THE TALE OF TWO CITIES: HELSINKI REGION ACCORDING TO CHINESE AND INDIAN STUDENTS AND PROFESSIONALS

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According to Richard Florida’s influential argument the economic success of city regions depends on their ability to attract talent. In Helsinki one interpretation of this argument has been that the city region needs to increase the immigration of students and professionals, the so-called highly skilled immigration. However, despite the increase in skilled immigration during the 2000’s, Finland has still negative net migration of highly skilled workforce.

Helsinki region’s main policy for attracting highly skilled workforce has been establishing of English language study programs without tuition fees. The strategy has been partly successful: the numbers of international students are rising and according to previous studies the students are mostly satisfied with the quality of education. However, the transfer from the student life to the labor market is considered difficult and most highly skilled immigrants leave Helsinki after finishing their studies.

In its quest for highly skilled immigrants Finland has recently turned towards Asia. The recruiting policies have been directed especially towards China and India, which are the two main sending countries of highly skilled immigrants in the world. Therefore, in this paper I discuss the problematic of skilled immigration from the point view of Chinese and Indian immigrants. The paper is based on 8 group and 8 individual interviews conducted in Helsinki in fall-summer 2009.

In this paper argue that for the highly skilled immigrants Helsinki consists of two separate cities: an accessible student city and an exclusive working city. In order to diminish the gap between the two Helsinkis the city and the universities must develop strategies together and broaden the current conception of highly skilled immigrants as “students” or “residents” into understanding them as transnational actors who are embedded in multiple cultural, social, political and economic networks.

Keywords: highly skilled immigration, brain circulation, transnationalism, the Helsinki region, economic competitiveness.
Introduction

An old joke knows that the first thought of a Finnish person encountering an elephant is: “what does the elephant think about me?” Similarly to an elephant, immigration is massive and, although some countries are very familiar with it, for Finland it is something fairly new and unfamiliar. Therefore, like a Finn wonders how he is perceived by an elephant, this paper questions how do highly skilled Chinese and Indian immigrants perceive Helsinki region.

The perceptions of the highly skilled immigrants – a term used in this paper to refer to the immigrants who either have a university a degree or have moved to Helsinki region in order to pursue one – are of high interest in the regard of the city administration. The current immigration policy of the city emphasizes work-related immigration and the need for highly skilled workers is listed among the priorities\(^1\). The focus is recent: still in the 1990’s the work-related immigration was barely mentioned\(^2\).

The city of Helsinki is not alone in its quest for talent. On the contrary, the interest of the city reflects more generally the current approaches towards immigration in Western countries, which are on the one hand constricting immigration and asylum laws while simultaneously liberalizing labor mobility. The measures towards liberalization are often related to preventing the predicted shortcoming of workforce in Western countries struggling with aging populations\(^3\).

However, the highly skilled immigrants are not employed on the sectors where the demand for labor will be the highest, such as elderly care or construction. Therefore, instead of contributing to the lack of workers, the immigration of the highly skilled is seen as a tool for enhancing the economic competitiveness of the regions\(^4\). As a result, the highly skilled immigrants are perceived as a value per se and the regions are competing with each other for the best talents. The highly skilled form the elite of the mobile workforce, and their mobility is not only being facilitated, but countries take on various measures in order to attract them\(^5\).

In this paper I discuss the problematic of skilled immigration from the point of view of Chinese and Indian highly skilled immigrants living in the Helsinki region. The paper is based on 8 group and 8 individual interviews conducted in Helsinki in fall-summer 2009. It contributes to the Finnish studies on highly skilled immigration by emphasizing regional instead of national angle and by giving the also the origin of the immigrants a central attention. Also, instead of focusing on either students or professionals, the study focuses on the life-cycle of immigrants in Helsinki region and the transition of status from a student to a professional.

\(^1\) Leiponen 2008, 14.
\(^2\) Kepsu & al. 34, 2009.
\(^3\) Lavenex 32, 2007.
\(^4\) Raunio 2005, 9.
Brain gain and brain circulation

The perspectives on politics regarding skilled immigration are based on the comprehension of human talent as a key economical resource. Highly skilled immigration is considered an essential element of regional economic competitiveness and the concepts of brain gain and brain circulation are frequently used to describe the assumed benefits of the migration. In the following I open up these two concepts and analyze briefly their political implications.

