Highly-Skilled Nigerian Migration as a Spatial and Temporal Continuum

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Melanie Mbah
Karlsruhe Institute of Technology
Email: melanie.mbah@kit.edu

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University of Sussex

Abstract

This paper focuses on the continuity of migration processes, which means that they neither have a perceived end nor a beginning. The identification of six types of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants gives insights into the multiple dynamics of migration processes. Individuals at different stages in times and space can be part of a different type of the continuity-based migration model, depending on the progress a migrant has made as well as influenced by the social and spatial context of a migrant. Continuity means that there can be several back-and-forth movements and return must therefore be understood not as an end of the migration process, since re-emigration can follow. Therefore, the classical understanding of return, as a definitive act which closes the migration cycle, is challenged. Drawing on 65 semi-structured interviews with highly-skilled Nigerian migrants in three destination countries, namely Germany, the UK and the USA, I argue for a new migration model for West Africa. Migrants do not take a clear decision to leave the source country forever; rather the length of stay remains unclear during the whole migration process. It is more like a repeated postponement of return as the goal of migration is not reached yet, or amenities for return have not been collected. Other factors, such as time and the socio-spatial context, play a crucial role in this mechanism of postponement. Furthermore, these ongoing and dynamic migration processes have various impacts on migration outcomes which cannot easily be categorised as either good or bad, neither for the source nor the receiving country. In this context concepts of brain drain, brain waste, and brain gain/brain circulation are discussed.

Keywords

Introduction

In recent years there has been a lively debate about linked processes of immigration, return migration, transnationalism and onward migration, as well as the implications of those developments for the integration of immigrants into the host society. A growing body of literature focuses either on transnationalism and the transnational social spaces which come into existence through the intertwined actions of migrants and non-migrants in two or more countries (see e.g. Glick Schiller 1999; Portes et al. 1999; Pries 2008; Vertovec 2009), or on the return of migrants which is now regarded as more dynamic in the sense that there could be several temporal returns and not just one permanent return to the country of origin (see e.g. King and Christou 2014; King and Kilinc 2014). In recent literature the assumption is furthermore challenged that there must always be a negative nexus between integration and transnationalism, and within the triple nexus of integration, transnationalism and return. Erdal and Oeppen (2013) and King and Christou (2014) regard transnationalism and integration (as well as return) not necessarily as antagonists, but as a continuum with two poles: on the one hand poor integration and high transnationalism and propensity to return, and on the other hand high integration and less transnationalism and lower return intentions. Between those

two poles there are several variations regarding the extent of integration and transnationalism as well as return intentions. For instance, high integration can also occur alongside a high degree of transnationalism and even, conceivably, a significant propensity to return. These findings go along with other authors' findings on, for example, citizenship, identity, and home in respect to transnational activities (see eg. Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Kennedy and Roudometof 2002; Faist 2010).

My focus in this article is on the temporal and spatial continuum of migration in this triple nexus of integration, transnationalism and return. With the identification of six types of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants combined through a complexity of variables, I will show that, dependent on time and socio-spatial context, migration can be seen as a temporal and spatial continuum with several potential outcomes. Carling and Erdal (2014) have already showed the interconnectedness of return migration and transnationalism in terms of temporal and spatial parameters and the ongoing continuity of return and transnationalism. Based on their analysis, I add a more complex view of the migrants as individuals acting between time and space in different socio-spatial contexts. I not only examine when transnationalism takes place and in which direction, rather I examine the whole migration process drawing on dynamic types which inherit various forms and levels of transnationalism, integration, and return.

I studied the migration of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants, completing 65 semi-structured interviews in three countries of destination, namely Germany, the UK and the USA. The variety of interviewees and the different spatial contexts the migrants live in made it possible to differentiate six main types of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants. I argue that individuals are not required to stay in one type; rather, with time and sometimes change of spatial contexts, they turn from one type to another type with different characteristics. Finally, I introduce a new migration model of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants.

Starting with bringing my research into the existing framework of transnationalism, return and integration research, I will focus mainly on the work of Carling and Erdal (2014), Erdal and Oeppen (2013) and Ralph and Staeheli (2011) as good examples of contesting concepts. Erdal and Oeppen (2013) challenge the relationship between integration and transnationalism and conclude that there exist various types beyond the zero-sum extremes, which show that integration and transnationalism do not preclude each other. Carling and Erdal (2014) regard return migration and transnationalism as two intermingled practices in a temporal and spatial continuum. Transnationalism has two directions, either from the destination to the source country or vice versa, depending on where the migrant actually is. By contrast, Ralph and Staeheli (2011) emphasise understandings of home and its effects on migration. They argue that migrants develop hybrid identities over time, which leads to integration in the host society and therefore return can be better understood as a myth which is continually articulated yet postponed.

Following brief outlines of my research questions and methodology, I will firstly introduce some important typologies in migration research and then consider the six types of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants. Secondly I will highlight the new aspects of the typology I introduce into migration research. Then I argue why those types of migrants must be viewed in a temporal and spatial continuum which puts the typology of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants in another complexion. Then, migration is interpreted as a dynamic process, which

leads to several outcomes. Those outcomes cannot easily be defined as either good or bad; therefore the identified types are sorted into a rather dynamic triangle of development paths which refer to the concepts of brain drain, brain waste, and brain gain/brain circulation (see e.g. Salt and Findlay 1989; Chikanda 2007; Lee and Kim 2010; Pecoraro 2013). In this section, I follow the argumentation of those scholars (see eg. Akesson and Baaz Eriksson 2015) who view return in both ways, permanent and transnational. Furthermore I suggest to focus not only on economic aspects of these knowledge flows, but to include cultural and social capital which has the advantage of regarding both short-term and long-term effects on societies. Finally, I propose a new model of migration from the perspective of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants. This model depicts the whole migration process as a continuum, starting with the actual migration aspirations and the migration decision, then continuing with the migration process as such. I argue that highly-skilled Nigerian migrants often have the goal of a transnational way of life which enables them to maintain identities and homes in both host and home societies.

Research questions

There are many different typologies in migration research (e.g. types of international migration, types of transmigrants and returnee types), but none that focuses specifically on highly-skilled migrants and the complexity of their forms of migration also in terms of integration and return. Therefore, the initial research question is: *what does such a complex typology of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants look like?* The follow-up sub-questions are then:
- What meaning has such a typology for migration processes as a whole?
- What kind of effects does migration have according to this actor-centred analysis?
- Which assumptions can be made in reference to the triple nexus integration-transnationalism-return?

Methodology and data

The findings of this paper are based on my analysis of 65 semi-structured interviews with highly-skilled Nigerian migrants in Germany, the UK and the USA conducted in 2011 and 2012. It was an initial goal of the research to have (almost) no gender biases and migrants of all age groups and social backgrounds. Due to methodological as well as practical limitations it was not possible to fully accomplish this goal. Access to migrants is very much limited through gatekeepers, especially if the researcher is interested in one special group of migrants, namely highly-skilled migrants who are defined here as people from Nigeria who at least have a first university degree. Furthermore, migrants are defined as people who are not living in their country of origin for at least one year or more.

To give an outline of the interviewees, the age distribution ranges from 25 to 64 years; most of them were between the age of 30 and 50. I interviewed 25 women and 40 men. The minimum of time in the destination country at the time of the interview was one year and the maximum was 31 years.

