MAPPING INTERCULTURAL MOBILITY

HOW TO MAKE IT A SOURCE OF PERSONAL GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

Report on the quantitative phase of the research WP of the 4C project

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1   What is mobility?

The history of mobility started about 100.000 years ago, with a group of humans engaging in a journey to leave their homeland in the Omo Basin in Ethiopia and slowly moving into the Middle-East, then Eurasia, Australia, and the Americas. Some researchers think it may have been one small tribe of a couple of hundred people who are our common ancestors, our common migrant ancestors.

We live in an increasingly mobile world, characterized by an ever growing and diversifying number of travellers: migrants, international students, expatriates, global nomads, etc. Data from the International Organization for Migration shows that there are roughly 214 million international migrants in the world today, an increase of 64 million from the number of migrants in 2000 and double the number living or working abroad in 1965[1].What's more, intercultural mobility is not just occurring across international borders. Cross-cultural interactions also take place at the local level in classrooms and workplaces across the globe. According to UNESCO, the number of tertiary students has multiplied by six since 1970, going from 32 million to 159 million university students worldwide. This implies that an ever greater number of young people engage in studies further than their parents, embarking on social mobility.

What is the common feature in all these different experiences? Is it "mobility"? What exactly is mobility? Anyone wishing to find the definition of mobility will face a multitude of definitions in very different fields, ranging from physics to anthropology through education.

> **Mobility,** *in solid-state physics, measurement of the ease with which a particular type of charged particle* moves *through a solid material under the influence of an* electric field. *Such particles are both pulled along by the electric field and periodically collide with* atoms *of the solid.* Encyclopedia Britannica Online
>
> **Social mobility,** *movement of individuals, families, or groups through a system of social hierarchy or stratification.*Encyclopedia Britannica Online
>
> **Population mobility, geographic mobility** *or more simply mobility is a statistic that measures migration within a population. It is most commonly used in demography and human geography, it may also be used to describe the movement of animals between populations.*   *Wikipedia*

The one common element, regardless of the disciplinary context is *movement*. Mobility in all the disciplines implies a movement from one material / space / group to another.

The theory of rites of passage proposed by ethnologist Van Gennep (1960) can bring a different light to the mobility phenomena. For Van Gennep, members of societies undergo such rites to mark their entrance as full member to the community. He identifies three phases of the rites: a separation, transition, and reincorporation. In the separation phase people withdraw from the community and prepare for the change. The transition phase is one between stages or places. It can be marked by activities that challenge the individual who can then deserve the reunion with the group – but in a different status. Engaging in mobility – whether geographical or social – could be understood as the separation phase, when one leaves the original cultural environment. Meeting the challenges of the new environment is the transition. Reincorporation would happen when one becomes adapted – integrated to the new environment.

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[1]International Organization for Migration:
 http://www.iom.int/jahia/Jahia/about-migration/facts-and-figures/lang/en

- From a psychological point of view, from the individual's perspective, mobility is a potential source of change, growth, development. The need or motivation for growth and expansion is a powerful motivation. Human behaviour is thought to unfold in the dynamics between the need for growth and the opposing need of self-defence and protection. (e.g.: see Terror Management Theory - Pyszczynski et al 2003). Mobility occurs when the motive of growth and exploration outweighs the need for protection and people engage with the other in intercultural dialogue, changing through the encounter.

In our definition, intercultural mobility is the passage of individuals through cultures (between or within countries) either through geographic movement or through a system of social hierarchy. Mobility implies the separation from the well-known surrounding, the immersion in and progressive adjustment to new cultural environments, which results in a set of changes on the level of self-perception, self-definition, attitude and behaviour patterns as well as skill development.

2   Method: how did we proceed?

Although we started with a clear understanding of what mobility is for us and what challenges it may imply; we also had to face some further questions, such as:

a. Are all intercultural mobility experiences similar? Or is there an essential difference between the experience of crossing a national border and that of accessing a new social class or professional group?

b. Are there some recognizable, "generalizable" challenges in mobility experiences or is each experience a unique constellation of difficulties?

c. Are there strategies that seem more adaptive and competences that are helpful in overcoming these challenges?

To understand the relationship between three different situations of intercultural mobility and to explore the similarity of the challenges and resources, the 4C project planned a primary research work package, composed of a qualitative and a quantitative phase.

The objectives of the research were to explore the differences and similarities between three specific types of intercultural adaptations:

Mobility Type	Definition
Long-Term geographic Mobility	Migrants: international migrants, expatriates, refugees, asylum seekers Having spent more than one year in a country other than the country of birth, with an intention to durably settle there.
Short-Term geographic Mobility	Sojourners: students, short-term contract workers and their families, tourists, Peace Corps members and other international volunteers Spending a period between 3 month and two years in a country other than the country of birth, without intention to durably settle there.
Social Mobility	Strivers: professionals, students who attain a higher level of education than the parents or accede to a career with a greater social prestige than the parents.

Table 1. Three types of mobility covered in our research

In particular we wished to explore whether the same types of challenges appear during the three types of experiences, how similar the learning situations are and if similar competences are needed to manage well these experiences.

In a first qualitative phase we have interviewed 72 people from the four countries (France, Hungary, Malta, United Kingdom) with some type of mobility experience. The interviews were semi-structured, which meant that we had a series of questions we used as a guide, but we also let interviewees deviate from the questions to mention aspects that seemed important to them. We analysed the interviews through open coding, i.e. we identified key elements in the narratives that pointed to crucial aspects concerning challenges, resources and competences.

By comparing the codes we have identified in the different interviews, we created a code hierarchy which points to the main features of the mobility experience. We used these findings to build our questionnaire. The branches of the coding tree became the dimensions of our mobility questionnaire, which we then tried to capture with several items. In an effort to make it easily adaptable to a guiding process, the dimensions reflected different phases of the mobility process: the phase preceding the mobility experience, the phase of living the mobility experience and finally the phase following the mobility experience. Indeed, some dimensions could be assessed even before the mobility experience, such as the motivations for engaging in mobility, the set of skills that could later on become resources and the preconceptions, expectations concerning the experience. The phase of the actual mobility is characterised by challenges that unfold as we get immerged in the unknown environment: challenges related to cultural differences, administrative, practical, work related difficulties. In the phase of immersion people also develop particular relational strategies concerning how they will reconstruct their social network in the new environment. We have also included a phase following the mobility experience, where the focus is on how the results, learning points form the mobility experience are incorporated and valued. Altogether we had 127 items to describe the seven dimensions: motivation, preconceptions, identity, intercultural skills, difficulties, strategies - resources and learning outcomes.

A total of 439 people filled in the test version of our questionnaire from the four partner countries (131 respondents from Hungary, 109 from France, 100 from Malta and 99 from the UK) again all of whom having had some experience of mobility. The data collected were analysed statistically, what helped us to refine the questionnaire by eliminating some items and restructuring the dimensions. At the same time we collected precious information on the challenges and resources of people in mobility.

In the following, we first share some information we gained on the experience of mobility, then we present the mobility chart and mobility map that appeared through the statistical analysis.

3   Who are the mobile? - A comparison of the respondents in the three types of mobility

Our first question concerned the characteristics of people who engage in different types of mobility. Are those who engage in short and long term geographic mobility or in social mobility, the same? What are the similarities and differences between their characteristics?

In the sample 36% of the respondents (156) participated in short term mobility, 32% in long term mobility (142 people) and 32% in social mobility (141 respondents). Our first set of questions aimed at understanding whether these different mobility experiences are similar: implying similar challenges, difficulties and similar resources.
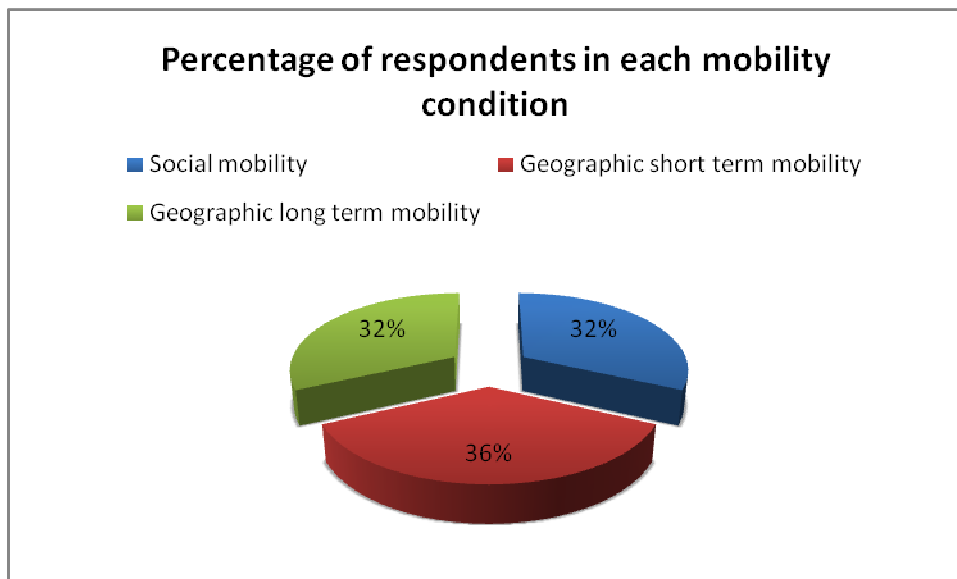
Diagram 1. Proportions of different types of mobility in the sample

In terms of age, respondents with a short term mobility experience were the youngest, less than 8% is older than 40 (for long term mobility it is 23%, and social mobility 21%). Short term mobility seems to be most common between 19 and 40 years. The two other types of mobility are fairly similar.

Diagram 2: age of respondents
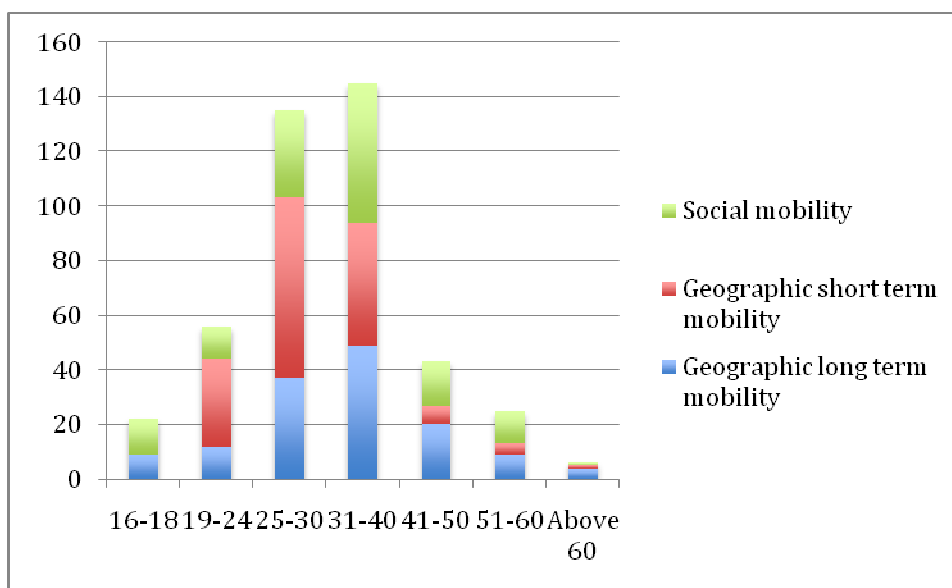
In terms of the duration of the mobility experience (which we took as the time elapsed after one leaves the home environment) the differences between the three groups correspond to our expectations.

