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# Place Relations of Mobile People: National and Local Identification of Highly Skilled Migrants in Wrocław, Poland

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## Abstract

This article discusses the difference between the construction of national and local identifications related to the new place of residence. It shows that local identification is more inclusive than national, and therefore may be a key to strengthening social cohesion. National and local identities can both be seen as forms of place identification (i.e., of spatial or territorial identity). The article builds on qualitative research on highly skilled migrants living in Wrocław, Poland. The empirical data shows that these migrants would rather obtain a city identification and call themselves Wrocławianie (inhabitants of Wrocław), and do not want, or only partially want, Polish national identity. Living in and experiencing Wrocław makes them feel like insiders, while experiencing Poland positions them as outsiders. While national identity is built around the difference between “us” and “them”, local identity focuses on gaining knowledge about the particularity of a place and therefore allows for acceptance of heterogeneity and is easier for migrants to obtain.

**Keywords:** local identity; national identity; highly skilled migrants; place; city

## Introduction

This article discusses the difference between the construction of national and local identifications related to the new place of residence. The highly skilled migrants’ (HSM) identity construction is not a novel topic to migration scholars (Bielewska and Jaskułowski 2017; Grzymala-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017; Pustułka 2016, Meier 2015; Leonard 2010). The human geography perspective in HSM identity analysis is less frequent but there are already such works (Ryan and Mulholland 2015; Liu 2014). This analysis, however, brings an original approach to HSM scholarship by developing the links between highly skilled migrants’ scholarship and literature on place in order to shed light on the different scales of belonging. Migrants’ identities are usually discussed as rooted in a country, whether a country of origin, of destination, or – in the case of a transnational approach – of more than one country (Kivisto and Vecchia-Mikkola 2015). This article shows that a destination may be defined by migrants as a country or as a city and it analyses the different features of local and national identities. This approach is a contribution to HSMs scholarship while the analysis of inclusiveness/exclusiveness of different scale territorial identities is a contribution to human geography and place scholarship (Cresswell 2003; Paasi 2004; but also Devine-Wright 2015; and Savage 2010). The HSMs are a good example with which to analyze the place relations of mobile people because being voluntary migrants they meet less barriers in their mobility than other migrants. This allows us to treat the impermanence of their migration as the major factor that shapes their relations to the new place. On the basis of data collected during a case study on HSMs

living in Wrocław, I discuss the way HSMs obtain local and national identification related to their new place of residence. I argue that, due to its different qualities, local identity related to the new place of stay is more inclusive and easier to build for migrants than national identity. First, the article presents the state of knowledge about HSMs' identity formation and place as a multi-scalar phenomenon. Then the analytical part of this article explores the differences in construction of city identification and national identification, and how these differences translate into the inclusiveness or exclusiveness of city and national identity perceived by foreigners. I use the example of HSMs in Wrocław, Poland to explore this and show that HSMs feel more a part of the city than the nation. Then I discuss the difference in constructions of the city and national identification in an attempt to explain why HSMs more easily identify with the city.

### **Research on Highly Skilled Migrants**

HSMs – known also as a managerial elite, an international professional class, an elite professional class, a new transnational professional workforce, expatriates, skilled international migrants, transnational elite or migrant professionals (Beaverstock 2005, Sassen 2000; Castells 2011; Meier 2015) – are usually described in terms of their high social and economic status. Until recently, when the diversity of HSMs was recognized, researchers expected this status to be translated into largely unconstrained international mobility (Urry 2007). Beaverstock (2005, 248) describes them as an “acceptable’ (politically, socially and economically) segment of modern migration systems”. However, these expectations are not rooted in empirical data (Favell 2014) and in fact conflict with more recent research evidence (Meier 2015; Bielewska and Jaskułowski 2017; Bielewska 2018). Some HSMs are more aptly categorized as “middling transnationals” (Conradson and Latham 2005; Ho 2011, Rutten and Verstappen 2013) than a global elite and do not share the privileged status of latter. Jaskułowski (2017, 263) briefly characterizes middling migrants as “migrants of middle-class background and status who are in mid-level career” . They differ from the so-called “transnational capitalist class” (Sklair 2001) since they are responsible for the day-to-day business of their corporations rather than strategy. In this sense, they can be called a global “service class” (Goldthorpe 1995). Since my research sample includes representatives of both groups – the global elite and global middle class – and since using the contested concept of class would be unnecessary distraction from the main purpose of the article, I use the term HSMs as it is wider and covers the diversity brought by research data.

The research on HSMs has primarily focused on migration flows where the impact of the unique locality on individual life was lost (Meier 2016). Recently the everyday experience of migrants, including their identity, have received more attention. One cluster of such research focuses on particular ethnic groups in global cities. For example, Walsh describes the postcolonial encounters of British professionals (Walsh 2012); Meier (2016) compares the identity performances of German financial professionals in different cities; and Leonard (2010, 2013) explores the racial identity of “white” professionals in Hong Kong and Johannesburg. There are also those who do not focus on ethnicity but locality and this research is growing (see Meier 2015). Some researchers like Favell (2011) stress HSMs' experience of difficulties integrating into cities they live in because of the national character of those cities, while others demonstrate that in spite of difficulties HSMs build relationships with the cities they live in. Researchers search for the concept that would capture migrants' relations with places. For example, Van Riemsdijk (2014) explores local emplacement of skilled migrants in Norway and Ryan and Mulholland (2015) write about embedding and stress the dynamicity of the process of attachment. In this article, we will use the multiscale concept of place to analyze HSMs' relationship with a place at the national level that they may experience as rejecting (as described by Favell, 2011), and their relationship with the city that Van Riemsdijk (2014) defined as the place where migrants experience attachment.