All interviews were conducted personally and face-to-face by me, except one telephone interview. The interviews were recorded and transcribed completely, to miss no

important detail. The length of the interviews ranged between 30 minutes and 2 hours. This variable length depended on the places they were conducted in, which were sometimes public (e.g. café, work place), sometimes private (e.g. home, car), and which greatly influenced the atmosphere of the interview. Of course interviewer effects have to be taken into consideration and were avoided as far as possible.

The analysis of the interview transcriptions was made in two main steps. First, sections of the transcriptions were categorised in codings which helped to get a proper picture of the main issues that were mentioned. Second, a variety of variables of different types were identified and several times verified regarding their inner cohesion and outer distinction. These types were then brought into a time-space continuum which led into a migration model from an actor-centred point of view, reflecting the migrants' perspective on the migration process. This helped to understand which structural opportunities and constraints migrants meet when trying to integrate themselves into the host societies. Quotations as well as narrations of migrants' biographies are used in the following sections to gain a better understanding of the migrants' point of view. Anonymity is guaranteed by the usage of pseudonyms for all names of migrants.

Migration typologies and their relevance

Many scholars of migration research have created typologies and models to reduce the complexity of international migration and in order to understand migration processes better. These typologies can be sorted in three categories. Firstly, typologies which focus on international migration processes as a whole. These typologies differentiate between different forms of international migration, e.g. emigration and immigration, return migration and diaspora migration, as well as transmigration (e.g. Pries 2003). Secondly, typologies which focus on just one group of the macro-typology of international migration, either focusing on transmigration or return migration (Cerase 1974; King 1986; Portes et al. 1999). The typologies on transnationalism differentiate between economic, political and socio-cultural transmigrants, which means that an economic transmigrant focuses on transnational business contacts as a migrant entrepreneur. Political transmigrants are actively involved in politics, and the socio-cultural transmigrant is likely involved in traditional sports and music activities (Faist 1999; Portes et al. 1999). Return typologies focus on individuals, as for example Cerase's (1974) typology on Italian returnees from America. He identified four types of returnees, namely the failed, the conservative, the retirement and the innovative returnee (Cerase 1974). Thirdly, other scholars who work on return migration created typologies focusing on specific categories, e.g. on length of stay in the country of destination, or the return intentions compared to actual returns (King 2000). King (1986) classified return in different temporal dimensions (occasional, periodic, seasonal, temporal and permanent) combined with levels of economic activities (none, short-term contract, active but with re-emigration intention, active and no return intentions), which can be seen as a first attempt to shift from the classical understanding of return migration as being permanent. Nevertheless, this typology cannot give a proper picture of return migration nowadays. Another typology includes both the intention of return and actual behaviour towards return (King 2000). These typologies can help to understand why return may not be permanent or not take place at all.

However, they focus on return migration and do not consider the overall migration process; instead they focus on only few (for example two or three) factors to reduce the complexity and get a general overview.

These typologies all have therefore in common that they try to reduce complexity in order to develop a better understanding of migration. On the other hand, migration typologies are always a reduction of reality and are not able to explain every single migration. Sometimes migrants' actions are completely different to those categories, which means they cannot be classified into even one of the categories. Nevertheless, migration typologies are quite useful to better understand migration processes.

However, my objective is to put a bit more of the actual complexity into the typology to gain a more nuanced understanding of migration processes as a whole. This is even more interesting as there is no existing classification of highly-skilled African migrants. My approach in this paper is therefore new and aims to get a better understanding of specifically African migration motivations, realisations and integrations of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants and their possible effects on the source country.

Types of highly-skilled Nigerian Migrants as a temporal and spatial continuum

A variety of variables were employed to capture the complexity of individuals and meet the requirements of a complex typology based on an actor-centred approach. Those variables can be categorised in five clusters, namely socio-economic background, networks, socio-spatial context, career development, and return intentions. Out of the 65 interviews, six types of migrants were identified: students, privileged, establisher, dependents, integrated, and transmigrants.

The *student* typically is in the country of destination for a few years (one to five years), is actively involved in education, sends no remittances (indeed he or she is likely to be receiving remittances from Nigeria), and is willing to return after graduation, or after some work experience, if conditions in their home country are good. They have not visited Nigeria since they left. A typical example for this type is Christian, a 36-year-old Nigerian student who had lived in Britain for four years at the time of the interview. He had made his decision to migrate to the UK long before he actually migrated, because he was sure that a UK degree will boost his career in Nigeria. This is why he saved lots of money before emigration, to finance university education in Great Britain. He was able to do so, because right after his first degree in Nigeria, he started to work as accountant in a bank. According to his narration, he liked the job and he stated that he earned good money. Nevertheless, he searched for an opportunity to migrate to the UK and was happy when he eventually got the possibility. He married a Nigerian woman who held a British passport. Beside his studies in the UK he still works to earn some income. In the future he wants to establish a company. Therefore he already makes plans to go into the line of migrant entrepreneurship. He still regards Nigeria as home. The longing for a better and brighter future is what made him accept the 'high price' as he said: 'I'm seriously missing Nigeria honestly to be frank with you, but what we are doing, we are paying a price for a great future and sometimes some price you pay can be very demanding […].' Therefore, for him, it was a necessity to migrate in order to have a better

future, not just for himself, as well for his family, as he already has a small child. Meanwhile he makes use of the term 'return' in that he wishes to return to develop the country (Nigeria):

> I'm not from this country and […] not a white person and so I would like to go back to my country and use the experiences and the knowledge and the education that I have acquired to help my people as well because Nigeria is still an under-developing country and I think that I still have things to contribute to help it to evolve as a big country that will be ranking up there with countries like Germany […].

In this context such a statement can be interpreted as a classical myth of return which is stated as a promise to himself that one day all the struggles will have an end and he will be able to relax and have a wonderful and bright future, which will affirm that he made the right decision – to emigrate in the first place, and then to return. It is also like a promise to family members and friends back in Nigeria that he will fulfill their expectations and hopes one day. At the same time such a statement might also be interpreted as an excuse in front of the host society to insist that he had no other possibility and of course still wants to go back.

To continue with the next type, the *privileged*. They are involved in different fields, which might be education, but also some sort of employment. For them migration was easier to access, because they already inherited the legal status of the country of destination. They send no or just little amounts of money to the country of origin, either because they have most of their family members abroad, or there is no need to as they do not actively plan their return. Their length of stay in the country of destination varies and therefore some of them make periodical visits to Nigeria, which means less than every three years. A typical example of this type is Susan, 32 years old, who works as learning development officer. She had been in the UK for five years in 2012, when the interview was conducted. Susan's parents had lived in the UK, where she was born, but soon after her birth her parents went back to Nigeria, so that she grew up in Nigeria. As the holder of a British passport, the access to migration existed and the wish for migration led her to migrate straight after her first degree. In the beginning she relied on her kin network in the UK who gave her accommodation and financial assistance. During her Masters she could only do some menial jobs, but right after her final exams she was able to find a job related to her field of studies. Susan had advantages over other Nigerians who migrate to the UK, not only with respect to her passport, but also the fact that her parents raised her differently due to their own migration experience so that she grew up bilingual right from the start, not as other Nigerian children who start with English only in pre-school. She already made up her mind that she does not want to go back to Nigeria, because of the future possibilities of her children.

> For instance, with all this madness going on, the bombing and you know the roads are bad and robbers and stuff like that, it just makes you […] think OK maybe I should stay here. […] You want to go back and want to have the same quality of life, but it doesn't look like if it is going to be possible. […] When you have a husband, then you have children, then it is a whole different ball game all together.