Brain gain is an older of the two terms and it refers regarding the immigrants themselves as the main benefit of the highly skilled immigration: the benefits of highly skilled immigration are seen to result from the contribution of the immigrants at the labor market. However, the immigrants are not considered to merely add to the numbers of brains and the amount of tax money, but having people from different cultures and different backgrounds working together is also assumed to increase the innovativeness and economical productivity of a region.  

The brain gain approach is based on idea of immigrations fairly permanent state and it draws the focus on attracting of the immigrants. In order to appeal to the global elite, several measures have been taken for example to guarantee them access to good quality housing, to answer their needs regarding the education of their children and several countries even have the even reduced tax rates for foreign professionals.

In addition, the measures to attract talent have been influenced by Richard Florida’s book “The rise of the creative class”. Within this book Florida seeks the explanation for the economic success of American cities by their ability to attract highly skilled workforce, whom he labels the creative class. The core of his argument is that the creative class does not base it decisions on the jobs available, but instead the creative class gathers in the cities that offer the most vibrant urban culture. This has encouraged cities to focus on soft factors, such as cultural activities and flourishing service economy.

The mobility of the people has increased exponentially during the last decades and, as Annalee Saxenian denotes, immigration of the highly skilled is no longer a one way process. For a growing number the immigration is a temporary phase, and maintaining citizenship and residency in two countries has become frequent for the highly skilled. As immigration is no longer necessarily a permanent situation, the brain gain/brain drain dichotomy has become too simplistic a view to cover the complexity of the highly skilled immigration and its impacts on global economy.

The brain gain approach is being complemented and replaced by brain circulation approach, which is based on understanding of the immigration as a continuous process instead of a permanent state. According to the brain circulation theory, the main benefits of the immigration of the highly skilled are not in the number of brains gained by the migration, but in the transnational networks formed by the highly skilled immigrants. In this view the professional ties the immigrants have in the two

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8 Florida 2002.
9 Saxenian 2005.
countries are considered a key advantage. The approach emphasizes the significance of global economic networks for local economy and it grants the highly skilled a central role in the formation of economic connections between regions.  

AnnaLee Saxenian’s study is focused on Silicon Valley, where job mobility is high and informal business associations flourish. The special features of the labor market structure have resulted in a highly networked region, where immigrants gain not only a degree and work experience, but also a high number of professional connections. Later, when the immigrants return to their home countries, they use these connections to create businesses which complement to rather than compete with the economic activities of Silicon Valley. However, the birth of the networks is not a self-evident process, and whether networks are formed depends on the context of the host country and the opportunities for international business that it offers.

The political implications of the brain circulation approach differ from those of the brain gain approach. Although a region must still first attract the highly skilled immigrants, attracting is no longer an end in itself. Instead the regions must also enable the arrived immigrants to create wide professional networks and facilitate turning the networks into business connections after the migrants have returned or migrated ahead to a third location. In addition, the brain circulation approach draws attention to the economic conditions of the sending countries and thereby stresses the significance of the immigration from the emerging economies which offer prominent locations for new businesses.

**Globalization from below**

The increased mobility of the highly skilled is related to globalization and the increasing interconnectedness of places. The theories of globalization tend to explain the mobility of people by the global structures, which in the case of the highly skilled refer usually to the economic flows restructuring the global spaces. Such views are represented for example by Manuel Castells, who analyzes the global world as consisting of space of flows where places function as nodes, and by David Harvey, who regards the role of localities mainly reactionary under the pressure of global structures.

Michael Peter Smith criticizes the globalization theories for over-emphasizing structures and spaces on the expense of agency and places. He argues for transnational theories of globalization, which instead of regarding the processes of globalization from top-down, shifts the angle and analyzes how globalization takes places in localities and is formed from bottom-up. The focus of Smith’s approach is in the human agency as embedded is cultural, local, social and political contexts. Well echoing with the brain circulation approach, for Smith globalization is a formed of transnational networks created

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10 Saxenian 2005.

11 Saxenian 2005.

12 Walton-Roberts 2009.

13 Castells 2000.

14 Harvey 1989.
by human agents acting in various localities, which are connected to each other exactly by these transnational networks formed by human agency.  

