

Emotions, Places, and Mobilities

The Affective Drives of the Migration and Settlement Aspirations among Highly Educated Migrants

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The increasingly globalized education and labor markets offer people more opportunities to move, and, at the same time, also enhance highly educated individuals' expectations of career development through geographic mobility (Hof 2019). The question is then: given the increased opportunities, how do people decide where and when to move, and where and when to settle down? What matters in their migratory decision-making? Existing research has offered many explanations about highly educated people's geographic mobility or emplacement. These motivations range from assessing the benefit of migration in terms of economic and career development (Beaverstock 2005; Millar and Salt 2008), the opportunities and constraints of destination countries' institutional characteristics, employment systems (Oishi 2012; Liu-Farrer 2020; Tseng 2020), and lifestyle choices (Ho 2011; Marinelli 2011), to combined motivations of "romance, adventure and quality of life" (Favell et al. 2011: 24). Moreover, studies show that life stages influence the choice of migration or emplacement. The young and single are more willing to move because of the lure of adventure and the desire to build a career. The middle-aged with families have to deliberate on a range of factors, from spouses' careers to children's education (Ryan and Mulholland 2014).

While these studies provide great insights into individuals' migratory decisions, they lean toward more instrumental motives to explain their mobilities. This chapter aims to examine migration decisions through an affective lens. Migration, by moving people from one environment to another, and separating them from one set of social relationships and inserting them into another, invariably creates emotional consequences. Although often implicit in the analysis, relatively few studies have examined emotions as forces in driving migration. This scarcity has to do with the difficult task of singling out an emotional dimension in the complex reasons that constitute motives for action. The most common approach to investigate affective drives of migration is quantitative. Using survey data, researchers can detect the significance of affective effect in each migration decision after controlling other variables (Ivlevs 2015). This study employs a qualitative approach to trace the logic of migration and emplacement aspirations through individuals' narratives. It does not seek to untangle the different dimensions of decision-making, or to show the unique effect of emotions. Instead, it sees affects as a consequence of the entanglement of different mobilities. Migration, a form of spatial mobility by moving people from one place to another, simultaneously brings about other forms of mobilities, such as: social—the relative social positions in the society; legal—the change of legal status in different countries and the residential security connected to it; and sexual—whether one becomes more sexually marketable or not. These various forms of mobilities, being tangled and unevenly accomplished, result in different emotions toward the place. In turn, these different emotions serve as driving forces for different migratory decisions—either onward movement or settlement.

This study takes as its premise that migration is essentially a decision made about places. Therefore, it examines migrants' articulations of feelings about places and how such sentiments are used as justifications for their migratory decisions and destination choices. Drawing on interviews with university-educated international migrants in Germany and Japan, this chapter shows that positive and negative emotions operate differently. It is often negative emotions about the place or their life in that place that compel the desire to move, despite instrumental rationality. The interviews also reveal that love relationships play a central role in adult migrants' migratory decisions. Moreover, places themselves are capable of engendering migrants' emotional responses toward them. This is because their natural and built environment and historically developed sociocultural and institutional practices can structure intimate and social relations, and thereby condition migrants' experiences within these places.

Affective Drive for Migration

Migration is a form of social action. Like any type of social action, it can be rational because it consciously pursues a goal or value, or be affectively determined, as a result of current emotional states; and as Weber (1978) argues, a social action seldom takes only one form or the other (28). The discussion of the motivation for migration is dominated by concerns of economic rationality during most of the twentieth century. With the “emotional turn” (Bondi, Davidson, and Smith 2016) that took place in human geography and cultural studies in the early twenty-first century, migration studies have increasingly brought in the affective lens to examine the conditions involved in people’s geographic mobilities.

One strand of literature highlights the emotional underpinning of migration aspiration. Carling and Schewel (2018) point out that while migration aspiration is commonly conceptualized as a comparison of places, it is also a culturally defined project and a matter of personhood or identity. The desire to move is, therefore, a highly emotional matter. From Chu (2010)’s anxious young Fujianese woman sitting on her suitcase in an empty apartment waiting to go overseas to Fong (2011)’s Chinese students in Dalian longing for studying abroad in “paradise”—preferably a developed anglophone country, affects, such as anxiety and hopefulness, illustrate the desiring subjects in anticipation of migration. Spatial mobility itself also has intrinsic value. Waters, Brooks, and Pimlott-Wilson (2011) show that notions of fun, enjoyment, and the pursuit of happiness abroad, rather than rational strategies around education, feature strongly in young British students’ aspirations to study overseas.

