# 4 Transmobility: The Transnational Pattern of Mobility

The three life stories of Janusz, Oscar, and Malinka that I will discuss in-depth in this section serve as illustrations of the social phenomenon I have conceptualized as the pattern of transmobility. These life stories will not only instruct us on the variety of biographical circumstances leading to transnational mobility during certain phases of my respondents' life-courses, my analysis will also demonstrate how and when individuals change their mobility practices from one pattern to another. As mentioned earlier, analyzing Janusz's life story is important because his mobility practices change. In this chapter, however, his case reflects the typical biographical constellations, life strategies, and motivations for bi-local mobility. Bi-local mobility means that the mobility practices are directed to two destinations—not random ones, but specific destinations—namely the so-called "country of origin" and "country of arrival" (Poland—Germany/Poland—Canada). It therefore opens a comparative perspective with the pattern of immobility. Oscar's life story, the next case that I will examine in depth here, will instruct us on multi-local transnational mobility. His biographical experiences are symptomatic for the context of Montreal, not Toronto or Germany. Including his life story is essential because it opens up contextual comparisons with the other stories and the other patterns. Last but not least, I include the life story of Malinka. Her life story, like that of Janusz, emphasizes changes to and the evolution of mobility practices over time. She, too, shifts from one pattern of mobility to another. Her story, however, is exceptional in many ways, which serves as a good contrast to the former more typical stories.

Transnational mobility is a heterogeneous post-migration experience. We will now see how my interviewees construct narratives about experiences of suffering or not as the case may be, cultural otherness, and experiences of integration into heterogeneous or multiple contexts, and how these experiences are linked with the border-crossing activity of transnational mobility.

## 4.1 JANUSZ, PART II: "THE ONE WHO SPEAKS POLISH BETTER THAN HIS BROTHER"

Given the topic of my study, I have divided the analysis of Janusz's narrative about his life-course in two parts. I have analyzed and discussed the first part in the section above. In this section, I will focus on the second part of his narrative, the one emphasizing a key moment in his life. The analysis will show that the key moment opened up future possibilities that not only changed his familial, educational, and professional direction, but it also triggered a transformation of his mobility practices from "immobility" to "transmobility."

### New Language, New Possibilities

As stated previously, Janusz moved to Greifswald in order to pursue his studies. He remembers this day very well:

"Then I moved, right away […]. I think it must have been 28 September, 2002. It was a Saturday, it was warm. I arrived in Greifswald in the evening and it was warm and summery." (ll.322ff)[1]

His recollection of this event is impressive. He recalls the exact date of his arrival, the weekday, and the weather. This precision indicates that the event has significance for him on a personal level, not least because it was the first (internal) relocation of his center of life. During his studies, he engaged in social relationships with fellow students, most of whom pursued Slavonic Studies (l.194), and many of whom studied Polish. When these relationships became more established, his friends knew about his Polish origin and they addressed his lack of Polish on several occasions:

"We got to know each other better and then they approached me: '[Janusz] why, hey, why can't you speak Polish? You're from Poland.' We were always talking like that. They were very good friends who did Slavonic Studies and who might have been teasing, but they were also saying, 'Learn Polish.'" (ll.196-200)[2]

1 "Dann bin ich umgezogen. Auch sofort. […] Ich glaube, es muss der 28. September 2002 gewesen sein. Es war ein Samstag, es war warm. Ich kam abends in Greifswald an und es war sommerwarm."

2 "Wir haben uns ein bisschen besser kennengelernt und dann haben die mich drauf angesprochen: '[Janusz], warum, hey, warum kannst du denn kein Polnisch? Du kommst

At first, Janusz perceived it more as a joke, but then around the end of his studies, he reflected upon the issue. He thought to himself that here was an opportunity: he could take advantage of his registered status at the university, which offered good language classes for free. Time also played a role; Janusz knew that, as long as he was still pursuing his studies, he had more time and peace to devote to learning another language (ll.206). His new circle of friends motivated him to develop an interest in learning Polish. Retrospectively, he sees his friendships with these persons, who have an affinity for Poland and the Polish language, as "a funny, profitable coincidence." (l.192) Profitable insofar as he, again, started to attend Polish language classes at the University of Greifswald and this time, he mastered it. However, the influence of his new friends was not the only decisive factor for him in making another attempt to learn Polish. In addition, he reflected about his family relations:

"I thought OK, maybe it would be good to learn Polish. Well, the idea of speaking Polish with my father. What's with my/with other relatives? I've noticed that I haven't been to Poland in years." (ll.206-209)[3]

Janusz was aware that his lack of proficiency in Polish influenced his familial relationships; he had lost touch with his relatives in Poland and subsequently did not travel there anymore. Besides, he imagined being able to speak Polish with his father; that was something he was never able to do and apparently wished for. Perhaps he wanted to make his father proud and to strengthen their father-son relationship by communicating in his father's mother tongue. If Janusz's interest in his heritage grew, he stresses that is was not in a genealogical sense:

"It was the interest in my heritage, not in the genealogical sense [but] to not tear off the bonds. I don't want to romanticize, but I think the idea was, for example, I have several aunts and uncles and they were always good contacts in my childhood. Well, it sounds

doch aus Polen.' Da waren wir immer so im Gespräch. Es waren sehr gute Freunde dabei, die Slawistik studiert haben und die haben mich vielleicht nicht aufgezogen, aber es ist gekommen: 'Lern doch mal Polnisch.'"

3 "Ich dachte mir so ok, vielleicht wäre es nochmal gut Polnisch zu lernen. Also, den Gedanken mit meinem Vater [sich zu] unterhalten [auf Polnisch]. Was ist so mit meiner/mit anderen Verwandten? Ich habe gemerkt, ich bin ja seit Jahren nicht mehr hingefahren [nach Polen]."

paradoxical now, right. [I] told you about expectations, pressure, nevertheless I liked those people." (ll.961-966)[4]

Janusz's main concern was not to lose contact with his relatives in Poland. Despite his aversion toward the Polish language and the pressure related to it, he likes his Polish relatives. Maintaining the relationship with his favourite aunt and uncle was an important factor in his decision to study the Polish language (ll.369-372). He felt sorry for not visiting them because of the language barrier (ll.975ff). Janusz must have been about twenty-six or twenty-seven years old when he started to acquire the Polish language again. As before, classes in the first semester were easy for him. Yet, unlike with his first attempt, Janusz did not stop; his interest grew and he continued to take lessons and eventually made progress. Soon after having started the classes, Janusz travelled to Poland for a holiday visit and met with his relatives there. He particularly enjoyed the reunion with his favourite aunt and uncle (ll.373ff). The acquirement of the Polish language was far-reaching in his life-path, not only in terms of private interests, e.g., maintaining relationships with his Polish kin, but also in terms of professional orientation:

"Initially, it was purely a private interest [to learn Polish]. Sometime […] during my studies […] I still didn't know […] What are you actually going to do professionally? Then a thought crossed my mind: OK, why not apply my language skills acquired for personal reasons professionally? And then, very late in my studies, I changed to Eastern European History." (ll.225-228)[5]

With the acquirement of Polish came a professional opportunity, one that had previously remained closed to him. Increased interest and success in learning the

4 "Das war Interesse für Herkunft, aber nicht [im] genealogischen Sinne, [sondern] im Sinne von die Bindungen nicht abreißen. Ich will es auch nicht romantisieren, aber ich glaube der Gedanke war, z.B. ich habe mehrere Onkel und Tanten und es waren immer gute Kontakte in der Kindheit. Also, es klingt jetzt paradox, ne. [Ich habe] was erzählt von Erwartungen, Druck, nichtsdestotrotz mochte ich diese Menschen."

5 "Es war am Anfang ein reines privates Interesse [Polnisch zu lernen] […] Irgendwann […] im Hauptstudium wusste [ich immer noch nicht] […] Was machst du jetzt eigentlich so beruflich? Dann kam der Gedanke, ok: Warum nicht verbinden, warum nicht sozusagen meine privaterworbene Sprachkompetenz mit dem Beruflichen verbinden? Und habe dann sehr spät im Studium, dann nochmal so einen Schwenk zur Osteuropageschichte gemacht."

language offered a way to reorient his studies and perhaps develop more specific professional ambitions. Since his professional path was not determined but still "in the making" during his studies at Greifswald University, Janusz took advantage of another possibility: to go abroad for a semester:

"It was at the end of my studies and I knew I would be finishing in a year, at the latest. It was now or never. I would never again be as free to do this and I had a very specific regional interest, namely Poland. It was easier, otherwise you have to think where to go. It was clear: when it came to going abroad, it was going to be Poland." (ll.1017-1020)[6]

In his penultimate semester before graduating, he made up his mind to go to Poland. Janusz gives two key reasons that account for a stay abroad: first, he anticipated that going abroad later would probably not be as "carefree" were he no longer a student, and, second, he knew where he wanted to go, namely to Poland. In this quote, Janusz implies that he would probably not have gone abroad if it had not been to Poland. Therefore, we can assume that the acquirement or the on-going process of learning Polish enabled him to take advantage of a mobility opportunity. Knowledge of the Polish language granted him "mobility capital" (Kaufmann et al. 2004) which he was able to make use of in a concrete way. The "timing," or his life cycle stage, was also crucial in this regard:

"I always wanted to study abroad but it never worked out. There was always something […] quasi objective reasons, like having a relationship. […] At that time, I was unattached and professionally free. Other than that, I had always worked a lot during my studies. But here was a moment where I could say, I have no job here and no one is holding me back so I can go." (ll.1013-1023)[7]

6 "Es war am Ende des Studiums und ich wusste in einem Jahr bin ich spätestens durch. Entweder jetzt oder nie wieder so unbeschwert und ich hatte auch ein ganz konkretes regionales Interesse, nämlich Polen. Es war auch einfacher, sonst muss man überlegen, wo geht man denn hin. So war es klar: wenn es ins Ausland geht, dann nach Polen."

7 "Ich wollte immer ins Ausland zum Studium und es hat sich nicht ergeben. Es war immer irgendwas […] quasi objektive Gründe, wie man [hat] gerade eine Beziehung. […] Ich war in der Zeit gerade ungebunden und beruflich gerade frei, ansonsten habe ich immer viel gearbeitet im Studium, aber es war gerade so eine Phase wo ich sagen konnte, ich habe kein Job hier und keinen der mich hält und kann gehen." (ll.1013-1023)

Janusz's decision to undertake a mobility experience largely depended upon his life phase: he chose to go abroad at a time when he was without significant personal or professional responsibilities. Here, we can note that language proficiency and a particular life phase are the conditions under which "going abroad" evolved into a realistic scenario. His main reason, however, was professional:

"I knew Poland could be professionally important to me so my line of thinking was certainly career motivated. Certainly, I didn't want to look bad and I thought: I want to improve my Polish—and I can't do better than to go there." (ll.1024-1027)[8]

At the end of the day, going abroad to Poland worked out for him, although not everything went according to plan. Initially, Janusz applied to a student association that organizes exchanges between Central and Eastern European countries. He would be attending the University in Cracow. This did not work out (ll.346-351). Then he applied for a semester abroad again; this time through the University of Greifswald, which had Erasmus exchanges with two Polish Universities in Szczecin in Poznan.[9] Students widely use the Erasmus program as an opportunity to spend a restricted amount of time abroad within the educational institutions of collaborating universities. Janusz was accepted and decided to go to University in Poznan because Szczecin was geographically too close to Greifswald, but also for financial reasons (ll.355-62): in Poznan, he had the possibility of staying at his favourite aunt and uncle's place (ll.366f). What is more, in the meantime his father had moved back to Poland and was living in Poznan as well. In preparation for this semester abroad, Janusz attended intensive language classes and met many new people (including my gatekeeper, ll.402ff). Finally, he spent the academic winter term of 2008/2009 at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. At that point in time, he was twenty-eight years old.

8 "Ich wusste Polen ist mir beruflich wichtig und das ist auf einmal auch so ein Karrieredenken gewesen. Ich will natürlich jetzt auch nicht schlecht dastehen und es war auch der Gedanke: Ich will mein Polnisch verbessern—und wie kann ich es besser verbessern als dort."

9 The Erasmus program is a support program of the European Union for student mobility. Since 2014, Erasmus merged with other programs and is now officially called *Erasmus Plus*. For further information about the mobility stipends for students, see the homepage of the European Commission: http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus

## Transnationalising Relationships

Once Janusz arrived in Poland, he experienced a new way of living:

"Then I moved in [with my aunt and uncle]. They had a guest room and then I lived there for one term and I enjoyed the whole thing that Polish students have at home if they live with their mom and dad, so this whole full service, from cooking food up to doing my laundry and vacuuming my room. So, I felt a bit like I was transported back. No, totally wicked, even my mother had never done something like that for us. It was again a very different experience." (ll.376-381)[10]

Janusz alludes here to the differences in the "student lives" of German and Polish students.

Student Life in Germany
Students in Germany more often move away from their hometown to pursue their studies in another city, and if not, students mostly do not live with their parents anymore but rather in residence halls, or in a flat shared with fellow students (*Wohngemeinschaften*), with their partners, or alone. Most of the time, beginning a university education is the first time a young adult learns to live alone, to be independent, if not financially then at least in the way of housework. Another difference that some interviewees mentioned is that students usually work outside of their studies (often in so-called *Minijobs)*[11] in Germany, whereas this would be an exception in Poland. Yet, we should not forget to perceive these differences while keeping in mind the slogan "the exception proves the rule."

10 "Dann bin ich eingezogen [bei meiner Tante und meinem Onkel]. Die hatten ein Gästezimmer und dann habe ich dort ein Semester lang gewohnt und durfte das ganze genießen, was polnische Studierende bei sich zu Hause haben, wenn sie bei Mama und Papa wohnen, also diesen ganzen Full-Service vom Essen kochen bis hin zum Wäschewaschen und mein Zimmer saugen. Also, ich habe mich ein bisschen gefühlt wie zurückversetzt. Nee, so krass, selbst meine Mutter hat sowas nie für uns gemacht. Es war nochmal eine ganz andere Erfahrung."

11 *Minijobs* are employments which are deduction-free for employees who earn up to 400 Euros a month.

He indicates that students in Poland often live with their parents during their studies when they study in the same city. Their parents generally provide and take care of everyday tasks, such as cooking, washing, and cleaning. Janusz, however, was not at all used to this kind of "full service" that his aunt and uncle suddenly provided him with. This becomes particularly apparent in his colloquial statement, "totally wicked" ("*so krass*"). He points out that his mother had never done that for him and his brother, indicating a cultural difference or a difference in gender roles. Janusz felt that he was taken back to the past, and thereby invoking a cultural disposition that seems to be less modern than he was used to. Due to his living arrangements, he was able to improve his Polish greatly as he spoke Polish with his relatives every day. What is more, he got to know the city of Poznan for himself; a different city opened up to him than the one he encountered during childhood (ll.381-388). He also established new social relationships, though mostly not with other Erasmus students as—according to Janusz—they were a lot younger than him and due to his living arrangements and his classes, he basically had less opportunities to meet them. Janusz was already in his late twenties when he went abroad, while most of the other Erasmus-students were in their early twenties. Besides, he did not live in residence halls and did not attend the classes for Erasmus-students (ll.392-399). Instead, he met with people whom he got to know in his language preparation seminars and others, whom he met through his familial networks (ll.405-412).

Janusz saw his aunt and uncle on a daily basis and he also saw his father on a regular basis. Being impudently curious, I asked Janusz why he was not living with his father. In the first moment, he was reluctant, but then he answered my inquiry, which touches on a very personal issue:

"There were several reasons [why I did not live with my father]. […] Yeah, it had nothing to do with my father, but more so with his new wife. My father re-married and she and I are not on the best of terms." (ll.420ff)[12]

We learn that the relationship between Janusz and his father's new wife is somewhat conflictual, but we do not learn why. Certainly, it leaves room for speculation, but Janusz did not give any further information on that topic. Although father and son were not living under the same roof, their relationship continued, and, in fact, changed significantly. They met frequently while Janusz was

12 "Hatte verschiedene Gründe [dass ich nicht bei meinem Vater gewohnt habe]. […] Ja, es hat nichts mit meinem Vater zu tun, sondern eher so mit seiner neuen Frau. Mein Vater hat nochmal geheiratet und da sind die Beziehungen nicht die besten."

in Poznan and they got to know each other in another way: before it would have been a father-son relationship, while during his semester abroad it turned into a kind of friendship: they would go for a drink together, watch a movie, go to a jazz concert (ll.423-429). He recalls this time as being very nice. If their continuous getting-together intensified their relationship, the following changed:

"Until my semester abroad, we spoke in German. […] During the semester abroad we switched […] we had tried to speak Polish when I started to learn […] [but] I lacked vocabulary […]. Yes, and in the semester abroad it was hundred percent and since then we actually speak Polish, with some very rare exceptions." (ll.429-439)[13]

Once Janusz started to communicate in Polish with his father, he tells me, he observed a sparkle in his fathers' eyes (l.1070). His father was proud: "He was just what one would call proud. I think the term is often misused, but here it's like a kind of bliss." (ll.1067ff)[14] Janusz indicates that, by learning the language, he was able to make his father very happy. It appears to have been something Janusz was striving for, and he managed to make it possible. Since his semester abroad and up to the moment of the interview, he mostly spoke Polish with his father, unless—and that is the exception Janusz indicated—his elder brother is present. His brother almost always speaks German, except when a third party present cannot speak German. This happens for instance, when they get together with their Polish relatives (ll.1075ff). Interestingly, the linguistic roles between the brothers reversed: during their childhood, it was Janusz who rejected Polish and now it is his brother. This reversed situation also underlines the fact that Janusz is more fluent in Polish now than his elder brother who at one point during puberty no longer wished to attend Polish school, refusing to speak Polish altogether (ll.601-607).

In sum, Janusz has reached his goal: he improved his Polish language skills so as to communicate with his father and his relatives in Poland. Due to his newly acquired language skills and his mobility experience to Poland, Janusz transformed and, in fact, transnationalized many of his social relationships. By now,

13 "Wir haben bis zu meinem Auslandsemester Deutsch geredet miteinander. […] Im Auslandssemester sind wir geswitched […] also wir haben vorher versucht immer wieder mal Polnisch zu reden als ich angefangen habe zu lernen […] [aber] mein Wortschatz reichte nicht aus […] Ja, und im Auslandssemester war es dann zu 100% und seitdem reden wir mit einigen ganz wenigen Ausnahmen eigentlich Polnisch."

14 "Er war einfach nur das was man stolz nennt. Ich finde der Begriff ist ja oft falsch verwendet, aber hier ist es sowas wie eine Glückseligkeit irgendwie."

he has significant relationships in Germany as well as in Poland and is therefore embedded in various social circles in both countries. His mobility to Poland has been a temporally restricted border-crossing relocation of his center of life. After six months, Janusz returned to Greifswald and graduated from university with a master's thesis on a Polish-German subject (l.447). As we will see, he was not to stay in Germany for too long.

