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Vienna's Appeal to Highly Skilled Migrants

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Abstract

In a globalized world, increased mobility creates complex migration patterns. While forced migration streams and refugees are usually the center of the public eye, the category of highly skilled migrants consists of a rather unknown group of mobile individuals. Although scholarly work has shown an increased interest for several decades now, the internal diversity and heterogeneity still creates difficulties in capturing the multiple dimensions these migrants inhabit. As many European and Western economies struggle in sustaining the ability to compete in global markets, the need of professional workers is imminent. They are necessary for growth, innovation, and stability. Skill shortages are the result of demographic changes in societies and the lack of proficiencies of the available work force. Studies show that companies are desperate to fill these vacancies and willing to hire outside of the borders to compensate the missing expertise, making an understanding of mobile professionals crucial for recruitment advantages and fulfilling the economic demands.

Revolving around the city of Vienna, this thesis focuses on the attractiveness of a specific place and its appealing conditions that foster the relocation of educated professionals. The goal of this research is to reveal the factors that eventually led to the decision to migrate and the reasons for choosing Austria's capital as the new center of livelihood. Producing knowledge concerning mobility patterns, motivation and realization of movement, and drivers of migration sheds light on flows and streams of this particular category of migrants. The results need to be regarded in relation to the place but also give overall insights to important preferences of the target group for other destinations.

Conducted via in-depth interviews, a qualitative approach is chosen for a nuanced depiction of the results. The application of the extended case method allows the generalization of the statements and an extension of existing themes and patterns. Contextualized in a variety of parameters, the findings reflect the uniqueness of the participants and the high degree of individuality among the cases. Skilled migration to Vienna consists of several drivers that are subsumed to dominant and decisive categories. Economic reasons that are linked to employment opportunities, biographical reasons such as families and relationships, the appreciation of Vienna's culture and life quality as well as geographical advantages build the dynamics of these mobilities. Additionally,

personal perceptions of the migration processes including barriers and occurring difficulties in entering the domestic labor market sparks discussions about typology and the generally assumed frictionless pathways of highly skilled migrants.

Zusammenfassung

In einer von Globalisierung geprägten Welt führt vermehrte Mobilität zu immer komplexeren Migrationsmodellen. Neben den im öffentlichen Raum stehenden Debatten rund um Flüchtlinge und erzwungene Migration bildet die Kategorie der hochqualifizierten MigrantInnen eine eher unbekannte Gruppe an mobilen Personen. Obwohl die Migrationsforschung seit Jahrzehnten ein immer höher werdendes Interesse an dieser Thematik bekundet, erschwert die interne Diversität und Heterogenität das Erfassen der verschiedensten Dimensionen dieser MigrantInnen. Da viele europäische und westliche Ökonomien Schwierigkeiten haben am globalen Markt zu konkurrieren, steigt der Bedarf an FacharbeiterInnen, welche Garant sind für Wachstum, Innovation und Stabilität. Demographische Veränderungen in diesen Gesellschaften und das Fehlen von Expertisen in der vorhandenen Arbeiterschaft führten zu diesem Mangel an Fachkräften. Studien zeigen, dass viele Unternehmen bereit sind, diese offenen Stellen mit ExpertInnen aus dem Ausland zu besetzen, damit vorhandene Defizite kompensiert werden können. Um den wirtschaftlichen Bedarf nachzukommen und Vorteile bei der Rekrutierung zu haben, wird ein besseres Verständnis von mobilen FacharbeiterInnen benötigt.

Diese Masterarbeit stellt die Stadt Wien in den Mittelpunkt und ist an ihrer Anziehungskraft und Attraktivität für hochqualifizierte MigrantInnen interessiert. Das Ziel ist es, die entscheidenden Faktoren und Gründe hinter dieser Form von Migration zu offenbaren. Das erlangte Wissen über Migrationsabläufe, Motivation und Durchführung soll helfen, weitere Kenntnisse über die Mobilitäten dieser speziellen Gruppe zu generieren. Dabei muss berücksichtigt werden, dass die Resultate vorwiegend nur in Bezug auf Wien zu werten sind. Einblicke in Präferenzen können jedoch für andere Ziele von Bedeutung sein.

Mithilfe von ausführlichen Interviews wird ein qualitativer Zugang ermöglicht, welcher die vielen Facetten und Nuancen der Resultate widerspiegeln soll. Die Extended Case Methode erlaubt eine Generalisierung der Aussagen und eine Erweiterung von bereits existierenden Thematiken und Mobilitätsmodellen. Die Kontextualisierung der Ergebnisse und die Berücksichtigung der unterschiedlichen Rahmenbedingungen der ForschungsteilnehmerInnen ist erforderlich, um die Individualität der einzelnen Fälle erfassen zu können und Validität zu gewähren. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass eine Zusammensetzung von mehreren Faktoren Grund für die Migration stellt. Dabei muss

zwischen dominanten und entscheidenden Kategorien unterschieden werden. Diese bestehen aus Ursachen wirtschaftlichen Ursprungs, biographischen Gründen wie Familie und Partnerschaft, der Wertschätzung von Wiens Kultur und Lebensqualität sowie Vorteile bezüglich der geographischen Lage der Stadt. Dank der Auskünfte über den Migrationsprozess selbst konnte zusätzlich festgestellt werden, dass gegen vieler Erwartungen diverse Barrieren einen reibungslosen Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt erschweren. Dies führt weiters zu Diskussionen über die Definition und Typologie von hochqualifizierten MigrantInnen.

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1. Introduction

The sphere of migration offers discussions about identity, cultural adaptation, social networks, diaspora, and effects for both the sending and receiving country. As global migration has increased in volume, diversity, and geographical scope, the main shifts over the past 60 years have been directional and concentrated on a small selection of destination countries. (Czaika, De Haas 2014: 283) Transnational migration influences economies and labor markets with remittances and a band width of work force. With demographic challenges and the need of certain proficiencies, particularly European and Western countries depend on specialized and skilled workers in order to drive innovation and development. They intend to attract highly skilled migrants who can fill gaps in the labor market to remain competitive in the global economy. (Bauder 2017: 294)

Skill shortages contribute to companies registering a decrease in growth, resulting in weaker economies. Preventing a decline of the gross domestic product and therefore a falloff in prosperity and quality of living should not only be a political matter which governments and states' officials are concerned with. Economic wealth is crucial for stability and peace in Europe. The numerous turmoil and riots among citizens caused by the pandemic as well as the high inflation rates over the past years are indicators of a fragile global system.

Referring to a study by ManpowerGroup in 2023¹, the percentage among companies with difficulties in filling skilled vacancies reached an average of 77% worldwide, doubling the shortages over the past ten years. With a scarcity of 81%, Austria is positioned in the top ten on the global ranking. These challenges can be tackled in many ways, ranging from investing in education internally and helping people to move up professionally within the organization, to attracting talent that cannot be built in-house and hiring externally. According to the same study, 55% of employers are willing to hire outside of borders. This strategy translates directly to requiring access to the international labor market, with skilled workers and experts waiting to be hired.

¹Manpowergroup 2023. Global Talent Shortage.

Although highly skilled migrants represent an increasing part of global migration flows (Iredale 2001: 8), they still form a rather unique group of migrants. Relying on international experts to fill skill gaps in enterprises and organizations demands a continually successful approach to acquisition by recruitment officers and human resources managements. While incentives such as career opportunities and an increase in capital are reasons at hand, location might as well be as crucial for permanent and temporary resettlement. Assuming that mobile professionals are fit to tackle skill shortages of domestic economies, it is important to increase knowledge that includes the intentions and moving patterns of this diverse and heterogeneous category of migrants.

But what makes a destination attractive for highly skilled migrants? Are labor market conditions crucial for resettlement? And what characteristics make an international city a suitable choice for the mobile skilled? Looking at Vienna with its recurring placing at the top of liveability rankings in studies held by both *The Economist*² and *Mercer*³, the high quality of living stands in favor for the Austrian capital. Apart from this apparent factor, this research is interested in a more nuanced depiction of drivers and motivations for highly skilled migrants moving to Vienna. The goal is to attain a deeper understanding of the decision-making process which should provide useful insights to pulling factors translating to the city's appeal and attractiveness for mobile professionals.

Comprehensive results shed light on the complex migration flows of this particular group. Grasping the factors that lead to the decision of moving to Vienna also serves as beneficial knowledge for firms being able to compete for talent and what fosters skilled mobility in general. Individual perceptions are the basis for qualitative findings about motivation, drivers, and other considerations leading to take the transnational leap. Centered on Vienna's appeal to skilled migrants, the meaning of location will come to the fore. The idea of a place as well as narrative elements created by the migrant journey become an important part of this study, as the information gathered via interviews reflects actions

²The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. 2023. The Global Liveability Index 2023. Optimism and Instability.

³Lenski, C. 2023. Vienna offers highest quality of living for expatriates, according to Mercer's 2023 Quality of Living survey.

over space and time. In ambition to highlight common characteristics and mindsets among this rather unique group, creating profiles depicting eagerness and prospects will be useful for a better understanding of skilled mobility patterns in academic discussions.

In addition to the primary intention of this thesis being the investigation of pull-factors for skilled migrants to the Austrian capital, it is also important to focus on findings about the relocation process itself. Talking about barriers and obstacles accruing from any actor or regulation involved, the accessibility to Vienna and its labor market for international professionals and what challenges they had to face during the transition gives insights on the realization of skilled migration streams. Furthermore, investigating personal premises that initiate the migration process and disclosing the degree of individual investment and preparation prior to moving to the city offers new perspectives on international mobility of professionals. The research ultimately covers three temporal stages: the decision-making process, the relocation process, and a short reflection of the subjects upon arrival.

2. Theoretical Framework

The first part of this theses presents and discusses relevant literature used for evaluating concepts and theories. Beginning with the peculiarity of the topic, terminology and existing approaches should then build the foundation that further creates the operational framework of this research.

2.1. Vienna – Important Aspects

Austria's capital is internationally acclaimed as a center of culture, with being home for many famous poets, musicians, artists, and important figures in the world of sciences over the past centuries. Geographically and historically recognized as the port between Western and Eastern Europe and the seat of old empires with rich ancestral heritage, Vienna also functioned as a hub for conflicts, trials and negotiations during both WWI and WWII and earlier. Romanticized as the “Heart of Europe”, there are few cities in the world that provide these multifaceted urban offerings. As a favored tourist destination due to a range of architectural testaments to the imperial past and a vibrant culinary scene between tradition and innovation, the city offers different worlds to experience. The infamous “coffeehouse culture” and the numerous possibilities of entertainment in art and music also contribute to the significance of this place.

Mercer Studies until 2019, which paused until 2023 due to the COVID pandemic, and the Economist have been ranking Vienna as the most livable city for over a decade. The Economist Intelligence Unit⁴ conducts the liveability survey across five broad categories considering over 30 qualitative and quantitative factors. Stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education and infrastructure are qualitatively rated by the judgment of in-house analysts and in-city contributors, while quantitative indicators are provided by external data points. The liveability ranking spans over 173 cities, with Vienna scoring

⁴The Economist Intelligence Unit Limited. 2023. The Global Liveability Index 2023. Optimism amid instability.

maximum points in each category except “culture and environment”. This unsurpassed combination of quality of living grants the title of the world’s most livable city.

Vienna is one of the most important headquarters for international organizations in the world, with the Vienna International Center being home to over 20 units of the United Nations, besides New York, Geneva, and Nairobi. The city acts as a hub for international dialogue due to its geopolitical position and neutral status. “With a focus on promotion of peace, security, sustainable development, the fight against organized crime, drug abuse, corruption and terrorism”, Vienna poses as the junction for collaboration in pursuing goals of global interest. In securing around 19.000 jobs, the international sector plays an economically important role, as NGOs and diplomatic representations also have their share. The cosmopolitan claim indicates opportunities for a multinational workforce, with qualifications ranging from expertise to administrative functions. (Federal Ministry Republic of Austria. European and International Affairs. 2019: 2 ff) Apart from official institutions and organizations, the attraction exceeds borders and animates foreign businesses to settle in Vienna, with numbers having tripled over the course of eleven years since 2009, making a total of 192 settlements in 2021 alone. (Buttler, Pohl, Trautinger 2022: 18)

The growing entrepreneurial diversity is reflected by migration streams to Vienna which impact the city’s population. Especially over the past two decades, a rapid growth in resident numbers changed the aging capital of Austria into a “young metropolis”. The total population in Vienna consists of approximately 34% inhabitants with foreign nationality, including a dominant representation of Balkan countries and former Yugoslavia due to the fall of the Iron Curtain and Austria’s accession to the EU in 1995. Net migration between Vienna and abroad has spiked in 2022 due to protection-seeking-migrants emerging from the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with over 92.000 people moving to Vienna opposed to 43.000 leaving to move to another country. (City of Vienna. Integration and Diversity 2023)

2.2. Defining Migrants

With perceptions and discussions about migrants being usually highly politicized (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 1), different categories of mobile people can be recognized. The public focus lies almost exclusively on the marginalized, those who seek asylum due to humanitarian crises in their home country. Topics such as integration and incorporation have been recurrently present in mainstream media, especially since the multiply alleged refugee crisis of Europe in 2014. Hostile debates against the unwanted foreigners who are depicted and perceived as a threat to national societies lead the narrative on migration issues. Opposing hostility, Western humanitarian aid initiatives and organizations also create narratives and imaginaries but to facilitate security and help, predominantly prior to the start of mass migration to the Global North. In either way, a process of objectification takes place that removes individuality and generates a group excluded from historical context and reduced to specific norms and terms. (Rajaram 2002: 251)

2.2.1. Disparities

The categorization and definition that nurture notions of the public are, like any representation of migrants, set by the state. Among other intents, it pursues a culturally inscribed identity that constantly requires renewal, recreation, and modification in order to defend it and constitute heritage and kinship. (ibid.) Furthermore, classifying migrants serves the purpose to create eligibility of the mobile individuals and maintaining sovereignty by controlling the borders. Seeking asylum as a refugee according to the rather outdated definition of the Geneva Convention of 1951 concerns with subjects of persecution and enables a restricted passage that primarily offers protection in a given state. Granting access to domestic economies and labor markets on the other hand is limited to those who meet the state-defined policies and visa requirements. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 9) Immigration laws therefore clearly dictate the terms and the shape of viable and potential work forces.

The group of highly skilled migrants are most likely to be authorized to enter the employment world of the receiving state, being a seemingly accepted type of migrants that is capable of contributing to the local economy. They are rarely in the spotlight of any

emotionally charged dispute about migration flows and obtain a privileged position in the state that generally lets them avoid negative associations and animosities or a denunciation to a faceless mass. When looking for a definite terminology on the highly skilled in academics and scholarship, they appear not to be a mass but remain faceless, making up a group of migrant workers that is generally difficult to conceptualize. In migration studies, definitions vary between functions of research and therefore lack consistency. Definitions used for labor market and policy research are both highly data-driven, relying on provided measurements of official institutions and state-produced categories. Research that aims for a more qualitative approach and insight into lived experience of the highly skilled contests dominant conceptualizations. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 10)

2.2.2. The Prototype of the Expatriate

Within the realm of definitions in literature, the commonly used term “expatriate” has taken the reigns, but the frequent application of the concept has resulted in a reduced understanding of the meaning. An often-unsuccessful definition and negligent use of terminology created a lack of coherence that causes confusion and misinterpretation in scholarly work. (McNulty, Bewster 2017: 28) Originally stemming from workers of higher positions or with a special skillset that are assigned to a foreign country within the same company or organization, the definition of an expatriate now also includes the relocation on a voluntary basis. Distinguished by labels of the assigned-expatriate (AE) and the self-initiated expatriate (SIE), this type of mobile people does not succumb to the group of immigrants with the usual connotations and affiliations, such as demanded incorporation. (McNulty, Bewster 2017: 29) Due to temporality and other variables, expatriates are not expected to be culturally assimilable in the host country, as their visas and residence permits are typically bound to corporate regulations and conditions and therefore limited.