Places themselves are imbued with affects. Choices of destinations are driven by the “affective possibilities” (Conradson and Latham 2007) of the places, especially global cities or Eurocities (Favell 2008). Conradson and Latham’s study shows that many of New Zealand’s temporary migrants flocked to London because of the city’s “affective promises.” The fantasy of Shanghai being a “chic” and “magical” city, and an exotic place reminiscing New York and Berlin fifty years ago, is as much a reason for the “Shanghai Rush” as the economic opportunities it offered to Taiwanese businessmen (Tseng 2011). Sometimes, the country as a whole can be a desired destination for migration. Japan, for example, attracts young migrants who grew up with anime and video games. The desire to migrate to Japan was so strong that some would “have stepped over (their) own mother to get out here” (Liu-Farrer 2020: 85).

One field that has explored the affective dimension of migration is happiness studies. Happiness research aims to examine the affective effect of

migration quantitatively. In an attempt to understand people's reasons for residential mobility, Nowok et al. (2013) found that migration is usually preceded by a period when individuals experience a significant decline in happiness for a variety of reasons. However, findings regarding whether one achieves happiness after the migration are not consistent. While the Nowok et al. study carried out in the United Kingdom shows that residential mobility brings a boost in happiness, studies about internal migration in China and Thailand indicated that rural migrant workers reported lower happiness after moving into urban areas (Knight and Gunatilaka 2010; De Jong, Chamrathirong, and Tran 2002). Among international migrants, research finds that a lack of life satisfaction is also associated with a desire to emigrate internationally (Ivlevs 2015). A more comprehensive economic study that involves countries in different world regions shows a nonlinear relationship between happiness and migration tendency, and directions are different between countries with higher happiness scores and those with lower scores. Among countries where the general population reports a relatively lower degree of happiness, the lower the country's happiness score, the higher the emigration rate. In happier countries, the higher the country's happiness score, the higher the emigration rate (Polgreen and Simpson 2011).

Affects are also an important drive for return migration. In Thomson's (2005) historic research of returned British migrants from Australia, immigrants are driven home by the feeling of "homesickness" and their longing "for people and places" and "ways of life" in the home country (118). Among the contemporary Chinese migrants in Japan, the frustration from social marginalization and status loss, and the nagging sense of discomfort of "being under other people's roof" propel some Chinese migrants in Japan to return to their home country (Liu-Farrer 2011). At the same time, the emotional ties to their parents or kin pull people back to their places of origin. Baldassar (2015)'s study about Italian migrant living in Australia, but with aging parents back in their home country, shows that the feeling of guilt operates in such a transnational family context, entailing a moral obligation to return. Similarly, the singleton Chinese students overseas feel the emotional and moral obligation entailed in the notion of filial piety, and see their eventual return to take care of their elderly parents as an inevitable part of the future plan (Liu-Farrer 2014).

Finally, affects not only drive people away but also keep people in place. This affective relationship with places has been discussed in the literature on place-belongingness—a personal and intimate feeling of being at home in a place (Antonsich 2010). Migration is essentially a form of "displacement" or "deterritorialization." Places provide the physical as well as social spaces that can facilitate or disrupt the anchoring of one's belonging. The places immigrants feel attached to vary on geographic scales, from

one's apartment (Walsh 2006) and the neighborhood (Ehrkamp 2005) to the nation-state itself (Ho 2006, 2009).

This study builds on this developing scholarship on the affective dimension of migration by qualitatively examining how emotions can lead to varying migratory decisions among highly educated migrants—the most mobile individuals that many countries compete to attract and retain. In particular, by approaching these migrants' migration decisions in the place they have already migrated to, the study aims to clarify how different aspects of places engender varied emotions, and how such emotions might play a role in a migrant's migratory decisions.

