Refereed article

The Mobility Intentions of Privileged and Middling Migrant Professionals in Singapore: A Cross-Cultural Comparison, and the Effects of the "Singaporeans First" Strategy

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Summary
Research on highly skilled migrants, transnational elites, and expatriates has often portrayed these groups as displaying an exceptional readiness for mobility, moving through a frictionless world, and belonging to an elite or privileged class in their host countries. Also, it has mostly focused on the migration of professionals from the West to low- or middle-income countries elsewhere. This article challenges and amends existing research through an analysis of the variability and temporality of the mobility intentions of professionals, including their aspirations to fixity, stay, and settlement. It seeks to fill a few lacunas in the literature, among them professionals' aspirations to stay and settlement, the various constraints that they face in remaining stationary or pursuing an envisaged onward mobility, medium- and long-term-oriented mobility intentions in addition to more short-term ones and the recognition that professionals occupy various class positions in their migration destination. The argument is based on a qualitative and cross-cultural study on Filipino, German, and People's Republic of China professionals in Singapore. It sheds light on the impact of socioeconomic, social, and sociocultural factors, and of the biopolitics of space, identity, and belonging on mobility intentions. Special attention is paid to the influence of recent changes to the immigration and residency law in Singapore, referred to as the "Singaporeans First" measures.

Keywords: mobility, translocality, transnational migration, highly skilled migration, transnational elites, expatriates, migrant professionals, citizenship, temporary migration, permanent migration, residency law, citizenship, permanent residency

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Introduction

Research on highly skilled migrants, transnational elites, and expatriates has often portrayed these groups as displaying an exceptional readiness for mobility, as moving through a frictionless world without borders, and as belonging to an elite or privileged class in their host countries. Also, it has mostly focused on the migration of professionals from the West to low- or middle-income countries elsewhere (cf. Willis et al. 2002; Ley 2004; Conradson and Latham 2005; Beaverstock 2011; Yeoh and Huang 2011; Meier 2014). Through engaging with recent criticism on these perspectives and presenting and comparing findings from a qualitative study on Filipino, German and People's Republic of China (PRC) professionals in Singapore, this article seeks to challenge and expand on these narrow representations of the mobility of professionals. It engages with migrant professionals' intentions of onward mobility, stay, or settlement, and their variability and temporality — which are conceptualized here as "mobility intentions." It sheds light on the impact of socioeconomic, social, and sociocultural factors, as well as of the residency law and the biopolitics of space on mobility intentions. Further, it suggests a differentiation of professionals into "migrant professionals with privileges" and "middling migrant professionals" so as to understand how, in the context of Singapore, contract status, economic benefits, and income can influence professionals' intentions for mobility, stay, or settlement differently.

Thus, the article focuses on two key themes and their interrelation with each other: (1) migrant professionals' mobility intentions and (2) the effects of recent changes in the immigration and residency law in Singapore on these mobility intentions. The analysis is based on a qualitative interview study that the author conducted in Singapore between 2013 and 2015. With regard to the first theme, it seeks to amend and challenge existing research related to the mobility of professionals through asking the following:

(1a) Which reasons have motivated migrant professionals to relocate to Singapore, and how long did they plan to stay (initial mobility intentions)?

(1b) How have these initial mobility plans changed since the migrant professionals' arrival in the city-state (subsequent mobility intentions), and which factors account for their change of heart?

(1c) Do the Filipino, German, and Chinese professionals under analysis hold similar or different initial and subsequent mobility intentions (cross-cultural comparison)?

With regard to the second theme it investigates:

(2a) If, and then how, the measures related to the "Singaporeans First" strategy affect migrant professionals' mobility intentions?

(2b) If, and then how, the three groups under analysis are affected differently by the Singaporeans First strategy (cross-cultural comparison)?

The article starts out by presenting and discussing existing research on migrant professionals, highly skilled migrants, transnational elites, and expatriates as well as on the temporality of migration and the role of mobility intentions. The immigration of professionals to Singapore, the foreign talent policy, and the recent changes to it as part of the ruling People's Action Party's (PAP) Singaporeans First strategy are outlined. The findings on professionals' initial and subsequent mobility intentions and the effects of the Singaporeans First strategy are first presented, before they are afterward analyzed in the context of existing literature in the discussion and concluding section.

Theoretical considerations: The migration of privileged and middling professionals, and the temporality of mobility intentions

The migration of professionals, or of certain segments of this population, has received increased academic attention particularly since the beginning of the new millennium. Different labels with sometimes slightly, sometimes more profoundly varying connotations have been applied to refer to this population or to segments of it — among them "highly skilled migration" (Lowell and Findlay 2001; Föbker et al. 2016), the migration of "transnational elites" (Beaverstock 2002; Willis et al. 2002; Meier 2016), or "expatriates" (Findlay et al. 1996; Yeoh and Khoo 1998; Beaverstock 2002; Thang et al. 2002; Farrer 2010; Fechter and Walsh 2010; Beaverstock 2011). In the context specifically of migration policy, many countries have in the last two to three decades referred to the migration of desired highly skilled subjects as the migration of "foreign talents" (cf. Wong 1997; Yap 1999; Low 2002; Iwasaki 2015; Bork-Hüffer 2016b).

In the context of my own research, the term "migrant professionals" is used. It is defined, first, as migrant subjects who are highly skilled, that is those who hold a degree from a tertiary-level education institution or who work as specialists in high-level positions (Föbker et al. 2016). Second, following Meier's (2014) definition of migrant professionals, they are conceptualized as persons whose qualifications and skills are recognized and who are in employment in the host country — both must not necessarily be the case for all highly skilled migrants, as they can face unemployment or a deskilling if their qualifications are not accepted in the host country (cf. Man 2004; Raghuram and Kofman 2004; Meier 2014).

Research on transnational elites and expatriates has been criticized for characterizing these subjects as "individual careerists responding purely to corporate logic and circulating in an intensely fluid world of intra- and inter-firm transfers and career mobility" (Yeoh and Huang 2011: 682; cf. also Conradson and Latham 2005; Yeoh and Willis 2005; Beaverstock 2011). Ley (2004) has argued that even for the transnational elite, the world is not as borderless as is often implied — as the particularity of place can be a challenge even for the most mobile individuals. Föbker et al. note that "recent research on highly-skilled migration emphasizes the diversity of this group concerning the duration of stay. For the most part, transnational professionals move to a place only for several years, some of them, however, intend to migrate permanently" (2016: 112). With regard to the duration of stay, migration scholarship has for long differentiated only between temporary and permanent migration as two distinct types thereof (in addition to seasonal migration, which as a specific type of migration is not further considered here). These are studied separately from each other, and usually do not include professionals as a focus group (cf. Massey et al. 1993). Only recently has the transition from temporary to permanent migration received more attention (cf. Baláz et al. 2004; Khoo et al. 2008; King 2012), with some scholars having come to argue that certain general tendencies in regard to this transition can be identified (e.g. Baláz et al. 2004).

