the same curriculum abroad. The availability of an international school in a local space is often seen as a precondition for coming. It is central for the parents because it allows the family to stay flexible. As for Robert:

> Yes, because we didn't know wherever we would move again. We want to keep it flexible, because wherever we would move the international baccalaureate was available so that was one of the key drivers (Robert, 46, married).

Expatriates or highly-skilled labour migrant with mobile orientations, who are understanding their stay in Switzerland to be one step in a broader career, are choosing international schools to maintain the motility of the family as a whole. Especially, when the company pays the tuition fees, since international schools in Switzerland are expensive.

The Swiss public education system makes more sense for those who want to settle on the long run in Switzerland, that is, those who are developing local oriented strategies. Nari, working in a biotechnological company, does not want to continue with a highly mobile international career and wants to stay in Switzerland. She puts her son in the Swiss public system while sending him every Saturday morning in the Japanese school.

> So our plan is to live in Switzerland on a permanent base and we have no plan to go to other countries or to go back to Japan, so why not public schools (Nari, 41, divorced).

Again, this choice aims to be coherent with the project and the household. It is in line with the orientations of the parents. Yet, many interviewees, even if they want to stay in Switzerland for some years, are not making the choice of the Swiss public school system, because of the path-dependency it implies. The content of the lessons, will, in their mind, anchor the children in the French part of Switzerland. Moreover, because of the language, non-native French speaker parents are afraid of not being able to support their children in the Swiss public school system. Thus, they opt for an international school.

The uncertainty of a further move leads to difficult situations for the parents. An expected mobility, sometimes, does not happen. Thus, some children make all their education in a private English-speaking international school in Switzerland. Retrospectively, the parents say they should have gone for the Swiss public system if they would have known. At that time, they say it was too risky. Crucially, the wish or the anticipation of a further move, which, as in *The Tartar Steppe* of Dino Buzzati, never comes, leads to such situations. After a while, it is too late to change for the Swiss

public school system. To sum up, the language as well as the differences in the curricula between the international schools and the Swiss public school system lead to continue with the prior decision.

Highly-skilled labour migrants working on a local-contract may want to maintain their motility. As we have seen it in the previous part, even if the type of contract does have an implication on the perception of the stay, it is still very likely that they will have to move again. They still feel ready to move somewhere else if they are asked by their company. Since the tuition fees are usually not supported, it is usually expensive for them to maintain motility in the household strategy. On the one hand, the schooling fees are a strong incentive to go for the Swiss public school system, because private schools are expensive. On the other hand, the fear of not being able to relocate their children if they have to move again somewhere else tends to push towards an international school. These dilemmas require coping strategies: a decision is made, and this decision implies a strong path-dependency.

Conclusion

This article analyses the household strategies of highly-skilled labour migrants while settling in a new local space. First, it shows that mobility is never frictionless, even when it is supported financially and organisationally. Second, it shows that motility has a price for households. Other types of constraints arise such as the working permit, other ways of dealing with them appear than the ones understood in migration studies.

In this context, dedicated organisations can be seen as a facet of a regime of mobility for highly-skilled migrants in Europe today. The removal of many legal and administrative barriers and the effective existence of an enlarged free-movement zone in Europe displace the constraints experienced while being mobile. In turn, 'new' constraints can be diminished by specific dedicated organisations, such as outplacement agencies or dual-career programs. The role of these organisations deserve further enquiries, especially their links with specific state-bodies and their facilitator's role regarding the administration. This could help to understand better how contemporary highly-skilled labour migration is imbedded in the state's interest.

In this article I showed that the various domains where the modalities of settling take place need to be coordinated with each other. The greater the financial and organisational support, the better it is possible to develop coordinated strategies within a

household and the easier it is to settle in a local space as the costs of living and leaving are smaller. Migration choices cannot be understood only through a maximisation of profit, but need also to be understood trough a minimization of the risks for the household as a whole. This may shed light on the debate in the literature regarding 'expat bubbles' (Bochove and Engbersen 2013; Fechter 2007). 'Expat bubbles' can be understood as a motile household strategy. They are at the mobile end of the continuum. A specific organisational imbed highly-skilled migrants and their household. Besides a whole range of household strategies are more linked with the traditional conceptualisation of integration.

The support that some highly-skilled migrants receive shows how mobility is soften for them. Multinational corporations put their means to back up their employees while settling in a specific local space; that is money and organisational support. Their aim is to ease the settling while maintaining the motility of an employee and his or her family. The household strategies show how this support (if granted) takes place regarding the different members of a family in different domains of life. Conversely, if such a support does not guarantee a 'successful' settling, household strategies show the agency of highly-skilled labour migrants coming to Switzerland without such a backup. When it comes to the opportunities in the modalities of settling, the support received by different organisations is central and shows hierarchies inside the 'wanted' side of today's migration processes. The conception of 'organisational inclusion' developed by Bommes (2012) is a relevant way to understand how the settling in a local space may be differently experienced through the different organisations, which offer their support to some and not to others. In the privileged group I got in touch with, I note strong differences. The possibility to be imbedded in specific organisation comes from the household economical capacities and/or the organisational (professional) possibilities to do so: when the fees are paid by the employing company, mobile oriented strategies are easier to put into place.

I do not claim that household strategies regarding mobility appear only in contemporary societies: it is just more apparent. Yet, for instance, Green (2008) does not see expatriation as an exclusive phenomenon of late modernity, but as a one that scholars are more aware of now. The same can be said for household strategies. However, the increased possibility of a further move makes more obvious the necessity to cope between different local spaces. Nevertheless, one could argue that the rich princes or aristocrats, making the *Grand tour*, where also dealing with these strategies to some

extend during the 18th centuries. They needed to select certain destinations over others - just as contemporary highly-skilled migrants: the necessity to choose certain destinations while not others.

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