Data, Methods, and Labeling

This chapter draws on interview data that I collected from highly educated migrants in Japan and Germany between 2015 and 2019. This project aims to understand these migrants' career mobilities in a global labor market and how they experience national employment systems and sociocultural life in both these countries. Although the fieldwork has been conducted in two different receiving contexts, instead of comparing the effects of specific places on people's migration, it focuses on examining how emotions matter to immigrants' migratory decisions in either location, and on how different places elicit different emotional responses. The Japan part of the data includes interviews with thirty-five individuals—fourteen women, and twenty-one men. The majority of them were aged between twenty-four and forty, with one who was forty-nine, at the time of interview. Among them, ten were Chinese, and the rest were mostly from Europe, North and South America, Africa, and Oceania. The German data includes twenty-five interviews conducted between 2017 and 2019—twelve women and thirteen men. Five of them came from other European Union countries, and the rest were from non-EU or non-European countries, such as India, Bangladesh, Brazil, China and Taiwan, and the Middle East. The majority of them were in their mid-twenties to early forties, but one was a retired medical doctor in his sixties.

Emotions were not originally planned as a research focus. As highly skilled migrants have relatively fewer institutional constraints and more resources to be mobile, the discussions about their migratory trajectories and career mobilities began to touch upon the affective aspects of places—be they workplaces, cities, or countries. In their narratives, it became clear to me that for these mobile migrants, the choice of place depended not only on the economic and professional opportunities it could provide, but also on how they *felt* about it or their life in it.

In this chapter, I use both “affect” and “emotion” in the text. Psychologists and cultural studies researchers consider affect to be a broader conceptual category than emotion. Emotions are seen as intense and temporary, and often culturally specific, such as anger, jealousy, and happiness. At the same time, affect can be more nebulous, and as simple as feeling good or bad (Russell 2003). Moreover, affect theory sees affects as “forces—visceral forces beneath, alongside, or generally other than conscious-knowing, vital forces insisting beyond emotion—that can serve to drive us toward movement, toward thought and extension” (Gregg and Seigworth 2010: 1). I thus choose to use “affective motive” to express this research’s objectives while emotions are used in the analysis to describe the specific feelings about places that my subjects expressed.

Negative and Positive Emotions in the Migration Decision-Making

Practical and emotional reasons are often both present and entangled in their narratives of migration decisions. When does either become more dominant in one’s migration decision? At least from this study, it shows that negative feelings about a place—feelings of unhappiness—are often more potent in one’s leaving decision, even though it might not be rational by the individual judgment. Positive feelings about a place, in comparison, exercise less pulling effect.

Boris is an engineer from Russia. His account of his multinational mobility trajectory illustrates such different degrees of influence by positive and negative emotions. He had been working for a big energy company in North Rhein Westphalia (NRW) in Germany for three years when I interviewed him. He lived in Düsseldorf with his wife. Boris first worked for a Norwegian firm in Russia upon graduating from university. Two years into his job, he had an opportunity to move from Russia to its Norwegian headquarters. Three years later, he obtained the permanent residency and so went back to Russia and married his girlfriend, Natasha. The young couple commuted between Russia and Norway in the first six months of their marriage because Natasha had a job in Russia that she liked. Also, she did not like Norway when she visited, and did not want to move there to live.

Soon, the company decided to move some of their production to Malaysia and looked for engineers who were willing to be stationed there. Boris discussed the opportunity with his wife, and they decided that, although the salary for working in Malaysia would be lower than what he was making in Norway, many of their expenses would be covered by the company. In addition, Malaysia was much cheaper to live in, and so they would eventually save money. They were also lured by the warm weather,

the possibility of speaking English (a language his wife was capable of), and a new environment. They moved, and quickly became absorbed into the expatriate community of the city. Natasha also enrolled herself in a Master of Business Administration program. They managed to make friends through such activities.

After staying in Malaysia for nearly two years, Boris faced a choice. Norwegian permanent residency stipulated that the maximum a resident could remain overseas without losing their residency was two years. Being a national from a non-EU country, that would mean his losing access to Europe, so he decided to move back to Norway even though he was enjoying his life in Malaysia. “My wife didn’t want to move, but she said ‘I will support you ... if you really think it’s important.’” Boris gave up his position, left the company, and went back to Norway with his wife.

