Cities are striving to attract and retain talented workers in order to increase their competitiveness in the new economy, which is highly dependent on innovation and knowledge. As residential satisfaction has been identified as a key determinant of whether a person stays or moves to another location, this study examines the determinants of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants living in the Helsinki metropolitan area, Finland. The empirical findings reveal in detail these migrants’ opinions on and experiences of the dwelling, the neighbourhood and the neighbours. The results show how housing cannot be detached from wider life circumstances, and social relations play an important part.
Housing talent
Residential satisfaction among skilled migrants
in the Helsinki metropolitan area

ELINA ESKELEÄ

ACADEMIC DISSERTATION
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**Abstract**

Cities are striving to attract and retain talented workers in order to increase their competitiveness in the new economy, which is highly dependent on innovation and knowledge. Residential satisfaction has been identified as a key determinant of whether a person stays or moves to another location. However, given the tendency to focus on the housing of immigrant groups with a lower socio-economic status, the factors that affect the residential satisfaction of skilled migrants remain understudied.

This article-based dissertation in the field of urban geography examines the determinants of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants living in the Helsinki metropolitan area (HMA), Finland. The research setting is intended to maximise the cultural and socio-economic as well as locational diversity within the limits of recognised skilled migrant groups. The analysis focuses on how the interplay between individuals’ norms and the situational conditions is manifested when immigrants assess a single housing market, the HMA. The study is qualitative in nature and draws on 70 semi-structured interviews with skilled migrants and with experts on migration and housing in the city region.

Despite the cultural, socioeconomic and locational heterogeneity of the interviewees, their experiences of housing in the HMA were notably similar: the uppermost assessment was that it is expensive, cramped and uniform. On the other hand, they appreciated the overall safety and functionality of the city region, as well as the natural environment: the predominant influence, for them, is the family life cycle rather than the urban amenities that are often assumed to be highly important for the “creative class”. The results also show that homeownership is not a simple indicator of the intention to stay in or leave the region, which contradicts earlier findings on ethnic-minority housing.

The study underlines the importance of the social environment in creating residential satisfaction among skilled migrants. Whereas earlier studies revealed the essential nature of social networks and personal trajectories in the location decisions of skilled workers, the results of this study indicate that the supply of local, neighbourhood-based social ties is particularly limited in the case of the HMA, and that this has a negative impact on the residential satisfaction of skilled migrants. Furthermore, the structural element of housing seemed to have an effect on local social ties: among international students the extent of such ties varied according to the housing form.

Although many skilled migrants are in a good socio-economic position, they are not immune to problems related to finding suitable housing. Housing availability, quality and affordability are therefore significant factors in enhancing residential satisfaction among such groups. Furthermore, as
local social ties serve a mediating role with regard to the residential area as well as to society, the formation of such ties would promote the integration of migrants. These aspects of housing should be acknowledged in the strategies of cities wishing to accommodate and retain global talent.

Keywords: skilled migrants, housing, residential satisfaction, social ties, Helsinki metropolitan area
Tiivistelmä

Kaupunkien strategioissa pyritään houkuttelemaan ja sitouttamaan kansainväliäisiä osaajia, joilla on keskeinen rooli uudessa, innovaatio- ja tietokeskeisessä taloudessa. Asumistyytyväisyyden on tunnistettu vaikuttavan voimakkaasti päätökseen lähteä asuinpaikasta tai jäädä siihen. Kansainvälisten osaajien asumistyytyväisyyteen vaikuttavista tekijöistä tiedetään vähän, sillä tutkimuksissa on yleensä keskitytty heikommassa sosioekonomisessa asemassa olevien maahanmuuttajaryhmien asumiseen.

Tässä kaupunkimaantieteen artikkeliväitöskirjassa tutkitaan kansainvälisten osaajien asumistyytyväisyyteen vaikuttavia tekijöitä pääkaupunkiseudulla. Tutkimusasettelussa on pyritty maksimoimaan tunnistettujen osaajaryhmien kulttuurinen, sosioekonominen ja sijainnillinen moninaisuus.Analyysissä tarkastellaan, miten yksilön normien ja tilannetekijöiden vuorovaikutus näkyy, kun osaajat arvioivat pääkaupunkiseudulla asumista. Tutkimus on laadullinen ja pohjautuu 70 kansainvälisen osaajan sekä muuttoliikkeen ja asumisen asiantuntijan puolistrukturoituun haastatteluun.

Haastateltavien kulttuurisesta, sosioekonomisesta ja sijainnillisestä moninaisuudesta huolimatta heidän kokemuksensa pääkaupunkiseudun asumisesta olivat huomattavat yhdenmukaisia: asuminen on kalliuta, ahdasta ja yksipuolista. Toisaalta osaajat arvostivat pääkaupunkiseudun turvallisuutta, toimivuutta sekä luonnonläheisyyttä. Osaajien asumisvalintoihin vaikuttui voimakkaasti elämänvaihe, eivätkä niinkään urbaanit palvelut, joita usein pidetään tärkeinä "luovalle luokalle". Tulokset osoittavat myös, että osaajien omistusasuminen ei kerro siitä, ovatko he jäämässä seudulle vai lähtemässä siltä. Tämä poikkeaa tuloksista, joita on saatu heikommassa sosioekonomisessa asemassa olevien maahanmuuttajaryhmien asumisesta.

Tulokset korostavat sosiaalisen ympäristön merkitystä kansainvälisten osaajien asumistyytyväisyyden muodostumisessa. Siinä missä sosiaalisten verkostojen on havaittu vaikuttavan merkittävästi osaajien sijaintipäättöksiin, tämä tutkimus osoittaa asuinalueeseen liittyvien sosiaalisten siteiden tarjonnan olevan erityisen rajoittanutta pääkaupunkiseudullalla, mikä osaltaan vähentää osaajien asumistyytyväisyyttä. Lisäksi asumiseen liittyvät rakenteet vaikuttavat paikallisten sosiaalisten siteiden muodostumiseen: kansainvälisten tutkinto-opiskelijoiden paikalliset sosiaaliset siteet vahtelivat asumisnuodon mukaan.