Smith is not alone in his critique, and in the context of the studies on the highly skilled immigration Jonathan Beaverstock criticizes globalization theories from truncating the global elite into a homogenous crowd following global economical flows while all but ripped of their individuality and personal preferences. Instead of reducing the mobility of the highly skilled into a process controlled by economic flows, Beaverstock insists on looking at human agency within the local context. In addition he emphasizes a broad understanding of locality: for the highly skilled, the locality is not a node within the abstract economic flows, but a setting in which their daily lives take place.  

All in all, the focus on localities stresses the complexity of the globalization and the focus on networks echoes well the brain circulation approach where the emphasis is on the transnational networks created within the geographically distant localities. Central message is that even in this era of globalization the places still matter and, as Doreen Massey argues, there is no single process of globalization but instead the multiple processes of globalization take different forms in different localities. Following this approach, this paper focuses on the local context of the Helsinki region, how it is experienced and used by highly skilled immigrants from China and India and how the local structures of both Helsinki region and China and India influence the formation of transnational networks.

**Highly skilled immigration to Helsinki region**

The population of Finland is quite homogenous and only 2.7% of the inhabitants of Finland have foreign citizenship. Even in Helsinki region, where the share of foreign citizens is the highest, it rises merely up to 7%. The immigration in general was very marginal until the turn of 1990’s when Finland began to receive refugees from Somalia, and the immigration of the highly skilled begun a decade later. Even now, in comparison to 29% in the United Kingdom, in Finland only 9% of immigration is work-based. The main motivations for the highly skilled immigrants to move to Helsinki region are related to interesting positions or personal relations, and the immigrants seldom consider working in the distant and fairly unknown Finland as a means to advance their future career.

It has been estimated that Finland receives approximately only 200 highly skilled migrants per year which leaves it among the European countries with the worst brain gain/brain drain -ratio. The

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16 Beaverstock 2005.
18 Statistics Finland (b).
numbers are rising slowly, but the paths for the foreign professional to arrive in Finland remain scarce: there are only about 4000 foreign subsidiaries in Finland and very few Finnish businesses recruit internationally. The process is further complicated by Finnish labor unions opposition to the liberalization of the Finnish labor market.  

While direct recruiting of professionals from abroad is still very small in scale, the underlying presupposition has been that the best foreign professionals are the ones who have pursued their degree in Finland. Therefore the universities and the universities of applied sciences have been granted forerunning role in the recruitment of highly skilled immigrants. The establishment of English language MA programs has turned out successful and the number of international degree students in Finnish universities doubled during the last decade and reached almost 7000 by 2009. The total number of foreign degree students including the universities of applied sciences exceeded 11 000 in 2007. In addition Finnish universities have created international post-doc positions and encouraged actively researcher exchange.

However, there is also growing attempt to attract foreign professionals. In this regards several problems have been brought up, such as too small financial compensation for work, unsatisfactory housing, poor position of their spouses at the Finnish labor market and lack of top class international schools for their children. As solutions to the challenges for example tax reductions for the foreign professionals and putting special focus on international schools have been suggested.

**Chinese and Indian immigrants in Helsinki region**

Recently, the Finnish discussion regarding the highly skilled immigration has taken a turn towards Asia. Both in the reports published and newspaper articles written Asia, especially China and India, are seen as potential reserves for the highly skilled. For example, the Finnish Ministry of education published an Asian strategy in order to enhance exchange with Asian countries, and a state funded program focused on finding ways to straighten economic ties with India came to an end in 2008.

The focus on the emerging Asian nations is a sensible solution in the global scale: Chinese form by far the biggest group of foreign international students globally and the numbers of Indian expatriates studying or working on IT-sector are remarkable. Also in Finland, the largest nationality of foreign degree students is Chinese. However, the numbers are still moderate, and while in 2006 there were 1677 Chinese registered on tertiary degree, the number of Indian students was only 197. All in all every other Chinese and every tenth Indian in Finland is registered as a student on tertiary degree.

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23 Kosonen 2009.

24 See for ex. Ministry of Education 2007

25 KOTA online service.

26 Statistics Finland (a).


28 Online Education Database, Biao 2007.

29 Online Education Database
The difference in the numbers of students is partly explained by the disparities in the migration patterns of Chinese and Indians. Chinese companies are only beginning to operate globally and the highly skilled Chinese immigration consists still mainly of students, professionals being only a minority. Indian IT-businesses, on the contrary, have more than half a century of experience of operating internationally and the international mobility of the Indian IT-professionals is built within the system. The proficiency of English language and less control of the state over migration further facilitates the emigration of Indian at a later phase of their career.