Short term mobility had an average of 16 months, while long term mobile people have lived in the new country on an average 7 years, and the social mobility average was about 9 years.
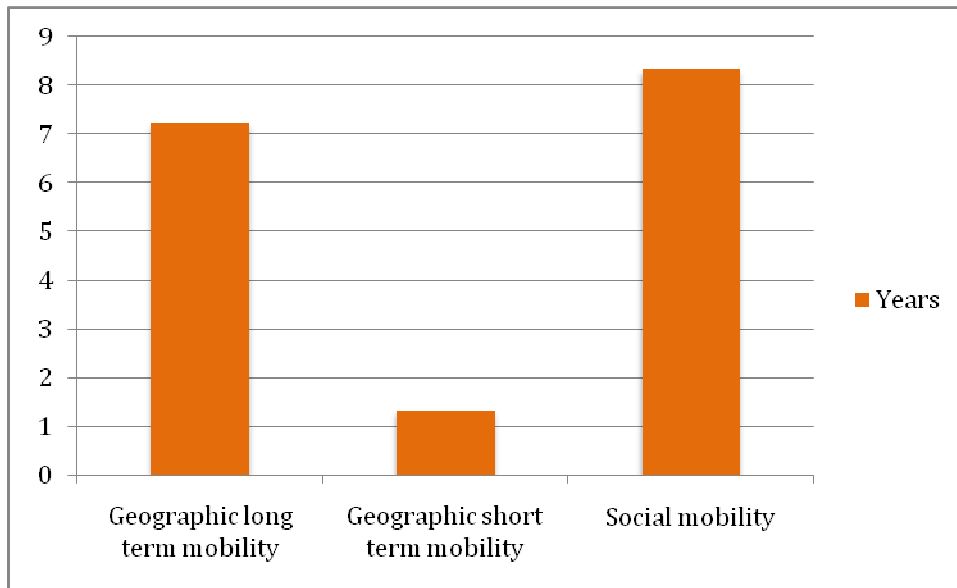
Diagram 3: length of the mobility experience

We have asked respondents about their previous international experiences. 179 respondents (41%) haven't had any prior experience of international mobility before their current mobility (38% of long term mobile respondents, 42% of short term and 42% of socially mobile respondents). 38% of the respondents had short experiences abroad lasting a couple of months (33%, 42% and 39% respectively for the three groups). People in the long term mobility situation tend to have the most prior international experience: 29% had spent at least one year abroad before their current stay, while only 15% short term mobile people and 19% of socially mobile did so[2].
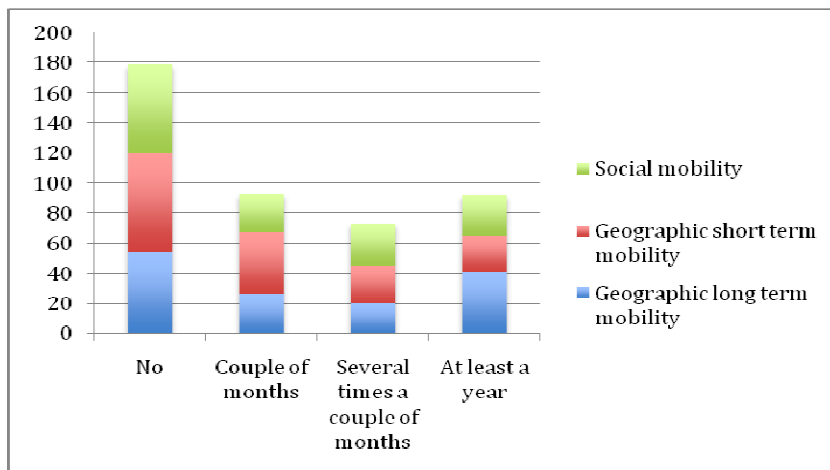
Diagram 4 –Number of respondents per mobility type and their previous international experiences

In terms of the educational level, the sample in general is rather highly educated: almost 60% have university degree and 25% have obtained a post-graduate diploma. Comparing the respondents with different types of mobility we notice that more than 60% of social and short term mobility

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[2]This last finding indicates that 19% of our respondents who answered in the "social mobility" situation belong to our "short term mobility" category as well. This could have biased our results, so where relevant we will indicate whether the previous international mobility experience is significantly different from the other social mobility respondents.

respondents have finished university compared to 49% of long term mobility, with social mobility leading on post graduate degrees (26% against 23% of long term and short term mobility).
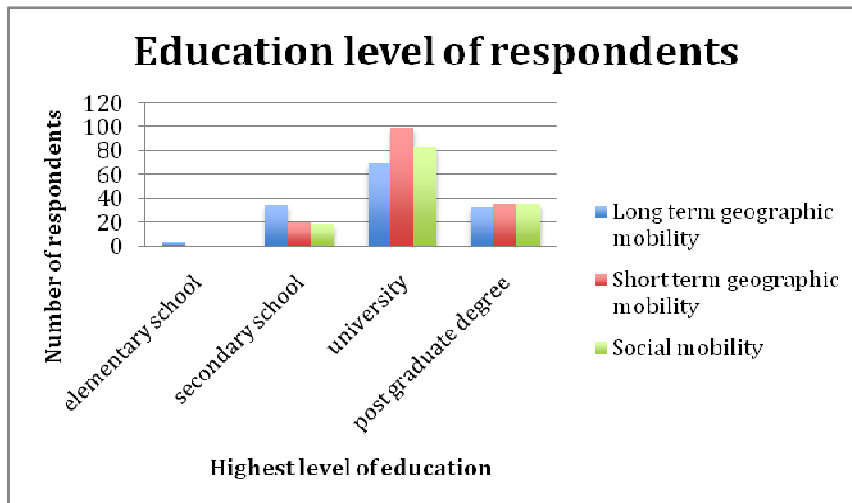
Diagram 5: Highest level of education of respondents

Knowing people in the new environment can become a resource in the adaptation process. It is a factor that could count in the choice of the destination environment both for long term, short term and social mobility. It seems that knowing someone in the destination country or environment is mostly a factor in long term geographic mobility (60% of respondents), while it is the least important for short term geographic mobility (39%). The mere fact of having known someone before arriving does not have an impact though on the actual success of the mobility (as measured by the indicators that we will introduce in the next chapter).

Diagram 6 - Did you know people in the new environment before you arrived?

After this brief demographic introduction of our respondents, the subsequqnt sections will present the model of intercultural mobility that we have obtained through the analysis of their responses.

4 Assessment and accompaniment of mobility

4.1 The mobility chart
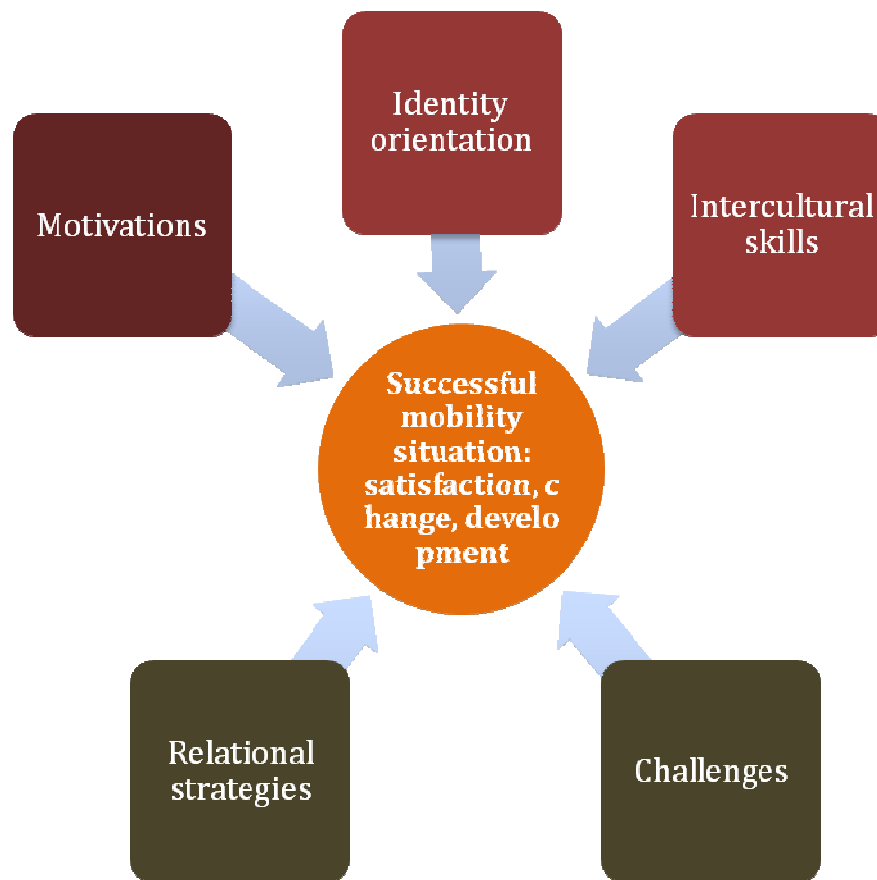
Diagram 7 The mobility chart

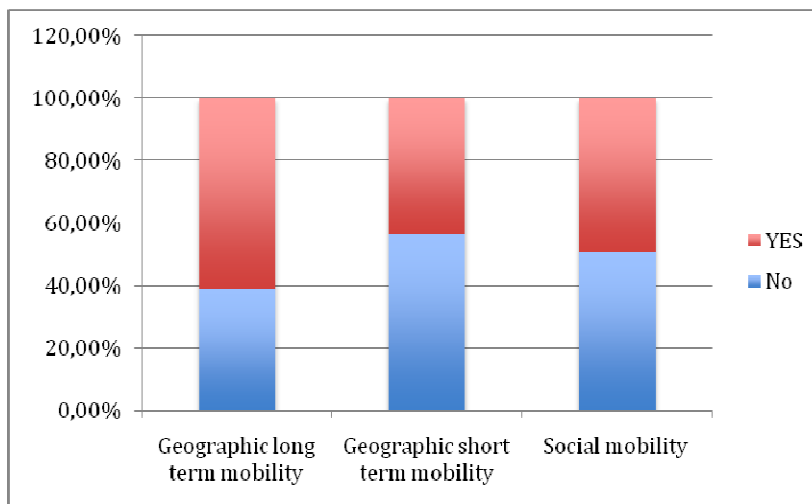Thanks to the 439 respondents who filled out our mobility questionnaire we could draw a map of the mobility experience, identifying the factors – skills, strategies and other aspects that help make mobility a successful experience, as we defined success as a source of satisfaction, change and skills development. Through the statistical analysis of our results we have identified five such dimensions; their precise meaning and relevance will be detailed in the consecutive pages. The main message of the model – which we called the mobility chart - is that the five dimensions offer five different windows through which not only we can assess people's current chances in having a successful mobility experience, but also the dimensions can be transformed into tools of intervention in order to facilitate the process. Three of the dimensions (motivations, identity orientation, intercultural skills) can be assessed and worked on even prior to the mobility experience, helping the preparation of the mobility. Relational strategies and our sensitivity to different challenges unfold once we are already engaged in mobility. All of them can be assessed retrospectively after returning from a short term mobility experience.