The third type, the *establisher*, is struggling to integrate into the host society, mainly doing menial jobs, trying several possibilities to become successful, but beset by several setbacks or failures. Establishers face responsibilities in both societies (Nigeria and the host country): therefore they send remittances to Nigeria, although they have to take care of family members in the country of destination as well. They do not plan to return as they do not have the means to do so. Michael is a typical example of this type. He is 39 years old, living for five years in the UK by the time of the interview in 2012, is married to a British woman, has two children and was actively looking for a job. Right from the beginning of the interview, Michael made it clear that he is very disappointed, as he feels like someone who has failed. He had come to the UK with great expectations of a better and easier life.

> My imagination and expectations were that getting into the UK will mean an end to most of my problems. I assumed life here to be so easy, so free, in fact so effortless. You don't need to put in much, everything does itself. That was my assumption before I came here.

Back in Nigeria, he went into politics during his first degree and continued with politics after he graduated. After seven years of struggling to get a good position, he had saved enough money to finance his studies in the UK. Therefore, he applied for admission at universities in the UK and for a student visa which he got. That is how he managed to access the migration process. He studied and did a Masters in the UK, but failed to find a good job afterwards and is still struggling with finding employment. This is what made him make such a harsh statement:

> We thought life to be so easy going down here; you now see that you just imprisoned yourself. […] You are being forced to do things that you wouldn't have done ordinarily in the name of a job, so for instance coming to this country for people like me is like Gulliver's travel. […] Gulliver in his own home was the tallest guy, but when he went to Lilliput as well, his height was so tall that people had to get to him with a ladder, but when he travelled to another place, the story changed and he became the shortest […]. That is exactly what the UK led me to.

Still Michael does not plan to return in the near future, rather he states that he has two homes now, especially because of his nuclear family in Britain. He wishes for his children that they will receive a Western standard of education and will not have to struggle in the future as he does.

Dependents are those highly-skilled Nigerian migrants who decided not by themselves to migrate; rather they married a Nigerian who already lived in the country of destination. Their everyday lifes are centred on the family as they have had children shortly after immigration or they already had some even before. Therefore they were not able to develop their own career, but chose types of employment mainly in the low-paid employment sector, eg. nursing, which they found more suitable to combine with taking care of their children. They do not remit money and do not plan to return, as the nuclear family is their focus. Jennifer counts as a typical migrant of this type. She is 26 years old, married to a Nigerian

migrant who lived in the USA for quite a while; they have three children. She narrated that she had not planned to migrate, because as a female she had no ambition to look for greener pastures. She explained that she migrated just because of marriage and therefore it was a decision not made by her alone.

> I didn't plan to come to abroad but I got married at home to a guy that lives here [in the US]. That's the only way of coming to abroad. […] My target was to work in a bank […] but while I was in school, about to graduate, I got married so I have no option but to join my husband. […] We are newly married we need to make kids by living together […].

This is a very traditional perspective on life, but in fact still vivid in the Nigerian culture. For this reason she has never tried to find work with her Bachelor's degree, neither in Nigeria nor in the USA. In fact, she started working as a nurse, as she finds it easier to get access to the labour market and more suitable to combine it with having small children, because she can work during nights. Jennifer stated that migrants have certain challenges in finding a job, especially when they do not speak proper English. That language might be such a big issue for Nigerians in the USA or the UK was kind of surprising, but regarding the fact that English is usually not their first language and most have a strong accent, it is clear that they might face difficulties. Jennifer does not think of returning as this would be a joint decision and more dependent on decisions made by her husband. And again she feels very lonely, because of different cultural and social aspects of daily life, especially regarding childcare.

> Things go different here. If your kids get off school, if you don't register anybody to pick up your baby nobody can pick it up, but at home [Nigeria] you go freely. But where I came from it's a different ballgame altogether. Your family and your relatives from everywhere all the time they are there for you, you don't have to struggle.

The fifth type is the *integrated*. They are well-integrated in the host society, which means they have well-paid jobs in the tertiary or quaternary sector. They have family in both societies, which means that they have responsibilities to take care of in both countries and therefore send remittances. They make visits to Nigeria either regularly (once a year) or periodically (less than every three years). Whether they will return in the future or not is very unclear, as they feel at home in both countries. Samson, as a typical integrated migrant, reported that he always had the desire to migrate since way back. His wish was strengthened by the narratives of Nigerian migrants in the USA and the UK. As he had known people in the USA, it helped him to make the decision and get assistance. In his own words, he said:

> In Nigeria, being a colony of British, after your university, we always aspire to get abroad to the European countries just to kind of booster your education. […] I want to travel abroad because it is […] the ultimate. […] You see people, they come back [from developed countries, e.g. the UK], they get job usually because they studied abroad, they speak differently […], so it is the goal that I wanted to achieve and I did.

He saved money to make efforts to let the dream come true. However, the moment he emigrated he realised that it is not going to be as easy as he thought. His degree from Nigeria was not recognised; therefore he had to repeat his studies and did another Bachelor. After doing some odd jobs he was able to find employment relating to his qualification. Samson, who has lived in the USA now for 22 years, is well integrated into the American system. He managed to find employment, owns a property, and has a family – so the American Dream became true. He is also able to fulfill his responsibilities in Nigeria, which means that he regularly sends money to his family members in there. Samson clearly stated that he has no intention to return to Nigeria, except as a retiree.

> Right now, United States is home. […] First, I have kids here, they grow up here. Second, I have business here. Third, life is just what you call life security here that we don't have in Nigeria, because if you go visit Nigeria, you are scared of armed robbery. […] And when you live here, there is nothing like that, everything is peaceful.

The last type is the *transmigrant*. This type is rather mobile, because travelling is the most important characteristic. Visits to Nigeria are not only made regularly; instead they are quite often which means more than once a year. Keeping in contact with people in both countries is part of their everyday life, as they are into typical migrant entrepreneurships. They also face responsibilities in both societies, but find it easier to fulfill them as they stay in close contact with people in the destination as well as in the source country. The status of transmigration means having reached the goal of being part of both cultures at the same time without losing one's identity or home. Transmigrants who are not in the reproduction stage of the life-cycle might think of onward migration regarding job opportunities or development of their own career. Ben, who had lived in Germany for 19 years at the time I conducted the interview, is well integrated into the German system. He came to Germany for 'greener pastures' and he eventually achieved this goal. It had been not easy for him, as he came as an irregular migrant and had to seek political asylum in order to reach some kind of legalised status. He was then lucky to meet his wife, a German woman, so that he could cancel his asylum-seeking status. But his Nigerian university degree was not recognised; that is why he tried to do another degree in Germany, but he dropped that and decided to go into self-employment which turned out to be a good decision, as he was able to establish a small company. His expectations and experiences were that of most Nigerians I interviewed, as the following quote shows:

> I come from a social class in Nigeria whereby I had an automatic expectation. I went to a very good primary school, my father was a very successful businessman, his father was a very successful businessman, […] I went to a very good university in Nigeria […] I had a very good grade, […] I wasn't unemployed for a day, I had a job at a state company as an engineer, so you have this kind of status that […] you should belong to in any society and if you come into a society whereby […] there's racism, […] and realise that the people don't take you as you take yourself, […] so this

process nobody could have expected it. […] At the beginning it was very frustrating […] but if you look back, it was positive.

