

# A Symposium Jan. 18th-19th, 2024

## Mobile Professionals and Families

Faculty of Social Sciences, Tampere University, Finland

### Preliminary programme (subject to change)

Thursday January 18<sup>th</sup>

9.30–11.00	Linna K113	Jennie Germann Molz: <b>Digital Nomad Families: From Worldschoolors to Mobile Mompreneurs</b>
11.00–11.15		Break
11.15–12.15	Linna K113	Mari Korpela: <b>Life is here and now: Experiences and Views of Expatriate Children and Teenagers in Finland</b>
		Lunch
14.00–14.30	Linna 5101	Taina Kinnunen & Päivi Korvajärvi: <b>Techno wives doing their gender identity through transnational movement</b>
14.30–15.00	Linna 5101	Akemi Jill Matsumura Vásquez: <b>Family building by high skilled Peruvian women in post-lockdown conditions in Germany</b>
15.00–15.30	Linna 5101	Katja Laakkonen: <b>Home in Finland – Work in Norway. The Multilocal Everyday Life of Finnish Nurses</b>
15.30–16.00	Linna 5101	Catarina Sales: <b>Long distance academic commuters: Part-time parenting in times of academic cultures of performativity</b>
16.00–16.30		Break
16.30-17.30	Linna 5026	Film Screening: <b>Hanging Out</b> + discussion with the participants of the film project
19.00		Dinner

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9.30–10.00	Linna 5101	Sophie Cranston: <b>Privilege in mobility? Discussions of childhood privilege by globally mobile British university students</b>
10.00–10.30		Klāvs Sedlenieks: <b>Childhood friends, colleagues and others: maintaining ties while being subjected to tie engineering</b>
10.30–10.45		Break
10.45–11.15		Zuzana Terry: <b>Disadvantage or privileged</b>
11.15–11.45		Johannes de Kam: <b>Navigating Stuckness: The Role of Global Mobility Professionals in Curating the Mobility of Mobile Professionals and Their Families During the Covid-19 Pandemic</b>
		Lunch
13.30–14.00		Schäfer & Maxwell: <b>Intergenerational social incorporation among high-skilled migrants living in Denmark</b>
14.00–14.30		Cederberg et al: <b>Coming 'home' in times of uncertainty: Return experiences and constructions of home among Swedish mobile families</b>
14.30–15.30		Concluding discussion

## Abstracts

Thursday January 18<sup>th</sup>

### 9.30–11.00 **Digital Nomad Families: From Worldschoollers to Mobile Mompreneurs**

*Jennie Germann Molz*

*College of the Holy Cross, Massachusetts, USA*

In this talk, I focus on a demographic that has generally been overlooked in research on highly skilled mobile workers: digital nomad families. Scholarship on skilled migrant and expatriate workers has included studies of children and families, but has tended to focus on corporate or diplomatic employees who relocate with their families under the umbrella of institutional support. In contrast, digital nomads are more likely to undertake free-lance or self-employed work as they move and travel abroad, but studies of digital nomads focus almost exclusively on young, single, child-free professionals. In between, we find digital nomad families, parents who travel together with their school-aged children while one or both parents earn money through remote online work. It is likely that the number of these families will only grow in coming years as arrangements for work and schooling become increasingly digitized, flexible, and mobile. The relative absence of digital nomad families in the scholarship leaves not just an empirical gap, however, but a theoretical gap as well. Because digital nomad families tend to prioritize travel, freedom, and self-actualization over work when opting to uproot their lives, their nomad practices represent complex entanglements of lifestyle, livelihood, and family life. My aim in this talk is to sketch out a future research agenda that examines digital nomad families as harbingers of the shifting contours around mobile lifestyles, remote work, parenting styles, and the commodification of family life.

### 11.15–12.15 **Life is here and now: Experiences and Views of Expatriate Children and Teenagers in Finland**

*Mari Korpela*

*Tampere University, Finland*

Finland, among many other countries, welcomes highly skilled international professionals. In this talk, I focus on the views and experiences of such professionals' 9-15-year-old children. I argue that although they have transnational backgrounds and transnational lifeworlds, they themselves focus very much on their local lives here and now. Paying analytical attention to the mundane everyday practices in the children and teenagers' lives, has helped me to gain insights into various negotiations and occasions where they (or others) define their position and belonging. Very often, those negotiations involve frictions and cause distinctions. In my talk, I also discuss the (un)privileged position of these children and teenagers arguing that although they are *relatively* privileged and adults often like to see such children as the future global elite, their position is not necessarily as privileged as it first seems. This concerns above all their educational paths as children's education is usually defined within the national order of things and families' transnational mobility causes disruptions to children's educational paths. Until now, empirical research on such children and teenagers has been scarce, and a crucial challenge is the lack of theorization on this type of international children and youth. In my talk, I elaborate on why I do not want to use the concept of Third Culture Kids and on the possibility of finding alternative conceptualizations. The talk is based on an extensive ethnographic research project I have conducted among children and teenagers who attend an international school in Finland.