Following this typology, expatriates do not seem to be subject to local integration. Self-initiated relocation is part of an expatriate’s global career path, accumulating career capital that provides an accelerated development of opportunities. Exemplary concepts of the “boundaryless career” and “protean career” indicate an additional notion of temporality, making assimilation in the receiving country even more futile. (Biemann, Andresen 2010: 431) Although the “expatriate” can be a very specific term, it is often used

to refer to all skilled migrants from the Global North, especially to those within the North-North migration spectrum. These migrants are also characterized as “cosmopolitans”, “elite migrants”, and “Eurostars”, reflecting a different stance compared to skilled migrants of the Global South who still face challenges and expectations close to the experiences of lower-skilled migrants from the same region. Therefore, dividing skilled migrants geographically reveals further disparities and enables clearer categorizations. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 2 f)

These conversations bring out the expatriate as a Western migrant, producing a distinguished identity and category in relation to other migrants. The ways in which expatriate lives are constructed are highly connected to a performance of a white migrant identity, implying certain bodies, habits, journeys, social relationships, and settlement practices. Yet, the forming of these identities is often disregarded in research, and the expatriate remains a descriptive socio-economic category. (Cranston 2017: 3) In the interest of this thesis the use terminology tends to capture a broader category of the highly skilled migrant in order to defy restrictions.

2.2.3. Constructing the Highly Skilled

As mentioned before, qualitative research contests prevalent conceptualizations to get better insights into lived experiences of people. However, the basic definition of a highly skilled migrant commonly used by economists applies to individuals with a tertiary education. The mere focus on educational attainment creates a significantly larger sample of migrants and offers a broader look at bigger migration streams that are used for investigating the effects of emigration on the countries of origin. For the perspective of the country of destination, many scholars employ definitions proposed by OECD which also include occupation, meaning in addition to a university-level education, extensive and equivalent experience in a given field also contributes to the defined degree of skill. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 11 f) These effects are part of the concept of brain exchange which will be discussed in a later chapter.

Difficulties in defining skilled migrants also arise when looking at professions that are still deemed as highly skilled but did not acquire an academic education, such as athletes and artists as well as workers in industrial and mechanical sectors with expertise in

craftsmanship from vocational education and years of practical experience. When discussing the notion of skill, scholars of public policy and migration studies show an increasing focus on the concept of “marketable skill”. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 14) This relates to the demand and interest of the receiving labor markets and the utility of workers, as certain industries experienced rapid growth that created rather fluid sets of minimum requirements in order to fulfill the needs of employment. Exemplary for this development is the industry of information technology that represents the internationalization of professions since the beginning of the twenty-first century. An industry that offers “a high level of intra- and inter-company mobility” which works with return migration and investment. In more general terms, the revolution of certain labor markets eventually led to countries soften their attitude towards temporary-based immigration and shaped their perception of skill. (Iredale 2001: 13)

The assumption of expatriates and highly skilled migrants being the accepted and publicly preferred type of migrant, a notion that permeates policy discourses, leads to conceptualizations often ignoring hierarchies within these heterogeneous groups. When scholars and policymakers induce a simplified model of skilled immigration, the omission of racial and gendered biases can create a blurred definition. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 15) The need of separating the transfer of people from the transfer of skills gains significance when revealing disparities in skill recognition and career advantages. Aspects of discrimination have to be considered in typologizing and constructing the highly skilled migrant. (Iredale 2001: 17)

2.3. Mobility among Skilled Workers

Taking a step back from the entanglement of finding suitable and effective features that define the highly skilled, there is one key component in literature that differentiates them from all other migrants. Enhanced mobility which is uninterrupted and largely facilitated has grown to become the common denominator among transnational skilled people. It is suggested that due to turning to international labor markets and the free movement systems, the skilled are often rendered “invisible” and not being captured in migration statistics, because they are not seen as “problematic”. (Salt 1997: 8) As entering under

different visa streams that usually do not count as permanent residence, the migration of the highly skilled tends to be outside of the scope of policymakers and scholars. Again, the geographic differentiation comes into play, changing the terminology of the Global North-migration to a distinctive perception of “mobility”, due to reasons of accessibility. (Weinar; Klekowski von Kopenfels 2020: 17)

But why do skilled people move? Theories on professional migration incorporate several approaches that resemble the development of the international labor market of the highly educated. Beginning with the human capital theory (HCT) of the 1960s and the assumption that education drives the marginal productivity of labor and therefore determines earnings, it is suggested that people move in order to find employment and remuneration. (Iredale 2001: 8) In the 1970s, this theory proved to be of high relevance, as the number of professional jobs grew rapidly, making income from work the main source of wealth, while other sources of capital, such as financial, social, and cultural were losing their determining importance. Over the course of half a century, fluctuating economies and increasing income inequalities contested this approach and revealed its limitations and outdated nature. (Marginson 2019: 288) Theories about mobile professionals require additional bodies, approaches that include individual, structural and institutional elements, and further imperfections of the labor market. It is argued that the impact of gender, race, and class assessed on a neo-Marxist macro level as well as ethnic networks and various types of actors, recruitment and relocation agencies should also be part of the theoretical framework for skilled migration. (Iredale 2001: 8 f)

In the OECD paper published in 1997, John Salt reviewed the existing literature on highly skilled people and recapped two basic concepts. (Salt 1997) With “brain exchange”, he reveals a multi-faceted phenomenon that implies a two-way flow of expertise between origin and destination. The sub-terms of “brain drain” and “brain gain” are used when net flow of skill is predominantly one-sided. The original notion of brain drain was used for emigration from Europe to North America and the UK in the 1960s. Today it describes the loss of skilled labor from developing countries to industrial countries as well as movements from East to West in Europe. The second concept “brain waste” concerns the process of deskilling migrants in the receiving countries, finding employment that does

not match the requirements and applications of the former job which result in tremendous shifts of living standards.

High skilled migration and especially brain drain of developing countries has immensely contributed to the progress of globalization we know today. Although international migration has increased at about the same pace as the world population, the rise of world trade to world gross domestic product ratio is unmistakably connected to the share of immigrants of high-income countries' population which are incrementally skilled. (Docquier, Rapaport 2012: 681) Over the past six decades since its emergence, various studies produced different claims on the potential benefits and inequalities for the sending countries caused by brain drain. Early arguments relied on remittances sent home by immigrants and economically compensating the loss of skill, while later studies emphasized more on the growth of international wealth gaps. Since the 1990s, a more circumstantial approach shows that brain drain also proves to be expedient for the source country, concerning fiscal and technological externalities. Today, a more balanced view of the brain drain is apprehended. (Docquier, Rapaport 2012: 683)

A different aspect of brain exchange offers additional valuable implications caused by skilled mobility. Return migration plays a crucial role in knowledge transfer, turning the experience of individuals to use in their home context. The concept of transnational learning depicts the exposure of migrants to new socio-cultural environments and unfamiliar practices which is not only instrumental for professional and personal development, but also relevant for implementing skill and knowledge in the country of origin. (Lam, Rui 2023: 313) This is evident for the impact of highly skilled labor and its importance to economic development happening on an international level, with additional benefits for the sending country, making skilled migration and increased mobility desirable for growth on a domestic level. Therefore, the need for foreign investments and labor expertise in developing countries can be met by other than only one-directional migration flows.

2.4. Motivation and Drivers of Skilled Migration

The human capital theory (HCT) scarcely captures the notion behind migration and mobility patterns and struggles even more in revealing contemporary drivers of relocation. While this theory intrinsically distinguishes the levels of education and skill, it is still important to recognize differences between the high- and low-skilled labor force. The theory also aligns with traditional neoclassical economic perspectives, which understand international migration as a result from cost-benefit analyses, with the goals of maximizing expected income. Skill levels are a determinant factor, as they impact the grade of salary and the return of human capital, much more significantly for the higher educated. It seems that the HCT is not inept after all when it comes to the decision-making process of moving across state borders. (Van Riemsdijk, Wang 2017: 3)

However, movement of highly skilled individuals is a multi-layered and multi-faceted phenomenon that accumulates a combination of drivers. This multiplicity consists of personal, professional, financial, and political reasons. (Silvanto, Ryan 2014: 110) Choosing to relocate and finding a suitable destination to migrate to depends on various preferences and conditions, including individual characteristics and social status of the migrant. Besides holding the right mindset and being mentally capable of temporary and/or permanent relocation, the stage in the life course as well as relationship and family status play significant roles. (Van Riemsdijk, Wang 2017: 3)

2.4.1. Establishing Categories

The drivers of skilled mobility often overlap and complement each other, without being mutually exclusive. Yet, there are recurring themes in literature to detect. Silvanto and Ryan (2014) present several key “vision drivers” and determinants that are used for “relocation branding”, a strategy to attract international talent within global markets, similar to schemes of nation branding for touristic appeal. In their article, the authors also rely on Andres Solimano’s publication “The International Mobility of Talent: Types, Causes and Development Impact” (2008). The following categories depict an overview, referring to the works prior mentioned. These should help guide the research analysis of this thesis.

Economic Dynamics

While the assumption of employment opportunities, chances of economic growth and higher earnings as the primary drivers of skilled mobility might be contested and other non-pecuniary influences are increasingly acknowledged, the pursuit of wealth still has a considerable share. Among these economic drivers, the possibilities of career advancements and relocation to a more fitting work environment are also of high relevance for the development of certain skills. Researchers for example are drawn to renowned facilities anticipating better fundings and reputation as well as a denser concentration of talent in favor of better working conditions. Entrepreneurs and freelancers may focus on certain regulations of a place for starting businesses and making contracts. These factors sometimes outweigh wage preferences and can be added to a more general category of economic dynamics. (Silvanto, Ryan 2014: 111)

Cultural Diversity and Inclusiveness

Even under seemingly prosperous working conditions, another key factor is the accessibility to the societal and cultural sphere of the destination. The risk of feeling isolated and marginalized in new living environments is an existing concern among the mobile skilled. Expatriates experience exclusion in the host society when they are invited by companies and relocate for work purposes only. (Rodriguez, Scurry 2014: 1058) The possibility of becoming an outsider in the local community is something that affects both high and low skilled migrants. The better educated tend to be even more exposed to isolation, as the access to diasporas and minorities might be denied due to their elitist and cosmopolitan attitudes and inscribed class disparities. They also tend to socialize outside of their familiar cultural realms, as it would hinder a valuable international experience. Cultural diversity and the sensation of inclusiveness have become essential determinants of skilled mobility, the receiving society's attractiveness is therefore linked to the degree of multiethnicity. Additionally, host countries are also obliged to present a welcoming attitude towards mobile professionals, as they are aware of tensions that their presence can arouse. Sociocultural affinity that enables a certain level of accessibility is an important criterion. (Silvanto, Ryan 2014: 112)

Family and Relationship

A migrant's decision to relocate and prior thoughts on even considering moving is also highly influenced by their stage in the life course. Marital status and family situation can foster the idea of migration, expecting a prosperous future in a new country. These "household considerations" include the factors regarding local school system, child-care options, and general well-being of the family as well as professional possibilities for the spouse. (Van Riemsdijk, Wang 2017: 3) The concept of "trailing spouse" labels the partners of highly skilled migrants that are highly educated themselves and either temporarily renounce their careers for the move or finding suitable occupation without deskilling employment, captured as "dual career couples". A rather new phenomenon of the trailing process is recognized when spouses are not considered as highly skilled and therefore experience restrictions in the receiving labor markets. The global shift in immigration policies that favor skilled migration opens possibilities for spouses following to new destinations, creating a new perspective of trailing and switching to a notion of family reunification. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 22 f)

Quality of Life

Creating a new livelihood and focusing on well-being is not exclusively reserved for skilled migrants in relationships and family situations. Additional to household considerations which consist of education and childcare, indicators for high standards of living are a working healthcare system, infrastructure, and provisioning. For skilled professionals in earlier stages in the life course, a vibrant cultural life can also be a pulling factor. Activities that are more interesting for single individuals, such as a thriving nightlife and places or events to connect socially need to be included in this category. These are intrinsic assets and virtues that work towards the attractiveness and quality of a place with even weather being an important component. (Silvanto, Ryan 2014: 113)

Political Culture and Policies

Quality of life is also indicated by secureness and comfort, parameters which are majorly the outcome of regulations implemented by the government and official institutions. A destination's reputation is highly dependent on its political stability, promoting a peaceful

and safe living environment. (Silvanto, Ryan 2014: 110) The category of political reasons also consists of the effectiveness of governance, including transparency of immigration policies and the accessibility to labor markets. (Silvanto, Ryan 2014: 112) Entanglements between political cultures and economic factors that are created by both the sending and receiving country show again the blurriness of the categories presented. Therefore, motivation and drivers of relocation are not solely caused by the appeal and attractiveness of a destination, unsatisfactory conditions in the home country are mutually decisive.

2.5. International Labor Markets

The increasing need for skilled workers in high potential economies has become an important challenge to tackle, as shortages caused by an ageing population, lower fertility rates and international competitive markets make it harder to fill gaps in employment. This transformation of labor markets rises the urgency of well-educated migrants to a degree that mobility and access to these markets are crucial for economic growth. (Al Ariss, et al. 2012: 93) The impressive share of expatriates in the United Arab Emirates for example demonstrate the development of internationalization of advanced labor markets and the direction these markets are heading. With almost 89 percent of the residents, skilled migrants not only constitute the majority of workers but are precedents to new compositions of the international labor market in general. (Global Media Insight 2024)

International mobility and accessibility are significant components in the organizational fields of the market, but the individual use of capital and resources are equally essential. The integral parts of skilled migrants' economic capital that determine and facilitate movement potential help an understanding of the formation of rising economies. Again, the human capital theory addresses the formal and measurable part of capital, as it focuses on accumulated education and training of the work force. Cultural capital indicates knowledge and competences which can be incorporated such as mental schemes, language, and values on an institutional as well as symbolic level. An additional part of economic capital is sociality which derives from diverse embedded networks of university alumnae associations or circles of relations and acquaintances. (Weinar,

Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 48) All these translate into economic capital and are critical in migration strategies of skilled individuals that further affect global markets.