### *Place Identity as Multi-Scalar Phenomenon*

Place is a multi-scalar phenomenon and this article shows how place identity is built in relation to a particular scale of place. As noted by Qian et al. (2011, 170), existing knowledge demonstrates that place meanings apply at various scales and a sense of place can be defined as “the product of a constant process of interaction between man and the physical settings, through different levels of place experiences” (Qian et al. 2011, 170). Scales of places have sometimes been constructed and labelled in an *ad hoc* manner. Overtly political scales (district, city, county, state) have been imposed and “under-imposed” scales of daily life (household, street/neighbourhood, community) have also been used (Bird 1989 after Paasi 2004). However, with time, more attention has been paid to the relational, socially constructed, and discursive roles of scales (Gustafson 2009; Paasi 2004). From one side scale was rejected as not answering the experiences of individuals (Marston et al. 2005), from the other, Massey’s (1994) conceptualization of place as open and fluid and experienced in different ways by different people paved the way for a similarly flexible understanding of scale as subjectively experienced (Paasi 2004). This article focuses on the city and national scales, as these two scales emerged as the most important for migrants’ identification in their new location during the analysis of interviews.

Relations between individual and place can be analysed with the use of different overlapping concepts, such as place attachment, place identity, place identification, place dependence, sense of place, sense of community, community identity, “insiderness”, embeddedness, rootedness, appropriation, belongingness, residence satisfaction, and topophilia (Qian et al. 2011; Lewicka 2012). Different authors may also ascribe different meanings to these concepts. According to Rollero and De Piccoli (2010), place attachment describes an emotional bond, while identification is expressed through using labels and contains knowledge about the category that is the subject of identification and its uniqueness. Identification may be also seen as a part of attachment or attachment as a predecessor of identification (see Lewicka, 2012). This article treats place identity as combining the two aforementioned elements: knowledge about a particular place (identification) and an emotional bond – a feeling of belonging (or attachment) – with a particular place. Belonging is the stronger of the two concepts as belonging may follow identification. Identification refers to individual choices about who we want to identify with, while belonging is that part of identity that relates to becoming part of a group; it demands the sharing of values, networks, and practices (Anthias 2008). Belonging is understood here not only as a sense that the “place” is part of “my identity”, or more abstractly, part of “me” (Qian 2011; Trentelman 2009), but also as being a part of the local community and accepting the values and practices of this community. Identification can be explored through stories about who we think we are, while belonging can be found in the notions of exclusion, inclusion, access, and participation (Anthias 2008). This article treats identification as constructed by discursive practices (Meier 2016).

According to Simonsen (2004) “all identity involves a distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them’”. However, this article argues that there are differences in how the city and national identities are positioned on the continuum of inclusiveness and exclusiveness. It refers to Tuan’s (1990) claim that regional identity is superior to national identity, as the latter supports prejudices, and also to Lewicka’s (2012) research on place memory (a type of collective social memory). Lewicka suggests that national identity and local identity are not just different scales of the same place identity, but are different phenomena with different cognitive functions. She assumes that local identity, as opposed to national identity, is attributive and not categorical, meaning it does not divide people into categories of “us” and “them” and for that reason, local identity may facilitate a non-ethnocentric vision of place of residence. Having said that, it is important to stress, the national and local identity are not a binary opposition and they are not contradictory. Having one does not exclude the other. Rather, individuals may activate one or the other depending on the context of a particular interaction.

### ***Bridging the Highly Skilled Migrants' Studies and Place Literature***

By exploring the relationship between HSMs and place this article develops links between the literature on place belonging and migration studies. Geographers and psychologists in their research on the relationship between individual and place traditionally focused on indigenous or long-term settled populations and the experience of transients has been marginalized (Stedman 2006; Relph 1976; Tuan 1990). The latter's sense of place was described as "inauthentic" (Relph 1976) and their enthusiasm for places "superficial" (Tuan 1990). However, there have been always voices accepting the possibility that people who are not long-term settlers develop relationships to places they temporarily stay in. In his typology of attitudes toward place, Hummon (1992) lists among others a time-related belonging, which he calls "everyday rootedness", and a belonging that is not time-related, called "ideological rootedness". Everyday rootedness is a more traditional, unreflective type of belonging, where belonging is taken for granted. It is built by cyclical repetition of everyday routines conducted in a place for years. It usually relates to the place in which one was born and raised, so HSMs are by definition excluded from this kind of belonging. In contrast, ideological rootedness is available to newcomers as well as native residents – an active belonging built by conscious effort, including engagement in activities to improve the place, interest in the place's past and future, and comparative evaluation with other places. This type of connection with place was also identified by Savage and Savage (2010), who call it "elective belonging" in contrast to "nostalgia", a narrative shared by people who live in a place for a long time and miss its lost past. Fallov et al. (2013) go even further, treating mobility as one of the dimensions of belonging, proposing a typology of mobile forms of belonging.