### 14.00–14.30 **Techno wives doing their gender identity through transnational movement**

*Taina Kinnunen, University of Oulu, Finland*

*Päivi Korvajärvi, Tampere University, Finland*

The presentation deals with gender identity of Finnish immigrant women living in San Diego and Silicon Valley in the U.S. These women (and their children) settled in California after their husbands were recruited to US-based technology companies for fixed term or permanent jobs. Most of the women themselves are highly-skilled professionals too – although of other than technology expertise – but have mainly stayed as home-keepers while living in the US and elsewhere abroad. Some women have though got employed during their stay which varies from 1 to 20 years. Most of them were married with the same man throughout the research period, but many had also divorced and created their own careers in the US.

The study is based on 3 two-month periods of non-systematic participant observation between 2005 and 2015, 15 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2015 in person, and e-mail discussions in 2019. The research material provides a unique opportunity to consider the research participants' gender identity as a *contextual relational process* along with the life changes in varied circumstances which offer new and unforeseen kinds of opportunities, privileges, and restrictions. Our paper discusses how the participants have (re)done and undone their identities as educated professionals, spouses, and mothers, and what kind of social, affective, and practical process their identity work has been. We argue that varied relations, circumstances, and happenings generate multidimensional continuities, empowerments, setbacks, and stucks in gendered subjectivities.

#### **14.30–15.00 Family building by high skilled Peruvian women in post-lockdown conditions in Germany**

*Akemi Jill Matsumura Vásquez PHD Candidate, Ethnology  
Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, Germany*

International migration implies interpersonal disconnections and new connections in the original and in the destination place. The present research seeks to analyze these processes of building connections that can be transformed into family relations for high educated Latin-American migrants in Europe who, at the same time, build a professional career and that are normally not seen as a vulnerable population. A case in point is Peruvian women in Germany. Their migratory behaviors present specific characteristics in comparison with others in demand destination countries like Japan or Spain. The first characteristic is a large presence of females and second, these women migrants are mostly high skilled professionals. In this sense, my current research has two main objectives. First: to obtain a wide overview of the situation of this migrant population in Germany, especially skilled women, yet vulnerable migrants. Second, to analyze the process of building relationships along their trajectories as skilled migrants who try to develop a career path in this new country and how these links can be considered family relationships. The subjects of study were approached in the context of the post-lockdown period in the aftermath of the Covid-19 crisis, when the challenges of coping with uncertainty were unequal and had specific characteristics for migrant populations. For these purposes, a mixed methodology is being used: a quantitative perspective, based on a survey in order to gather data from 100 Peruvians in Germany; and a qualitative ethnographic perspective, based on interviews to 30 Peruvian Women in order to re-construct their own process. This method will be complemented with observations of their households and activities.

#### **15.00–15.30 Home in Finland – Work in Norway. The Multilocal Everyday Life of Finnish Nurses**

*Katja Laakkonen  
University of Eastern Finland*

My presentation is based on my doctoral research, in which I study the multilocal everyday life of Finnish nurses. The nurses in my research live in Finland but work in Norway (long-distance com-muting). These middle-aged and high-skilled nurses are active players in the Nordic labour and care market, where work and family life are spent in physically different places. My research pro-vides new insights into how nurses' lives are structured in a context of multilocal mobile care work between two welfare states. The aim of my research is to describe the transnational labour mar-ket of women, as long-distance commuting has been more common in the past in male-dominated sectors (such as mining, construction, and transport).

My study is based on ethnographic research data collected through participant observation in a Norwegian hospital and thematic interviews (n=17). Through an individual and institutional per-spective, I combine these two relevant dimensions of everyday life into an experience of multilo-cal everyday life and how everyday life in Finland and Norway intersect. The commuting nurses live physically separated from the

rest of the family during their commuting periods, so they have developed new everyday practices to deal with the challenges of transnational everyday life. Transnational lifestyle requires negotiation of everyday practices, as the transnational space is not only the personal space of the commuting nurse, but it also affects her family and close ones. In this presentation, I consider the reconciliation of work and family life in the context of mobile care work.