## The Mobile Search for a Profession

Once Janusz was back in Greifswald, it took him another semester to graduate from university. He finished his studies in January 2010 and in February 2010 he was back in Poland. When he started to improve his Polish language skills more and more, he had seen an offer to do an internship in the Polish parliament (*Sejm*). He applied for this internship once he was back in Greifswald and he was lucky to be selected (ll.451-456). So, he moved back to Poland, this time to Warsaw:

"[I] also got to experience Warsaw. Then, generally, an intense phase of Poland began again, right. Again, getting to know a completely different Poland, again meeting new people." (ll.457ff)[15]

Janusz's memories of this internship are consistently positive. He hoped to be able to stay in Warsaw after the internship was over and to find a job (ll.460f). As his plan did not work out, he had to come back to Germany. He relocated his center of life from Warsaw back to Berlin, where he ended up being unemployed. In August 2010, he received welfare from the German unemployment benefit system (*Hartz IV*) until February 2011 when he got a job in Stralsund. He had heard of the position through contacts from Greifswald which is not far away from Stralsund. His application was successful: "Then my new job began. Surprisingly, in a German-Polish project [laughter]." (ll.481f)[16] By using irony, Janusz indicates that is was not exactly surprising that he found a job in a Polish-German project, which was about coordinating several events for a German-

15 "[Ich habe] auch Warschau nochmal kennengelernt. Dann fing so eine Phase generell an, nochmal ein intensives Polen, ne. Nochmal was ganz Anderes von Polen kennenlernen, nochmal neue Leute kennenlernen."

16 "Dann [fing] mein neuer Job an. Überraschenderweise in einem deutsch-polnischem Projekt [Lachen]."

Polish audience (ll.496f). At first, he depicted the application and acceptance of the position as driven by professional reasons; yet, he later mentioned personal reasons, which very likely influenced his decision to move out of Berlin:

"Back then, I had a long-distance relationship, so all was somehow quite good. My girlfriend at the time was also in Greifswald. OK, so back I went […]. She was Polish, and I met her through these German-Polish things." (ll.486-490)[17]

It becomes clear that his internal relocation was not only professionally motivated, but also worked out well for him on a personal level. Janusz moved to Greifswald and commuted to Stralsund to work. We notice that while Janusz stayed in Germany, he in fact, increasingly incorporated German-Polish relations into his everyday life: he transnationalized (and therefore transformed) his social relationships in Poland and, later, in Germany. Transnational scholars would probably argue that his quotidian life evolved into and is now structured by a transnational social space (or field). This becomes apparent in both his professional and private life at that time.

The position in Stralsund was limited to one year, which soon forced Janusz to look for another position. Anyhow, he was dissatisfied with this job and he did not feel as though he were in good hands there (l.498). That is when he started thinking about doing a Ph.D. He was looking for a challenge: "[…] but honestly, through this professional experience, I realized that I felt bored by all that and that I needed something that challenged me." (l 505)[18] He then started to work on a dissertation proposal to apply for a Ph.D. position. Since he was working a lot, it took time to write the proposal. His writing motivation increased immediately when he saw a job advertisement in Munich:

"In one weekend [I] knocked together an exposé […] Sit down, I said to myself, try to write yourself into this advertisement. Lucky me, somehow, they invited me [to the interview]." (ll.522ff)[19]

17 "Ich hatte damals auch eine Fernbeziehung, also das war irgendwie alles auch ganz gut. Meine damalige Freundin war auch in Greifswald. Ok, also zurück […]. [Es war] auch eine polnische Freundin, die ich auch durch diese deutsch-polnischen Sachen kennengelernt habe."

18 "[…] Aber ehrlich, durch die Erfahrung im Berufsleben habe ich festgestellt, mich langweilt das alles irgendwie und ich brauche irgendwas was mich fordert."

19 "In so einer Wochenend-Aktion [habe ich] ein Exposé zusammengezimmert. […] Setz' dich mal hin, habe ich mir gesagt, versuche dich in diese Ausschreibung hinein-

In Munich, a new doctoral program focusing on German-Polish research questions was just opening up (l.521l). Janusz was admitted to the program, but without funding. Since Janusz did not have a better opportunity at that time, he accepted the proposition and commuted to Munich while still working in Stralsund. Janusz underlines that he did not need to go to Munich every day or every week, but a couple times in a month to take part in workshops (ll.533-538). He evaluates his attendance in the doctoral program as intensive and motivating for elaborating his research proposal. Eventually, he got an invitation to another doctoral program, in Frankfurt (Oder), which offered funding. Janusz tells me that the decision to go to Frankfurt (Oder) was not an easy one: he had met nice colleagues and professors in Munich, but—at the end of the day—he did the "rational thing." He then moved back to Berlin. When asked why he moved to Berlin instead of Frankfurt (Oder), Janusz responded that commuting between Berlin and Frankfurt (Oder) is something many people do (fifty minutes train ride). Besides, living in Frankfurt did not appeal to him: he sees Frankfurt (Oder) as a stigmatized place (ll.555ff). His position started in January 2012 and since then he has been working on his doctoral thesis, which deals with the local administration in Communist Poland and how it contributed to stabilizing and maintaining communist dominance (ll.574ff). We could say that such a topic provides another kind of "mobility capital" (Kaufmann et al. 2004) because it opens up further mobility experiences to Poland, which are directly linked to his research activities. Doing research on such a topic is not restricted to only one geographical space. In fact, Janusz is back and forth between Germany and Poland:

"Last year I was working in the archives in Poland a lot. So [I] was mainly in Poland last year; more than I was in Germany. This year I have to write more, so [I have] to be more in Germany than in Poland, although at the end of the year the goal is to be more in the archives [in Poland] again." (ll.582ff)[20]

He continuously relocates his center of life between Germany and Poland without officially moving from one country to the other. These circular movements

zuschreiben. Glück gehabt, irgendwie haben sie mich eingeladen [zum Vorstellungsgespräch]."

20 "Letztes Jahr war ich viel dafür in Archiven in Polen. [Ich] war also letztes Jahr mehrheitlich in Polen; mehr als in Deutschland. Dieses Jahr muss ich mehr schreiben, also mehr in Deutschland sein als in Polen, obwohl am Endes des Jahres ist das Ziel wieder mehr in die Archive [nach Polen]."

are incorporated into his professional activity. In his previous job, Janusz also dealt with Poland, but did not practice geographical mobility to Poland. His current research would be unfeasible without geographical mobility to Poland. In sum, his life course is characterized by border-crossing activities. Since Janusz acquired the Polish language, he has increasingly practiced geographical mobility. Learning the Polish language was a *key moment* in his life in many ways. It was a turning point, which, I assume, changed his life-path significantly. Acquiring the language was initially intended to serve personal interests, namely to reconnect with the Polish side of his family, but then the language acquirement also became central to his professional endeavours. Profession and mobility have become entangled. As we have seen, his geographical mobility experiences combine domestic and border-crossing spatial movements. Up until now, his mobility has been voluntary: he *carried out* as opposed to *underwent* geographical mobility. Certainly, it is transnational, and to be more precise, it consists of bi-local movements between Germany and Poland.

Janusz's mobility, however, is not the only one standing out in this life story: the mobility of Janusz's father also shines through Janusz's narrative. At one point in his narrative, Janusz even mentions that his father is a "mobile guy." (l.626) In one passage of his narration, he tells me about how his father advised him to study. Janusz assumes that his father wanted him to have better professional possibilities than he has had (l.782f). In this context of the narration, Janusz indicates that his father's mobility evolved under different circumstances than his own and it thus takes on another shape:

"You have to do something with your life, not like me […] the one who was back and forth between different worlds, did everything, but nothing real and eventually ended up doing different jobs […]/ he has managed it well." (ll.786-789)[21]

Except for the last sentence, Janusz puts himself in the speaking role of his father. The quote is an imitation of his fathers' speech, in which he underlines that his father was "back and forth between different worlds." His transnational mobility between Germany and Poland is actually not so different from Janusz's mobility practices; yet, what Janusz implies that the difference is in the intentionality of mobility experiences. While Janusz integrates mobility into his professional tasks, his father needed to integrate or rather find new jobs *ad hoc* eve-

21 "Du musst doch was aus deinem Leben machen, nicht so wie ich hier … der […] zwischen verschiedenen Welten rumtingelte, alles Mögliche machte, nichts Richtiges und irgendwann bei ganz anderen Jobs landete […]/ er hat das gut hinbekommen."

ry time he was geographically mobile. In a way, we can assume that Janusz's mobility is somewhat more deliberate, but more striking, is his father speaking about his social status. At the end of the day, we can grasp a discourse about social advancement, more precisely, about Janusz's father's wish for his son to be upwardly (socially) mobile. In fact, Janusz uses his mobility to improve his social position (by finishing his thesis), while we can assume that, in the case of his father, mobility may have often implied a lowering of his former status. To some extent, we could say that Janusz follows in his father's mobile footsteps. Transnational mobility plays an essential role in Janusz's life. His future plans and wishes are marked by it:

"Do I see myself in the German-Polish realm? […] Somehow, I've done a lot for the German-Polish realm. […] It is not as if I say: 'Oh, I have to do something with Germany or Poland.' That's not the point. I would like to work in Poland. I always wanted to do it. Except for internships, it never worked out in Poland. It was a bit of a shame. I never succeeded." (ll.1263-1268)[22]

On the one hand, Janusz does not want to force himself to continue his border-crossing activities in the German-Polish social space. On the other hand, he would like to accomplish his desire to work in Poland, a wish he has not yet been able to fulfill. In fact, he incorporates mobility into his future plans. Mobility is the precondition of his wish to work in Poland someday. Being curious about the duration of this "envisaged mobility scenario," the following dialogue developed between us:

A.W.: "So, you would actually consider working in Poland?"
Janusz: "For a while, yes"
A.W.: "For which period of time?"
Janusz: "Five years or so. Everything under one year is not really enough time."
A.W.: "What about forever?"

22 "Sehe ich mich im deutsch-polnischen Bereich? […] Irgendwie habe ich ja viel dafür gemacht als ich lange dort war. […] Es ist nicht so, dass ich jetzt sage: 'Oh, ich muss was mit Deutschland oder mit Polen machen.' Das ist nicht der Punkt. Ich würde gerne in Polen arbeiten. Das wollte ich immer mal. Das habe ich—außer so Praktika—habe ich nie in Polen gearbeitet. Das war ein bisschen schade. Es [ist mir] nie gelungen."

Janusz: "I don't know. If it turns out to be forever; that's another thing. That would be the result of certain life circumstances." (ll.1269-1278)[23]

Interestingly, Janusz has no clear idea about the time-span of his "envisaged mobility" to Poland. He does not want to stay for too short a period of time. He wants to spend a certain unspecified amount of time working in Poland; yet, he is also not opposed to spending the rest of his life there. This, however, strongly depends upon his prospective life-path.

## Cultural Irritations under the Condition of Mobility

Due to his numerous mobility experiences between Germany and Poland, Janusz not only navigates between two countries, he also navigates between two cultures and societies. In his narration, he often talks about the differences he encounters and how he negotiates or simply rejects certain cultural elements or social norms. He needs to manage several cultural repertoires and selectively engages in transnational activities. Typically, he sees a difference in the way Polish and German families get together and celebrate. In a German nuclear family, the celebrations are rather plain, while Polish families generally celebrate with a lot of food, drinks, and with many family members and friends (ll.880-884). While Janusz enjoys the family celebrations in Poland, he encounters other differences that are more difficult to deal with. One example is his observation of divergent "life concepts." In Poland, Janusz tells me, he is often asked when he will get married and start a family. This happens most often within the realm of his familial relationships. For such situations, he developed a strategy by not engaging in these discussions (ll.898). Most of his Polish relatives cannot relate to his way of life:

"Having kids and the like. If you were to say that this is not part of the plan. Then […] you get the shaking heads. I do not address it, except with my aunt who's just really so close. She is the only person in Poland [with whom I talk about these things]." (ll.708ff)[24]

23 A.W.: "Also, du würdest das schon in Betracht ziehen [in Polen zu arbeiten]?"
Janusz: "Für eine gewisse Zeit, ja."
A.W.: "Was soll das für ein Zeitraum sein?"
Janusz: "Fünf Jahre oder so. Alles unter einem Jahr ist keine richtige Zeit."
A.W.: "Auch nicht für immer?"
Janusz: "Das weiß man nicht, wenn es für immer wird, das ist eine andere Sache. Das ergibt sich dann aus dem Leben heraus."

He only talks with his aunt about such sensitive topics as they have developed a very close relationship. Arguably, his aunt may be more understanding about this matter as she and her husband do not have any children themselves. Being approached by his Polish relatives illustrates that social expectations and what is considered to be the norm in Poland also affects Janusz; at least to the extent that he needs to justify himself. This topic is potentially a conflicting one, because Janusz has a slightly different "life concept" in mind. He experiences similar reactions with regard to his professional situation of writing a dissertation and being a doctoral candidate. Some of his Polish relatives welcome his decision to do a Ph.D. while others ask when he will finally start to earn a living:

"It is a totally different perspective [in Poland] even if the [perspective] is also problematic in Germany, because also in Germany one has to justify oneself for doing a Ph.D. and how long it takes. But it is more acknowledged […] and in Poland, if you are a Ph.D. student, you are a student and you're a child somehow and […] everyone asks when you will start working. When will you begin to live properly? You have to make money."[25]

Janusz feels that his Polish family does not perceive his dissertation as "serious grown-up work." They rather link it with student life, in which the young people earn no money, and are not yet grown up. We could assume that Janusz's Polish family does not strongly value such educational efforts and be tempted to link this attitude to a lower-class status. In fact, Janusz mentions that he is the only academic in his family on both the German and Polish sides (ll.773f). The fact that Janusz does not earn (much) money is related to his other observation of another "space of difference," that is the perspective on material life: "Perspectives on material things, I'd always find very Polish." (ll.750)[26] He sees the interest in material goods as much more pronounced in Poland than in Germany, which he

24 "Kinder kriegen und so auch wenn man sagen würde, dass sowas nicht zum Konzept gehört. Dann […] kriegt man nur Kopfschütteln. Man spricht das auch gar nicht an, außer mit meiner Tante, die halt wirklich so eng ist. Es ist die einzige Person in Polen [mit der ich über sowas rede]."

25 "Das ist eine ganz andere Perspektive [in Polen] auch wenn die [Perspektive] in Deutschland auch problematisch ist, weil man sich in Deutschland auch rechtfertigen muss warum man promoviert und wie lange man braucht. Es ist doch anerkannter […] und in Polen, wenn man Doktorand ist, ist man Student und man ist Kind irgendwie und […] alle erwarten, wann fängt man an zu arbeiten. Wann fängt man an richtig zu leben, man muss doch mal Geld verdienen."

26 "Perspektiven auf Materielles finde ich immer sehr Polnisch."

extrapolates from the way people talk about it. He does not necessarily perceive it as "pretentious," but as a means to make sure that one does not need to worry (ll.1133-1136). It is a difference for Janusz, but he can understand it as he points to historical differences of both countries, which are characterized by divergent economic developments and its social consequences. While Polish people are afraid of having to live in poverty, Janusz believes that Germans do not share these fears to such a great extent. He admits that his perspective might be, in fact, a spoiled one (ll.767-771).

A topic that many of my interviewees mention is religious life in Poland. Janusz, too, gives a rather detailed account on that matter. He tells me what kind of experiences he had with religion and church in Poland, and how he evaluates them. Generally, religiosity in Poland leaves a big question mark for him. In this context, he cites the example of his father. Janusz is struck by the fact that his father goes to church while he is not even religious or devout: "He is the kind of a person who always goes to church. He finds church apparently quite important as an institution. It's just tradition. Absolutely Poland." (ll.732f)[27] Janusz puts forward the significance of the Polish tradition of "church-going." He generalizes it as typical behaviour of Polish people, even when they are not particularly religious. He struggles with this traditional behaviour as it does not make much sense to him. He interprets it as being useful on "an abstract collective level" in terms of community life, but not individually. Janusz's father, he mentions, does not even subscribe to the opinions of the Polish episcopate (ll.858). Besides, Janusz disapproves of the debates in Poland about questions pertaining to the social realm of the church. Homosexuality and abortion are, according to Janusz, two prime examples. With regard to his father, Janusz assumes that he would take a liberal position on these matters. For Janusz, his father is a "a liberal Pole, but a liberal Pole is not a liberal German [laughter]."[28] Generally, Janusz knows that positions against homosexuality and abortion can be found in both countries, but he nevertheless believes that they are more representative of Poland, although he immediately acknowledges that Polish society is a differentiated society, in which there are also radical proponents of gender studies (ll.741-746).

As mentioned above, the theme of religiosity is a recurring motif in the narratives of my respondents. They approach the topic in view of expressing more liberal views than those espoused by the Catholic Church and by extension the many Poles whom my respondents see as incorporating the dictation of the

27 "Er is so'ne Person, der geht immer in die Kirche. Er findet Kirche scheinbar ganz wichtig als Institution. Es ist halt Tradition. Absolut Polen."

28 "Ein liberaler Pole, aber ein liberaler Pole ist ja kein liberaler Deutscher [Lachen]."

church into their dispositions and attitudes without question. However, Janusz himself was brought up "firmly atheistic," typical for a socialization in East Germany, and he only experienced the Catholic Church through his visits to Poland as a child. Following Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004), in this particular case, we can say that he participates in *ways of being* within transnational social fields, meaning that he is embedded in transnational practices without identifying with them. He remembers a striking experience from his childhood. Back then, he did not feel good about being in a church because he thought it was "strangely unpleasant." Janusz describes a situation, in which he went to church as a child. Here are his impressions:

"So, I was taken to liturgical ceremonies as a small child, I entered buildings, into which I would never have gone otherwise, even if it was with my father or family members. No one says a word and all people change. You have to imagine that: A small child comes into a church and all [family members] change their behaviour, their demeanor, yeah." (ll.835-839)[29]

Such impressions from his childhood were, more than anything, a deterrent to Catholicism and the practice of "church-going," not least because, back then, no one of his Polish family would explain to him what these ceremonies meant (ll.832-835).

Encountering such differences creates a paradoxical condition, in which Janusz is neither perceived to be a typical Pole in both Germany and Poland, nor is he the typical foreigner in Poland. Janusz assumes that he is perceived by his Polish relatives as:

"The German who does not dance at parties, who drinks too little, who speaks funny, who is still studying. That's who I am, I think so. Not everyone says so, but I think that's what most people think." (ll.1164ff)[30]

29 "Also, ich bin als kleines Kind in liturgische Zeremonien hineingekommen, in Gebäude hineingekommen, in die ich niemals sonst hineingegangen wäre, zwar mit meinem Vater oder Familienangehörigen. Keiner sagt ein Ton und alle verändern sich. Das muss man sich mal vorstellen, da kommt so ein kleines Kind in so eine Kirche rein und alle verändern sich in ihrem Verhalten, in ihrem Gehabe, ja."

30 "Der Deutsche, der nicht tanzt auf Feiern, der zu wenig trinkt, der komisch redet, der immer noch studiert. Der bin ich, ich glaube schon. Sagt nicht jeder, aber ich glaube das denken die meisten."