Questioning the transferability of capital primarily concerns the cultural and social aspects, making them the most vulnerable in regards of losing value and power. As they are both inextricably linked and spatially variable, they are highly dependent on a migrant's ability of validating them in prospective labor markets. (Landolt, Thieme 2018: 38) Furthermore, the utility of skill on an international level includes the gathering of additional information about the markets themselves, a degree of language proficiency, occupational licenses, and credentials. Negotiating one's value of skill with employers in the receiving context is as important as the employer's knowledge of foreign qualifications. While conceptual skills, cognitive abilities, and work experiences are individually constituted and easier to be transferred via migration, encultured and embodied knowledge are often conveyed in an abbreviated form. They arise from socialization and acculturation, are contextual and not objectively predetermined. (Aure 2013: 276 f)

The potential loss of capital value during transfers results from migrants being confronted with so called "hard and soft barriers" to labor market integration. The first type captures policies that are concerned with visas, work permits, and migration quotas and are typically lowered for the highly skilled migrant who qualifies for these dedicated entry channels. "Soft barriers" on the other hand are still the key to successful market integration and affect both high and low skill migrants. Dynamics of these barriers determine the quality of the transferred capital and are responsible for skilled migrants achieving their full potential in the host country. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 48 f) The mismatch between economic capital and employment outcomes leads to highly educated migrants experiencing deskilling and overqualification in jobs, eventually pushing them into precarious and low paid labor market segments that demand high flexibility and only guarantee short-term occupation. (Landolt, Thieme 2018: 38) In some Southern European countries, it is a risk many young skilled professionals are willing to take shortly after finishing a tertiary education. The economic recession has led to collapsing labor markets, austerity in professional opportunities and rampant unemployment rates. A higher return on their human capital investment and better career

prospects are expected, creating migration patterns with distinct reasons and drivers. (Bartolini, Gropas, Triandafyllidou 2017: 652 f)

2.6. Highly Skilled Immigration Policies

In order to tackle demographic and economic changes as well as the transition towards more knowledge-based economies, many Western industrialized countries have set trends in immigration policies, aiming to attract skill. BRIC and developed Asian countries joined the race for talent in these emerging “global skill markets”. Affecting the selection of immigrants, liberalized policies tend to create a fast-track system in residential permits and access to labor markets for highly skilled workers, based on a variety of factors and the government’s own definition of skill. (Van Riemsdijk, Wang 2017: 6) Immigration programs consist of a series of elements that change and evolve constantly, resulting in schemes adjusting to contemporary economic conditions. With impacts of financial crises or the fallout of Brexit, these programs primarily offer simplified procedures for a work permit to address skill shortages. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 39)

Theorizing policy changes and developments among industrialized, labor-importing countries point towards a converging trend of immigration policies, based on similar domestic pressures from skill shortages. Governments in OECD countries have been adapting to compete, characterized by liberalizing and deregulating labor and capital markets. (Cerna 2009: 145) Although it is suggested that these countries learn from each other as they face the same challenges, discrepancies in their openness regarding highly skilled migration reveal a diverging hypothesis. Looking through a domestic lens in demand-driven as well as supply-driven systems, policies are defined by the employers and their interest. As the selection of highly skilled migrants depend both on the local labor markets and the national definition of skill, differences still outweigh commonalities in policymaking. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 41)

Skilled migration policy changes are highly dependent on structural forces that are impacted by social and economic conditions. These again are happening on a domestic level and are determined by high rates of unemployment, labor market shortages, lacking

economic growth, and greater influx of migrant workers. Additionally, changes in government can also easily cause the preference of actors to intensify, following mobilization and lobbying to achieve the desired policy output. (Cerna 2016: 1613) The notion of highly skilled immigrants with projected incomes and occupational levels helps in letting them appear more contributive via taxes and less reliant on social services and being perceived as a less economic and cultural threat. (Kolbe 2021: 37) Still, policies are linked to political parties reacting to voters' demands and partisan preferences, making it often difficult to predict intentions and the directions potential changes are heading. When it comes to a party's position on the left-right spectrum, indication of preferences are rarely clear, as liberal and conservative stances can be both protective of domestic workers and demanding open policies for skilled migration. (Cerna 2016: 1614)

Next to policies targeting the highly skilled aiming for attraction of certain skill sets and the temporary occupation of specific professions, there are strategies that work in a more holistic way, wanting the skilled to settle and contribute to the society in the long run. These goals differentiate in terms of particular demanded job fillings and general interest in human capital as a whole. Another approach is the implementation of the Blue Card initiative. (Weinar, Klekowski von Koppenfels 2020: 46) Approved in 2009 after long negotiations, this entry scheme functions on a supranational level within the EU internal market, filling important policy gaps in various member states, as they expressed desire for guidance and harmonization of European immigration laws. Opposing national interests and policy-making traditions, the compromise was a directive that sets selection minima for skilled migrants from third countries outside of the European Economic Area, leaving individual member states with a strong interpretative scope. (Boucher 2020: 2541)

Austria's approach on granting access to the domestic labor market for third country nationals was introduced in 2011. The "Red-White-Red-Card" is a point-based system that enables different categories of qualified and skilled workers to obtain a permanent residence permit issued for a period of 24 months. Points are earned in fields of education, income, work experience, age, and language proficiency that need to accumulate to a certain score. The system considers individual circumstances of the applicants, especially for members of a target audience such as key workers in professions that lack skill.

Additionally, health insurance coverage and adequate accommodation is mandatory for the highly skilled migrant. (Migration.gv.at 2024) This scheme was the answer to the dominating immigration pattern of family reunions since the 1990s, with the goal of liberalizing mobility possibilities for skilled economic migrants. (Krings 2013: 270)

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the research design and the methods used are presented. A description of how the data was received and what considerations happened before and during the conduction of the research should later explain the choice of analysis tools. Additionally, the validity of the research as well as the position and reflections of the researcher are discussed.

3.1. Approach & Design

To gain a better understanding of a specific group, a qualitative approach offers insights into their behavior, perception, and experience. The best way to capture the subjectivity of a target group is to work with extensive and descriptive data, derived from in-depth research. For this study, a qualitative approach in form of interviews appears to be of highest value. A publication using quantitative methods concerning a similar topic (Haslberger, Zehetner 2009) creates results of rather general conclusion. Their interpretation is based on statistics and percentages that reveal notions of a majority. This should not imply that there are hierarchical differences between the various methodological approaches. In migration research, the complementary of the paradigms with their strengths and limitations as well as multi-method collaborations are acknowledged. (Zapata-Barrero, Yalaz 2018: 2)

The proclaimed goal of this research is distinct, following a clear direction of the given topic. Due to the existing studies and their comparativeness, this research is of deductive manner, without the goal of developing a new theory as such. Still, results and findings stem from the data of the conducted interviews and indicate an inductive process. This ambiguity spans over the choice of method, with the researcher initially leaning towards applying grounded theory, as it would lead to generic explanations in form of invariant laws. (Burawoy 1991: 280 f) Regarding the pursued significance of the outcome which is societal and embedded in a target group as well as the situational nature of the research field, the extended case method was eventually the more suitable option.

A popular method for conducting interviews that aim for qualitative research is the semi-structured interview type, as it allows for a more open questioning with the possibility of follow ups and adaptations during the interviews. The researcher can also operate on a more personal level and remove formalities that may emerge during highly structured interviews and linear questioning. While relying on a set of predetermined questions that helps keeping track of the topic of the research and acquiring the relevant information, one can still create a relaxed atmosphere of familiarity and comfort that lets the participants open up and share as much as possible during only one interview. The usage of an interview guide lets the researcher remain in control but allows to follow new leads. (Bernard 2017: 165)

3.2. Data Collection

The definition of highly skilled migrants varies depending on the functions of the research, as previously discussed. In order to delimit the subject group and avoid restrictions for this qualitative approach, the only requirement for skill is the education of at least a bachelor's degree received outside of Austria. Other variables such as extensive experience in a given field, expertise in craftsmanship as well as being an athlete or artist cannot be considered. As this research primarily deals with notions of a decision-making process happening in the past, participants should not have residence in Vienna for more than five years. This relates to a less strict form of "purposive sampling" which involves identifying relevant cases prior to research conduction. (Barglowski 2018: 162)

Initially, the idea was to find participants via expat communities on web portals such as "Virtual Vienna" and "Vienna Expats". This plan was inspired by a previous thesis (Pedersen 2012) at Vienna University that conducted research on incorporation of highly skilled migrants which required a similar target group. Unfortunately, these websites were not relevant for (expat-)users anymore, with only showing inactive forums containing sporadic posts which were left unanswered in large parts. After contacting "Wirtschaftsagentur Wien – Section Expat Relations" requesting access to community members and possible contacts, further websites and portals like "InterNations" and "Expatica" were suggested. These appeared promising in the beginning but remained

unsuccessful in the outcome. The classic social media network *Facebook* eventually offered willing participants. Several groups related to expats, foreigners and English-speakers in Vienna were joined by the researcher and after regularly posting a comprehensive query about the research project, the preferred number of subjects could be acquired over the course of three months. Contacts to a few other participants was obtained via “snowball sampling”, which were mostly colleagues and friends of the initial respondents. (Barglowski 2018: 161)

The integrated messenger service of *Facebook* was exceptionally helpful in exchanging contact details for further information regarding the research process and the questions asked. All of the participants agreed to an online meeting via the communication software *Zoom*, which allowed not only flexibility concerning date and time, but also a location independent conduction. The implementation of digitalized communication means caused by the times of the COVID-lockdowns were of great advantage for this interview conduction, as every participant could resort to the software. Additionally, the video interviews could be directly recorded via the application, simplifying following transcription work. With the consent of using the recording as well as first names, each participant was interviewed individually, with durations between 30 and 70 minutes. Prior recording, the project and its trajectory were introduced and some information about the researcher were shared to create a friendly atmosphere. After the interviews, a short talk about topics vaguely connected to the research ended the conversations.

3.3. Methodological Considerations

It was in the interest of this research that the subjects were encouraged to share *their* stories, recalling past experiences and perceptions about the initiative factors of the relocation. The emerging narrativity is part of this ethnography, artificially binding time and space in which the events took place. For the participants, the narratives of the stories add a sense of structure to the developments of the process causing life changes. (Tavory, Timmermans 2009: 249) Considering the embeddedness and cohesiveness of the statements that recapture these past processes of decision-making and execution, the

applied extended case method draws macro findings and extended theories from the ethnographic field already afflicted with narrativity.

This narrative character of the data affected the structuring of the questions posed during the interviews. The implementation of the three temporal stages allowed the subjects to share and reflect on potential changes and alterations of their perceptions over time. While the focus lies on the initial phase of the decision to migrate, additional information about the sequential experiences depict a more coherent foundation for reconstructing and building on preexisting theory. One reflexive dimension of the extended case method is the observation over space and time. (Burawoy 2009: 63) However, the conduction of only one interview per subject creates restrictions that the different stages of questions attempt to tackle and compensate. The dialogic and interventionist relation between the researcher and the subject facilitates the recovery of specific experiences over an extended timespan. Burawoy addresses this reflexive interview technique as “clinical research”, based on a psychoanalytic prototype. (Burawoy 2009: 65)

For this research, two other important dimensions of the extended case method and its application of reflexive science to ethnography exist. One is the extraction of the general from the unique and connecting the present to the past in anticipation of the future, moving from the “micro” to the “macro”. The second dimension aims for an extension of theories, making the elaboration of existing literature and material an important prerequisite for the analysis and the presentation of the results. (Burawoy 2009: 21) After the interviews were transcribed, the collected data has been evaluated and key themes were categorized. As the topic at hand already holds recurring themes and a body of theories that were drawn from literature review, the coding process was partially guided. While this approach follows a deductive manner, new emerging insights required an inductive analysis. Applying both strategies turned out to be of great advantage, as it helped recognizing general categories and discovering new ones.

The implementation of categories created a form of a comparative analysis of existing and emerging themes, resulting in not only an extension, but also in a complementation of a broader spectrum of theories. Resorting to and contesting the summarized categories extracted from literature revealed the strengths and weaknesses of an attempted generalized depiction. Nuances and subsequent aberrations are naturally caused by

parameters of spatial and temporal aspects (King 2018: 35) which were considered and discussed in a separate contextual analysis. This should not only highlight findings embedded in situational knowledge, the incorporation of field effects and subsequent alteration of perceptions also help create an understanding of the skilled migration processes as a whole. The results concerning drivers and factors of skilled migration to Vienna are presented via adjusted categories that are supported by various quotations of the subjects.

3.4. Validity

Choosing the requirements for participants being only the level of education and a residence in Vienna for no longer than five years, the investigated group holds a high degree of heterogeneity. The subjects consisted of migrants with different nationality, including EU- and non-EU citizens. This divergence of origin of the 20 participants shapes the outcome of the study and calls for considerations during the analysis. The application of the extended case method leads to the retrieval of significant results, as generalizations focus on reexamination and extension of existing theory. For this research specifically, the individual findings need to be placed in relation to each other. Diversity among the interview partners spans over age, gender, and culture as well as personal parameters with biographical characteristics. With skilled mobility being the main scope of this research, the impact of place and time is as important as regulating factors of skilled migration.

The heterogeneity of the sample group implies both strengths and weaknesses in terms of validity of the results, allowing the city to be the locational center of the study with the input of various perspectives, but restricting broader representative positions of the individuals for other comparable destinations. Therefore, the contextualization of data becomes a crucial part of this research, regarding the differentiation of the statements. (King 2018: 36) Individuality on the other hand helps locating peculiarity of the skilled migration spectrum, indicating exceptions that lead to new aspects. The wide range of information can also produce excessive data that distracts from the initial research query but supports necessary contextual elaboration.

3.5. Position and Reflections of the Researcher

Challenging the dichotomy paradigm in anthropological research has been part of methodological considerations for almost 30 years now, with Kirin Narayan arguing that the inhomogeneity of culture and society inherently creates a natural distance to the professional identity of the researcher, questioning the position of the alleged insider and outsider of being “native” or “non-native”. (Narayan 1993: 671) In migration research, discussions about this position usually happen under an ethnic lens and perspective of methodological nationalism. Criteria for belonging to the investigated group becomes easily denounced by transnationality and the multiple identifications and various roles emerging from crossing borders. (Fedyuk, Zentai 2018: 180)

However, this study investigates subjects with multiple nationalities that belong to different cultural groups, with commonalities rooted in characteristics regarding education and mobility. As an Austrian citizen with a bachelor's degree who moved to Vienna from Upper Austria, I only share the academic trait. As the migration happened on a domestic level, my position is located outside the target group. My prominent role as the researcher throughout the interview affects its structure and the questioning as well as the registering, storing and interpretation of data. (Fedyuk, Zentai 2018: 179) The interview itself generally creates an unnatural situation of one individual sharing personal information and experiences with an alleged stranger. This emerging imbalance is constantly checked during the talk, as the actors in these situations move within dimensions where identities are formed and reinstated. It is suggested that interview processes should metaphorically be compared to a “power dance” with dynamic rhythms of multi-personalities. (Fedyuk, Zentai 2018: 181)

Under these power related conditions, the use of empathy impacted the way I listened. My goal was to create a (virtual) space where the subjects felt free of judgment and without having the need of justifying any decision of their relocation story. The performed narratives of the interview partners needed to be treated as a simplified and recognizable configuration of their personal history, especially due to my role as a domestic interrogator which can trigger a specific line of self-representation on their part. Being a

“perfect outsider” and native citizen of the receiving country turned out to be advantageous, allowing the subjects to speak without considering assumed shared norms that may cause external embarrassment. (Fedyuk, Zentai 2018: 181 f) Fortunately, restrictions and hesitation towards expressing their feelings were rarely sensed, as the migrants shared not only occurring resentments against bureaucratic disputes and processes but also opened up about their mental states.

I rarely intervened during longer narrations, resulting in an assessment of impressions and information, often leading to extended durations of the interviews. Brief interruptions in form of affirmation or clarifications should only bring structure to the statements. I followed actions of active listening by making encouraging comments. Before moving to questions of the next temporal stage, I quickly summarized the main points presented to me in case the interview partners wanted to add more. The participants were generally motivated to tell me about their migration process, as the relocation resembles a success story, including the achievement of overcoming difficulties and obstacles. Additionally, the subjects responded to my research query posts eager to help me with my master’s thesis, indicating rather extroverted personalities.

The conduction of the interviews produced an ethnography with biographic characteristics, requiring the researcher to reflect on initial motivation for doing the project and on what changes of persona have been experienced during the process. (Ellis, Adams, Bochner 2011: 278) Approaching and getting in contact with new people is not something I usually struggle with, yet the moments before the video calls were filled with excitement. Luckily, my first interview partner did research via interviews herself, helping me ease into the process. Over the course of the next few talks, I began to develop a rehearsed introduction, presenting my query embedded in the academic field I operate, emphasizing that knowledge production stems from everything my counterparts would like to share, ensuring that there are no restraints on their side. Being repeatedly confronted with the migration processes revealed patterns of driving factors of relocation and generated profiles of the subjects early on but quickly accumulated to a varying set of characteristics and themes, which let me recognize the importance of individuality and contextual embeddedness. I continuously paid close attention to the insights I received and tried to put myself into the partners position while retaining my objectivity.

