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**THE CONTRADICTION CONDITION OF 'HOMELESSNESS' IN
THE LIFE OF THE TRANSNATIONAL PROFESSIONAL**

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The contradictory condition of 'homelessness' in the life of the transnational professional

Abstract

This paper explores the condition of 'homelessness' as self-represented by a particular category of skilled professionals, who in the pursuit of work have relocated internationally more than once. The argument proposed is that, as a result of their highly mobile lifestyle, these transnational professionals experience ambiguous feelings regarding their notion of home, considered as a source of direction and stability associated with a given place or culture. Drawing on 48 personal narratives, this paper examines how the notion of home is manifested as part of the life of the transnational professional. The analysis follows the approach of intertextuality to identify associations with certain archetypal tales and novels associated with individual displacement. The findings show contradictory references to a sense of homelessness, which in the context of work is perceived as an ideal attitude, whereas in the private sphere generates negative feelings of self-alienation.

Keywords

Global careers; serial expatriation; narrative analysis; home; archetypes; corporate discourses.

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the condition of 'homelessness' as self-represented by the transnational professional. The term transnational professional as used here refers to a particular category of skilled professionals who, in the pursuit of work opportunities, have relocated internationally more than once and who intended to continue to move globally at the time this study was carried out. The argument put forward is that these transnational professionals experience ambiguous feelings regarding their notion of home, which is considered on the one hand as a source of direction and stability associated with a given place or culture, but which at the same time is weakened by the continuous change of locality involved in the life of the transnational professional because it results in ephemeral relationships with place and the local community. Drawing upon the narratives of these transnational professionals, this paper suggests that, as a part of their work-life experiences, they sense a 'contradictory condition of homelessness' which encompasses self-perceptions of a heroic status alongside negative feelings of self-alienation.

The mobility of the transnational professional differs from traditional migration in that the former primarily perceives the host location as temporary rather than a place in which they seek to reside on a permanent basis (D'Andrea 2006; Nowicka 2007; Ossman 2004). Host locality refers to the country in which the individual lives and works at a given time, so it is considered as a stable place of residency during a defined period of time. Following this, the life of the transnational professional

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3 necessarily involves a series of host localities. It is important to note that the kind of mobility here
4 examined is embedded with a sense of willingness, meaning that it is initiated by personal agency
5 rather than a response to external circumstances, as is the case with other forms of individual
6 mobility in modern society (e.g. refugees and economic migrants). Moreover, the mobility of this
7 category of skilled professionals can be considered as privileged, because employment, hence
8 individual economic stability, is secured in the host location before mobility takes place.
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14 On the basis that transnational professionals actively seek job opportunities abroad, this paper
15 follows the view that international experience is perceived by the individuals as an important asset
16 in the construction of their corporate career (Dickmann and Baruch 2011; Doherty and Dickmann
17 2009). The interest here is to contribute to the existing literature on mobile professionals by focusing
18 on people's attitudes towards their idea of home. It falls beyond the scope of this paper to explore
19 the extent to which international experience gained by employees results in financial gains for the
20 corporation in which they work.
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27 Drawing on 48 personal narratives, this paper critically explores how the idea of home is represented
28 as part of the life of the transnational professional and identifies the narrative elements used to
29 construct such representations. A personal narrative is a unique composition of past events,
30 characters and experiences of an individual history (Boje 2001; Czarniawska 2004). In constructing
31 the narrative, the narrator consciously or unconsciously incorporates different narrative elements,
32 such as other texts and discourses, to express a particular perspective or intention (Gabriel 2004).
33 Archetypes are narrative elements used for the plotting of a narrative to communicate meaning;
34 they provide the narrator with a shared frame of reference for the understanding and self-
35 representation of different aspects of life (Brunel 1992; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera 2012).
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43 The analysis of the narratives adopts the methodological approach of intertextuality to trace
44 patterns of emplotment that draw upon existing or prior texts (Boje 2001; Czarniawska 2004;
45 Fairclough 2006). In particular, the analysis examines the use of archetypal characters and
46 prototypical plots as represented in certain archetypal tales and novels associated with individual
47 displacement, whether physical or emotional. Specifically, the analysis draws upon the ideal of home
48 as presented in the archetypal plot of Homer's *Odyssey*, the sense of self-alienation as illustrated in
49 *The Metamorphosis* by Kafka and in the legend of *The Flying Dutchman*, and the archetype of the
50 wanderer as depicted in Eichendorff's story *Life of a Good-for-Nothing*. These texts were chosen to
51 support the analysis of the narratives because they contain narrative elements relevant to the idea
52 of homelessness as put forward in this paper, particularly the change or transformation of the
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3 traditional values of fixity and rootedness associated with the notion of home as the individual
4 attempts to adopt continuous international mobility as a form of life.
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8 The intertextual relations between the archetypes and the narratives presented here are based on
9 the references to shared assumptions and common beliefs concerning geographical displacement
10 and relationships to place, which are traced to the functional as well as the moral dimensions
11 attributed to certain archetypal figures and plots (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera 2012). At the same
12 time, the analysis of the representations of international travel is framed by the corporate discourse
13 of individual global mobility, as part of the wider context of modern corporations in which the
14 transnational professional moves. A review of this discourse is presented in the next section. This is
15 followed by the methodological approach of the analysis, the overview of the sample of
16 transnational professionals and the methods used to collect their personal narrative. The analysis
17 offers extracts of the narratives to illustrate the findings in terms of the discursive themes identified
18 in the texts, whilst the discussion focuses on these findings. The conclusions in the final section
19 complete the paper.
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30 **The corporate discourse of individual global mobility**

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33 Mobility has become one of the main class stratifying factors of modern society, as the ability to
34 change and adapt puts certain individuals at the top of the hierarchy in relation to those who are
35 rooted to place or locally fixed (Bauman 2000). Those who oscillate between such extremes are in “a
36 state of permanent anxiety about being disconnected, rejected, abandoned on the spot by those
37 who move around” (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007, 364). The perceived social deprivation associated
38 with the immobility of the spatially settled is reinforced by the pervasive gloss which contemporary
39 globalization puts on the mobility of the ‘nomadic elite’ by associating this elite with social
40 promotion, advancement and success, and subsequently directing people’s desire towards a life ‘on
41 the move’ (Bauman 2000).
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50 This paper considers the transnational professional as part of the nomadic elite, because the
51 corporate context in which they move provides a sort of protective environment regarding economic
52 stability and professional development (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007). From this standpoint, value is
53 measured by the individual’s readiness to be physically and intellectually mobile; the sacrifice of
54 lifetime projects, such as a profession or a marriage, is considered as a ‘form of investment’ to
55 sustain the ability to remain available and flexible (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007). This view generally
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3 opposes the principles of stability and rootedness characteristic of previous stages of capitalism and
4 encourages the detachment from the local as well as the renouncement of longstanding links
5 (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007; Harvey 1990). In such an environment, individual mobility is
6 associated with positive and even glorified metaphors of flux, freedom and boundary crossing
7 through the ways in which they encompass the changes occurred in the capitalist forms of
8 production and consumption (Bauman 2000; Boltanski and Chiapello 2007).
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14 This representation of the mobile individual relates to the perceived spatial and temporal
15 compression provoked by contemporary globalization, which contributes to the dissolution of the
16 illusory relationship between identity and nation-state, and between self and place (Harvey 1990;
17 Sloterdijk 2013). Such intense compression has changed the ways in which individuals perceive and
18 interpret the world, resulting in a 'disorienting and disruptive impact' on all aspects of social life
19 (Harvey 1990, 284). Within this context, Sloterdijk (2013) refers to the 'self without place' as a
20 condition of modernity, meaning that the sense of collective unity is generated through the
21 construction of imaginary communities, which are formed and sustained outside the subjective and
22 actual boundaries of a given locality. The term imagined community was originally coined in 1983 by
23 Benedict Anderson to describe nations (Anderson 2006, 6); from his perspective, a nation is
24 imagined because it is created in the mind of the individuals who consider themselves as members
25 of the nation's community.
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35 In the context of modern corporations, the discourse of individual mobility often draws upon
36 idealized representations of international travel and subjective detachment from place, notions that
37 relate to other salient discourses such as 'being global' and 'cosmopolitanism' (Whitehead and
38 Halsall 2016). For instance, Nowicka and Kaweh (2009) argue that 'cosmopolitan ideas' as used
39 within certain international institutions influence the way individuals make sense of their reality and
40 relate to culturally different others. The authors note that being part of international organizations is
41 generally perceived by individuals as an 'important step' in their professional career, because it is
42 perceived as the means to move across cultural borders. Nowicka and Kaweh (2009) conclude that
43 cosmopolitanism is not only an aspiration embedded in the social positions and the institutional
44 context of the international professional, but also "a way of giving sense to some daily struggles in
45 an unfamiliar environment" (Nowicka and Kaweh 2009, 68).
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55 Similarly, Colic-Peisker (2010) examines how global mobility represents, for the individual, an
56 opportunity to develop 'cosmopolitan credentials' because it facilitates cross-cultural connectivity
57 and the establishment of international networks. Career, in this environment, provides a sense of
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3 continuity and structure for the mobile professional that may serve as substitute for the traditional
4 view that identity construction and sense of belonging are fixed to a defined geopolitical territory
5 (Colic-Peisker 2010).
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10 11 ***The notion of home for the transnational professional*** 12