Yet it is my contention that a focus only on the transition from temporary to permanent migration simplifies the intersectionality of migration and mobility processes (cf. Smith and King 2012). For example, translocality scholars (e.g. Lohnert 2005; Steinbrink 2009; Brickell and Datta 2011; Verne 2012; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013; Etzold 2016) have asserted migrants' simultaneous embeddedness in and identification with the spaces and places that they come from, pass through, move to, or otherwise relate to. Additionally, such a focus loses sight of the complexity of individual motivations for mobility that are becoming increasingly diverse and blurred (cf. King 2012; Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016), influenced for example by key life events (such as entering parenthood, retirement, etc.), the result of changes within social relations and/or spaces (aging or death of family members, preferences of or separation from partners, family ties), or an outcome of (un)familiarity with the culture (Moore 1986; Schiller and Diez 2012; Butsch 2016b). Contributing to this is the increasing vicissitudes in structural factors. The last decade especially has seen a more rapid change in residency laws, enacted in countries that have received an increasing number of migrants — with the aim of limiting or selecting their inflow (cf. Yeoh and Lai 2008). Greater oscillations in the now more volatile globalized economy result in decreasing job security — but also more individual economic development options. The Internet, digital and mobile communication, and the continuously evolving opportunities that they present are changing the social conditions and consequences of migration (cf. Sterly 2015; Bork-Hüffer 2016a; Lim et al. 2016).

More recently a few studies have addressed individuals' intentions to leave their home country in the near future, which are addressed as "mobility intentions" (Cairns 2009, 2014; Fassmann et al. 2009; much more research has been done on intentions for internal migration and local and circular mobility, cf. Moore 1986; Tsfati and Cohen 2003; Shuttleworth and Green 2011). However, there is currently a lack of analysis of (further) mobility intentions of transnational migrants, a more concrete framing of this concept, research in non-Western contexts, and scrutiny of more medium- and long-term-oriented mobility intentions. Mobility intentions are conceptualized here as a certain preference that individuals hold at a given point in time for being mobile or stationary in their future lives. They can refer to intended mobility in the nearer or more distant future. These intentions might or might not be realized as envisaged; they do not necessarily result in actual mobile practices (as conceptualized for example by Cresswell and Merriman 2010; significant divergences between mobility expectations and actual practices were found by, among others, Moore 1986). Reference is made here to (physical) mobility intentions rather than migration ones, as a means of acknowledging the interrelatedness and intersectionality of different types of transnational, translocal, local, and circular mobilities (cf. also Smith and King 2012; Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016). An analysis of mobilities always includes a recognition of the antipode, the immobilities, and of moorings (cf. Urry 2007; Cresswell and Merriman 2010; Cresswell 2012). Hence, restraints to mobility and aspirations to fixity, stay, and settlement — features that have far too often been neglected in the analysis of professionals' mobility when being compared to that of nonprofessionals — are given the same attention as the analysis of aspirations for mobility in this article. Aspirations to stay or leave have often been found to be related to feelings of "belonging," and the emergence of hybrid identities that relate to the places that mobile subjectivities are part of — among them the migration destination, places of origin, or those of transit (cf. Ehrkamp 2005; Ho 2006; Gustafson 2009; Marcu 2012; Liu 2014; Butsch 2016a).

Research on expatriates focuses on a specific segment of professionals, "[those] sent by their employers to work outside their home countries in a subsidiary or private entity for a contracted period of time, requiring a specific temporary immigration status and the receipt of an employer relocation package including enhanced salary, subsidized accommodation, family health care, and school and club fees" (Beaverstock 2011: 712). Conradson and Latham (2005) animadvert on notions of exceptionalism stirred in writings on transnational elites and expatriates by claiming that even elites face "ordinary" tasks of managing everyday life, such as eating, sleeping, raising children, and organizing their education. The importance of shedding light on "middling" forms of transnationalism (Conradson and Latham 2005) — represented by migrants who not only belong to the elite but also the middle class in the host society — has been emphasized (e.g. by Ley 2004; Conradson and Latham 2005; Föbker et al. 2016; Baas 2017).

In the context of Singapore, a differentiation of professionals is suggested here into "migrant professionals with privileges" and "middling migrant professionals" — based on contract statuses, income, and special economic benefits. Professionals with privileges are defined here as individuals who either earn a monthly gross income from work above the national average of Singaporean professionals with tertiary degrees (the median gross monthly income from work was 7,000 Singapore dollars [SGD] in 2016, including employer shares paid into the individual Central Provident Fund [CPF] plans, Ministry of Manpower 2017), who are granted expatriate or other contracts that include additional economic privileges (e.g. housing, schooling, and car allowances), or who are on a local contract but earn well above the average monthly gross income of local professionals to compensate for the higher costs for housing and education for non-Singaporeans. Elite migrants are subsumed in this category, even though they would have exceptionally high economic capital even when compared to professionals with privileges. Middling professionals embrace those staying on local contracts and earning up to the average income of Singaporean professionals with tertiary degrees without further privileges. My interviewees represent professionals from both groups. The share of middling professionals has been on the increase in Singapore recently (cf. Straits Times 2016b).

At the same time, Yeoh and Huang have pointed out that "the migratory moves of the talented and skilled have to be understood within a broader cultural politics— both in terms of a politics of moving (and belonging) and a politics of place" (2011: 683). Migrants' positions and social identities in the sociopolitical assemblage of a city (McCann and Ward 2011) are not only determined by their income, skills, and qualifications but also by the intersections of (cf. Ye 2014) their ethnicity, class, culture, and gender (Yeoh and Willis 2005; Yeoh and Huang 2011; Ye 2013, 2014, 2016; Bork-Hüffer et al. 2016; Baas 2017) — and the conjuration of these in the biopolitics of space, identity, and belonging (Amin 2012, 2013; Hall 2013; Solomos 2013). While in comparison to the wide continuum of lower-skilled groups of migrants (cf. Baas 2017)[1] professionals usually receive privileged treatment in the host country regarding their immigration, access to its social services, and sometimes in regard to their personal freedoms (e.g. having a choice about the place of residence, the right to marry, giving birth, etc.) (Meier 2009, 2014, 2016), they nonetheless might face other forms of institutional and social discrimination in the specific places that they stay in or pass through (Lim et al. 2016). Meier attributes migrant professionals "a relatively high status with an attractive social position in the host country" (2014: 5). While this certainly holds true for parts of the migrant professional population, according to my own findings it overlooks how the effects

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1   Baas (2017) refers to a complex continuum of skill levels, that not only embraces those un- or low-skilled migrant workers who are usually separated from migrant professionals but also those who occupy positions in-between this artificial dichotomy.

of specific biopolitics of space significantly affect the class status of certain professional groups.