The second time in Norway turned out to be a painful experience. Through a connection of one of his former colleagues, Boris started to work at a consulting firm in Oslo. The majority of the employees were Norwegian. “The Norwegians were reserved, so it was difficult to build friendships. In particular, my wife was unhappy. She couldn’t speak the language, had no friends, and initially also had some trouble with her legal status because she had never really lived in Norway before leaving for Malaysia.” Natasha started to talk about going back to Russia, but Boris was not willing to. He decided to look for jobs in other European countries. He was interviewed for four of them, two of which were in Germany. He accepted the job in Düsseldorf although, in his own words, this move was an irrational choice—because by the time they decided to leave the country, Boris had become eligible to apply for Norwegian citizenship, which would have given him much more freedom for residential mobility than his Russian passport. Nevertheless, the move to Germany turned out well. He commented:

The money was good, and they took care of us really well. We got all the immigration papers within a week. My wife was super happy. When we moved here and she saw the prices, she said, “Look, it’s cheaper to live here.” So it was a boost of energy for her, and she was dragging me in terms of emotion. She wasn’t happy in Norway, so that was that.

When I talked to Boris in a meeting room in the sleek, modern, high-tech office compound where he worked, he said that he had comfortably settled in Germany and into his new job. Being “comfortable” was not the ideal state for Boris, he confessed, because he liked excitement and challenge, especially in terms of work. However, Natasha was happy in Düsseldorf because she had made friends and started working. He was also happy with his life, and because of this contentment, he was not actively seeking other jobs. Boris still received recruiters’ phone calls and put his profile out, but

he was conservative about moving. Unless an exceedingly good opportunity came up, he said, he would stay put.

From Boris's narratives of his journey through different countries, one can see that instrumental and affective reasons tangled in his migration decision. However, depending on the nature of their emotions, he gave different priorities to instrumental and affective reasons. For example, when his Norwegian permanent residency was expiring, which would mean losing his access to Europe, he decided to leave Malaysia, even though both he and his wife were happy living there. At that moment, the instrumental reason, a European residency, was prioritized. The positive feelings brought by their expat life in Malaysia were not a strong enough pull to keep them there, even though leaving Malaysia also meant leaving the cushy job in this multinational firm. Later, when both he and his wife became unhappy in Norway, he sought jobs in other countries, despite soon being eligible for Norwegian citizenship—a legal status that would have brought him much more freedom than his Russian passport. When he finally moved to Düsseldorf, they became happy and content again. Because of this positive attachment to the place, they were more or less prepared to settle. Now, the only possibility for them to leave is if a great exciting opportunity came along—an instrumental reason yet again.

One might argue that Boris was among more privileged migrants whose skill was in great demand. He was in the EU region where the labor market was more integrated, and therefore enjoyed a better prospect for onward migration. He could afford to be more footloose when negative emotions arose. However, negative emotion-driven migration was also observed in Japan, even though it frequently meant returning to the home country. In an earlier study, I encountered in China a young man named Jing. Originally from Inner Mongolia, Jing went to Japan as an international student in 1998. Upon graduation, he started to work in a small city as an engineer for a company that manufactured car parts. He worked long hours and had a long commute, usually left home at 7 A.M. and returned at 11 P.M. The salaries were good, but he had no girlfriend nor time to look for one. To make things worse, his relationship with his neighbor soured over a parking space—the neighbor sometimes parked his car in the spot designated for Jing. This stressful lifestyle, compounded by the lack of a partner and a bad relationship with his neighbor, resulted in an intense feeling of loneliness.

It was such an unbearable feeling. After all, from the day he is born, a person needs to communicate with people daily. Every day, if there is something unpleasant, you can talk to your friends, your loved ones. [But in Japan] I sometimes did not dare to speak. Because if you spoke

[about unpleasant experiences] with parents, they couldn't help you but would worry ... I thought I had better go back to China.

After some searching, Jing found a job at a Japanese company in Shanghai. When I interviewed him in China, he was married and expecting a child. Although he was financially worse off than he had been in Japan, his life was much happier.¹

Tangled Emotions: The Centrality of Intimate Relationship

Both Boris's and Jing's stories bring out another characteristic of the affective drive for migration: the centrality of an intimate relationship. On the one hand, sex and love relationships themselves are potent drives in the migration process.² The potency of a love relationship provides a strong pull for people to leave a place, and it could just as quickly encourage someone to stay put (Farrer 2019; Liu-Farrer 2020). On the other hand, people's emotions in a relationship tend to tangle with those of their intimate others. Boris's statement about his wife "dragging" him in terms of emotions signals that his feelings were strongly connected to those of his wife. In the end, whether to move or to stay is a collective decision made by the couple, a finding that is also presented by other studies about highly skilled migrants (Ryan and Mulholland 2014).