A closer examination of the Chinese population in Finland reveals that the number of Chinese students registered on tertiary degree exceeds slightly the number of Chinese aged 20-29. Therefore it can be concluded that the highly skilled Chinese migration consists mainly of students. The analysis of the age structure of the Indian population reveals that the biggest groups of Indian are aged 25-34, which is rather the age for young professionals than that of students. The interviews support the observation: Chinese interviewees doubt that any Chinese professional would migrate to Finland, while Indians inform that job opportunities in Nokia and in subsidiaries of Indian IT-companies are common reasons for Indians to migrate to Helsinki region.

Globally, 70-80% of Chinese students studying abroad study natural sciences, engineering, technology, medicine, agriculture or forestry and animal husbandry. Indian highly skilled emigration for its part constitutes largely of IT-professionals. Although no data is available on the professions of Chinese and Indian professionals employed in Helsinki, the student statistics reveal that half of the Asian university students study at the Helsinki University of Technology. In addition to this, natural sciences can also be studied at the University of Helsinki. Considerable portion – altogether 14% of Asian students – is registered at the two Economics Universities. Similar data is not available for the universities of applied sciences.

Emigrating from China and India

Both the Chinese and the Indians interviewed considered a foreign degree and foreign work experience as an advantage at the competitive labor market of the home country. Migrating in itself had been a fairly evident decision and the choice of destination was based on either comparing the different options from the point of view of the career plans, or, as experience abroad was considered beneficial per se, some interviewees had simply grasped the first opportunity available.

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30 Salmela 2009, Zhang 2003
31 Biao 2007, 116
32 Statistics Finland (a,b)
33 Statistics Finland (b)
34 Zhang 2003.
36 KOTA Online service
“So in general studying abroad, studying in a developed country was a plus for us. I came because of an exchange program, that opportunity was a reward for good students. When you have this precious opportunity, of course you would take it” (Chinese male)

“I applied to the US, Stockholm and here. I got accepted to a lot of places and then I did a kind of SWOT-analysis. Then I realized maybe the risk is highest here, but then maybe the benefits are also quite high.” (Indian male)

Apart from four people who migrated to Finland following their marriage either with a compatriot living in Finland or with a Finnish person, the decision to move abroad was based on career-centric future plans. Nokia was found to be the main attraction of Finland, but apart from it, the awareness of the interviewees about Finland prior to their arrival had been minimal. All in all, the main destination of the interviewees had been the educational institute or a position in an international company. Therefore it is misleading to speak about the immigration of highly skilled Chinese and Indians to Finland or to Helsinki region, and it would be more accurate to describe it as immigration to English language BA and MA programs and to the international companies.

However, the Finnish context was not totally irrelevant factor in the choices made. First of all, the lack of tuition fees had often been the final decisive factor for taking the risk of studying in an internationally unknown Finnish university. In addition availability of courses in English, informative university websites and the ease of immigration bureaucracy had facilitated the process of applying. And, finally, the reputation of Finland as a safe country had appealed to Chinese women and several interviewees told that their decision was affected by the appeal of the social system of the Scandinavian societies.

“My parents chose Finland because they think it has really a good economic situation and it is safe. They don’t send me out wherever I want, they also care about what is good for me. I didn’t go to Netherlands, because my mother thought that was such a dangerous place.” (Chinese female)

“It was very clear in my mind that ok, no America. I don’t like communist system, but I have always liked equality and that concept. So I never tried to go to US.” (Indian male)

In general the immigration of the highly skilled Chinese and Indians was very much career-motivated and the appeal of Helsinki lies within its universities and in the international companies operating in the region. It can even be argued that the highly skilled Chinese and Indians do not move to Helsinki or to Finland, they move to a university or to a company. In this respect, the main task of Helsinki or Finland seemed to be promoting the possibilities offered by the region, helping in creating opportunities for international migrants and in securing a smooth migration process.