The interest in place belonging is also developed in migration studies. It is usually described with the use of such concepts as embeddedness, embedding, and anchoring. However, embedding and anchoring are multidimensional processes and place is just one of these dimensions. The main focus of anchoring is the individual's search for socio-psychological stability and security in a new location, with the use of footholds and points of reference (Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017), while embeddedness and embedding describe an attachment and belonging in general. Embeddedness is a static concept that means "social relationships that foster a sense of rootedness and integration in the local environment" (Korinek, Entwisle, and Jampaklay 2005, 780), and embedding stresses the dynamism of the process of acquiring belonging. Ryan (2018, 235) builds the concept of "differentiated embedding" to stress that "the dynamic processes through which migrants negotiate attachments and belonging" differ in different social and structural settings.

Berg and Sigona (2013) see this interest in place belonging as a result of the "diversity turn" in migration studies that replaced studies of ethnic communities with studies of localities, mostly neighbourhoods. They declare that "the very local level is more important than the national level for understanding questions of belonging and expressions of diversity" (Berg and Sigona 2013, 349). This local level-oriented approach was adopted by, among others, Trąbka (2019) who uses Lewicka's (2011) concepts of "place inherited", "place identity", "place dependence" and "place discovered". Interestingly, she argues that all types of place attachment are available to migrants and she shows their dynamic over the time. Glick Schiller and Caglar (2016) reject neighbourhood and choose cities as an entry point to construct a multi-scalar analysis. This new focus on local/city level of analysis requires a comparative approach that explores relationships built with places at different levels and considers how similar and how different they are. This article is a step in this direction.

Nevertheless, migration studies rarely focus on place, especially place understood as a multi-scalar phenomenon (see Hess 2004). An example of quantitative research on belonging to places of different scale in migration studies is Gustafson's (2009) analysis of "Statistics Sweden" labor force surveys. It shows that in general, unsurprisingly, immigrants' sense of belonging is lower than for people born in Sweden but that their local sense of belonging is stronger than their national sense of belonging. However, Gustafson does not explain how these two levels of places are perceived by migrants and why local belonging is stronger than national.

As mentioned above, HSMs are a good example with which to investigate the development of migrants' relationships with their new place of stay (so called "ideological rootedness" [Hummon, 1992] or "elective belonging" [Savage 2010]). Not only do they meet fewer barriers in their mobility than other migrants but, as research shows, less-educated people belong more often to places in which they were born and raised than to places they have discovered, while highly educated people (e. g. HSMs) belong more strongly to places they have discovered (Lewicka 2012 176). Additionally, all people, regardless of their material position and education level, declare a strong belonging to place and a strong local identity, but upward social and material mobility causes weakening of emotional bonds in the case of traditional, unreflective types of belonging, but not in the more reflective types (Lewicka 2012, 178).

HSMs build belonging to place at different scales both in their country of origin and new place of stay. There are few studies on multi-scalar place relations of migrants and of those many focus on one particular scale. Above I mentioned the recently growing number of studies on neighbourhoods and city. There is also a high volume of works on the conception of home (Blunt 2011; Butcher 2010; Nowicka 2007). There is much evidence that HSMs may establish a new temporary home – in the sense of a place where they feel they belong – in their new dwelling. Their dwellings, after turning into a home, are secluded from the surrounding national space of the host country and become a scene of performing their national identity related to their place of origin and (see Gilmartin & Migge 2015; Walsh 2011). In this context, Blunt and Sheringham's idea (2019) of working on home-city geographies seems a useful way to organize current research interests of migration scholars. However, focusing on micro and local scales does not include other levels important to migrants. This article does not focus on the scale of dwelling but analyses rather if and how migrants are able to call their new city and new country "home" and if their newly developed embedding leads to a new identification at city and/or national level. The interviews with HSMs in Wrocław show that the two scales of place they use to build new identities relating to their new place of stay are the city and the national scale (see Bielewska and Jaskułowski 2017). Therefore this article focuses on these two scales of place in order to discuss the differences in construction of HSMs' identities.

### ***Wrocław as a Research Location***

This article builds on qualitative research on highly skilled migrants living in Wrocław, Poland. Wrocław is uniquely situated as a location in which to explore different migration phenomena as its current population is quite recently settled. In its long history it was a Polish, Czech, Austrian, Prussian, and German city. After World War II it became part of Poland. Its German population was deported almost completely and city was settled by Poles arriving from territories of the Soviet Union and also from other parts of Poland (Davies and Moorhouse 2003). From one perspective, Wrocław's post-war experience of migration may allow new immigrants to feel less excluded, to be more part of the place (see Bielewska 2021). But at the same time, due to the post-war history of Poland, meeting foreigners is a relatively new experience for the inhabitants of Wrocław and as Mayblin, Valentine, and Winiarska (2016) point this absence of regular encounters with foreigners can make Polish people vulnerable to absorbing stereotypes. The inflow of immigrants to Poland started in 1990s as communism collapsed, but it was low in numbers and grew rapidly only recently as a result of a surge in the economically and politically driven immigration of Ukrainians who brought some diversity to the previously homogenous Polish population. Between 2014 and 2019 the share of foreign-born non-nationals increased from 1.6 to 2 percent which still makes Poland one of the most homogeneous states in the UE (Eurostat 2019). The rapid growth in the number of foreigners in Poland coincides with the European refugee crises that was used by right-wing Polish politicians to fuel anti-immigrant discourse that has dominated Polish public media since 2015.