Vaikka monet kansainväliset osaajat ovat hyvässä sosioekonomisessa asemassa, sopivan asunnon löytäminen on usein vaikeaa. Siksi asuntojen saatavuus, laatu ja edullinen hintataso ovat tärkeitä pyrittäessä lisäämään heidän asumistyytyväisyyttään. Lisäksi paikalliset sosiaaliset siteet auttaisivat...
osaajien asettautumisessa seudulle, sillä ne toimivat välittäjinä sekä asuinalueeseen että laajemmin yhteiskuntaan. Nämä asumiseen vaikuttavat tekijät olisi hyvää huomioida kaupunkien strategioissa, joiden tavoite on houkutella ja sitouttaa kansainvälisiä osaajia.

Asiasanat: kansainväliset osaajat, asuminen, asumistyvyys, sosiaaliset siteet, pääkaupunkiseutu
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Kumpula, Helsinki, May 2015
Elina Eskelä
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Articles I-IV
List of original publications

This thesis is based on the following publications:


1 Introduction

1.1 Economic competitiveness, city regions and the global race for talent

Where would we want to live, that’s a good question. I think the US ranks pretty high on our list, we really liked the United States for a lot of reasons. We like in general the lifestyle choices that come with the US. [...] Especially in a place like Dallas, things are just so easy. It has a lot of the advantages that I just mentioned that Helsinki has which is not crowded, easy to find parking, and it has other advantages. For example Texas has no state taxes, I still have to pay federal taxes. Then it also has really large houses, cheap houses. House the size that I’m living right now in the Helsinki metropolitan area would be roughly one fourth, one third the cost, right? (Indian male, 36, management)

The above quotation exemplifies the reflections of a skilled migrant on how different cities offer opportunities for leading certain lifestyles, and how housing is an important part of living in a certain city. This study focuses on skilled migrants, who are generally defined as people who have a tertiary education and/or are employed in an occupational role normally requiring a tertiary qualification (e.g. Kennedy 2010, Mulholland & Ryan 2015), and their residential satisfaction. It offers one perspective on cities in the era of creative and knowledge-based economies.

A notable proportion of economic production nowadays is based on immaterial work: information, innovation and problem solving (Castells 2010: 77, McCann & Acs 2011). The change from a Fordist to a post-Fordist mode of production has, along with the globalisation of the economy, also changed the global economic geography: the new economy is described as “an expanding mosaic of interrelated regional economies”, which is built on major metropolitan areas in the world (Scott, A. J. 2006: 43). The importance of location is evident in the competitive advantages of clusters such as Silicon Valley and Hollywood (Porter 1998). Obviously the notion of cities as central places for economic production and innovation is not new (e.g. Hall 1966, Friedmann 1986), but in the new global economy they have gained renewed importance as “sites for producing strategic global inputs” (Sassen 2006: 7). The economic performance of a country is increasingly dependent on how its city regions are connecting and succeeding globally (McCann & Acs 2011: 29).

As cities increasingly depend on innovation (Glaeser 2011), the role of talented and creative people is highlighted in discussions on their economic competitiveness (e.g. Fratesi 2014). International mobility has become a normal middle-class activity (Scott, S. 2006: 1105, Kennedy 2009), and skilled people create a global pool of workers. It is commonly understood nowadays that city regions have to attract different flows of information, capital and skilled people (Sotarauta 2001, Ewers 2007, Sotarauta & Saarivirta 2012). Moreover, city regions that are able to attract and retain skilled migrants stand to gain competitive advantage (Douglass et al. 2001, Wadhwa et al. 2008). Porter (2013), for example, highlights the importance of skilled people in his recommendations for restoring US competitiveness: the ease of immigration for highly skilled individuals is at the top of his list.

In their pursuit of economic competitiveness practically all city regions aim to attract the “creative class” (Florida 2004). Discussion on factors affecting the migration decisions of professionals has
been intensive for over a decade. According to some authors, soft factors such as urban amenities and a thriving cultural life are crucial (Glaeser 2001, Florida 2004), whereas others claim that traditional hard factors such as job opportunities and a positive immigration policy are still dominant (Peck 2005, Storper & Manville 2006, Niedomysl & Hansen 2010, Pethe et al. 2010). Institutions such as universities have also been shown to have an important role in attracting and retaining talent (Lester & Sotarauta 2007, Ciriaci 2013, Musterd & Kovács 2013b, Hedberg et al. 2014).

Discussions on the creative class encouraged city regions to consider their attractiveness in the eyes of skilled people. However, this often resulted in the one-sided development of commercial spaces such as cafes and shopping neighbourhoods (Lawton et al. 2013), or the adoption of cultural strategies supporting festivals and museums, for example, which has attracted criticism for the resulting “sameness” of cities all over the world (Zukin 2010: 231-232). Although skilled workers are acknowledged as influential drivers of economic growth and are often targeted in local strategies (e.g. Strategy… 2013), the literature focusing on cities and their competitiveness tends to portray them as somewhat anonymous actors who “flow” in global networks (Castells 1996). However, there is a growing research strand particularly in the field of migration, focusing on skilled international migration and covering topics such as the migrants’ motivation (Thor 2009, Kennedy 2009), the diversity of migrant groups (Scott, S. 2006, Conradson & Latham 2005b) and their social networks (Ryan 2011), and the community morphology of skilled migrants (Scott 2007). There is also an emerging interest in migrants’ experiences of and reflections on their host cities (Tseng 2011, Walsh 2014, Meier 2015b, Yanasmayan 2015). There is a need to focus on local specificities and how they are considered in the “complex formations of creative labour” (Borén & Young 2013: 1807).

Although the above-mentioned studies have substantially enhanced understanding of skilled migrants as people living their everyday lives in cities, thus far little is known about their housing or residential satisfaction. Whereas city-development strategies tend to pursue the “consumer city” (Glaeser et al. 2001), specific housing policies are rarely developed to attract skilled migrants (Egedy et al. 2013: 128). It is acknowledged that the residential environment plays an important role in people’s everyday lives, and residential satisfaction has been shown to play a key role in whether people move away from or stay in their current location (Rossi 1980, Speare 1974, Newman & Duncan 1979). Skilled migrants who are endowed with human capital have good prerequisites for relocating (Mauro & Spilimbergo 1998). It is therefore vital for city regions, which are increasingly dependent on attracting and retaining members of this migrant group, to understand what factors affect their residential satisfaction. Furthermore, an investigation into the housing of skilled migrants will also enhance understanding of ethnic-minority housing, the research on which largely focuses on lower socio-economic groups: it would allow the testing of the validity of theories on ethnic-minority housing in a different socio-economic context.