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14 Studies concerned with globally mobile professionals sometimes draw upon characteristics
15 traditionally attributed to nomadic communities as a source for metaphorical descriptions of
16 geographical displacement and relationships to place. For example, D'Andrea (2006, 97) proposes
17 the theory of 'neo-nomadism' to address the 'hypermobility' of individuals in contemporary society,
18 characterised by a convergence of economic strategies and lifestyles that structure the social life of
19 individuals who claim to embrace the global as a 'new home'. According to D'Andrea (2006), these
20 'global nomads' reject the rigidity of their ethnic or national origin, meaning that they do not have
21 feelings of nostalgia for their homeland. This portrayal of a 'deterritorialized nature' of the mobile
22 individual is presented as a positive sense of homelessness because it opposes the hegemonic
23 conventions and traditional values of fixity and rootedness.
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32 Meerwarth (2008, 113) uses the term 'nomadic worker' to refer to those individuals who, in order to
33 accomplish work, follow repetitive and structured patterns of geographical mobility, temporarily
34 grounding themselves in different places. Meerwarth (2008) explores the changes in behaviours or
35 adjustments involved in the mobile lifestyle concerning the relationships with the social and physical
36 environment. He finds that the meaning of home is no longer limited to a given location but
37 extended to places in which particular people, objects and activities are situated (Meerwarth 2008).
38 From a similar perspective, Nowicka (2007) argues that highly mobile professionals perceive home as
39 a network of social relations, objects and familiar environments that can be spatially and temporally
40 dispersed. The private space called home is constantly reconfigured as new locations and social
41 relations become part of the 'transnational connections' that make up such space. On this basis,
42 Nowicka (2007, 83) describes home as a 'flexible space in-becoming' that, in an abstract sense, can
43 move with the individual since it is 'located anywhere and everywhere'.
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53 Butcher (2010) challenges the ideas of 'belonging everywhere' and 'being a global citizen' related to
54 the highly mobile lifestyle, arguing that individuals are confronted by the need to associate their
55 sense of 'being at home' with a given place in order to manage the feelings of unsettlement
56 generated by their continuous mobility. Butcher (2010) suggests that fixing home to the imagined or
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3 real characteristics of an unfamiliar location provides individuals with feelings of security and
4 familiarity. This process of 're-placing' home represents for the individual a stabilising weight amid
5 changing frames of reference, thus confronting the notions of fluidity and cosmopolitanism
6 attributed to transnational movement (Butcher 2010).
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10 11 12 ***International experience in the context of contemporary careers*** 13

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15 Geographical mobility as part of the individual's working life is often represented in the literature of
16 careers as the means to develop 'career capital', understood as knowledge and skills that are
17 believed to be highly valued in the labour market (Doherty and Dickmann 2009). One of the
18 associated ideas found in the literature is the concept of the 'boundaryless career' (Defillippi and
19 Arthur 1994). In general terms, the notion refers to the individual's ability to transcend traditional
20 organizational arrangements or boundaries, considered within dimensions of physical or
21 psychological mobility (Arthur and Rousseau 2001). These boundaries may be objective, as for
22 instance among fields of work, organizations and countries, or subjective, such as those perceived
23 between the domains of work and family. Boundaryless career principles are oriented towards self-
24 directed career paths as opposed to organization-managed careers. Individuals are encouraged to
25 seek 'psychological success' in their changing work settings and to rely more on their personal
26 talents and potentials in their search for employment (Arthur and Rousseau 2001; Defillippi and
27 Arthur 1994).
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38 This view relates to the ideology of neoliberalism and the emphasis the latter places on people's
39 responsibility for their social and economic success or failure, rather than being the result of the
40 system's properties (Whitehead and Halsall 2016). This is noted, for example, by Roper, Ganesh and
41 Inkson (2010) in their study of the boundaryless careers discourse as represented in the academic
42 literature. According to the authors, these texts generally accept the normalisation of the view that
43 individuals must take maximum responsibility for their own career outcome (Roper, Ganesh and
44 Inkson 2010, 668). This support, whether tacit or unconscious, is manifested by a lack of critical
45 recognition of the unequal power relations and the economic interests embedded in the discourse
46 (Roper, Ganesh and Inkson 2010).
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54 Another influential idea associated with employee mobility is the concept of 'protean career' (Hall
55 2002). The notion draws upon metaphorical representations of the archetypal character Proteus in
56 Greek mythology who, as depicted in Homer's (1980) poem the *Odyssey*, can change shape at will in
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3 order to survive. Following this archetype of self-transformation, the construction of a protean
4 career generally refers to the individual's ability to 'reinvent themselves' and shape their identity to
5 adopt the changes in the contemporary work environment (Hall 2002). In the same manner, the skill
6 to 'reshape' thinking and behaviour to be more sympathetic and act appropriately in respect to the
7 culture of others is considered as a valuable competence of the global manager (Thomas and Inkson
8 2004). For instance, some studies concerned with internationally mobile professionals agree that
9 possessing a 'protean attitude' can be considered as a type of career capital, as it can positively
10 influence career success and satisfaction (Cao, Hirschi and Deller 2012; Mäkelä et al. 2016).
11 However, other studies note that following a protean career can also generate negative feelings for
12 the individual in terms of psychological well-being (Briscoe et al. 2012) and job security (Roper,
13 Ganesh and Inkson 2010).

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22 It is this ambiguity between professional advantages accrued and negative individual feelings which
23 forms the 'contradictory condition of homelessness' explored in the narratives of transnational
24 professionals in this paper. The notion of protean career is an example of how archetypes as
25 narrative aids interlace different texts on a temporal continuum (Fairclough 2006), in this case the
26 *Odyssey* and career literature. This paper identifies this sort of intertextual connections between the
27 sample of personal narratives from transnational professionals and certain archetypal tales and
28 novels associated with individual displacement.