**15.30–16.00 Long distance academic commuters: Part-time parenting in times of *academic cultures of performativity***

*Catarina Sales*

*UBI and Cies Iscte, Portugal*

The growth of commuting distance is a trend of the current century (Ribeiro, 2022; Kneebone & Holmes, 2015; Sales Oliveira, 2015; Aguilera, 2005). Long distance commuting is a phenomenon that has been given scarce attention despite all the questions involved in this lifestyle. One group of professionals who often experience this reality are academic scholars (Yarrow & Davis, 2020). *Academic nomadism* is feasible because face-to-face contact is compulsory only for the lectures and at the same time the growing competitiveness and complexity of academic careers pushes scholars to consider jobs increasingly distant of their hometown (Sallee, 2019). Given that it is a highly qualified occupation these professionals tend to be represented as privileged workers belonging to a social, economic and cultural elite. In countryside universities, the phenomenon of long-distance academic commuters tends to be more frequent, since it is harder to find suitable human resources in the local community. Specifically at UBI (University of Beira Interior), a small university located in a mountainous region in the interior of Portugal, its history has been shaped by a strong presence of international scholars as well as of Portuguese long distance commuters.

In this exploratory research, we aim to understand the effects of this mobile lifestyle on parenting. Through the *long stories* - in time and space - of a sample of long distance commuters at UBI who are parents, we essay to understand the strategies and family dynamics of these professionals. The relationship with their children, their daily lives routines, the division of tasks and family management of spaces/time are the dimensions addressed. The interviewees emphasised the need for a space for themselves, where work is a central element but also connected to social life, especially in the case of the women lecturer.

**Friday January 19<sup>th</sup>**

**9.30–10.00 Privilege in mobility? Discussions of childhood privilege by globally mobile British university students**

*Dr Sophie Cranston*

*Loughborough University, UK*

Contributing to wider discussions around middle class identities, this paper explores how British globally mobile young people discuss privilege in relation to their childhoods. In discussions of global mobile families, there is often the assumption of privileged lifestyles in three ways. One, the ability to move is privileged in comparison to other groups. Two, privilege is often framed in relation to the host population in terms of the economic capital of the family. Three, through the acquisition of cultural capital, privilege is manifest in comparison to children at home.

However, accounts of globally mobile families tend to focus on the perspectives of adults as opposed to the experiences of young people. This paper takes a different approach through semi structured interviews and a photo elicitation exercise with British university students who had spent part of their childhood living abroad. The paper explores the different ways in which these young people frame and discuss their perceptions of the privilege in their childhood experiences: 1) relationally 2) by discussing fractions in middle class identities between those globally mobile and those not 3) by drawing on markers of identification of globally mobile childhoods like the TCK (c.f. Holt and Bowlby, 2019). The paper demonstrates that for these young people, there is a tension between seeing their experiences of growing up abroad as a marker of distinction and a desire to hide these experiences to others in an attempt to fit in.

**10.00–10.30 Childhood friends, colleagues and others: maintaining ties while being subjected to tie engineering**

*Klāvs Sedlenieks*  
*Riga Stradiņš University, Latvia*

Changing one's place of residence inevitably affects interpersonal ties – some are shortened and strengthened, some are stretched to the limit, and some are severed. I use the concept of “tie engineering” to describe the process whereby various agencies (governments, private or public employees, bureaucracies etc) consciously manipulate human ties in order to achieve their intended goals. This may include pulling or pushing people together in order for them to “network” and “form webs” or pulling them apart in order to minimise the personal ties that might form (as is the case of some international aid organisations). This presentation is about the subjects of this tie engineering – the people who get entangled in periodic relocation related to their job and (at least partly) due to institutional policies. On the basis of a series of interviews with mobile scholars, diplomats and employees of international organisations I trace the way they maintain relationships with people around them, paying particular attention to how they refer to friendships and other important ties. Unsurprisingly, it is difficult to maintain old friendships while one moves around. However, new friendships are also difficult to create and many of the people that I interviewed, do not even intend to start working on their relationships. In particular, if the relocation is to another country where the language is different. While some manage to develop deeper friendships with some of the colleagues and even neighbours, most refer to their childhood or early adulthood friends as the most important persons.

#### **10.45–11.15 Disadvantaged or/and Privileged**

*Zuzana Terry*  
*Charles University, Czech Republic*

My presentation deals with diasporic community education in the form of a youth theatre institution for Anglophone migrants in the Czech Republic. The Anglophone migrants could be considered privileged due to the English language as their mother tongue with its position in the globalised world, their family background in the globalised North, and passports that let them travel easily. On the other hand, children and young people with migrant parents often struggle with establishing their position among their peers, where it is essential to be included. In the context of post-socialist Czech, the society is still very homogeneous and Anglophone teenagers are often considered different and their position in a peer group is contested.