1.2 The research questions and the structure

This dissertation explores the housing situation of skilled migrants in the Helsinki metropolitan area (HMA), and specifically their residential satisfaction. The research is qualitative, and is based on a total of 70 interviews. The study builds on a European ACRE research project (Accommo-
dating Creative Knowledge - Competitiveness of European Metropolitan Regions within the Enlarged Union), which investigated the competitiveness of 13 European city regions (e.g. Musterd & Kovács 2010, Musterd & Kovács 2013a). The HMA was one of ACRE’s research sites, and the local reports broadly assessed the conditions of the creative and knowledge-intensive economies in the city region, including the experiences of skilled migrants (e.g. Kepsu et al. 2009, Vaattovaara et al. 2009, Kepsu et al. 2010, Vaattovaara et al. 2010a). This dissertation extends the depth and sharpens the focus of these results, concentrating on a particular aspect in the lives of skilled migrants in a host city, namely housing, and diversifying the sample (see Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the research method and data).

Given the lack of knowledge about the factors affecting the residential satisfaction of skilled migrants, the main research question to be addressed is:

**What are the determinants of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants?**

Previous research has shown that various factors affect residential satisfaction, including the dwelling, the neighbourhood and the neighbours (this is discussed in detail in the theory section, Chapter 2.2.). Other studies have assessed the significance of the residential environment in the moving decisions of skilled migrants. The following three sub-questions, which focus on detailed aspects of skilled migrants’ housing, therefore support the main research question:

1. What motivates skilled migrants to migrate, and what related expectations do they have of the residential environment in the case of Finland?
2. What factors affect the establishment of local social ties among skilled migrants, and what effect do they have on residential satisfaction?
3. Is there a connection between homeownership and future plans among skilled migrants?

These research questions are addressed in the four articles that constitute this dissertation.

**Article I** examines the residential satisfaction of skilled migrants in the HMA. The analysis is based on 25 interviews with migrants working in the knowledge-intensive and creative sectors, and on five interviews conducted with experts on the housing of skilled migrants in city regions. Residential satisfaction is assessed with regard to the migrants’ opinions about and experiences of the local housing market, the quality of housing and the various neighbourhoods. The article addresses the main research question.

**Article II** discusses the role of international degree students in skilled migration, and examines their motives for moving to Finland and their expectations of the residential environment. The analysis is based on interviews conducted with 25 international degree students studying at Aalto University and the University of Helsinki. The paper addresses the first sub-question.
Article III examines local social ties in student housing in the Helsinki metropolitan area. The data derives from 20 interviews conducted with international degree students. The housing pathway approach is used to analyse local ties on two spatial levels: shared flats and neighbourhoods. The article addresses the second sub-question as well as the main research question.

Article IV investigates the connection between homeownership among skilled migrants and their future plans (sub-question 3), as well as their overall residential satisfaction (main research question). It also specifically focuses on the migration motives of skilled migrants from India (sub-question 1). The analyses are based on 15 interviews with skilled Indian migrants.

The dissertation is structured as follows. Chapter 2 gives the theoretical background and introduces the key concepts used in the study. Chapter 3 describes the empirical context, the Helsinki metropolitan area, and Chapter 4 focuses on the research setting, the methods used and the data. The results of the study are summarised in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions and discusses the policy implications.
**2 Explaining the dynamics of migration and settling among workers with talent**

**2.1 Skilled migrants, migration motives and settling**

Interest in the movement and migration motives of talented workers has grown as the global economy is becoming increasingly dependent on them. Recent studies define a skilled migrant as a person who has a tertiary education (e.g. Kennedy 2010, Koikkalainen 2013, Labrianidis & Vogiatzis 2013) and/or is employed in an occupational role normally requiring a tertiary-level qualification (Mulholland & Ryan 2015). Skilled migrants are differentiated from earlier waves of labour immigrants by their educational profile and work in non-manual positions (Iredale 2001). Unlike the term migrant professional (Meier 2015a), the term skilled migrant (Scott, S. 2006, Kofman & Raghuram 2005, Kennedy 2010, Tseng 2011) encompasses the diversity of the migrant group, and also includes international students and or migrants whose working position in the host country is not secured (such as freelance artists and scientists with temporary contracts).

Meier (2015a) suggests the following reasons for the migration of professionals: intensified globalisation processes, the general increase in the numbers of people with a tertiary education, the economic crises in some regions (unemployment) and the current consideration of migration experience as a necessary qualification for professionals (see also Kõu & Bailey 2014). Interest in the changing international division of labour (Koser & Salt 1997) arose along with economic globalisation and the emergence of “global cities” (Sassen 2001). Skilled migrants were seen as essential in the formation of these cities (Hannerz 1996, Findlay et al. 1996), and as among the key “flows” affecting them (Castells 2010: 445-447, Beaverstock 2002: 525). The role of inter-company transferees, typically working in the field of financing, has gained particular attention (Beaverstock 2002, 2005, Findlay et al. 1996).

Whereas the discussion on skilled migrants in global cities raised awareness of the importance of this migrant group, later studies addressed the perceived uniformity of “elite migrants”. International mobility is no longer the preserve of corporate elites: other skilled people, such as artists and doctors, are also globally mobile (Scott, S. 2006, Ewers 2007). International students have been acknowledged as a significant category related to the “middling” of skilled migration (Conradson & Latham 2005a), and have even been called “the quintessential avatars of globalization” (Favell et al. 2007: 16).