4.2 Centre stage: indicators of a successful mobility experience

If our ambition is to find the competences and strategies underlying a successful mobility experience, first of all we need to define what a successful mobility experience is. Researchers have used a variety of different indicators to benchmark the success of mobility. Performance indicators such as achievement at work for expatriates, or academic results for international students, the rate of early departures (going home sooner than expected) offer some objective measures to assess. Using these in the 4C project was not an option though due to the great diversity of our respondents and their contexts. Other measures often used are different scales of psychological adjustment. These can be good indicators of success in the sense that they show if people have overcome anxiety, depression, stress triggered by the mobility experience. However they focus on the emotional – psychological state of individuals and not their relationship with the mobility situation. Against this backdrop we decided to create our own indicators of the success of mobility experiences.

We included in our questionnaire a variety of items related to the evaluation of the mobility experience and to learning outcomes. Through principal component analysis (a statistical method to identify the structure within a set of items) we found three different components:

a) *satisfaction* with the mobility experience expresses how pleased people were with their experience

b) *change* expresses to what extent people felt they changed through the mobility experience, not in any one particular way, change rather understood generally in their personality and their habits.

c) *skills development* showed whether people felt they developed new skills and competences

All three indicators are admittedly subjective: they focus on how the *respondents perceive* they have developed skills, changed during the mobility, and how much they are satisfied with the experience.

The identification of change and skills development as indicators of success was so important that we later on decided to adopt them in our definition of mobility (see page 3). Indeed, our definition now pins down that mobility is a source of change and skills development.

After the identification of our indicators of success a great part of our inquiry was directed towards finding the factors that link to these indicators contributing to making the mobility a source of change, skills development and satisfaction.

Table 2. Summary of the indicators of the success of mobility

CATEGORIES	Definitions	Relevance
Satisfaction with the mobility experience	Indicates to what extent the mobility is a subjective success: how satisfied people are with their experience.	Satisfaction reflects how happy participants are with their mobility experience. This perception can be indicative of psychological adjustment, understood as the successful coping of the stress and anxiety triggered by the new situations.
Change through the mobility experience	Indicates to what extent the mobility is a source of long term changes of the personality and life style.	Our definition of mobility implied that a change takes place in the individual's identity and personality. This illustrates to what extent the person was open, permeable to the influences of the new environment.
Skills Development through the mobility experience	Expresses to what extent the mobility experience is a source of developing new skills, such as communication, tolerance and social skills.	Beyond the change on the level of identity and personality we also expect more concrete learning outcomes from mobility, in particular of skills related to communication, collaboration, handling difference.

Results of the three target groups

We have compared the outcomes and the subjective success of the mobility experience for the three groups. Short term geographic mobility seems to give the most satisfaction: the score is significantly higher than for the other two mobility types – although we have to note that the score is high for all target groups.

The greatest perceived change and skills development is triggered by long term mobility; i.e. people who migrated for longer term reported the most changes in terms of habits and personality and they also report to have developed more in terms of communication, social skills and tolerance.

For all three indicators, it is the social mobility that has the lowest scores, although the differences are not very high, they are significant. It is worth to note that amongst the socially mobile, those respondents who had prior international experience score significantly higher in terms of change and skills development (3.44 vs. 3.19 for change and 2.46 vs. 2.23 for skills development). This implies that a previous international experience can help better benefit from an experience of social mobility.
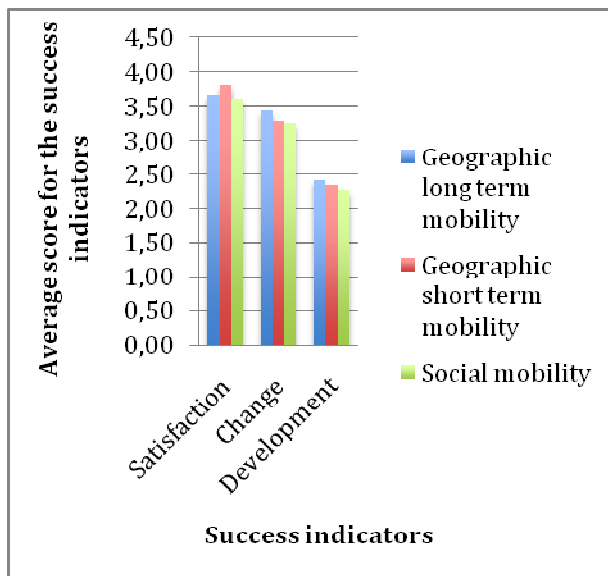
Diagram 7: success indicators per mobility type.

Implications for the accompaniment process

Beyond their great utility in the research phase for the identification of the positive factors of mobility, the indicators of success can also be useful in the accompaniment process. Indeed, they offer a mirror to the respondent and some insight to the guide on how he/she feels about her/his mobility project. It can be particularly interesting to observe the relationship of the three different indicators. For instance one may perceive great changes as an impact of the mobility and at the same time may not feel particularly happy about the experience. This may suggest to the mentor to open discussion on the mentee's perception and representation of change.

Given the importance of the success of mobility in making it a source of change and skills development, in the following sections we take under scrutiny the four different factors influencing this success (motivation, identity orientation, intercultural skills, relational strategies) as well as the challenges that mobility implies.

4.3 Motivation

What makes us engage in mobility? Do we go abroad because life at home is not satisfactory, maybe not even safe? Or because our partner just got appointed abroad? Do we engage in social mobility just because an opportunity presented itself? Does the reason for which we leave have any impact on our new life and the success of our mobility experience?

We made motivation one area of interest in the interview and the questionnaire precisely to be able to answer this last question.

It turned out in the qualitative phase of the research that intercultural mobility is motivated by a variety of factors. In fact there were seven recurrent reasons, varying in both their intensity and their origin. Some seemed more internal to the person (the desire for exploration, a specific interest in the destination (country or vocation), the wish to develop professional competences) while others were rather external, such as the need to leave, a wish to use an opportunity that presented itself, or following another person or another person's desire. We included each of these as separate items in the questionnaire.

Our results showed that three of the seven motivations correlate significantly with all three indicators of the success of the mobility experience (satisfaction, change, skills development). This

confirmed the intuition that motivation does matter and have an impact on how we're going to live our mobility. All of these three motivations had a positive impact on the mobility experience: the desire for exploration, the specific interest and the professional motivation. The other three motivations did not show a significant impact on the success of mobility, though the relationships showed a slight negative impact. The results are detailed in the table below. Afterwards we try to make some proposals as to how assessing motivation can be relevant for the accompaniment process.

Table 3. Summary of the motivation dimension and its sub-dimensions.

CATEGORIES	Definitions	Relevance
Desire to explore	A genuine interest in discovering new places, new environments. The instinct of the explorer (example: "I've always wanted to see other countries")	The desire to explore motivation corresponds to high success of the mobility in terms of change, satisfaction and skills development. However if the international mobility is a longer engagement the positive correlation is less significant.
Specific interest	A genuine interest in one particular destination – be that a country or a professional path	The best motivation for long term geographic mobility correlating significantly with all indicators of success, also shows positive correlation for short term and social mobility though to a lesser degree.
Professional development	Engaging in mobility as a means to develop professional skills	The desire of professional development contributes strongly to the perceived satisfaction of mobility. In general it shows positive connections with the other indicators too.
Relationships	Engaging in mobility because of someone else (example: "I followed my wife to Mexico")	Relationships do not correlate positively with any indicator of success; in fact it shows a slightly negative connection. Engaging in mobility for someone else is not enough for a good experience.
Opportunity	Engaging in mobility because an opportunity presented itself (example: "My boss told me about an international exchange program, so I applied")	Does not correlate positively with any success indicator of mobility.
Economic Improvement	Expecting an improvement of the economical condition through mobility (example: "Going away was the only hope of earning decent money")	Does not correlate positively with any success indicator of mobility.
Need to leave	An external need to depart from the home environment, triggered by unpleasant life conditions, or even threats. (example: "I knew I had to get away if I wanted to do something with my life")	When connected with the outcomes of the mobility, the need to leave motivation only correlates with changes, but does not correlate with satisfaction or skills development through the mobility

A closer look at motivation

During the statistical analysis we have tried to find an inherent structure by grouping of the different types of motivations through principal component analysis, however we did not find any significant structural division. At the same time a distinction appears in the correlations with the mobility success indicators: the division between motivations rooted in the person and the external environment. This separation reflects a recognized classification of different motivations in social psychology. The Self-Determination Theory (Deci, Ryan 2000) for instance differentiates between four types of behaviour regulation or motivation: intrinsic, identified, introjected and external. Intrinsic motivation implies doing an activity because the activity itself provides pleasure or satisfaction. Choosing to move to France because we are genuinely interested in French language, cuisine, culture in general amounts for intrinsic motivation. Similarly, if we engage in mobility because we inherently feel as explorers eager to discover the world our moving is intrinsically motivated (our desire for exploration motivation). If on the other hand we are moving to France because that gives us a chance to work at the UNESCO, and we would very much like a work experience at an international organisation on our CV, we talk about identified motivation: our action is motivated by an external outcome (our CV getting nicer) but it is a goal that we strongly identify with (professional motivation in our questionnaire). Introjection is a motivation that we have only partially internalised. For instance following one's partner to a new country because of the desire of not to disappoint her/him and to avoid becoming an obstacle in her/his career could be such an introjected motivation. Finally external motivation implies doing an activity to avoid punishment, or obtain some separate outcome: earning more money, following the recommendation of a parent or a superior etc. relationships in our questionnaire (going somewhere because of someone else) implies usually such an external motivation – though as in the example given above, it might become introjected.