Due to its location in southwest Poland, the presence of several universities, and being part of four special economic zones, Wrocław with its population of 641,000 inhabitants (Central Statistical Office 2019, 36) attracts many global companies (e. g. IBM, Hewlett-Packard, Nokia) and the

influx of foreign investment has been accompanied by an influx of foreigners. There were only 601 foreigners registered for permanent or temporary residence in Wrocław in 2002 and under 3000 in 2012 (Bielewska, 2015). Currently the number of foreigners in Wrocław is estimated as 80,000–100,000 (Kłopot and Trojanowski 2018). This rapid increase is a result of the eruption of conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The number of HSMs is hard to determine.

Since the early 2000s, Wrocław's authorities have seen the influx of foreigners, especially HSMs, as positive for the city's development and have made an effort to build Wrocław's identity around diversity. The historical Wrocław is presented as a city of many nationalities and cultures with the four temple district as material proof of this diversity. The present openness of Wrocław is stressed by a promotional slogan that calls Wrocław "the meeting place". These efforts were evaluated by some researchers rather as building the myth of multiculturalism than Wrocław being a real multicultural city (Dolińska and Makaro 2013). However, recent activities of authorities, such as signing the "Wrocław Declaration" in 2016 to support tolerance and condemn racism, antisemitism, and xenophobia, and especially developing a Strategy on Intercultural Dialogue in 2017 and a new Wrocław 2030 Strategy, may change this perspective. The last two documents describe migrants as inhabitants of the neighbourhood who have same rights and responsibilities as other inhabitants (Wrocławska Strategia Dialogu Międzykulturowego 2018). The documents are accompanied by many practical actions such as antidiscrimination workshops, intercultural education fairs, language courses, preparation classes for children who do not speak Polish, and actions that increase security of foreigners in Wrocław. The latter point to the problem of hate crime that is on the rise in Wrocław reflecting more general anti-immigration sentiment in Europe. This problem is especially vivid for the migrants who visibly differ from the general Wrocław population (Jaskułowski and Pawlak 2020).

## Research Method

This article looks at identity and place from a constructivist perspective. It treats both not as objective but as social constructs (see Hall 1992; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Szacki 2004; Edensor 2002). Qualitative interviews were chosen as a tool for gathering data because an interview is a situation of dialog which facilitates construction and reproduction of social concepts. Since some HSMs are very busy, semi-structured interviews using a list of topics to discuss were considered the most efficient approach, as they did not demand too much time from the participants' busy schedules (Drew 2014). They also gave participants the opportunity to raise themes important to them (Berg 2009).

This article is based on the analysis of 32 semi-structured interviews with HSMs living in Wrocław and employed in companies of the Wałbrzych Special Economic Zone (WSEZ). The size of 30 interviews is usually treated as assuring full development of patterns, concepts, categories, properties, and dimensions of the given phenomena (Thomson 2010). In the case of this research, the recruitment of respondents was stopped when following interviews failed to increase the diversity of the sample.

The sampling criteria were foreign nationality, living in Poland at the time of the interview, and employment in the WSEZ as a manager or professional. The sample was very diverse, with interviewees born in Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Hungary, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Romania, Spain, South Africa, Turkey, Taiwan, Tunisia, and Ukraine. Despite their diversity, the legal situation of the interviewees was similar, as their companies offered assistance in obtaining the right to stay and the right to work. They worked as CEOs, directors, managers, engineers, programmers, or IT specialists in several different companies (e.g., IBM, Sonel, Accuromm) in five different locations in Lower Silesia.

The sample consisted of 25 men and seven women, ages 24 to 41, with most participants in their late twenties and early thirties. Despite the research team's efforts, gender parity proved difficult to achieve. Data on the whole population of HSMs are not available so we do not know if this disparity reflects the overrepresentation of men among HSMs in the WSEZ. At the time of the interviews, the interviewees

had spent between five months and eleven years in Poland. Five months is a short time for building identity rooted in a new place but I am interested in the *process* of constructing identity and not in identity as a final construct. Two interviewees had a Polish wife, one had a Polish ex-wife (divorced during his stay in Poland) and three had Polish partners. Six interviewees lived in Poland with their non-Polish wives and children. Both corporations and public authorities were reluctant to reveal information about foreign workers so participants were recruited through personal networks of researchers and research assistants, social media sites, and snowballing techniques.

Interviews were conducted between February 2015 and October 2016, in English or Polish depending on the interviewees' preferences, and lasted from 45 to 120 minutes. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. To maintain confidentiality, detailed personal information on interviewees is not disclosed in this article.

The interviews were conducted by researchers and trained research assistants, all of them Polish. One could argue that they were outsiders in relation to the group of HSMs in Wrocław and their positionality might motivate some HSMs to refrain from expressing negative comments on Poland and Poles. However, the negative comments appeared in some interviews and such an "insider-outsider" dichotomy based on nationality is an example of methodological nationalism and forcing simplistic groupist assumptions on an ethnically diverse group of HSMs (see Nowicka and Ryan 2015). Instead, the interview situation could be conceived as social encounter where commonalities are constructed and deconstructed and ethnicity is only one of the categories that can be used to build temporal positive rapport next to age, gender, or social class.

Following the general principles of qualitative research, data analysis started with immersion in the data (Kvale 1996). Then an open coding procedure was used. Close reading and re-reading of transcripts allowed categories and themes to emerge from the data (Saldaña 2012). Finally, more focused coding was carried out to reduce the number of categories and themes. During this process, codes such as "being partly Polish" or "Wrocławianin" emerged that were later used as analytical categories, as described below.