Singapore: The immigration of professionals and the Singaporeans First strategy

Residence status, rights, and obligations of migrant professionals

Singapore's population is subdivided into three main groups: individuals with Singaporean citizenship (SC), those with a permanent residence permit ("permanent residency," PR), and those with a temporary residence permit ("temporary residency," TR). The first two groups are categorized as the "resident population" — only those with temporary residence permits are called "migrants." Characteristic of Singapore is a forward-looking controlling of immigration by strongly regulating and managing the various migrant groups, specifically through a flexible and targeted regulatory policy (cf. Yeoh 2004, 2006; Gutting 2016).

Professionals who migrated to Singapore after 1965 today can reside there on an Employment Pass (EP), which is a temporary pass, PR, or SC. Employers can request an EP for executives, managers, and individuals with specialized skills needed in the labor market, who can demonstrate completed tertiary education or other specialized qualifications, and who earn a monthly salary of at least 3,300 SGD. A person earning at least 18,000 SGD can apply for a personalized EP without an employer (Ministry of Manpower 2016). In June 2015 holders of EPs represented 11 percent of foreign temporary workers (National Population and Talent Division et al. 2015). EP holders can apply for residence permits for their spouses and children if they are earning over 5,000 SGD per month, and for their parents if they are earning more than 10,000 SGD (Ministry of Manpower 2016).

After having worked in Singapore for six months EP holders can apply for PR, which can later be converted to citizenship, all subject to a successful application being made. PR and SC approvals are issued according to undisclosed quotas for countries of origin. Preference is given to migrants from countries of origin that are culturally or historically connected to Singapore (Yap 2015). Whether the applicant will contribute to Singapore's society or economy is examined. Training, qualifications, work experience, and income are also taken into account. Applicants should as far as possible be of "ideal working age," meaning between 25 and 49 (*Straits Times* 2015b). Applicants for SC must have held PR for at least two years. Individuals to be naturalized are "handpicked" from the group of PR holders. They must present proof of "suitable character" and sufficient income, and declare their intention to settle in Singapore for the long term. Applicants, and in some cases people from their network, are interviewed personally. They must give up their previous citizenship; Singapore does not recognize dual citizenship (cf. Singapore Government eCitizen 2014). There is no publicly accessible evaluation system for

PR and SC that indicates the required criteria for them — and therefore what the likely chances of success are in applying for them.

PR and SC bring with them certain rights and obligations. All sons of those who hold PR or SC status are obliged to perform military service and must serve two years once they turn 18. PR and SC holders must become part of the Singaporean social security system, the aforementioned CPF, which encompasses a health fund, pension fund, and a credit scheme for an owner-occupied home. PR allows its holder to purchase a Housing Development Board (HDB) residence on the resale market, with prices well below those of the private housing market. HDB residences are state-subsidized, owner-occupied flats. Only citizens are entitled to purchase a home on the primary housing market. Children of PR holders receive discounts on public education fees and priority access to the public education system. An EP is applied for by the employer, and ends if the employment relationship is terminated. In contrast a PR pass is applied for by the individual themself, and does not need to be changed if its holder switches jobs — and also permits its holder to be unemployed for a certain period of time.

The Singaporeans First strategy since the end of the 2000s, and its effects on immigration

Shortly after Singapore gained independence in 1965, the national government began to promote immigration. Overall, the percentage of people with TR has increased rapidly: from 2.9 percent in 1970 to 29.5 percent in 2015 (1.63 million individuals out of a total population of 5.54 million inhabitants; cf. Figure 1, Department of Statistics 2016). The percentage of PR holders had also climbed to 9.5 percent (527,700 people) by 2015 (Department of Statistics 2016). In 1988 the term "foreign talents" was introduced, and has since been used to differentiate from the less qualified and less desired "foreign workers."

Foreign talents were seen as the key to the country's pan-Asian and global economic competitiveness, and to the creation of new job opportunities (Yap 1999, 2013, 2015; Ho 2006; Yeoh 2006; Beaverstock 2011; Iwasaki 2015). Alongside a string of immigration measures that were targeted at attracting foreign talent, the development of an attractive urban landscape, the promotion of local soft factors (such as diverse consumer, cultural, and entertainment offerings), as well as imagineering strategies aimed at marketing Singapore as an international and cosmopolitan world-class city have all taken place (Beaverstock 2002, 2011; Ho 2006; Yeoh and Lai 2008; Khveshchanka et al. 2011). In the second half of the last decade, conditions for recruiting professionals from abroad were liberalized once more. The continued aim to promote immigration so as to boost economic growth was confirmed in January 2013 with the "Population White Paper." It projected that the population has to grow from 5.3 million (2013 figure) to between 6.5 and 6.9

million by the year 2030 in order to meet demographic and economic needs (National Population and Talent Division 2013: 6).

Over the last ten years, the Singaporean population has become increasingly dissatisfied with the growing number of migrants arriving. The global economic crisis of 2008–2009 — one of the most severe economic recessions that Singapore has experienced since its independence (cf. Jordan 2009) — has led to increased economic insecurity and fear that migrants could take away jobs from Singaporeans (Yeoh and Lam 2016). Additionally migrants are held responsible for the increasing cost of living (mostly regarding living space, everyday needs, and the Certificate of Entitlement — the registration of a vehicle in Singapore whose cost depends on demand), overcrowded public transport and streets, a sense of alienation, as well as the loss of Singaporean identity (cf. Lai 2012; Yap 2013). Given the strictly regulated offline media world (cf. Rodan 2000), xenophobia and criticism of Singapore's migration policy are particularly expressed online. Online xenophobia either refers to "migrant workers" or "foreign talents" in general or to specific groups based on ethnicity or nationality — often linked to certain happenings, such as online postings or criminal deeds by foreigners or activities of foreign companies in Singapore (Gomes 2013). Subtle attempts at countercampaigning via the Internet first played a role in the 2006 elections, and had a noticeable effect on election results in 2011 (cf. Abbott 2011; Jordan 2011; Ortmann 2011; Lai 2012; Sreekumar and Vadrevu 2013; Soon and Soh 2014).