It becomes clear that the cultural differences Janusz encounters when in Poland, are also encountered by the Poles surrounding him. In other words: the differences encountered are mutual. Whenever Janusz perceives cultural values or social norms as odd and acts against them, likewise, his relatives perceive his behaviour as odd because he stands out from the crowd. Janusz mentions that he is neither a "typical foreigner" who

"[…] comes to a foreign country and perhaps even knows the language, but […] I have access to non-public spaces in Poland and I didn't buy them and I didn't have to work for them, but I have them from birth. I mean that by 'no typical foreigner.'" (ll.1153-1156)[31]

By the same token, Janusz benefits from certain privileges in Poland that are not as easily accessible for those without Polish roots. As we have seen, he partially does not fit in, but he is nevertheless not excluded from, let us say, familial celebrations or other social events. This condition results from—what I call—the *accumulation of origins*. I have argued above that the common differentiation between "country of origin" and "country of arrival" is of no analytical use in Janusz's case, but that both Germany as well as Poland make up his *countries* of origin. Generally, I assume that individuals can accumulate more than one (cultural) origin; yet, it is dependent on specific biographical constellations in their life-courses. The accumulation of origins is intensified by mobility experiences, which show cultural fractures and irritations. Bi-local transnational mobility, as in Janusz's case, makes him feel at ease in Poland, but not "at home." ("*heimisch*," ll.1249f) His narrative about cultural differences and the ambiguous state of not being typically Polish nor a typical foreigner in Poland means he must meet the standards of both "here" and "there." He is expected to match two sets of social norms. It certainly brings about potential conflict, yet it is characteristic of "multiple integration" in both societies.

## Self-Acknowledgement through Language Acquirement

Acquiring Polish and re-uniting with his Polish relatives transformed both his feeling of belonging and his feeling of estrangement toward Poland and the Polish language. As a child, Janusz felt estranged from the culture and, most ob-

31 "[…] In ein fremdes Land kommt und vielleicht sogar die Sprache kann, aber […] ich habe ja Zugänge zu nicht-öffentlichen Räumen in Polen und die habe ich mir nicht erkauft und die habe ich mir auch nicht erarbeiten müssen, sondern ich habe die per Geburt. Das meine ich mit 'typischem Ausländer.'"

viously, from the language. Nowadays, Janusz tells me, that he does not perceive it as something alien anymore:

"Today, it is, of course, no longer strange to me […] Professionally, I deal with Polish almost every day. In this doctoral school, we are more Poles than Germans. […] Our professor is Polish and Polish is almost the *lingua franca*, [more so] than German […] of course, it became a part of me."[32]

Polish has now become an integral part of his life. It is linked to his professional activity and to his other social activities, as is German. Janusz's life is now embedded in a (bi-local) transnational social space that is characterized by border-crossing social practices between Poland and Germany. Therefore, he is able to incorporate Polish into his self-understanding. In his narrative, he insists that Polishness *has now become* a part of him, rather than having been a part of him all the time:

"I think it has become. I think of it more like something that has become [laughter]. Certainly, I have integrated something from the past that was there. […] But still, I feel the Polish rather as something that was added. […] Well, German, I think, is somehow more causal." (ll.679-671)[33]

By comparing the German and the Polish languages (and other cultural elements), Janusz feels Polish to be a part of his "self," but one that has evolved; something that was added only later on. By now, Janusz considers his Polish language skills as good, but not comparable to that of a native speaker. His friends say that his Polish is *specyficzny* (specific, ll.993). He likes to communicate in Polish and he also misses it in phases in which he does not often speak Polish. At the same time, he is sometimes bothered when talking in Polish because he is not able to express himself like he could as a native speaker; nevertheless, speaking Polish is not as exhaustive anymore as a "real foreign lan-

32 "Heute ist es natürlich überhaupt nicht mehr fremd […] ich habe einfach beruflich fast täglich mit Polnisch zu tun. In diesem Graduiertenkolleg sind wir mehr Polen als Deutsche. […] Unsere Professorin ist Polin. Also, Polnisch ist da fast die *Lingua Franca* [mehr] als Deutsch […] es ist natürlich ein Teil von mir geworden."

33 "Ich glaube eher geworden. Ich glaub eher an sowas Gewordenes [Lachen]. Sicherlich habe ich etwas aus der Vergangenheit integriert was da war. […] Aber dennoch empfinde ich das Polnische weiterhin eher als was Hinzugekommenes. […] Also, das Deutsche finde ich irgendwie ursächlicher."

guage" for him (ll.1002-1005). In a way, Janusz' personal development is liberating: "There are no barriers in my head, saying: 'Uh, Polish, I don't want that.' You could say I have emancipated myself from this." (ll.1054f)[34] Not only has he broken down those barriers that once surrounded the Polish language, he also acknowledges that his father is a Pole. Now it is something that he is not ashamed of anymore; something that he is able to handle a lot better than before (ll.680). Most importantly, Janusz has acknowledged his Polish roots: "I have acknowledged it. It [is] so integral in my life today. Almost everything I do is connected with it." (ll.1241f)[35] In contrast with Janusz, we will now learn about Oscar's life story, who strongly acknowledges his Polish belonging, but gets confused about it once he lives in Poland.

## 4.2 OSCAR: "THE ONE WHO COULD BE ANYTHING IN A WEIRD WAY"

Oscar is a young man of Polish descent who came back to Montreal following a rather lengthy mobility experience a few months before we met. When I interviewed him, he was twenty-nine years old. I got in touch with him through one of my gatekeepers who is distantly related to him. He was open to my inquiry, but it was not too easy to arrange an appointment with him; he needed to reschedule a few times because he took advantage of ad-hoc work opportunities. As with all of my interviewees, I asked him where he preferred to meet me. He kindly invited me to his home. Oscar established an interview setting, in which I was able to take a peek into his current life-phase. I interviewed Oscar on December 1, 2013. At first glance, our get-together seemed quite regular: after introducing ourselves, he asked me some details about how I met my gatekeeper and what kind of study I was doing. But then, after having answered his questions, Oscar surprisingly asked me: "So, you're not Canadian? You're German? And you don't live in Canada, you're just here for your research?" He confided to me that he had assumed that I was Canadian. Surprised at this, I reminded him that I had written to him that I was a sociologist from Germany, looking for Polish-Canadians to do interviews with, being of Polish heritage myself, etc. He then responded that he just assumed I would have German-Polish parents, but

34 "Es gibt keine Sperren im Kopf, die sagen: 'Öh, Polnisch, will ich nicht.' Man könnte sagen, ich habe mich emanzipiert von dem."

35 "[Ich habe es] anerkannt, weil es [ist] in meinem heutigen Leben so integral. Fast alles was ich tue ist damit verbunden."

would be Canadian anyway as so many Canadians have different cultural backgrounds. I realized that this type of misunderstanding would most likely not have happened in Germany or in other countries with an assimilationist stance on integration policy. After having a good laugh about this incident, I posed my initial question and Oscar fell into a narrative mode right away. The interview lasted one hour and thirty-five minutes.

Oscar's autobiographical narrative is not only a more or less detailed recap of his life, it also includes (short) passages in which he conveys his knowledge of his family history over generations. His life story, however, highlights his experiences of diverse cultural influences in more than one geographical space. He speaks mostly about the Canadian and the Polish contexts; yet, his biographical experiences also go beyond these two contexts. The part of Oscar's life story about his childhood, youth, and early adulthood is *typical* for the Montreal context. Certain aspects are *specific* to the Canadian province of Quebec as opposed to other provinces in Canada. In another part of his life story, Oscar focuses on his mobility experiences to Poland and to other parts of Europe. As in many of my respondents' narratives in both Canada and Germany, Oscar constructs a narrative about his life, in which *languages, familial networks, and cultural belonging(s)* are crucial for the direction his life-path has taken, and therefore for his multi-local biographical experiences. Before I discuss Oscar's life experiences in-depth, I will let him recount his family history to point out the historical background of his family's immigration to Canada so as to contextualize his experiences.

## Aristocratic Nobility and Diasporic Mobility

In Oscar's narrative, not only his own biographical experiences and inherent social practices play a significant role, he also gives some contextual information about his family's past. Most importantly, Oscar underlines that his family differs from other Polish families, who emigrated abroad. In his narrative, Oscar did not really know how to tell me about the "special status" of his family:

"I don't know how to approach it […]. I could tell you that my family […] has an *herb* [coat of arms, A/N], which is, I don't know how to say […] in English, it's an aristocratic symbol." (ll.392ff)

Concretely, this aristocratic symbol is made manifest by a huge silver ring, which is, according to Oscar, "very king-like." (ll.429) He tells me that his family is quite well known in Poland, because they held the status of counts before

World War II. However, the Polish nobility lost their possessions and belongings when aristocratic privileges were ultimately abolished in 1945[36] under the accruement of the Polish People's Republic (1952-1989). Under these circumstances, Oscar's family lost many castles that were once in its possession, because the Bolsheviks destroyed them (l.405). As for Oscar's nuclear family, both of his parents share an aristocratic background: "My dad is some sort of an aristocrat and my mum as well." (l.412) Meanwhile, his family has tried hard to get back two remaining castles: "[…] since the fall of Communism, we started with the lawyer to try to get back this property that we lost during the war." (ll.406ff) The attempt to get property back, which is legally no longer theirs is instructive for the collective identity of the family. The family has tried to get its former aristocratic status legally re-recognized or re-acknowledged by the Polish government. In a way, the family not only aims to maintain a sense of belonging to their heritage culture, they try to re-acknowledge their former privileges and thus to re-establish a *high social class status*. Oscar incorporated the "collective memory" (Halbwachs 1950) of his families' aristocratic past, even if he has not personally experienced aristocratic privilege in Poland. This becomes particularly evident in his use of the personal pronoun "we," which marks a belonging to and a high opinion of his family's past. He emphasizes that he perceives himself to be part of the aristocracy and considers the efforts of getting back the castles into the family's possession as perfectly self-evident. Then again, he does not live the "high life" like some of his cousins in Poland whose photographs are regularly taken for Polish magazines. As Oscar grew up in Canada, he is not confronted daily with his (family's) prominence in Poland; yet, he had other experiences when he was there:

"[…] when I went to Poland and I was saying **** [aristocratic family name, A/N] everybody was like: 'Wow, you're like coming from some defined family.' Since I was in Canada all this time, I was like: 'What? [laughter] No, I'm normal [laughter].'" (ll.421ff)

Oscar refers to the differences of his family's status in two different geographical spaces: in Poland his family name is well known, while in Canada it is just one name out of other (immigrant) names and thus the experiences differ due to the geographical contexts. Oscar points out that he "is normal," meaning that he has had a life in Canada, which was not significantly influenced by his aristocratic belonging, i.e., he was not famous in "gossip rags." As stated above, he

36 Konstytucja marcowa, article 96.

indeed values his aristocratic roots, but as opposed to some of his cousins, Oscar does not wear his ring:

"[The ring] is something that I would never wear, but I have cousins that wear this and they kind of show it off [laughter]. I find that very pretentious. I feel like our past shouldn't define us. I feel like be who you are […] like how you are born and what made you and what surrounds you rather than what your family did in the past even though it is very respectable. Most of our past family members have their books that were written and lot of heroes were there, so that's always nice to think back to and I mean I admire that, but I'm not gonna wear my ring." (ll.429-435)

On the one hand, Oscar tries to distance himself from the ring as a symbol of aristocracy. He seems not to be opposed to the meritocratic principle but, on the other hand, he strongly admires his families' aristocratic past and celebrates them as heroes. Here, we can empirically observe what Vertovec (1997) refers to as the "diaspora consciousness," which is marked by both negative and positive experiences. Vertovec also refers to an "awareness of multi-locality," which stimulates the need to connect oneself with others, both "here and there." This can also be inferred from Oscar's narrative, as his close relatives in Canada and in Poland are not the only families that belong to former Polish aristocracy. It is rather an aristocratic circle or diasporic network dispersed all over the world, which comes together from time to time:

"Oh, I didn't tell you about the family reunions that we have? Every five years, we have family reunions for **** [aristocratic family name, A/N]. **** [Name of my gatekeeper, A/N] comes there as well. We go to a different spot in Poland every five years and we meet. People […] appear from all over the world. They just converge into one spot in Poland and we spend four days together. […] We rent out a hotel [laughter], so it is about five hundred people." (ll.989-1002)

This piece of his narration illustrates the extent of the diaspora of Polish aristocratic families. Accordingly, we cannot speak of a few family units, but rather of a relatively large network of former aristocrats. This network, however, can be more precisely referred to as a diaspora (ch. 1.2), because it includes members of a community and their ancestors that have been dispersed to many foreign regions from their original "center," in this case Poland under Nazi and Soviet occupation. Certainly, non-aristocratic Polish groups who fled during World War II, are also referred to as a diaspora; yet, their "myth of homeland" differs. Because aristocratic privileges in Poland were abolished, the vision of Poland as a

country in which the aristocrats were privileged over others was ultimately destroyed and thus probably influenced the "myth of return" as less desirable, while non-aristocratic members of the diaspora did not have any privileges to lose. We could assume that their "myth of return" was more pronounced, even though the majority of Polish refugees did not return to Poland after the fall of communism (Currle 2005: 70). The big family reunions Oscar mentions are followed by activities during the day that everyone can sign up for, and by dinner parties and dances during the night. The parties combine traditional Polish songs and dances with pop cultural elements like hip hop that are mostly brought into the celebrations by those members of the diaspora who live abroad. Oscar evaluates these regular get-togethers as "really cool." (ll.1023-1028) While they are linked to Oscar's maternal family and display a multi-local dispersion of aristocrats, he also attends reunions that are linked to his paternal side of the family; these are smaller, with about hundred people of whom most members have remained in Poland (ll.1009f).

Aside from the aristocratic network of which he is a member, Oscar tells me about his nuclear family: his parents as well as two younger siblings, a brother and a sister (ll.869-872). Both of his parents are of Polish descent. While his mother was born in Poland (Warsaw), his father was born in Morocco. His father's family immigrated to Canada (Montreal) when Oscar's father was a little child. His father lived in Montreal for eighteen years until he met his mother on a summer trip to Poland, who subsequently immigrated to Canada. The couple got married and, one year later, Oscar was born in Montreal (ll.6-10). Oscar's narrative not only indicates that he belongs to an aristocratic network due to his family background, it also tells us that mobility is present within a multi-generational temporal frame in his family history. According to categories commonly used in migration studies, he would be classified as "second generation."

## A Limited Scope of Montreal: Growing up within the Polish Community

Oscar was born into a vibrant Polish community in Montreal. His parents had many Polish friends who had children at the same time. Oscar refers to these children as his cousins (ll.13-16), yet it remains unclear whether he is really related to his peers since it is common among Poles to refer to parents' friends as "uncles" and "aunts" and to their children as "cousins," even though there is no real blood relationship. In any case, these cousins would become his closest friends. During his childhood, Oscar was surrounded by the Polish community:

"I was brought up in a very happy community with Polish people, where we had quite a limited scope of what Montreal was, because we were so ingrained in that Polish culture, which was going to Polish church, going to Polish school, and hanging out with Polish parents and Polish kids." (ll.20-23)

Oscar remembers his childhood as "happy." The members of the Polish community followed many social activities that were exclusively linked to Polish culture and tradition. Oscar reflects *ex post* that being surrounded only by people of Polish origin limited—as he repeatedly refers to it—his scope of the city of Montreal. By that he refers to Montreal's ethnic diversity and cultural variety. While Oscar enjoyed his childhood, he later realizes that his experiences were culturally one-sided. In this context, his choice of the word "ingrained" is instructive as it indicates a very strong embeddedness in the Polish community in Montreal. One of the activities that Oscar mentions in this quote is Polish school.

Polish Schools in Canada

Learning about the existence and my interviewees' experiences of Polish schools in Canada during my fieldwork was fascinating to me: I had never heard of such schools in the German context and I was astonished how many of my interviewees in Canada attended these schools during their childhood. Polish schools are Saturday schools that conduct classes from the elementary school level to the high school level. This educational program complements the Canadian school system. Although not compulsory, many of my interviewees attended these schools, in which language, history, geography, and mathematics classes are offered. The textbooks used, grading systems, and promotional rules are recognized in Poland. Parents have to pay a fee, but the schools are mainly financed by the Polish consulates. There are schools in Montreal and Toronto, apart from many private language classes.[37]

Realizing that attending the Polish school constitutes (early) biographical experiences of many of those Polish-Canadians whom I interviewed, I became curious about similar offers in Germany. Despite a few private programs, I found out that the Polish Institute in Berlin offers similar Saturday classes for children, yet it only recently re-established these classes after

37 For further information, see the website of the Polish Embassy in Ottawa: http://www.ottawa.mfa.gov.pl/en For the Polish school in Montreal, see https://szpkmontreal.wordpress.com and for the Polish school in Toronto, see https://www.spktoronto.com

many years. Besides, there is no mention of the classes as being officially recognized in the educational system of Poland.[38] Interestingly, neither the Polish consulates in Germany offer such classes, nor the other Polish institutes in Germany as in Düsseldorf and Leipzig; only one Polish parish in Wiesbaden offers language classes for children in the afternoons. The teachers there also work with textbooks authorized by the Polish Ministry of Education.[39] The result of this internet research reflects the experiences of my interviewees: while many young adults of Polish heritage in Canada attended these complementary classes during their childhood years, my interviewees in Germany did not receive this kind of officially acknowledged complementary Polish education during childhood. Janusz, who briefly attended a Polish language school in the former GDR and acquired Polish in his later years pursuing higher education at university, was an exception. I assume that the demand for such an education is simply low. This discrepancy cannot be explained due to the share of persons of Polish origin living in both countries as there are more persons of Polish origin in Germany than in Canada. Arguably, this discrepancy can be traced back to the different integration policies in force: Canada is known for its multicultural policies, where the consulates are more active, while Germany takes up an assimilationist stance on integration. What is more, the offers of the Canadian consulates in Montreal and Toronto in Polish education can be clearly seen as a transnationalization of state policies, which may promote (migrant) transnationalism or in some cases even transnational mobility between Canada and Poland.

As for Oscar, however, he preferred to watch TV than go to Polish school:

"[…] instead of watching Saturday morning cartoons, we were rushed off to Polish school to learn the language and how to write it and speak it […] from eleven to four […]. That was our weekend for a good three years until I made my parents realize that I was not watching Saturday morning cartoons and on Sunday church and I have my whole week just like kind of booked, you know? […] So, then I left [Polish school]." (ll.154-159)

Since Polish school is complementary to compulsory education in Quebec, Oscar's schedule was busy. After three years, he convinced his parents that he

38 For further information, see the website of the Polish Institute in Berlin: http://berlin.polnischekultur.de

39 For further information, see http://www.pmk-wiesbaden.eu/uber-gemeinde.html

should quit Polish school and they agreed, not least because some of his cousins had quit Polish school by that time, too (ll.467f). Oscar does not explicitly state that he did not like the Polish school or that he had any kind of bad experiences there. He basically left because he wanted to have more leisure time. In his case, quitting Polish school does not mean that he distanced himself from his cultural heritage; it rather means that he distanced himself from the obligation of attending formal lessons. As soon as the group of friends quit, they found another activity for their newly gained leisure time: skiing. They mutually joined a ski club and they were all wearing the same winter jackets, even in the elementary school, they attended (ll.163-167). At this point of his narration Oscar indulges in "self-realization":

"[Polish] kids going to the same school all dressed the same. […] There is no identity, we were collective, you know? Now that I'm talking about it I'm having like self-realizations on how together we were like in bunches. That's funny." (ll.166, 172f)

His social group was purely ethnic Polish. In his *post-hoc* evaluation, he realizes that he and his peers displayed a collective identity rather than individual ones. The "outside world"—composed of other students at the school—recognized this collective belonging as Oscar and his peers wore the same clothing and were always together. I came across the emergence of this kind of ethnic "groupism" (Brubaker 2004) quite often in the narratives of my Canadian-based interviewees while the German-based ones would rather socially orient themselves towards Germans, with and without migration experiences.[40] However, my Canadian-based interviewees experience this "groupism" most often during their schooling years whereas they later tend to engage in social relationships with persons from various ethnic origins. Here again, we can see how the different policy agendas of both countries are incorporated in the social practices of individuals and how multiculturalism and assimilation have an impact on the biographical experiences of individuals.