## Findings

As stated above, this article explores differences in HSMs' construction of local and national identification related to their new place of residence; going further, I explore how these differences are reflected in the perceived inclusiveness/exclusiveness of local and national identity.

### *Partly Polish, but Fully Wrocławian*

Some migrants in my sample, mainly those living in Wrocław for less than three years, were convinced that migration did not affect their identity in any way. However, some living there for as little as six months acknowledged that their identity gained a new element. This new identity / new element of identity is related to their new place of residence; however, place of residence can be defined by using different scales. As discussed in my previous work (Bielewska and Jaskułowski 2017; Bielewska 2021) migrants refer to places at national scale (Poland) or/and city scale (Wrocław), but the identities or identifications related to these scales are described in different ways. Some migrants admit they have a city identity and comfortably use the word "Wrocławianin" (an inhabitant of Wrocław) or a self-coined English equivalent to describe themselves. They confidently identify themselves as insiders of the city inhabitants group:

For me, saying that I'm Indian is not a complete truth. I know I am not just Indian ... I'm also a Wrocławian ... I don't know. It's a complicated identity. It's not a straightforward identity. I'm not like a regular Indian. I think I think differently, I have different expectations from life. (Mahi 2015, India, five years in Wrocław)<sup>1</sup>

There are also migrants who define the change in their identity at the country scale. They accept that by living in Poland, their primary national identity is affected and that they are different to nationals who have no migration experience. However, none of the migrants interviewed describe themselves as Polish. They may talk about being “partly Polish”, “a bit Polish”, “half Polish”, or just “living in Poland”, but not fully Polish. They are not able or not interested in fully obtaining a new national identity or even identification.

If we didn't stay here, I'd always look at our time here in Poland as a great adventure ( ... ) It would be part of my identity. I would be a little bit Polish – not so much, but certainly that would be part of my identity.

(George 2015, England, two years in Poland)

This shows that migrants' narratives about identification differ depending on whether they are referring to the city or national level. Wrocław identification is fully embraced while Polish identification is more difficult to obtain. This link to the new place is an important finding as the HSMs are considered to belong to the so-called global elite or to the global middle class who are defined through the temporariness of their migration, and due to this temporality are not expected to build relations to their new place, but to cultivate transnational links instead.

### *Differences between City and National Scales of Identity*

As showed above, the city identification is embraced by migrants more fully than a national one. Now it is time to relate migrants' perception of these different identifications to the way identities are constructed and Lewicka's (2012) hypothesis of different qualities of national and local identities. A further part of this section discusses how city identification is constructed and if it includes accumulation of attributes of the city, understood as gaining knowledge about that city, its geography, history, culture, etc., and/or if it includes building divisions between insiders and outsiders. It also shows how diverse and how open city and nation are in the eyes of migrants.

This section focuses on migrants who acknowledge their identity has changed as a result of migration. Interestingly, those who perceive their identity as unchanged describe similar experiences – such as learning about the city's history, building a new network of acquaintances, gaining knowledge of a new culture; however, they do not relate these experiences to their identity which according to them is given and cannot be changed.

### *Knowledge of the City*

My research confirms the interviewees arrived in Poland with no intention of settling. Even those who had Polish partners or who arrived to Poland with their family did not declare certainty of settling in Poland. Having Polish partner or not, they often do not know how long they will stay, and their plans vary between several years (usually two) and until retirement. However, many HSMs, in spite of the temporary nature of their stay, develop a new identification related to their current place of life. HSMs in Wrocław feel partly Polish but fully Wrocławianie. My research data shows that HSMs actively engage in building bonds with their new place of residence. For a discussion of how HSMs use different practices, including their network, to build bonds with a new place, see Bielewska (2021). Here, I would like just to describe active learning as a way signalling that the HSMs' bond with a new place may be characterized as “ideological rootedness” (Hummon 1992) and that this bond is built at particular scales (as city or national).

Some migrants feel that learning about their new city – its history, language and customs – is their duty, as migration has given them a chance for personal development:

When you live in a country it's nice to get to know about it. Like, I'll never understand people that live here for 9-10 years and don't know anything about it, the place, the language. I don't



know why they are here, they might as well be in their own country. (Dario 2016, Italy, four years in Wrocław)

They treat learning about their new place as a project. This project starts immediately after their arrival. Their efforts to build a relationship with their new place include taking Polish language classes, studying history, and going out to meet friends. Being highly educated, they are able to perceive new knowledge as cultural capital and they have enough tools to gain it. They have the tools to learn about history and language, as well as the resources to pay for museum tickets or language courses. They also attempt to build social networks, which they see as form of social capital (see Ryan et al. 2008):

I want to have contact with local people. I think that's the point of coming here. (Osman 2015, Turkey, nine months in Wrocław)

This dynamic process of building relationships with a new place in the form of knowledge of place and social networks can be called embedding (see Ryan and Mulholland 2015) while searching for familiar elements to build socio-psychological stability and security in a new location can be described as anchoring (see Grzymała-Kazłowska and Brzozowska 2017). As Ryan and Mulholland (2015) note, embedding is a multi-scalar process and the migrants' efforts can be directed at the place understood as city or the place understood as country. However, the city scale appears in migrants' interviews as more appealing than country. This is well-illustrated with learning history. Talking about history, migrants could refer to the history of the neighbourhood, city, region, or country, but it is the scale of city that arises spontaneously in the interviews.