Both Maria and Lingling followed their hearts. Originally from Latvia, Maria arrived in Japan aged twenty, enrolling at a Japanese university as an exchange student. She ended up staying, and finished a bachelor's as well as a master's degree. Speaking fluent Japanese and English, and three other European languages, she was employed by a prestigious Japanese firm. After working there for four years, she met a man from Australia who was in Japan on short-term assignments. After over a year of a long-distance relationship, she decided to leave Japan for Australia because it would be harder for him, who did not speak Japanese, to find a job in Japan than for her to continue her career in Australia, where her firm also had branches.

Lingling, a 36-year-old Chinese woman, was an engineer when I interviewed her. She had graduated from a master's program in engineering in the UK and then stayed on to work in London. As a foreign woman in an occupation dominated by English men, and working at places that often had no toilets for women, she went through a lot of hardship. She succeeded in gaining trust, attaining promotions, and earning a good salary. By her tenth year in the UK, at the age of thirty-three, she had become a branch manager in a multinational company, leading a team of English men who were mostly older than her. She then met a man who would

be her future husband, a German, and faced a decision. Lingling loved London. During the interview, she talked about how she enjoyed the abundant nightlife, colorful cultural events, and multiethnic and open social environment in this global city. She had also been in romantic relationships with different men, so her love life was not a total void. After she had met her husband-to-be, she spent several years traveling back and forth between the UK and Germany. Nonetheless, after they decided to marry, she left bustling London for Germany. The presence of a romantic relationship, therefore, exerted a strong enough emotional drive to pull her out of a place she was attached to and was making a successful career in. After moving to Germany, she and her husband chose a small town in which to build a house, where she would also have a garden to plant flowers. “That’s what I do now after work—planting flowers and watching the same crime series on TV on Sunday evenings.” Though this could not be more different from her former urban lifestyle, she felt satisfied with such a peaceful domestic life.

In contrast to Lingling and Maria, Carlos’s decision to settle down had to do with finding his partner in Japan. Carlos was a gay man from a South American country. He had always wanted to leave his home country because of his resentment toward its corrupt political regime. He spent the first five years of his postgraduate life in the United States as a language teacher, teaching Spanish. When his contract ended, he went back home and worked for a multinational foreign language education provider. Not wanting to stay in his home country, he looked for open positions his company advertised, and applied for several of them. Japan was just one of the choices. Not having been to Asia previously, he decided to try it out. While in Japan, he met his partner Takashi. By the time I talked to him, he had already been in Japan for fifteen years and had not long before obtained permanent residency and bought an apartment. Reflecting on his migratory decisions, Carlos emphasized that although the decision to come to Japan was out of the desire to escape his home country’s political environment, having Takashi in his life helped solidify his decision to settle in Japan.

Place and Affects

Migration aspiration is essentially a comparison of places (Carling and Schewel 2018). The place is not only a labor market where migrants can find better economic opportunities but it is also where affects and what matters to affects, such as intimate relationships, are engendered and structured. In recent social sciences, place, to be differentiated from space, is seen as constructed by human activities and as an intricate web of relations perceived by subjects (Massey 1994). However, a place is both a network

of relations and a physical thing. The place is a geographic location where nature and climate all play a part in conditioning one's activities. It is also historical, with settled cultural patterns and institutionalized practices shaping the manner in which social and intimate relationships can be formed and performed. Places consequently affect people's experiences and impact on their emotions. In the sections below, I explore how places engender affective responses to them, both by structuring intimate and social relationships and through their more general physical, social, institutional, and political environment.

Structuring Relations

Emotions are embodied experiences and can be internal responses to stimuli created in interpersonal relationships (Boccagni and Baldassar 2015: 74). Places, with their historically cultivated social and cultural patterns, sometimes dictate what kinds of relationships are possible and how they are constructed and performed, and thereby trigger emotional responses. This section focuses on two broad types of relationships: intimate/romantic relationships and more general social/friendship relationships.

Intimate Relations

The characteristics of the place influence the possibilities as well as the patterns of intimacy. Research finds that postcolonial racial hierarchy, localized status stratification, and global inequality that organize the socioeconomic landscapes in each place affect one's chances in the sexual field as well (see also Farrer and Tran in this volume). Legal and religious institutions in particular places also provide opportunities as well as constraints to specific demographic groups, and condition their sexual behavior. For example, in Shanghai, white women feel marginalized and undesirable in the sexual field they are involved in, and are thereby more inclined to leave (Farrer 2010). Dubai, on the other hand, attracts British women because, in contrast to the host country's restrictive moral codes and social environment regarding sexual practices, they have abundant sexual opportunities (Walsh 2007).