Certainly, Oscar and his peers made it clear that they were seen as a unit, grounded in their mutual Polish heritage. The Polish heritage was also reinforced by their taking part in *harcerstwo*, the Polish scouts. As I had not heard of this before, I asked what this Polish scouting was all about. Oscar told me that the Canadian Polish community organizes two weeks of scouting in Kaszuby (region of the lake Wadsworth) in the province of Ontario (the region around the

40 The German-based interviewees who rather engage in social relationships with fellow Poles are mostly first-generation migrants.

first village in Canada settled by Poles), where Polish kids from all across Canada get together. Camps were divided by cities: Montreal, Toronto, Edmonton (ll.178-183). Taking part in Polish scouting was a significant event in Oscar's childhood:

"So *harcerstwo* was a pretty big deal. I think it kind of establishes how many activities our parents were kind of making us do. So, there's no dead time, there's no time for video games, there's no time to like take drugs […] you're always doing an activity." (ll.202-205)

Following many activities would have kept him away from criminal activities such as taking drugs, therefore keeping him "on the straight and narrow." In addition to Polish school and Polish scouts, Oscar regularly went to Polish church with his family:

"All of our family was controlled by our mum […] religion-wise. She was like: 'This is where we are going.' If it would be without my mum, we wouldn't be going to church [laughter]. We were going there to make her happy." (ll.489-492)

Oscar states that it was his mother's wish to go to church. He indicates that the rest of the family would rather not have gone there, implying that the practice of "church-going" was a tradition rather than a social practice grounded in deep religiosity. In fact, he quit going to church at the age of eighteen (l.522). Later in his narration, Oscar and I engage in a discussion about religion and faith. He tells me that he believes in God "in the sense of trying to understand the meaning of life" (l.549) and "treating Jesus' story as a metaphor." (ll.544)

All in all, we have seen that Oscar lived his childhood years in a "Polish bubble," more or less disconnected from other cultural realms in Montreal. In this context, his expression of having had a "limited scope of Montreal" gains meaning. He made good friends within the Polish community, with whom he is still very close. He sees his cousins on a regular basis but at some points in their lives they parted ways a little as they went to different schools, made other friends, and "got more ingrained into the actual Montreal world." (l.212f) For him, this development began with his attending a French-speaking elementary school. He explains to me that he could not choose the language of instruction, because "by law, any immigrant has to send their children to French school in Quebec […] only the second generation can decide." (ll.28-31) In fact, according to Quebec's *Charte de la langue française*/ *Charter of the French Language,* second generation individuals (and, of course, other Canadian citizens as well)

can only be educated in English when one of their parents received instruction in English.[41] There is an ongoing debate about Quebec's language laws in the public sphere, which I cannot delineate in more detail here. My focus lies on Oscar's biographical experiences, and, for him, attending French elementary school "was the only connection to the Montreal culture" (ll.27) during his childhood years.

## Broadening the Scope: Experiencing Montreal's Diversity

Leaving the sheltered "Polish bubble" was not an easy task for Oscar. He was suddenly faced with a yet unknown "outside world" encompassing other social groups with different ethnic origins, cultural traditions, and, most importantly, different languages. The theme of language is predominant in Oscar's narration; he was not only confronted with one language other than his mother tongue, but with two. Polish was the only language he would know until he was four years old. He then started to pick up English through his cousins who were the first to teach him the language. Last but not least, he needed to acquire French as—to put it in his words—at the age of six he was "kind of forced into French school." (ll.33-36) Using this strong expression of being "forced" to go to French school may arguably stem from the fact that he had some unpleasant experiences while learning the language. He suffered at the beginning of his schooling because he did not speak a word of French:

"I got into French school without knowing any French [laughter]. You could imagine how retarded I must have looked in a class where everybody just spoke French and I was supposed to learn subjects rather than the language […] all these subjects were terrifying for me since I didn't understand a word and I was very impressionable about/I mean at a young age, you are always very, you know, sensitive to all that criticism." (ll.42-45)

As a child, these criticisms made him suffer. He gives a more concrete account of how this came about:

"So, when your French teacher is getting impatient with you, that's quite rough for a Polish kid […] So that was my first experience with the language and I kind of had no choice but learn the language as I went from year to year. (ll.47ff)

41 For further information, see the *Charter of the French Language* granted in the province of Quebec, section 73: http://www2.publicationsduQuébec.gouv.qc.ca

Here, Oscar concretizes that his teacher was impatient with his language progress. Interestingly, he points to his Polish ethnic belonging. By that, he refers to his childhood experiences within an active Polish community, in which learning other languages than Polish was not a concern. However, despite his struggles with learning French, Oscar eventually became comfortable with French around the grade six. By then, he would have had less of an accent and he would finally get "more friends that are not Polish, but Québécois as well as English-speaking." (l.53)[42] We can assume that his lack of French not only prevented him from following the lessons, but also from building friendships with other students in school. That is probably another factor that contributed to his suffering. He felt excluded: "In school as a Polish-speaking person, I feel totally like apart from this Québécois culture 'cause I felt like everybody was different in this weird world [laughter]." (ll.124f) Oscar felt that the Québécois culture, which he initially experienced in French school, was completely different from what he was used to. He did not feel a part of it. Indeed, he tells me that he took the Polish culture for granted. It was in school that he realized that not only the language was different, but also the traditions and customs:

"Christmas is different or Easter is different and the fact that I'm painting eggs on Easter […] and people in school aren't and I'm like: 'Oh, how did you paint your egg this year?' They'd think I'm a weirdo […]. I thought everybody does this." (ll.65-74)

Oscar reveals that he was not aware of the cultural differences he would encounter when he stepped out of the "Polish bubble." He assumed that everybody followed the same traditions. He, however, indicates that he learned this lesson when the other students mocked his inquiries about egg painting at Easter. Oscar does not explicitly state that he was bullied by other students, but some other of my Canadian-based interviewees told me about their experiences of being bullied and ostracized due to their lack of French or their accent and the differing cultural habits.

By the time he got to high school (*École secondaire*), he had made friends. He already understood that "you are different and that everybody else has their own culture and you kind of learn from each other and I think, we grew together […]." (ll.136ff) As soon as Oscar acquired French, he was able to construct a more ethnically diverse group of friends. His schooling experiences were a tip-

42 The categories—as mentioned in Oscar's quote—are not mutually exclusive. More adequately, we would speak of "Francophones as well as Anglophones" or "French speaking as well as English speaking Québécois."

ping point in his life-course or as he calls it "a transitional period or like a period to get ingrained in the Québécois culture, into the Montreal culture." (ll.59f) Oscar discovered the ethnic diversity of Montreal, getting in touch with Québécois people and culture as well as with persons from other ethnic backgrounds. He was better able to understand what kind of society he lived in; a society that certainly goes beyond his Polish childhood experiences. Polish culture was nevertheless always on his mind, meaning that he "kind of [went] back and forth between two cultures." (ll.80) Though his upbringing initially hindered him from integrating, it later allowed him to differentiate himself from the Québécois culture. At the beginning, he suffered on account of being "different," until he got older and wanted to be different:

"It took me a while before I realized that [going back and forth between two cultures] was something special I guess. […] Something that kind of allowed me to differentiate myself from the normal Québécois culture, which I don't wanna be mean, but it's pretty *prosty* [Polish for simple, A/N], very simple." (ll.83-88)

He describes Québécois culture as "simple" in probable contrast to Polish culture. His argument is based on the fact that Quebec society, once steeped in religion, has since become highly secular (ll.91). This is a paradoxical argumentation, because he himself, as stated, is not a practicing Catholic. His lapsed Catholicism will emerge in future discussions of his experiences in Poland. However, he links the decline of religious practice in Montreal with the influx of immigrants into the city as he offers the following explanation:

"[Religion] got kind of numbed, maybe it's also because of all the crazy immigration that now Montreal is fully mixed like there is no real Québécois identity anymore. It's basically a mix of cultures that kind of exist together […] and accept each other, which is beautiful I find." (ll.84-88)

Oscar talks about immigration and its impact on national identity, a discussion we all know too well from politics and media, not only in Quebec, but basically in every "western liberal society." These discussions are often exploited by populist parties, which plea(d) for stronger restrictions on immigration that poses a threat to the national identity—be it Québécois, German, Swiss, French or other. On the one hand, Oscar perpetuates these populist statements ("immigration threatens the Québécois identity"). On the other hand, he celebrates Montreal's ethnic and cultural diversity.

Interculturalism in Quebec

Accommodating cultural difference and diversity is implemented in Canada's multicultural policy, yet some of the sitting governments of Quebec have opposed Canada's policy of multiculturalism while continuously encouraging immigration to Quebec. In scholarly discussions and official documents, Quebec's integration policy is often described as interculturalism, however there is no official policy of interculturalism in Quebec (Howes/Classen 2016). The main reason for rejecting multiculturalism is that it treats the Québécois just as another immigrant group in the Canadian cultural mosaic, instead of treating Quebec as a distinct society and nation. Therefore, multiculturalism does not deal enough with the French-English duality (ibid.; Bouchard 2010, Taylor 2012). Generally, both ideas of multiculturalism and interculturalism are quite similar, but many advocates of the latter argue that it better acknowledges the specific story of Quebec, which is not only characterized by a long-term struggle to survive as a francophone society and to flourish as a democratic society. To put it in a very simplified manner, interculturalism as the favoured notion in Quebec puts greater emphasis on the immigrants' integration into Quebec's majority culture, which itself constitutes, in turn, a minority in Canada and the rest of the North American continent. Historically under the threat of assimilation due to their minority status on the continent, some people in Quebec still perceive the language and culture to be fragile. As opposed to some of Canada's sitting governments at the federal level, which have adhered to the idea that there is no majority culture in Canada, Quebec rather insists on having a distinct culture, to which immigrants need to conform, particularly in terms of acquiring the French language. To use Taylor's words: "Because of our [the Québécois, A/N] situation, we have to work to ensure that integration takes place in French rather than English." (2012: 417) Similar to multiculturalism, interculturalism advocates cultural pluralism while simultaneously protecting the French language (Howes/ Classen 2016, Bouchard 2010, Taylor 2012, Isajiw 1999).

In fact, Oscar endorses Montreal's cultural pluralism:

"Montreal is fully mixed. It's fascinating how you go to one school and […] there are Indians, there are Koreans, there are Chinese people, Blacks, Arabs, Italians and […] you kind of have no choice but to accept at a young age because, I mean, that's all who you hang out with." (ll.106)

The ethnic diversity that he finds in Montreal schools is fascinating for him as it promotes an acceptance for all these different cultures from early on, because these "cultural others" are, in fact, the ones that you engage with in everyday interactions, and sometimes they become your friends. Oscar indicates that the fear of "the other" is diminished in cultural pluralist settings, but he also has some reservations: "Let's not be super hopeful for all this [cultural] mixing 'cause there [are] always some kind of like gangs happening in schools." (ll.108) This is an interesting objection, stemming from his own *emic* experiences (and as mentioned above, many other Canadian-based interviewees confirm this experience) as one *etic* argument in favour of interculturalism in Quebec—as opposed to Canada's multiculturalism—is that it promotes more intercultural exchange and social interaction between different ethnic groups, therefore diminishing the risk of social fragmentation, segmentation, and immigrants retreating (only) into their communities of origin; at its worst in the form of ghettoization (Bouchard 2010: 464, for a counterargument see Taylor 2012: 414). Oscar's experiences mirror a kind of segmentation of social groups according to the same ethnic origins of students in school. This is an attenuated form of the well-known criticism of multiculturalism as promoting social stratification (as argued, for instance, by Esser, see ch. 1.1), a criticism that has also been picked up by the advocates of interculturalism who attempt, at least theoretically, to overcome this danger. However, in empirical reality of everyday experiences, tendencies of ethnic segmentation are still evident. If, on the basis of distinct ethnicities, small groups of students are formed in school, the inversion of the argument is not to say that there is no social and cultural exchange. As for Oscar, we have seen that the acquisition of French was central to his integration into Montreal and, additionally, it enhanced his possibilities to establish several new social relationships with peers. Hence, interculturalism in Quebec as the idea of an integration path taking place in French, and, as I would add, through the French language is empirically observable.

After Oscar graduated from high school, he attended CEGEP (*Collège d'enseignement général et professionnel*).

CEGEP

CEGEP is a publicity funded pre-university college, which is exclusive to the educational system in Quebec. Attending CEGEP is obligatory for students as it mainly fulfills two functions: it either prepares students to enter university or a technical profession. The former requires two years of classes in CEGEP. The resulting DEC-diploma (*Diplôme d'études collégiales*) allows individuals

to attend university in Quebec. The latter requires three years of classes and is mainly geared towards immediate employment in the labour market.[43]

Oscar, however, chose the first option and studied commerce or "management of trade" (*Gestion de commerces*) in a CEGEP where the language of instruction is French. At this point in their education, students are free to choose the language of instruction. Studying in French was not a big deal for Oscar anymore, but commerce was, in fact, not the field of study he would have chosen for himself:

"Because of my parents, they forced me. I wanted to go into film [laughter] and they were like: 'No, this is not something for your future. So, you're going to do commerce' and I was like: 'OK' and I did this stupid commerce for two years. I did all my math and I graduated." (ll.226-229)

Oscar's parents did not agree with his idea to study film in CEGEP and, again, he felt as though he were being "forced" to do something he himself would not have elected to do. His parents perceived film studies as inadequate preparation for the future they imagined for their son and Oscar gave in to their demand. He finished his studies in commerce. His referring to commerce as "stupid" certainly conveys his reluctance. Then again, later he admits that his parents' decision was not too bad:

"[…] but I was thankful to do commerce. It was good. My parents are very smart to have made me not waste two years on film in CEGEP 'cause that's ridiculous, […] I have that kind of business sense at least, like basic [laughter]." (ll.232-234)

In retrospect, Oscar is happy to have gained a business sense during his studies at CEGEP, particularly because he has come to see that studying film in CEGEP is ridiculous. Arguably he means that it is ridiculous in the sense that it is not of high quality or that it does not lead to a job. Oscar eventually studied film in the further course of his life, but prior to that, he enrolled in the French-speaking Université de Montréal (UdeM). At first, he forgot to mention his studies at *l'UdeM* in his narrative about his university education:

43 For further information, see the homepage of the CEGEP federation in Quebec: http://www.fedecegeps.qc.ca

"Oh no! Sorry! I did even *Université de Montréal*, French literature […] So after CEGEP, I did two years, from twenty to twenty-two years, I did *Littérature française et cinématographie*. It's more theory in cinema and the study of French literature." (ll.253f)

Oscar does not give any contextual information as to how this decision came about, yet I assume that it could have been a compromise between him and his parents, who had dismissed film studies as not proper for his future. French literature and cinematography, however, comes close to his initial idea of doing film studies. Studying at *l'UdeM*, Oscar became "really aware" of what Québécois culture is because he was "[for] the first time […] surrounded by Quebec, that's it, like there is no other mix or anything. It was all Québécois […]." (ll.261ff) It was the first time that Oscar came across less ethnic diversity compared to his former experiences in Montreal's educational institutions. He perceived *l'UdeM* as rather homogeneously Québécois, making him feel uncomfortable again as he found himself being in the position of the "cultural other" notwithstanding his proficiency in French:

"I must say I didn't like it. I didn't feel comfortable […] because I was different […] I was like the immigrant, let's call it. That was the only time I felt really not in my world, so that was a […] tough two years." (ll.263-268)

His feeling of being "the immigrant" was probably intensified by the fact that he encountered few others like him. Therefore, he evaluates this time as having been tough, likely because he felt a relatively high pressure to conform. Intriguingly, Oscar's life-path in Montreal is characterized by experiences of being the "cultural other," which makes him suffer every time, while he simultaneously seeks to differentiate himself, at least from the Québécois culture, as we have saw earlier. In a way, he is torn between integration or conformism and boundary-making. Not only did Oscar feel uncomfortable in—as perceived by him—an "all too Québécois environment," but he was not entirely happy with his field of study. He therefore decided to quit theory of cinema to focus on the practice instead and switched to "film production" at Concordia University (l.257). Arguably, it was the first time he made an independent decision, which he most likely needed to negotiate with his parents. His first "autonomous" choice had consequences. He not only changed his field of study, but also the language in which he would learn and work: "So, I finally switched languages […] when I switched to Concordia […]." (ll.246f) There he realized: "that I'm more English than French, I'm more comfortable in English than French." (ll.276) Oscar figured out that he feels a stronger sense of the English language and a greater sense of

belonging and he found his professional passion, yet he was still not completely happy:

"I was not happy with the school still 'cause I wanted to do cinematography and this school [had] a little film department. It was like the best school in cinema in Canada, but I was not happy, so I decided to move to Poland after I graduated and I went to Lodz." (ll.280-284)

In pursuit of his professional aspirations Oscar made another far-reaching decision, and this time his choice was literally "far-reaching," not only in the biographical sense, but also in the very geographical sense of the word: he relocated his center of life to Poland after he graduated from university in Montreal.