29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 **The study**

38 39 40 41 42 ***Narrative analysis: Intertextuality***

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45 The analysis is situated within the methodological framework of narrative analysis, with a particular
46 emphasis on intertextuality. The term intertextuality was first introduced by Julia Kristeva (1980) to
47 describe her idea that a text redistributes language in a 'destructive-constructive' manner, a view
48 that refers to the quality of texts to both construct and subvert meaning. According to this approach,
49 a text contains various utterances which are taken from other texts and intersect and neutralize one
50 another as they are linguistically incorporated (Kristeva 1980, 36). This abstract relationship of texts
51 occurs in a wider social and historical dimension, interlacing past, present and anticipated texts (Boje
52 2001; Fairclough 2006). Intertextuality transforms texts as they come to be incorporated as part of
53 the production of a new text, which in turn is distributed and used as reference for the constitution
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3 of other kind of texts (Fairclough 2006). As Barthes (1977) advocates, intertextuality is not the
4 tracing of the 'origins' of a text but rather the 'citations' that make up a text and which are
5 "anonymous, untraceable, and yet already read" (160).
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9 Intertextual analysis in this paper follows the critical approach assumed by Fairclough (2006) and
10 Boje (2001), who suggest that texts incorporate shared conventions and hegemonic assumptions
11 that seek to perpetuate dominant ideologies. This approach partially relates to the structuralist view
12 in that texts contain traces of other texts as well as structural features intended to impose order and
13 unity to the narrative. For example, the structure of a narrative is founded on the function that
14 certain actions carried out by one or more characters have in the overall meaning of the text, such as
15 actions that are rendered 'heroic' or 'villainous' in relation to the significance of the story (Barthes
16 1977; Czarniawska 2004). A particular discourse, in this case the corporate discourse of individual
17 global mobility, can be considered as a sort of structural principle that is incorporated in personal
18 narratives, whether consciously or subconsciously, as a frame of reference to render past
19 experiences meaningful and coherent (Fairclough 2006). Following this, the analysis presented here
20 identifies references to other texts on a temporal continuum, namely narrative archetypes and
21 prototypical plots, and seeks relations to discourses associated with individual global mobility. These
22 narrative elements are then examined for the ways in which they are used in the narratives to
23 construct the meaning of home.
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34 35 36 37 *Archetypes as narrative aids*

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39 Archetypes can be considered as structural principles used for the plotting of a personal narrative or
40 textual unfolding of events, as they provide the individual with a frame of reference for the
41 understanding and self-representation of different aspects of life (Kociatkiewicz and Kostera 2012).
42 This view sees narratives as intertwined with one another through underlying associations that draw
43 upon prototypical interpretations which concern the function and moral dimension certain actions
44 and events have in a given story (Barthes 1977). Following Jungian psychology, archetypes are a
45 'collective unconscious' from which individuals subconsciously obtain the source of their dreams,
46 delusions and symbolic material used for the creation of religious, cultural and mythical texts (Brunel
47 1992; Jung 1990).
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56 In a study of literary myths, Brunel (1992) argues that stories always contain, to different extents,
57 some representations or particular features that correspond to one or more archetypes. Following
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3 the ideas advocated by Carl Jung, Brunel (1992, 111-117) proposes that the meaning of the term
4 archetype can be considered from three different dimensions: as a prototype, as an ideal model and
5 as the supreme type. An archetype is a 'prototype' or the original conception or symbol of
6 something because the characteristic features provide a sort of matrix for future representations of
7 themselves from one text to another, according to the imagination and subjectivity of the narrators
8 who consciously or unconsciously draw upon them. For example, original or prototypical plots are
9 romantic, tragic, comedic or ironic (Boje 2001; Brunel 1992).
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15 An archetype is also an 'ideal model' understood as a preconception against which actions and
16 characters are measured. This perspective refers to the image recreated by an archetype rather than
17 to the original instance that it represents. For example, an archetypal figure as an ideal 'heroic'
18 model is embedded with knowledge and virtues that are unique to the individual and that are used
19 as a reference for the interpretation of other texts. In the case of management and organizational
20 narratives, Boje (2001, 27) notes that they typically have a romantic plot in which the figure of the
21 chief executive is pervasively represented as the hero in the story.
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29 The third dimension put forward by Brunel (1992) corresponds to the archetype as the 'supreme
30 type'. This metaphysical perspective refers to absolute and perfect images that are reproduced
31 through language. The archetype is the essential point from which all other representations
32 generate, despite their particular circumstances and context. It is universal and instinctive
33 knowledge that transcends the personal psyche and so it is spontaneously shared among individuals
34 as a sort of permanent structure to organize their reality (Brunel 1992; Jung 1990).
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40 Although this paper considers archetypes as conveying a structural principle that underlies how
41 transnational professionals understand and represent the notion of home, they are not assumed as
42 a definitive form through which all texts can be analysed. Rather, archetypes are here considered as
43 a narrative element that the individuals use, whereas consciously or subconsciously, to plot events,
44 actions and characters associated with their highly mobile lifestyle in order to render their narrative
45 consonant with their intentions.
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50 51 52 53 ***Personal narratives***

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56 A personal narrative or life story can be defined as a text that involves meaningful representations of
57 past events, characters and experiences of an individual history (Boje 2001; Czarniawska 2004). It is a
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3 text produced by the individual who inhabited or lived the story rather than being narrated by
4 someone else (Boje 2001; Czarniawska 2004). The narrator or storyteller can mould, twist, embellish
5 and omit events or facts to portray a given perspective or intention. The interest of narrative analysis
6 is thus to explore how events are textually interrelated and adapted to express particular
7 negotiations of meaning, but which may be subconsciously contradicted, reflecting a certain amount
8 of inconsistency in the narrative as intended by the narrator (Gabriel 2004).
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14 This is what Dorrit Cohn (1978) refers to as 'consonant' and 'dissonant' self-narration. In dissonant
15 self-narration the narrator evaluates and interprets the actions, characters and experiences being
16 narrated, whether in consonant self-narration past events are reproduced through the expression of
17 feelings and opinions that are less critical. Consonant self-narration and dissonant self-narration
18 result from the conscious or subconscious incorporation of information or comments that sustain or
19 contradict the accordance among different parts of the narrative, and which may transform its
20 overall sense (Cohn 1978).
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29 *The sample of transnational professionals*

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32 The study draws on 48 personal narratives collected between 2010 and 2011 from transnational
33 professionals located in different parts of the world. The term transnational professional as used
34 here refers to those individuals who in the pursuit of work opportunities have relocated
35 internationally more than once, and intended to continue to move globally at the time this study
36 was carried out. This category of professionals had secured employment in the host location before
37 each move, meaning that the latter is defined by corporate demands and job availability.
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43 The study was advertised in online discussion forums in two online social networks concerned with
44 international mobility (namely *LinkedIn*¹ and *InterNations*²). These websites are available to a
45 worldwide audience, rather than to the members of local communities or groups supporting private
46 interests. To meet ethical considerations, the author disclosed her identity in the forums, explained
47 the academic purpose of the discussions and assured the anonymity of the participants. English was
48 the common language between the author, who is a Spanish native speaker, and the participants in
49 the study, who are of different national origin, including English speaking countries.
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57 ¹ www.linkedin.com – social network focused on the professional context.