I'm really interested in history, I'm generally interested in history, so I think the history of the city of Wrocław is very, very interesting because there are so many influences. (Achim 2016, Germany, six years in Wrocław)

The history of the city is described as much more interesting than Polish state history:

I don't read the history of Poland and I don't learn by heart dates and biographies of kings. Yes. But generally speaking, I'm interested in the history of the city, which is my hobby. I have opportunity to see what the backyards look like, the historical buildings and so on. So I am interested what was happening, when and why. (Anton 2015, Ukraine, three years in Wrocław)

An element of the learning process HSMs have a problem with is the Polish language. With the exception of those coming from the former Soviet Union countries, whose native languages belong to the same family as Polish, HSMs refer to significant difficulties in learning Polish.

To be honest, I really try to learn the language, I don't think I will ever be comfortable with Polish language and always understand everything that people say between them ... (Clotilda 2016, Germany, 3 years in Wrocław)

Clotilda (2016) admits that problem with learning Polish is one of the main reasons she does not consider living permanently in Poland. HSMs make attempts to study Polish and often give up before achieving fluency. The lack of language skills is for some a main obstacle in developing a new sense of belonging.

The fact that I don't speak Polish – I still feel myself like a tourist. But I think that if I speak Polish, it would help me a lot. (Ronny 2015, Indie, three years in Wrocław)

Ronny's views on the importance of Polish support the works of many migration scholars who see language competence as a key to successful integration in general and developing new identification

in particular (Heckman 2005; Rogova 2014). However, such a picture is too simplistic. Even though many of them do not speak Polish, HSMs are well integrated structurally. They all work as specialists or managers. They have good quality accommodation and private medical care. As shown above, they make successful attempts to learn about Polish culture and build ideological rootedness. Some of them declare they feel at home in Poland:

At the moment Poland is home. You know this the first time we flew back from the UK and we said oh we're home. And it was strange to say we are home in a country where... people mostly speak the language we don't fully understand. (...) Suddenly it became your home and you go back from vacation to your home which is not your place of birth and not your native language. That's quite strange. (George 2015, England, two years in Wrocław)

This statement shows that speaking the local language is not a condition of embedding. In spite of not speaking Polish, George also develops a new identification – he admits that he feels a bit Polish:

I'd always look at the time here in Poland as a great adventure and the time we were in Poland, we would be talking about this time when we are 60 (laughing). That would be part of my identity. I would be little bit Polish. (George 2015, England, two years in Wrocław)

Interestingly, the sample includes also those who speak Polish fluently but feel like strangers among Poles and describe Wrocław being just a temporary hotel for them. Language seems to be a less important indicator of embedding and new identity building in case of HSMs than for migrants in general. It seems that lack of language competences let HSMs remain in a bubble of people with whom they share class belonging while speaking Polish allow them to leave this bubble.

In summary, even though HSMs are temporary migrants and temporariness is expected to exclude investing in building relationships in general and a relationship with place in particular, they build their relationship with place in the way classified by Hummon (1992) as ideological rootedness or by Savage (2010) as elective belonging. It may be assumed that their highly skilled status facilitated this process since this ideological rootedness is developed by people with higher education rather than those with a basic one. Interestingly, in the case of highly skilled migrants, an ideological rootedness is developed as a side effect of their career development or personal development projects.

However, HSMs' narrative describing the process of embedding are not limited to elements listed as part of ideological rootedness. When they talk about the new place becoming their home, they talk also about time spent in the place. It seems knowledge alone is not enough to build a new home and it needs to be supported by everyday life. Only repetitive everyday life results with time in familiarity (Edensor 2002). The everyday is usually unreflective and therefore becomes second nature. It gives us the feeling of being present by cyclically repetitive habits and routines (see Edensor 2006). The familiarity that comes from everyday unreflexively repeated routines allows migrants to call Wrocław "home". They often recall they are not able to identify a time when this happened. They usually realize it when they come back to Wrocław from a trip and feel the familiarity:

(E)verything feels familiar. It's like, if I'm going by plane and you fly over Wrocław and you see Sky Tower, it's like, yay, maybe not the most pretty building, but still, it's like home. ( ... ) Yeah, I just have my own places here. It's like where we are now, Literatka, and some other pubs that the bartenders even know me, that's nice. (Guusje 2016, Netherlands, five years in Wrocław)

Hummon (1992) mentions everyday life as an element of everyday rootedness. This analysis shows that it is also an element of ideological rootedness. Unreflective everyday life is an element necessary to form attachment and to be able, after time, to call the place home. Everyday life may be also a

condition for developing knowledge about the place. Migrants may want to know their new place because it is not some random location, but the one where their everyday routines take place. Even in the case of a temporary or short stay the rootedness includes both learning about the place and everyday life in this location.

In summary, some HSMS develop a new place-related identification during their temporary stay in Wrocław. This new identification is built through different embedding processes focused mostly on a new place understood as city.