## From Canada's Heterogeneity to Poland's Homogeneity

Oscar must have been around the age of twenty-four when he relocated his center of life from Montreal, Canada to Lodz, Poland for a total length of five years. His transnational mobility experience was motivated by his discontent about his experience of the education programs on offer in the field of film studies in Canada. He had developed a passion for film and more concretely for cinematography, yet he found the range of courses offered at Concordia University to be too limited. He chose Lodz as his mobility destination, because there is "the most known school in cinematography in the whole world. There [are] three that are known […] like Polański, Kieślowski, Wajda, all these like huge stars." (ll.299f) Oscar presents his reasons to relocate his center of life to be educational. However, we can also assume that his Polish descent, particularly his belonging to the aristocratic network, promoted his *motility*, i.e., the potential of being mobile (Flamm/Kaufmann 2006). In other words: moving to Poland enabled him to build on familial relationships and networks that were already on site. These may have functioned as facilitators as he put his educational project of studying cinematography in Lodz *into practice*. Through his networks, Oscar could get support when it came to, for example, finding accommodation or dealing with bureaucratic tasks, which are still nationally organized and unavoidable when settling in another geographical location. Yet another factor that might have impacted his decision to follow his studies in the specific geographical space of Poland is that it is the place where his cultural roots lie. Oscar interlinks mobility with experiencing his "roots society" and therefore the place of his cultural origin becomes his destination of mobility, or to put it differently: *where he is from (culturally), is where he goes.* Oscar's knowledge of the Polish culture cer-

tainly affected his decision to move to Poland: he may have wanted to reconnect with his cultural roots, maybe even because of his constant experiences of "cultural otherness" in Montreal. The anthropologist Susanne Wessendorf observed a similar, but not the same, mobility phenomenon in the case of second generation Swiss Italians who returned to their ancestral country, though neither were they neither born there, nor had they lived there before. She termed this kind of transnational migration as "roots migration." (2013) The biggest difference between these two mobility practices is that Wessendorf's empirical material and her conceptualization of it hints towards a permanent "return" of her respondents to Italy, their (parents') country of origin, while Oscar's stay in Poland is clearly *temporally-restricted*. He therefore cannot be understood as a sedentary "roots migrant," but as an individual, who practices *transnational mobility* within his life-path.

As mentioned above, Oscar's school was in Lodz where he lived for the first three years of his studies. He then commuted from Warsaw to Lodz for the remaining two years of his education (ll.296). In his narration, he did not explain why he moved from Lodz to Warsaw, yet it may be linked with the fact that his mother's family lives there (l.8). In Lodz, however, he studied how to control the statics, cameras, and lighting in the process of film production aiming at graduating with a master's degree, trained as a director of photography (ll.303-308). As for his studies, Oscar admits that his three-year's attendance at the Polish school in Montreal was a big advantage for him:

"I am thankful I did those three years [in Polish school], because once I went to Poland, you know, I could write. I had more of a structure even though Polish is so hard and I still can't find how to conjugate most of these words. It's insane. I was there for five years." (ll.478-781)

Being able to speak and write in Polish was, indeed, a big advantage for Oscar. At the same time, he puts forward that he, nevertheless, had to struggle with the language because his proficiency is not at a level of a native-speaker. Training for the profession of a director of photography particularly requires flawless communication; certainly in Polish:

"[…] on the set, I have to be very verbal. I have to use my words carefully to communicate what I want. I delegate to like five people, right, and I have to be quite consistent. […] It's very tough 'cause you get stuck. You know what you wanna say in English, but you're like translate it and it's hard 'cause you feel like you are so much smarter. […] It's quite frustrating 'cause you feel kind of stupid in their eyes […] and your work suffers in

consequence. As a result, you are less quick. You get less of that what you want, especially on set." (ll.703-727)

In this quote, Oscar goes into detail about his work procedures. He points out how central communication and therefore language proficiency is. However, Oscar's message is ambiguous. On the one hand, he narrates his struggles with the Polish language in view of his professional training. He sometimes could not translate fast enough or well enough to communicate what he wanted to express. Therefore, his work suffered, and he got frustrated. Again, Oscar suffered because of an insufficient mastery of a language. On the other hand, he makes it clear that, despite these problems, it was very useful to already have a certain degree of knowledge and proficiency in Polish. This became especially evident with regard to other international students, who had less knowledge of Polish than he (ll.726).

The school was composed as follows: half of the student body came from Poland, and the other half was international: "people came from India, from Korea, from Ukraine, from France, from America and they didn't speak a word of Polish." (ll.682f) Oscar observed how hard it was for those "internationals" who were not able to speak Polish because at the beginning it was "very hard for them to be accepted by the Poles." (ll.688) A big reason for that is the language barrier as—according to Oscar's experiences—Poles would refuse to speak English, even if they knew how, as he observed with his Polish friends:

"Most of my friends that speak English, it's extremely rare that they would start a conversation in English knowing that I had difficulties in Polish or knowing that others are barely speaking Polish. They are always speaking Polish. They know Polish. That's all they know well, and it's like their identity relies on that." (ll.692ff)

Oscar makes the point that Poles would make no concession to switching languages in order to make communication easier for those who lacked proficiency in Polish. He assumes that their identity is strongly interwoven with their (national) language. From a sociological standpoint, language is certainly significant for processes of identity construction, particularly for collective identities. In addition, Oscar indicates that Poles would not like to speak another language (e.g., English) as they do not master it as well as they master their native tongue. This is, of course, a given whenever one speaks in a foreign language. However, this code-non-switching did not affect him so much as it affected his fellow students. In a way, this account reminds me of Oscar's early experiences in French public school in Montreal with the difference that Oscar's role reversed: he al-

ready had a knowledge of the Polish language, although he also struggled with technical terms, but it was the others who suffered (more). Certainly, French is the official language in Quebec as is German in Germany, Polish in Poland, English in the United Kingdom and so on. The difference is, as I see it, that while French was spoken in the public realms in Montreal, other languages would also be spoken in the private spheres or in private conversations in public spaces, i.e., with family and friends. Montreal, in particular, is *factually* bilingual where French as well as English is being spoken (Poitras 2016: 184, footnote 9) so that one observes a diversity of spoken languages (French, English, and various heritage languages) in the streets of Montreal. This is due to Quebec's intercultural stance on integration, while in other societies, which are rather assimilationist, talking in the non-official language while having a private conversation in a public space is sometimes frowned upon. Oscar's narration emphasizes that Poles have incorporated an assimilationist stance with newcomers expected to adapt to all aspects of social life, including personal relationships. Admittedly, we should keep in mind that Poland has less experience with immigration than with emigration or to put it differently: there are not many "foreigners of any kind" in Poland compared to settler societies like Canada or other European immigration countries like Germany.

However, language barriers led to a segregation of social contacts in school:

"Polish people in school were hanging out together. The international people were hanging out together at first and that was how friends formed and then once the international people started to speak Polish, there was more of a mix, but the dynamic is still less as I sense here [in Montreal]." (ll.738-741)

Oscar now explicitly compares his experiences in Poland with his experiences in Montreal. He states that friendships were mainly formed on the grounds of language proficiencies, which would have eased once the international students acquired Polish. Notwithstanding, he sees a difference in social dynamics in Montreal. Indeed, having asked Oscar about the social relationships he established while in Poland, he gave the following reply:

"[…] my good friends are international […] it's an American, another good friend is from Sweden and no Polish persons 'cause I feel it's very hard to relate [to Poles] […] maybe I'm being close, you know, how to say it? Blind to the fact that I'm the one that can identify with them and not vice versa, but I believe that because I'm friends with so many different cultures, that it is the Polish culture that can't kind of open up to people that are international. I couldn't really get that close with Polish people, which is sad." (ll.761-773)

Oscar is of Polish descent, but he nevertheless made friends with international people rather than with Polish people. He was somehow not able to get close to them. He evaluates this circumstance as sad and he reflects on the reasons for this. He considers that it could be he who cannot identify with Polish people enough to build friendships, yet due to the fact that his social relationships meanwhile consist of persons from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, he concludes that it is the Polish people who would not open up as much, which he sees as a cultural characteristic. His best friend in Poland was "somebody that was born in Montreal and moved to Poland," thus it was somebody who basically had a similar "background of experiences" as Oscar. The constellation of similar experiences, Oscar assumes, makes it easier to establish a relationship: "The fact that somebody is Polish from Canada, it's huge. Polish from Canada compared to Polish-Polish is a different world." (ll.787) This differentiation is common in the narratives of most of my interviewees, whether they live in Canada or Germany. They constantly emphasize how the migration experience has transformed them and has made them different from the "Polish-Polish," the Poles in Poland. This process of differentiating themselves from Polish people who have not emigrated is a phenomenon that has long been observed: it was first put forward by Florian W. Znaniecki and William I. Thomas in their biographical work *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America* ([1918-1922] 1958). One of the biggest differences lies in the question of how to deal with persons from different ethnic backgrounds. Oscar sums up his response to this question, which stems from his experience in Poland:

"[…] if you're Polish, you're quite afraid of other cultures. I've lived in Poland for five years […] so I'm quite aware of what the Polish mentality is vs. here. So, I'm just going to do that parenthesis where Polish people in Poland are usually very unaccepting or afraid of other cultures. Anything that is different from them, they have troubles with comfortwise. They close up right away, they're not as open […] even with me, a Canadian speaking Polish, I saw that they behaved differently with me." (ll.112-121)

Based on his experiences, Oscar considers Polish people to usually be wary or afraid of "the cultural other" and that they avoid such social interaction. To put it bluntly: Oscar states that Polish people in Poland are xenophobic. Without a doubt, many of my interviewees' biographical experiences led them to make similar statements. Interestingly, this (non-generalizable) result gains significance in the context of the political position of Poland's government, led by the right-wing party *Prawo i Sprawiedliwość* (PiS), in power since 2015, on receiving refugees from Syria—a humanitarian act, they vehemently refuse to engage

in. Although Oscar was in Poland three years before PiS came into power, his past experiences hint towards the present political atmosphere there. However, truth to be told: governing parties are far from representing the political opinions of all citizens of a country. Oscar, however, experiences xenophobic attitudes or mild discrimination "first-hand" as Polish people behaved differently toward him, even though he is of Polish origin and speaks the language. Interestingly, here he puts forward his self-understanding as "Canadian," while earlier in his life-course he rather understood himself as "Polish." Therefore, we can assume that he generally expresses a *contextual self-understanding*, in which he localizes his self in his heritage as well as residence cultures. It remains striking that this kind of Polish "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans 1979), which is characterized by an allegiance to the Polish culture and a love for a tradition, appears reversed now at the point of Oscar's life when he is in Poland, surrounded by his "root culture." As for the case of Janusz (ch. 3.3), I argue here that differentiating into the commonly used categories of "country of origin" and "country of arrival" is of no great analytical use in Oscar's case for the simple reason that these categories are *situationally constructed* rather than fixed and essentialist. We can very well witness here that Oscar understands himself as "being Polish" mostly when he is in Canada, while he understands himself (and is understood by others) as "being Canadian" when he is in Poland. His cultural origins situationally change depending on his geographical location ("travelling origins," ch. 5.2), leaving him in a paradoxical situation characterized by a contextual sense of belonging that only evolves in non-sedentary post-migration life-courses.

As indicated earlier, another difference Oscar addresses in his narrative is the topic of religion and the practice of "church-going." Within his family, his mother was strict about going to church every Sunday, yet he stopped eventually. In Poland, however, he experienced an even more severe handling of this tradition:

> "[They are] very Catholic and […] all my mum's relatives are extremely Catholic like way more intense that she is, like in a scary way. They are going to church and it's serious when you miss it. It's like the end of the world, so I really pity the kids, my cousins […] it's way more strict then my mum." (ll.510ff)

Oscar describes his relatives' religious practices as kind of "scary." He thought that his mother's attitude on religious traditions and Catholicism was strict, but in Poland he realized that people were even more severe about it. They would punish those who missed church on Sunday with social contempt. Since Oscar

was interested in this way of practicing Catholic traditions; he would sometimes start discussions with his friends about it:

"I had a lot of friends in Poland that go to church, which I always had fascinating discussions with, because I don't understand it. But they had their way. They didn't wanna explain it, they just said this is how everything [is]." (ll.512-516)

Not only Oscar, but many interviewees have mentioned similar experiences whenever they tried discussing this topic with Polish people in Poland. This practice corresponds, on the one hand, with what Max Weber (1864-1920) has called value-rational social action (*wertrationales soziales Handeln)* which is determined by a conscious belief in the value of something for its own sake, and in this case religious practice, independent of its prospect of success (1921 [1978]: 24f). On the other hand, it is also at the edge of traditional social action (*traditionales soziales Handeln*), which is determined by ingrained habituation. Weber himself admits that these two ideal types easily shade over into one another (ibid.: 25). One could say that Poles believe in the value of church-going, which has been a long-held tradition. Many interviewees, including Oscar, find Polish people to be "unreflective" on this topic, especially when it comes to the stance of the Catholic Church on homosexuality and abortion. In this context, Oscar feels that Poles are "closed-minded." (l.566)

## The Simplicity of European Mobility

However, Oscar evaluates his experiences in Poland as positive:

"This experience in Poland was amazing. It was eye-opening not only for Polish culture, because I was obviously not ever aware of what Polish culture was before that, but also because of the potential of travelling from Poland. It was quite open to possibilities. I visited all of the European countries, except two. Portugal and Spain, I'm missing on my list." (ll.312-316)

Oscar points to a certain kind of "horizon broadening" when he admits that he was not aware of what Polish culture was before coming to live in Poland, although he practiced Polish cultural traditions from early on. We can assume that this experience made him realize that he still differs from the Poles living in Poland due to his particular biographical experiences. He was probably not aware that while often playing the part of the "cultural other" in Montreal, he ended up having similar experiences in Poland, one of the country of his cultural origins.

Besides his experiences of "what Polish culture is," another significant insight he gained while being in Poland is—as he refers to it—"the potential of travel." While Oscar was living in Poland, he used the cheap inner-EU flights to visit other European countries as travel has become bureaucratically simplified within the EU *Schengen* zone. Oscar has both Canadian as well as Polish citizenship, the latter enabling him to move freely within the member states of the EU, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, and Norway. He used this form of "mobility capital" (Kaufmann et al. 2004) extensively, not least because his girlfriend at the time moved to Scotland at one point while Oscar was residing in Poland. The couple had already met in Montreal and when he moved to Poland "she was coming and going" (ll.330) before she relocated her life center from Canada to Scotland for one year (l.331), which

"[…] allowed me to go to Scotland every week from Lodz. […] It was just like fate brought us this airplane that opened for thirty Euros […] We were like amazed from Lodz directly to Edinburgh sometimes we got ten Euros. It was very easy for us to see each other and I fell in love with Scotland." (ll.334-343)

Oscar's mobility experiences evolved and gained a new geographical destination. It emerged under the specific condition, as Oscar presents it, of the (geographical) constellation of his romantic relationship at that point in his life-course and under the condition of cheap travel opportunities. He travelled every week to Scotland to see his girlfriend. While she lived there, Oscar was the "majority of time over there." (l.349) It was with her that Oscar travelled through Europe. His mobility in the form of travelling to, and short-terms stays in, different places without relocating his center of life, was not only linked with his personal situation, but also with his career ambitions:

"If you really wanna know what cinema is, you have to kind of live full of experiences. So, like go travel, come back, do documentaries, meet new people and like explore. […] That's what I'm passionate about. That's the kind of exploration of the world. So, I did that." (ll.322-327)

As becomes clear, Oscar understands mobility in the form of travel as a precondition to becoming successful in his career. He believes that good movies and documentaries can only be created when the people who create them have, at least to a certain extent, explored the world. Here, he puts forward a cosmopolitan perspective on travelling, experiencing destinations all over the world. During his travels to Edinburgh, however, he encountered other Polish people, who

also took advantage of the free-movement zone established by the *Schengen Agreement*:

"[…] and then I hear *kurwa* [a vulgar swearword in Polish, A/N] and then I'm like: 'Oh my god, is that the culture that's traveling nowadays?' […] I hate that so much and it's like the lower classes are now travelling and it's just so embarrassing 'cause it is like […] the drinkers and the loud-mouth and that really bothers me." (ll.801-806)

Oscar refers to these other Polish people, who are now frequently mobile, as "lower classes." As becomes clear in this quote, he is embarrassed and bothered by such people, who do not behave decently (at least according to his understanding of decency). In order to distinguish himself from these "other Poles," he strongly puts forward his high social class status, that is grounded upon—as we have seen above—his belonging to an aristocratic network, practicing mobility already for generations. The mobility of these "other Poles" differs from Oscar's mobility, which is certainly linked to class status. Like Oscar, they are mobile, yet for different reasons:

"[…] but it's also good for Polish people to travel because many people go to Scotland to work and they come back for the weekends […] It's worth it for them to work over there to make a load of money for their value. […] There's also [other] popular destinations for Poles to go to work and, you know, they do all the blue-collar jobs like bus drivers […] they are known as the hardest workers, they come there and then they make the most hours." (ll.806-815)

Facilitated mobility through EU-regulations and the emergence of cheap flights enables individuals with a low(er) socio-economic status to use the transportation system extensively for the sake of earning a living. Oscar admits that it is also a good development, which basically allows these less-skilled individuals to earn a "more decent" income than they would be able to do in Poland. It is safe to say that Oscar encountered "circular migrants" on his travels, who practice a form of mobility that is completely different from his own. However, not only did Oscar combine border-crossing mobility experiences within a transatlantic mobility experience, but he also travelled within Poland due to his educational training: "Obviously, I did films, you know, […] and travelled to festivals and because of that, I kind of got to know Poland. I went everywhere in Poland with these films." (ll.355ff) Oscar, indeed, travelled a lot.