58 ² www.internations.org – social network focused on global mobility.
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3 Approximately 80% of the participants manifested their interest through the online discussion
4 forums; the remaining 20% approached the author via email. Purposeful sampling was used to
5 achieve a diverse group of participants in terms of gender, age, country of origin, profession and
6 family situation, while ensuring homogeneity in terms of the highly mobile lifestyle adopted by the
7 participants. The narratives were gathered using interviews (16) and online discussion forums (32).
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9 These methods are explained below.
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13 14 15 16 *The narrative interviews*

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19 The narrative interview allows individuals to construct a unique composition of events, actions and
20 characters situated within the context of their own life history (Czarniawska 2004). Interviews that
21 aim at life stories generally focus on how individuals impose order on the flow of experience, the
22 linguistic and cultural resources they draw upon, and how these are put together to communicate
23 meaning (Fairclough 2006).
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28 The narrative interviews took place via *Skype*³, email and traditional telephone; in each case the
29 method was selected by the interviewee. The interviews were carried out in two stages during which
30 the same sample was interviewed twice with a twelve-month period in between each interview; this
31 was to consider potential changes in attitudes towards the mobile lifestyle. The spoken interviews
32 lasted an average of 80 minutes and those via email lasted an average of six days. All the interviews
33 were recorded under informed consent from the interviewee, the transcripts were made within one
34 week following the interview and the average length on paper was 10 pages per interview (voice and
35 email).
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43 Out of the 16 interviews, 5 were carried out in Spanish, which is the native language of the author,
44 where this was a common native language between the author and interviewee. The remaining 11
45 interviews were carried out in English which served as a common second language between the
46 author and interviewee. The interviews conducted in Spanish were translated into English during the
47 transcription process. The quality of the data collected for the analysis was not compromised by the
48 use of English as the common language in this study. This is because the qualitative style of the
49 interviews provided the interviewees with an opportunity to construct elaborated answers, in ways
50 in which their intended meaning was clear for the author. The demographic characteristics of the
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58 ³ www.skype.com – online application for verbal communications.
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3 sample of transnational professionals is presented in table 1 (fictional names are used to protect the
4 identity of the participants).
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8 **Table 1 HERE**
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10 11 12 *The online discussion forums*

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15 A total of nine online forums were created in *LinkedIn* and *InterNations*. The forums were
16 maintained active for 12 months. The maintenance of the forums meant that the author as well as
17 the contributors participated regularly in the discussions. The themes of the discussions were related
18 to the notion of global mobility in the pursuit of work opportunities, which was in accordance with
19 the overall orientation of the online social networks in which the forums were contained. All
20 communications in the forums took place in English, which is the standard language used in these
21 websites. The narratives of this sample were chosen on the basis of the richness of the data
22 collected in terms of the length and the depth of the narrators' account of their own life story.
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30 The sample comprises 32 narratives collected from 10 female participants and 22 male participants.
31 The countries of origin of these participants are Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Korea,
32 Mexico, Nepal, Spain, Sweden, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of
33 America. The demographic variables of profession, age and family situation were not offered by all
34 the contributors. This is not a limitation of the study because the unity of the sample is based on
35 their mobile lifestyle. Nonetheless, examining the narratives on the basis of the diversity of variables
36 can be of interest for further research (for example, see Vance and McNulty 2014).
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44 **The findings**

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47 The analysis identified how the notion of home is manifested in the narratives in relation to the
48 overall sense of the text as well as in relation to the other narratives of the sample. In addition, the
49 analysis identified the narrative elements and discourses used by the narrator to render events,
50 characters and experiences meaningful, and how these narrative elements and discourses are
51 textually interlaced with certain narrative archetypes and prototypical plots associated with
52 individual mobility. The corporate discourse of global mobility is considered in the analysis as a
53 source for metaphorical representations of international travel and subjective detachment from
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3 place, as it is part of the wider social context in which the individuals live and work. The sections
4 below are organised following the common themes identified in the narratives. Extracts from the
5 narratives are offered to exemplify these findings. The extracts from the sample of narratives
6 collected from the discussion forums have the word 'forum' following the fictional name of the
7 participant.
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11 12 13 14 ***The duality 'mobile-sedentary' as a narrative element*** 15

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17 A common feature identified across the narratives is the categorization of mobile professionals in
18 relation to their sedentary counterparts, based on personal qualities and attitudes which generally
19 imbue the former with a marked sense of elitism: 'I think people who travel a lot and have lived in
20 different places develop the skills of openness and flexibility to get around more easily in the world'
21 (*Richard-forum*). In this extract, the notions of 'openness' and 'flexibility' are consistent with the
22 corporate discourse of global mobility in that they are used to support the belief that transnational
23 travel is a desirable form of action in contemporary society. According to the narrator, they are
24 required skills to 'get around more easily in the world'. The expression 'more easily' carries the idea
25 that global mobility involves a degree of 'difficulty' for those individuals who lack international
26 experience. This is further exemplified in the following extract from a different narrative:
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35 'We like to think of ourselves as being perhaps more flexible than the average
36 person, more willing to take risks and perhaps more willing to engage in more
37 cultures than most people' (*Raymond*).
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40 The ideas of being 'more flexible', 'more willing to take risks' and 'more willing to engage in more
41 cultures' are presented in this text as positive qualities of the mobile individual. These are used to
42 differentiate the narrator as part of the class of the globally mobile professional ('we'), from a wider
43 category that seems to include all other individuals ('the average person', 'most people'). The value
44 of global mobility in people's lives is thus measured against the image of the sedentary individual,
45 which reinforces the perceived social hierarchy associated with the immobility of the spatially
46 settled (Bauman 2000). This 'imagined community' (Anderson 2006; Sloterdijk 2013) of the mobile
47 professional is constructed in the narratives based on a shared lifestyle and attitudes towards place,
48 rather than by the locality in which individuals dwell.
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56 Another salient characteristic that recurs in the narratives is the portrayal of the motivation to
57 initially relocate outside the country of origin as a personal objective. This is often presented
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3 through idealised associations of international travel with notions of liberty and self-growth, as the
4 following quote shows:
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8 'What I'm doing is to discover what there is in the world. I don't want to stay with
9 these visions so narrow about what is normal [...] I want to know different ways
10 of thinking, meet different people and widen my horizons. This knowledge
11 redefines my values and my way of seeing life' (*Laura*).
12