Current discussions also highlight the need to uncover the rich details of host cities as well as the experiences of skilled migrants in them, complementing the earlier, rather anonymous descriptions of global cities (Robinson 2005, Walsh 2014, Meier 2015a). The academic interest is increasingly in studying the everyday lives of skilled migrants in specific localities (Meier 2015a), the most recent studies focusing on their identities and feelings of belonging (Walsh 2012, 2014, Mulholland & Ryan 2015, Rincón 2015), their social networks (Ryan & Mulholland 2013, Ryan & Mulholland 2014) and their reflections on their host cities (Tseng 2011, Walsh 2014, Meier 2015b, Yanasmayan 2015).
What drives the location decisions of skilled migrants? Florida (2004) initiated the wider debate on this topic, suggesting that the location choices of the “creative class” are affected by the presence of thick labour markets, and also by their preference for living in a diverse and tolerant urban environment. According to Florida (2004: 68-69), the creative class consists of two subgroups: “the super-creative core” including people who “fully engage in the creative process”, such as scientists, artists, actors, designers, editors and analysts, and “the creative professionals”, who work in knowledge-intensive industries such as high-tech sectors, financial and legal services and business management. Members of the creative class work hard but also appreciate free time, and are guided by shared values including individuality, meritocracy, diversity and openness (ibid. 199, 77-80). These characteristics direct the choice of living and working environment. Working long days, they need recreational facilities close by, such as parks for running in, a thriving nightlife and street life with unique characteristics. Florida also stresses the importance to the creative class of uniqueness and authenticity in the built environment. Similarly, according to a study on skilled British migrants in Paris (Scott, S. 2006: 1124), “a growing number of the urban middle classes appear to be making locational decisions based increasingly upon lifestyle as much as career-path priorities”.

Florida’s arguments have attracted criticism from other scholars (Peck 2005, Storper & Manville 2006, Hoymann & Faricy 2009), and in general the discussion on the “creative class” and “creative cities” is criticised for the imprecise use of these terms (Markusen 2006, Evans 2009). It is still claimed that “hard factors” (work opportunities, the regional economy and immigration policy) carry more weight in the location decisions of skilled people than so-called “soft factors” such as entertainment opportunities and the aesthetics of the built environment (Boyle 2006, Niedomysl & Hansen 2010, Kennedy 2010). The overall functioning of city regions, with core urban services such as safety, transport and schools, has also been highlighted (Glaeser 2011: 260). However, an empirical study testing the creative-class thesis in a Nordic context (Andersen et al. 2010) generally supported Florida’s arguments: members of the creative class locate in open and tolerant cities, especially in the case of larger city regions.

The European ACRE study (Musterd & Kovács 2010, Pethe et al. 2010, Musterd & Kovács 2013), encompassing 13 city regions, highlights the importance of job opportunities but also, interestingly, refers to the significant role of social networks and personal trajectories in the location decisions of skilled workers. Diversity and tolerance were not generally considered very strong attracting factors, but the residential environment was not dismissed as meaningless. In fact, the study showed that although these urban amenities do not play a major role in attracting talent, they do in retaining migrants, as “soft factors are pivotal for their decision to extend their stay” (Pethe et al. 2010: 188). Yanasmayan’s (2015) study on skilled Turkish migrants in Barcelona and Amsterdam supports this view. Khoo et al. (2008) also showed that lifestyle factors affected the decisions of skilled temporary migrants in Australia to become permanent residents. A study conducted in the US further showed that many skilled migrants who came on a temporary contract ultimately decided to settle in the host country (Kim 2014), the reasons including access to various individual and family benefits such as children’s education, and becoming accustomed to the American lifestyle.
Florida continued to emphasise the importance of place in his later work. Mellander, Florida and Stolarick (2011) found that place-based factors, especially the beauty or physical setting and the opportunity to meet people and make friends, had the largest relative effects on the desire of individuals to stay in their current US location. Florida (2007: 195-199) also raised the issue of housing prices, arguing that a lack of affordable housing for the creative classes threatened the competitiveness of cities. For example, housing in New York and Los Angeles is so expensive that other global centres such as Sydney and Toronto are competing with them for the same skilled workers. Florida also challenges the American dream of homeownership, given that owning a home limits mobility and the individual’s chances of relocating in search of better career opportunities (Florida 2008: 142-143).

Academic interest has also focused on where within the city region skilled migrants live, and what factors play a role in these location decisions. Settlement patterns have been described in many locations in terms of statistical patterns (Glebe 1986, White 1998, Freund 2001, Kauppinen 2002, Aalbers & Deurloo 2003, Kepsu et al. 2009: 104-107). It appears from these studies that skilled migrants are concentrated in certain parts of the city region, usually in more affluent neighbourhoods, which differ from those in which other ethnic minorities are settled. It is suggested that one factor contributing to this outcome is the structure of the local housing market, in other words where suitable (private rental) housing is available (Kauppinen 2003, Aalbers & Deurloo 2003): the Japanese in London are concentrated in certain high-social-status districts, for example (White 1998). The geographical locations of students in university towns have also been analysed: analyses of “studentification”, particularly in the context of the UK, have exposed the negative effects of student concentrations on established residents (Allison 2006, Hubbard 2008), especially in deprived communities (Sage et al. 2012).

Some studies have assessed the housing preferences of skilled migrants, and their search mechanisms. A rare example of a more detailed investigation into the housing of skilled migrants is White & Hurdley’s (2003) study on Japanese corporate movers in London, in which the focus is on the migrants’ effect on the local housing market. The presence of highly skilled Japanese migrants has resulted in the establishment of a separate housing sub-sector in which Japanese estate agencies channel housing to Japanese clients. According to the researchers, because the Japanese tended to see London as a “potentially threatening environment” (White & Hurdley 2003: 695), they wanted to locate in neighbourhoods that were considered safe. Other important characteristics included a good location in relation to the workplace, the condition and size of the apartment, and the availability of Japanese facilities (such as schools and specialist shops). The results showed that the Japanese were quite satisfied with their housing, and especially with their neighbourhoods, which the researchers concluded was the result of the “filtering” actions of the estate agents.

The most recent strand of literature on skilled migrants, with a specific focus on their perceptions of host cities, also touches on the issue of housing. Kim (2014) found that skilled migrants in Alabama, USA had different settlement experiences depending on whether they came with or without a job contract: corporate-driven migrants received initial help from their employers, including relo-
cation packages with temporary housing, which considerably eased the transition from temporary to permanent settlement. Meier (2015b), too, describes the importance of settlement services (an apartment provided by the employer) in ensuring efficient working from the very beginning in the case of German finance managers in London and Singapore. He illustrates the “social mapping” in which skilled migrants engage in order to select their residential area: they read other people’s representations of neighbourhoods and use their own direct local experiences to guide their choice. The family situation also plays a role in the selection, particularly with regard to the location of schools. German financial managers noted the varying and unique characteristics of cities in describing their experiences: London was seen as chaotic, whereas Singapore was described as “city of social harmony” (Meier 2015b: 66). Walsh (2011) refers to the material aspects of residence and the home-making practices of skilled migrants, highlighting their production of homeliness. Nowicka (2007), in turn, notes that although mobility affects home-making, highly mobile professionals adjust to the situation and easily make a home in different locations.