These motivations vary in their relative autonomy, in fact they can be placed along a continuum of self-determination from more to less autonomy, starting with the intrinsic motivation as the most autonomous to be identified, followed by introjected and finally by external motivation which implies a complete lack of autonomous motivation. In their research on the role of motivation in the adaptation of international students, Chirkov et al (2008) found that autonomous motivation to study abroad contributes to students' various adjustment and that the so-called preservation goals (more external motivations) have a weak negative effect on the adaptation.

Our own results show also the positive impact of more self-determined motivations. Indeed, the two intrinsic motivations (desire to explore and specific interest) correlate the most with our three indicators of success. The identified regulation of professional motivation also correlates significantly with our indicators of success, though to a lesser degree. Amongst the external motivations only the need to leave motivation shows a positive correlation with one indicator of success: change. The other motivations (relational, opportunity, Economic improvement) are characterised by a lack of self-determination and do not have a positive (in fact any) impact on the mobility experience.
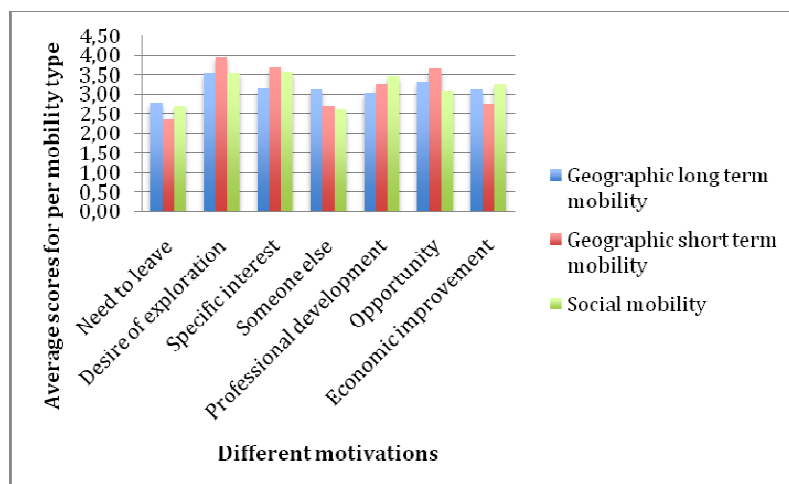
Diagram 8: why did you engage in mobility

We found some significant differences between our three groups in terms of the relevance of different motivations. The *need to leave* and *economic improvement* – two external motivations for example are significantly less important for short term mobility than for long term and social mobility. To the contrary, the desire for exploration is a stronger motivation for short term mobility than the two others. Being attracted to the destination environment is stronger for short term mobility as well. Engaging in the mobility because of someone else is a bit significantly more important in long term mobility. Professional reasons appeared more relevant in social mobility. At the same time we observed great variance in each mobility type, meaning that the individual contextual elements play an important role.

Additionally, the *need to leave* motivation showed some significant positive correlation with the changes amongst long term migrants; but not with the other indicators of success and not in the other two target groups. A typical story behind such a connection could be that of a person who needs to seek asylum in another country, but in one, which he/she may not have chosen, where he/she arrives without plans. Adapting to this country can imply substantial changes, but if one does not manage to connect to this new environment, not much satisfaction or skills development can be expected. The *need to leave* and *economic improvement* – two external motivations for example are significantly less important for short term mobility than for long term and social mobility. To the contrary, the desire for exploration is a stronger motivation for short term mobility than the two others. Being attracted to the destination environment is stronger for short term mobility as well. Engaging in the mobility because of someone else is a bit significantly more important in long term mobility. Professional reasons appeared more relevant in social mobility. At the same time we observed great variance in each mobility type, indicating that the individual contextual elements play an important role.

	Need to leave	Desire of exploration	Specific interest	Someone else	Professional development	Opportunity	Economic improvement
Geographic long term mobility	2.79	3.55	3.14	3.12	3.04	3.33	3.13
Geographic short term mobility	2.37	3.95	3.70	2.71	3.25	3.66	2.77
Social mobility	2.72	3.56	3.58	2.61	3.47	3.10	3.25

Table 4. Scores for motivation for different mobility types

Detecting the presence or lack of intrinsic motivation can orient the pre-departure work. During assessment the main task is to observe the relative weight of more or less self-determined motivations. If the strongest motivations are all external (opportunity, relational, need to leave) then working on developing more self-determined motivations becomes paramount. This work can continue even after arrival. It would imply the development of a more genuine interest towards the new environment, what it could offer, seeking out entry points through which one could connect or find an ''anchor''[3] in the new place as it can be particularly important for people who move by necessity or because of someone else, or for any other external motivation.

4.4 Identity

Before we start to discuss identity, I'd like to ask the reader to take a pause and write down eight answers to the questions "who am I?" When ready, you can continue the reading. Have a look at your list. Some of the answers will probably refer to traits that make you unique, that represent your personal traits and reflect your life journey (e.g. "I am a dreamer" "I am a traveler" "I am optimistic" "I am short" etc.). Other answers will represent us in relation to somebody else: I am a daughter, a companion, a good friend etc. Finally some answers will refer to groups and communities of which we are members: "I am a migrant", "I am Hungarian", "I am a woman", "I am a researcher" etc. Together these three types of statements make up the mosaic of who we are, the mosaic of our identity.

The construct of identity is not an easy one, so it may be worth to revisit some key issues that will help to understand our findings.

- Identities are dynamic and situational not static and stable. Indeed I may feel Hungarian in France, but rarely in Hungary. As time goes by, I may identify myself more as mother and less as daughter, etc. Group identities tend to gain importance under perceived threats and salience.

- Identities include the way we think of ourselves (see the list we just made) but it is not a merely cognitive structure: it implies affects and behaviour. For instance my Hungarian identity explains why I feel touched when a Hungarian swimmer wins at the Olympic games, and it also explains why I like overcooked pasta with poppy seeds and sugar.

- Identity also includes social statuses that reflect the position occupied in a given social structure. Statuses are inscribing identities in a system of hierarchy, they are difficult to ignore because this is often how people see us.

- In a way all identities are cultural, even the most individual ones: how I identify myself as a person is ultimately governed by concepts that are cultural constructs: the way "I am a dreamer" even the way "I am short" can only be understood from a specific cultural context. Nevertheless these are the items that identify me as an individual; they are part of my personal identity.

- The scientific construct of identity itself is cultural: it reflects the individualist bias of the modern Western world. There are some cultural differences that are easy to comprehend: for instance the relative importance of relational or collective items for cultures where interdependence is more of a value than individualism. It is important to note that the distinction is one based on nuances, not absolutes: both members of individualist and more collectivist cultures use personal, relational and group identity aspects. Furthermore, there may be concepts, which are more relevant for some cultures as a central key to open

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[3] A source of security or stability

the door of what it means to be human. As those concepts may not be translated to our languages, identity may have a limited use in other vocabularies. It is important to be aware that our concept of identity as discussed below has an important cultural bias.

- Like all psychological phenomena, identities also exist for a reason; to fulfil certain functions. Up to the present there is no consensual exclusive list of what these functions (sometimes called as motives or principles) may be, but some items are recurrent throughout different researches. These include meaning (e.g. the professional identity of a doctor may be based on reducing human suffering) value or self-esteem (identities are an important source of self esteem) relatedness (part of a tango dancer identity can be sustained by the regular occasions to meet and dance with other people) competence (an American migrant may choose to give English lessons because it gives her a feeling of competence) autonomy (for a runner running may be an occasion to perform an activity just for the sake of it) and distinctiveness (curiosity may be a distinguishing feature in one's self conception).

So what's the role of identity in mobility?

During the qualitative phase we have noticed that the respondents whose narrative gives the most negative experiences of mobility use cultural terms to identify themselves much more often than other respondents. They mentioned more often different group memberships in their narratives than respondents who were more happy with their mobility. We kept this observation for the quantitative phase, where we included items to assess to what extent people identify themselves in terms of cultural groups or in terms of individual characteristics. We asked how important was national identity, religion, class, ethnicity, but also personality and individual life experiences. A principal component analysis of the five items resulted in two identity orientations, with national, ethnic and class membership one the one hand and individual experiences and personality on the other. We called these group orientation and personal orientation respectively.

What we have found is that the group orientation and personal orientation behave differently in the mobility experience: personal orientations seem to have a positive impact as they correlate significantly positively with all three indicators of success (satisfaction, change and skills development) while group orientation shows no such correlation. This lack of correlation indicates that other factors might intervene to influence the succes of mobility, for example the capacity of the person to define him/herself by multiple identities and his/her willingness to open up to people in other categories than his/her own.

What's more, stronger cultural orientations seem to go together with stronger challenges in the mobility, in particular concerning cultural differences and discrimination. Finally the two identity orientations seem to have an influence also on how we are developing our new social network in the new environment and what our intercultural skills are. In the paragraph bellow we will look at explanations of these findings and show how this information can be used in the accompaniment process.

Table 4. Summary of the dimension of identity orientation

	Definitions	Relevance
Group identity orientation	A tendency to identify oneself dominantly though memberships in different social groups such as nationality, religion, ethnicity, social class.	*Link to difficulties* A group identity orientation seems to significantly relate to experiencing difficulties of cultural differences and feeling discriminated (for more details see section on difficulties). *Link to relational strategies* Cultural orientation links positively to the separation strategy: people with stronger cultural orientation may be inspired to make friendships in the new environment with people from their own cultural background. *Intercultural skills* Negative correlations are observed with emotion management (capacity to overcome the grasp of emotions) and awareness of relativity, positive correlations with active control and planning. (for details see section on intercultural skills)
Personal identity orientation	A tendency to identify oneself dominantly through individual characteristics, achievements and life experiences.	*Success of the mobility experience* A personal identity orientation seems to be a resource in mobility: it correlates positively with all three indicators of success (satisfaction, change, skills development). *Relational strategies* This orientation negatively correlates with marginalisation and relational tolerance strategies, and positively with relational proactivity (see section on relational strategies for more details) *Intercultural skills* Strong positive correlation with Learning from challenges and uncertainty tolerance. Also positive relation to active control and planning strategy (for details see section on intercultural skills)

A closer look at identity in the mobility experience

The connection between identity orientations and relational strategies, intercultural skills, difficulties and the indicators of success makes this construct an interesting resource for the accompaniment of the mobility project.