Ben now feels at home in Germany, he learned a lot and loves the system, but still he feels at home in Nigeria. He therefore developed a hybrid identity which is the reason why he does not want to give up his connections in one country for the other, rather he combines both in travelling to Nigeria as often as possible, at least three times a year. This is only possible because of his migrant entrepreneurship and the maintenance of business links to Nigeria as well as his private network.

Migration as a Dynamic Process

Thus far, I identified six types of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants, taking into account several factors. Despite the fact that the findings are based on the micro level and refer to an actor-centred view, differences which can be regarded as caused by structural differences between the countries of destination have been detected as well.

First, *the USA* seems to be appreciated by migrants who are more traditionally oriented and more conservative, as they have a strong image of the American Dream. Those migrants who migrated looking for 'greener pastures' aspire to match the typical American Dream in having a big house and big cars with which they can reach the status of somebody who made it. In the USA there are lots of other Nigerian migrants with whom they are linked and who help to provide relevant information on how to get started. Those ethnic networks play a huge role in the USA. Nigerian migrants can live a way of life with certain kinds of similarities to Nigeria – although in a totally different system – as there live so many Nigerians that they can easily stay linked exclusively to Nigerians and still feel as part of the American society. This is why most highly-skilled Nigerian migrants I interviewed feel very much integrated into the American society and do not intend to return to Nigeria.

Contrarily, the *German system* does not allow Nigerian migrants to get into the system so easily. There are more challenges, starting with the language, less African minorities and an employment market which is very much restricted and not easy to access. Therefore, many Nigerians take self-employment as a chance to overcome the difficulties they face in the German labour market. In the literature, the development of transnational strategies to counter the lack of opportunities in a host society has been an issue for several years now (Safran 1999; Portes 1999). Those Nigerians who are successful develop strong transnational links to both countries, so that they regard a transnational way of life as the best choice.

In *the UK*, migrants have different expectations and more knowledge about the system, as they know the education system and therefore often have the wish to gain access to that system to improve themselves and become more competitive. The colonial ties play a huge role in that case. This can be seen in the high number of second-generation Nigerians returning to the UK after having been taken back to Nigeria. This displays a reverse return migration to that of those mainly examined in the literature on second-generation returnees (see King and Christou 2014; King and Kilinc 2014), because the first generation had returned to the country of origin and now the children are involved in similar migration

processes as their parents, but actually not as first-generation migrants. On the other hand integration seems to be more difficult, as the labour market is very restricted and many highly-skilled Nigerians do not yet know how they will be able to integrate or if they will have to go back to Nigeria which might be a goal for them as well, if conditions and job opportunities are good.

Beyond the differences regarding integration, there are the differences in the way of entering the country. For the USA, most highly-skilled Nigerian migrants either gained access through the American Greencard Lottery or through marriage, and to the UK through the British passport, student visa, or as well marriage. In Germany many highly-skilled Nigerian migrants reported that they came into the system through irregular migration channels (e.g. fake passport and political asylum), or they came in with a tourist or business visa which they overstayed and then searched for opportunities to legalise themselves which often led to interethnic marriages. This in turn leads to another kind of integration and links towards the host country, which on the one hand binds migrants more to stay, and on the other hand, because of several difficulties, brings them to establish economic links to Nigeria.

Based on these types, I argue for a conceptualisation of migration as a dynamic process with several stages depending on the individual's development and preferences evolved over time and space. That is why those types have to be regarded dynamically which means that individuals change affiliation from a specific type to another with time and depending on experiences, preferences and choices the individuals made. For a better understanding, I draw my argumentation on three examples of migrants' biographies who are three new cases who illustrate the trajectories in the migration process (see Figs. 1-3).

First, there is Samuel who migrated to Germany the first time in the late 1970s to study there (see Fig. 1) starting as *student* type. He reported that in those times it was not difficult to get a visa for Germany. After graduation in Chemistry he was not able to find suitable employment in Germany and decided therefore to return to Nigeria to find a job there in 1987. He was employed as a lecturer at several universities of Nigeria and stayed there as a return migrant for 14 years. Meanwhile the labour market in Nigeria deteriorated and when his contract at one of the universities ended he was unable to find another employment. That is why he decided to re-emigrate to Germany in 2001. Although he came with a student visa he is not actively into education, rather he is working in several menial jobs to earn a living, that is why he is, at this stage, characterised as *establisher*. Since 2001 he is struggling and still has difficulties getting settled into the German system and society. He has responsibilities in Nigeria; therefore he sends remittances every now and then. The constraints he met are structural as well as individual, because although he studied in Germany, he had difficulties finding a job, which might have to do with less-than-perfect German language skills, but as well with discrimination, notably a different skin colour which is very obvious in case of Nigerians, and which often makes a difference in Germans' behaviour towards black Africans. In structural terms it has to be emphasised the role of legal status which he does not have in a permanent way. This makes it extremely difficult to become employed, and without proper employment he faces again difficulties in getting a permanent legal status. For some migrants this might be like a vicious circle, and in his case it is. Furthermore his advanced age (in 2011 he was 54 years old) is another hindrance in fitting into the labour market requirements easily. Therefore he is in my dynamic migration

model still characterised as affiliated to the *establisher* type. He is very unsure of the future, whether he will return to Nigeria or not, especially because he is lacking a permanent legal status in Germany.
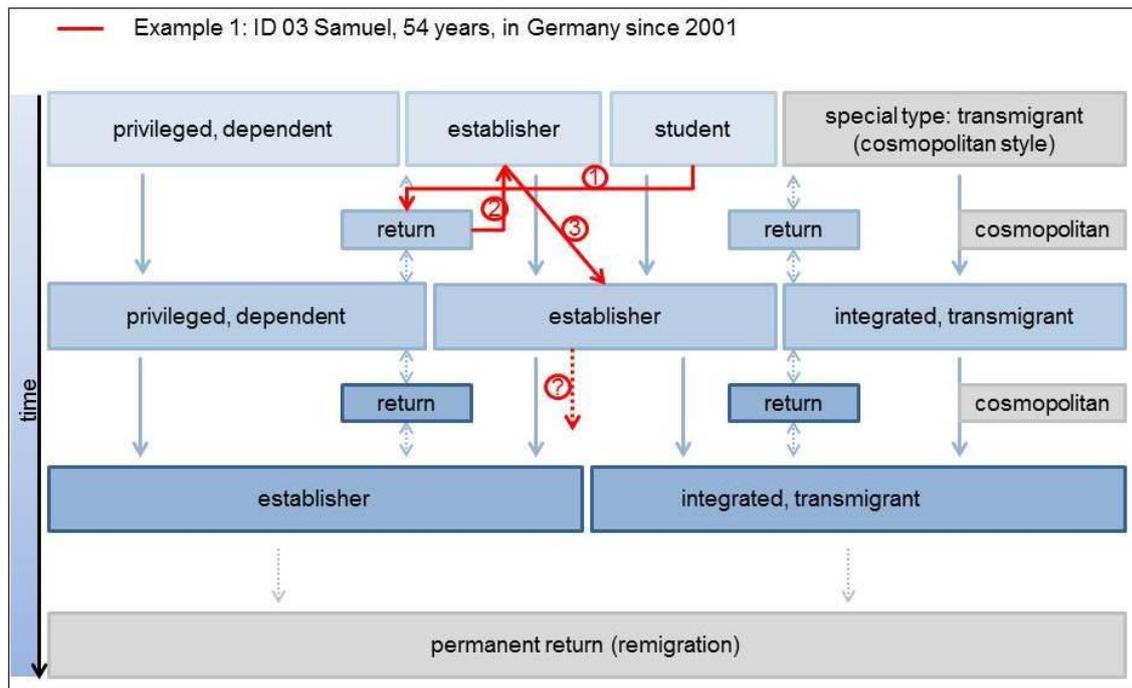

Figure 1: Migration as temporal and spatial continuum, example 1.