Some studies focus on the role of local social ties in the housing and settling of skilled migrants. Fincher and Shaw (2009, 2011) found that allocating international students and natives to different housing forms resulted in unintended socio-spatial segregation. Wulff and Dharmalingam (2008) identified specific factors that contributed to the local social connectedness of skilled migrants in Australia: the family context (especially the presence of young children), the length of residence, living in a small town and having a specific cultural background (USA/Canada, South Africa, Zimbabwe). According to Harvey’s (2008) study on the social networks of British and Indian expatriate scientists in Boston, in turn, these skilled migrants socialised mainly with the host population outside the expatriate networks. Harvey argues that these social relationships were more important for their professional development. On the other hand, Mulholland and Ryan (2015) found that skilled French migrants in London tended to socialise with their co-natives. They assessed these “co-native bubbles” as both an opportunity and a threat: they provide support, but also weaken attachment to the native population (Mulholland & Ryan 2015, Meier 2015b).

As shown in this section, earlier studies on the housing of skilled migrants generally focus on settlement patterns and housing search. There has been very little detailed investigation into residential satisfaction – opinions about dwellings, neighbourhoods and neighbours. The next chapter reviews the literature on residential satisfaction as a key determinant of staying in or moving from the current location.

2.2 Residential satisfaction as a predictor of behaviour

Residential satisfaction has been studied extensively in the fields of social psychology, sociology, planning and geography (Newman & Duncan 1979, Rossi 1980, Clark et al. 2006, Lu 1999, Dekker et al. 2011). As a concept, residential satisfaction reflects how well individuals’ housing needs are fulfilled (Lu 1999) and their expectations met (Dekker et al. 2011). It could be seen as a criterion of residential quality, or as a predictor of behaviour (Amérgio & Aragonés 1990, 1997). In the latter case it plays a key role in whether a person moves from or stays in the current location (Speare 1974, Newman & Duncan 1979), and it is a better predictor than individual or household character-
istics (Speare 1974). In other words, in an optimal case residential mobility leads to better dwellings and neighbourhoods (Clark et al. 2006). In the case of skilled migrants, residential satisfaction is a useful tool for predicting whether or not they will stay in their current location.

What factors affect residential satisfaction? Despite the many studies on the subject, there seems to be a lack of understanding in terms of how individuals build up residential satisfaction (Lu 1999). Given that “housing has the distressing characteristic of being a very complex and diverse good” (Rossi 1980: 40), it involves various physical, economic, locational, social and symbolic considerations. It seems that residential satisfaction forms through the interplay of the dwelling, the neighbourhood and the neighbours (Amérigo & Aragonés 1990, Buys & Miller 2012). The qualities of the dwelling are of significance: satisfaction is higher when it is in good condition and sufficient in size (Lu 1999, Baker 2008, Dekker et al. 2011). Residents who live in low-income neighbourhoods are more dissatisfied than those living in more affluent areas, and high-density neighbourhoods have higher dissatisfaction rates (Parkes et al. 2002). It has been shown that neighbourhood satisfaction is a significant determinant of housing satisfaction (Lu 1999), and that people who are dissatisfied with their housing are three times more likely to be dissatisfied with their neighbourhood (Parkes et al. 2002). Clark et al. (2006) found that when households move the quality of their dwelling improves, as does the quality of their neighbourhood measured in terms of socioeconomic status as well as the physical environment (less density, more green space). The general conclusion is that neighbourhoods matter in housing choice.

**Local social ties** play an important role in the neighbourhood and in the formation of residential satisfaction. Social ties are generally categorised as strong and weak, each having different functions: strong ties (friends) offer emotional support and intimacy, whereas weak ties (acquaintances) deliver information among different groups of people, which is especially useful in finding jobs, for example (Granovetter 1973). In other words, strong ties help people to get by, whereas weak ties help them to get ahead (Woolcock & Narayan 2000). Henning & Lieberg (1996) found that social ties in the neighbourhood enhanced the feeling of being at home and pleasantness, and that security, social support and practical help were related to weak social ties. The authors concluded that the neighbourhood as an arena of weak social ties was of special importance to people who did not have an extensive social network. Neighbourhood ties act as bridges to society, and make it possible to access resources that are not present in the network of strong social ties.

Recent studies support previous findings on the importance of local social ties. Although the development of communication technologies has facilitated the maintenance of social relationships regardless of physical distance, local social ties are still important in building a social identity and as sources of informal help (Forrest 2012). Knowing and/or recognising neighbours and their friendliness contribute significantly to neighbourhood satisfaction (Buys & Miller 2012, Parkes et al. 2002). The social aspect of the residential environment has a significant effect on place identification and residential satisfaction (Fleury-Bahi et al. 2008, Amérigo & Aragonés 1990). Neighbourhood-based social ties also predict residents’ attachment to the area (Moser et al. 2002, Lewicka 2005, Livings-
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...ton et al. 2010) and their societal activity (Lewicka 2005: 392). In other words, local social ties act as a mediator with regard to the residential area as well as to society.

Homeownership has been shown to enhance housing satisfaction (Lu 1999, Coulson et al. 2003, Elsinga & Hoekstra 2005), as well as general life satisfaction (Rohe & Stegman 1994, Rossi & Weber 1996). Homeowners are less likely to move than renters (Rossi 1980), and according to Diaz-Serrano’s study (2009) based on the European Community Household Panel, renters who become homeowners experience a significant increase in housing satisfaction. Scholars have found that the meanings attached to homeownership depend on the context; it is more important as a factor of security and success in English-speaking countries and in Southern Europe (Elsinga & Hoekstra 2005). Homeownership is the dominant tenure in Finland, and “acquires an aura of successful normality” (Andersson et al. 2007: 169). The neighbourhood context also has an effect: homeowners surrounded by renters experience less residential satisfaction (Parkes et al. 2002, Vera-Toscano & Ateca-Amestoy 2008).

Other factors affecting residential satisfaction apart from tenure and characteristics of the residential environment include the household’s needs and its composition. As Rossi (1980) argues, the family life cycle affects housing needs. Changes in the household related to marriages, births, divorces and deaths, for example, change housing needs and are expressed as changes in housing demand. According to Rossi (1980: 61), mobility ensues when families adjust their housing to their housing needs. In other words, the lack of fit between current housing and housing needs pushes the household to move.