I argue that the homogeneity of Czech society pushes Anglophone teenagers into more privileged social landscapes of cosmopolitan knowledge and future. The teenagers of studied youth theatre in the Czech Republic enjoyed the Anglophone diasporic community education's inclusive environment, the youth theatre was a place where their ‘otherness’ became a normality. Egalitarian, local mainstream schools exoticised those children and created a feeling of exclusion. ‘Otherness’ that motivated them to join a more privileged environment to feel accepted and ‘normal’. What makes them ‘other’ in the outside Czech majority world makes them ‘fit in’ here. Although it is located in the Czech Republic, the youth theatre connects its actors with the Anglophone world, teaching them to manoeuvre expectedly through Anglophone cultures (Hannerz 1996). At the same time, they tend to close themselves within their own social bubble (Korpela 2014).

#### **11.15–11.45 Navigating Stuckness: The Role of Global Mobility Professionals in Curating the Mobility of Mobile Professionals and Their Families During the Covid-19 Pandemic**

*Dr Johannes de Kam*  
*The University of Warwick, UK*

The border restrictions that were characteristic of the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic dynamically impacted mobile professionals and their families, generating varying degrees of stuckness. Whereas much research focuses on the practices and experiences of those mobile, less emphasised are the actors who mediate their mobility. This paper aims to shed light on the ways in which the experiences of mobile professionals and their families, amid the pandemic, were, to varying degrees, enmeshed with the power structures and curating practices of Global Mobility Professionals (GMPs) in the Global Mobility Industry (GMI).

Rooted in the mobilities paradigm, this paper draws on a thematic analysis of 26 semi-structured interviews with GMPs from across the GMI, conducted during April-June 2020. The paper demonstrates the ways in which highly uneven transnational mobilities of mobile professionals and their families are produced through the care practices of GMPs. These care practices were seen to operate at the crossroads of an ethics of care, politics of care, business interest, and government regulation.

This paper contributes to the growing body of literature examining the ways in which privilege in mobility is shaped and structured through the infrastructures mobile professionals are enmeshed with. It highlights the significance of GMPs in mediating the experience of mobile professionals and their families during a pandemic, shedding light on the complex interplay between mobility and the power structures through which various mobilities are produced.

### **13.30–14.00 Intergenerational social incorporation among high-skilled migrants living in Denmark**

*Gregor Schäfer and Claire Maxwell*  
*University of Copenhagen, Denmark*

Projects of social incorporation among migrants need to be examined through a temporal lens – focusing both on practices in the present, as well as whether and how these are seeking to create particular future possibilities. High-skilled migrants, especially those who have been recruited from abroad for a new job, are an interesting case to focus on – given their resources and understanding of selves as highly mobile for future work opportunities. In this paper we consider the case of the high-skilled migrant and their families, examining their approaches to social incorporation in the Greater Copenhagen area and Denmark. Drawing on interviews with 20 families, we found that many parents, despite their potential on-going mobility, were working to create social incorporation through an intergenerational frame – focusing on the needs of their children rather than their own. Meanwhile, others were engaged in a different form of social incorporation, more strongly linked to an international community. Our analysis highlights how previous and anticipated mobility trajectories, socio-cultural backgrounds, connections to a ‘homeland’, and choice of schooling differentiated the practices found within this group, and that there is not always a clear and direct connection between the parents’ own professional and social ambitions and those they hold for their children. Such analyses are important given the heterogeneity with the group of ‘high-skilled migrants’ and the various ways they impact local communities and the societies they take residence in, no matter how temporarily.

### **14.00–14.30 Coming ‘home’ in times of uncertainty: Return experiences and constructions of home among Swedish mobile families**

*Maja Cederberg, Oksana Shmulyar Gréen and Ylva Wallinder*  
*University of Gothenburg, Sweden*

The research aims to illuminate the motivations, experiences and practices of return among Swedish mobile families. Returning Swedes constitute a significant proportion of incoming migrants to Sweden, yet remain underresearched. They are seldom considered migrants and often expect a smooth return, but existing knowledge points towards numerous challenges. Recent events, including Brexit, the global pandemic, the war in Europe, the recession, and accelerating climate change, create a unique impetus for return migration, making this research timely. As part of this research, we plan to explore migration through a family lens, arguing that family-related priorities and commitments are central to understanding practices of return. Importantly, we explore the perspective of children in mobile families, which previous research has insufficiently attended to. The study will include a descriptive analysis of register data, analysis of guidance for returnees from public authorities, and 18-20 family case studies involving interviews with different family members. In interviews with adults, we will use a narrative interview method, while interviews with children and young people will combine narrative interviews with visual methods, in order to access their experiences of mobility and meaningful relationships. Our unique research design captures the interplay of individual experiences and the family context in different societal settings, making a significant contribution to knowledge of migration and integration.