13 The expression 'to discover the world' in this extract draws upon ideas of flux, freedom and
14 boundary crossing, which emphasise the gloss contemporary globalization puts on the mobile elite
15 (Bauman 2000). Moreover, the idea of discovery refers to individual agency. Mobility is motivated by
16 a personal desire rather than as a result of external circumstances, such as economic crisis or
17 political disputes, as it is the case of other forms of individual displacement in modern society.
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22 The portrayal of 'the world' as presented across the narratives relates to the figure of 'the
23 wanderer'. The wanderer is a Romantic archetype of liberation that refers to people's transcendence
24 of the traditional boundaries of the parochial, bourgeois environment in which they live (i.e. 'the
25 local' context of home). For example, in the story *Life of a Good-for-Nothing*, by Joseph von
26 Eichendorff, the wanderer motif represents the ideal of freedom from traditional intellectual and
27 artistic models (Cusack 2008, 222). *Life of a Good-for-Nothing* is the story of a young man who
28 wanders away from his family home to seek his fortune out into the world. He wanders from place
29 to place towards Italy in search of what he believes is exciting and different in comparison to the
30 ordinary context of his native village in Germany. The protagonist in Eichendorff's story feels an
31 overwhelming desire to 'be on the go', always daydreaming of future travels. To travel is the fantasy
32 of being somewhere else, despite having realised that everyday life in distant places can also be
33 monotonous and ordinary once the excitement provoked by the new and unfamiliar has passed.
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44 In the case of the extract above, the notion of rootedness, in terms of the narrator's relationship
45 with her own culture, is depicted as an obstacle to professional success and personal development
46 ('these visions so narrow about what is normal'). Conversely, the notion of homelessness, in terms of
47 geographical displacement and subjective detachment from a given culture and place, is presented
48 as a personal competence through positive associations with ideas of flexibility ('redefine my
49 values') and autonomy ('what I'm doing').
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57 ***The narrator's 'heroic' status as a globally mobile professional***
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5 The duality 'global-local' identified in the narratives draws upon certain archetypal plots of travel,
6 exploration and conquest that serve to imbue the narrator with a sort of 'heroic status' on the basis
7 of his/her ability to be internationally mobile. This heroic status can be understood from the
8 perspective of the hero as an adventurer as proposed by Joseph Campbell (2004). Campbell (2004)
9 refers to the 'call to adventure' as the motive that drives the hero to embark on a mythological
10 journey. The hero, 'summoned by destiny', sacrifices the sense of security of a familiar environment
11 in order to explore the 'unknown'. In the following extract, for example, the narrator refers to her
12 decision to relocate internationally as a sort of 'superior calling':
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19 'I came to realise that the culture and the environment around me was starting
20 to feel very limited. I wanted to branch out professionally [...] when I got the
21 offer to move I almost instinctively knew that I had to take it. I mean, I was
22 terrified initially, but I knew that it would open a new life for me. I also knew that
23 once I left home I would never go back' (*Sonia*).
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26 The expression of an 'instinctive' desire to move abroad is an example of how certain discourses, in
27 this case the corporate discourse of global mobility, infiltrate the everyday life of individuals
28 (Fairclough 2006). In the extract, global mobility represents an ideal the narrator naturally aspires to
29 achieve, despite feeling 'terrified' of renouncing the security of the familial environment of her
30 home country. To become a transnational professional is presented as an assumption in the sense
31 that it is not questioned by the narrator.
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37 The notion of 'branching out professionally' positively represents the global as a source of
38 opportunities in comparison to the limiting context of the local. This relates to the utopian message
39 of the global as promoted by the ideology of neoliberalism, which carries promises of freedom,
40 equality and progress (Boltanski and Chiapello 2007; Harvey 1990). However, it is a contradictory
41 element in the text because it is at the same time presented as an aspiration and as a necessity for
42 the narrator. In terms of the career literature, this representation of the duality global-local
43 reinforces the idea that international experience constitutes a valuable asset for the individual
44 (Dickmann and Baruch 2011; Doherty and Dickmann 2009). However, in the narrative sense,
45 dissonance occurs in the expression 'I would never go back' as it contradicts the archetypal hero
46 whose journey is traditionally completed by his return having survived the 'impact of the world'
47 (Campbell 2004, 209).
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3 Metaphorical representations of mobility away from home in the quest for new experiences can be
4 related, for example, to the archetypal plot of the *Odyssey* (Homer 1980). The *Odyssey* narrates the
5 return to home of Odysseus after the ten years of absence that followed the defeat of the Trojans.
6 The *Odyssey* is primarily seen as a journey driven by the nostalgia for home (Gabriel 2003), 'an
7 overwhelming yearning for home [...] no matter how poorly it compares with the wonders that are
8 discovered along the way' (621). In the *Odyssey*, as well as in later representations and associations
9 in the literature, the heroic image of Odysseus is based on a series of stories that recount the
10 dangers, adventures and discoveries that fill his trajectory or journey (Gabriel 2003). In the
11 narratives, a metaphorical representation of the 'dangers' in the life of the transnational
12 professional is found in the challenges the individuals encounter as they move from one country to
13 another ('the unknown'), such as to learn a new language and adapt to different cultures.
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24 ***The 'split' of the self: contradictory work-family experiences***

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27 References to contradictory work-life experiences in the life of the transnational professional are
28 common in the narratives. The narrators self-represent as in control of their own mobility by
29 regulating all aspects in their mobile lifestyle, which involves trade-offs that generate some kind of
30 improvement for the individual. However, this is opposed by certain comments and opinions that
31 indicate negative feelings and undesired consequences of continuous global mobility, as the extract
32 below exemplifies:
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38 'I have been "feeding" the professional part of me, the part that wants to see and
39 conquer the world. But the part of me that wants to be close to my family and
40 friends [...] has been suffering' (*Hannah*).
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43 In this extract, the consonant-self, portrayed through the heroic intentions of the narrator to 'see
44 and conquer the world', is deconstructed and the dissonant-self is presented in the inner 'split'
45 manifested in the comment 'I have been feeding the professional part of me'. The narrator evaluates
46 the struggle her mobile lifestyle provokes, represented as a divided-self in the sense that one side
47 has achieved success ('feeding' her professional ambition) at the expense of the other (the
48 'suffering' of her personal relationships). This condition is contradictory because the sacrifice of
49 leaving home to embark on a journey 'to see and conquer the world' results in negative feelings,
50 rather than enriching the protagonist as happens with the archetypal hero (Campbell 2004; Kostera
51 2012).
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3 A similar image is found in another narrative as the perceived gains continuous global mobility
4 generates in the context of work are compared against the perceived losses in the private sphere:
5 'the capital I have invested [in my life] is not to have a stable romantic relationship, so it's one thing
6 for another' (*Laura*). This idea can be related to Michel Foucault's (2008, 226) argument that the
7 neoliberal doctrine treats the worker as an 'entrepreneur of himself' based on how individuals use
8 or shape the resources available to them, including the ability to be mobile and their behaviour
9 regarding family: "being for himself his own capital, being for himself his own producer, being for
10 himself the source of his earnings". In the literature of careers, this approach refers to the notions of
11 boundaryless and protean careers as they emphasise people's ability to manage their professional
12 path as well as the development of personal skills (Arthur and Rousseau 2001; Mäkelä et al. 2016).
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21 Although the narratives widely place a positive emphasis on the view of international travel as the
22 means to achieve personal growth and career advancement, dissonance occurs in the references to
23 repetitive international relocations as an 'endless' cycle in the life of the transnational professional.
24 The next comment exemplifies this: 'I knew I wanted to see the world but I didn't think I would keep
25 doing it for ten years' (*Leslie*). In consonant self-narration, the narrator describes the motives of her
26 actions as an innate desire for adventures. However, in dissonant self-narration, the narrator
27 assumes a rather critical view of her continuous mobility, feeling almost 'cursed' to wander
28 eternally, as it was not part of her initial life-plan ('I didn't think I would keep doing it for ten years').
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35 A related archetypal element is found in the legend of *The Flying Dutchman*, according to which a
36 sea captain who in his quest for self-enrichment is doomed to sail forever, condemned by the devil
37 to never bring his vessel to harbour (Pelzer 2004). The myth of *The Flying Dutchman* is considered to
38 represent discontent with modernity and the loss of stable frames of reference for the individual's
39 sense of identity. The story symbolises society moving away from the order provided by traditional
40 ways of thinking and established cultural structures, resulting in the loss of a 'harbour' where the
41 individuals can anchor their systems of meaning (Pelzer 2004, 143).
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48 In the case of the narratives, the expressed intention to become internationally mobile in the pursuit
49 of new experiences is opposed by dissonant feelings of being 'eternally castaway' from what the
50 participants consider as home. Moreover, the idea of never-ending mobility is in some of the
51 narratives directly associated with traditional forms of nomadism, as found for instance in the next
52 comment:
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3 'I don't see myself spinning around the world all my life. I like this life of
4 adventure, but I guess that at some point I would want to settle down
5 somewhere' (*Carlos*).
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8 In this extract, global mobility ('spinning around the world') is used as a consonant element to
9 sustain the narrator's self-representation as an adventurer ('I like this life of adventure'). However,
10 global mobility becomes a dissonant element as the narrator presents it as a temporary condition in
11 his life-plan ('at some point I would want to settle down somewhere'). The idea of having a stable
12 home fixed in a place is consistent with traditional sedentary values, which in the comment above is
13 expressed as an assumed expectation in one's life ('I guess that'). This finding supports the argument
14 put forward by Butcher (2010), according to which highly mobile individuals are confronted with the
15 need to associate their sense of 'being at home' with a particular place.
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24 ***The need to 'always be somewhere else'***

