Migrants or Expatriates?
Americans in Europe

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Transnationalism

- Minority groups have space to become active (e.g. Østergaard-Nielsen 2000)
- Migrants seek to improve conditions in home country, politically or economically (e.g. Levitt and Jaworsky 2007)
- Transnational groups are ‘peace-makers’ or ‘peace-breakers’ (e.g. Adamson 2002)
- Instrumental use of migrant status by highly skilled: ‘class shapes one’s ability to engage in transnational practices’ (Levitt 2003: 183).
American Transnationalism

• Political
• Social/ Cultural
• Economic
Overseas American Political Activity

• Lobbying of Congress and Executive agencies
  – Citizenship: 1960s – 1990s
  – Teabag campaign: right to vote achieved 1975
  – Current FATCA campaign

• Engagement in domestic politics
  – Voter registration
  – Voting
  – Fundraising
  – Letter-writing
  – Protests in host country
Explaining American Political Transnationalism

• Civic identity
• Partisanship
• Reactive transnationalism
Migrant or Expatriate?

• “You know, where all the expats hang out.”
• “All of those migrants are down there.”
Expatriates?

- Narrow sociological definition: short-term, usually intra-company transferee.
- Broader understanding: ‘accompanied by associations of luxury, leisure or moral decline abroad, in historical as well as contemporary contexts’ (Fechter 2007: 3)
- ‘defined by reference to where they came from rather than who they are. This arises from the difference-in-power relationship between the country of origin … and the host country’ (Guild 2009: 20).
Migrants or Expatriates?

• Economic migrants
• Leaving for personal reasons
• Seeking adventure
• Marriage migration
• Studying
• Unable to form a family in country of origin (elements of forced migration)
In their own words...

• ‘An immigrant is somebody who chose to move to another country. I moved more or less by accident.’

• ‘An immigrant is someone who’s here permanently, and that is my case, but there’s also the idea of seeking a better life which is not what I.... I was just here because this is where my husband is from. ... And I was a kid [when I came to France] and I wasn’t thinking”

• ‘At this point, I would almost say I would be an immigrant rather than an expat because I’ve been here for so long.’ (p. 137)

• ‘the notion of immigrant to me has sort of, you know, give me your tired, your hungry, your poor – and I don’t feel tired, hungry or poor.’ (p. 135)
And yet...

- ‘I come from a kind of pretty poor family and it was pretty clear that there was not enough money there for me to study ... And I had a very difficult family situation and it was clear to me that I had to, I had to leave.’ (p. 56)

- ‘we decided to come back [to Germany from the US, where we had been living for five years] because we could get married [registered partnership] and we could finally live in a country where we have the same status, where we would both be able to work and do what we wanted to do and not have to worry about one’s visa expiring’(52).

- ‘I don’t even really have ... a place that I would call home really any more. So it is less of a pressure I guess to go back because of that’. (61)
But not expatriates...

• ‘I’m not fond of the term because I think it implies that you hate your country or dislike your country or you don’t agree with your country or something.’ (130)

• ‘what do you mean, expatriate? I’m a patriot. I’m not an ex-patriot.’ (130)

• ‘[a]n expat is here for a short time. And for one reason or another, he is attracted to the city for its beauty, for the cafés, for the lifestyle ... that kind of thing. You know, the Hemingways of this world.’ (24)

• ‘expat in this country [the UK] has a very particular significance. It’s the sort of gin-swilling red-faced Telegraph-reading [man] ... It’s not a kind term, really’. (24)

• my family ‘still kind of look at it like I live in Disneyland. It’s a tourist – well it is a tourist attraction but my apartment isn’t a tourist attraction, it’s my life.’ (158)
‘American Living Overseas’

Figure 5.1 Expatriate; Migrant/Immigrant; American Living Overseas
N=105–781

Klekowski von Koppenfels 2014: 133
But above all... *l’Américain(e)*

- ‘you always see these stories about – I don’t know – some dumbass book banning in Texas, or these sorts of stories. They’re the ones that always bubble up. ... [and I have] to say, “Well, no, we’re not all idiots.” But, those [types of things] are just omnipresent.’ (151)

- ‘I found, as the American, you can be perceived as too aggressive. ... And I’ve kind of learned my lesson as sometimes you just need to sit back and see how things are done and then get involved.’ (152)

- ‘you have to prove that you’re not *l’Américaine* and that you actually have a brain and you read books and you’re not aggressive and you know, go on and taking over.’ (98)
Accidental Migrant

• King (2002): distinction between temporary and permanent migration is at best arbitrary.
• Has implications for explanations of migration motivations.
• ‘I was only supposed to be here for one year and that was 18½ years ago’ (60).
• ‘I never planned on staying here or anything like that. I just did and home is where your junk collects and I collected a lot of junk here, and so there I am. It wasn’t any conscious decision’ (60).
• ‘[My wife] got pregnant and we have an 11-year-old son, and at that time we were thinking about going back to America before he was born – but then that made no sense because health care and everything is so perfect here. We had nothing to go back to in the States. So we said, OK, we’ll stay. And then after that, at some point we just decided we’re here. I don’t know how that happened’ (64).
Concluding Thoughts

• Transnationalism: political engagement as reaction, as felt need to protect rights
• Migrants or expatriates?
• Accidental migrants
• Future of American emigration?
Thank you!
Discussion

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