My interest in the topic of migration origins in the curiosity of people's development considering the achievement of live changing goals. The relocation and reinstatement of livelihood is an impressive accomplishment, entering a new cultural and social environment a courageous act. I deliberately chose the topic of skilled migration to be the focus of my thesis to avoid being confronted with hardships and abject conditions of forced migration in order to protect myself from exaggerated emotional investment. However, in a globalized world, international mobility leads to cultural and professional diversity which I regard as a step towards innovation and general advancement of societies. The proclaimed struggle concerning the lack of skill in Western economies is a possible entrance to engage with these complexities. A better understanding of skilled mobility with diverse parameters included should help create a more progressive (international) environment to tackle these challenges.

On a concluding note, I genuinely enjoy living in Vienna myself and endorse the high living standards. Centering the research on Austria's capital and gaining access to different worlds aligns with my interest for cultural and social dimensions and the appreciation for the place. During the talks, I often caught myself idealizing the place, increasing the risk of being bound by my own preconceptions and implementing biographical elements. (Burawoy 2009: 39) However, a reflexive stance still allows enhancing the perception of the city and discloses new perspectives that were hidden before.

4. Contextual Analysis

Conducted in reflexive qualitative research, the interview is a social context itself which is embedded in other contexts, independently evolving from the questions as well as being ultimately connected to them. Michael Burawoy recognizes four different types of context effects. The first type consists of the problem of reactivity in a well-documented interview that concerns how characteristics of the interviewer and the interview schedule affect responses. The second describes the unavoidable ambiguity in the meaning of questions for respondents coming from different worlds. To what degree the individual reproduction is adopted and incorporated into generalizations for building on existing theory is defining for the extended case method. The next type states that interviews cannot be isolated from the “field”, as retrieved data is always embedded in political, social, and economic contexts. The last effect is situational which tackles the principles of representativeness. The fact that information and knowledge are rather constituted in social situations than in a population of individuals, consistently challenges sample strategies. (Burawoy 2009: 36)

The results of this research depict several dimensions in which the motivations and reasons of highly skilled migration are located. The factors and drivers are then collocated in themes and categories for comparison with existing and established theories. Before presenting the outcome and alterations of these themes, the specific context effects that are deemed relevant need to be discussed. As the production of information stems from context-afflicted statements which are embedded in a world affected politically, socially, and economically, the following chapters address the variables and parameters which shape the reproduced knowledge of the participants during the interviews. Field effects and respondent effects turned out to be the most impactful for this research, as the environments as well as the individual and biographical influences on the subjects influenced and shaped their perception, revealing significant nuances within these realms.

When looking at factors of skilled migration or any form of (voluntary) migration, the initiation of the decision-making process becomes the starting point for any form of development considering motivation and drivers that lead to relocation. The origins of the

desire to move abroad sparks at a very personal and individual level that requires not only an examination of biographical presets but also the incorporation of a subject's stage in the life course. Considering these individual settings are not always corresponding to the social situation of the whole target group, creating generality may not be feasible if it is drawn directly from data. However, unique cases can produce generalizations that lead to the reconstruction of theories when they are put in relation to each other. Representativeness is not always prioritized in the extended case method when it comes to sampling on the basis of the individuals. (Burawoy 2009: 42 f)

4.1. Stage in the Life Course

Starting with biographical settings and stage in the life course of the participants as a preliminary condition for migration, age, family, marital status, and other important relationships affect recurring factors of migration. (King 2018: 38f) Excluding participants that moved to Vienna to live with their Austrian partners, a total of four subjects relocated together with their significant other, claiming that the decisions to migrate were based on common interests in consideration with their partners' preferences. Compared to single migrants, choosing a place to relocate to happened under prospects of longevity and compromise. Among the drivers summarized from the interviews which are presented more detailed later, the majority of recurring factors played an important part in relocating to Vienna but were subordinate to what is best for the subjects' relationships. The city offered to be a place of compromise, culturally and geographically.

All except one participant were childless during the relocation process, making family considerations rather difficult to generalize. Still, moving to Vienna was a decision which all family members should benefit from, as the mother of two teenage children stated. Her main motivation was the city's overall quality of life. During the interviews, other participants in a couple eager to start a family were happy to be in Vienna for the next steps. They appreciated the conditions of bringing up children in the city due to medical care, general safety, and support. For migrants with an Austrian partner planning to have

children, moving to Vienna for their upbringing was a certain intent, knowing the overall conditions from the native partner.

"When I think exactly about why Vienna, it's also because of my wife. She's Austrian. [...] It was very important that we could live in Austria and that we could raise our family here. So, yeah, that was ultimately the reason why we ended up specifically Vienna." (Carlos)

However, implementing plans of having children to be a decisive factor to include in reasons to move to Vienna for skilled migrants should be regarded as part of other categories in this research.

Skilled migrants without a partner could decide independently where to move, yet existing ties to friends and family in the home country were still considered, but to a lower degree. For these eight participants not being in a relationship, Vienna was more appealing in aspects of cultural life, diversity, and economic possibilities, translating to a place fostering personal fulfilment and growth. Moving and working abroad offered them an adventurous lifestyle with new experiences which the migrants have been ambitious about over a longer period prior to the eventual decision. A different stage in life consequently resembles different priorities for the individuals.

"So, I think it's important to claim or to share that I am a person who loves adventure, loves to move, and loves different experiences. I think my academic background already gives you a bit of a sense of that, having studied and traveled for study, so that I find, you know, that's the way I like to operate. It's not a big deal for me to move." (Denyse)

4.2. Personal Investment

Another aspect of individuality when it comes to the realization of resettlement is the degree of preparation and personal investment. This not only affects the mental preparedness but also the exposure to unfortunate incidents that impede a smooth transition. Questioning the participants about actions taken prior or during the move to familiarize themselves with the culture and lifestyle of Vienna was part of the second temporal stage. Information concerning this aspect is relevant for detecting established or already existing connections to the destination that influence the drivers of migration.

This helps evaluating the importance and relevance of the respective factors for generalizations.

The answers to this inquiry reflect that acquiring additional knowledge about the culture and lifestyle of Vienna was not a priority for the aspiring citizens. The impression received during visits or via other sources of information was enough to initiate the move. Their focus lied on preparing documents and official requirements for the resettlement as well as finding a suitable apartment or other temporary forms of accommodation. The participants claimed that there was no need for further familiarization as they already felt sufficiently informed considering cultural aspects. Knowing that Vienna is an international city assured them access as a foreigner to certain realms. How the actual incorporation processes would unfold did not often meet the expectations, when asked to reflect upon. Many participants claimed to struggle in this matter, lacking time and energy on their behalf.

The only significant effort of preparation was the improvement or installment of language proficiencies. Primarily migrants from Eastern European countries who have already gotten in contact with the German language at school or other educational instances had the intention to refresh their language skills. In some cases, existing familiarity with the language positively impacted the decision to move to Vienna, reducing barriers of incorporation or generally being adjuvant in managing relocation endeavors. The strong and recurring personal demand for better integration via language skills relates to the intention of experiencing new cultural spheres, a fundamental preset for migration in this study. That these skills are tied to employment opportunities was often not considered.

"Originally, I wanted to go to an English-speaking country because my English was better than my German, even though I learned German in elementary school and also in high school, but I didn't use it during university, so I forgot everything, and I had to relearn it." (Lili)

"And I started learning German again. I learned some German in school for seven years, but it wasn't very successful. And I found myself a tutor, and I wanted to learn German because, like, you need to learn language first of all." (Eugenia)

4.3. Viennese Labor Market

This research implies that the inclusion of parameters that render the accessibility of a place is also relevant when discussing its attractiveness, as certain pathways to the Viennese labor market shape perceptions and influence the decision-making process. Skilled migration suggests that highly educated professionals have advantages entering foreign labor markets. Aligned with the human capital theory, the motivation behind moving to a foreign place is the increase and accumulation of wealth. The relocation to the capital of a western European country reflects basic global economic inequalities. (King 2018: 40) As discussed before, this assumption cannot cover the dimensions of economic advancement. Among the subject group, three participants stated that Vienna offered job opportunities that were matching their career path and education, making economic dynamics the main driver. In this research specifically, these interview partners were looking for jobs on an international level, such as NGOs and other multinational organizations. Their priority was not getting employment with the highest paid income, but a fitting work environment that allowed building their envisioned lives. While the outlook on finding employment seemed promising, these participants appreciated all other factors subsidiary to their primary motivation, eventually leading to the decision to migrate. With only one subject being contacted by a company based on a recommendation of a former peer, there was no involvement of specific headhunting processes.

This fourth case fits into the group of migrants that are linked to economic drivers as primary motivation and can be used as a representative for this category. The company offered the subject the opportunity to choose among cities to work in and Vienna was picked as his employment residence. While the participant did not initiate the relocation himself, economic reasons were still the leading cause of migration and subsidiary factors eventually decisive for the destination. With a culmination of factors, the category of economic drivers leads to questioning the importance of employment in relation to the significance of the place. The subjects depict a notion that the city is interesting for its job prospects, but the final decision of settlement is determined by considerations outside the economic spectrum.

Finding suitable employment should be fundamental for skilled migrants, as higher qualifications ultimately define this type of migrant and enable entering international

labor markets via easier paths. This presumption is based on general conceptions and is contested when examining the unequal accessibility to various industries. The participants of the research received education in different fields and work in different sectors, with the IT-industry being the most commonly represented. Of the six subjects coming from this specific sector, the primary motivation of moving to Vienna was not based on economic drivers. The city did not offer them explicitly better job opportunities for this particular branch or better salaries, yet the quantity of positions and the demand for workers was a warrantor for employment. Participants from the IT-industry claimed that they would have had no problems finding jobs almost anywhere they wanted, letting non-economic factors take the priority for migration.

Migrants entering the labor market to other work sectors are prone to experience more obstacles in finding suitable employment, with language proficiency being the most common requisite. While the IT-industry and the international sectors primarily use English as the working language and thereby extending the range of candidates to draw from, positions in other fields of work are often bound to domestic language skills, limiting not only the access for non-German speakers but also resulting in devaluating the migrants' education and skill levels. In addition to language barriers, existing work experiences and specific diplomas were often not acknowledged or considered by potential employers. Among the participants, five claimed to feel victim to such deskilling processes while entering the Viennese labor market.

"I tried to contact some dialysis units, and they said to me, like, you need these and this and this and this. After I came here, I had to learn German, of course. And on that, I like it because it's another language. It is important. And you can't, you are not allowed to work in the hospital without it." (Panagiota)

"I started applying to two different companies. I had invitations for interviews. Like almost every day, but they wouldn't hire me because I couldn't speak German fast. And so, what I did, I registered myself for German courses." (Natalia)

"Now I try to do the recognition of my certificates for my diploma. Because, due to the specialization, of course, I have to be recognized as a finished GP here. That's why now, I have to do the whole exams on the uni." (Michelle)

While these cases are deemed unique, various similarities could be recognized. The decision to move to Vienna was primarily driven by apparent non-economic factors, as the

initial job search already caused difficulties. The participants were still determined to relocate and accepted detrimental employment conditions. This was only possible due to circumstances that allowed compensation for arising financial insecurities. For three of these subjects, the partners were able to make up for lower or missing income flows, the rest gained financial support from their families at home. Nevertheless, these participants either had to settle for a less qualifying job or were forced to extend education for assimilating to domestic labor standards. These employment situations were perceived as mentally wearing, causing additional financial pressure and a setback for career paths.

The most particular commonality of the participants experiencing this form of brain waste is their decisiveness to move to Vienna despite the challenging labor market premises. This determination reflects the importance of factors other than economic drivers, with skilled migrants agreeing to endure temporary professional degradation in order to establish livelihood in the city. The willingness to take financial risks relates to the significance of the place, making Vienna a desirable destination even with arising downsides in economic dimensions.

4.4. Political Context

After discussing economic and individual contextual parameters, another critical effect that is situated in the field can be detected on a political level. There are two dimensions that need to be considered when implementing political aspects. The first one addresses a rather respondent-centered embeddedness, meaning that the motivation to migrate originates in individual political discontent towards their home countries, emphasizing push factors instead of the attractiveness and appeal of the city at hand. The second dimension concerns political structures that enable or hinder an unobstructed migration process and further settlement procedures. This aspect includes migration policies as well as official institutions and actors that impacted the decision prior and during relocation. Data was drawn from the interviews where the subjects were also asked to reflect on their experiences of the move. As stated before, the three different temporal stages of the interview questions were implemented to put the findings into relation to each other. This allowed a more coherent depiction of the driving factors of relocation which could be

subject of alteration during the process itself, shedding light on past perceptions to reduce discursiveness of the retrieved situational knowledge. While the produced narrative is not necessarily delimited this way, tacit knowledge can be recovered more thoroughly. (Burawoy 2009: 41)

Disagreement with the political state of one's country of origin is an individual perception embedded in a political and social field, creating pushing forces that may appear to be more dominant than appealing factors of the destination. If the urge to emigrate from a place is the priority, the relevance of the receiving place becomes questionable. However, even if the mobility of a skilled migrant is less restrained and they are offered more possible destinations to relocate, subordinated factors leading to the choice of the new home can still generate pertinent theories of migration. Within the sample group, participants that claimed political discontent as primary reason of migration form a separate cluster whose presets are aligned, simultaneously creating other features that also lead to representative generalizations. Five subjects belong to this emerging cluster, allowing for a differentiated analysis under this particular contextual parameter. These participants expected an improvement concerning the political climate compared to their home country when moving to Vienna which relates to the knowledge and impression of the city, effectively creating pulling forces that represent political allurements, as shown in the result section in the chapter "political culture". Although these forces depend on the subject's preference and personal demand, Vienna becomes a favored destination for skilled migrants who neglect political conditions in their native countries.

The second dimension recognizes political parameters as field effects, influencing experiences and perceptions. As skilled migration happens within an official framework guided by institutional order, the relocation process is exposed to impacts of governance and policies. While political discontent directly affects driving factors and motivation of migration, the official and bureaucratic actors shape sentiments of its execution. The addition of this dimension fosters an understanding of the migration process as a whole, highlighting deficiencies and areas for improvement. Experiences concerning the communication with officials, the delivery of documents, or any other kind of policy-guided visa requirements reflect the degree of organizational investment and time required whilst entering via skilled migration streams. As regulations and immigration

guidelines are not subject of contestation, the analysis should point out that even the group of the highly skilled can experience precarious migration streams.

The most important distinction concerning barriers and accessibility of skilled migration in Europe is the nationality of the individual, determining mobility and the necessity of work and residence permits. Among the interview partners, eight participants migrated to Vienna as non-EU citizens, creating a divergence in the sample group. Questioned in the second temporal stage of the interview, these non-EU citizens were eager to share their considerably unique journey of moving to Vienna. Highly biographical and narrated insights depicted intricate endeavors of delivering required documents, extensive waiting periods, and struggling communication between the migrants and official actors. Recurring patterns of language barriers with officials and missing information on submission deadlines demanded a pro-active stance and initiative from the subjects.

Some migrants could rely on support from their Austrian partners erasing translation difficulties and facilitating visa permits due to matrimonial documents, others had either access to a circle of native friends or a culturally related community where shared experiences helped in dealing with official requirements. Anjana enjoyed connections to other Indians already living in Vienna:

"Basically, the network of friends. It was like all the ones who were right before me. So, they were like helping me out how to go through the process." (Anjana)

It is important to state that contact with diasporas was primarily sought for reasons of frictionless settlement and majorly by migrants from non-EU nations. Participants lacked in interest of socially assimilating to diasporas in general. This deprecatory position towards familiar cultural groups stems from the desire to experience internationality and moving away from already known social and cultural worlds.