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27 To relocate internationally is described in the narratives as a sort of persistent need to be globally
28 mobile. For example, in the next comment the narrator describes global mobility as a 'drug' to which
29 she has become addicted: 'I think travelling around and working in different places is like a drug,
30 some people do it for some time and then stop, other people cannot find out how to stop' (*Leslie*).
31 The drug metaphor is a dissonant element in the extract because it is used to depict continuous
32 global mobility as an undesired need that controls or dominates the narrator's life. On this view, the
33 narrator seems to become a 'victim' of her own mobility, in the sense that mobility generates the
34 need for more mobility; like a drug that is difficult to resist. This is further exemplified by the
35 following quote from the same narrative:
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43 'I am happy here but I don't feel like it's home forever, but then I felt like this
44 about London [...] I had this sort of irrational love for London, but maybe it's only
45 me painting a worthy picture of it now that I am not there [...] you always kind of
46 want to be somewhere else, and that's a big problem for me [...] it's a terrible
47 condition that I have to overcome' (*Leslie*).
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50 The reference to the desire to be continuously on the move as a 'terrible condition' challenges the
51 heroic and adventurous elements associated in the narratives with international travel. As in the
52 myth of *The Flying Dutchman*, the narrator is somewhat 'condemned' to wander eternally because
53 the need to always be somewhere else means that no place will ever become a home in which to
54 settle. In addition, the narrator's reference of a persistent desire 'to be somewhere else' relates to
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3 the archetype of the wanderer as represented in Eichendorff's story. To repeatedly relocate
4 internationally seems to fulfil the narrator's fantasy of moving away from what is familiar and
5 ordinary, despite having realised that she feels the same in different places ('maybe is only me
6 painting a worthy picture of it'). This is manifested in the extract as a contradictory element because
7 it opposes her value of being spatially settled ('it's a terrible condition that I have to overcome').
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12 Eichendorff's lyrical narrative is considered as a critique of the confines of sedentary bourgeois
13 society represented through the figure of the wanderer. It proclaims the individual's liberty to be
14 spontaneous and to seek pleasure in face of the pervasive rationality and uniformity that
15 characterises modernity (Cusack 2008, 226). However, in the narratives the wanderer motif
16 represents a dissonant element because to wander opposes the portrayal of self-direction
17 concerning the narrator's own transnational mobility, which is consistent with the values of
18 autonomy and self-entrepreneurship embedded in the discourses of boundaryless and protean
19 careers (Defillippi and Arthur 1994; Hall 2002). This ambiguity in the life of the transnational
20 professional is exemplified in the extract below; the narrator starts by providing justifications for her
21 desire to change locations and ends by self-evaluating such a desire:
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31 'After four years I think I want to move, or I need to move, or there is something
32 better, or there is something different [...] I'm slowly realising that different
33 countries will bring different things to you. There is never going to be a perfect
34 place [...] suddenly I'm looking at my life and thinking, ok, does this mean that three
35 years from now I'm going to look again and think that I need to move? but why?
36 What is it that I'm looking for that I haven't found in three or four lives already?
37 and if I change again, what is that place going to bring to me?' (*Sonia*).
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40 As in Eichendorff's story, the narrator in the extract above believes that other countries may be
41 better and different in a positive way than her current location, thus to relocate internationally is at
42 the same time a desire and a necessity for her ('I want to move, or I need to move'). The narrator
43 justifies this view by making reference to the benefits she believes different places can offer
44 ('different countries will bring different things to you'). Global mobility is partly articulated as a
45 consonant narrative element that sustains the narrator's lifestyle, depicted as a self-structured life
46 plan to find places that 'best suit her' ('what is that place probably going to bring to me?'). However,
47 continuous mobility becomes a dissonant element as the narrator questions her own attitudes
48 ('why?'). In particular, the expression 'what is it that I'm looking for' is contradictory because it
49 reflects the negative emotion of being 'doomed' to wander eternally in the quest for a non-existent
50 ideal place ('there is never probably going to be a perfect place').
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Personal transformation as a contradictory narrative element

The notions of personal change and adaptability are often used in the narratives to describe a sort of personal transformation that refers to the narrator's transition from being a sedentary individual to being a globally mobile professional. For instance, in the next extract the transformational motif is incorporated as a positive element that sustains the narrator's self-development: 'I feel I'm more fluent culturally, that is, I know what's normal and what's not normal in different cultures' (*Daniel*). However, as discussed above, to become a transnational professional is generally a contradictory narrative element because it is at the same time represented as an ideal form of behaviour and a negative condition in the narrator's life. This is notably evident in the descriptions of work-life experiences, as the next extract shows:

'They have converted me in a little soldier who is conditioned to accept these changes and who sees them as normal, because in the environment where I move [a multinational corporation] it's seen as normal. Although others, for example my family in Mexico, they don't see it so normal. There are also other circles in which doing this is not seen as a symbol of strength but as a symbol of total instability, of not knowing what one wants to achieve in life' (*Laura*).

The 'corporate soldier' is a dissonant narrative character because it emphasises the narrator's inability to manage all aspects of her globally mobile lifestyle. Being a corporate soldier positions the narrator as under the organization's control, in the sense that the narrator's actions are intended to respond to external interests rather than to her own motivations. The narrator assumes a critical perspective to evaluate the contradictory meanings of her mobile lifestyle in and outside the work context ('family', 'other circles'). The character soldier is thus used to symbolise the narrator as being 'conditioned' by the organization for which she works, to adopt standardised attitudes within the setting of modern corporations. In addition, the view that in the workplace being a highly mobile individual is considered as normal, relates to the argument that feelings of belonging to the community of the mobile provides the individual with a sense continuity and structure (Colic-Peisker 2010; Nowicka and Kaweh 2009). However, as the extract exemplifies, the individual dis-identifies from the corporate identity of the transnational professional as she becomes aware of a dissonance from her identity in the private domain.

The manifestation of the transformational motif recurs in the texts as a dissonant element to express feelings of self-alienation from what the narrator considers is normal, as shown in these two comments: 'they actually see you as a strange element, as a weird bug' (*Luis*); 'I think you are