My fieldwork yields similar findings. Because I am a Chinese speaker, I was more likely to interact with Chinese migrants in Japan and Germany. In both countries, I have encountered unhappy and unsatisfied single heterosexual Chinese men. A sense of a lack of recognition of their masculinity frustrated them. Jun was a tall and stylishly dressed Chinese man I met at a global meet-up event in Düsseldorf. He had been in Germany for ten years, the first five as a student and the second five as an accountant in a German firm. He had recently purchased an apartment and a secondhand BMW

car, but when talking about his emotional life, Jun was dissatisfied. He complained, referring to the women present at the event, “These women only want to date German guys. What do I not have? I have a house, a car, and a good job. I beat most of the people here [at this organized social event]. But no, they still chase after the German guys.” I asked why. He said, after a pause, “Because I am ugly.” “But you are not!” I said. “I don’t understand,” he replied, visibly agitated, “what they are looking for.” He then talked about how in China he could get whomever he wanted with his *tiao-jian* (resource conditions). However, while some single Chinese men I had encountered, such as Jing, returned to China to look for marriage partners, Jun was not ready to resort to that means yet. He was attracted to European girls. At the time of our meeting, he was working to improve his English so he could have the opportunity to move to other countries in Europe where he might have a better chance of finding a partner.

Places also structure migrants’ intimate life and their migratory trajectories by conditioning their social life. In both countries where I conducted the fieldwork, the highly skilled migrants share the sentiment that it is hard to develop close friendships with the local residents—a phenomenon also documented in other studies on migrants’ friendship networks (Butcher 2009; Scott 2007; Liu-Farrer 2012; Walsh 2014; Hof 2018). Instead, migrants are likely to cluster around co-ethnics (Liu-Farrer 2004, 2012). Among the highly skilled, friendships are often built with other foreigners through work, professional associations, or organized social activities (Ryan and Mulholland 2014; Liu-Farrer 2020). Romantic relationships between migrants from different nationalities frequently develop in such social contexts. When it is time to consider long-term plans, complex decisions around career potentials and linguistic and cultural adaptation will sometimes cause one party to become an onward migrant, as shown in the cases of both Maria and Lingling.

Social Relations

Aside from intimate relationships, the other crucial interpersonal relationship is social, as friendship, community life, and clubs feature importantly in mobile people’s relationships with places (Plöger and Becker 2015; Ryan 2015, 2018; Frykman and Mozetič 2019). Whether there are social organizations and communities in a place is extremely important for skilled migrants’ emotional well-being. For some migrants, social networks and a group of friends provide emotional comfort and keep negative feelings at bay, even when other aspects of their life might not be entirely satisfactory. It is often these social resources that tie them to the place.

Juan was a Taiwanese woman who had obtained her first master’s degree in economics at a German university. She had moved to mainland China

when her German boyfriend at the time was transferred there. After the relationship failed, she had to go back to Taiwan because her German visa had expired. Juan was not happy in Taiwan. Not only was she unsatisfied with her work, but she also perceived her return as a failure. She detested the feeling of failing, because she had always been considered inferior to her elder brother. He had been to an elite school and had become a high-earning doctor while she only managed to go to a second-tier college in Taiwan. It was to prove her worth that she decided to study abroad. Aside from her dissatisfaction with herself being in Taiwan, she also missed the social circle in Germany. Most of her friends were in Germany, particularly in Düsseldorf, where there was a big Asian community, and she had been involved in all kinds of social groups. She decided to apply for another master's program in Germany, and found her way back to Düsseldorf. When I interviewed her, she was working for a small family-trading firm near Düsseldorf. Juan had never been satisfied with her work life in Germany because most of the places she worked for had been small firms. When I asked why she loved to live in Germany, especially Düsseldorf, she said, "Look around. In this area (near the main train station), you don't even see Germans." Indeed, when we walked out of a Japanese restaurant on a Tuesday night, somebody from a group of young Asian and half-Asian people in the store next door called out her name. Juan said, "I go out almost six days a week, and I have to set a day to myself to spend alone every week."