On the other hand, participants were prone to connect with other international professionals. The statements of one interview partner from the EU reflects this stance:

"Peculiar because in terms of the cultural thing, it's not like I was looking for a place where... because it's not like I really want to hang out with people of my own nation. That's not my criteria for like, hanging out with people or something like that. But it does provide a great sense of comfort to know that people of my nationality and similar to my nationality are welcome here." (Franka)

"I was really lucky, with this friend of mine who's Austrian and she helped me pretty much with finding accommodation and everything. So, it was really easy. I mean, I understand that this is not how it works for the majority of people, but again, I was quite lucky with this." (Franka)

While the organizational investment for non-EU citizens declares the parameters for access to the labor market beforehand, members of the European Economic Area are confronted with regulations only when starting employment. For EU-citizens, the process seemed fairly comprehensible, with reduced pressure regarding residence permits and deadlines for submitting documents. They had to follow a rather clear procedure: after finding employment which included the application for the Austrian insurance card (e-card) and opening a domestic bank account. The search for accommodation appeared to be the biggest obstacle. While some claimed to be lucky for finding an apartment early, others had to improvise and temporarily move to a hotel or student dorm. Some participants shared experiences of hostile treatment by real estate agencies, supposedly connected to the applicants' nationality. Unfortunately, most of the procedures are tied to the validation of permanent residence which delayed the bureaucratic progress.

"There was one appointment that I had set, and then I was halfway on the way to Vienna to take a look at the apartment, and then the real estate agent just texted me that, 'sorry I have something to take care of, I need to cancel our appointment.' And I was like, okay, but then can we reschedule? And she's like, we will see about that. And then she just ghosted me, and I was like I'm halfway through the way here. [...] I started working already and I was living in these hotels and Airbnbs and stuff, and it took me to two and a half months to find an apartment." (Teodora)

One participant from Greece claimed that until she found occupation, there was no knowledge about formal and official requirements, revealing a scarcity of information channels for EU-migrants as well.

"I got the job the next day I started working and. And then I had to start to go to the bank, open a bank account, do all these, the paperwork, the ecard, and then they told me that I have to be registered at least 12 hours to get the e-card. I actually had no clue about all these things. And so, I got informed." (Natalia)

Transition endorsement was rarely offered by future employers but were cooperative and indulgent in terms of the duration of the relocation process, adapting working contracts and start of employment. Colleagues deemed to be supportive for administrative matters they were familiar with.

"At universities, they set up appointments for you. They guide you through the process. And here, in my case, I learned a lot from colleagues who some of which are Austrian or some of which they had already had these experiences." (Denyse)

"Also, my boss was really supportive of this. He told me that I can start, 1st of November. So, I had like two months to look for an apartment because he was really generous, because I felt that they were expecting me from September. And it's really good that they didn't do that because I was still looking for apartments in September. And that then it would have been really difficult." (Lili)

When it comes to self-dependency, most subjects relied on internet forums, basic internet research, and groups on social media. They would regularly check new posts concerning questions and requests of other internationals living in Vienna or actively engage themselves. Online communities turned out to be the primary source of information for skilled migrants of this research.

"And then of course, Facebook groups like Expats in Vienna. So, I'm like part of all, international community Facebook groups because you never know when you need those, and you always get some kind of useful information." (Anjana)

"I mean, today in in digital world we live in, it's really easy to get a lot of information really fast. So, I did find the way to subscribe to my tickets. So where do I have to apply for my ecard? What do I have to do for finance? All of these things. So, I've started learning all of that before I came. And then since I came to the company, I had a bunch of colleagues, and they all helped me if I had some additional questions. [...] They have presentation courses and stuff like that, so you can learn a bit more and familiarize yourself with stuff." (Aleksandra)

"Here in these groups, I guess it's more the fact that there is so many active people that no matter the question you ask, there's always somebody who already went through it. So, they know exactly either who to contact or where to go. So yeah, I think I find them more useful than the officials." (Dionyz)

"I did extensive research online of course, on Facebook groups, and I was reading a lot of articles and whatever was out there. I try to, you know, gain as much knowledge as possible. But, yeah, I was on my own. So, it was not easy in that sense." (Teodora)

But how did policies and the official framework affect the experiences and perceptions of the participants? After deciding to move to Vienna, the subjects were immediately confronted with the bureaucratic system. Although most of the interview partners claimed to be overwhelmed at first, endurance and perseverance eventually led to successful immigration. Employment prior the relocation became a crucial parameter for third country nationals who are not members of the European Economic Area, as it grants

access to a work visa. The pathways varied for subjects who moved to Vienna already being married to an Austrian citizen, as they belong to a different visa category, making the use of the “Red-White-Red-Card” obsolete. Family members with third country nationality automatically have access to the labor market. (Oesterreich.gv.at 2024) These different conditions regarding the residence permits among the subjects of this research did not diminish their desire to live in Vienna but introduced the bureaucratic order of the new home. While these findings gave information about the relocation process and the individual journey of the migrants, the initial driving factors of the move remained unaffected. Yet, it did challenge the presumption of skilled migration schemes allowing an unobstructed access to a chosen destination and revealed the high degree of complexity of individual mobility.

4.5. Typology Reissued

With a large part of the literature review dedicated to discussing and defining the skilled migrant, it is in the interest of this research to highlight resemblances and discrepancies with the profiles of the investigated subjects. As the broad requirements of this study only concerns the education level of a bachelor’s degree and therefore tending to conceptualizations for a qualitative approach, the applied definition rather deviates from generally state-produced categories and official measurements. Among the participants, only one migrant represents the originally labelled form of the “expatriate”, with the trait of being assigned to a new position in Vienna within the same company. The relocation of the other subjects was self-initiated on majorly voluntary, creating a redundancy of the common and frequently used typology for this research. The notion of aspiring a global career path with the goal of accumulating career capital was barely found among the sample group, prompting to challenge the defining categorizations in relation to economic perspectives.

While the generic term “expatriate” allows the distinction between self-initiation and assignment, it is still linked to a model of mere economic mobility, placing skilled migration in the context of stipulated employment. This leads to the typological assumption that transnational movement of highly educated individuals naturally and

exclusively occurs in the realms of the domestic labor markets. Discrepancies appear when implementing these parameters for participants of this study, as it would exclude almost a third of the subjects. The research revealed a variation of migration streams which do not align with prerequisites of the prevalent terminology, questioning the belonging of skilled professionals that struggle entering the labor market as well as highly educated refugees. This thesis argues that the group of highly skilled migrants cannot be subject of representing a unitary entity without considering its high degree of dissimilarity to general categorizations.

As the contextual analysis and the further presentation of the results show, the dominating factor for relocation shifts from the initially presumed prospects of career advancement to the significance of the destination. Some cases still reflect the city's primary attraction being the suitable labor market for the specific profession, but the tendency of prioritizing other aspects is more representative for the majority of the interviewed participants. The qualitative approach enabled a more complex depiction of the highly skilled migrant, neglecting a purely descriptive socio-economic representation. The inclusion of relationships, personal histories, and journeys as well as settlement and relocation practices highlight the several dimensions in which the individuals are located. Furthermore, the consideration of distinct characteristics that constructed the individual migrant identities helped recognizing themes and patterns for this research.

5. Results

Following the contextual analysis to capture the significance of the place, the individual parameters, and regulations that determine and shape the labor market of Vienna as well as locating the subjects within the typology, the next chapters narrow down the research query and evaluate the statements made during the interviews concerning drivers and motivation. Established categories that were summarized earlier in this paper are now compared with the actual outcome and recurring patterns of the field research. Unsurprisingly, the findings reveal new emerging categories and show that push factors need to be considered as well when examining skilled migration dynamics. These factors are highly dependent on the respective home countries of the individuals and usually differ between political and economic perspectives. However, some subjects tend to connect the two spheres and detect causalities in their developments.

Both established and emerging categories proofed to be overlapping and far from being mutually exclusive, as the literature already suggested. Within the dimensions of drivers and motivation of relocation, it is important to emphasize the focus of this paper being the attractiveness for skilled migrants to a specific city, making the factors highly locational and adaptive.

5.1. Driving Factors Moving to Vienna

This part of the thesis discusses the factors that motivated moving in the first place and the reasons behind choosing Vienna as new residence. In the first section of the interview, the data gathered from the participants refers to the time prior the move. The presented categories revolve around characteristics of a place that appeal to skilled migrants. As these characteristics were also created prior the relocation, they were usually not experienced by migrants themselves, instead they stemmed from acquired information which were provided by various formal and informal sources. Exceptions arise when people had the possibility to travel to the destination on shorter terms, in professional settings or simply as a tourist. This creates an original and unbiased perception of a place with great impact on the decision to move there.

5.2. Contesting Established Categories

5.2.1. Quality of Life

Vienna's reputation as the most livable city was well known among all participants and deliberately affected the decision process. Therefore, the "quality of life"-section is relatively broad and consists of several diverse parameters with varying importance to the subjects, often perceived and defined differently. This reveals a very vague and difficult category, as the perception of what characterizes a city with high life quality is predominantly subjective but also general. Most of the reasons given by the participants in the initial questioning on why they even considered moving to Vienna all contained aspects that can be summarized to this factor but were rarely reduced to it.

During the interviews, the notion of Vienna being a generally attractive city to live in due to its high living standards arose to be a given fact that all participants were aware of but was hardly mentioned specifically. Reflections upon arrival strengthened these perceptions, as "living quality" is a trait that has to be experienced. The sole motivation to raise the standard of living is captured in the following statement.

"So, this is my fourth country where I live. [...] I'm from Greece. I went to Cyprus. I was very young, and I wanted to do it just for the experience to see something different. For personal and family reasons, I moved to Ireland. And after I decided with my partner that Vienna has the best quality of life, and this is why we decided to come here. It was not that I was unemployed." (Panagiota)

Over the course of the research, "quality of life" did not turn out to be a dominant factor of migration, but a decisive one. The next participant involved political aspects, medical schemes and economic variables to this category.

"So, I know that every country has its own issues, but I think that level of corruption, then health standards and everything else is way better in Vienna. So, it's more of that than actual salary. So, salary was also good there. But I think the living standard is nowhere near when you compare it." (Aleksandra)

The city's infrastructure is another attractive aspect for Mateusz, whose primary motivation is actually assigned to a different category. He knows the city from several visits before.

"The whole picture of a city. It's like, it's very clean. It's very organized. The public transport is awesome."
(Mateusz)

5.2.2. Cultural Life

Historically speaking, Vienna was home to many great artists and musicians with great cultural prowess. These repercussions are still seen today, acknowledged and appreciated around the globe. These traits form a significant factor in eventually deciding to move to Austria's capital, as they create a sense of familiarity with this foreign destination, even among societal and cultural settings in one's home country. As a world-renowned city, Vienna grants a certain degree of attractiveness and accessibility.

"It's a city of music. It's cultural. I mean, you know, when you are like growing up, when you read things and all, it's a lot of Mozart and classical music and it sounded very nice. I come from South India, so I come from Kerala. In Kerala, we have several nurses move to Europe. And mostly they move to either Vienna or to Switzerland. So, it's not like, culturally, it's not an unfamiliar place for us to move." (Anjana)

"I wanted somewhere where I can enjoy culture, enjoy art and stuff like that because I'm a big fan of art. And I think that Vienna doesn't have much competition in terms of big cities. So that's how I got to Vienna."
(Aleksandra)

The cultural factors are also resembled in leisure activities and the possibility of enjoying a cultural scene, being a dominant reason for some participants to move to Vienna. Fulfilling the interests and needs of a vibrant cultural life did not have the same priority to everyone or is simply not important. However, if the city has been visited before, the cultural aspects were highly appreciated. Experiences made during prior visits always left a good impression, albeit the duration and purpose of the stay. It is noted that visiting a city as a tourist or for temporary business generates a rather restricted perception of the localities, moving there for permanent or indefinite residence constitutes a different approach which is tied to rights and duties, including visits to manage living and employment arrangements.

"I had visited Vienna as a tourist in 2017, just with my family for a week and, you know, had a nice experience and thought in the back of my mind, oh, that's maybe a place I would consider living, because of various things. So, you know, it felt like an interesting city in terms of culture, history, things to do as a young person. Cafes, nice restaurants, things to explore. I had a good experience with the level of English when I was a tourist, so I didn't really think through or, you know, worry about the, the German aspect." (Denyse)

"Before moving in, I was here several times, as a tourist and on some conferences. So that was my purpose of visit before. I liked it, but I like a lot of cities like that. So, there was nothing really specific in terms of city itself when you walk around. What I was more impressed is all the culture and architecture and art that you can see. Museums in Vienna fascinate me even today. Yeah. I think that that was something that when I studied closely, like where I want to go, that's how Vienna won." (Aleksandra)

"Vienna is culturally very rich, and there are opportunities to going to places without leaving the city. And so that was definitely one of the things that I consider when we moved here." (Eszter)

Similarities of European cities were appreciated, as they gave a sense of familiarity. Choosing Vienna as the destination to move to can be less derailing in terms of cultural disparities if the migrant's country of origin might show resemblance or is also located in Europe. This was important for skilled migrants who wanted to experience living abroad but not at the cost of cultural estrangement, as Vienna offers familiar traits of "Europeanness". The preference of cultural proximity is a recurring factor and linked to the emerging category of geographical proximity, presented in a later chapter.

"It's definitely different to the UK culture for sure, but I think that's to be expected with anywhere you go, really. I think just European culture in general is pretty similar. There's a few differences here and there. But, you know, and that's another reason why I moved to Europe and, you know, in Vienna because the culture is similar. Whereas if you move a lot further afield, the culture just becomes completely different. So, it hasn't been a culture shock at all, and it hasn't been difficult to adjust to the culture because it's fairly similar, you know." (Henry)

5.2.3. Diversity and Inclusiveness

As an international and multiethnic city, Vienna is highly appreciated for its diversity traits and inclusive culture among some participants. For one subject that was torn between two cities, the aspect of diversity (as well as living costs) led eventually to choosing Vienna as the new residence.

"It would have been easier for me to live in London since I know English. But of course, London is more expensive, but you know, so I was not very sure of moving to London. And Vienna seemed fascinating, to be honest. I've heard that, you know, it is an international city, it is a very diverse city." (Anjana)

Diversity in a city comes with a lot of social benefits, it prevents a homogenic majority of people pushing minorities to the margins of society. Vienna consists of many different cultural and social groups that offer a sense of belonging for people beyond the

conventional norm of inhabitants. This creates inclusiveness which is important for individuals who feel marginalized due to their social status, sexual orientation, and ethnicity. Austria's capital can be very appealing to migrants who cannot experience affiliation in their home countries. This appeal combines push and pull factors, making the motivation depend on two locations with multiple aspects rather than one defining reason to move to a destination. Nonetheless, Vienna offers safety and comfort for migrants in this regard, making it an attractive city due to its diverse and inclusive culture.

"The reason why I started thinking of it was, well, first of all, I was already dating women back then. And in Vienna, I felt very safe because it was a time when in Ukraine, we had sort of a right turn, very nationalist. And there were some, like, specifically homophobic things that were happening. And it made me very tense, of course. And it seemed to get worse back then." (Eugenia)

Eugenia experienced discrimination in her home country and after visiting Vienna in 2017, she then decided it was the city she wanted to permanently reside. During the interview, she shared an experience that described this sense of safety:

"And what I liked about Vienna is that I felt very safe as a woman, as a non-heterosexual person, like basically just as a person. And yeah, I remember a particular experience when we were sitting in the Heuriger near Nußdorf, I guess it was Kahlenberg. I've had this feeling that nothing bad can happen right here, right now, like at all. Like no way. [...] Everything was so calm, so chill. And it was, I hadn't had this feeling like in years. [...] And also, I felt safe again as a queer person." (Eugenia)

Diversity is also an appealing factor for migrants of different cultural backgrounds, as it enables access to services and goods from various parts of the globe. Michelle appreciates Vienna's diversity when feeling homesick.