My second example is Benjamin (Fig. 2). He also migrated for education with a student visa to the USA to gather some education there (*student*). It was the beginning of the civil war in Nigeria when he entered the USA in 1967, still a teenager. It was not difficult to get a student visa and in his case even easier as he was completely funded by the Nigerian government. After graduation in the USA he became part of an official returnee programme of the Nigerian government, to get back the lost 'brains'. He relocated with his wife and worked for the Nigerian government in different places. According to his reports, it was difficult to be accepted by the non-migrants with whom he worked, because they were hostile to his skills and educational background which were experienced as strange and patronising. According to his account of his experience, Benjamin identified the low level of education he inherited (Master) as the core problem, because his colleagues might have had more practical experience and a higher educational level. Therefore he decided to re-emigrate to the USA in order to further his studies in 1980 (*student*). Again he was funded by a scholarship. This time, after graduation, he decided to stay in the USA for some additional years to acquire further work experience and develop his university career, as he got employed at a University in the USA. Time went by and he still worked with several universities in the USA, and as the political as well as economic situation in Nigeria deteriorated he continued to postpone his return (*integrated*). Meanwhile he integrated more and more in the host society became settled in terms of family and employment. Despite that, he started to establish some professional networks with universities in Nigeria and became editor of a scientific journal which turned him from an integrated type to a *transmigrant*. His nuclear family lives in the USA, but he maintains very strong linkages to Nigeria which enables him to travel to Nigeria

at least twice a year. Regarding a permanent return he said: 'Yes, I am in the process, there is no doubt about that. I mean it is as clear as tomorrow's sun, when I'm ready I want to go back (giggle).' This statement has an ambivalent meaning, because he is already in his 60s, therefore he has not so much time left to return to Nigeria, either for retirement or ultimately for his own burial. This is not said sarcastically; I base my interpretation on narratives of Nigerian migrants who told me that corpses are sent to Nigeria when people wish to – and referring to their narratives many do indeed wish that.
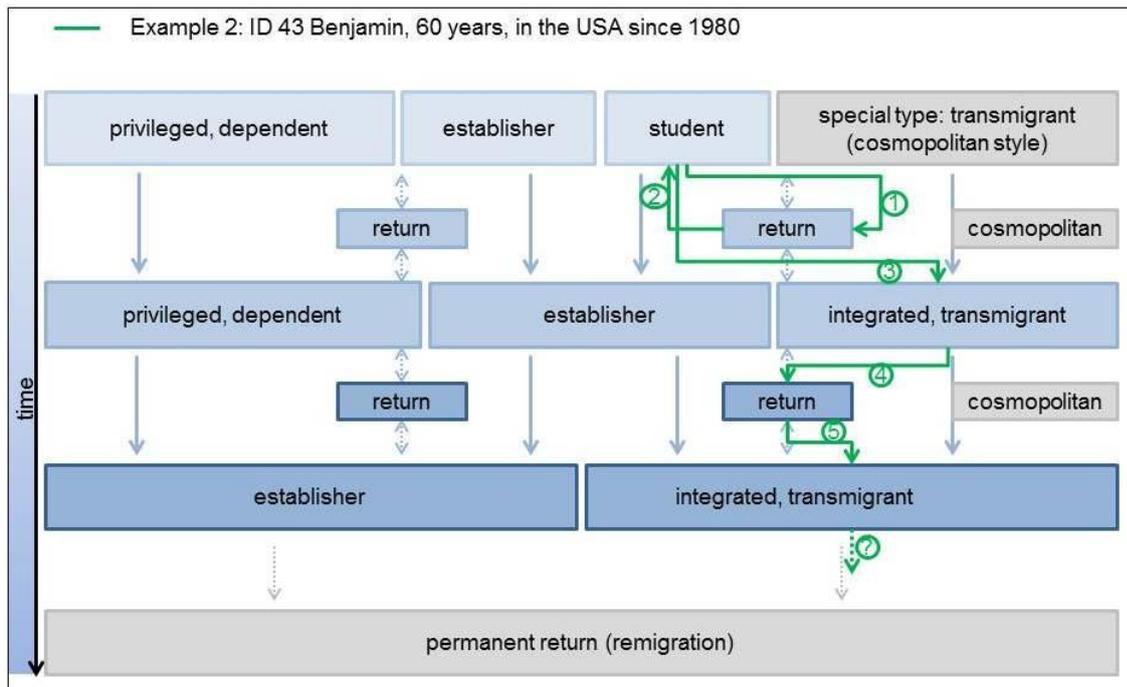

Figure 2: Migration as temporal and spatial continuum, example 2.

My final example is that of James who migrated to the UK in 2004, two years after his first degree in Nigeria (Fig. 3). He was born in the UK and lived part of his childhood in the UK. His parents returned to Nigeria when he was in his first year of secondary school, in 1989 when he was 12 years old (first as *dependent* then as *privileged* type, as we take the first stage of the life-cycle and his early childhood into account although it was not an independent migration process, but influenced his migration biography). Both of his parents had studied in the UK, but decided to go back, first just his father alone, who worked in Nigeria as a banker, and later on, the whole family followed him. He narrated that it had always been clear to him that he will re-emigrate to the UK one day. After he finished his Bachelor he did his National Youth Service Corps in Nigeria with Chevron, which inspired him even more in his wish to emigrate to the UK. Although he was privileged in the sense that he already had the British citizenship and had relatives in the UK who backed him up financially, he struggled in finding a job. It took him one year to find a job, but at last he found work as a 'custody officer' (his own term). Meanwhile he finished his Master degree with the hope to find some better job opportunity in the UK, although meantime he already managed to acquire property for himself and his nuclear family (*integrated*). At the same time he is establishing some migrant entrepreneurship initiative as he is communicating with people in Nigeria every day and visiting Nigeria on a regular basis (trying to further develop