While many social groups seem to center around shared ethnic origins or professions, recently many social organizations have emerged that cater to the emotional needs of the globally mobile community. I joined InterNations, one of such organizations, before I headed to Germany. My mailbox has been bombarded by all sorts of social events since I signed up, from cocktail parties to movie-going and philosophical discussions. I went for a Sunday hiking event. It was a cool and sunny late summer day. Over thirty people from more than ten countries gathered at a train station in suburban Düsseldorf. Those who arrived first introduced themselves, and immediately started friendly chats. Conversations continued throughout the over 20-km walk through the beautiful German woods. Many of the people who went on the hike had already met each other at other events. Indeed, two days later, I spotted a few familiar faces when I went to an InterNations evening gathering with over 350 people from seventy different countries attending.

Many globally mobile people join such organizations. I have encountered single people at these events who were there both socializing and looking for potential partners. Even though the latter goal might not be immediately satisfied, the fulfillment of the former quenches the hunger for conviviality and social intimacy. Anita, an Indian woman, explained: "People are

social. Well, at least I am. I like such social gatherings. We make friends, build networks, and just have a good time. Yes, I want a family. I want kids. But it is not happening right now. I am quite happy living here because I have friends and many social activities.”

It is important to note that looking for communities and participating in such social circles are themselves learned skills. Boris, the Russian engineer featured in the previous section, said migration itself was a process of learning how to deal with emotional needs. After a multinational migratory experience, he and his wife had learned to anticipate the post-migration emotional responses. He pointed out that the first three months after arriving in a new place is like a honeymoon. “You love everything. You go everywhere, like a tourist. And then after that, it comes another six months of the difficult period.” It is difficult because migrants often have few social connections in the new environment, and find themselves isolated. “And I think that was the experience: I need to socialize. I need to network ... now. I don’t need to wait for three months of honeymoon, [and] another six months of stress. I need to do it now.” Although he did not join those organized activities himself upon coming to Germany, his wife signed herself up and participated in many social events. “She now knows how not to wait three months to let the stress period kick in. She immediately connects herself.”

Affects and the Physical, Social and Institutional Environment

People’s emotions in a place are not only affected by whether or not they can find intimate partners or a group of friends; the physical and social characteristics of the place itself can facilitate or inhibit people’s attachment to a place. Indeed, sometimes it is the little physical details in one’s environment that elicit positive feelings in people. Walsh (2012), for instance, described the case of a British woman from Newcastle who claimed she felt at home in Dubai because of the feelings invoked by the stretches of beach she walked on, the malls she went shopping in, and the morning sun shining through her bedroom window.

The general built environment and the sociocultural milieu in the place elicit affective responses among the skilled migrants I have interviewed in both Japan and Germany. For example, every migrant attached to Japan praises Japan’s security and convenience, and the general civility that Japanese people display. In particular, migrants’ narratives center around the specific localities they live in, especially the cities. For example, Tokyo is referred to as a global city that offers a charming and vibrant urban life. Contrary to common perceptions, Tokyo is also affordable, especially in terms of housing—a fact many migrants only realize after they have started living there (Liu-Farrer 2020). My respondents also liked to point out that

there were cheap and healthy meals available at any time of the day. The efficient, affordable, and extensive public transportation system impressed all of them. Thus, even though many young skilled migrants complained about other aspects of their life—such as the lack of social interactions with Japanese people, or the irksome Japanese workplace culture—they chose to stay because of the affordability and the excitement of life in Tokyo.

Similarly, Sunil decided to stay in Germany after he moved to Berlin because he found Berlin more international and had a lively social scene. Sunil first came to Germany for a six-month internship in Munich in 2013. He had previously been working for two years in Mumbai for a large tech company. Bored with the sameness of his life in Mumbai, he wanted to go somewhere else and experience other things, which drove him to apply for paid internship programs “in countries he was interested in.” These countries ranged from Cambodia to Chile, but also included Germany. That he ultimately came to Germany was merely because it was the first place where he got a suitable internship offer. After a difficult first two months, Sunil started to enjoy his life in Germany and decided to look for a job there. As he felt that there were not enough job opportunities in Munich, he broadened his search to other cities, mainly looking for jobs in Hamburg and Berlin, sending out over one hundred applications. After weekend trips to both Berlin and Hamburg, he decided on a company in Berlin. The job was satisfactory, but Sunil was more passionate about Berlin itself: not only were there many events and leisure opportunities, such as clubbing and sports, but Berlin also had a higher concentration of international people to whom he could easily relate. In particular, Sunil described the tech scene in Berlin as tightly knit. Everybody knew everybody else, which meant that he immediately heard about every new opening. In one way or the other, he was always considering changing jobs, because, according to him, the average “lifespan” of a job in his industry was two years, which made him, having now spent three years at his current company, “a dinosaur.” Nonetheless, he did not consider moving to another country in Europe, as Berlin offered enough excitement and ample career opportunities.