"Vienna is also the Hauptstadt, the capital city. I think it makes my life easier as well, because here I can find more people from another country as well. It gets more diverse in Vienna. And, if I miss something from my homeland, from Asia, I can find everything easily here. Yeah, I think it's pretty compatible with me." (Michelle)

5.2.4. Economic Dynamics

This category is intrinsically connected to the human capital theory and the assumption that people relocate due to reasons of economic growth and the pursuit of wealth. As discussed in earlier chapters, advantages of better work environments and improved working conditions sometimes outweigh wage preferences. The answers given in the

interviews show that this aspect apprehends the majority of the economically driven factors for moving to a city. As a hub for many international organizations, Vienna offers positions for foreign professionals, creating employment possibilities for many skilled migrants without the usual language barrier of domestic labor markets that create constraints in enabling a smooth entrance.

These barriers are recurring yet highly industry-dependent and reveal the differing dimensions of accessibility and skill transferability which most of the participants were aware of. Some were confident in finding occupation in almost any chosen city or country despite these barriers. Therefore, the liberty of choosing any location to work cannot be regarded as a driving factor, it rather depicts the transformation of international labor markets and the chances some industries offer. As already mentioned in the contextual analysis, these claims mostly come from participants working in the IT-industry which allows remote work possibilities that is location-independent. Furthermore, communication in this branch of work often takes place in English, making domestic language proficiencies obsolete. This privilege is captured by a participant working in IT regarding the location:

“Right now, I also have a remote job. So last year I worked three months from Japan. I worked two months from home in February and March of this year, so, there's not many restrictions. I know it's not the case for 99% of the people that have the ability doing those kinds of things.” (Ignacia)

And continues on required language skills.

“In my company, the official language is English and it's international. We only have eight people in Austria. And the people that are actually working, like with customers and stuff, they speak German because of course they need to, but I am based in Austria, but I work for Ireland now, so I don't handle anything regarding Austria.” (Ignacia)

Another participant working as a software engineer states that she could have found a job anywhere due to high demand, emphasizing the choice of destination solely on other personal preferences, as stated before in the category of “cultural life”.

Before presenting the actual results in this category, valid occurring economic drivers need to be elaborated. The most significant feature considering economic attractiveness of a city is the location itself and the job opportunities it offers. This concerns the

possibilities of a skilled migrant finding employment under prolific and promising conditions. The other recurring driver is the economic stability of a place. Considerations in this regard happen in comparison to other destinations, predominantly to the sending ones. Factors like a “reasonable” wage and affordable costs of living are salient and often connected to parameters of life quality. Other than having a stable income to raise living standards and being able to grow savings, surprisingly none of the participants justified moving to Vienna for solely a tremendous increase of their salaries.

Locational Allurement

The international aspect was especially attractive for participants who wanted to find employment in this respective field. After finishing her master’s degree in European politics and external relations, Vienna was the primary choice for Franka.

“Vienna seemed like a really good option because, yeah, it's really close. It's a very international city. And I thought there is like a lot of opportunities here.” (Franka)

She initially struggled in finding suitable employment in her home country that fitted her educational background.

“I have been studying abroad already and after coming back to Croatia, I thought of just getting a job there for a bit before figuring out what to do next. And this, first of all, proved to be very hard. As a political science student in Croatia, there's not a lot of job opportunities. And then when I did get a job in Croatia, it was also in project management. And unfortunately, I wasn't really happy with the way things were being done. So, I quit this job after a year, and I decided that I'm going to look for something abroad again.” (Franka)

A participant of Maltese nationality was also looking for a job after graduating in a similar field of international studies. She was open to move to any city in Europe that offered proper employment opportunities and eventually recognized Vienna as the best option.

“When I was finishing my thesis on my studies, I was looking for jobs all over Europe, basically. And I was more motivated by the position and the job I could find over the place. So, if I found a good fit or felt that I found a job, which was really interesting to me and a promising option then I was flexible in terms of where I could go. So, I have to say, I didn't really expect to find something in Vienna, and I wasn't specifically looking for that. It was one of many options that I was looking at. And, then I felt that it was the best option. And I was also very interested because there are many international organizations in Vienna and that relates to my field of study.” (Denyse)

The international approach can be extended to Vienna being home to plenty of units of the United Nations. For Teodora, who was working for the organization in Budapest, Vienna offered the possibility to relocate without changing the employer.

"In 2020, there were some changes in my private life, and I felt like, okay, now is the time to make this, this move if I ever want to leave. So, initially I because at that time I was working for one of the UN organizations in Budapest, and I was thinking that I should want to ideally move within the UN system somewhere. [...] And then I saw that, yeah right, Vienna has a big UN community. So, it makes sense." (Teodora)

Economic Stability

For many participants looking for a stable and secure economy as well as benefits of the welfare state, Austria is an attractive destination to settle down. Economic crises and the COVID-shock did not significantly weaken this perception. The subjects recognized Austria's capital as a chance to create a financially secure livelihood, predominantly as an improvement to their former employment, depending on the sending country. Again, parameters of push factors are relevant in this category, as many participants stated discontent towards past economic conditions. The following quotations concern aspects of economic stability, including safety, job opportunities and affordable living conditions which are salary-bound.

Living and working in Latin America for most of his life, Carlos recognizes and appreciates various economic advantages in Vienna.

"I mean, when we talk about general motivations, I would say I was looking for a country that would be stable with good economic situation, provided personal safety, a country where I could more or less plan for the future." (Carlos)

Among other decisive factors, Eszter and her spouse consider Vienna to offer a better job market than their home country Hungary.

"We wanted more opportunities to, you know, earn more. Have more opportunities as far as job, school and so on. And so that was a huge part of it. And, when my husband got a job offer in Vienna, then it was no question anymore. And I think there's more options and a reason that we always really wanted to move abroad. So, we had some destinations that we were aiming for." (Eszter)

Claiming that living costs in her home country Greece are hardly affordable, Natalia enjoys the lower expenses in Vienna.

"Everything is in order. You don't have to pay for basic things. Even if you get the minimum salary, you can still survive. You can still pay your expenses. And you don't have to worry about these things." (Natalia)

5.2.5. Political Culture

In the chapters presenting the drivers and motivation of skilled migration which are drawn from literature, the category of "political culture and policies" discusses parameters emerging from regulations of governmental institutions as well as security and peace. As mentioned earlier in the chapter of "political context", policies turned out to be hardly relevant compared to push factors that translate to allurements. Considering skilled migrants coming from volatile economies or regions and countries troubled with conflicts and moving to Vienna for escaping instability and turmoil, these push factors need to be emphasized. Additionally, political culture affects almost any sector that concerns life quality. Starting with civil and human rights, protection of minorities as well as labor law, the governance of a state and city is one of the primary determinants of living standards. Due to the entwined characteristics of this category, this chapter focuses on driving factors that stem from political discontent in the sending country. Nevertheless, the traits of Vienna giving sense of secureness and comfort are reasons for (skilled) migration.

Among the participants, the degree of political discontent towards their home countries can be evaluated by distinguishing forced and voluntary migration. Coming from Afghanistan and Ukraine, two participants were escaping crises and war and seeking asylum in Austria. The others did not face immediate threats and danger to their livelihoods yet were feeling discomfort with the state the country was in, a perception represented unanimously by the three subjects of Hungarian nationality. For them, the situation at home became unacceptable, primarily due to disapproving the developments of the political culture. In addition to disagreeing with the political direction their home country is heading as well as the identity and ideology publicized by the government, some participants feared a constant decrease in their living standards, caused by economic instability and regression.

"Every person has their own reason why they left. For me, it was not only the economic reasons, it also had to do with the society. The way society worked and the norms and what was considered normal. Hungary's pretty

conservative. And also, I'm not the biggest supporter of the ruling party. And so, I also had political reasons why I wanted to leave.” (Lili)

Hungarian participants did not only identify correlations between the economic situation and ruling party, they also neglected the societal paradigms of the country. The main reasons for Eszter and her partner to emigrate were the employment opportunities as well as financial aspects, but she added that she also did not share the mentality of her compatriots.

“Mentally, I'm more Austrian than Hungarian because the Hungarian mentality, like looking for the loopholes and solving everything, you know, the gray way. Not the white way. And I'm more on the Austrian side of doing things, by the book.” (Eszter)

One participant claimed that although she was financially secure, she felt the urge to emigrate, as she could not approve with the political culture at home.

“I really had a good life. But at the same time, I knew that, you know, the direction things are moving in the country I'm not happy with. So, I was like, okay, I need to leave. I got to get out, not because I personally suffered, but I really didn't agree with whatever was going on in there or is going on in there. So that was the final push that I was like, okay, I'm done. Let's get out.” (Teodora)

Political discontent is a motivational factor to emigrate which is not exclusively tied to citizens of Eastern European countries. One participant from the UK expressed his problems with developments concerning the BREXIT.

“It's the single worst thing to ever happen in terms of like, recent politics in the UK. It's absolutely a joke. But we're paying for it now. And I said that's part of the reason why I wanted to move away and moving back to Europe, because I just feel like as a nation, we're sort of disconnecting ourselves. It split the country, massively. And you know, friendships and families was torn on. Yeah. And my opinion is just like why do we want to shut ourselves away from everyone else? Like, what is the point?” (Henry)

5.3. Discussing Emerging Categories

5.3.1. Family, Relationship and Eligible Compromise

The importance and effects of the stage in the life course on deciding to migrate have been presented in an earlier chapter. The family situation and the marital status play a

significant role when it comes to relocating to a new country. The interviews disclosed that factors like “household considerations” and the implementation of the “trailing spouse” concept are not sufficient to depict an adequate and nuanced set of reasons for skilled migration for this research. As household considerations include aspects that overlap with drivers of the life quality-category and primarily concerns general well-being of the family, only one of the participants specifically pointed out that moving to Vienna would be extra beneficial for their existing or future children. The concept of “trailing spouse” struggles in capturing the distinctiveness of the individual cases of this research. None of the subjects mentioned a situation that is similar to such a trailing process, with one partner following the other for career path reasons. As the findings concern other aspects then those emanating from the established “family and relationship” dimension in literature review, relevant factorial considerations are treated as being part of an emerging category.

Among the participants that stated family and relationship as a reason to relocate, the majority moved to Vienna because of an Austrian partner, intending to build a life together in the city. A total of six interview partners were detected that belong to this group. These subjects met their significant other either during travels and visits to Vienna or online-dating apps used in Vienna or other (international) cities. Most of them were having a long-distance relationship before and were prolongedly separated due to COVID-travel restrictions. Two migrants chose Vienna as a neutral location to start a new life with their non-Austrian partner. These couples recognized the city as an eligible compromise for establishing livelihoods.

After getting married in Slovakia, Dionyz and his Indonesian wife decided to move to Vienna due to economic reasons and easier language acquisition. This locational compromise contains several driving factors but are subsidiary to the familial motivation.

“Basically, we were not sure, you know. [...] We always have this discussion about like where to settle. And Slovakia wasn't ideal. [...] I would say mostly the worst part about Slovakia which we thought would be resolved in Vienna, were basically job opportunities, for my wife specifically. And the language. I think these two were kind of major points. [...] Instead of learning a Slavic language, which is really far from her own language and from English and from everything she knows, it might be easier to learn German, you know, if you're already fluent in English and she already had some basics in German, so we felt that's the move.” (Dionyz)

In a similar case, Henry decided to move to Vienna with his Hungarian girlfriend after living in Budapest for over a year. Again, this compromise includes a variety of factors that are tied to other categories such as economic dynamics and political culture as well as cultural life but still involves the expectation of a prosperous life in Vienna with the partner.

“But the main issue for us in Budapest was the political climate. And the economic situation over there was just not great. So, we kind of felt a bit trapped. And, and the longer you stay there, the longer you have to stay there. So, we were like, okay, we have to get out of Budapest, where can we look to? And obviously Vienna is close to Hungary, so it's close to have family whilst also still being within the EU.” (Henry)

The decision for these non-Austrian couples to move to Vienna for settling down on a rather neutral common ground offers a distinct dimension of the category concerning family and relationship. Austria's capital becomes a destination for international couples that seek to establish livelihood in a new place instead of moving to one of the partners' countries of origin. Besides the beneficial factors that are tied to Vienna's quality of life, the reasons for finding a neutral place to live presumably root in the relationship of these couples. How these decisions are made and what actually influenced taking the step to relocate together requires a different research approach. The individual dynamics of the relationship that led to moving to Vienna may not be subject of determination, choosing the city still reflects its appeal to migrant couples, making it a driving factor for skilled migration.

5.3.2. Geographical Proximity

This emerging category recognizes the city's geographical location as a determining factor for skilled migration. Among the dominant reasons for mobile professionals moving to Vienna, European subjects addressed Vienna's geographical proximity to their home countries as advantageous. This factor can be regarded as subordinate to the main themes but is often the final push for the finite decision to move. Many participants stated that Vienna eventually became their destination of choice due to the reasonable travelling distances back to their families at home, especially intriguing for migrants from Eastern Europe.

Geographical proximity correlates with cultural proximity, as increased distances to the native country cause further dissipation from the original cultural habitat. For participants with the initial desire to live and work abroad, the location of the city played a significant role, especially if several places were potential destinations to move to. Eszter's partner received job offers from various places, but they were too far away.

"Because we wanted to stay close to our family, too. So, when we were making a decision, we actually talked about the one offer from Holland. And when he got it a few years ago and we were like, yeah, but it's really far away. If anything happens, then it's at least a flight away. And I forgot to mention there was another offer that he got for the US. And then we were considering doing that, but then realized that, oh, that's very far away. The proximity, that definitely played a part in our choice." (Eszter)

Proximity turned out to be a decisive factor for Teodora as well, with her primary motivation being political discontent towards the government in her home country.

"It's really close to Budapest where a bunch of my family members and loved ones live. So why not, let's try to apply for a position in Vienna. [...] I like living abroad, but still not being too far away. So, I was like, okay, then if I like it here, then I will see. Maybe I can move further away later. But for the time being, it seemed like the right choice to, you know, to try this." (Teodora)

With experience of living abroad during her studies, Franka decided to move to a geographically closer destination for her career.

"I decided that I'm going to look for something abroad again. And the reason why I decided to for it to be Vienna was because I lived abroad and quite far away during my studies. So, it's 1300km away from home and I could only visit like twice a year. So, this time around, I was really hoping to relocate somewhere a bit closer. And Vienna seemed like a really good option because, yeah, it's really close." (Franka)

The factor of geographical proximity also aligns with the subcategory of locational allurements, showing again the entanglement of the driving factors.

5.4. Ranking Factors

Extracting the statements from the interviews and assigning them to different categories in order to demonstrate patterns or general tendencies can give notions of quantitative research methods. However, categorization is a necessity in strategies of both qualitative

and quantitative scholar work. (Jacobs 2018: 134) This research focuses on presenting drivers of mobility to extend known theories and themes while considering discourses and contextual embeddedness. Implementing both strategies, the following chapters summarize the findings to identify hierarchies within the reasons for skilled migration to Vienna.