into a *transmigrant*). His parents and some of his siblings are in Nigeria; his brother is in the UK and other relatives as well as his nuclear family – his wife and two children. He does not know if and when he wants to return, because first of all it is important to him to let his children grow up in the UK, so that they receive a Western standard of education. Therefore, it seems as if he either continues being part of the *integrated* type or turns in the future into a *transmigrant*.
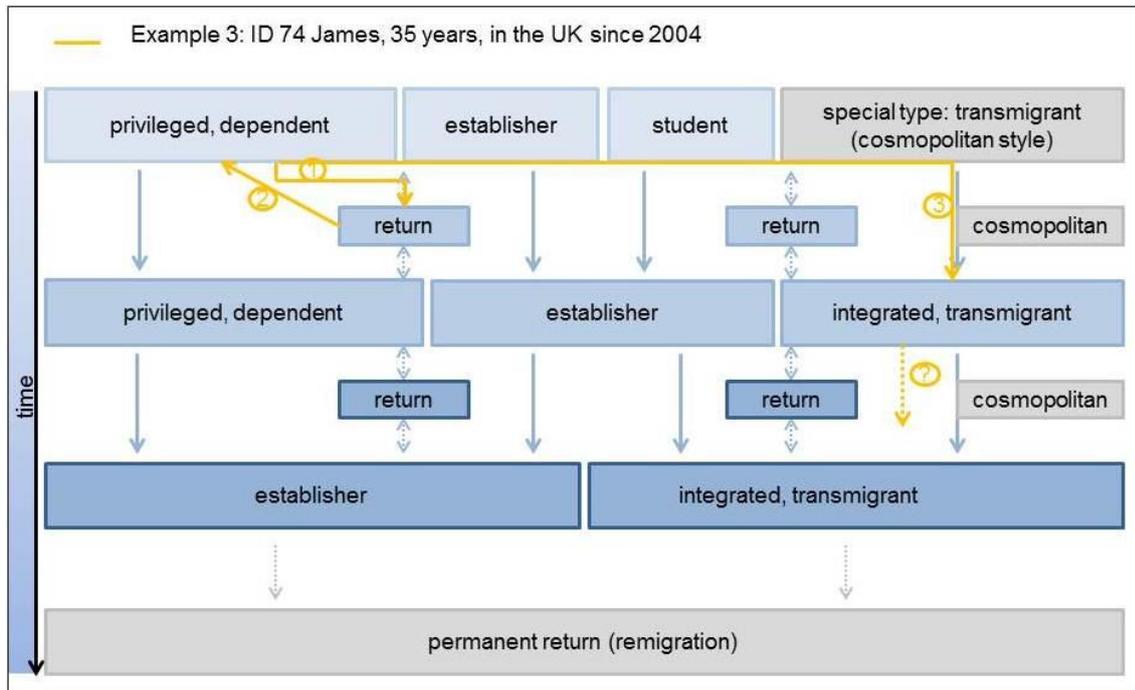

Figure 3: Migration as temporal and spatial continuum, example 3.

In summary, the above models of temporal and spatial migration continuum show that, first, individuals develop themselves over time and can therefore turn their affiliation from one type to another. Four types are the classical starting types which are classified as student, privileged, establisher and dependents. Three of them are not seen as being continued throughout the whole migration biography, namely student, privileged and dependents, because individuals will start being part of the labour market after residing for a more or less long period of time in the destination country, depending on the socio-spatial context. Second, return is not necessarily permanent, but short-term stays as well as periodical visits and return, either permanent or to re-emigrate after some time, need to be taken into consideration. Third, several countries can be involved: at least two, the source and the destination country. Fourthly, migration can start and continue at various points in life, e.g. as a child, as a student, during work life, and as a retiree. And fifth, the decision-making in migration processes depends on the actual stage of the life-cycle, and is constrained by temporal and various socio-spatial contexts as well as personal preferences which can either be seen as factors of opportunity or of constraint.

Furthermore, I argue that those types have different developmental effects in respect to the level of transnationalism and identity. Transnationalism is performed in various ways, e.g. visits, communication forms (phone, email, etc.), and money transfers. The identity and emotional belonging regarding where home is located depends very much on two factors:

first, time spent in the host society, and second, integration into the host society. Therefore migrants can have hybrid identities and regard more than one place as home (see also Ralph and Staeheli 2011).

To refer my argumentation to the above types, we can (following Faist 2008) categorise those under three possible knowledge flows (brain drain, brain waste, and brain gain/circulation), which are taken as synonyms for development pathways (see Fig. 4).

Brain drain stands for a loss of knowledge from the source country's perspective. This group of migrants is highly-skilled (Bachelor, Master or higher) who emigrated, maybe after collecting some work experience, to another country, losing every link of exchange with the country of origin. The knowledge they had acquired in the country of origin now contributes to the development and competitiveness of the country of destination as highly-skilled migrants' are regarded as human capital which helps them integrate in the labour market of the host society and therefore guarantees the successful utilisation of their acquired skills (see also Chikanda 2007; Rizzica 2008).

Brain waste does not only mean a loss, but a wastage of knowledge, because in the country of origin acquired skills and knowledge are not used at all, and neither are they in the country of destination. Therefore, brain waste means a deskilling of the migrant labour force in host societies (Faist 2008; Fossland 2013; Pecoraro 2013).

In contrast to these rather negative knowledge flows from the source country's perspective, *brain gain and brain circulation* are drawn as win-win-win situations. It is not only a gain in human capital from the host societies' point of view, but also has in terms of circulatory knowledge flows positive effects on the economy of the origin society as well as for the migrants themselves (Salt and Findlay 1989; Findlay 1995; Lee and Kim 2010). For the country of destination this can mean a gain in human capital and the generation of tax income. The country of origin profits from remittances which are part of the national income generation. Furthermore, remittances might induce development in the sense that higher educational attendance rates and small-scale businesses can be established as well as new ideas through entrepreneurship might create new jobs and income and shape a specific societal culture. The migrant benefits from circulatory migration processes in so far that he or she gains in status, maintains contacts in both countries, develops a hybrid identity, has two or more homes, and may therefore regard transnational activities as self-fulfillment.

Today, these definitions and understandings of knowledge flows are highly contested as migration is viewed as rather multidirectional and complex and simple contiguities are negotiable and are not able to depict and explain the nexus between migration and development. Akesson and Baaz Eriksson (2015) argue that policies focusing on brain drain neglect issues of racism and discrimination in the countries of destination which often lead to a downgrading of skills of African migrants. On the other hand, skills and knowledge acquired in countries of destination cannot easily be transferred by the migrants to contribute to the development of the country of origin, as Akesson and Baaz Eriksson postulate. In both cases a bottom-up concept does not work, but a change in policies is needed (Akesson and Baaz Eriksson 2015). In considering the above argumentation of Akesson and Baaz Eriksson, I surmise that highly-skilled Nigerian migrants face racism and discrimination as well, which often leads to a downgrading of skills, but in contrast to their postulation I argue that this does not mean that migrants stay in miserable economic and/or social situations. Depending

on time spent in the host society, on the socio-spatial context and individual capacities, highly-skilled migrants are able to gain good employment chances and a professional career as well as contribute to the economic and social development of the origin society.