### *Welcoming City*

HSMS described Poland as a place where they feel like strangers, but Wrocław as a welcoming place where they feel at home. When alienation is described, the national level of place appears in their narrative as context:

I feel like, sometimes I do feel like an outsider to be honest, like I, like I don't have any say in what's going on around Poland. (Fernando 2016, Italy and South Africa, two years in Wrocław)

They expect that in spite of their efforts, they will never be accepted as insiders and will never feel like insiders in Poland. They will never be able to change their status into that of a Pole. Gaining new skills, such as language or customs, will not change their situation:

But even if my Polish were fluent, I would always, I think I would also always be treated as not a Pole but a Dutch person. Maybe not in a bad way, but yeah, I don't think I'll ever feel Polish. (Gusje 2016, Netherlands, five years in Wrocław)

When the HSMS explain their feeling of being a part of their new place, they refer not to the national level but to the city level. They do not speak about Poland being their country, but they often speak about Wrocław being their city. One such statement comes from Hamid (2015) from Algeria (ten months in Wrocław), who explains that he does not like working late when he lives in Wrocław because he likes going out to see his city:

Living in Wrocław I like to be outside. I don't care what time I start my work in the morning, 7, 8 or 9am, but I like to be outside at 4:30 because it's really my city.

Explaining their positive feelings related to living in Wrocław, migrants refer to Wrocław's citizens. Wrocław inhabitants are described as open, friendly, and welcoming:

People from Wrocław are open-minded, they smile, they are welcoming. I feel welcomed here. (Ronny 2015, India, four years in Poland, two in Wrocław)

Therefore, feeling rooted in the city seems connected with established sociabilities with local inhabitants (Jaskułowski 2017; Glick Schiller and Çağlar 2016), which means that regardless of difference, social relations are based on mutuality, satisfaction, non-utilitarian interests, togetherness, and feelings of the worth of relations (Simmel and Hughes 1949). Analysis of HSMS' networks it is not the topic of this article (and may be found in Bielewska 2021). Here, I would like just to note that HSMS' common lack of knowledge of the Polish language can make building bridging capital (Ryan et al. 2008) difficult and enclose them within the international community where even Polish friends are, in the eyes of foreigners, not really Polish because they are Poles with international experience<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, lack of language skills could make migrants express discomfort, rejection and even being discriminated against, although, the issue of racism appears as a minor topic in the interviews. Rather rare and often tone down references to racism may be interpreted after Jaskułowski and Pawlak (2020) as ambivalence of study participants who shared desirable

neoliberal imaginary of individualism and economic worthiness and even though they recognized racism, they embraced individualist strategies of coping with it. However, migrants may also feel accepted regardless of the ethnic differences and language barrier:

Living in Wrocław is easy. People understand you. Even though I don't speak Polish I can say "dzień dobry [good morning]" and, even if sometimes I don't understand people and vice versa, I can feel their respect. So that's why I call Wrocław home. (Olander 2016, Turkey, two years in Wrocław)

In summary, HSMs describe feelings of being outsiders in Poland but in-group members in Wrocław. The feeling of being welcomed they mention in relation of the city does not appear at the country scale. They call Wrocław "home" and they feel it is their city.

### *Diversity vs Homogeneity Nation*

The feeling of Wrocław being an open and friendly city is connected in migrants' narratives with the friendliness of local inhabitants and with the presence of other migrants, ethnic products in shops, ethnic restaurants, accessibility of services in English, and accessibility of their religious services. Wrocław is described as a place where you can meet more and more foreigners, but also where the multicultural offering is increasing.

Ten years ago in Wrocław there were only Polish restaurants and nothing more, really few things. Now you can choose from all over the world. Because you can find restaurants from Italy, Spain, Japan, whatever ... (Matteo 2015, Italy, ten years in Wrocław)

However, while Wrocław is prized for its diversity, Poland is perceived by HSMs as homogenous and, interestingly, this homogeneity is also a positive quality in the eyes of some foreigners who do not accept diversity:

A western European country – I didn't want to work there because they are already flooded with a lot of Turkish and other people ( ... ) So I don't want to work in a country like that. ( ... ) You are still ... 99% are Polish here so ... (Roland 2015, Hungary, two years in Wrocław)

As I show above, the analysis of the interviews with HSMs shows that the two main themes relating to Wrocław are knowledge of the city and its welcoming nature. Additionally, migrants also mention that the city is multicultural. At the same time, the HSMs are not as interested in Poland and Polish society is perceived as homogenous and excluding rather than welcoming. Maybe it is because the national identity is constructed by the state around the myth of common origin, uniformity of values and homogenous ethnicity and the particular, everyday locality, with its geography and architecture, is enough to form attachment to the city. This allows a city to embrace the heterogeneity in the content of identity. Diversity may be perceived as positive at the city level. The presence of different groups of foreigners may enrich city identity.

### *Particularity of Wrocław*

I analyzed above whether HSMs develop city / local identification because of the specifics of local identity, which is attributive, in contrast to national identity, which is categorical. However, it is necessary to consider whether the identification of HSMs with Wrocław is the result of the general nature of local identity, which would therefore apply to any city, or because of the specific qualities of Wrocław. As mentioned above, Wrocław has some qualities that can facilitate migrant integration. Its local authorities build the image of multicultural city, the local population has a migration tradition, and there are English language services designed especially for HSMs (Ślęzak and Bielewska 2021). It could be expected that city that builds its identity around other themes would not be perceived as so welcoming.

This line of argument is supported by the HSMs' narratives in which the differences between Wrocław and other towns and cities are an important theme. They often compare Wrocław to other Polish cities, especially Kraków and Warsaw, finding Wrocław a better place to live.