Cross-cultural transitions (be it international or between cultural groups) instantly challenge our identities by questioning our cultural patterns, norms, ways of being and identifying ourselves. Identity conflicts and threats are often triggered during adaptation, whenever there is a

- Tension between assigned and claimed identities (e.g. consider a Hungarian-born young man who's considered as Chinese by Hungarians because of his appearance), or

- Conflict between different functions of identity (e.g. consider the conflict between relatedness and competence for a man who decided to make a pause in his career to follow his wife to another country) or the inability to satisfy particular motives (e.g. re-establishing a feeling of competence and meaning for the young husband mentioned before)

- Lack of recognition of particular identities (e.g. consider the implications of low status identities, often marked by negative stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination).

To respond to the threats, people engage in a variety of "identity strategies" (Camilleri 1985) "identity management" (Imahory and Cupach 2005) or "identity negotiation" (Ting-Toomey 2005) all of which denote taking different actions to re-establish harmony between identity aspects and satisfy the motives behind identity. These actions can take a wide range of forms from changing the way of clothing, the habit of spending free time, attending networking events and making new friends as well as improving language skills etc.

The question is why personal identity orientation could be effective in these adjustment processes, while the group orientation does not have such an effect.

In her research on international students' adaptation Cross (1995) found that independent self-construals (similar to our personal identity orientation) are positively linked to direct coping strategies, which imply lower levels of stress, thus better wellbeing and satisfaction. Direct coping strategies are those that rely on self-expression, assertivity, direct action, and task-oriented problem solving. These strategies may indeed be more adaptive in a culture which has also an individualist orientation. Our own findings partially confirm these results. Indeed we did observe significant differences between the intercultural skills correlating with personal and group identity orientations: personal orientation correlates positively with Learning from challenges (our capacity to take new situations as opportunities to learn) and tolerance of uncertainty (our capacity to handle uncertain situations), as well as with relational strategies associated with a successful mobility experience (such as the capacity to create a new social network). The difference seems to be in the particular dynamics of cultural identity in intercultural situations. Let's have a closer look at these dynamics.

In their study on heterogeneous teams Earleyand Mosakowski (2000) have shown how in moderately mixed groups, where collective identities are salient, in case of pressure, confrontation, tension, collective identities can become dividing lines or *faultlines* similar to the "geological fault lines" under tectonic plates. Lau and Murnighan (1998) observed how such faultlines offer a safety zone for participants, an easy retreat where their identities find confirmation with less effort. An example: consider an international project consisting of some French, some Germans and some Greeks working together. Inevitably some cultural differences will appear in the collaboration (e.g. how do we lead a meeting, how we prepare for it, how we manage time). If these differences become a source of conflict (e.g. the Germans are unhappy with the Greek way of making time flow) what Early and Mosakowski predict is that a likely outcome will be to see the French the German and the Greeks retrieve in their own groups and stick to their own way and argue for it, in terms of group differences. However if only one person represented each nationality no such retreat would be possible and team members would be propelled to solve their conflict through negotiating a joint way of handling time.

Following on the above the explanation of the different impact of group and personal identity orientations is that a low personal orientation with a strong group orientation can offer the option of easy retreat in the face of conflicts and tensions. This is reflected by the link between group orientation and the relational strategy of separation (where we look for friends amongst people from our own cultural background). This seems to show that precisely in intercultural situations, which would demand openness to negotiation, to change, the inherent threats, challenges of the situation increase the defensive motives of identity and make people hold on to their group identities more firmly. A personal identity orientation seems to provide resources to avoid this need for closure[4] and defence.

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[4]On the need for closure see Kruglanski 1996

Results of the three target groups

The differences between the three mobility types are slight and not significant in terms of identity orientations. In all three target groups personal orientations are stronger than group identity orientations, which reflect maybe the individualist tendency characterising western societies.

	Personal orientation	Group orientation
Long term geographic mobility	3.96	2.83
Short term geographic mobility	4.02	2.68
Social mobility	3.91	2.73

Table 5. Identity orientations and mobility types

Instead of the type of mobility, the factor that seems to have an impact on identity orientation is whether one considers oneself to be part of a cultural or visible minority. This is understandable as identities under perceived threat tend to close on themselves. The respondents that consider themselves members of such minorities have significantly stronger group identity orientations, though even for them the personal orientations are higher. It is however important to consider that identity orientations can change in a dynamic way and are very much dependent on the actual context of particular lived situations.

Implications for the accompaniment process

By no means should the findings be interpreted such that a group identity orientation is bad or maladaptive. Group identities are not harmful as such. However when these are the only identity positions, they may become frozen, and serve as a retreat in the face of the uncertainty, the unpredictability of the new environment. When they become rigid, they can indeed become an obstacle for change and skills development. People who consider themselves more in terms of group identities tend to face significantly more difficulties related to cultural differences and discrimination than those who score higher in personal orientation. This may later on further enhance the rigidity of group positions, thus creating a self-sustaining process of more rigid group positions, leading to more challenges and so on. The tasks proposed for respondents who score low on personal orientation focus on accepting the multiplicity and dynamic nature of an identity system. A particular objective can be the development of the dialogical potential implying the introduction of flexibility to the identity system: the capacity to develop new identity positions (e.g. "volunteer" instead of unemployed when no employment is possible), transform or change the valorisation of existing positions (e.g. "black is beautiful" or "I'm a migrant, but that is an achievement rather than a disadvantage"). The task is not a mission impossible: all identity systems are multiple; the difference lies more in how much we are aware of this fact and how we use this multiplicity.

4.5 Intercultural skills

Are there skills and competences that have a general utility in all intercultural situations or each situation requires specific skills? Can these skills be developed? Can we assess them even prior to the mobility experience? And most of all: if they exist, what are these skills?

The identification of such intercultural competences has been the holy grail of cross-cultural research for almost half a century. The stakes are high: to select, prepare and accompany efficiently people engaging in international assignments, studies across national or cultural borders. We supposed that people in intercultural situations make use of certain competences and the mobility itself is developing these competences. We also assumed that the importance of developing these competences is that they can be used in very different domains in life not only in mobility situations. These are the competences we will call intercultural and a key objective of the 4C project was to identify them and develop ways to strengthen them.

Based on the open coding of the interview transcripts we have recognized that a variety of skills and competences seem to act as resources in the mobility experience. Once the key domain as intercultural skills was identified, we focused on the sub-domains. Three researchers proposed items independently and we included the ones that all three found acceptable. In a second round the members of the partnership and the expert group were invited to review these items. Altogether we included 26 items in the questionnaire, as the identification of intercultural skills was at the centre of our inquiry. These 26 items touched all three levels of human functioning: emotional life, cognitive patterns, and behaviours. Because of a desire to be able to assess these skills even before engaging in a mobility experience we formulated them in a way that they could be understood without referring to a mobility experience.

Through the statistical analysis of our 439 responses to our questionnaire we have kept 16 items, which formed 7 factors through principal component analysis. All of these seven factors have a positive impact on the mobility experience, though some show stronger correlations with our indicators of success (satisfaction, change, skills development) than others. The table below gives a quick summary of these factors, which we will detail below. We then compare the results of different types of mobilities and end the section with suggestions for the applicability in the accompaniment process.

Table 6. Summary of intercultural skills

CATEGORIES	Definitions	Relevance
Active control and planning	Capacity to take action to solving problems	Shows a strong positive correlation with all indicators of success, in particular with satisfaction, and skills development. With change to a lesser degree.
Reflective anticipation	Skills of developing patterns and explanations from observation.	Shows a strong positive correlation with all indicators of success, in particular with satisfaction, and skills development. With change to a lesser degree.
Learning from challenges	Capacity to reframe difficult tasks as learning opportunities and as opportunities for change.	Shows a strong positive correlation with all indicators of success, in particular with satisfaction, and change.
Motivation to engage	An attitude of resisting the need for retreat and for avoiding potentially disturbing, difficult situations	Shows a strong positive correlation with all indicators of success, in particular with satisfaction.
Awareness of relativity	Awareness of cultural differences.	Shows a strong positive correlation with two indicators of success: satisfaction and skills development.
Emotion management	Capacity to manage one's emotions and not to be carried by them, not to be imprisoned by them. It is not the same as the exteriorisation of emotions or the tendency to display them	Shows a positive correlation with one indicator of success: satisfaction.
Uncertainty tolerance	Tolerance of uncertain situations.	Shows a positive correlation with one indicator of success: satisfaction.

Active control and planning is the process of taking active steps to face a challenge. As such it is clearly a problem focused activity (Carver, Scheier&Weintraub, 1989). Many studies linked problem-focused coping strategies with a good adjustment and success in solving problematic situations (Holahan& Moos, 1987 ;Holahan, Moos & Schaefer, 1996). Indeed, it is suggested, that suppression of competing activities – usually contributing to entropy and a feeling of confusion - allows the individual to focus on the stressor. Planning permits one to formulate a strategy to deal with the stressor, and control involves the implementation of the solution to solve the problem (Ward & Kennedy, 2001).

In our research active control and planning shows a significant positive correlation with all three indicators of the success of mobility. Amongst all intercultural skills, active control and planning has the strongest impact on the satisfaction with mobility. A further interest is that this skill seems to be similarly used by people with different identity orientations

Reflective anticipation. A key element in intercultural communication is to assume that there is a rationality behind the behaviour of the other. We construct hypothesis based on previous encounters and knowledge on the other culture. However, this theory of the other, anticipating the other's behaviour can easily become limiting and even source of prejudice if it is not paired with the capacity for observation and for making the feedback on our own expectations based on the observation. It may also be the case that conscious, critical thinking about intercultural incidents, the generation of rival hypotheses that explain conflict by other factors than those arising from one's own cultural framework and the creation of a new set of ideas about social interaction are critical to adjustment. This factor shows a significant positive correlation with all indicators of the success of mobility: it contributes to satisfaction, change and skills development.

Learning from challenges implies that one sees difficult situations as an opportunity to learn something new. People scoring high on this factor may go out of their way to find themselves in life-changing situations. For them, life is but a series of opportunities that help them to grow.

In the context of mobility, Learning from challenges implies a certain freedom from over-attachment to previous ways of thinking that have worked in the past and a willingness to tolerate the ambiguity of not knowing or being able to predict the likely outcomes of one's actions. Learning from challenges implies the use of a positive reinterpretation and growth strategy, which means construing a stressful transaction in positive terms, finding something positive from the stressful experience, shifting priorities, and gained new appreciation of the situation. (Carver, Scheier & Weintraub, 1989). This response should intrinsically lead the person to continue to be active, motivated.