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3 supposed to settle down, you are not supposed to keep moving on like this, because it means that
4 there is something weird about you' (*Leslie*). These extracts depict a sort of self-transformation that
5 results from continuous mobility, presented as a metaphorical metamorphosis of the self into a
6 'weird bug' in comparison to the normal sedentary individual.
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11 This use of self-transformation as a narrative element relates to *The Metamorphosis* by Franz Kafka
12 ([1915] 2009). In the story, the protagonist character Gregor Samsa, who is a traveling salesman,
13 wakes up one ordinary morning and realises that he has mutated into an insect-like creature. Gregor
14 assumes his metamorphosis and attempts to carry out the everyday tasks of his working life;
15 however, his family rejects the different other into which he has become. In Kafka's story, the motif
16 of self-transformation is a central narrative element that symbolises people's self-alienation that
17 results from their struggle in meeting demands from contemporary society. This struggle is
18 expressed through Gregor's conscious feelings of self-estrangement that are finally visible to others
19 as his body is also transformed (Sokol 2002, 219).
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28 In the case of the narratives, the individuals are seen to assume their 'metamorphosis' as a new way
29 of being, as expressed for instance in the comment: 'being different becomes a normal feeling'
30 (*Hannah*). However, this is contradicted in a different part of the same text: 'my mum considers this
31 as one of the phases that I have to go through, that it will be over soon and I will go back and be
32 normal' (*Hannah*). To be normal in this extract means to be spatially sedentary; the counterpart of
33 such a view is that to be always on the move is perceived as being out of the norm or different in a
34 negative way.
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41 A different representation of Kafka's transformational motif is found in the perceived status of
42 'outsider' attributed to the narrator: 'if you don't show any sign of being a foreigner the local
43 community will accept you, but if you start living the same life as back home you will always be
44 ignored' (*Samuel-forum*). This extract presents the notion of being a foreigner in a place as a
45 negative condition which the narrator attempts to regulate by masking the outsider he actually is
46 (i.e. not a local or native in the host locality). Adapting the self as presented in this extract is a
47 positive manifestation of the condition of homelessness that relates to the cosmopolitan ideal of
48 immersing oneself in the culture of the different other (Colic-Peisker 2010; Nowicka and Kaweh
49 2009). However, the text is contradictory because the comment of 'being ignored' by the other
50 based on the narrator's national origin and socio-cultural background reflects the traditional socio-
51 cultural boundaries the neoliberal discourse of globalization claims to transcend (Boltanski and
52 Chiapello 2007; Harvey 1990). As with Gregor in *The Metamorphosis*, the narrator assumes his
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3 transformation to adapt to his new environment, but this is at the expense of his sense of identity
4 which is a negative manifestation of the condition of homelessness.
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8 Although such a 'protean ability' (Hall 2002; Thomas and Inkson 2004) is represented in the
9 narratives as the means for the transnational professional to attain a sense of belonging in the
10 places in which they temporarily live and work (to be 'accepted' by the local), it is also manifested so
11 as to provoke negative feelings of self-estrangement. This is exemplified in the next comment: 'I
12 don't fit in [...] everything is in German so I have to renounce my own culture, to put it in the
13 background [...] I don't recognise myself' (*Christelle*). This extract is dissonant self-narration as the
14 narrator assumes a critical perspective of self-analysis, considering the adoption of the local
15 language in her everyday life in the workplace as a sort of 'renouncement the self'. To be able to
16 speak the local language would generally be a consonant element in the narrative because it
17 supports the cosmopolitan element in the life of the transnational professional as discussed above.
18 However, as in Kafka's story, the narrator's feeling of self-alienation ('I don't recognise myself') is
19 contradictory because it reflects a loss of home as a frame of reference for her sense of identity.
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30 Discussion

31 32 33 *Continuous global mobility as a marker for identity construction* 34

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36 Individual global mobility is manifested across the narratives as a positive discourse that establishes
37 a hierarchy in the duality 'mobile-sedentary' (Bauman 2000), thus serving as a marker for the
38 narrator's identity construction as a mobile professional. More specifically, international travel is
39 represented in the texts as an ideal form of behaviour that at the same time justifies the narrators'
40 adoption of repetitive transnational relocation as a form of life and discursively differentiates them
41 from their sedentary counterparts. It can be argued that the notion of being part of the imagined
42 community (Anderson 2006; Sloterdijk 2013) of globally mobile individuals provides a frame of
43 reference in the narratives that validates the sense of elitism embedded in the figure of the
44 transnational professional.
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52 Continuous mobility is rationalised in the texts by presenting it as a lifestyle that requires particular
53 skills and knowledge that are somewhat unique to the mobile individual, discursively validating the
54 subjective and objective rewards that the participants perceive to gain from their own mobility. Such
55 a view is reinforced in the narratives by the references to the sacrifices or trade-offs involved in the
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3 life of the transnational professional, namely, the fulfilment of personal expectations in the private
4 sphere.
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8 The contemporary discourse of global mobility may be perceived by the individuals as inspirational
9 because it carries strong utopian concepts of freedom and equality (Harvey 1990). This is
10 represented in the texts as a sort of liberation from the familial and limiting context of home; not
11 only in the sense of the individual's national origin and local culture, but also in terms of personal
12 development and professional advancement. From this perspective, the discourse of sedentariness
13 is incorporated in the narratives as the 'antithesis' of progress and success, by associating it with lack
14 of advancement and the loss of potential opportunities for the individual. This illustrates the need
15 for flexibility in a world where mobility is amongst the highest values that infiltrates all aspects of
16 social life (Bauman 2000; Boltanski and Chiapello 2007).
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26 ***Ambiguous representations of becoming a transnational professional***

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28 The representations of international travel as the means for the narrator to 'explore and conquer
29 the world', draw upon the archetype of the hero as represented, for instance, in the archetypal plot
30 of the *Odyssey*. The transnational professional relocates internationally to pursue work
31 opportunities abroad; however, work as the motive for their mobility is generally marginalised or
32 simply omitted in their narrative. Instead, global mobility is depicted as an 'inner' or 'natural' desire
33 to seek new adventures and live exciting experiences, almost as if 'summoned by destiny', following
34 the archetypal hero as an adventurer (Campbell 2004; Kostera 2012).
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41 The heroic status attributed to the narrator is often challenged by contradictory references to the
42 lifestyle of the transnational professional as a never-ending mobility. Feelings of 'never being able to
43 return home', in the sense of satisfying the sense of belonging and providing the possibility of
44 establishing meaningful long-term relationships, are a manifestation of a negative form of
45 homelessness, which opposes the cosmopolitan ideal that values detachment from the individual's
46 national origin in order to embrace the global (D'Andrea 2006; Nowicka 2007; Whitehead and Halsall
47 2016).
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54 The ambiguous portrayal of continuous mobility can be related to the archetypal myth of *The Flying*
55 *Dutchman*, in that the narrator self-represents as somewhat 'condemned' to wander eternally,
56 feeling that no place will ever be home. The narrative element of the hero as an adventurer is thus
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3 challenged by the figure of the 'eternal castaway' individual. To a certain extent, this dissonance in
4 the narratives represents a level of struggle from the part of the participants as they attempt to
5 adopt continuous international mobility as a form of life.
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10 ***The contradictory condition of homelessness***