5.4.1. Dominant Categories

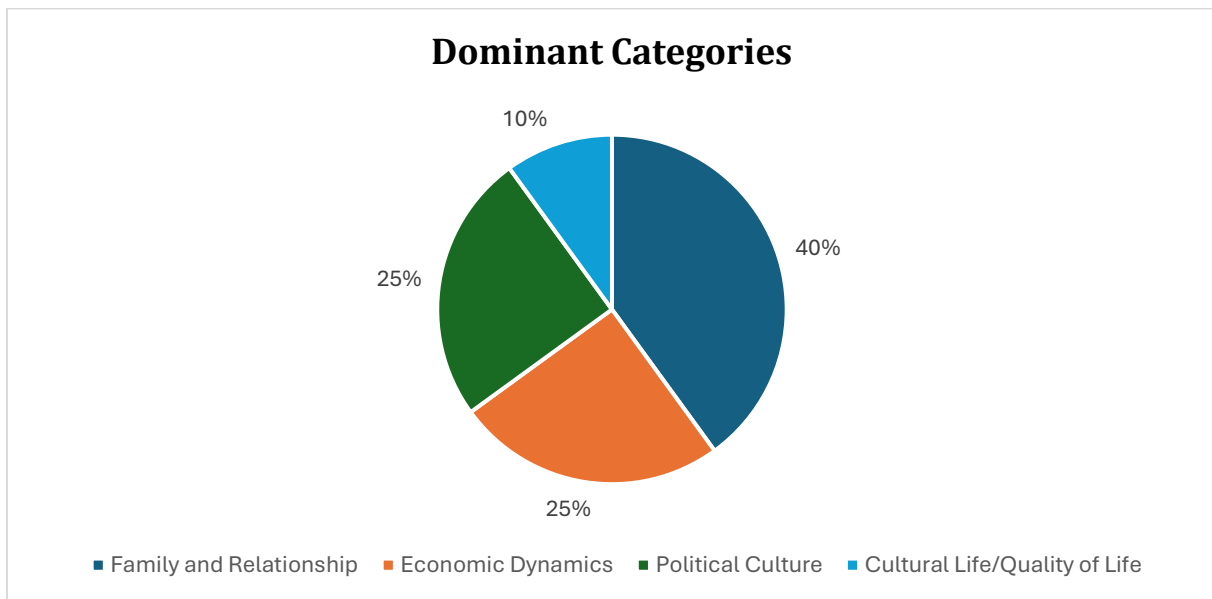
Among the participants, the most common primary reason for moving to Vienna is connected to matters of family and relationship. This category is represented by eight migrants divided into two groups. Six of them moved to their partners already living in Vienna and the other two moved together with their non-Austrian partners to Vienna.⁵ While the first group's main motivation seems to be distinct, the decision to merge livelihoods in the city still reveals the locational preference for the couples, considering other available option to settle. The other two migrants created a new emerging category which is introduced as "eligible compromise", linked to secondary drivers that consist of "economic dynamics", "cultural life", and "quality of life". Contextualized in individual stages in the life course, choosing Vienna as a compromise not only combines other categories but also includes an extended dimension of attractiveness for skilled migrant couples.

The second most common category consists of one dominant factor that is backed by several other aspects but offers now a more direct depiction of Vienna's attractiveness to highly skilled migrants. Five participants belong to the category "economic dynamics" which is a complex composition of drivers and can be divided by locational advantages in terms of job opportunities and the condition of the economic area. Findings show that Vienna is appealing for mobile professionals that aim for a career on an international level with employment possibilities in several organizations operating on a global scale. While this result is supported by apparent reasons, Austria's capital in particular functions as a central hub for international relations and cooperations due to institutions of the United

⁵Other migrants in a relationship prior to the relocation stated different primary reasons.

Nations and is home for other international organizations. The density of positions in this field leads to the attraction of the skilled, which in turn generates more hiring positions.

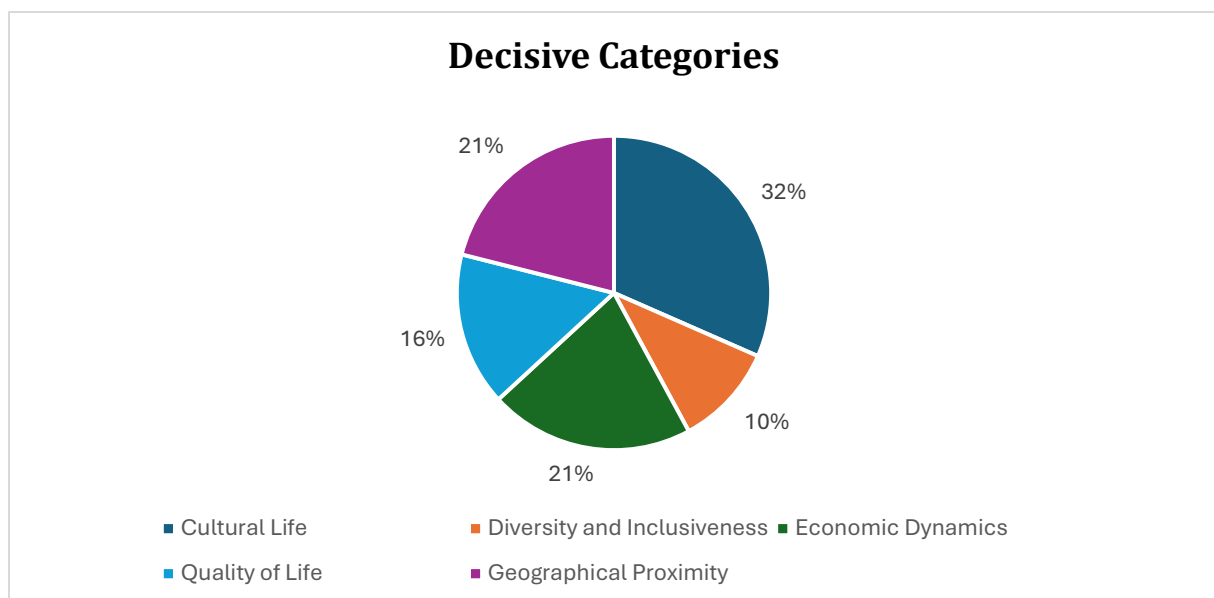
The next category involves push factors of the skilled migrants' sending countries and the political and governmental situation of both sending and receiving location. The category "political culture" evolves around improvement of the political environment and is represented by five subjects. These individuals are also associated with the category "diversity and inclusiveness" which could not be placed as a primary reason for relocation itself but yields a strong position due to its recurrence during the interviews.



5.4.2. Decisive Categories

"Cultural life" and "quality of life" as dominant reasons are each claimed by only one participant but should not devalue their relevance as secondary factors for other participants. For example, all migrants stating economic drivers being primary also mentioned the cultural life as decisive aspect for the choice of location. As the city's reputation of extraordinary living standards was well known among the subjects, this factor can be regarded as part of any decision leading to resettlement. Rather general conclusions may support the assumption that life quality is always one of the most pervasive drivers for skilled migration. However, the ranking in this study recognizes its repetitive occurrence and importance but assigns a subordinate position.

With the emerging category of “geographical proximity”, Vienna appeals to skilled migration streams due to its location and close distances to respective countries of origin. This factor is relevant to all subjects coming from European countries that belong to the categories of “economic dynamics”, “cultural life”, “political culture” and to the subcategory of “eligible compromise”. The city’s centered position on the continent enables a reduced travel duration back home. For a total of eight participants, the proximal location to relatives became a critical factor for choosing Vienna. Additionally, the subjects appreciate travel possibilities to other European countries and cities for short visits. Although this locational trait is of physical and unchangeable nature, its influence on skilled migration patterns of this study is significant.



5.5. Additional Findings

In the third temporal stage of the interview, the participants were asked to reflect upon the relocation process as a whole, what improvements they would suggest on the official side to grant a smoother transition and if Vienna met their expectations professionally and personally. These additional questions should complement the findings and add further insights of individual perceptions to skilled mobility patterns of this research that translate to attractive characteristics of the city. While earlier statements of the conversation already covered some topics of the third stage, the interview partners were still able to emphasize on important points and share concluding thoughts.

5.5.1. Room for Improvement

The subjects generally described the moving process as manageable, yet sometimes underestimated the effort it took to on their behalf. They were well aware of the financial and personal investments prior the initiation and expected challenges to overcome while often referring to the need of having the right mentality and a positive mindset when situations turned out to be more difficult than anticipated.

One recurring obstacle mentioned was the language barrier when engaging with officials. This includes communications with functionaries and the access to important information regarding the process and required documents. In the offices, the working language was often restricted to German and relying on English as the common tongue was not a certainty, requiring external translational services for dealing with these official channels at times. However, experiences varied in this matter, as some participants also reported successful visits to the agencies, pleased with the way the interactions took place. Besides reducing language barriers, they also wished for a source of collected information, eliminating the search for specificities. The following statements summarize these recurring impressions.

"I fully understand the logic behind it, and I understand that, you know, they want you to speak German. And I understand why. And it makes perfect sense to me. I understand it as also my responsibility. But, you know, it means for like the beginning phase. It's really a bit ambitious, you know, to expect people to come already speaking German." (Franka)

"I don't know if it's something that needs improvement. What would be nice is to have, like, 'how to move to Vienna for dummies', maybe a list of, you know, all the official things, like, maybe, if there was one place where all of this information is collected." (Teodora)

"You know, I got this information of the internet. Yeah, that doesn't really work all the way. And especially with the insurance, the social security, that was horrible. So, they should definitely communicate more. I mean, the guy wanted me to have the ending date of my Hungarian social security, but they already knew it because I needed a paper, and I had to get it. And it was really, really complicated. So, yeah. It's chaotic. That definitely needs improvement." (Eszter)

"I would say there be more resources available in English in general. I know that they deal with many languages and nationalities here, and I've found like 1 or 2 pages where they have documents in like six languages, like also Polish, Czech, Turkish, which is really cool. But for like by and large, I wasn't able to find pages of information in English, even if it's just a basic one. Like I know the e-card website has that, for instance." (Denyse)

Again, the diverging prerequisites concerning their nationality highly influenced the migration pathways. The effort for non-EU citizens seems to be significantly larger than for those migrating within the European Economic Area. Longer waiting periods during communication processes increased uncertainties for a positive reply. Non-EU interview partners suggested improvements in terms of duration of responses, the handling of the documents and fixed deadlines.

"To have a certain waiting time. I think that would really make a difference. Especially. It gives you as a foreigner worker gives you more certainty. So, if you could know, okay, your visa will be ready in maximum, I don't know, two months. Then you know what to expect, what you need to do when you need to prepare. But you know, it was my case that I didn't know exactly when it will be ready. [...] So, I think if there was a way to have it fixed. Tell us how long and if there was a way to have a fixed time period to get all the paperwork and all the process done, I think that will be really helpful." (Carlos)

"I'd say like a deadline for us is also a deadline for them. Or like the communication, you can't just get an email back saying, yeah, it's going to be done because that's what you get. The reply you get is it's in process and it's like, okay, but I need a guarantee that the deadline for me being here is going to be met by you as well. Because I think once you've got that confirmation and they, I think I've found out that if it's in process, you can't be deported. I think that's what I found out in the end. But even so, like, it's kind of stressful. And you don't know that." (Henry)

5.5.2. Expectation and Reality

This paper revolves around the attraction of Vienna, drivers and motivation to migrate and what can be expected when settling down in Austria's capitol. One part of the concluding stage of the interview also aimed for comparing these expectations with lived experiences of the subjects. This perspective helps to determine aspects of the city that are appreciated by highly skilled migrants and appealing factors to the target group to an extent.

While dominant factors of relocation can be regarded highly individual, the decisive ones are often perceived as additional benefits and traits for general wellbeing. As presented earlier, quality of life includes a multiplicity of elements that increase living standards. After establishing livelihood and getting to know the plurality of facets of their new home, the participants started to value other qualities of the cities. The questions were aimed at both professional and personal life. The answers included appreciation for public institutions and organization of infrastructure as well as economic factors like income and expense. Overall, Vienna met most of their expectations and sometimes even exceeded them.

"I definitely don't doubt that it is voted as the best city to live in because it does have like, there are features in Vienna that are really amazing. Like the public infrastructure is amazing. The health insurance and education are really high level. I mean, the entire like social security kind of net is a really strong one. And you feel safe, and you feel like you have access to stuff that you need to have a good life here." (Franka)

"So, from that perspective, was good. The salary was very good. It's a good, it's a cheap city, you know. It allows me to save a lot of money from my particular situation, I think it was a win-win situation. And as I said, given that I have a motorbike, I still travel a lot and everything, so I don't feel so restricted here." (Ignacia)

"It has definitely hit my expectations and almost exceeded it in terms of... [...] For me, in my experience of the health care enough was above and beyond, you know. So, for that alone, it's almost like, yeah, I can't compare it to anywhere else. It was so good. So, so good [...] I don't regret it, I don't feel, the main thing for me is that I don't feel trapped, like I'm earning in the euro. It's decent wages, I'm saving money, and if I want to suddenly move to somewhere else in Europe, nothing changes." (Henry)

"I think I am pretty satisfied and I'm pretty happy with how it turned out. Same with, like, quality of life. I think we have good life here. I would say that I feel like the points where I kind of got disappointed or not

disappointed, but I don't know, in ways it just didn't meet the expectations, it was the job search for my wife.”
(Dionyz)

The last quote holds an aspect of dissatisfaction for employment possibilities. While this statement does not directly refer to one of the subjects, other participants and their partners experienced the same difficulties. Labor market conditions which have been discussed in the contextual analysis earlier influence the perception of Vienna. When the highly skilled migrants of this research initially struggled in finding occupation or are still unhappy with their current situation, other aspects of the city are still appreciated. This aligns with the notion that disadvantageous economic positions are somewhat acceptable when the place has much to offer considering other factors of life quality.

Natalia's path into the local labor market was very difficult but she could get settled eventually. Even though she claimed that the beginning was mentally and financially demanding she still considered moving to Vienna as one of the best decisions.

“And I think Vienna, yeah, it's a perfect place. So, if anyone if anyone asked me also from Greece, I said, just come to Vienna. It's an investment especially if you have the education and you have skills. I think Vienna is the best city to invest your life. And that's also for me. When I decided to have kids with my husband, I actually wanted to do it here so my child won't go through the same things I went through so he can grow up in a stable country financially and also open-minded society.” (Natalia)

Anjana and Eszter are both professionally not where they intended to be but still enjoy many things about the city.

“My expectations were a bit more higher because I thought I would be able to. I mean, not that I'm complaining about the pet sitting job. I would do it happily any day, but I was hoping that, you know, I would, I would be able to use my academic skills. [...] My favorite thing is the public transport. It's all connected. Well-connected and quite reliable, especially if you're coming from the global South.” (Anjana)

“Professionally, I'm working on it. Of course, I hoped that it would be a faster process, but maybe in two years we are going to be settled here for a longer term. And we are definitely planning for a longer term with Austria. [...] Culturally, it's really colorful and really busy, so I like that. Although we are kind of a stay-at-home people, but we want to go somewhere we can, and I like the multicultural, atmosphere here too.” (Eszter)

In addition to opening discussions of typology and definition of professional migrants, the disappointment considering a frictionless entrance to the labor market questions the connection between supply and demand of a required work force. The present need of

skill and the appealing characteristics of the city to skilled migrants represent two positions that call for instances of procurement. The installment of third-party channels could close these gaps and provide necessary access prior and even after resettlement. However, only investments on both sides guarantee a successful assignment.

6. Discussions

Following a better understanding of highly skilled migration streams to Vienna, this thesis is interested in drivers, motivation and factors that spark the initial decision-making process of relocating to Austria's capital. For reasons of contextuality, the focus of this study is extended to the moving process itself and reflections of the subjects upon arrival which consider the embeddedness of the statements. This concluding section summarizes the findings and analyses of the interviews, presents trends, discusses generated value and accruing limitations, and offers recommendations for future research.

6.1. Conclusion

What makes Vienna attractive for highly skilled migrants? This research question appears to be simple and straightforward but leads to complex answers that require reflexive incorporation of various dimensions. Extracting situated and individual knowledge only achieves value when considering context effects stemming from various sources. This study primarily regards the impact of the field and the respondents as vital.

