Migrants, language and motility

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Young researchers’ perspective
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The case for motility I

• Concept from biology
• Urban sociology: Kaufmann et al. (2004)
• Potential mobility
• Connecting socio-linguistic and migration theory
• Three characteristics:
  – Access (e.g. linguistic infrastructure)
  – Competence (e.g. language skills)
  – Appropriation (perceived skills and mobility)
The case for motility II

- Advantages
  - Comprehensive migration analysis
  - Studying the interplay between integration and migration
  - Accounts for policy effects on mobility options
  - Focus on transnationalism
Field-work

• Three countries (Sweden, The Netherlands, France)
  – Reason: each represents a ‘national model’ for integration
• Two immigrant groups (Poles and Turks)
  – EU and Non-EU
• 83 interviews made, approx: 20-40 minutes each.
  – Main topics
    • Perceived language skills and language use
    • Migration history
    • Transnationalism
    • Intra-EU mobility
    • Language education and citizenship courses
Some conclusions

- Mother tongue skills could improve migrants’ motility in EU
- Government discouraging bilingualism has very little negative effects on migrants’ motility. Government promoting bilingualism (i.e. teachers promoting bilingualism) has strong positive effects
- Host language education poorly organized.
- Mother tongue education poorly organized
- All communities engage frequently in transnational activities. Consequence: linguistic assimilation is complicated to enforce.
- Mother tongue skills improve motility for half of the groups
- Low socio-economic status equals little interest in cultural aspects of language skills. “Erst das Fressen und dann die Kultur”.

“Erst das Fressen und dann die Kultur”.
Future of multilingualism research

• Engage with concepts such as motility
  – Bridging theoretical gap between migration and socio-linguistics

• More research incorporating perspectives of immigrants
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