Learning from challenges correlates significantly positively with all indicators of the success of mobility, in particular with satisfaction and change. Amongst all the intercultural skills it is the Learning from challenges that has the greatest impact on change: this confirms the openness to grow and change that this skill implies. An additional interest is that people with stronger personal identity orientation have a tendency to use more often this skill.

Motivation to engage is the opposite of avoidance, in a way it is a capacity to resist the need for avoidance. Ward and Kennedy's research (2001) suggest that the avoidant coping style, which encompasses behavioural disengagement, denial, the inability to see the potentially positive aspects of change, and mental disengagement, was inversely related to psychological adjustment. Indeed, an avoidant coping style is considered the most powerful predictor of poor psychological adjustment. However this kind of response may have some utilities in a short term as the individual manage to take temporary distance from the overwhelming stressor (see Carver et al., 1989). However, as immigrants and sojourners are unable to withdraw completely from the dominant culture, the sustained use of avoidant strategies is likely to be maladaptive. This is corroborated by Chataway and Berry's (1989) international student research, which indicated that detachment is associated with increased psychological distress.

Motivation to engage correlates significantly positively with all indicators of the success of mobility, in particular with satisfaction.

Emotion management implies the skill of controlling emotional reactions to emotionally evocative events. It is important to distinguish this skill from the tendency of exteriorising emotions (i.e. of crying when we are sad and shouting loud when we are angry). Emotions – whether exteriorised or not can linger on and stay with us and we can be imprisoned by them if we do not manage to set ourselves free from them to some extent. Masumoto, Hirayama and LeRoux (2006) proposed the concept of *emotion regulation*. They suggest that people in intercultural mobility will be more likely to manage adjustment if they learn how to regulate their emotions. This capacity allows individuals to engage in clear thinking about intercultural incidents without retreating into psychological defences. If people in mobility situations do not have the ability to regulate or control their emotions, they will be unlikely to adjust well because they will be locked into their automatic or habitual ways of dealing with the world, and will often be propelled to act upon the emotions. Because intercultural contact and change are significant life events that inherently stressful, emotional management is a psychological skill that can help people deal with life in a new and different environment (Masumoto, 2006). Indeed, research suggest that people in mobility situations with better emotion management have less depression, anxiety, culture shock and homesickness, and higher levels of happiness and well-being.

Emotion management correlates significantly positively with the satisfaction of the mobility experience, and is not related to the other two indicators. It is interesting to note that there is a reverse relationship between cultural identity orientation and the capacity for emotion management. This connection sends us back to the idea of "easy retreat" in case of intercultural conflicts. Indeed, those who manage better their emotions may feel less propelled to seek protection in the safety zone of cultural identities.

Uncertainty tolerance. The fact that intercultural encounters imply an unusual level of uncertainty and ambiguity is recognized by most researchers. Some testimonies are the dimension of *open-mindedness* in the *Multicultural Personality Questionnaire* (Van Oudenhoven, Van der Zee 2002) the cognitive component of the concept of *cultural intelligence* proposed by Early and Ang (2003), the *flexibility and openness* dimension in Williams'(2005) *Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory* or the *tolerance for ambiguity* identified by Ruben (1976). Openness and uncertainty tolerance are actually the central elements of some theories and measures, for instance of the *Attitudinal and Behavioral Openness Scale* created by Caligiuriet al. (2000) and the*Uncertainty and Anxiety Management Theory* developed by Gudykunst (2001). Uncertainty is a powerful stress producer. In preparing for mobility, uncertainty about key factors can cause high levels of stress. Uncertainty is not just one of the causes of stress; it is a vital part of the mechanism of psychological stress. Managing it can make a big difference to health, happiness (Leitch, 2008) and to a better adjustment.

Those who better cope with uncertainty can cut their psychological stress significantly improving the adjustment process to a new environment. Leitch (2008) suggest different ways aiming at diminishing uncertainty like: "do not wait for a response to be decided, to manage the extreme downside risks first" (« what is the worst that could happen ? »), "try to be objective and quantitatively precise about the chances of alternative things happening, prepare for a situation that is likely to throw up stressful news, and recover through exercise and relaxation" (the more we are relaxed, the more we are tolerant).

Uncertainty tolerance relates positively significantly with the satisfaction with mobility, but not with the two other indicators of success. Furthermore, personal identity orientation seems to go hand in hand with a high tolerance of uncertainty.

Awareness of relativity is a cognitive skill, connected to the concept of "cultural relativism" attributed to the anthropologist Franz Boas. The idea of cultural relativism implies an awareness

that there is no position outside of any specific culture from which we could objective contemplate other cultures. This implies that our perceptions (and judgements) of other cultures are necessarily biased by our own cultural positions. For the same reason, any objective comparison and evaluation of another culture is by definition impossible. The awareness of relativity assumes that one has adopted an attitude of cultural relativity at least in theory on the cognitive level. This implies that one can conceive and accept cultural diversity - at least in theory. It is important to note that applying cultural relativism in practice is infinitely more difficult than acknowledging it in theory, but this capacity can also be developed, primarily by conscious self observation and self reflection.

Awareness of relativity correlates significantly positively with satisfaction and skills development but does not relate with change. And here is something interesting: too much relativity may prevent us from being shocked by cultural difference, and this lack of critical incidents may also prevent us from using culture shock as a source of self-reflection and change. The matter surely deserves further investigation.   What we know for certain is that a strong cultural identity orientation is often paired with a low awareness of relativity.

Results of the three target groups

Learning from challenges seems to be the strongest competence of the social mobility and short term respondents, while long term mobility respondents use slightly more the active coping and planning.

There are slight but significant differences between respondents of the three mobility types in terms of their intercultural skills.
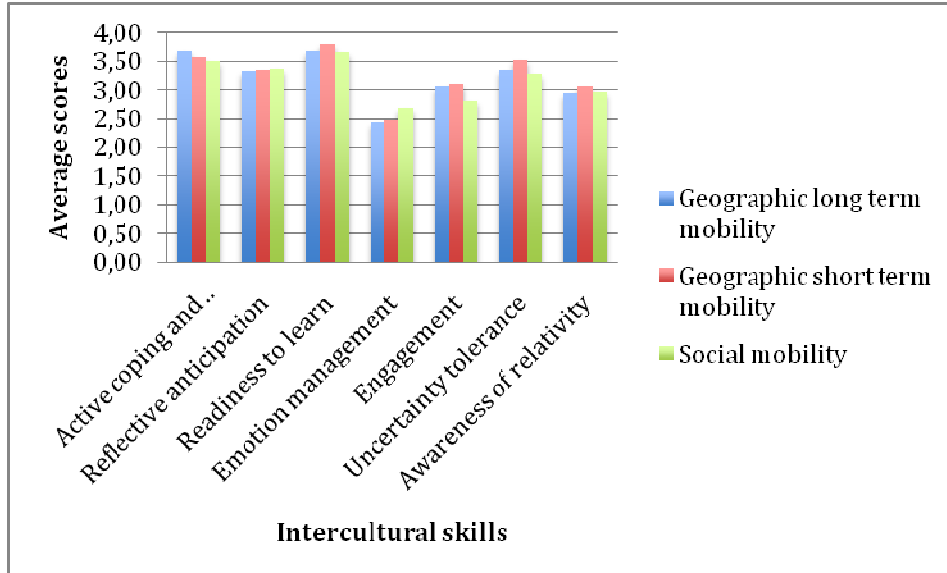

Diagram 10. Intercultural skills and mobility types.

The significant differences are highlighted in the table below summarizing the average scores. Learning from challenges is significantly higher for short term mobility than the other mobility types. Emotion management is significantly higher in social mobility, while motivation to engage is significantly lower, which means that respondents in social mobility have a slightly stronger tendency to avoid potentially disturbing situations.

	Active coping and planning	Reflective anticipation	Learning from challenges	Emotion management	Engagement	Uncertainty tolerance	Awareness of relativity
Geographic long term mobility	3.69	3.33	3.67	2.44	3.07	3.36	2.94
Geographic short term mobility	3.58	3.35	3.79	2.48	3.10	3.53	3.05
Social mobility	3.52	3.38	3.66	2.69	2.82	3.27	2.98

Table 7.Average scores of intercultural skills per mobility types

Implications for the accompaniment process

The skills identified above can be assessed prior to any mobility experience, as they are formulated in a way that is not dependent on cross-cultural contextualisation. Indeed they are skills that are used during everyday life, which we found to be predictors of a successful experience of mobility.

When the questionnaire is administered prior to a mobility experience the guide can estimate the internal resources of the respondent and identify areas that need to be developed.

During the mobility the intercultural skills can be developed taking into account the current experience of mobility and the current context, not least in conjunction with working on the actual challenges met.

After the mobility – and in particular through the comparison of the pre-departure and post-arrival data we can help participants to become aware of how they have developed these competences during their mobility experiences, hence contributing to the valorisation of the journey.

The most important is that all of these skills can be developed and thereby contribute to a better experience of mobility which results in more change and more skills development.

4.6 Challenges

What is particular about intercultural situations? In what ways do they differ from any other situation? Are there some common challenges inherent in mobility situations?

So that we can give effective support to those in a mobility situation we need to have a better understanding of the challenges that such experiences imply. Based on the interviews we have constructed 18 items on different difficulties to include in the questionnaire. During the statistical processing of the data principal component analysis resulted in four factors, keeping 14 items. We distinguished difficulties stemming from cultural differences, threats to identity, professional challenges and finally separation from old connections. Maybe the most interesting finding is that in general the impact of difficulties is rather moderate on the success of mobility. To make it simple: experiencing difficulties does not imply that we'll have a bad experience. In fact, to the contrary: certain challenges can be beneficial. Indeed, both the cultural differences and the separation from old connections are significantly positively connected to change. The only negative link is between the identity threat and satisfaction, which seems easy to understand. In the following we first explain each of these difficulties, then we present the relation of the three target groups with the difficulties.

Table 8: summary of challenges

CATEGORIES	Definitions	Relevance
Cultural Differences	Difficulties that arise from the difference between cultural reference frames. Differences include: gender roles, different approaches to hierarchy, difference in ways of thinking, differences in customs.	Cultural difficulties significantly correlate positively with the changes resulting from the mobility, indicating that the perceived clash of the cultural references can be an important trigger to the adaptation procedure.
Identity Threat	The threats to identity can imply the perception of feeling different, sticking out, facing stereotypes or even racism against one's own cultural group.	Shows some negative correlation with the satisfaction of mobility experiences.
Professional challenges	Concerns related to finding a proper job, performing well, making a good living out of it.	Does not correlate with any of the indicators of success.
Separation from old connections	Conflicts and misunderstandings marking the separation from the primary social relations of family and friends from the old environment.	Separation significantly correlates positively with the changes resulting from the mobility, probably indicating that the more we change, the more recurrent conflicts are with the old environment.