The living environment

In the original decision to move to Finland, the locality had been all but pushed aside. Living in Finland was considered a temporary phase, and living in abroad was regarded more of an investment than a value in itself. However, once the immigrants had reached Finland, the locality grew in importance. In order to analyze the different aspects of Helsinki region and their significance to the highly skilled immigrants I divided “locality” into three categories: functional, cultural and institutional environment.
First there is the functional environment, by which I refer to the urban setting, the possibilities for urban life provided by the city. Part of this aspect is Richard Florida’s ideas of the city as an entertainment center that offers multiple activities and a vibrant urban scene. Despite that urban life had been minor factor within the decision to move to Finland, several interviewees had moved to Helsinki region after living first in a smaller Finnish city. The main reason for this was exactly the urban setting: the interviewees expressed strong preference for Helsinki over other Finnish cities due to the wider variety of things “to see and to do” as well as the more international environment.

Nevertheless, although Helsinki is the main metropolis of Finland, it can hardly be described as buzzing metropolis such as New York or London, and some interviewees found it slightly boring. However, the city was found to have a well-functioning infrastructure – trains run in time and warm water never runs out – which made the living in city easy and comfortable. Interviewees were also pleased by taking account of English speakers: libraries have wide selection of books in English, movies are not dubbed, hobby courses in English can be found and even that Helsinki lacks a proper English newspaper the main media have decent online versions in English. Therefore, Helsinki did not offer the biggest thrill, but its urban setting provided a peaceful yet urban life with good quality of living.

“Tampere is a beautiful place and it is very nice, but for hard-work and friends Helsinki is better, and there is a lot of things to see, we can work.. It is good being in a metropolitan city” (Indian female)

“I have my local Chinese friends and during the weekend what we can do is just playing cards and go to shopping something and to see the movies and if I want to have some exciting more exciting things then I have to go with my Finnish colleagues” (Chinese male)

Secondly, there is the cultural environment, the mindset and the local culture where the immigrants landed. By the cultural environment I refer to the pace of life and the social structures and “the local habits” of the country. In general, the interviewees named several aspects that differed significantly from their home countries or of the experiences they or their friends had encountered elsewhere. First of all, the independency of working culture, challenging tasks and flat hierarchies, as well as relatively calm working pace was considered advantages of life in Finland and most European countries in general. Regarding Finland especially, the interviewed females were happily surprised of their equal position in comparison to their male colleagues, combining family and career was found relatively smooth and only very few interviewees had encountered racism at work or elsewhere.

The cultural differences were not solely positive, however, and the strong emphasis of independency and high respect of privacy resulted in difficulties regarding establishing social networks. The alcohol-centric social life was found challenging, and Indians would have wanted their families being acknowledged in the social happenings of their work communities. Actually, the lack of connections and places to meet people – Finnish people do not make friends at classes, at work or at hobby clubs – was a central part of the “boringness” of Helsinki. Also, although direct racism was considered rare, some interviewees noted that it was more difficult for non-western immigrants to establish social contacts with Finnish. As a result, loneliness was often a severe problem.
“Then the good thing about Finnish companies is that they are very fair. I never felt I’m a foreigner in Nokia. I actually don’t know about the other companies, but Nokia is very fair, I never felt like a foreigner there.” (Chinese male)

“But not knowing Finnish language as such has reduced our.. It has reduced. I really have less connection in normal Finnish society. All the connection I have is via my work place.” (Indian male)

Thirdly, when the immigrants enter a society, they enter also its institutional structure. They pay taxes, they use services and profit of the social security and of the infrastructure. The Finnish society has traditionally been based Scandinavian welfare state model, which relies on having expansive public sector funded by relatively high progressive taxation. Social equality has been one of the main pillars of the society and the income gap is still among the smallest in the world. 37. The small financial compensations of the working professionals and high taxes have often been labeled as a disadvantage in attracting global talent. 38

The interviewees acknowledged that if the aim is to maximize the financial profit, Helsinki is not the right place to be. However, the salary rate was for far from being the only factor by which the interviewees evaluated their compensation for work. Other issues brought up were availability of English schools for children, the services available for a spouse looking for a job, and the quality social security and of the healthcare. The interviewees had diverse political views regarding the organization of the society, and while some thought that Finnish system does not reward enough for hard work, others found the concept of social equality a value in itself and considered the welfare state as the main asset of Finland.

“And the political aspect is so attractive—maybe to people from India, the fact that Finland is socialistic type of country, lot of people would actually agree with that world view. I mean equality and stuff.” (Indian male)

“To highly skilled white collar like engineers or some managers I think that Finland might not be so attractive to them. I believe that US will be better choice, because they can get almost the same level of salary in China and with low cost of living in China “ (Chinese male)

Career paths of the Chinese and Indians in Helsinki

The typical plan of the students was to first to get the degree and then gather few years of relevant working experience in order to guarantee a successful return at the labor market when they return home. The ones recruited to Helsinki by an international company had usually considered Helsinki as a stepping stone on their international career and their next move would next move would depend on where their career would take them. Setting up one’s own company, either in Helsinki, home country or in-between was also a common dream.