Every place also has particular social landscapes shaped by both the localized historical, racial, and ethnic relations, and global power relations and structural inequalities. An individual’s socioeconomic standing, racial and national background, gender, and age influence their social status in a given place. Geographic migration is often a process of identity disruption or remake, and, for many people from relatively less developed regions, entails a status drop or suspension. Sometimes, this status differential is reflected in the legal system’s different treatments and the inability to transfer one’s cultural capital in the labor market. A sense of marginalization and loss of social status foment resentment toward a place and can produce the

urge for onward migration. Nohl et al.'s study (2014) describes how a man from North Africa was distressed by his experiences of discriminative treatments in German society. Even after he obtained German citizenship, he had trouble securing his father-in-law's visa to visit Germany. Fed up with his marginal status in Germany, he moved his family to Sweden, hoping that the treatment would be different there.

Finally, places themselves change, and one's affective ties to them also change. Mahir was the oldest interviewee in the project. He had been born and raised in Aleppo (Syria), had studied medicine in Cairo (Egypt), and had moved to Germany after graduation in the 1980s. He retired in 2015. His relationship with Germany changed over the nearly four decades he was in the country. When Mahir first arrived in Germany, he felt welcome because there was a severe shortage of medical staff. He developed his career and became a head surgeon in his local hospital. He obtained German citizenship in 1992, and made friends with local Germans through sports activities. However, things took an adverse turn in the last two decades. He sensed increasing racism in German society, even before the 2015 refugee crisis. He had been supporting refugees from Syria by providing translation services to the local refugee and immigration offices. Once, when he was volunteering, a public servant asked him about his nationality, and he replied, "German." The officer demanded to see his identification document. After examining the I.D., the officer still claimed that carrying a German I.D. did not make him "German." For Mahir, this was a traumatic experience. He had perceived himself as "German" up till that point. After that, he spoke about himself as a "naturalized Syrian." With the recent migration and refugee discourses, he felt a further distancing from Germany, a place he used to consider home. He still enjoyed his quiet life in a small town near Hamburg, but sometimes he "got sick of his life in Germany." When that feeling occurred, he would fly to Greece, to an island where his father-in-law lived.

Conclusion: Affects, Mobilities, and Places

Migration is a process contingent upon a wide range of conditions, from practical incentives to legal structures, and from predictable outcomes to serendipitous encounters. Migratory trajectories are also tangled with an individual's social mobilities and life courses, influenced by imperatives inherent in different mobility logics. This study has used the lens of emotions to investigate the complex causalities. It shows, first, that migration is essentially a choice of places. Migration results in varied feelings toward places, and such emotions as much as practical reasoning affect the further

migration decision-making. Negative emotions often trump instrumental concerns, and act as a primary driver for leaving a place. The opposite is true for positive emotions toward a place. Though migrants tend to be conservative about leaving if they are content with the place, instrumental incentives can still pull a person out of the place. Second, this study highlights the centrality of intimate relationships in migratory decisions. Love relationships can pull migrants out of a place or keep them there. A partner's emotions also influence migration decisions because emotions often tangle within a relationship. Finally, this study demonstrates that places can engender affective responses to them and thereby influence people's migratory decisions. Places elicit different emotions because of their social and physical attributes, and the opportunities and constraints they present. In particular, they shape emotions by structuring the patterns and prospects of intimate relationships and social relationships.

This study was conducted in Germany and Japan, two countries located in markedly different geopolitical regions, with different sociocultural and institutional contexts. While the opportunities of migration might vary and directions of trajectories might differ for migrants in these two countries, the key findings of affective drives of migration and emplacement are observed in both countries. It affirms that wherever they are, migrants need intimacy, whether it is romantic or social; they desire recognitions, whether it is through their work or social circle; and they look for places that can provide existential security and at the same time fulfill these different emotional needs.

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NOTES

1. This story is documented in Liu-Farrer 2020: 116.
2. See, for example, Liu-Farrer 2010, and the special issue in *Mobilities* edited by Mai and King (2009).

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