At the end of the last decade, the government began to react to these developments with various measures (cf. Bork-Hüffer 2016b) — of which those affecting professionals on EPs and PR permits are highlighted in the following. First, measures aimed at curbing the rate of increase of foreign labor were introduced. The minimum income limit needed to apply for an EP has been raised numerous times over the years, and the levels of qualification and work experience that must be provided have been enhanced (*Straits Times* 2016c). Obligations placed upon employers aim to ensure the preferential treatment of Singaporean workers: employers are assessed according to the percentage of foreign workers in their business, their commitment to recruiting and promoting Singaporean workers, and their general contribution to the Singaporean economy and society (cf. *Straits Times* 2016d). The minimum salary bar for applications for visas for spouses, children, and parents has also been raised (*Straits Times* 2015a). The issuance of PR permits in particular has been strongly limited (Lai 2012): The highest level of annual PR growth was reached in 2008, with 79,167 new holders. Since 2010 only around 29,000 new PR permits have been issued annually on average (National Population and Talent Division et al. 2015: 14). Yet, with an average of 20,000 people per year, the number of naturalizations between 2007 and 2015 remained constant (National Population and Talent Division et al. 2015: 14). As applications for PR and SC have increased dramatically since the global economic crisis of 2008–09 (Yap 2015), the chances of obtaining either have nonetheless conversely plummeted.

Even starker differences have been introduced between foreigners and Singaporeans in their access to social services. The fees for access to educational institutions for TR and PR holders have increased several times (Ministry of Education 2016; *Straits Times* 2016a). As a result, now TR holders from non-ASEAN countries pay for example almost 39 times (970 SGD) more for secondary schools as compared to citizens (25 SGD) — while those holding PR pay almost 9 times more (220 SGD) (Ministry of Education 2017a). The entry of children — especially those on TR, but also on PR — to the public education system has become much more difficult (cf. *Straits Times* 2016b). Several new regulations have, further, tightened the conditions under which PR holders can buy HDB housing on the resale market (cf. ST Property 2013; *Straits Times* 2013; Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore 2016).

In parallel with the enactment of these various measures putting citizens first, a discussion also began about what was seen as the necessary integration of foreigners into the country (cf. Rahman and Kiong 2012; Mathews 2015; Yap 2015). However despite the aforementioned measures, the number of foreigners is still growing — albeit at a lower level than initially intended. Hence for all its rhetoric about the preferential consideration of the needs of its citizens versus those of foreigners, the Singaporean government is still clinging to a strategy of compensating for falling birth rates and boosting economic growth via immigration.

Methodology: A qualitative study with Filipino, German, and Chinese migrant professionals

The empirical material presented in this study is based on a qualitative interview study.[2] As such it focuses on analyzing and discussing the breadth of mobility intentions, the effects of the Singaporean First policy, and the tendencies of cross-cultural differences. It covers 47 respondents, who were selected using a combination of snowball and purposeful sampling. Purposeful sampling aimed at selecting a maximum variation of cases within the sample; while only a few cases were selected, those that were sought to cover the variability of perceptions and opinions of migrant professionals (following Patton 1990, as cited in Flick 2005[3]). The selection of interviewees was based on the following criteria, and applies to units of analysis of all three groups:

(1) Nationality: Chinese were chosen because they are among the largest groups of migrants on EPs and PR permits (Yeoh and Lam 2016). As one group of the decisive number of migrants from Southeast Asian countries (National Population and Talent Division et al. 2015), for whom Singapore is among the most favored migration destinations,

Filipinos were selected. As one example of migrants from the non-Asian, Western countries that are the "traditional" source countries of professionals in Singapore (cf. Meier 2009; Beaverstock 2011), Germans were chosen.

(2) Residence permit status: all of them held either an EP or PR.

(3) Education and qualifications: all held a degree from a tertiary-level education institution, meaning universities or other higher education bodies (Föbker et al. 2016), or worked as specialists in high-level positions.

(4) Work status: the focus was on migrants working, or actively looking for work.

(5) Type of work: Interviewees from employment fields typical for migrant professionals in Singapore were selected. They were employed by transnational companies, local companies, government or educational institutions from Singapore or from the countries in which they held citizenship, and by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Self-employed migrants were excluded from the analysis.

(6) Gender: a similar share of women and men was selected.

(7) Age: the capture of a sample representative of professionals of working age in Singapore was sought. Interviewees were aged 23 to 63, with most being between 25 and 50 years old.

(8) Length of stay: interviewees with different lengths of stay in Singapore were selected (from a few weeks to a maximum of three decades), with the aim of achieving a sample that would include more short-term to more long-term migration orientations.

There were only two main points of divergence between the Filipino, German, and Chinese interviewees: All but one of the Filipinos were married, and most had children; there were more single people and interviewees who were married/in a relationship without children among the other two groups meanwhile. This reflects the lower age at which people generally marry and have children in the Philippines — at least as compared to Germany and the Chinese, as age at marriage and giving birth have also increased in the Philippines in recent decades (cf. Jones 1997). Further those Germans with children had all brought these with them to Singapore, whereas among the Filipinos and Chinese about half had brought their children along with them and half had left them with their (extended) families in their native country.

A content analysis following Mayring (2000; 2005) with the help of the software MaxQDA was employed for the analysis of the interviews. As this research pursued an inductive approach, Mayring's (2000; 2005: 472) "inductive category development" was chosen as the procedure to be used.

Findings: Mobility intentions and the effects of the Singaporeans First strategy

A cross-cultural comparison of mobility intentions

In order to analyze the temporality of and changes in mobility intentions, interviewees were asked, on the one hand, about their initial reasons for migrating to Singapore and the originally envisaged period of stay ("initial mobility intentions") and, on the other, about their current plans to stay in, settle in, or to leave Singapore ("subsequent mobility intentions"). Tables 1a, b, and c below provide an overview of the variety of reasons accounting for initial and subsequent mobility intentions, differentiated into social, socioeconomic, sociocultural, and environmental factors, as well as vis-à-vis residency laws. As all interviewees planned to leave Singapore eventually, the overview of subsequent mobility intentions focuses on reasons for planned onward or return migration over a short-, medium- or long-term time period rather than on reasons to stay. Tables 1a, b and c also differentiate answers based on the country of origin of interviewees (Germany, the Philippines, PRC, or all groups).