37 Karisto & al. 1998.

The first phase of the plan had usually followed fairly well the script. Despite the flaws in the availability of courses and teaching in English, the students considered the quality of Finnish university education excellent and they were mostly satisfied with their studies. The PhD students had found Finnish standards strict but rewarding, and the professionals enjoyed the challenging tasks and the independent working culture of Finland.

However, what the interviewees had experienced was that the local characteristics of Helsinki labor market were not as favorable to their plans as their English-speaking havens of university and international companies. First of all, the labor market was found to be very challenging for foreigners who do not master Finnish fluently and who are not included within the Finnish networks. Finding a job was found especially impossible for people outside of the IT-sector, and job consultancy services served poorly the need of the highly skilled foreigners. Also, although the labor market at the IT-sector was consider better than on other disciplines, even there the opportunities were mainly limited into the few international companies and academia.

“Ok, Nokia is a separate case, but even in many big companies, or big in Finland, UPM and so, even there if you want to apply for a job, they are multinational English speaking companies, I think language is still a barrier. (Indian male)

Secondly, Finland was considered to serve poorly the dreams of having a company of one’s own. A job functions as a prerequisite for a residency permit, and taking up an enterprise means taking a risk that with a failure might result in losing the permit and being force to leave the country. The interviewees also remarked that having Finnish partner ameliorated the chances of succeeding, but as they lacked both professional and social networks finding a partner was not that easy. The entrepreneur-minded immigrants also denoted that Helsinki lacks an agora where the immigrants could mingle with aspiring Finnish entrepreneurs with whom they would share similar business interests.

“In order for us to stay you need to have a business, so forget about you own business. If you run your business, and you fail you have to leave. So it is actually quite a scary factor for entrepreneurs. “(Chinese male)

“But if I don’t have a Finnish partner, I’ve seen many Indians starting a company here and failing to get contract and you know, projects and this” (Indian male)

Therefore, the immigrants found the change of status from a student to a professional, from an employee of one company to an employee of another company or from an employee to an entrepreneur very challenging. The immigrants had first migrated to a separate island on the city – an institution or an international company – but they had planned hop from one island to the next during the years to come. However, in practice “island hopping” had turned out much more difficult than they had imagined.

 Appeal of Helsinki

The ideas of Richard Florida about talent choosing the living environment first and the looking for a suitable job or university after apply poorly to the immigration of the highly skilled Chinese and Indians to the Helsinki region. The immigration of the Chinese and Indian talent to Helsinki region is extremely career-centric, and the highly skilled immigrants’ destination is rather the university or a
position in an international company than the region. Therefore - regardless of whether the explanation should be looked for in the sending nations or the receiving nation - it is clear that even if it explains internal migration of talent within the US, the Florida’s ideas do not suffice to explain the complexity of highly skilled immigration in the global world.

After the arrival the locality grows in importance and due to its larger size and more diverse urban culture Helsinki was clearly preferred over smaller Finnish cities. However, it is evident that regarding the buzzing metropolis, Helsinki is hardly in the same league with London or New York, but that is not what everyone is looking for either. Instead, other aspects, such as good combination of work and leisure as well as child-friendly environment are also aspects appealing to the highly skilled. All in all, the living preferences of the interviewees hardly resembled those of the creative class described by Florida.\textsuperscript{39}

Therefore, it is evident, that the concept of locality is wider than the simple “entertainment center” promoted by Richard Florida. Florida’s ideas have been criticized of narrowing the creative class into seekers of hedonistic experiences, who only seek entertainment from their living environment. Far from being a neutral scientific result, Florida’s argument encourages focusing on the needs of the well-to-do on the expense of others and is thereby strongly promoting neoliberal urban planning.\textsuperscript{40} Elitist tones to undermine also the policy recommendations aimed to attract skilled immigration: the common presupposition is that the highly skilled are looking primarily for their personal profit and remain rather indifferent to the overall context of the society.