Américo and Aragonés (1997) highlight the cognitive, affective and behavioural processes in the creation of residential satisfaction. Individuals have their own standards of residential quality, shaped by social and cultural influences, which they compare with the actual residential environment: the smaller the gap, the more satisfied they are.

The characteristics of individuals and households also affect satisfaction levels. Older people are more satisfied than younger people (Dekker et al. 2011, Lu 1999). It has also been reported that immigrants are less satisfied with their housing than natives, but more satisfied with the neighbourhood: this is presumed to be caused by the fact that immigrants occupy dwellings that are of worse quality (Dekker et al. 2011: 494). The effect of the socioeconomic background varies. In some cases people on a low income experience more residential satisfaction if their housing costs are low and they have more social contacts in the neighbourhood, whereas those on a high income may be more satisfied if they are able to choose a good dwelling or neighbourhood (for a review, see Dekker et al. 2011: 483). However, according to a study from the Netherlands (Musterd et al. 2014), the bigger the social distance in the neighbourhood (between the household income and the median income), the higher the odds that the individual will move away. Movers also tend to select a neighbourhood that reduces the social distance. These results suggest that residents are most satisfied when living with people who match their own social position.
It has also been found that residential choices and satisfaction are affected by work life: as Clapham (2005: 30) puts it, “[h]ousing is not consumed in isolation from other aspects of life”. Career mobility may affect residential mobility (Hardill 2004). Forrest and Murie (1987), for example, showed that the mobility of affluent professionals affected their attitude towards buying a house: salability was very important in facilitating mobility, as well as making a good housing investment. They also found that the housing histories of households were shaped by the careers of their members. The location of housing in relation to the workplace is especially important for dual-career households (Karsten 2007).

Residential satisfaction is a relevant research topic from both the individual and the societal perspective. On the individual level it contributes to the general quality of life: home is a place for rest, refuge and security (Adams 1984), and has a significant impact on identity and wellbeing (Easthope 2014: 581). Studies have shown that housing satisfaction contributes to overall life satisfaction (Peck & Stewart 1985). From the societal perspective, understanding the characteristics of residential satisfaction facilitates the development of successful housing policies (Lu 1999) and the functioning of the housing market (Dekker et al. 2011: 481).

What makes the study of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants especially intriguing is that, unlike people with low economic resources (e.g. Amérito & Aragonés 1990), they have more residential-mobility options if they are not satisfied with their current housing. However, as foreigners they have a different starting point for their housing than the native population. The focus thus turns in the next section to studies on ethnic-minority housing, and especially how housing reflects immigrants’ plans to stay in or leave the host society.

2.3 Ethnic-minority housing: staying or leaving?

Immigrant housing has been studied extensively, especially in the United States. One of the basic questions in this field of research is whether ethnic-minority housing is guided by societal constraints or by the minorities’ own choice.

According to the traditional approach, which dates back to the Chicago School of sociologists (Burgess 1925, Park 1915), immigrants’ settlement patterns form “naturally” as a result of urban ecology. Burgess (1925) applied concepts from plant ecology, namely succession and invasion, to describe the expansion of cities and the settlement of immigrants there, zone by zone. The residential assimilation model (Massey & Denton 1985, Alba & Logan 1991) posits that as immigrants acculturate and settle in the host country, their residential locations change from inner-city areas to the suburbs. The spatial location of immigrants in the city region is thus seen to reflect the state of their assimilation. This spatial movement increases their interaction with the native population (Alba et al. 1999).

However, not all immigrant groups follow the traditional spatial pattern (from inner cities to the suburbs), even though their socio-economic position may resemble that of the native population. Logan et al. (2002: 3201) argue thus: “[T]he ethnic neighbourhood for some groups is a springboard, but for others it is a destination. This is not a time, if ever there were a time, for a one-pat-
tern-fits-all theory of residential location”. Some studies focus on the societal structures that guide and limit immigrants’ housing choices, such as housing discrimination (Massey & Denton 1993, Yinger 1995, Heckmann et al. 2001). The place stratification model (Logan & Molotch 1987, Alba & Logan 1992) offered an alternative to the spatial assimilation model: the powerful majority appears to take over the most desirable residential areas, and the minorities have to settle for what is left. Empirical evidence shows that immigrants reside in less-desirable neighbourhoods in many cities (Giffinger 1998, Bolt & van Kempen 2002, Drever & Clark 2002, Magnusson & Özüekren 2002), and that ethnic minorities have more problems with housing than the majority (Newman & Duncan 1979). Immigrants also have less knowledge of the local housing market, which affects their housing outcomes (Özüekren & van Kempen 2003, Kepsu et al. 2009).

The ethnic-cultural explanation highlights immigrants’ autonomy in establishing their housing situation, which develops based on their ethnic resources and cultural preferences (Bowes et al. 1990, Andersson 1998, Peach 1998). Dahya (1974) showed in his pioneering work that Pakistanis in Britain wanted to minimise their housing costs in order to send remittances back home, and therefore settled for the cheapest accommodation available, whether rental or owner-occupied. He describes how the Pakistanis’ intention to return to their home country, the myth of return, affected their everyday life in the host country. Whether or not they do return is not of great importance, but the interest is in how this belief of return affects their actions in the host country (see Al-Rasheed 1994). Anwar (1979) uses the term “incapsulation”, which is manifested in the immigrants’ residential segregation, their work life and their dependence on the ethnic community. The myth of return affects migrants’ commitment to the host country as well as their emotional settlement:

“[…] the immigrants’ preference for a particular type of housing is a form of response to their immediate needs and interests, and an expression of their non-committal to Britain. In keeping with their myth of return, the immigrants do not regard the house in Britain as a ‘home’ but as a short-term expediency related to a particular goal or goals. It cannot be overemphasized that the immigrants came to Britain with the firm intention of earning and saving money and eventually returning to their homeland. They did not come in order to enjoy a comfortable life here.” (Dahya 1974: 99).