Overall, reasons to migrate to Singapore in the first place were mostly motivated by socioeconomic factors, and less often by social, sociocultural, or environmental ones (cf. table 1a). None of the interviewees had the explicit aim to settle permanently from the start. If at all, they wanted to see how they liked it there and to potentially stay on if they did. Two different groups emerge, differentiated by the reasons for initial migration to Singapore and the originally envisaged duration of stay: The first group includes those interviewees who had thought that they would leave after a few years (on average after two to three years, depending on the migration reason — from a few months to a maximum of four years). This group is especially represented by those subjects who had come to Singapore for socioeconomic reasons. Above all it covered those interviewees who were posted there — by transnational companies, NGOs, or foreign government institutions with offices in Singapore — either alone or as part of a larger restructuring shift. These interviewees were usually initially offered contracts of two or three years, with the option of an extension of one to two years (most of those who were sent there by transnational companies were offered expatriate contracts). Some of the interviewees had accompanied a partner who was posted by an employer and picked up work themselves after arriving in Singapore, mostly on local contracts. Other interviewees had come to Singapore initially to study, either for a limited time while they pursued a degree abroad or on a full degree program — then staying on afterward. Others needed experience abroad for upward job mobility in their native country or previous migration stations, or for general international career paths — typically their stays were designed to last for a limited time period of usually one or two years only.

A second group of interviewees had initially intended to relocate for several years first and to then see how it goes. Among this group are those who had come to Singapore for social or sociocultural reasons (cf. table 1a). Further, it includes interviewees who had searched for a job in the country out of their own motivations. They were usually less fixed in regard to the anticipated length of their stay, as well as employed on local contracts.

Turning to a cross-cultural comparison, there were no clear-cut differences in regard to the breadth of socioeconomic or social reasons for initial migration between the three groups. The reasons to select Singapore as their destination varied only between those who chose it as one among a number of possible destinations to gain experience abroad. Almost all Chinese and several Filipino migrants selected it as an option because of a perceived cultural closeness and/or relative proximity to their home countries. In contrast, some Germans chose it as they wished to gain life experience in an Asian country.

Table 1a: Variety of reasons for initial mobility intentions

Reasons for	Socioeconomic factors[1]	Social and sociocultural factors[1]	Other factors (residency law or environmental)[1]
initial mobility intentions	- study (A) - gaining employment experience abroad (A) - career advancement (A) - higher income (A) - posted by company/other employer (A)	- joining a partner/spouse located in or moving to Singapore (A) - experiencing life in an Asian country (G) - perceived cultural closeness (F, C) - relative proximity to home country (F, C)	- less pollution (C)

Source: interviews; abbreviations: A = all groups, F = Filipinos, G = Germans, C = Chinese

Remarks:
[1] Very often interviewees named several factors.

When interviewees were asked about their plans to stay in Singapore and/or onward migration, three groups shaped up: those who had relatively clear plans to leave Singapore very soon to up to in two years' time, those who intended to stay for a medium-term period of five to ten years (more seldom considered by the interviewees as a period of up to 20 years), and those who planned to stay for a long-term period up to retirement age (cf. Table b). Strikingly none of the interviewees, not even those with local partners and spouses or those who had stayed in Singapore

for decades, considered the country as their anticipated place of retirement. Reasons cited were, above all, high living costs in the city-state and — only named by Germans — its restricted size and opportunities for leisure activities (cf. Table 1). In general, and unsurprisingly, married interviewees — and even more those with children — held much more fixed and less open future mobility intentions than single interviewees of all three groups did. When compared to initial mobility intentions, about two-thirds of the interviewees had stayed longer than initially planned — an exception was particularly the group focusing on international career paths. Despite the longer duration of their stays, new socioeconomic and social reasons fostering interviewees' plans to eventually leave Singapore had emerged.

For most interviewees from all three groups who wanted to leave in the short-term, socioeconomic reasons played the largest role therein: they covered better career or income opportunities elsewhere, the end of placements, and the necessity to move on to further stations on an international career path. Particularly migrants on local contracts named high living costs and the inability to bring or keep their families in Singapore as reasons to leave.

Table 1b: Variety of reasons for subsequent mobility intentions

Reasons for	Socioeconomic factors[1]	Social and sociocultural factors[1]	Other factors (residency law/ environmental)[1]
short-term onward/ return migration (within next 2 years)[2]	- career and income opportunities elsewhere (A) - end of placement/contract (A) - international career path that requires onward mobility (A) - inability to financially sustain a family in Singapore (A)	- inability to find a partner in Singapore (G, C) - inability to establish a social network (G) - failure of cultural adaptation (G) - high demands and pressure on children to perform in local or international school system (G)	
medium-term onward/ return migration (after 5–10 years, and seldom up to 20 years)[2]	- a favorable social security system in interviewee's country of origin (G) - costs for education of children in international school system (G) - inability to financially sustain a (planned or existing) family in Singapore (A)	- reuniting with core family (spouse and/or children) based in home country (F, C) - reuniting with extended family and/or important part of social network based in home country or elsewhere (A) - aging parents and their need for care (G, C)	- failure to obtain PR (A) - failure to obtain SC (F)
long-term onward/ return migration (no fixed period, but at the latest by retirement)[2]	- high living costs in Singapore (A)		- overcrowding (G) small size of Singapore with limited leisure opportunities (G)

Source: interviews; abbreviations: A = all groups, F = Filipinos, G = Germans, C = Chinese

Remarks:
[1] Very often interviewees named several factors.
[2] The definition of the duration for short-, medium-, and long-term departure is based on interviewees' own responses.

There are further differences between the three migrant groups in regard to especially social and sociocultural factors motivating a short-term desire to leave. Reasons for some German interviewees were failures to culturally adapt to the local work environment — to which not speaking the language of their co-workers and thus feeling excluded by them contributed —, the failure to establish a social network (or the fact that others from their network had left Singapore), not finding a partner in Singapore, and/or their children having difficulties to adapt to the local or international education system. Not finding a partner was also named as a reason for

departure by two Chinese interviewees. This challenge did not apply to the Filipinos, most of whom, as noted, were married before coming to Singapore. While, similar to the Germans, some Chinese and Filipinos complained about difficulties in establishing a network in Singapore this however was no reason for them to leave soon. Also, more of the Filipinos and Chinese remarked that they perceived more cultural differences than they had expected when compared to the Germans, but none of them wanted to leave as a result. Most Chinese reported being surprised by the local dialect, differences in everyday norms, and almost all had associated Singaporean society with being a mostly Chinese one — and so were surprised by the diversity of its population in reality. Filipinos noted that they had expected more similarities to a fellow Asian society, and were especially frustrated by social discrimination. Thus, the expected cultural closeness that was a reason to choose Singapore for some Chinese and Filipinos was no longer a reason to remain in the country.