I argue that a focus on economic benefits which can be described as short-term effects is not suitable for knowledge flows regarding highly-skilled Nigerian migrants. Instead, social and cultural capital has to be included into the concepts of brain drain, brain waste and brain gain/brain circulation. As Binaisa (2009), and more specifically Levitt (1998), define social remittances as 'normative structures, systems of practice and social capital', I argue that these social remittances have to be included into concepts of knowledge flows. Therefore I define those developmental effects not only as economic, but also in terms of cultural and social capital, which means that long-term processes, e.g. changes of cultural meanings and societal behaviours through new information and the influence of different ways of life introduced by returning migrants (long and short-term returns), play a crucial role in such knowledge flows.   The six types of the above typology of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants can be sorted into a rather dynamic system of knowledge flows (see Fig. 4). The closer they are to an angle of the triangle, the more is the type considered to be of this specific knowledge flow of this angle of the triangle. Being in the middle of the triangle means that individuals of this type cannot be regarded as expression of one specific knowledge flow, instead it remains open until they move further on in the next stage of the dynamic migration process. Therefore the direction and level of development flows may change over time depending on how individuals' actions and preferences change.
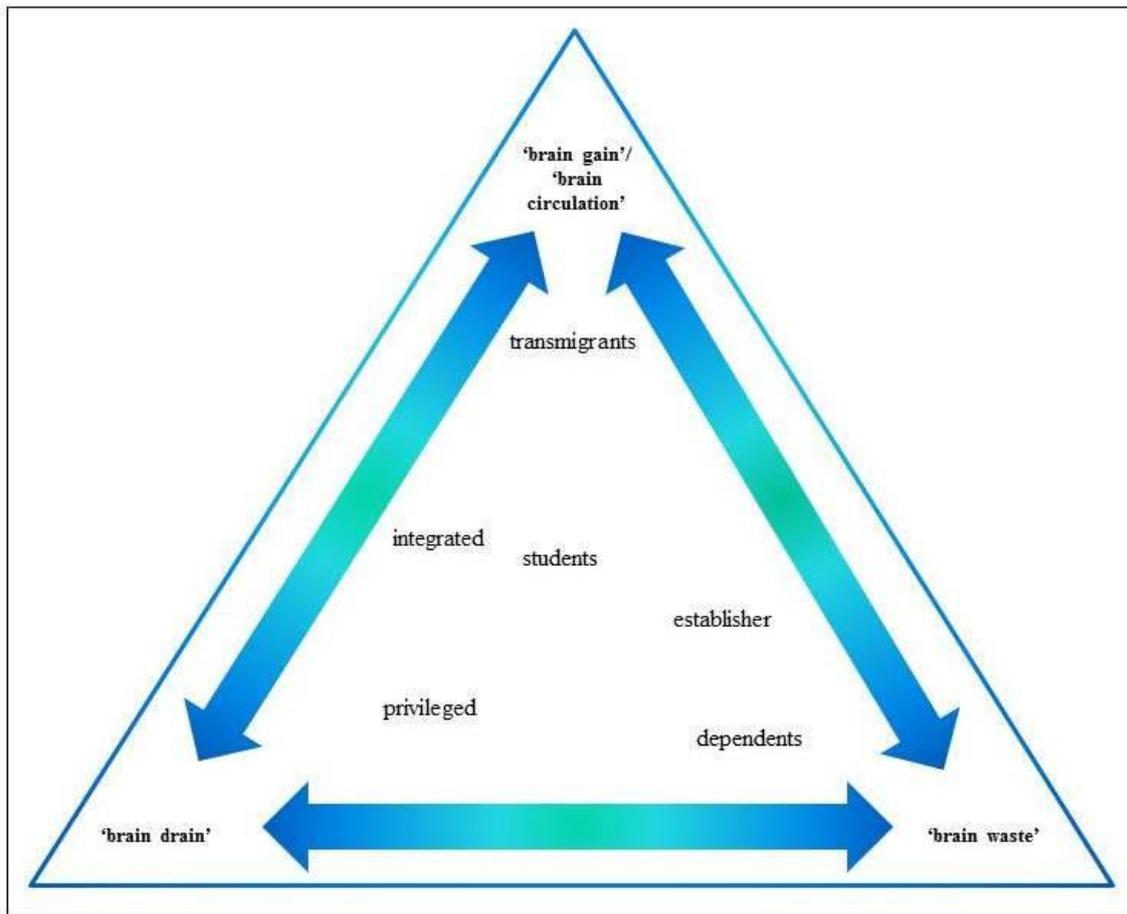
Figure 4: Developmental impacts of migrants in reference to different knowledge flows.

In summary, this section has emphasised not only the dynamics of migration processes, but linked them at the same time to knowledge flows which stand for certain influences both on countries of destination as well as countries of origin and take into account the individual levels of the migrants' development. Migration is therefore a temporal and spatial continuum with several potential outcomes in terms of development which are not static, but depending on the migrants' development and turn in affiliation to a specific type of highly-skilled migrant.

A new migration model of West Africa?

The above-described migration processes can now be summarised in a migration model seen from the migrant's perspective. Therefore I still employ an actor-oriented view which is able to outline structural as well as individual opportunities and constraints at the same time. Despite the rather narrow perspective of Nigerian highly-skilled migrants, a broader understanding of migration processes is gained. The migration model from the migrant's perspective (see Fig. 5) describes how the migration process is experienced by highly-skilled Nigerian migrants. It takes into account the whole process starting from reasons for emigration (1), going on with the decision-making and realisation of the actual migration (2), describing further the aims and hopes of the migrants (3) as well as opportunities and constraints they meet while in the integration process (4). The model ends with the shift of aims which can be seen as an adjustment to the situational context in the country of

destination and as well as a result of their own change of identity and development of the meaning of home (5). The decision-making and integration process is influenced by several factors which are shown in the boxes with the arrows pointing towards the direction of the migrants' development status (boxes in the middle lateral segment of the diagram), to be read from left to right. The other boxes indicate migrants strategies and possible influences on both countries of destination and origin (arrows therefore in the direction to the boxes).
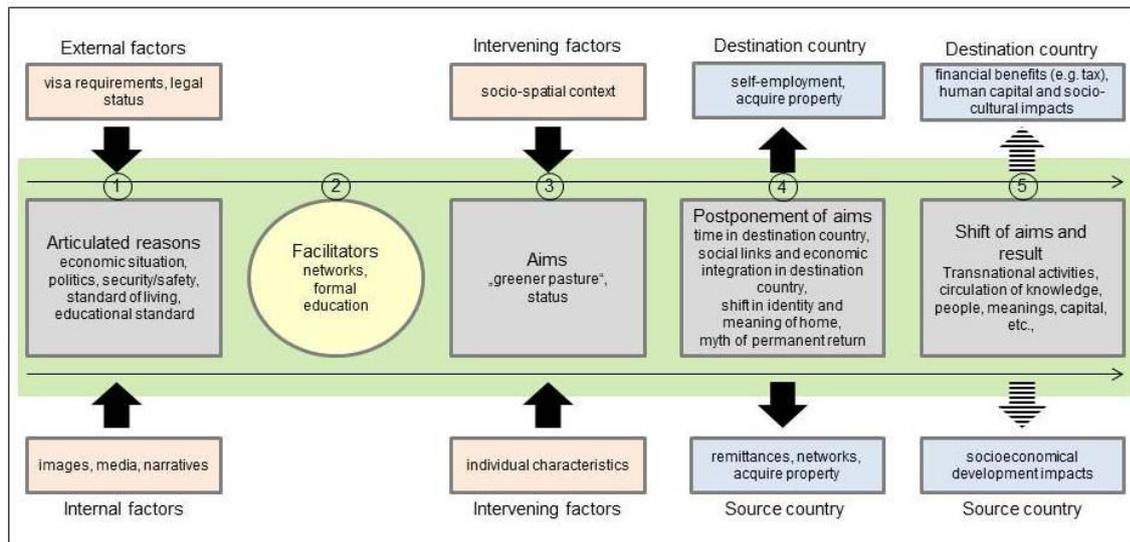

Figure 5: Model of the migration process from the migrants' perspective.

To describe the model step by step, I start with (1) the reasons articulated for the desire to migrate which are influenced by external and internal factors. External factors come into existence through laws, administrative requirements, as well as special programs from potential destination countries which either facilitate or constrain migration and are taken into consideration by the migrant in developing the desire for migration. Internal factors are those which exist in the sending country through narratives, media, culture and specific images which also have an impact on the development of the desire for migration. The migrant will then articulate some reasons why leaving is regarded as the only option or the better option than staying, which is the formulation of the migration desire and the active planning of how to enter the migration process, although from an actor's point of view that might not be happening one after the other, but at the same time, and must therefore not be a deliberate process. However, my argument is that migration decision-making is a process which in most cases is not that spontaneous. Rather, it is an underlying wish which is sharpened through several events and influences, and either pushed forward actively or taken by chance.