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14 The notion of becoming a transnational professional is represented in the narratives as a sort of
15 personal transformation, which can be related to Kafka's archetypal plot *The Metamorphosis*. This is
16 depicted as a desirable form of action in the context of work, a view that draws upon discourses
17 associated with international mobility and the construct of a protean career (Hall 2002; Thomas and
18 Inkson 2004). At the same time, this transformation of the self is described as an undesirable
19 condition that generates feelings of self-alienation in the private sphere, because it challenges
20 traditional values of spatial stability and continuity. In this environment, transnational professionals
21 experience a sort of 'split-self' or divided identity between their identity in the organization
22 (corporate-self) and their identity in the private sphere of home (family-self).
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30 This finding relates, for example, to Collinson's (2003) work on identities and insecurities in the
31 workplace. Collinson (2003, 537) argues that employees who feel their job lacks opportunities for
32 personal development may distance themselves from the organization as a 'conformist survival
33 practice', and seek meaning to their lives in the private sphere outside work. Distance may be
34 manifested physically, for instance through absenteeism or resignation, or psychologically, by
35 dividing or splitting their identity between the self at work (instrumental and indifferent) and the self
36 outside work (the authentic and real). However, Collinson (2003, 537) notes that the precarious
37 nature of the splitting self is evident as the domains of work and family are brought together, for
38 example during periods of unemployment. In the case of the life of the transnational professional,
39 characterised by a perceived dissolution of boundaries between work and family, the individual
40 experiences contradictory feelings as the corporate-self is challenged by what he/she considers are
41 the expectations of the family-self.
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51 This situation generates a negative sense of self-estrangement for the individuals as they feel they
52 do not recognise the person they have become. This finding can be understood through the concept
53 of self-alienation in contemporary organization as put forward by Costas and Fleming (2009), for
54 example. Their approach builds on the notion of the divided-self (dis-identification), to explore the
55 individual's sense of self-alienation generated by the blurring of the illusory distinction between the
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3 corporate-self and the authentic-self. According to the authors, as the employees become aware
4 that their narrated imaginary of authenticity is unrealizable in lived experience, “they simultaneously
5 notice that ‘who they really are’ is an alien corporate self” (Costas and Fleming 2009, 360). In other
6 words, the corporate-self dominates the individual’s life and the family-self is experienced as
7 inauthentic. In the case of the transnational professional, feelings of self-alienation can be seen as a
8 form of homelessness, in that the individual's perceived authentic or real self is dissociated from
9 his/her idea of home.
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16 The transformational motif is also manifested in the narratives in the expressions of the narrator’s
17 self-portrayal as an outsider in the local community. This may be understood as a representation of
18 the individuals desire to establish some sort of relationship with the places through which they
19 move, so they are perhaps experienced less as ‘non-places’ and more as home. The idea of non-
20 places as advocated by Augé (1992), refers to spaces without past that lack the meaningful and
21 historical relationships that tie individuals with anthropological or ‘existential places’. Non-places are
22 ephemeral because the individuals who experience them are in transit, as it is the case of airports
23 and train stations (Augé 1992). It can be argued that for transnational professionals the division
24 between anthropological places and non-places has been transcended as they establish temporal
25 and conditional relationships with the localities in which they live and work, perceived as places of
26 transit in a life driven by a persistent desire ‘to be somewhere else’. In the narratives, this view
27 draws upon the archetype of the wanderer, which contradicts the references to a sense of self-
28 direction concerning the individual's own mobility.
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40 **Conclusions**

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43 This paper examined the ways in which transnational professionals perceive and self-represent their
44 idea of home, considered as a source of direction and stability associated with a given place or
45 culture. The analysis followed the methodological framework of narrative analysis with a particular
46 emphasis on intertextuality. The objective was to identify intertextual connections between the
47 personal narratives and certain archetypal characters and prototypical plots associated with
48 individual displacement. Archetypes as narrative elements are consciously or subconsciously used by
49 the narrator as frames of reference in their attempt to render meaningful past events, actions and
50 characters.
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3 The adoption of a highly mobile lifestyle as represented in the narratives is generally associated with
4 feelings of homelessness, expressed as a sense of detachment from place, including the individual's
5 national origin. This notion of homelessness results in contradictory accounts in the narratives
6 because it is at the same time incorporated to endow the narrator with a sort of heroic status and to
7 describe negative feelings of self-alienation. This is manifested through the discursive favouring of
8 the figure of the mobile individual over the figure of the sedentary individual. The mobile individual
9 is associated with the elements of adventure and success: homelessness is described as a positive
10 condition. The sedentary individual, as the oppositional narrative character, is equated with the loss
11 of opportunities for personal growth and professional advancement: homelessness is described as a
12 negative condition.
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21 The representations of the duality 'mobile-sedentary' in the narratives draw upon the corporate
22 discourse of individual global mobility. The positive representation of the individual's subjective
23 detachment from place is considered as a personal asset in the workplace because it involves a
24 privileged lifestyle and economic rewards. However, this flexible identity is challenged by the
25 individual's need to belong to a community, expressed in the narratives through references to the
26 desire to establish meaningful long-term relationships as part of their intended life plan.
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32 This tension is also identified in the references to a divided identity. Descriptions of a corporate-self
33 are discursively opposed to the family-self, in the sense that one side in the life of the transnational
34 professional benefits at the expense of the other. The split element recurs in the descriptions of the
35 individual's self-transformation from being a sedentary individual to becoming a transnational
36 professional; this change is perceived by the transnational professional as a sort of Kafkaesque
37 metamorphosis. In the workplace the mobile individual feels normal or even superior in comparison
38 to non-mobile employees, but in the private sphere of personal relationships and family life the
39 individual feels alienated from the person they perceive they have become. These contradictions can
40 be seen to represent a form of homelessness in that the individual dissociates from the family-self
41 who is tied to the idea of home.
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51 ***Final remarks and future research directions***

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54 This paper contributes to the existing literature on mobile professionals in three ways. First, it
55 critically analyses the contradictory condition of homelessness in the life of the transnational
56 professional as a result of their highly mobile lifestyle. Second, it identifies intertextual relations
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3 between the narratives and certain archetypal characters and prototypical plots, considered here as
4 a source for metaphorical descriptions of geographical displacement and relationships to place.
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6 Third, it examines the ways in which the individuals draw upon the corporate discourse of global
7 mobility to represent and justify their own mobility in the construction of their narrative.
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11 The findings in this paper show that global mobility in the context of modern corporations is
12 associated with personal growth and career advancement, discursively favouring the figure of the
13 mobile professional in relation to their non-mobile counterparts. In addition, repetitive or serial
14 mobility opposes the notion of migration, which in the workplace involves different experiences in
15 terms of the individual's career expectations and in the wider social context is traditionally perceived
16 as a less privileged form of displacement. Following this, further research could examine the extent
17 to which failing to achieve *continuous* global mobility results in negative feelings for the individual.
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21 Another area of interest is the extent to which the ongoing circumstances relating to migration in
22 Western countries, such as the so-called 'Brexit' in the United Kingdom and President Donald
23 Trump's policy on immigration, influences the attitudes of transnational professionals towards their
24 own mobility. For instance, further studies could critically examine how the figure of the mobile
25 individual and the discourse of border crossing are manifested in the media and the ways in which
26 these representations are incorporated in the personal narrative of the highly mobile professional.
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30 This paper provides an account of some of the ways in which transnational professionals perceive
31 and self-represent their own mobility. As the narratives show, there is ambiguity between the
32 perceived professional advantages associated with the highly mobile lifestyle and the individual's
33 feelings towards their idea home as a frame of reference for their sense of identity. The
34 'contradictory condition of homelessness' that results from this ambiguity is an example of the
35 dissonance that occurs between the contemporary discourse of corporate individual global mobility
36 and the individual's work-life experiences. Therefore, a critical approach to the representations of
37 such a discourse is necessary so that its meaning is not taken for granted.
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Table 1 - Demographic characteristics of the sample of transnational professionals

Participant	Country of origin	Profession	Age	Family situation
Leslie	Australia	Information Technology	34	Single
Hannah	Denmark	Marketing and Sales	37	Single
Christelle	France	Research and Development	23	Single
Leris	Malaysia	Banking and Finance	32	Single
Laura	Mexico	Marketing and Sales	27	Single
Sonia	Trinidad and Tobago	Education	39	Single
Jenny	UK	Marketing and Sales	33	Single
Katya	USA	Marketing and Sales	44	Single
Carlos	Argentina	Marketing and Sales	36	Married
Daniel	Canada	Engineering	37	Single
Ron	Taiwan	Banking and Finance	36	Married, 2 children
Ian	UK	Banking and Finance	54	Married, 1 child
Raymond	USA	Marketing and Sales	61	Married, 2 children
Luis	Venezuela	Marketing and Sales	43	Single
David	Venezuela	Information Technology	35	Married
Marco	Venezuela	Engineering	34	Single