Social reasons dominated among those who had plans or wishes to return to their native countries in the medium term. Planned return so as to reunite with the family, meaning spouse and where applicable children, was named by Filipinos and Chinese who had left their spouse and/or family behind and did not expect them to be able to follow. As an envisaged time frame for return, these interviewees usually named ten to 20 years — the time needed to earn enough money for raising their children and possibly to have a comfortable retirement in their country of origin. This did not apply to Germans, as those who had families had, as noted, all taken them along. All middling German professionals did not have children at the time of the interview, and said that once they planned to have children they would leave the country if their earnings had not substantially improved by that time. The necessity to care for or simply being close to aging family members was only named by Germans and Chinese as reasons to leave within the next five to ten years. Parents of Filipino interviewees were usually still relatively younger, and they often relied on larger family network where other family members — often siblings of the interviewees who had remained in the Philippines — were taking or able to take care of their parents. To reunite with other family members such as parents or to reunite with friends eventually was another reason named by all interviewees to leave Singapore in the next five to ten years.

Further differences appeared in the role of structural factors in the countries of both origin and destination, particularly in regard to the access to and perspectives on the respective education and social security systems. Differences in perspectives on the Singaporean education system were factors accounting for the largest divergence in subsequent mobility intentions between the three groups. That their children would have higher chances of admittance to public schools, school fees would be lower, and that their children and they themselves would be able to remain in the country until the children had graduated were primary reasons for some Filipino and Chinese parent interviewees whose children were with them in Singapore to stay on and seek

to obtain PR or SC (cf. Table 1c). Many Filipinos had a high interest in sending their children to school in Singapore, as they expected them to have much higher prospects in the global job market when graduating in Singapore as compared to the Philippines. Most sent their children to local schools. Yet, especially due to high entry and language barriers — the latter of which are caused by Singapore's "Mother Tongue Language" policy, which requires all students who are SC or PR holders to study their official mother tongue language, which must be chosen from Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil (Ministry of Education 2017b) — they also regarded the access to and journey through the Singaporean education system as a huge challenge for their children. Hence not all had brought their children along, and one couple eventually sent their children back to the Philippines.

All but one German interviewee with children sent them to the German European School Singapore or Swiss School. These parents mostly did not consider a change to or enrolment at school age in local schools feasible for their children due to, above all, a perceived high pressure to perform but also differences in the curriculum, final degrees, and language — as well as due to the Mother Tongue Language policy. Hence school fees were named as the limiting factors of stay by German parents, who expected that their expatriate contracts covering those would eventually not be extended. As pointed out above, middling German professionals all did not have children at the time of the interview. Scheduling the duration of stays according to children's time until graduation, changes in the school year, or to transitions from kindergarten to primary, primary to secondary, or to A-levels within secondary school were another factor that significantly affected German parents' exact timings for departure.

In contrast to the two other groups, Chinese saw large similarities between the Singaporean education system and the one in their home country. They did not feel negatively affected by the Mother Tongue Language policy because of their children's good command of Mandarin. Also in contrast to the other groups, many of them regarded the Singaporean education system as less rigid and more accommodating to students' needs then the one in their home country. Yet the children of Chinese parents on TR permits were also affected by the high entry barriers to the public school system. They had enrolled their children in public or international schools. If their children faced challenges to access or to prevail in Singapore's education system, Chinese and Filipino interviewees had sent or were considering sending their children home to live with relatives, usually grandparents, but not to leave the country themselves as the Germans did.

Germans were interested in remaining members of the German social welfare system, whereas one incentive for obtaining PR or SC for Filipinos and Chinese was the entailed obligatory CPF membership. For middling professionals of all groups access to HDB housing made applying for PR — and even more so SC — attractive, which did not apply to privileged professionals. For most Germans who had or were

intending to apply for PR, the location of their main social network being in Singapore made them want to secure their long-term stay there. Another aspect that kept only Germans from applying for PR but not Chinese or Filipinos was the need of their sons to undertake national service.

Table 1c: Variety of reasons for the application for PR or SC

Reasons for	Socioeconomic factors[1]	Social and sociocultural factors[1]	Other factors (residency law/ environmental)[1]
a past, current, or planned application for PR or SC	- securing children access to education in Singapore and better future career opportunities (F, C) - lower education fees (F, C) - access to HDB housing (A) - benefits of the CPF (F, C) - career and income opportunities in Singapore (A)	- partner/spouse with SC or PR (A) - main social network established in Singapore (G)	- security of stay (A) - benefits of a SC (F, C)

Source: interviews; abbreviations: A = all groups, F = Filipinos, G = Germans, C = Chinese,
        CPF = Central Provident Fund, HDB = Housing Development Board, PR = permanent residency,
        SC = Singaporean citizenship

Remarks:
[1] Very often interviewees named several factors.

Effects of the Singaporeans First strategy on the mobility intentions of migrant professionals

Interviewees who intended to remain for longer periods of time and apply for PR and SC were especially affected by the tightened immigration laws as part of the Singaporean First measures, as well as the increase in the overall number of applications over the years. Filipino and the Chinese participants were more affected, as more of them were interested in obtaining PR or SC as compared to the Germans. Especially the increased fees for accessing social services were a factor fueling the interest and endeavors of those interviewees who could be counted as middling migrants to obtain either.

One principal criticism expressed by interviewees from all three groups is that the PR and SC selection processes are opaque, making their prospects of remaining unclear. My sample included interviewees from all three groups who had already faced a denial of their applications for PR or SC. Since those individuals whose EP extensions are denied have to leave the country shortly thereafter, there were none among the sample. Interviewees reacted differently to the difficulties related to obtaining PR or SC or the rejection of their applications: Some had given up altogether their attempt to obtain PR or SC, assuming that their current situation would not significantly raise their chances of success. Others had begun looking around for alternative migration destinations, or made plans (concrete or otherwise) to return to their homeland — at least in the medium term. Certain interviewees

were fighting for their right to stay by orienting their entire life around this goal, with far-reaching consequences for the lives of all their family members (this included only Filipinos and Chinese). These included interviewees who have pursued the following strategies (often combined) to increase their potential chances of obtaining PR or SC:

(1) Economic optimization and upgrading of skills and positions: professions with a higher income or pay raise and more senior professional positions were sought; partners without a job tried to find one; interviewees enrolled in continued training and graduate programs; children have been put under pressure to do especially well in Singapore's educational system, or to win one of the coveted governmental scholarships.

(2) Making oneself (more obviously) needed for the Singapore economy: interviewees who had worked for a foreign employer changed to an employer from Singapore.

(3) Investments: HDB residences have been purchased.

(4) Adapting to desirable family profiles: interviewees got married to their partners.

(5) Expansion of the professional and private social network to Singaporeans.

(6) Charitable engagement.