I really like Poland and especially Wrocław. I've been to Warsaw and no, it wasn't good. If I got a job offer from Warsaw, I'd definitely reject it. Even with a bigger salary. ( ... ) I do like Wrocław ( ... ) It's a living city. (Olander 2016, Turkey, two years in Wrocław)

Apart from the general statement that Wrocław is better than other cities, migrants also refer to very specific qualities of Wrocław that make it unique. Alberto (2015) from Italy (11 years in Wrocław) explains that he decided to live in Wrocław because he felt that, in contrast to Kraków, Wrocław does not base its historical importance on aristocrats and people who have lived there for generations:

Wrocław is a city without nobles where everyone, Gaul or from Italy or Germany or born in Poland, let's say in Lublin, can feel at the same level as everyone else. It is a big mental difference and you can feel it in people, therefore for me it is ... Wrocław is a city start up you can say.

He explains that this is the reason why foreigners can integrate in Wrocław. The beauty of Wrocław's architecture and the openness of Wrocław's inhabitants are raised by migrants as a special quality.

The fondness for the place and the conviction about its uniqueness comes with experience. The migrants' city identification needs time to develop. It does not take generations, like the traditional rootedness, but it demands months or years, depending on the person.

In the beginning it wasn't easy, you know? Because many things were different, many things were different, but then you adapt yourself and fall in love gradually with the city. Like, I started from okay, it's not bad, to oh, in the end the city's nice, now I really love this place. (Dario 2016 Italy, four years in Wrocław)

After passage of time, people stop calling the place they come from "home" and start calling the new place "home". They admit that they may not notice the change when it happens.

In summary, migrants compare their city, Wrocław, with other cities and find it better. They find Wrocław unique and can explain what makes it special. However, this comparison is a characteristic quality of identity. Without positive attachment to our own place and bias in judgement, there is no identity. Knowledge about a place is also a sign of developing attributive identity to that place. Therefore, when migrants discuss the features of their current location and talk about its differences with other cities, it is impossible to determine if Wrocław has special qualities that make building local identification easy, or whether HSMs are simply demonstrating the strength of their local identification. An interesting point of reference is a work of Cai and Su (2021) on Western expats in Guangzhou in China. Some of their respondents regard themselves like visitors or tourists to China but at the same time they talk of Guangzhou as their home. This seems to confirm the findings of my research. However, the authors do not discuss further Guangzhou as the migration destination. Therefore, it cannot be determined if Guangzhou shares Wrocław's characteristics of a "welcoming city". It would demand comparative research conducted in different cities to determine if HSMs gain Wrocław's identification because general qualities of local identity facilitate it, or because Wrocław has some unique attributes that make it easy for foreigners to identify with.

## Conclusions

This article focuses on the building of place identification in a situation of temporariness. The research confirms that in spite of the intended temporariness of their stay the research participants

develop identification connected to their new place of stay. This identification is built in a different way to that described by Hummon (1992) as “everyday rootedness” and “ideological rootedness” as it includes some elements of both. HSMs stress that their identification came with time when the new place became familiar and recognizable. In their interviews, liking their new place is connected to “living” and “knowing”. Everyday life lead in new place over some time is necessary to develop an identification. However, the timescale of such practices may be much shorter than the lifetime scale demanded by the traditional conception of place. New identification is built through typical “ideological rootedness”, conscious gathering knowledge about the place, and also through quintessential “everyday rootedness”, banal everyday experiencing of place, which, in this case, takes months not years. HSMs combine both these processes to build their place-related identification. Building a new identification is for them just a side effect of a project undertaken for a career or personal development that may be transferable to the new location they will move into.

The originality of this article lies in applying a scalar perspective to HSMs research. It argues that identifications built in relation to the different scale places have different qualities. I show not only that HSMs build new identification but that they obtain a city identification rather than Polish national one. They sometimes identify as Wrocławianin, but they do not call themselves Polish, although they may admit becoming partly Polish in some aspects of their thought or behaviour. I argue that this may be caused by the fact that local/city identity is built through accumulation of the knowledge of the place and place-related experience, and in this sense it is a different phenomenon than national identity constructed around the difference between “us” and “them”. Local identity is rather built through gathering information and everyday life. HSMs build their local identification through learning about Wrocław’s history, geography, and cultural offerings, and the more they know, the more they feel connected with the place. Since they are highly educated, they have the skills to easily research and absorb new information.

Additionally Polish national identity is built around the myth of a homogenous nation sharing the same language, values, and ethnic origins, while Wrocław identity is built around the myth of multiculturalism. HSMs usually already possess their own national identity that places them in opposition to the Polish nation and, even after learning the language, values, and patterns of behaviour of Poland, they still identify as those who do not share common ethnic origins as native Poles. The research presented as a particular case study does not allow us to determine if the difference between Wrocław’s and Poland’s identifications are examples of general differences between national and local identifications. Further comparative research is necessary to confirm that local identity is attributive and inclusive.

To sum up, this study demonstrates that local identity is more inclusive than national identity. While migrants obtain a “city identity” they are unable to fully embrace a national one. Strengthening local identities at the expense of national identity can be a key to the social cohesion.

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## Notes

- 1 All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement and replaced by nicknames. All interviews were conducted by members of research team to the project Between Transnational Mobility and Locality. Highly skilled immigrants in local communities of Walbrzych Special Economic Zone, UMO-2013/11/B/HS6/01348 between February 2015 and October 2016.
- 2 Piekut 2013 makes a similar observation on the experience of HSMs in Warsaw.

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