However, the results of this research resonate with the observations made already by Kepsu & al. and Beaverstock \textsuperscript{41}, the skilled immigrants are not a homogenous group simply interested in maximizing their own profits. Far from this, the highly skilled have variety of living preferences and political views, and they find different models of society appealing. Helsinki does not compete – and most likely it never will – with the salary rates of London or New York. Instead its strengths lie in social equality, good infrastructure, clean environment and safety, aspects of society that also highly skilled immigrants can find more precious than their personal profit.

**Patterns of the highly skilled Chinese and Indian immigration in the Helsinki region**

The plans of the highly skilled Chinese and Indians immigrants on their arrival to Helsinki correspond to brain circulation theory: most of them do not plan to settle in permanently and the experience in Helsinki is regarded as a stepping stone to improve career possibilities elsewhere in the future. The finding corresponds to results \textsuperscript{42} regarding the Chinese and Indians of Silicon Valley, but contrasts with the results of highly skilled immigration in general to Helsinki region.\textsuperscript{43}

\textsuperscript{39} see also Kepsu & al. 2009.

\textsuperscript{40} Peck 2005.


\textsuperscript{42} Saxenian 2005.

\textsuperscript{43} Kepsu & al 2009.
All in all, the plans highly skilled Chinese and Indians in Helsinki resembled more of those of their compatriots in Silicon Valley than those of other the highly skilled immigrants living in Helsinki region. Both China and India are emerging economies, and they are not only prominent locations for new businesses but in addition the countries are taking various political measures encouraging the return migration highly skilled\textsuperscript{44}. Immigration of today is not a one way process, but its forms are affected both by sending and receiving countries. Therefore, where the highly skilled immigrants come from, has its implications on the forms of the globalization processes of the Helsinki region.

According to the brain circulation theory, essential part of the benefits of the highly skilled immigration lies in the economic networks that the mobile immigrants from between the regions. This, on the other hand, requires that the immigrants become part of thick professional networks in their host region, a process which is facilitated by high professional mobility and flexible labor market\textsuperscript{45}. However, the structures of the professional Helsinki do not encourage labor mobility – instead the labor market is exclusive and the immigrants tend to remain their isolated island, whether within academia or in an international company.

The “island hopping” from one position to another – shifting of status from student to a professional and from a professional to an entrepreneur - was found a major challenge. The exclusion of the immigrants is further strengthened by the relatively closed social structures of Finnish societies – Finnish people tend to keep their professional connections quite formal. As Helsinki also lacks an agora for foreign and Finnish entrepreneurs to meet, the finding of suitable partners in order to establish international business relations is found to be a major challenge.

So far the immigration policies of the Helsinki region have focused on attracting the highly skilled immigrants to the region and in opening up of the academia for international students. The strategies have been fairly successful and numbers of both foreign professionals and students have increased rapidly. However, the inclusion of the highly skilled immigrants within the professional Helsinki and the facilitating of the formation of international economic networks have remained neglected.

\textbf{Tale of two cities}

"Before graduating from university I thought this is like a fairy-tale country. (...) But when I came out from the university, it is not so easy, so straight line." (Indian male)

When looked through the eyes of the highly skilled immigrants two different images of Helsinki emerge. First image is that of a high class student city actively looking for ways to approach and serve the foreign students. But while the academic Helsinki is rapidly opening up, the other city, the professional Helsinki remains exclusive and grants only few possibilities for entries for highly skilled foreigners. As permanent immigration is being replaced my mobility and brain gain by brain circulation, failing to tie the highly skilled within the Finnish networks might mean a major loss.

The Helsinki region is a new player in the competition for talent and due to its relatively small size, it will remain a marginal destination for the highly skilled. However, the region is not merely adjusting

\textsuperscript{44} see Biao 2007.

\textsuperscript{45} see Saxenian 2005
passively to abstract global flows, but it participates in shaping the local processes of globalization. As Doreen Massey\textsuperscript{46} writes, “global space is no more than the sum of relations, connections, embodiments and practices (...) space is not the outside of place, it is not abstract, it is not somehow “up there” or disembodied.”

Therefore, Helsinki region is now at a point where it can choose whether it wants to compete for talent by offering tax reductions for the highly skilled, establishing private schools for their children and by providing luxury housing for the elite. Or whether it considers that it will benefit more of by evolving the labor market and enhancing the job mobility of highly skilled, while simultaneously maintaining the society that appeals to the portion of highly skilled who find the Scandinavian welfare state a value in itself.

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