## Looking Back and Looking Ahead

Oscar graduated from film school in Lodz with a master's degree and came back to Montreal. His biographical experiences are complex, especially in view of his mobility practices and language acquirements. When I asked him to sum up for me the places that he had lived in, Oscar mentions Montreal, Lodz, Scotland, and Warsaw (ll.929-937). We see that his transnational mobility is mainly directed to Poland, but not only as he includes Scotland in his enumeration because he perceives that he lived there during the year his former girlfriend studied there. Compared to some other interviewees, Oscar became more mobile relatively late in his life-course, when he was already twenty years old. It does not mean that his experiences were culturally homogeneous at all because they were made in only one geographical social space. In his narrative, he reflects about the geographically immobile part of his life:

"I mean my life was in steps: first, I was Polish fully. Then I had to go French, because of school, but I always had my cousins, who were English. So, that was always a parallel. So, my life is divided in three kinds of sectors: French was school, English was friends and cousins and Polish was family." (ll.635-637)

Oscar was not geographically mobile, yet his life implied movements in form of "steps." These steps are mirrored in his life-phases that he divides according to language acquirements and usage. Making one step after another allowed him to open his "cultural scope," most importantly through language. Nowadays, he has solid competences in each of these languages as he was also educated in each of these languages during the course of his life. It is an advantage; one that is crucial for the development and the maintenance of his *motility* as he can theoretically work in many different places of the world. However, he perceives his multilingualism not as a choice, but rather as heteronomous: "I suck with languages. I have three to take care of and I hate it [laughter] but, you know, I just had that life where I had to speak everything." (ll.729-733) He emphasizes that it is a lot of work and effort to take care of three languages, particularly because he does not feel as though he is especially gifted when it comes to learning languages. He had no choice but to learn these languages due to his biographical experiences, which are not only determined by his family context—more concretely the Polish origin—but also by living in Montreal. Being proficient in three languages, that is, in the heritage language and the two official languages of Canada is *typical* for my Montreal-based interviewees as opposed to my German- or Toronto-based interviewees. Indeed, I have also interviewees who speak more than

two languages, who have not lived in Montreal, nevertheless I argue that being fluent in *at least three languages* is more common to the life stories of my Montreal-based interviewees. Interestingly enough, not all of them are geographically mobile. However, Oscar's life-course includes various mobilities, a dynamic which we can refer to as the "mobility of languages":

"Whenever I spoke with my cousins, it was mainly three languages at the same time in one sentence and there I felt the most comfortable when I could do that. […] I felt like I don't have to force myself at any point, because every language I [spoke] I had an accent in. I was not fluent in any and still to this day when I go to Toronto, they tell me I have a French accent in my English. Whenever I go to Poland, they tell me I have an English accent in my Polish. […] When I speak French, they are like: 'You're not from here' and I'm like: 'I know, I *am* from here, but, you know." (ll.640-650)

Oscar feels permanently uncomfortable language-wise when he needs to speak in only one language. What he enjoys most is to mix all three languages within only one sentence with whatever language comes to mind first and fits best. This intensive code-switching prevents him from feeling "forced" to choose only one language. Oscar masters none of these three languages perfectly. In each language, he has an accent, which he is repeatedly reminded of in his interactions with other speakers, who would always classify him as a "non-native speaker" leading to the paradoxical situation that he is perceived as a foreigner wherever he is. Oscar clearly states that at the beginning of his life, he suffered because he was "that." (ll.665f) To conclude his sentence, I would say: that kind of a "hybrid." Nowadays, however, he embraces and cherishes it more (l.666). His experiences of multiculturalism, multilingualism, and geographic multilocality have, without a doubt, an effect on his self-understanding:

"So, all this to say like wherever I am, I don't think defines me or who I am 'cause I could be everything in a weird way. I don't speak anything fluently. I'm kind of weird in everything, but, I don't know, I like it." (ll.668f)

Oscar implies that he is always perceived as "the other," as someone, who behaves in strange and weird ways in the eyes of others. This paradox is that he is both excluded and included, if only as someone who does things in a "weird way." He could or he could not be Polish, or French or English Québécois by the same token. Oscar emphasizes that his self-understanding goes beyond his current location. In fact, he puts forward a rather "cosmopolitan" self-understanding:

"I don't have like a specific place to be, but I call myself a citizen of the world and that's what my dad always called himself, so I think I identify." (ll.652f)

Oscar mentions his father when he expresses his self-understanding. This is interesting insofar as his father has also been living a mobile life. As mentioned earlier, he was born in Morocco, immigrated to Canada, went to Poland where he met Oscar's mother and started a family in Montreal. In a way, it seems like Oscar continues his parents' mobile lifestyle. As for his self-understanding, he constructs his "self" as independent of any specific geographical localization. In fact, he understands himself as a "citizen of the world," which highlights his attitude of belonging everywhere, but at the same time, nowhere specific. He localizes himself beyond geographical categories because he believes that the place he is currently living in does not define who he is, but rather that the plac*es* he has been living in affect him insofar as to be geographically and culturally open towards places all over the world. It becomes apparent that his cultural localization goes beyond geography: it includes references to both *the whole world* as well as *no place in specific*.

We can also find this self-understanding reflected in his future plans. Since Oscar's return from Poland, he has been working as a director of photography on a freelance basis: "Right now, I'm obviously freelancing from production to production, so I'm working irregularly." (ll.878f) For his future, Oscar is "dreaming to go to New York to work there and to make bigger films." (l.891f) He rented the apartment in Montreal, in which he was living when we met, on a temporary basis. Back then, he had five more months left until he needed to look for something else. However, his plan is to be able to move away from Montreal:

"My goal is to move to New York, so all my efforts now are to figure out how to emigrate there as a freelancer. It's very hard. Usually you have to have a company that backs you and since […] I'm a freelancer I have two options. The most retarded one is the lottery. You could play a lottery and hopefully you get a green card […] Then there is this sponsor program also, I have a lot of family in the States and if one of them sponsors me, I have to read up still on this. This is actually the only thing I'm doing today to figure [it] out." (ll.884-888)

Since Oscar has "a lot of family" in the United States, the second possibility might work out for him. The family members he refers to are obviously other members of the Polish aristocratic network, who do not necessarily need to be blood-relatives, but who settled in the United States during or right after World War II. If this possibility does not work out for Oscar, he would also consider

moving to Toronto: "Toronto […] is more television, so I could do that as well. Toronto is pretty cool. I mean it's not cool in the sense that it is a wide and annoying city, but there are a lot of jobs over there." (ll.896-899) This time, Oscar presents the reasons for his "envisaged mobility" as professional ones. While his relocation from Montreal to Poland was motivated by the expectation of having access to better training for his professional aspirations, his "envisaged mobility" is motivated by having better career chances. During the process of establishing his career, Oscar wants to "get married and have kids." (ll.901) To conclude, Oscar is aware of the uncertainty of his future in geographical and professional terms in the sense of where to live and what to work, but he is determined to make the next step: "I love life […] you don't know where it's gonna bring you and you're going for it all the time, right?" (ll.944f) Similar to Oscar, we will now see how Malinka broadens her mobility orientation from bi-local mobility flows between Germany and Poland, to multi-local mobility practices to the United States, yet she has a different time frame in mind.

## 4.3 MALINKA, PART I: "THE ONE WHO WANTS TO EMIGRATE"

Malinka is a young adult of Polish origin, whom I met in a quiet café in a southwestern neighborhood in Berlin. I got in touch with her as a result of the "snowballing" procedure: one of my other interviewees suggested I interview her and gave me her contact information. Malinka was open to my inquiry and we made an appointment right away. The meeting was ordinary. We talked about my research project and about how I met my other interviewee, who is Malinka's good friend. I interviewed her on July 8, 2014. At that point in time, Malinka was 34 years old. After having posed my initial question, she did not immediately fall into a narrative mode, so I had to encourage her to elaborate quite a few times. She narrated in paragraph form only later in the interview. The interview lasted one hour and fifty-one minutes.

Her autobiographical narrative is a detailed summary of her life. Malinka often indulges in reflection when narrating her life story. Her biographical narrative differs from those analyzed before insofar as the issue of mobility arises very early in her life-course and the frequency of mobility experiences is a lot higher than in the biographical experiences of the other interviewees. In fact, Malinka had the most mobility experiences, amounting up to twelve relocations of her center of life. Her story is especially interesting as it emphasizes how her mobility practices evolve during her life-course at specific points in time. In

view of my study interest, I divide the analysis of her life in two parts in order to show how her mobility practices change and what biographical constellation underlie these developments. Similar to Janusz—whose narrative I have also divided in two parts—there is also a specific *key moment* that I identified as "life-changing" which consequently had an impact on her mobility practices. The changes as such, however, were rather insidious and unpredictable. In this section, I will deal with the first part of her life story in which *family structures*, *languages, and social relationships* play an important role in the early emergence of *mobility practices* in her childhood and adolescence. I will analyze the second part of her life story on the biographical consequences of this *key moment* in the next empirical chapter. But before I discuss Malinka's early life experiences in-depth, we shall first see how her mother's history frames the background of her own story.

## Transnational "Motherhood" Reversed: Living a Transnational "Childhood"

Malinka was born in Berlin (l.4) and in keeping with commonly used categories in migration research, she would be categorized as a "second generation migrant." In fact, there is a migratory movement in her family history, namely that of her mother's. Although Malinka was not born in Poland, all her family lives there—yet again:

"My whole family, they live in Poland. My mum, well she is, yet again, back in Poland by now. Exactly, she lived here in Berlin for a long time […] My dad has never lived in Berlin. Well, my parents separated. Yeah, this is why my mum came to Berlin." (ll.6-10)[44]

While all of her family lives in Poland, Malinka is the only one living in another country, namely in the country she was born: Germany. However, Poland is significant not only in terms of her cultural heritage, but also as a geographical space since all her family lives there. Before the family's reunification in Poland, Malinka's mother lived in Berlin for quite a considerable time. The family relations that Malinka introduces here emphasize the context of her mother's mobility towards Berlin, which indeed, clarifies Malinka's birthplace. She tells me that

44 "Meine ganze Familie, die leben in Polen. Meine Mama, also mittlerweile ist die auch schon wieder in Polen. Genau, eine ganze Zeit hat sie halt hier gelebt in Berlin […] Ich habe drei Halbgeschwister. […] Mein Papa hat nie in Berlin gelebt. Also meine Eltern haben sich getrennt. Genau, deswegen ist meine Mama nach Berlin."

her parents separated, probably when Malinka's mother was pregnant with her. This event subsequently led to her mother moving to Berlin. Her family history tells us not only about delicate issues like her parent's separation, but it also indicates ongoing mobility practices in her mother's life-course as we learn that she moved to Berlin, but eventually moved back to Poland—in the sense of "return-migration." However, in the early stages of her life-cycle, Malinka first lived with her mother in Berlin. The reason why both mother and daughter lived there lies in her mother's personal circumstances:

"[My mother] worked at customs and she met someone there. And it was also someone from Poland. He, however, lived in Berlin. Exactly, he was of Polish heritage and therefore she moved to Berlin. Because she married him." (ll.91-94)[45]

Malinka spent her formative years in Berlin where she attended kindergarten from an early age, but she got sick very often:

"Well, I went to the kindergarten here [in Berlin]. My grandma was very often at our place and also, I had been ill. Well, my grandparents, they lived in Poznan in the countryside and I spent a lot of time there. I felt a lot better there […] that's not so far away. At my grandma's, I was all the time with her." (ll.24-27)[46]

Malinka's illness, which is left unspecified, brought about her grandmother's presence in Berlin until Malinka could spend more time in Poznan, Poland with her grandparents. She eventually "moved" to Poland as a toddler: "I was three or two when I moved to Poland." (ll.43f)[47] Malinka lived for the first few years of her life in Berlin and then she relocated to Poznan due to her illness, where she was subsequently raised. I could not quite understand the links and circumstances of this relocation, so I asked Malinka to tell me a little more about this situa-

45 "[Meine Mutter] hat gearbeitet für den Zoll und da hat sie halt Jemanden kennengelernt und das war auch Jemand aus Polen, der hat aber in Berlin gelebt. Genau, also mit polnischen Wurzeln und deswegen ist sie halt nach Berlin gegangen. Genau, weil Sie ihn dann nochmal geheiratet hat."

46 "Also ich bin hier [in Berlin] in den Kindergarten gegangen. Meine Oma war auch ganz oft bei uns und ich war auch krank. Also, meine Großeltern, die wohnten in Posen auf dem Land und da hab ich dann viel Zeit verbracht, und da ging es mir auch viel besser […] das ist nicht so weit. Bei meiner Oma, da war ich dann die ganze Zeit bei ihr."

47 "Da war ich drei oder mit zwei bin ich nach Polen gezogen."

tion. Since Malinka was so young at the time of the move, she struggles to remember:

"Well, I can remember when I was a child, I attended kindergarten and I didn't like it at all. It was really terrible for me to go there. Maybe that's why I got ill so often." (ll.54ff)[48]

Malinka tries to make sense of how her illness came about and proposes a physical manifestation of her dislike of kindergarten. However, she does not really know what caused this emotional and physical distress (l.60), yet it influenced the families' decision to raise her in Poland instead of Germany. Since Malinkas' childhood memory is rather vague, she supplements her own recollections of this history through a "family narrative":

"They told me that I didn't like to go there and also that I cried a lot and then she took me to Poland and, then I was in Poland." (ll.70ff)[49]

Malinka can only repeat what she was told about this situation by others, namely her family members. She, however, tries to find explanations for it in her narrative, and suspects she had difficulty being separated from her mother: "The familiarization phase, maybe she should have approached it a little differently. I don't know how it was back then." (ll.64ff)[50] Malinka points to the process of familiarization into kindergarten and her mother's role in this context ("she") wondering whether her mother could have handled the matter differently. At the same time, Malinka relativizes her statement when uttering that at the end of the day, she would not have known what was going on at the time. Basically, we get to know that Malinka moved from Berlin to Poznan very early in her life-course. This relocation is related to health and/or emotional reasons. While Malinka moved to Poznan, her mother stayed with her husband in Berlin. Once in Poland, Malinka recalls how much better she felt there (l.78). *Ex post*, she emphasizes both sides of the coin of living in Poland as a child:

48 "Naja, also ich kann mich erinnern als ich klein war, war ich […] ja im Kindergarten und das mochte ich gar nicht. War ganz schlimm für mich wieder hinzugehen. Also, vielleicht kam es ja auch deswegen, dass ich so oft krank war."

49 "Das wurde mir dann erzählt, dass ich da nicht gerne hingegangen bin und ich habe dann auch […] häufig geweint und dann hat sie mich nach Polen genommen und ja dann war ich in Polen."

50 "Diese Phase des Eingewöhnens vielleicht, dass die das ein bisschen anders machen sollte. Ich weiß auch nicht wie es früher abgelaufen ist."

"It was on a farm and we had many animals. I had my cat there, […] I also had a lot of friends and my cousin lived not far away, too. It was certainly great. But actually, I always missed my mum. It was difficult. She was there very often. Every weekend, she was there. Exactly, but this was difficult, but somehow, I didn't want to be in Berlin. […] I simply didn't want to go to Berlin." (ll.47-52)[51]

What she liked most about her childhood in Poland was that she was surrounded by animals, other children and other family members such as her cousins. Yet, Malinka regretted her mother's absence. The negative side of being raised in Poland was, as Malinka underlines, the difficulties of not being with her mother on an everyday basis. Her mother, however, was going back and forth between Berlin and Poznan to see her daughter as Malinka "simply did not want to be in Berlin." From early on, she had a negative connotation with her birthplace, Berlin, which explains why her mother intensively practiced transnational circulation flows between the place she was living and the place her daughter was living. We witness here an alternative border-crossing child-rearing arrangement between Malinka's mother and Malinka's grandparents in Poland in order to accommodate the spatio-temporal separation of mother and daughter. In transnational studies, this phenomenon is known as "transnational motherhood." (Hondagneu-Sotela/Avila 1997) In most empirical studies, transnational motherhood is an economic arrangement: women work in other countries to earn a better income in order to support their children and other family members back home. The mother-child separation in this case, we can assume, was influenced by more than just an economic factor, such as Malinka's unhappiness in Berlin conflicting with her mother's married life there.

The first relocation of Malinka's center of life transformed her living conditions not only in the form of a *geographical dislocation*, but also for the *reconfiguration of her attachment figures*. It was her grandparents and particularly her grandmother who took care of Malinka in Poland. Thus, Malinka's grandmother switched positions with Malinka's mother as the immediate day-to-day caretaker. During her early childhood, Malinka's relationships mostly consisted

51 "Das war auf einem Bauernhof und wir hatten da ganz viele Tiere und ich hatte da dann meine Katze […] und dann hatte ich da auch ganz viele Freunde und meine Cousine lebte auch nicht weit weg und das war natürlich ganz toll. Aber eigentlich habe ich meine Mama immer vermisst. Das war schwierig. Sie war zwar ganz oft da. Sie war jedes Wochenende war sie da, genau, aber dies war dann schwierig, aber ich wollte irgendwie nicht nach Berlin. […] Ich wollte halt nicht nach Berlin."

of family members. Despite the geographical separation, the relationship between Malinka and her mother remained close, particularly as a result of her mother's efforts to go back and forth between Berlin and Poznan. However, on a daily basis, Malinka was living with her grandparents, a circumstance that she *ex post* considers to have been difficult for her grandparents, too:

"Yes, I think I was a little difficult as a child. Especially for my grandparents because I believe that grandparents as such cannot or do not want to be as strict as the parents. And I don't know, they weren't." (ll.127-130)[52]

In retrospect, Malinka thinks of herself as having been a difficult child. Nevertheless, she had a fairly good relationship with her grandparents who were not strict with her and took good care of her. Malinka's early relocation not only transformed her social relationships, but it also had an impact on language acquirement and use. While Malinka was still living in Berlin, her mother spoke Polish with her (l.81), but once she attended kindergarten, she started to catch up on German. As her stay in Poland continued, Malinka forgot how to speak German as it was not a part of her daily life (l.1036). Therefore, Polish is her first language (l.1035). In the course of her childhood in Poland, Malinka attended elementary school there for the first two years. She remembers Polish school as being quite strict:

"I know […] that it was stricter. […] I know that sometimes, when we were naughty, for example we had to go in the corner and on our knees and hold up our hands, etc. Sometimes you got it with a stick on the hands […] I know we had a very good class community and somehow, if something had happened, then […] we caught each other. […] In retrospect, [I] did not perceive it as bad. Well, it happened to everyone sooner or later [laughter]." (ll.105-116)[53]

52 "Ja, ich glaub' ich war ein bisschen schwierig als Kind. Also, vor allem für meine Großeltern, weil ich glaube so Großeltern können oder wollen auch nicht so streng sein, nicht so wie die Eltern. Keine Ahnung und das waren sie auch gar nicht."

53 "Ich weiß […], dass es strenger war. […] Ich weiß zum Beispiel, dass wir manchmal, wenn wir unartig waren, mussten wir dann in die Ecke und auf die Knie und die Hände hochhalten usw. Manchmal hat man auch mit so einem Stock auf die Hände bekommen […] Ich weiß wir hatten eine ganz gute Klassengemeinschaft und irgendwie, wenn sowas passiert war, dann […] [hat] man sich gegenseitig aufgefangen. […] Im Nachhinein, fand [ich] es halt nicht schlimm. Also, es hat jeden mal getroffen [Lachen]."

All in all, growing up in Poland seemed rather regular, except the fact that Malinka missed her mother all the time. After having lived in Poland for about five years, Malinka moved back to Berlin to be with her mother.

## Between Regret and Integration

Understandably, Malinka tells me that her mother wanted to take her daughter back to Germany (l.149). First of all, it is likely that Malinka's mother missed her daughter as well and that living geographically separated was emotionally difficult for both of them. Second, maintaining "transnational motherhood" takes a lot of effort. When Malinka was eight years old, her mother finally decided to take her daughter back to Berlin—against her will. The main reason, as narrated by Malinka, involved the issue of integration:

"She had wanted to take me [back to Berlin] earlier, but I didn't want to […] but one day she said: 'No, there's no other way now. It's time and I will take you with me now.' Because eventually it would be more and more difficult to integrate me and for me to learn the language and handle the subjects [in school, A/N] and yes, therefore the decision was made." (ll.139-145)[54]

The decision to take Malinka back to Berlin was a rather lengthy process, which was eventually initiated by Malinka's mother. Malinka was not able to have her way in this situation. She was passively exposed to her mother's decision to relocate her center of life back from Poznan to Berlin. Her mother was worried that the longer Malinka lived in Poland, the more difficulty she would have in adapting to Germany. For that, acquiring the German language in order to follow classes in school played a decisive role in her mother's considerations. By the same token, this decision also indicated that her mother did not plan to return to Poland anytime soon. Subsequently, Malinka stopped attending school in Poland and started attending grade two in Germany (l.37). In fact, in the initial weeks and months following her arrival in Germany, Malinka missed being in Poland:

54 "Sie wollte mich schon früher immer mitnehmen [zurück nach Berlin], aber ich wollte nicht […] aber irgendwann meinte sie dann: 'Nee, jetzt geht's halt nicht anders. Es ist soweit und dann nehme ich dich jetzt mit.' Denn irgendwann wird es immer schwieriger sein mich dann einzugliedern und die Sprache zu lernen und mit dem Unterrichtsstoff irgendwie zurechtzukommen und ja, damit war das entschieden."