Cultural differences

Facing cultural differences is probably at the source of the learning experience in any mobility situation. The sometimes dramatic encounter of cultural practices - sense of embarrassment and surprise - can result in two simultaneous consequences. First of all we can suddenly become aware of our own cultural baggage, which usually is silent and non-conscious, but when confronted with the mirror of alterity it breaks to our consciousness. For instance when talking with French people I often realize that I have a positive bias for the non formal communication style, well in contrast with French formalism. The second consequence concerns the encounter with new cultural practices, which - if we are ready to receive them without prejudice - can make our world grow. We learn new recipes, new ways of moving, new ideas to explain the world from other cultures.

In the end it shouldn't come as a surprise that challenges related to cultural difficulties make us change. But what kind of difficulties are we talking about? In fact the questionnaire pointed to four recurrent sensitive areas – i.e. areas of potential surprises, misunderstandings, tensions - that often became the sources of difficulties. We briefly detail all four of them.

Habits

A more general category, "customs" can imply a variety of cultural practices from different domains of life. Some examples include: clothing, eating habits, rules and norms of appropriate behaviour in general and communication. This last may be particularly important, since almost immediately we are confronted to differences in communication. Edward T. Hall (1976) for example distinguishes between high- and low-context cultures, linked to the importance of contextual elements such as framework, non-verbal and para-verbal elements and surrounding circumstances in which communication or an event takes place. High-context communication styles rely more on such contextual elements while context-poor communication styles focus on the verbal transmission of the message.

Societies might differ on the basis of the importance attached to certain values, which, in turn influence behaviour in ways that remain most often hidden. Some of the examples we found in our sample of interviews:

Gender roles

Every society defines the behaviours and attitudes expected of male and female members of a society, therefore what means to be a woman and what means to be a man may vary from culture to culture. Hofstede (1980) differentiates cultures on a masculinity and feminity dimension. Cultures that tend to be more masculine have the preference for values traditionally considered as masculine (in modern Western societies!) such as competitivity, strenghtand assertivity, while feminine cultures according to him tend towards modesty, caring, acceptance. More interestingly, masculinity, in his classification goes together with more distinction between gender roles, while in feminine cultures those are more overlapping. Encounters between the different practices often become source of surprise and misunderstanding: a French woman described her shock when an Eastern European woman appeared "excessively sexually dressed" at a job interview. A group of Danish women did not realise they went into a Lesbian party because the lack of very feminine outfits and make-up was just norm to them, and finally an invited lecturer got shocked when she was giving a speech at a Turkish cultural centre and realised men and women were seated in separate spaces.

Hierarchy

People of different cultures have also different attitudes towards authority, which is reflected in many areas of lives (e.g. business, school, etc.). One of the reasons for this lies in the different level of acceptance of power distance (Hofstede 1980). Power distance refers to the way in which power is distributed unequally. High power distance cultural orientations are characterized by a higher acceptance of these differences. France for instance is characterized by a relatively high power distance, which is well illustrated by the fact that high ranking managers and employees usually don't have lunch together, subordinates are not supposed to openly contradict the bosses and the education style is dominated by the clear authority of the teacher. (This does not imply that equality is not considered as a value, but shows that at the same time unequal power distributions are also respected and considered important.)

Ways of thinking

Researchers of cross-cultural differences have been trying to identify the main dimensions of differentiations along which different ways of perceiving the world around us and thinking about it could be compared. Although there is no final consensus, there are a variety of relevant dimensions proposed. Hofstede differentiates uncertainty avoidance vs. tolerance and the orientations toward long term or short term. Another distinction between different approaches to time differnciates polychronic and monochronic cultures, the latter insisting on a linear perception of time, on doing tasks sequentially, one at a time while the polychronic approach prefers the simultaneity of several tasks and a more "flexible" interpretation of agreed meeting hours. In addition, Fons Trompenaars and and Hampden-Turner identified the dimension of universalism vs. particularism (on the basis of what is most important in a given culture: the rules and rights valid for each member of the society or relationships which allow for differenciated treatment.

Societies differ from each other on the basis of innumerable dimensions and sometimes differences of norms and values are bigger between subgroups of the same society than between one society and the other. The above (most often dual) classifications should not be taken as objective descriptions of cultural systems, rather as models that might help us to understand the systematic nature of difference – which however always allow for exceptions.

Identity Threat

The need to be recognized is a tricky one: in fact we simultaneously need to be recognized in our group identity and still not to be enclosed in it. That is, a Roma university student in Hungary may desire to be recognized positively as Roma yet would not like to be considered only as the Roma student "who made it", rather than just a student. This duplicity is just one of the complexities of identity: as a minority we want the option of not sticking out, not being pointed to as different, yet we also want the chance of being recognized in our particular group identity. Threats then can come from both ways: being reduced to a group identity (hence individual identity being undervalued) or not receiving the (positive) recognition of a group identity. Negative attitudes, stereotypes have a strong impact on migrants, newcomers, and other minorities (Ward et al 1995) racism is often brought up as the greatest of the risks for migrants (Fernando 1993) and the perception of racism have a strong negative impact on wellbeing (Ataca 1996).

This is the only factor amongst difficulties, which shows some negative correlation with indicators of success, namely the satisfaction with the mobility experience. This shows the strength of experiences of discrimination and prejudice and the powerful need to feel accepted, recognized and included. We have also found that the group identity orientation is significantly connected with the threat to group identity, which should come as no surprise. What's more, there is probably a reciprocal relationship between these two factors: the more we identify with our group, the more likely we interpret bad situations as acts of discrimination and prejudice, hence enclosing us even more in our group positions.

Professional challenges

Finding a job is crucial for successful economic adaptation - a process which refers to the degree to which work is obtained, is satisfying and is effective in the new culture (Aycan &Berry, 1996). Work must be obtained, performed in a satisfying manner and this is difficult in a new culture, yet it is the basis of material survival. What's more, beyond material survival work is also a basic criteria through which social statuses are assigned. Challenges related to professional life include proceedings such as familiarization of oneself with the labour culture and laws of the new country, gaining a work and resident permit, a valid passport or national identity card and complying with employment laws and regulations. Sometimes even highly qualified people are not able to find a secure job for long periods. That might influence their general well-being. There is strong evidence that re-employment leads to improved self-esteem, improved general and mental health, and reduced psychological risks. On the contrary, anxiety, depression, dissatisfaction with one's present life, experienced strain, negative self-esteem, hopelessness regarding the future and other negative emotional states have each been demonstrated in cross-sectional studies to be higher in unemployed people than in matched groups of employed people (Fryer, 1995).

It is important to point out that in our own research the presence of challenges related to finding work, make ends meet, performing well does not show any singificant correlation with any of the success indicators, even though for all target groups it is the highest challenge: this suggests that these difficulties could be overcome so that they do not hinder the chance to benefit from the mobility experience.

Separation from old connections

The experience of immersion in a new environment causes changes in oneself and can influence individuals on a profound level such as their sense of who they are and in their most important values. People change and often newly acquired patterns of values, habits and ways of thinking are not in total congruence with the ones that are held by their friends or family left in the home environment. This might lead to misunderstandings and might cause feelings of insecurity and confusion about where one belongs to. The importance of keeping in contact with the family might be reflected in the fact that chronic stress of family separation is related to emotional dysfunction,

and those who arrive in the country of resettlement with a spouse seem to fare better during cross-cultural relocation. (Berry and Blondel, 1982). Links to one's heritage culture (i.e. with co-nationals) are also associated with lower stress (Ward & Kennedy, 1993).

In our own results the separation from old connections has no impact on satisfaction with the mobility experience, which shows that people find resources to successfully overcome these challenges. At the same time there is a significant positive correlation with change resulting from mobility, which supports the idea that the more we change the more it is a challenge to keep connected with our relations from the home environment.

Results for the three target groups

Professional challenges are the strongest for all three target groups, followed by challenges related to cultural differences. Identity threat is faced by both types of geographic mobile group, while the social mobile suffers the most from the separation from family and friends.
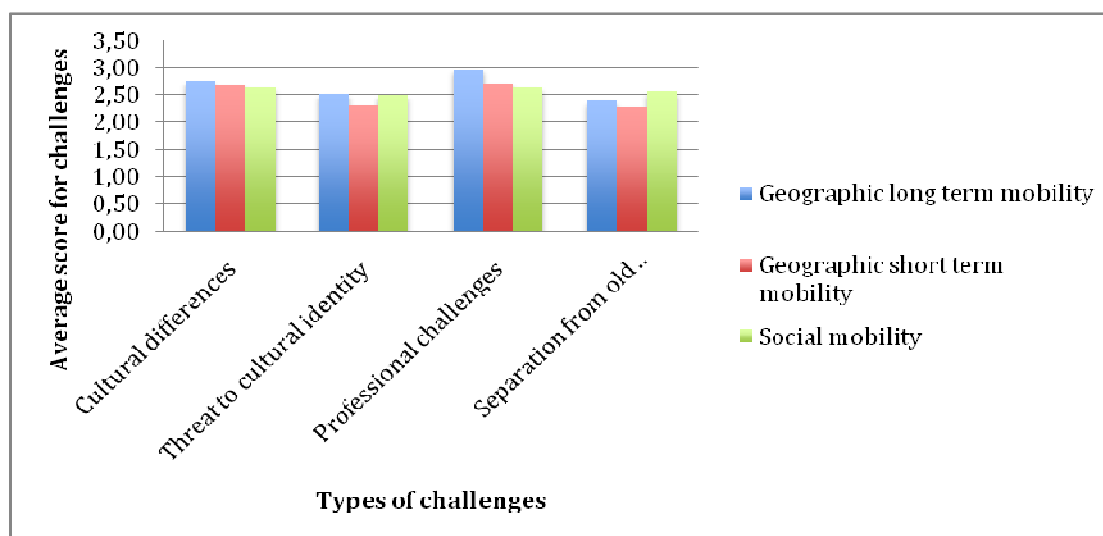

Diagram 11. Challenges and mobility types

There are some small but significant differences amongst the target groups: identity threat is significantly smaller in short term mobility than the two others; professional challenges are significantly stronger for long term migrants and the separation from old relations is more intense for social mobility than geographic – despite the fact that there is no physical separation by state borders.

Implications for the accompaniment process

So why work on the challenges if their impact on the success of mobility seems so light? Remember, only identity threat has actually a negative impact and only on satisfaction, while challenges related to cultural differences and separation from old connections actually has a positive connection with change. All the same there are two strong reasons why to work with the challenges. The first is that even though the challenges above might not have a very strong impact on the ultimate success of mobility; people are usually not aware of this. They may perceive these difficulties as powerful, occasionally even unbearable. Helping them realize that these challenges are unlikely to undermine the whole experience of mobility can be an important goal. The second is that challenges only become a positive learning experience if they are dealt with properly.