Later studies explored the myth of return and its effect on the housing choices of socio-economically low-level migrant groups (Owusu 1998, Zetter 1999, Sinatti 2011). According to Owusu (1998), although socio-economic factors such as low incomes and small household sizes affected the low homeownership rates of Ghanaian immigrants in Toronto, their return intentions and desire for homeownership in Ghana also played a role in their housing decisions in Canada. Sinatti (2011), in turn, found that Senegalese migrants in Italy wished to return to Senegal permanently, and that building a home for their family in Senegal tended to be their first priority as an economic decision but also as a symbol of rootedness. The evidence suggests that the physical home or house in the country of origin may assume an important role in the myth of return. As Zetter (1999: 13) argues, for Greek-Cypriots, “[i]dealization of the house/location […] becomes the basis for creating and living with the myth”
The most recent research in the context of the Nordic countries (Nielsen et al. 2014) stresses the need to include the local context and the cultural background of the immigrants in analyses in order to understand the housing options of ethnic minorities. The study showed that the local contexts in Nordic capitals affect the perceived housing options of Somalis: the local access structures in particular affect how much the immigrants feel in control of their housing situation. It has been shown that the allocation of social housing in Helsinki is not always transparent (Dhalmann & Vilkama 2009). As Nielsen et al. (2014: 11) note, “[T]he lack of control in the housing market strongly affected Somalis’ life projects and commitment, including the commitment to stay in the migration country”.

Immigrants’ homeownership in the host country has been perceived as a sign of commitment and adaptation to the new culture and its values (Murdie & Teixeira 2003, Alba & Logan 1992, Myers & Lee 1998, Clark 2003). Homeownership is generally seen as the final target of both native and immigrant populations, “the peak of the housing career” (Magnusson Turner & Hedman 2014: 271). A recent study (Gonzalez-Fuentes & Iglesias-Fernández 2013) describes immigrant homeownership as a sign of consumer acculturation, and as being more likely among immigrants who socialise with natives. Previous studies indicate that immigrants have lower homeownership rates than natives because of their lower earnings and lower education levels (Borjas 2002). Religious convictions related to paying interest may also make it more difficult to take on a mortgage (Nielsen et al. 2014). According to a study conducted in Australia (Chua & Miller 2009), the likelihood that immigrants will own their homes increases as their stay in the country lengthens. However, it seems that different ethnic groups have different rates of homeownership (Peach 1998, Coulson et al. 2003, Brown & Webb 2012). It has been shown that Indian immigrants, for example, have higher household incomes and higher homeownership rates than other immigrant groups (Peach 1998, Borjas 2002: 455-456). In the US, Asians are as likely as whites to choose homeownership, whereas there is an unexplained differential between blacks and whites (Painter et al. 2001). According to Borjas (2002), the differences in the different immigrant groups are attributable to their different educational and wage levels, and also to the fact that they tend to cluster in metropolitan areas where homeownership rates are generally low.

Homeownership may also be a forced choice. Bowes et al. (1990) found that the concentration of the predominantly Asian minority population in Glasgow in the owner-occupied sector was not a free choice, but a result of their discriminatory exclusion from council housing. Homeownership can also confine ethnic groups within certain locations where affordable and less desirable housing is available (Alba & Logan 1992).

As discussed in the previous section, local social ties play an important role in residential satisfaction. However, establishing such ties is not straightforward in the case of immigrants. Developing inter-ethnic relationships may be complex because of different cultural and social codes: even the meaning of eye contact can vary (Smets & Kreuk 2008), and there are various perceptions about who should introduce themselves first (Müller & Smets 2009). According to findings from previous studies, living physically close does not automatically result in social contacts between natives and ethnic minorities (Blokland & van Eijk 2010, Dhalmann 2013). It is also important to acknowledge
that not all immigrants have similar views on local social ties: those coming from village-like set-
tings may prefer close neighbourhood ties, whereas those with more of an urban background may
settle for more superficial contact with their neighbours (Müller & Smets 2009, Dhalmann 2013).
Nonetheless, local social ties may be of significant practical help to immigrants (Ryan 2007).

Skilled migrants are encouraged to settle in city regions, and creating local social ties is one way of
rooting them in the new country (Wulff & Dharmalingam 2008). In the context of Finland, skilled
migrants suffer from the superficiality of social interaction with Finns, although they are a wanted
group and at the top of the “migrant hierarchy” (Koskela 2014). This is unfortunate in terms of their
settling, and does not support their professional development (Harvey 2008).
3 The empirical context: the Helsinki metropolitan area

3.1 Socio-economic challenges in the metropolis

The Helsinki metropolitan area, not a global city (Sassen 2001) but a “pocket-sized metropolis” (Vaattovaara & Kortteinen 2003: 2129), is of national importance because of the capital position of the city of Helsinki and the volume of economic activity in the region. In many ways the HMA also dominates the Finnish innovation scene (Sotarauta & Saarivirta 2012). It comprises four municipalities: Helsinki, Espoo, Vantaa and Kauniainen (Figure 1). The largest urban area in Finland, it hosts almost 1.1 million people (HRS 2014a). In comparison with other European metropolises, Helsinki is medium-sized or even small (Laakso & Kostiainen 2011: 7).

Metropolitan Helsinki produces around one third of the national Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita (Laakso & Kostiainen 2011: 14-15). Certain economic activities are focused in Helsinki: it hosts around 40 per cent of the nation’s jobs in the information and communication, and financial and insurance sectors (Statistical yearbook of Helsinki 2013: 70). The regional economy is currently struggling, with decreases in production and a weak outlook for Finnish companies (Helsinki re-

![Figure 1. The Helsinki metropolitan area: two of its major universities, which also host the informants interviewed for this study (see Chapter 4.4), are located on the map (map by Arttu Paarlahti).](image-url)
The HMA has a strong ICT cluster, but in order to decrease the economic risk and to remain competitive it needs to diversify its economic base (Laakso & Kostiainen 2011: 45).

The most recent competitiveness ranking by the World Economic Forum put Finland in fourth place (The global… 2014): Finland excels particularly in innovation. IMD, a global business school based in Switzerland, has compiled a global talent-ranking list that assesses a country’s ability to develop, attract and retain talent for the companies that operate there. Among 60 countries, Finland was again ranked fourth (IMD World Talent Report 2014). On the other hand, Helsinki is not mentioned in the top twenty of the world-competitiveness index of regions in the ranking of the Centre for International Competitiveness (The Global… 2014), whereas Stockholm is placed sixth and Norway seventh. According to the most recent report on the state of scientific research in Finland (Nuuitten & Lehvo 2014), whereas Finland ranks just above the average in comparisons of scientific impact, the gap from the top performers seems to be growing: more internationalisation is needed in filling professorships as well as in publishing research. The rise in the educational level of the Finnish population has slowed down (Education… 2014): Finland has had a large proportion of highly educated citizens, but in future the level will be closer to the European average.