Why do highly skilled migrants move to Vienna? The majority of subjects in this study (a total of eight) stated that family and relationship were the dominant reason of migration. This highly individual factor seems to be locationally independent at first, but further questioning and elaboration revealed existing connections in favor of the city. Firstly, five of these participants were merging livelihoods with their Austrian partner, making Vienna the prioritized destination for establishing a shared future. Participants stated that the city offers additional benefits in several aspects of their lives compared to possible places in their own countries of origin. Secondly, these benefits become more visible when looking at the decision of participants that relocate to Vienna together with their non-Austrian partners, as choosing the city offered to be a middle ground and eligible compromise for resettlement, outweighing perspectives of any other suitable location. The appreciation for secondary drivers accumulated for the subjects whose original motivation of moving were the partners and spouses. These considerations were highly

affected by the individual stage in the life course of the interview partners, creating a necessary dimension for interpreting their statements.

Factors of relocation connected to family and relationships are followed by economic dynamics, with five subjects stating that the primary reason for moving to Vienna is linked to employment possibilities and given economic stability specifically tied to the place. It is important to note that within this category, advanced salary and accumulation of capital were not prioritized. Yet, subjects were intrigued by work environments and vacant positions similar to their professional fields.

Another recurring factor is dependent on push factors created in the respective countries of origin. For five subjects, the political conditions became unacceptable, triggering the search for a more suitable place to work and live. These pushing factors that reflect struggling aspects of the sending countries intrinsically translate to pulling factors of Vienna, making the city a place of political preference. As the political environment affects many aspects of life such as diversity and inclusiveness, the degree of discrimination against ethnic and sexual minorities, Vienna becomes the place of choice for skilled migrants longing for societal equality and the respect for human rights.

During the interviews, an aggregation of factors created several categories of reasons for migration. Although some of these categories remain secondary yet decisive, they all somehow impacted and sparked the decision-making process for migrating to Vienna. The participants were well aware of the high living standards Vienna has to offer, as it has been placed at the top among several rankings of cities worldwide in terms of quality of life. This trait supported almost all decisions of relocation and the general benefits connected to it were an important factor. Vienna's thriving cultural life was also a recurring driver, connected to the city's history and global reputation.

Emerging categories revealed further depths of migration patterns of the skilled. The geographical advantages regarding proximity to home countries and cultural familiarity are connected to the physical location of Vienna. Again, these factors all add up to the eventual decision of relocation. The dominant categories therefore consist of a multiplicity of factors and drivers that build up to the attractiveness of the destination.

The chapters concerning the contextuality of the findings show that numerous parameters influence the choice of Vienna. The before mentioned stage in the life course turned out to be of the highest impact. Labor market conditions can align with occupational preferences connected to the location but also create barriers and restrictions usually tied to the lack of language proficiencies and missing recognition of foreign diploma and training. On the other hand, skilled migrants of the IT-industry claimed that the shortage of workers in their profession led to relocation independent from the domestic economic environment, allowing them to choose the preferred destination based on other factors and parameters such as cultural life and quality of life.

This research creates profiles of highly skilled migrants that require a further review of typology and definition. Common terminology depicts a prototype of an economic migrant whose desire of migration is solely connected to dimensions of labor and employment. While some participants of this study did primarily relocate due to economic factors, their decision was never based on these factors alone. The findings create a discrepancy with old-fashioned yet commonly used terms like “assigned expatriate” and “self-initiated expatriate”, calling for discussions about the category of highly skilled migrants.

With the intention of highlighting the attractiveness of smooth migration paths and their impact on choosing Vienna, a part of the interview questions was aimed at a depiction of the process within the framework of regulations, policies and official actors. Except for the arising divergence of execution between EU- and non-EU citizens, the findings show that bureaucratic challenges did not affect motivation and reasons of relocation. They rather revealed that skilled migration schemes do not guarantee an unobstructed access to the destination at hand.

Highly skilled migration to Vienna consists of a variety of factors, aspects and preliminary conditions that affect the decision-making process and mobility patterns. While international professionals are often associated with paths of career advancement and accumulation of capital, participants of this research represent a different stance. For them, the city’s attractive and appealing characteristics are a composition of locational advantages, economic and political stability, cultural diversity and quality of living. Individuality and biographical perspectives are determining factors when aiming for generalizations and a better understanding of skilled migration processes.

6.2. Value of the Research

With the focus of this research being the attractiveness of Vienna to highly skilled migrants, the goal is to reveal mobility patterns, factors and drivers of relocation. Producing knowledge about this particularly heterogeneous and diverse category of migrants brings merit for recruitment strategies of companies struggling with skill shortages and starts discussions on prevalent scholarly concepts. As this study revolves around a specific location, the results need to be regarded in relation to the place but can also give overall insights to important preferences of the subject group for other destinations. Findings stemming from individual interviews reflect personal perceptions and require narrative and contextual considerations.

But how can these findings be used? First of all, the results give the notion that the attractiveness of a destination is constructed by characteristics other than economic growth alone, meaning that high salary and financial bonuses are not always dominant aspects of skilled migration. When interested in living and working abroad, mobile professionals chose a place based on parameters that primarily fit their personal demands. These can vary depending on the stage in the life course and individual desires, but ultimately relate to perceptions affecting their living standards. A destination has to offer a sense of comfort, security, diversity, and inclusiveness – traits which are highly influenced by the political environment of the location. The educated internationals aspire to create a life on their behalf, requiring an open society that provides opportunities and freedom of choice. Highly skilled migrants of this research show that many established typologies and definitions in literature are not accurate in describing the target group. The subjects do share an interest in the host society and culture, do not strictly follow an ascending career path and enter the new place not solely via the labor market and exclusively designed migration schemes. These findings reflect a changing profile of an international group that combines a global approach with individual preferences.

When looking at usability for recruitment and employment strategies for companies and organizations that need to compensate lack of skill and expertise, the results primarily depict that attraction to a place is created by different factors and perceived at an

individual level. Naturally, suitable employment conditions need to be offered to spark the interest of possible candidates, but high wages alone cannot assure successful talent acquisition, as skilled migrants tend to prefer life quality over capital growth. While there are not many possibilities for companies to influence the living standards of the location they are hiring from, Vienna functions as the ideal city to advertise this quality, making interpretation in this regard highly locational and difficult to adopt to other places. With almost all of this study's subjects initiating the relocation and search for employment by themselves, suggestions considering recruitment plans are limited. Nonetheless, when companies intend to hire from abroad, highlighting locational qualities should be the leading strategy. Additionally, participants claimed that they appreciated the flexibility during the transition concerning starting date but did not experience much help when dealing with government officials and bureaucratic procedures. While support on this behalf is not always a necessity, easing the relocation process for the migrants could provide endorsement. However, the changing profiles of the "new expatriates" should also be recognized by human resource departments, adjusting the strategies to the needs and appealing factors of the potential employees.

6.3. Limitations

Conducted via semi-structured interviews with 20 participants, this qualitative research allowed for a nuanced and individualized depiction of the results. Applying the extended case method to existing themes of the topic helped discovering important dimensions and relevant contexts. However, the detection of commonalities and representative generalizations still hold limitations.

Beginning with the number and selection of participants, this research investigates only a small fraction of the significantly larger target group. The internal diversity depicts a cross-section relating to the group's heterogeneity which often requires a separate, more distinct analysis or the creation of subtypes and clusters. This led to constantly evaluating the statements during the analysis before allocating them to generalized themes, demanding an increased reflexivity. The different conditions under which the migration

processes happened shifted the focus from the domestic labor market to other dimensions important to the subjects.

Due to the interview covering several temporal stages of the migrants' journeys, the amount of information received is often located beyond the scope of this study. The additionally produced knowledge did help embedding the central statements but distracted both the interview subjects and researcher from the core topic at times. This resulted in an extended duration of the interviews on occasion, which did not necessarily enhance an understanding of the content but could be regarded beneficial for the actors of the conversation, nonetheless. The participants were offered an opportunity to share their perspectives related to additional matters while the interviewer discovered other aspects of skilled migration.

6.4. Recommendations

This research can function as an entry point to investigate mobility patterns of highly skilled migration to Vienna or other destinations by providing a general overview of varying and emerging migrant profiles and generalized trends regarding drivers and motivation of relocation of the group. Adjusting the requirements for participants with emphasis on economic parameters offers significance for queries aiming to capture the mobility of solely recruited and assigned expatriates within labor market dimensions. Access to specific subjects would demand an approach on a corporate level, by contacting human resource departments and recruiting agencies.

The revealed diversity of the skilled migrant typology also opens up possibilities for investigating different categories of the highly skilled, such as industry, nationality and family status and the dynamics of respective pull and push factors influencing the decision to move. This study showed that personal as well as organizational prerequisites shape the conduction of skilled migration processes. Filtering out the internal dissimilarities could eliminate unwanted complexities and allow for a more distinct interpretation of the received data. For example, the pathways of professionals working in the IT-industry are characterized by the demand of international labor markets. Their movement and

employment possibilities have been increased for over two decades, creating unique mobility patterns. Duration, destinations and individual priorities are potential aspects for investigation. Additionally, research on policy regimes and entry schemes with the implementation of biographical attributes could create additional relevant perspectives.

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8. Appendices

8.1. Interview Questions

Prior the talk, the project and its trajectory were introduced and some information about the researcher were shared. Conducted online via Zoom, the interviews have been recorded digitally.

Basic Information

1. Please introduce yourself. Name, age, profession, and education.
2. How long have you been living in Vienna?

First Temporal Stage – The decision-making process

3. What motivated you to consider relocating to a new country and city?
4. Were there any specific factors about Vienna that attracted you? (professionally, culturally, a social network)
5. Can you share any personal experiences or stories that influenced your decision to move to Vienna?

Second Temporal Stage – The relocation process

6. What challenges or obstacles did you encounter during the transition, and how did you overcome them? (law, policies, official requirements)
- (7. Did you apply for the “Rot-Weiß-Rot-Karte”?)
8. Did you receive any support or assistance from local organizations/companies or the government to facilitate your relocation?

9. What steps did you take to familiarize yourself with the culture and lifestyle in Vienna before moving?

10. Was it easy to access all the necessary information required to get settled in Vienna?

11. Please tell me the most beneficial assistance/support/aid for your transition process?

Third Temporal Stage – Reflections upon arrival

12. Upon arrival, how would you describe the relocation process?

13. Would you describe Vienna as an accessible city for highly skilled migrants? And would you recommend it to fellow expats?

14. Have you found opportunities to connect with other skilled migrants in Vienna? How has this impacted your integration?

15. Did Vienna meet your expectations as a city in terms of quality of living and professional employment?

16. Do you think Vienna is an attractive city for highly skilled migrants?

17. Looking back, do you believe that moving to Vienna was the right decision for you professionally and personally?

18. Which aspects in terms of relocation do you think need improvement? Do you have any suggestions?

8.2. Table of Participants

#	Participant	Age	Nationality	Education	Sector/Profession	Marital status during migration
1.	Franka	28	Croatia	Master	International	Single
2.	Anjana	33	India	Master/Pre-Doc	Education/Teaching	Single
3.	Ignacia	33	Chile	Master	IT	Relationship
4.	Dionyz	32	Slovakia	Master	IT	Married
5.	Elena	31	Russia	Master	Architect	Married
6.	Michelle	29	Indonesia	MD	Health/Medical	Married
7.	Teodora	33	Hungary	Bachelor	International	Single
8.	Carlos	41	Venezuela	Master	IT	Married
9.	Eszter	39	Hungary	Bachelor	Education/Teaching	Married
10.	Theodora	46	Romania	Master	Legal	Married
11.	Abdul	32	Afghanistan	Bachelor	Communication	Married
12.	Jocelyn	35	Singapore	Bachelor	IT	Married
13.	Denyse	28	Malta	Master	International	Single
14.	Panagiota	46	Greece	Bachelor	Health/Medical	Married
15.	Eugenia	33	Ukraine	MD	Communication	Single
16.	Natalia	32	Greece	Master	Data Analyst	Single
17.	Lili	24	Hungary	Master	Customer MGMT	Single
18.	Aleksandra	33	Croatia	Bachelor	IT	Single
19.	Henry	27	UK	Bachelor	Education/Teaching	Married
20.	Mateusz	33	Poland	Bachelor	IT	Married

8.3. Assignment of Categories / Coding

#	Participant	Main Category	Decisive Category
1.	Franka	Economic Dynamics – Locational Allurement	Cultural Life / Geographical Proximity
2.	Anjana	Economic Dynamics – Locational Allurement	Cultural Life
3.	Ignacia	Family and Relationship – Partner	
4.	Dionyz	Family and Relationship – Eligible Compromise	Economic Dynamics / Quality of Life
5.	Elena	Family and Relationship – Partner	
6.	Michelle	Family and Relationship – Partner	Diversity and Inclusiveness
7.	Teodora	Political Culture	Cultural Life / Geographical Proximity
8.	Carlos	Family and Relationship – Partner	Economic Dynamics – Stability / Quality of Life
9.	Eszter	Political Culture	Economic Dynamics – Stability / Geographical Proximity
10.	Theodora	Family and Relationship – Partner	
11.	Abdul	Political Culture	
12.	Jocelyn	Family and Relationship – Partner	
13.	Denyse	Economic Dynamics – Locational Allurement	Cultural Life
14.	Panagiota	Quality of Life	
15.	Eugenia	Political Culture	Diversity and Inclusiveness
16.	Natalia	Economic Dynamics – Stability	Cultural Life

17.	Lili	Political Culture	Geographical Proximity
18.	Aleksandra	Cultural Life	
19.	Henry	Family and Relationship – Eligible Compromise	Economic Dynamics / Cultural Life
20.	Mateusz	Economic Dynamics – Locational Allurement	Cultural Life / Quality of Life

8.4. Research Query Post

TELL ME YOUR STORY!

Participation in Research for Master Thesis

Dear interview partner!

My name is Maximilian [REDACTED], and I could use your support. In order to complete my Master Studies at Vienna University, I chose the topic of my final thesis to be highly skilled migrants and their motivation for moving to Vienna.

What do I mean with Highly Skilled Migrants?

The official definition of a highly skilled migrant (HSM) is inconsistent. For my research, a person that has an academic education of at least a bachelor's degree received outside of Austria fits the requirements. Furthermore, the person should not live in Vienna for longer than five years to generate experiences concerning motivation in the decision-making process to be as fresh as possible. The goal of this research is to find out about Vienna's appeal to the international labor market and patterns and structures that foster and/or impede work mobility.

How is the research conducted?

The research will not be a simple questionnaire where you mindlessly click your way through. It is more about qualitatively producing knowledge of individuals' experiences that should give an insight into the development of choices und making important life decisions. An interview of approximately one hour will be held where we talk about what motivated you to eventually deciding to move to Vienna for whatever reason and how this intention became reality! With an eye on details, I am also interested in what played in your favor during the journey or obstacles you had to overcome in order to reach your goals of moving to Vienna.

We will meet up as you see fit, either in person or via web call (Zoom, Skype, etc.). Additionally, I would give you the questions beforehand, so you don't get put on the spot and can decide if some are too personal. Everything is adaptable!

What's in it for You?

Everyone's got a unique and interesting background that needs to be heard and shared with others, especially people who decide to move across borders and entirely change their livelihoods. Maybe you just took to the next step in your impressive career path, relocated for love or you are simply eager for an adventure? Either way, the use of your story can help the understanding of processes that concern a rather significant group of people and enable possible enhancements in their mobility.

Furthermore, a raffle will be held among the approximately 20 participants, with a chance to win two amazon gift cards. Just to make sure that Your effort will not remain unrewarded.

Contact Me

If a participation and the incentives seem of interest to you,

I would be happy to hear from you.

Just contact me via Facebook, e-mail or simply respond to this post.

I am looking forward to getting to know you!

Best, Maximilian