The growing number and intensity of voices critical of or hostile toward foreigners, combined with the government's changed rhetoric and the multiplicity of new, often unannounced amendments made to immigration and residency requirements, perturbed interviewees and raised insecurity about their future in the country. A number of the interviewees were visibly shocked at the changed tone of the government and even more at the xenophobia expressed online. However this applied to interviewees who had only lived in Singapore a few years and those who had not built up a network among locals more than to others — also, it was mostly Filipinos and Germans. Among them, alienation and distancing from local society as well as the emergence or strengthening of a feeling of not — and possibly never — belonging to Singaporean society was evident as a reaction to voices critical or hostile toward foreigners. Some of them said that these developments had cemented their plans to leave Singapore; whereas, however, the main reasons to leave were other socioeconomic, social, or sociocultural factors. Germans and Filipinos were more likely to engage with online forums that contained discussions by Singaporeans on foreigners in the country. This is how I would explain why, despite the fact that Chinese immigrants are more often the targets of xenophobia online, this topic was much less often addressed by my interviewees from the PRC. Filipino interviewees felt much more personally affected by xenophobia online as compared

to German ones, which might be explainable as the consequence of the massive "rant" (cf. Martin et al. 2013) against Filipinos by Singaporean netizens that had taken place relatively close to the interview period — being related specifically to the announced opening of a store of the Filipino fast food chain Jollibee in Singapore. Additionally, my Filipino interviewees generally felt more often discriminated against by Singaporeans and associated with looked down on Filipino domestic workers.

Discussion and conclusions

Initial and subsequent mobility intentions

This article has analyzed the mobility intentions of professionals in Singapore, including their intentions for fixity, stay, and settlement (cf. Cresswell and Merriman 2010, Cresswell 2012) — as well as how they were affected by the recent measures and rhetoric of the "Singaporeans First" strategy. When evaluating the professionals' mobility intentions, the specific context of Singapore has to be borne in mind. Given its large population on TR permits, including professionals, it is largely a transit city. Among factors fueling temporary stays are the residency laws, but also the city-state's limited size and job market as well as high living costs. At the same time its top position in the global urban and economic system (cf. Kraas 2005), combined with its endeavors to create a livable city particularly for "foreign talents," is not only attracting professionals but also making them want to stay on.

The focus on mobility intentions is a specific one, because it looks at aspirations for (im)mobilities and their temporality rather than at actual "mobile practices" (cf. Cresswell and Merriman 2010). My study has unveiled significantly different mobility intentions and orientations of professionals, reaching from the pursuance of mobile international career paths on the one hand to the hope of acquiring PR or SC in a country that is the base of a partner or spouse or that offers better social welfare and socioeconomic security on the other — which is usually more associated with the livelihood strategies of migrant workers (cf. Sakdapolrak 2008) but not of professionals. Recent research (e.g. Ley 2004; Conradson and Latham 2005; Yeoh and Willis 2005; Beaverstock 2011; Yeoh and Huang 2011; Schiller and Diez 2012) has pointed out that professionals are often less mobile than they were portrayed in the initial studies done on this group; nonetheless their personal intentions of stay and settlement have scarcely been addressed thus far. Whereas my interviewees initially all envisaged a limited stay or had a "see, experience, and evaluate mentality," this must not be confused with intentions for a mobile lifestyle. A number of the interviewees developed strong intentions to stay for medium- (usually five to 20 years) to long-term (up to retirement) periods.

My findings also underline how initial mobility intentions can be replaced by very different factors encouraging migrants to leave — or, on the contrary, to stay, and

even to apply for PR or SC. At the same time, none of my interviewees wanted to retire in Singapore, due to the high costs of living and limited recreational opportunities. Both these findings once more contest a differentiation of migration into a transition from temporary to permanent (as suggested for example by Baláz et al. 2004), which neglects that changes in structural (e.g. residency laws) or individual factors (e.g. problems with finding a partner or cultural adaptation) can hinder such a transition. It also does not help to grasp the fact that mobility orientations might be much more open and variable, as well as directed toward several spaces that migrants come from, (intend to) move to, or move through. It further neglects that long-term periods of stay, which potentially go hand in hand with the emergence of strong feelings of belonging attached to the interim migration destination, nonetheless might not turn out to be as permanent as anticipated.

Cross-cultural differences in the mobility intentions of privileged and middling professionals

A differentiation of professionals into "migrant professionals with privileges" and "middling migrant professionals" based on economic indicators such as contract status, income, and special economic benefits has been suggested here. Transnational elites, expatriates, and middling migrants have, so far, seldom been dealt with at the same time in one study. High prices in the private housing market and for access to public schools were particularly a burden for my middling professional interviewees, who thus either more often aspired to or had obtained PR or SC for financial reasons — or alternatively argued that this factor generally limited their length of stay in Singapore. For my privileged professional interviewees with expatriate or other packages, the duration of these contracts or their maximum extension could become the defining factor in their planned length of stay. While transfers to local contracts were usually possible, this might mean that they would no longer be able to maintain their living standard and pay for housing (or their previous housing standard) and international schools. Thus, although housing prices affected middling and privileged migrants differently, they stimulated short- to medium-term stays in the city-state for some members of both groups. Elite migrant interviewees, who earned high salaries even when compared among the group of privileged professionals, were less affected by these financial considerations.

Importantly, the mobility intentions of professionals were not only oriented toward economic optimization but affected by other socioeconomic factors such as social security and the organization of the education and future careers of children; social and sociocultural factors such as the familial context and the location of partners/spouses and/or children, the aging of parents and the organization of care for them, cultural adaptation, and the location and strength of social networks; the residency laws, the biopolitics of space, as well as the related exposure to

xenophobia and social discrimination. These factors were relevant to professionals independent of their income. It was mostly for these factors that different perspectives and intentions between the three groups under analysis — Filipino, German, and Chinese migrants — appeared.

For all Filipinos and Chinese who intended to stay beyond a short-term stay, the outlook to be able to become a member of the CPF was a clear incentive for applying for PR given the limits of the coverage and benefits of the respective social security schemes in their home countries. In contrast Germans usually preferred their native social welfare system which offers more long-term security as it is based on a solidarity principle and is not an employment-based individual savings scheme like the CPF is. Paying into both would not be reasonable, thus the obligation to join the CPF rather kept them back from applying for PR. Yet this only applied to those who had remained members of the German system, or who had stopped paying into it only for a few years duration.

The Singaporean education system was a primary factor for Filipino and Chinese parents whose children accompanied them to Singapore to remain in the city-state at least until graduation. It also motivated them to seek PR or SC, due to lower school fees and better access to local schools — a PR would provide children with priority status, and SC would secure them a place in local schools. As such they perceived that their children would have better chances in the global job market if they had graduated in the city-state rather than in their native countries. Hence not only one's own life events (cf. Butsch 2016b) but also those of dependents (school entry or graduation of children) influenced interviewees' mobility intentions. In contrast, most German parents avoided sending their children to Singaporean schools — among others especially due to a perceived high pressure to perform. The prospect of having to enroll their children in local schools was a factor limiting the envisaged stay of those interviewees whose expatriate contracts were coming to an end.