(2) To enter the migration process, usually some preparation is needed which is, in terms of highly-skilled Nigerians, the activation of existing or development of new networks as well as meeting visa requirements through formal education and therefore opting for a student visa. This is step two in the migration model.

(3) The third step is the realisation of migration with having certain aims in mind like being part of the so-called 'greener pastures' syndrome and gaining in status in the country of origin.

(4) Migrants follow up those aims depending on their individual capabilities, which are very much constrained by the individual character and the socio-spatial contexts they are into in the destination country. Due to several constraints which were not taken into consideration while the decision to migrate was made, migrants continually postpone the fulfillment of their previous aims. The main reason for that is the lack of preparation for integration due to a lack of information before emigration. At the same time, the question of how to get access to the migration process itself is at the forefront before emigration and not how to integrate and manage in the destination country in future. That is why in the fourth step migrants have to postpone their aims, as they realise that they need more time for integration and hence they develop other wishes as well as other demands. During the migrants' time of stay in the country of destination, social links and networks are developed, social and economic integration is a strategy as well as an aim which means a shift in the individual's identity and understanding of home. The desire of a permanent return to the source country will be continually articulated but this turns out to become more of a myth than a reality, due to postponement and not actively planning, rather fostering integration in the host society (see also King 2000; Sinatti 2011). Both pathways are maintained at the same time in furthering self-employment possibilities regarding typical migrant entrepreneurship in the country of destination, which enable migrants to keep the link to both societies as well as acquiring property in both countries. Furthermore, remittances are a manifestation of the promise of return and part of the dealing with responsibilities in the source countries.

(5) Finally, aims were adjusted and shifted to a transnational way of life, which is another potential outcome of the migration process. Transnationalism includes return migration, whether permanent or short term does not matter, because at this stage migrants' networks in both countries are so strong, individual identities have changed a lot, home is perceived to be in both places where they will be eager to keep in touch with their contacts. From a migrant's point of view, transnationalism is usually preferred to permanent return, as they have responsibilities and strong links to the host society as well, and also the migrants' identity and home understanding changed and became rather hybrid. Recently published literature (see e.g. Gonzalez-Ferrer et al. 2014; Akesson and Baaz Eriksson 2015) takes this preference into account and is therefore an approval of the interpretation of migration leading to transnationalism rather than permanent return or just integration without preserving linkages to the country of origin. As time went by, migrants are seen to be more likely to stay in the destination country, but maintaining strong links to the source country. Therefore, for the destination country this means financial benefits, e.g. in form of collected taxes as well as human capital in terms of highly-skilled migrants who successfully integrated and are able to use their acquired knowledge. Furthermore, migrants may have socio-cultural impacts which can lead towards a multinational society with different cultures, languages and mixtures of those. The source country may also go through socio-economic impacts, as the narratives of migrants continually shift images and cultures, temporary return visits lead to exchanges between migrants and non-migrants and can foster knowledge transfers, remittances, and perhaps can generate income and entrepreneurship in the source country.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the dynamics of migration processes in introducing a typology of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants, and has argued for a temporal and spatial migration continuum model. I have drawn on Carling's and Erdal's (2014) approach of temporal and spatial parameters of transnationalism, questioning the integration-transnationalism nexus, as well as on Erdal's and Oeppen's (2013) approach of 'migrant balancing acts' between integration and transnationalism to explore firstly the dynamics of migration processes, and secondly the various forms and levels of integration and transnationalism regarding return as an intrinsic part of migration processes. Drawing on 65 semi-structured interviews I have given insights into typical migration biographies and narratives of Nigerian migrants who live in Germany, the UK and the USA.

In terms of responding to the three detailed research questions set out earlier in the paper, my key findings, and their wider implications, are as follows. Firstly, as migration processes have been demonstrated to be dynamic, so too, individuals belonging to a specific type are also dynamic. Individuals, therefore, can turn their affiliation from one type to another depending on personal developments and capacities. Migration is not a linear process, but rather multidirectional, as return is mostly temporary and includes short-term visits to the country of origin. The migration process can be started with the aim of being a temporary stage in life and then return continues to be postponed because of different circumstances. Return intentions may be high but still not implemented or might be rather small, but implemented, due to other circumstances. Return is therefore regarded as an intrinsic part of the migration process as a whole. Every development of migrants is dependent on temporal and spatial contexts as well as individual capabilities to cope with situations and move-on or re-direct development paths. There are different stages of the integration-transnationalism-return nexus according to time spent in the destination country. Integration and transnationalism need time to be acquired and rather few migrants can be regarded as transnational right from the start. Transnational activities take place on several occasions, at different stages of the migration process and in various directions, for example at the beginning of the migration process while preparing for emigration, and in addition with some breaks in-between, later on in the migration process, acting, for example, as a migrant entrepreneur (see Carling and Erdal 2014). Return may take place during different stages of the migration process and for a variety of reasons and lengths of time.

Secondly, those types of highly-skilled Nigerian migrants discussed above inherit different possible development outcomes, but the fact that they must be seen as dynamic means, at the same time, that simplistic binary interpretation of migration processes regarding economic and social outcomes is misleading. Migration is neither positive nor negative, but there exist several nuances which can lead to rather positive or negative effects depending on further development which is directly linked to personal and structural possibilities and constraints.

Thirdly, integration, transnationalism and return are intertwined, and one does not exclude the other. Rather, they can also be regarded as stages which are mutually interdependent in so far as integration must be achieved before return is possible, and transnationalism is a kind of integration and return at the same time, and one cannot stand without the other. Integration is necessary to enable return, and return is necessary for transnationalism; therefore transnationalism is a combination of both integration and return.

Finally, structural differences have been identified regarding the three destination countries, which leads to the finding that an actor-centred analysis is able to disclose structural constraints which should be considered in policy programmes dealing with migration in general, and integration and return in particular. Integration, transnationalism and return should no longer be considered as contradictory but rather as intertwined concepts, and developments which keep this in mind may lead to more effective policy programmes. According to Akesson and Baaz Eriksson (2015), European labour markets are still to some extent marked by racism and discrimination, and therefore fail to make use of the potential or knowledge of highly-skilled migrants. This is also true for the findings of this paper, but I would propose a different assumption, as the USA was part of this study. In the USA migrants follow the American dream; however this does not mean that they are integrated right from the start, but rather their skills are downgraded. The migration process must be regarded as a long one, and is dependent on migrants' capabilities as well as on structural constraints. Nevertheless, migrants find it easier to integrate in the US system, because of the large ethnic communities and the longstanding migration history of the USA. Lack of accrediting foreign degrees is a major problem in all destination countries, combined with issues of time and financial resources in order to have them accredited. Furthermore, language skills are a major problem and this, to a large extent, lies in the hands of the migrants. Countries which have experienced immigration for many generations influence migration processes in different ways to those countries with shorter immigration histories, in terms of integration, transnationalism and return, as well as development outcomes. They may also have bigger immigrant minorities and they may come from a wider range of countries of origin. Further research is necessary to clarify these interconnections and to bring more light to structural differences and constraints as well as influences on the above triple nexus.

Acknowledgements

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