"Yes, it must have been 1986/87 […] we were very often in Poland then since I really missed it […] and I had a bit of a trouble to somehow acclimatize here in Berlin." (ll.245ff)[55]

Malinka went back and forth between Berlin and Poznan, because she missed her old environment. She regretted not being there. "Missing Poland" went hand in hand with the difficulties of adapting or—as she puts it—acclimatizing to Berlin. It appears as though both issues were interrelated. Malinka's emotional attachment towards Poland persisted for several months. The (already established) transnational connections were intensified by regular bi-local mobility flows, and this time Malinka and her mother carried them out together: "At the beginning, every two weeks at least [we'd go to Poland]. […] It did not last for long, though, at least a couple of months and then it was more rarely." (ll.254f)[56] Yet, after a while, her transnational mobility practices decreased as did her emotional attachment to Poland: "I missed it for a while and after a while it did not matter anymore, I guess." (l.251f)[57] At the end of the day, Malinka's mother was right: Malinka's process of integration into Germany was successful without facing too many difficulties. An advantage was certainly that Malinka met another Polish girl in her class, who was also not able to speak German so both girls soon became friends. Another advantage was that acquiring German was kind of an automatic process:

"At first, I didn't understand so much. Well, but eventually it came. It went automatically without me being aware. […] I also don't feel that I was aware of learning the language. We also had remedial courses [in German], so for the foreign children in small groups […] it happened by itself somehow." (ll.167-174)[58]

55 "Ja, dann war's 1986/87 […] da waren wir sehr häufig in Polen. Da habe ich [Polen] auch noch sehr vermisst […] und da hatte ich so ein bisschen Schwierigkeiten mich hier [in Berlin] irgendwie so zu akklimatisieren."

56 "Also, mindestens alle 2 Wochen am Anfang [waren wir in Polen] […]. Das ging aber nicht lange, mindestens ein paar Monate und dann halt immer seltener."

57 "Ich hab's vermisst eine Zeit lang und nach einer Zeit ist es egal, glaube ich."

58 "Am Anfang habe ich nicht so viel verstanden. Also, aber irgendwann kommt es dann. Das ging automatisch ohne dass es bewusst [war]. […] Ich habe auch gar nicht gefühlt, dass ich bewusst die Sprache gelernt habe. Also, wir hatten dann auch Förderkurse [in Deutsch], also extra für die ausländischen Kinder in ganz kleinen Grüppchen […] es ging wie von alleine irgendwie."

As opposed to other interviewees, we can see that acquiring the official language of the "country of arrival" was relatively easy for Malinka. On the one hand, she already had a new friend and was therefore not feeling like an "outsider" in class. On the other hand, she received additional support in the form of remedial courses within a small group of children who did not yet speak German fluently. Arguably, these two factors prevented Malinka from too much in the way of suffering. What is more, Malinka mentions that she did not encounter any discrimination in the classroom. The other German students perceived her as "normal" and no one teased her (ll.180-184). While she continued speaking Polish at home (l.176), the process of integrating into Germany, in Malinka's case particularly into the institution of elementary school, was rather unproblematic.

Generally, her everyday life was mainly determined by attending school and complementing her educational pathway. Malinka finished elementary school and continued to middle school (*Realschule*). By then, she had a lot of friends in her class, with whom she would have done many activities outside of school like attending a dancing academy and a swimming club (ll.234). Most of her friends were German:

"My best friend at the time was also German. Then I got together with her brother [laughter]. So, all the time, I had no Polish friends, but not intentionally. It just didn't happen." (ll.216-218)[59]

Her social circle consisted of German fellow classmates: her best friend was German and her first boyfriend as well. However, she did not intentionally choose to befriend only Germans, but, rather it just happened that way. In the course of her life, Malinka overcame the "acclimatizing challenges" she had initially faced after relocating from Poznan back to Berlin. She learned the language relatively quickly and established social relationships with many fellow students. In a way, this evolvement of her life-course shows that she integrated into German society successfully, not least because her regret at not being in Poland decreased.

59 "Meine beste Freundin zu der Zeit, die war auch Deutsch. Dann bin ich mit ihrem Bruder zusammengekommen [Lachen]. Also, ich hatte die ganze Zeit keine polnischen Freunde, also gar nicht so bewusst. Es hat sich nicht so ergeben."

## Perceiving "Origin" in a Transnational Context

As stated above, Malinka is a German born of Polish heritage and thus she would be categorized as "second generation." Interestingly, her reflections on her biographical experiences suggests another self-positioning. In this context, the geographical place of Poland is salient as a "space of meaning." The categorization of first and second generation or the generation 1.5 commonly used in migration research is challenged by Malinka herself, indicating that belonging to a generation can be a lot more ambiguous and complex if we take into consideration the subjective evaluation of the individuals themselves. As we have seen, Malinka moved from Berlin to Poznan at a very young age, where she spent five years of her early childhood. She incorporates this early relocation of her center of life into her self-perception. As for the categorization of "migrant generations," Malinka perceives herself as having been born in Poland:

Malinka: "Sometimes I say like well I'm a native-born from Poland […]."
A.W.: "But interestingly enough, you were not born in Poland."
Malinka: "Yeah, but I come from Poland. That's right! [Laughter] It is a little complicated, because my parents and my whole family comes from Poland. I was born here, but I was in Poland and the first language I acquired was Polish. In fact, I started with German, but I quickly forgot it. It did not stick […] Exactly, therefore I do say that I'm a native-born from Poland. Yes, indeed." (ll.940-960)[60]

This excerpt illustrates the ambiguity in Malinka's self-perception about the place she was born. Usually, based on their "birthplace," individuals are categorized in different "migrant generations." Malinka perceives herself to be born in Poland. She does not realize that her statement of being born in Poland is factually incorrect. When I brought this incongruity to her attention, Malinka became irritated before acknowledging my point. She objectively agrees that she was not, in fact, born in Poland, but she subjectively does not distance herself from

60 Malinka: "Ja, manchmal sage ich so naja, also gebürtig bin ich aus Polen […]."
A.W.: "Aber interessanterweise kommst du ja gar nicht gebürtig aus Polen."
Malinka: "Ja, ich komme ja aus Polen. Stimmt! [Lachen] Das ist so ein bisschen kompliziert, weil meine Eltern und meine ganze Familie kommt aus Polen. Ich bin hier geboren, und war ja auch in Polen und die erste Sprache die ich gelernt habe war ja Polnisch. Ich habe zwar mit Deutsch auch angefangen, aber das habe ich schnell vergessen, das war noch nicht so manifestiert […] Genau, deswegen sage ich schon dass ich gebürtig aus Polen komme. Ja, genau."

her earlier statement. She rather defends her subjective perception about where she was born. She sees this statement as (subjectively) true, which is in line with the well-known Thomas-theorem: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." (Thomas/Thomas 1928; see also Merton 1995) "Being born in Poland" is true for her and she therefore defines her situation accordingly, making her biographical experiences rather comply with the experiences of the generation 1.5 (Rumbaut 2012), and not the second generation. In this sense, Malinka constructs a meaning of Poland not only as the country of her cultural origin and the country where her whole family lives, but also as the country in which she was born. Thus, she affirms her belonging to Poland: culturally and geographically. This re-positioning of the birthplace is strongly linked with her early experiences of bi-localism while living a transnational childhood.

## Immigration or Mobility?

Malinka's educational pathway was ordinary until her senior years, i.e., after she graduated middle school and pursued her *Abitur* in another school in Berlin. Though she does not mention which school she attended, in the German school system it can only be the *Gymnasium*, an academic high school, or the *Gesamtschule*, a comprehensive high school, in which students can acquire the *Abitur* certificate. These senior years usually take three years. For Malinka, this time of schooling leads to an interesting development:

"Then I continued with the senior years [laughter]. Oh, one year I was here and one year I was in the United States, right. I had a year abroad there. I thought it was really good." (ll.260f)[61]

She immediately emphasizes how much she enjoyed her year abroad in the United States. She must have been about sixteen years old when she relocated her center of life from Berlin to Sacramento for a temporally-restricted amount of one year. Curious about how this experience came about, I asked Malinka to tell me more about it. Basically, she had set her mind to go there:

"I'm not sure whether I watched a movie about the USA or the exchange program, but at some point, I had it in mind to go to the USA at any rate, definitely to California. […] We

61 "Dann ging es mit dem Abi weiter [Lachen] Ach, da habe ich ein Jahr hier gemacht und dann war ich ein Jahr in den USA. Da habe ich Auslandsjahr gemacht. Das fand ich richtig gut."

watched those series 'Beverly Hills' and 'Melrose Place' […]. Certainly, I knew I wanted to get away. So, for one year, so one year abroad." (ll.294-301)[62]

Malinka cannot recollect how she came up with this idea. She indicates that her wish to go to California may have been influenced by the media. In this context, she mentions having watched popular fictional television series set in California. At this point in time, Malinka painted a picture of the United States, in particular of California, as a desirable place to live. Constructing such a positive imaginary on the basis of popular television series influenced her destination. Malinka conceived of doing a student exchange in the form of a "year abroad" as a realistic option to fulfil her desire to get away. In order to put this possibility into practice, she needed to organize it: "So there were organizations that organized this kind of thing. I applied to several of them and then I went with one of them." (ll.310ff)[63] Evidently, organizing a student exchange requires knowledge of the different channels and organizations that offer such services. Malinka gained all the necessary knowledge and completed the application process. She actively took care of these tasks in order to make her wish come true. However, her mother was a little skeptical about her daughter's idea to go abroad at first, but she got "on board" quite fast. Malinka did not need to persuade her much (l.322): "Well, [my mother] has always let me follow my own path. So, she always supported me in what I wanted to do." (ll.323ff)[64] At this point in her life-course, Malinka had a boyfriend, whom she had been with for two or three years by then, but she wanted to go anyway (l.312ff). She was with him during the whole year abroad. It was thus a proactive decision on the part of Malinka, a self-initiated biographical experience, which would have far-reaching consequences for her life-path. The year abroad in Sacramento was "the best year" for Malinka:

62 "Ich weiß nicht ob ich mal 'nen Film über die USA gesehen habe oder über das Austauschprogramm, aber irgendwann hatte ich den Gedanken: 'Ich fahr auf jeden Fall in die USA, auf jeden Fall nach Kalifornien.' […] Man hat ja damals auch diese Serien geschaut 'Beverly Hills' und 'Melrose Place' […]. Auf jeden Fall wusst' ich, ich will weg. Also, ich will ein Jahr also ein Austauschjahr machen."

63 "Es gab also Organisationen, die es organisiert haben. […] Ich habe mich bei mehreren beworben und dann […] bin ich mit einer gegangen."

64 "Also, [meine Mutter] hat mich, glaube ich, auch immer schon so meinen Weg gehen lassen. Also, immer indem auch unterstützt was ich dann machen wollte."

"And then I was there, yes and it was great. It was really one of my best years. I thought it was awesome in the USA. I was with this host family and I met new friends quite fast […] and then I did a lot of things. Right from the beginning, I did a lot with the people there, right, after school and on the weekends and it was really a great year […] for me. It was a great year." (ll.314-318)[65]

She enjoyed the mobility experience in Sacramento very much. She especially liked having made many new friends, establishing good relationships with her host family and fellow students at the high school. For her, this experience was *exceptionally* positive. One reason might be that Malinka did not face strong language barriers. Learning English at school provided her with a good basis on which she was able to build. Again, Malinka improved her foreign language skills "automatically" as she likes to say. She reflects about her experiences of learning languages and concludes that she does not put herself under pressure: "I'm this kind of a person who does not stress myself or I don't think about it so much. It simply happens, and it was exactly the case with my English, so it happened that I improved it and it was […] good." (ll.347ff)[66] However, Malinka's "best year" eventually came to an end. The mobility experience to the United States was temporally-restricted. It is institutionally predetermined for high school students to go abroad for one year at the most so that they are able to return and graduate at their home institutions. This is exactly what Malinka did. She returned to Berlin and attained her *Abitur*. She remembers that coming back to Berlin was difficult for her:

"It was difficult. It is always difficult for me to return and settle down again when I've been abroad for a long time. Perhaps there is something a bit like a red thread, which hooks somehow. When I was coming back from Poland, well, it was also difficult. It was also the school, being there again, it was difficult. At the beginning, I had difficulty getting on track there and the people […] I have good friends in Berlin, but somehow, I

65 "Und dann war ich da und es war toll. Es war echt mit das beste Jahr. Also, ich fand's super in den USA. Ich hatte auch diese Gastfamilie und ich habe auch recht schnell Freunde getroffen und […] ich hab' dann auch recht viel gemacht. Also, von Anfang an immer viel unternommen mit den Leuten, also nach der Schule und auch am Wochenende und es war echt ein tolles Jahr […] für mich. Es war ein super Jahr."

66 "Ich bin auch ein Mensch, ich mache mir nicht so viel Stress oder nicht so viele Gedanken. Es kommt dann einfach und genauso war das mit dem Englisch, also es kam halt und es war […] gut."

missed the USA. It then got into my head, well, I want to go back to the USA." (ll.337-344)[67]

Malinka points out that she struggled to reintegrate in Berlin. She had difficulties keeping up with classes and she missed her friends in the United States. Intriguingly, she not only reflects on the difficulties of returning back to Berlin from the United States, but she relates it to her first move from Poland to Berlin. She clearly sees parallels between these two life situations of "being away and coming back." It constitutes a red thread in her life, which she describes as "hooking." Here, a striking similarity comes to the fore: she always seems to miss something. She seems to regret not being where she was before. Painting the image of a "hooking red thread" going through her life, Malinka stresses not knowing how to deal with these repetitive situations of struggling to reintegrate. For this mobility experience, Malinka coped with this situation by developing the idea of going back to the United States eventually. However, another reason for facing difficulties once back in Berlin may be related to her former boyfriend. As mentioned earlier, the relationship was still going on when Malinka left for the United States, yet it abruptly ended when she came back and found out that her former boyfriend maintained a close relationship with another girl:

"Because in the end when I came back, I found out that my boyfriend somehow, sometime his/ just before departure to the USA or so that he was with a friend of mine, or acquaintance or someone from school with whom I was friends. Anyway, then I broke up. Right, we had seen each other after I returned and then I found out about it. It was, of course, a big drama and then […] we broke up. That was a good thing. That was a good thing." (ll.352-358) [68]

67 "Das war schwierig. Für mich ist es immer schwierig wenn ich eine längere Zeit im Ausland bin und wieder zurück komme, mich dann wieder so einzuleben. Also, irgendwie ist da vielleicht auch ein bisschen so ein roter Faden, der hakt irgendwie. [Als ich] aus Polen wiedergekommen [bin], war es auch schwierig. […] Die Schule fand ich dann wieder auch schwierig. Da hatte ich auch anfangs meine Schwierigkeiten da wieder reinzukommen und die Leute. […] Ich hatte […] gute Freunde in Berlin aber irgendwie hab' ich dann auch schon die USA vermisst. Es hat sich dann schon so in mein Kopf reingesetzt, also ich will wieder nach USA."

68 "Weil im Endeffekt als ich dann wiedergekommen bin, habe ich rausgefunden, dass mein Freund dann, kurz bevor ich in die USA gegangen […], dass er mit einer Freundin von mir, oder Bekannten oder also jemand aus der Schule mit der ich auch befreundet war. Wie auch immer und dann habe ich Schluss gemacht. Also, wir haben

Malinka's former boyfriend engaged in another relationship, but already before Malinka's actual departure. She, however, only learned about it when she came back from the United States; one year later. She subsequently ended the relationship, which had been—to use her words—a "drama." In a way, the mobility experience to the United States made it possible for this relationship to last longer. Malinka, however, emphasizes *post hoc* that ending the relationship was a good thing to do.

Having had a great time abroad and facing struggles with her life in Berlin reinforced her desire to go back to the United States. In fact, her mobility experience to the United States triggered further mobility orientations that Malinka was eventually to put into practice:

"[The year abroad in the USA] was somehow really great and then I came back, and I graduated. And I was thinking because I enjoyed the year in the USA so much that I somehow want to live there [laughter]. It was kind of my goal. But right after graduation, I guess I was working for a year or so and I think I started studying economics and then I told myself: 'Nope, I want to give it a shot in the USA' and I had such a good relationship with my host family and they said: 'Yes, if you come, you can live with us and attend the city college' and that was what I did." (ll.280-287)[69]

In this quote, Malinka presents the consequences of her stay abroad in respect to her future plans: she wanted to go back to the United States in order to live there without having a pre-determined restriction on the time of her stay, or, to put it differently: she wanted to immigrate there. Malinka creates a positive imaginary of the United States, which was enhanced by her positive mobility experience there. Indeed, it was so powerful that it promoted a desire to immigrate and live

uns dann halt noch gesehen als ich wiedergekommen bin und dann habe ich das rausbekommen. Es war natürlich auch so'n Drama und […] dann habe ich Schluss gemacht. Das war auch gut so. Das war auch gut so."