As we have seen before, strong group orientation of the client can suggest difficulties related to cultural differences and discrimination. It is important to note that a higher level of difficulties in one or another domain does not imply anything for the success of the mobility experience. In fact

people facing higher level of cultural- and separation-caused difficulties seem to correlate with perceived change resulting from mobility. Nevertheless, challenges only become a positive learning experience by enhancing reflection on the processes in question and offering resources that one can use in order to successfully overcome them.

4.7   Relational strategies

Social relations constitute a very important – if not the most important human need. Researchers Tice and Baumesiter (2001) state that social relations are the only reliable indicator of wellbeing. Mobility – be it geographical or social, forces people to break with their social relations, at least to limit those connections to the virtual sphere. What strategies people use to rebuild their social network has been subject of research.

In 1987 John W. Berry (1980) created the model of acculturation strategies that would become the most cited model of how people engage with others in a new cultural environment. Simplicity is both the advantage and shortcoming of the model that classifies the acculturation strategies of migrants or minority members based on their answers to two questions: "is it important to engage in relations with members of the new environment?" and "is it valued to maintain relations with the original cultural environment?". From the two questions, four acculturation strategies emerge.

Table 8: Berry's acculturation strategies

		is it important to engage in relations with members of the new environment?	
		YES	NO
Is it valued to maintain relations with the original cultural environment?	YES	Integration	Segregation
	NO	Assimilation	Marginalisation

Though the model has often been criticised for its simplicity we have included it in our questionnaire because we were interested in how these orientations influenced the success of the adaptation procedure. We have added two more indicators (relational proactivity and relational tolerance) to express the intensity of people's relational efforts besides the orientations already captured by Berry's matrix.

Table 9: Summary of relational strategies

CATEGORIES	Definitions	Relevance
Integration	Maintaining social relations with members of the new environment and the old cultural environment as well	Show significant positive correlation with two indicators of success: satisfaction and skills development
Assimilation	Valuing connections with the new environment and losing connections with the old environment	Show significant positive correlation with change – assimilation indeed seems to imply that we accommodate more from the new cultural repertoire. We have also discovered a week positive connection to satisfaction.

Separation	Being engaged in relations with members of the original cultural environment but not with members of the new environment	Shows significant negative correlation with satisfaction. There is no correlation with change nor skills development.
Marginalisat ion	Not having relations with either members of the original or the new environment	Correlates significantly negatively with all indicators of the success of mobility.
Relational proactivity	While the previous items give the direction of the social activity, relational proactivity expresses the intensity of the relational engagements: how much effort one puts in establishing and maintaining social relations.	Shows significant positive correlations with all indicators of the success of mobility
Relational tolerance	Unlike proactivity, it expresses the lack of tolerance and the refusal of making connections to people in the new environment. It is a resented position where one purposefully gives up the desire to connect.	Shows significant negative correlation with two indicators of mobility: satisfaction and skills development.

While our own research looked for connection between the relational strategies and the success of the mobility experience, others looked for the relationship strategies to achieve psychological adjustment and adaptation, exploring which strategy corresponds to greater wellbeing. In the paragraphs bellow we highlight these findings that are highly relevant for the accompaniment process.

Integration happens when individuals are able to adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture while maintaining their culture of origin. Integration leads to, and is often synonymous with biculturalism. In this case, one maintains some degree of cultural integrity, while at the same time seeks to participate as an integral part of the larger social network. One holds on to some aspects of his/her own culture such as central norms and values but also tries to melt in to the new cultural environment. The research shows (e.g., Berry, 1997, 2005) that those who employ the integration strategy (by engaging in and becoming competent in the two cultures) usually adapt better than those who are primarily oriented to one or the other culture (by using either the assimilation or separation strategy), and much better than those who engage in neither culture (the marginalisation strategy). This generalisation has been confirmed in a recent meta-analysis of findings across numerous studies (Benet-Martınez, 2010) and also confirmed by our findings.

Indeed, amongst all relational strategies integration has the strongest positive impact on the satisfaction with mobility, and also on skills development. However it does not relate significantly to change. This suggests that the maintenance of connection with the original cultural environment and its members can act as a shield against deep transformations of habits and personality. In a way it suggests that we can learn to function in the new culture, create and maintain contacts with locals, develop new skills substantially yet keep the continuity in our deeper layers and feel that the changes do not affect who we really are.

Assimilation occurs when individuals reject their minority culture and adopt the cultural norms of the dominant or host culture. They seek daily interaction with the host culture. The ambition of the individual is to become accepted as part of the majority culture. Assimilation has been associated with a weakening of the immune system (Schmitz, 1992, (Ward et al. 2001:93). Assimilation is also

often reported to bring about higher levels of acculturation stress and dissatisfaction (eg: La Fromboise 1993:397) It is hypothesised that this negative relationship between assimilation and well-being is due to the fact that complete assimilation is rarely possible. Visual markers, names, accents often highlight the strangeness of immigrants, even after many years of stay in the host country, and are perceived as foreigners. Indeed, those engaging in an assimilation journey would often face a gap between their self-perception and the perception that members of the host society sends back to them.

Our own findings indicated a weak positive relationship to the indicator of satisfaction with the mobility experience, and a significant positive correlation with the indicator of change. This means that assimilation does not necessarily undermine the satisfaction with the mobility: it implies risks, but there are resources to counterweigh those risks. Some resource lies precisely in the other relationship, which is the positive connection with change: amongst all the relational strategies it is assimilation that works towards the most change. Indeed, if during our mobility in Argentina the French student spends most of his time with Argentinians and not French, he'll be much more successful in absorbing the local culture and making the mobility matter. Retrospectively this achievement can help in positively valuing the experience.

Separation occurs when individuals reject the dominant or host culture in favour of preserving their culture of origin. In this case one places a high value on holding onto their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others. One focuses on keeping his/her own values and avoids contact with the majority culture as much as possible. Separation is often facilitated by immigration to ethnic enclaves. Separation strategy has been associated with high levels of neuroticism, anxiety and psychoticism, cardiovascular problems, as well as addiction to drugs and alcohol (Schmitz, 1992).

Our own findings showed a significant negative correlation with the satisfaction of the mobility experience, which seem to enforce the hypothesis that retreating around the original cultural groups is an obstacle to a successful adaptation. Separation does not have an impact on the other two indicators of success: it does not seem to help nor does it undermine change and skills development. We have also observed that the separation strategy often goes paired with a group orientation.

Marginalization takes place when individuals reject both their culture of origin and the dominant host culture. It might either happen due to limited possibility of interaction (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) or because of lack of interest in cultural maintenance. This might lead to isolation from both cultural groups (host as well as culture of origin) and causes that individual lacks identification with any of cultures. Marginalization strategy was associated with psychosomatic and adjustment disorders (Berry, 1994). In the last few years, there has been research focused on possible connections between exclusion and brain function. Studies published by the University of Georgia and San Diego State University found that exclusion can lead to diminished brain functioning and poor decision making. The effect of exclusion may likely correlate with such things as substance abuse and crime.

Our own results confirm the negative evaluation of marginalisation: it significantly negatively correlates with all our indicators of success. In fact amongst all the factors touched in our research (all skills, orientations, strategies included) it is marginalisation that has the strongest impact on satisfaction, which once more confirms the paramount importance of social relations for wellbeing. Marginalisation shows also significant negative correlation with the personal identity orientation.

Relational tolerance implies the lack of interest in making connections and a negative attitude to new people. It shows significant negative correlation with two indicators of mobility: satisfaction and skills development, while it is not related to the third (change). The intensity of the negative connection with satisfaction is as similar to integration's positive connection. Relational tolerance expresses that one is not willing to put effort into new social relations, which in cross-cultural

transition can imply marginalisation, since both the maintenance of far away relations and the constitution of new ones requires substantial work. We have also found that there is a significant negative correlation with personal identity orientation.

Relational proactivity expresses an active posture towards making and maintaining relationships in the new environment (without regard to their origins). It is the only social strategy that positively linked significantly to all three indicators of success. It reflects the very social nature of human existence, and is in line with findings illustrating the importance of social connections (e.g. Baumesiter and Tice (2001), Csikszentmihalyi 1990:164). Interestingly, we have found that personal identity orientation has a positive connection with relational proactivity (as opposed to group orientation).

Implications for the accompaniment process

The identification of the dominant strategies used by respondents helps to unveil whether their strategies are adaptive. New strategies can be developed or reinforced to help the reconstruction of significant social connections. The guide must take into account that the strategies are not fixed: the same person can adopt different strategies in different situations. What's important is that respondents become aware of the possible implications of the strategies they adopt and are ready to explore the adoption of new strategies such as integration, assimilation and relational proactivity.

5 Conclusions

Our questionnaire gave us a window on the challenges triggered by different types of mobility, contextual factors (motivation) and personal dispositions (identity orientations) and intercultural competences that influence the mobility experience.

We have compared the three types of mobility experiences to find out whether they can together be considered as different variants of a same "intercultural mobility" experience. We found that some challenges characterize more some type of mobility: professional challenges are stronger in geographic mobility, while the separation from old relations is more difficult in social mobility. There are no significant differences concerning the other two types of challenges. All in all the four challenges are present in all mobility, hence allowing us to speak about a common process of intercultural mobility. At the same time, the presence of challenges do not imply a bad experience, in fact cultural differencess and separation from old relations point to the changes occurring through mobility.

We have also created indicators to assess when mobility becomes a successful experience – a source of personal satisfaction, of change and skills development. We have used these success indicators to identify intercultural skills and strategies that contribute to a positive experience and opened up pathways to develop these skills and strategies.

Seven intercultural skills have been identified that contribute to a better experience of mobility: active control and planning, reflective anticipation, Learning from challenges, emotion management, interaction engagement, uncertainty tolerance, awareness of relativity. The skills are linked to different levels of psychological functioning: some to cognitive level (e.g. awareness of relativity), some to behaviour (e.g. interaction engagement) and some to emotions (emotion management). These skills are not specific to mobility experiences – they are useful in other areas

of life too, and can be developed and assessed even prior to mobility experiences. As such they become a powerful tool for the preparation of cross-cultural mobility.

We have also found that the relational strategy that people pursue in the new environment has an impact on the success of the experience. Some strategies have a positive impact (relational proactivity, integration, assimilation) and some a negative impact (separation, marginalisation, relational tolerance). The relational strategies can also be analysed and developed in a guiding process hence contributing to a better mobility experience.

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