Not surprisingly, especially singles but also couples without children had less fixed mobility intentions as compared to those with children. About half of the Filipino and Chinese parent interviewees had left their children with relatives in their home countries, which did not apply to the Germans. Differences in migration regimes, including traditions of family separation in the context of internal and international migration affected familial migration contexts, which in turn had different effects on intentions of return or stay. Rodriguez (2010) argues that in the Philippines narratives are evoked that celebrate as national heroes those who go abroad for improving the lives of their left-behind families. While separation of families has not been that much discussed in relation to the international migration of Chinese, leaving children with relatives is a necessity for many of the 221 million internal migrants[3] (2010 Population Census figure, National Bureau of Statistics 2011: 59-

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3   This figure includes those people who had crossed at least county borders, and stayed for more than
     six months somewhere other than their place of permanent residence.

61). Hence, spatial separation of families for work is a widespread and accepted practice in the Filipino and PRC societies. In Germany, welfare state-provided services, increased internal migration that reduced the proximate residence of grandparents and their children, and a greater and longer participation of grandmothers in the labor force have significantly decreased traditional intergenerational arrangements of care (Hank and Buber 2007). Further, family separation is not a common or accepted practice for German internal and international migrants. Thus while the inability to sustain a family in Singapore or to pay fees for international schools, or children's challenges in adapting to schools, were all factors resulting in German (future) parents' plans to return home or migrate elsewhere with their children, Chinese and Filipino parents were not considering to give up their jobs in Singapore but rather to leave their children with relatives in the home country. At the same time for Chinese and Filipino parents who had left their children and/or spouses behind, this became a factor limiting their plans of stay — that in order to reunite with their families as soon as possible, after they earned enough money to secure not only their children's education but also their own satisfactory return and retirement plans.

Differences in the age of parents and the size of familial networks led to variation in considerations about returning home at a necessary point in time to care for aging parents — something that affected German and Chinese interviewees more. A generally lower age of giving birth in the Philippines also meant that grandparents were still relatively younger and often not (yet) in need of care. At the same time the much higher fertility rates and consequential larger familial networks in the Philippines when compared to Germany, but even more so as compared to the, until recently, one-child policy country PRC (cf. Scharping 2007[3]), meant that Filipino interviewees could usually rely on siblings or other family members to take over the care of their parents.

Overall, for most of the Filipino and Chinese interviewees who intended to stay in Singapore in the medium- to long-term socioeconomic reasons were given as their primary reasons, while those Germans who intended to stay for longer periods usually grounded this in a strong social network and the emergence of feelings of belonging (cf. Ehrkamp 2005; Ho 2006; Gustafson 2009; Marcu 2012; Liu 2014) to the city-state. While this, of course, does not mean that Filipino and Chinese participants did not develop such feelings too, it only shows that they prioritized socioeconomic factors more than the Germans did in their mobility intentions — which can be attributed to the higher differences in incomes and living standards between Germany, the Philippines, PRC, and Singapore. At the same time, socioeconomic status and having achieved a job in Singapore seemed to be of higher relevancy for the social identities of Filipino and Chinese migrants — especially in regard to their peers in the countries of origin — as compared to Germans. Applications for PR or SC by Chinese and Filipino interviewees, however, did not always necessarily go hand in hand with intentions of settlement and permanent

stay, but could also be part of a complex strategy of ensuring a better economic position, increasing social security, and/or seeking better future career prospects for their children. Nevertheless, reuniting with social networks in their home countries was named by interviewees of all three groups as a motive for leaving Singapore eventually.

Biopolitics of space and the Singaporeans First strategy

My study has also highlighted how particularly nationality and ethnicity affected interviewees' social status in the city-state differently, which is closely influenced by biopolitics of space, identity, and belonging (cf. Amin 2012, 2013; Hall 2013; Solomos 2013). Alongside income and qualifications, these factors separate out the employment fields of migrant workers (not professionals) and migrants' related rights and privileges in the city-state. This applied particularly to my Filipino interviewees, who felt personally affected by xenophobia expressed online and discriminated against in their everyday lives because they were associated with the by far largest group of Filipinos in Singapore, domestic workers. The latter stay on work permits and are at the bottom of the social hierarchy, facing extensive institutional and social exclusion in the city-state (cf. Ueno 2009; Yeoh and Huang 2010; Platt et al. 2016). These circumstances were only slightly relevant, if at all, in regard to these interviewees' mobility intentions however — as they merely cemented their already existing plans to leave. Nonetheless this shows that Meier's (2014) characterization of migrant professionals as individuals holding a relatively high status and attractive social position in the host country is not generally applicable as, depending on the specific biopolitics of space, identity, and belonging, other factors — in the context of my study, particularly nationality and ethnicity — have implications for social position, status, or class.

Further, the restrictions that the laws and politics related to the immigration and residency of foreigners impose on mobilities has hitherto mostly been discussed in relation to nonprofessionals, while my research has highlighted their different relevancies for the professional groups under analysis in this article. The measures implemented under the Singaporeans First strategy have led to immigration and residence conditions for professionals in Singapore significantly tightening up. The increasing number of applications since the global financial crisis has prompted a "rat race" for PR and SC. Only elite applicants, meaning those migrants whose economic, cultural, and social capital ensures them a leading position in the city-state (cf. Beaverstock 2002), will in future continue to receive PR or SC without any further problems. Other candidates must continually "optimize" themselves to be able to compete successfully. The recent increase in financial barriers to accessing social services for persons holding TR but also PR affects particularly middling professionals; those with children in local schools have been affected most strongly by all measures as a result of the steep increase in tuition fees. My findings indicate

that the tightened access to social services for migrants is one factor causing even more individuals, and among them especially middling professionals, to want to upgrade their status from TR to PR, or from PR to SC. This affected especially my Filipino and Chinese interviewees, of whom more were seeking PR and SC for socioeconomic reasons as compared to my German ones. Although the Singaporeans First measures have achieved their goal of restricting immigration, the gradual implementation of new regulations with little prior warning has also led to a growing feeling of unease among migrants regarding their future in the country. The emphasis on and implementation of the Singaporeans First policy, alongside growing xenophobia, turn the biopolitics of space, identity, and belonging in Singapore into an "affective apparatus that contrives and maintains prejudice" (Hall 2013: 51). To some degree, these factors have had negative effects on my interviewees' willingness to integrate as well as promoted the alienation of migrants from the local population.

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