69 "[Das Auslandsjahr in den USA] war irgendwie ganz toll und dann bin ich wiedergekommen und dann habe ich hier das Abi zu Ende gemacht. Ich dachte ja weil ich die USA so toll fand', dass ich irgendwie in den USA leben will [Lachen]. Das war irgendwie so mein Ziel. Aber gleich nach dem Abi, ich glaube, ich habe dann ein bisschen gearbeitet dann so ein Jahr oder so habe ich gearbeitet und ich habe dann auch mit BWL angefangen und dann habe ich aber gesagt: 'Nee, ich will's jetzt doch in den USA versuchen' und hatte so guten Kontakt zu meiner Gastfamilie und die meinten so: 'Ja, wenn du kommst, kannst auch bei uns leben und da in der Stadt auf's College gehen' und das habe ich dann auch gemacht."

a life there. However, she did not return there immediately after graduation, but first she spent time working at temporary random jobs in Berlin until she began to study economics. It took her about a year to return to the United States. We could assume that, for Malinka, it was a time for getting things into place making up her mind about immigrating and taking the necessary steps. For her, the decision to finally move there was realistic: she was able to arrange her accommodation through networks she had established during her first stay, in which her former and to-be host family played a major role. They gave her pragmatic courtesy, encouragement, and initial security. However, Malinka not only decided to immigrate to the United States because she enjoyed her mobility experience so much, but her quotidian life circumstances in Berlin at that time played a crucial role in the decision-making process. As for her professional future, Malinka wanted to study psychology, but she was not admitted to a program:

"But it didn't work out […] to get admission [into psychology] and then I was thinking: 'OK, I have worked and then I studied economics.' And then I was thinking, because I wanted to go to the USA anyway, I was thinking: 'OK, I will study there.' I guess it was like that." (ll.372-375)[70]

Malinka was not admitted to study in the field of psychology, her desired field of study. Generally speaking, admission into the field of psychology in Germany is restricted: universities contain a *numerus clausus*. The fact that Malinka did not get into psychology right away indicates that her final grade of the *Abitur* did not match the *numerus clausus*, so she had to face a waiting period. Malinka saw immigration as a way to solve the problems she was facing: she was not able to study psychology in Germany, so she made up her mind to do so in the United States. Retrospectively, Malinka admits that she might have decided otherwise had she been permitted to study psychology in Germany:

"I know for sure that I already had the idea to return when I came back from the USA. And I don't know if this idea would simply have gone away if I had gotten a place in psychology at university here. I don't know to what extent this has played a role, but I think it

70 "Es hat aber nicht geklappt […] da reinzukommen [in Psychologie] und dann dachte ich: 'Ok, du hast dann gearbeitet und dann mache ich halt BWL.' Und dann dachte ich, weil ich sowieso in die USA wollte, dachte ich: 'Ok, dann fange ich da an zu studieren'. Ich glaube so war das."

was a little bit of both, because I definitely already toyed with this idea when I graduated from high school." (ll.382-387)[71]

Under different circumstances, Malinka might have made another decision. Yet, she emphasizes that she had toyed with the idea of living in the Unites States for a long time. Until then, there were no incidents that demolished the constructed imaginary. Quite the opposite, the idea of moving became a more concrete possibility in view of her situation after graduating high school: an obviously unfulfilling professional outlook in Germany. In other words: the initially vague idea of immigrating was nourished by unsatisfying life circumstances. Ultimately, Malinka put her life project of immigrating into the United States into practice. Having taken this step, it turned out that she did not like it there as much as she assumed she would:

"I was a little older when I went there for the second time. […] I was simply confronted with things I had not faced before, because if you want to stay there for longer, you face many difficulties, right. Things like: 'Do I get a work permit later?' and so on. It's not so sure. […] Suddenly I found a lot of things negative. They struck me in a negative way. I also thought the people to be more superficial. Well, I still had the old friends from school, but many of those were indeed no longer in Sacramento, because they had gone away to study some place else." (ll.408-416)[72]

The expectations that Malinka had for her life in the United States did not correspond with the reality she encountered on site. This experience was more nega-

71 "Ich weiss auf jeden Fall, dass ich den Gedanken schon im Hinterkopf hatte als ich dann aus den USA wiederkam, wieder in die USA zu gehen. Und ich weiss nicht, ob dieser Gedanke nicht vielleicht eher weggegangen wäre, wenn ich hier einen Studienplatz bekommen hätte in Psychologie. Ich weiss jetzt auch nicht, inwieweit das noch eine Rolle mitgespielt hat, aber ich glaube es war so ein bisschen beides, weil mit dem Gedanken habe ich auf jeden Fall schon gespielt als ich das Abi gemacht habe."

72 "Als ich das zweite Mal dort hingegangen bin, da war ich dann ein bisschen älter. […] Ich war dann einfach mit Sachen konfrontiert, mit denen ich vorher nicht konfrontiert war, weil wenn man da länger bleiben will, […] steht man dann schon vor vielen Schwierigkeiten. Sowas wie: 'Bekomme ich dann später eine Arbeitserlaubnis?' usw. Ist auch nicht so sicher. Auf einmal fand ich viele Sachen negativ. Die sind mir negativ aufgefallen. Ich fand auch die Leute oberflächlicher. Also, ich hatte zwar noch die alten Freunde von der Schule, aber viele von denen waren ja auch nicht mehr in Sacramento, weil die weggegangen sind zum studieren."

tive than positive. She was faced with administrative challenges related to her foreign-born nationality, the insecurity resulting from it, and the fact that some friends she knew from last time had left Sacramento. Through this accumulation of factors, the positive imaginary she had constructed began to crumble. Generally, what was different the second time is that Malinka intended to stay in the United States "for good":

"I left with the idea of staying there for good, right? I remember missing [my boyfriend at that time] very much and I also really missed my friends. And then at once I made the decision: 'No, I come back. I don't want to live here.' Well, consciously saying: 'OK, the USA is not for me.' The whole lifestyle, the attitude, those people, that's just not for me. […] I like the culture here and so on." (ll.397-402)[73]

She could not continue with her plan of immigrating for good, because she missed the people she had left behind in Germany. Apparently, Malinka left behind another boyfriend when she went to the United State in addition to her good friends. It took time to admit to herself that living in the United States was not how she wanted to live her life. Deciding to return to Berlin was a deliberation process. With regard to her boyfriend at that time, Malinka reflects about her experience:

"Ah, right. At that time, I had another boyfriend, a new one [laughter]. True, that was also such a big love. I was with him for a long time and how was that? I think I had just left him again. Well, I did not leave him, but I went away, and we were still together […] I mean such a young love is passionate and unrealistic anyway. So, I thought: 'Yes of course, I go to the USA, but let's stay together [laughter].' Then we broke up while I was in the USA. […] now, from today's point of view, we were just too young, and I had left with the idea of staying there forever." (ll.390-398)[74]

73 "Ich bin ja auch mit dem Gedanken gegangen da für immer zu bleiben. Ich weiß, ich habe [meinen damaligen Freund] auch sehr vermisst und ich habe auch meine Freunde sehr vermisst und dann habe ich auf einmal den Entschluss gefasst: 'Nee, ich komm zurück. Ich will da nicht leben.' Also auch bewusst zu sagen: 'Ok, nee, USA ist nichts für mich.' Der ganze Lebensstil, diese Einstellung, die Leute. Das ist halt nichts für mich. […] Ich mag hier die Kultur, usw."

74 "Ach stimmt, da hatte ich wieder 'nen Freund, 'nen Neuen [Lachen]. Stimmt, das war auch so eine große Liebe, mit dem war ich auch lange zusammen und wie war das? Ich glaube, schon wieder, den habe ich einfach verlassen. Also, nicht verlassen, aber ich bin dann einfach gegangen und wir waren noch zusammen […] Ich meine, so eine

Malinka remembers that she had another boyfriend when she was about to leave for the second time to the United States. It seems as though she was not fully aware of it at first. She describes this relationship as having been "another big love," signaling that it was biographically relevant for her. Malinka had left (another) boyfriend, not in the sense of ending the relationship, but of leaving him behind. She underlines her naiveté to believe that this relationship would last in spite of the distance, but it eventually did not. Clearly, Malinka's mobility experiences affected her romantic relationships. The experience of dissolving this romantic relationship was a bitter one. What is more, Malinka tells me that it was exactly the point in her life when she began to be more independent. Before leaving for the United States, she worked in Berlin and she was able to earn money on her own, yet this possibility remained closed to her in the United States, not least because she lacked a work permit. She also could not move "so freely," for two reasons. First, Malinka believes that one needs a car in Sacramento, which she did not have (ll.456-463). Second, her host parents wanted to know what she was up to:

"I believe it bothered me a bit [to stay at my host parents' place]. So, in high school I had a great relationship with them, but then I realized: 'No, I need a bit more freedom,' because […] they were worried. They always asked me: 'Where are you?' and I was at such age where I no longer wanted it. I just didn't want to say where I was going." (ll.465-470)[75]

Malinka felt that her host parents exercised a kind of "social control." She assumes that they were worried, but, at the same time, she did not want to justify herself. She basically needed more freedom as, according to her point of view, she had entered a phase in her life cycle, where she wanted more independence.

junge Liebe, ist Leidenschaft wie auch immer und realitätsfern. Also, ich dachte: 'Ja klar, ich geh nach USA, aber wir bleiben zusammen [Lachen].' Dann ist es auseinander gegangen während ich in den USA war. […] Also jetzt vom heutigen Standpunkt, wir waren einfach zu jung und ich meine ich bin ja auch mit dem Gedanken gegangen da für immer zu bleiben."

75 "Ich glaube das hat mich auch so ein bisschen gestört [bei meinen Gasteltern zu wohnen]. Also, in der Highschool hatte ich ein super Verhältnis, aber danach habe ich dann gemerkt: 'Nee, ich brauch' schon bisschen mehr meine Freiräume,' weil […] die haben sich Sorgen gemacht. Die haben immer so nachgefragt: 'Ja wo bist du denn?' und wie auch immer. Und da war ich schon in so einem Alter, wo ich das nicht mehr wollte. Ich wollte halt nicht mehr sagen, wo ich hingehe."

It was hard to fulfill this need for independence under these circumstances. In addition, Malinka was not happy with how the classes were structured in college. She started to study psychology there—her desired field of study—but it was not how she had imagined it:

"I started to study psychology there, but it's different there. The first two years in college are very general. You specialize a little bit, but it's just very general and I didn't like to study so many different subjects, […] which I no longer wanted to have. I thought: 'Yeah, I already have the *Abitur*.'" (ll.473-477) [76]

Malinka was able to study psychology in college in Sacramento, but she encountered a way of studying and teaching there that she describes as "very general." By that, she means that she was not learning much about psychology, but instead needed to take a number of other subjects that she felt she had already studied in order to attain her *Abitur* in German school. Educational institutions are nationally structured. Therefore, educational experiences gained in institutions of one "national container" are not always easily adaptable or transferable to institutions of another "national container." As for Malinka, she felt that she was repeating her *Abitur* in the college in Sacramento. Her narrative reveals that she disliked basically everything she encountered, because things were different from what they would be in Germany. She realized that she preferred life in Germany over life in the United States and particularly she learned to appreciate Berlin more: "I realized […] for the first time […] Berlin is really cool." (ll.489f)[77] However, the most salient factor was probably her intention to stay there forever. The thought of "immigration" transformed her outlook on life there. Immigrating would just be too much:

"I began my studies and I went through one semester and then […] I couldn't do it anymore, especially for good. I don't have a problem with going abroad for a year or so, but going away with the idea of staying there forever, to somehow build my life there is very different, I discovered." (ll.480-484)[78]

76 "Psychologie habe ich da angefangen, aber da ist es ja anders. Da ist ja diese ersten zwei Jahre College macht man sehr allgemein. Man spezialisiert sich schon so ein bisschen, aber es ist halt sehr allgemein und ich fand es auch nicht mehr so toll, dass ich auf einmal so viele Fächer haben muss, […] die ich irgendwie gar nicht mehr haben will. Ich dachte: 'Ja, ich habe ja schon das Abi.'"

77 "Da habe ich auch gemerkt […] zum ersten Mal […] Berlin ist echt cool."

78 "[Ich] habe angefangen zu studieren und habe das eine Semester durchgezogen und

Malinka could not put up with the thought of staying in the United States forever and to do what it took to establish a new life there. The temporal dimension apparently affected the perception of her experience abroad. Malinka points out that a temporally restricted relocation would not be a problem as opposed to a stay *ad infinitum*. At that point of her life, she realized that "immigration" was the wrong choice for her, but that she rather prefers mobility experiences that are temporally limited. Her "immigration project" thus failed and Malinka returned to Berlin. This was a significant life lesson, which influenced her further life-course. Up to this point, Malinka's mobility experiences can be understood as transnational ones, which evolved as such only in the course of time. In her early childhood, she practiced bi-local transnational circulation flows between Germany and Poland, while she broadened her "scope of destination" towards multi-local transnational mobility later on, including cross-border connections and spatial movements between Germany and the United States. However, her story is not over just yet. In the next empirical section, we will witness another striking evolution. As for now, we can note that the attempt to immigrate to the United States symbolizes a turn-away from the thought of living a life someplace else "forever."

## 4.4 TRANSMOBILITY: CROSS-BORDER TIES AND BI-OR MULTILOCAL MOBILITY

The analyses of (parts of) Janusz's, Oscar's and Malinka's biographical experiences serve to illustrate the transnational pattern of mobility, or transmobility. Practicing post-migration transnational mobility is not a given, but it rather evolves on the basis of specific biographical constellations at certain points in the lives of my interviewees. The analyzed discourses center around the topics of *language acquirement* (of multiple languages), *social networks and family structures*, as well as *the construction of belonging* or *boundary-making*. We have seen that the very same issues are also relevant for the biographical experiences of post-migration sedentariness, yet the (biographical) configurations are different. It is safe to say that language (acquirement) has a significant impact on the transnational experiences and border-crossing mobility practices in the life sto-

dann […] ging's auch nicht mehr irgendwie, vor allem für immer. Ich habe kein Problem ins Ausland zu gehen, so für ein Jahr, aber so mit dem Gedanken wegzugehen da irgendwie für immer zu bleiben, mir da irgendwie ein Leben aufzubauen ist ganz anders, habe ich festgestellt."

ries of my interviewees. First, knowledge of the heritage language is a *precondition* for relocating one's life center to Poland for a specific amount of time. In turn, mobility is central to improving those language skills. Certainly, such a constellation is similar to the need to acquire other foreign languages to practice multi-local transnational mobility. What is more, the narratives of my interviewees reveal that the *lack of (a necessary) language* at a given point in time and space and the *process of language acquirement* are often experiences of suffering. As we have seen in the former chapter, languages are not only relevant for being mobile *per se*, but also for integration into the "country of arrival," or the other "country of origin," as well as for processes of upward social mobility.

Janusz's life story strongly emphasizes the role of the Polish language in his life-path: lacking the ability to speak Polish came with a share of suffering while desired developments came about once he acquired the language. I pointed out that learning the Polish language marked a *key moment* in Janusz's life-path. His motivation was initially a personal one, to re-connect with his Polish side of the family. It, however, gained relevance in his professional life, too. Mastering the Polish language, he says, enabled him to set another focus on his academic work, which allowed him to link bi-local mobility with his educational and professional aspirations. Then again, being able to communicate in Polish was a *precondition* for his mobility experiences to Poland, while these mobility experiences became a *precondition* for improving his Polish language skills and thus for his future professional or academic success and upward social mobility. Janusz launched a "mobility circle," making bi-local mobility *integral* to his profession, and profession or work is integral for the contemporary "institutionalization of the life-course." (Kohli 1985) Oscar's narrative emphasizes the acquirement of languages as well, but in a different context, culminating into slightly different biographical experiences. In contrast with Janusz, Oscar was faced with the acquirement of three different languages. Polish is relevant to his familial relationships and networks, the maintaining of his heritage and later on for his educational phase in Poland, while French is central to his integration into Quebec society and its institutional public sphere. Acquiring English is also important for Oscar's life in Montreal. It encompasses the social realm, i.e., communicating with his cousins and other English-speakers, and the public realm, i.e., studying in the institutions of higher education. The results of analyzing his narrative show that getting fluent in three languages demanded a lot from him, evolving into a "suffering structure" for a long phase of his life. After having acquired all these languages, Oscar is still perceived as "the other" wherever he is. Conversely, his multilingual knowledge enables him to be multi-locally mobile. Besides living in Montreal, he has relocated his life center to Poland, he has spent a sig-

nificant phase of his life in Scotland, and he plans to relocate to New York or Toronto in future. Language acquirement is also important in Malinka's narrative of her life, yet she does not emphasize it as much as the others. Once she moved back from Poland to Germany, she certainly had to learn German, which made the process of "acclimatizing" into German society more difficult, but without much difficulty. In her youth, she first relocated to the United States for a year. However, she already had a basic knowledge of English due to language classes in German school. Generally, it seems as though Malinka acquires the language or improves her skills "automatically" when she is on site in a particular place. In her case, mobility is more strongly linked to other issues, such as *family structures* and her search for a sense of *belonging.*

The specific family structures at play in Manlinka's life-course evolved into a "transnational childhood" for Malinka and a "transnational motherhood" for Malinka's mother, as both were living spatially separated for a specific period of time. Her early relocation from Berlin to Poznan at the age of three strengthens her sense of "being Polish." This becomes especially apparent in her self-perception as being born in Poland, while she was *factually* born in Berlin. Such a self-positioning reverses her categorization from "second generation" to "generation 1.5." In Janusz case, his bi-ethnic origins and the fact that one part of his family is Polish and lives in Poland certainly contributed to and sometimes facilitated his language acquirement and his mobility practices. In the course of his life, he "transnationalized" his social relationships, so that he established networks in both countries Germany and Poland. His father is an especially central figure: he not only connects Janusz with the Polish part of his origins, but he practices bi-local mobility between Germany and Poland himself. Transnational mobility is therefore something that Janusz grew up with. Thus, the social practice of mobility was familiar to him, practiced as it was by his father, even if he himself refused to have anything to do with his Polish cultural heritage, let alone practicing mobility towards Poland, for many years. Yet, Janusz grew out of his aversion to speaking Polish or even "being Polish" and he now perceives "Polishness" not only as being integral to his work endeavours, but to his very self-understanding through which he is able to construct a sense of belonging. Speaking the language, maintaining ties to his family, constructing a sense of belonging to Poland, and especially being there leads to expectations of adapting to the society and its social and cultural values. Though Janusz cannot identify with all social norms, he still pursues a project of *multiple integration* into both German and Polish contexts. Family structures play a significant role in Oscar's life story as well. Not only is he part of an aristocratic network, which has been mobile for generations, but he also uses it as *mobility capital* when he relocates to

Poland. He is not a stranger to mobility either: both of his parents have practiced mobility themselves. His life experiences lie somewhere between "cultural learning" and "integration," which are intensified by his transnational multi-local mobility experiences. Interestingly, in Oscar's narrative, *belonging* is often linked with *boundary-making*. He often experiences the role of "cultural other" by being excluded, but at the same time, he himself establishes differences between himself and others: "the Québécois culture" and later "the Polish Polish." This paradoxical constellation creates a contextual belonging that develops into a rather "cosmopolitan" self-understanding. All in all, the three interviewees mobilize their family relationships and networks in Poland in order to practice transnational mobility. Bi-or multi-local transnational mobility is often linked with educational or professional aspirations. The young adults, whose life narratives I have examined in this chapter, all have completed certain educational stations of their lives in Poland or another destination. Janusz spent one semester abroad, did an internship there and is now doing archive work there for his research. Oscar earned a degree in film school there, and Malinka attended the first two years of elementary school in Poland, a high school year as well as one semester of college in the United States. Their mobility is embedded in an educational framework. We can assume that these individuals will remain mobile in their further life-course.

As for Malinka, we will see how her mobility practices evolve in the further path of her life in the next section. However, her mobility experiences differ from those of Janusz and Oscar, not least because she has been mobile from a young age. The circumstances under which her mobility experiences emerge—not for all, but for some of her mobility practices—indicate that she uses mobility as a coping strategy to get away from unsatisfying life circumstances. From my point of view, her first relocation from Berlin to Poznan can be seen as an attempt to leave behind her illness and emotional discomfort in kindergarten in Berlin. Her first relocation to the United States could be more a thirst for adventure, yet her second relocation to the United States, her immigration project, were also a way to evade certain challenges she faced in Berlin at that point of time, like the non-admittance to a university psychology program. While for Janusz and Oscar, mobility is relevant to "move on" in the sense of pursuing educational and professional aspirations, for Malinka mobility is sometimes used to "move away" from the personal challenges she encounters at given points in time. We have seen how her transnational mobility changed from bi-local mobility between Germany and Poland to multi-local mobility, gaining another destination, the United States. At that point in her life, her mobility orientation reaches a climax, where she constructs an idea of mobility as immigration. Malinka's

"immigration project" eventually failed, constituting a *key moment* in her life, which brings about a change in perspective toward her life, in which she re-orientates her mobility practices. Since Malinka refuses to be mobile in the sense of a "one-way ticket immigration," she is left—as I see it—with two possibilities: either she stays sedentary or she practices temporally-restricted mobilities. In the next empirical section, we will see how her mobility practices evolve from the pattern of "transmobility" to the pattern of "cosmobility."