The aging of the population also poses challenges for the HMA: the retirement of baby boomers increases the need for immigrant workers. The immigration strategy of the current government therefore highlights the need to attract skilled migrants to Finland (Government… 2013: 11). Immigrants may also have a positive impact on the local economy: if they come at the working age of between 20 and 40 and are employed similarly as the natives, their total net contribution to the public economy can be almost 200,000 euros (Maahanmuuttajien… 2014). International students also have a positive net effect on the economy: according to a Danish study, international Master’s degree students have a positive socio-economic impact on the local economy even if the programme is financed by the Danish state, as many of them supplement the local labour force and consequently contribute to employment, consumption and tax revenues (Analysis… 2013).

### 3.2 Skilled migrants in the HMA

Finland was, until recently, a country of emigration. The rate of immigration began to rise in the 1990s, the immigrants originating from the former socialist countries, Yugoslavia, Asia and Africa (Korkiasaari & Söderling 2003: 7, Vaattovaara et al. 2010b: 224-225), and grew rather steadily in the 2000s (OSF 2013a). Recruitment of foreign labour grew in the 2000s along with the ICT-driven economic growth (Vaattovaara et al. 2010b: 225).

Among the total population of 5.5 million in 2013 there were 291,000 foreign-language speakers and 208,000 foreign citizens in Finland (OSF 2013b). The proportion of foreign-born people is still considerably lower than the OECD average: 4.9 per cent in 2011 compared with the OECD average of 12.6 per cent (Society… 2014). Foreign-language residents made up 12 per cent of the population in Helsinki: the largest groups being Russian, Estonian, Somali and English speakers (Foreigners in Helsinki 2013). The proportion of residents speaking languages other than Finnish, Swedish
or Sami as their mother tongue in the Helsinki metropolitan area is expected to rise notably from 12 to 21 per cent by 2030 (HRS 2014a).

The specific numbers of skilled migrants – immigrants with a tertiary-level education – in the HMA are not clear: information on the educational level of immigrants is incomplete because many have not entered their educational background into Statistics Finland’s register. However, according to the statistical information available, 24 per cent of 25-64-year-old foreign-language residents in Helsinki have a tertiary degree (Foreigners in Helsinki 2013), the corresponding number for all Helsinki residents being 46 per cent (Väestön koulutusrakenne 2014). The skills of immigrants are often left unutilised: they have difficulties in finding work that corresponds to their education (Merimaa & Oilinki 2010).

Studies on skilled migrants in Finland thus far concentrate mainly on working life and the migration process (Raunio 2002, Forsander et al. 2004, Hoffman 2007, Jasinska-Lahti & Laine 2009, Merimaa & Oilinki 2010, Habti 2012, Habti & Koikkalainen 2014). The ACRE study focused on the migration and lives of skilled migrants in the HMA (Kepsu et al. 2009, Vaattovaara et al. 2009, Kepsu et al. 2010): they come to Finland for career purposes, not for the sake of Finland (Kepsu et al. 2009, Merimaa & Oilinki 2010, Habti 2012, Kobak 2013). Social ties also affect the moving decision (Kepsu et al. 2009, Kobak 2013). Experiences of working life vary: Chinese and Indians have had problems finding work and establishing career-related networks (Merimaa & Oilinki 2010), whereas Russian-speaking professionals have found jobs in Helsinki rather easily, as many already had abundant work experience (Kobak 2013: 23). Many studies report on the difficulties migrants face in establishing social contacts in Finland (Kepsu et al. 2009, Merimaa & Oilinki 2010, Kobak 2013, Koskela 2014). However, according to research on Indian and Chinese professionals and students in Helsinki, although they originally came on a temporary basis, leaving gets more difficult as they become accustomed to life there (Merimaa & Oilinki 2010).

The housing of skilled migrants in Finland and in the HMA has attracted little research attention: most studies focus on their perceptions of working life and on the host society as a whole. Generally, skilled migrants assess the quality of life in Finland and Helsinki as very high: they appreciate the safety, cleanliness and functionality of their daily lives (Merimaa & Oilinki 2010, Kobak 2013). Forsander et al. (2004: 184-190) touched on this issue in their study of skilled migrants in Finnish city regions. According to their findings, some of the migrants find housing cramped and expensive, but they concluded that housing does not pose a serious problem in terms of settling. However, the ACRE study, which was also the starting point for this dissertation, highlighted housing as a serious problem for skilled migrants working in the creative and knowledge-intensive sectors in the HMA (Kepsu et al. 2009): the poor price-quality ratio in particular was discussed as a major weakness of the city region. More recently, Kobak (2013: 26-29) studied the housing of Russian-speaking professionals. Although the interviewees were mainly satisfied with the quality and the neighbourhoods, they experienced housing search as difficult because of the high demand. They also found the price level too high.
3.3 Housing in a Nordic welfare state

Housing policy in Finland is part of the welfare system (Vaattovaara et al. 2010b: 257). Homeownership is the dominant type of tenure (Ruonavaara 2003: 53), and is supported by tax benefits and special help for first-time buyers. On the other hand, housing policy supports weaker groups in the form of social housing and housing benefits. Access to social housing is means-tested (targeted), whereas in Denmark and Sweden the system is universal (Nielsen et al. 2014).

Urbanisation occurred late but rapidly in Finland (Vaattovaara 2011), which is manifested in the built environment in the form of blocks of flats. In 2012, 86 per cent of the dwellings in Helsinki were in blocks of flats, compared with 59 per cent in the rest of the HMA (Espoo, Vantaa, Kauniainen; Statistical... 2013). In general they are relatively small: in 2012, 59 per cent of the dwellings in Helsinki had one or two rooms (kitchen excluded), compared with 41 per cent in the rest of the HMA (Statistical yearbook of Helsinki 2013).

The majority of immigrant households in Helsinki live in rental accommodation: 45 per cent lived in social rental housing and 29 per cent in private rental housing in 2010 (the corresponding figures for natives being 20 and 25 per cent) (Foreigners in Helsinki 2013). The dominance of social housing is visible in the settlement patterns of immigrants originating from poorer countries in particular (Kauppinen 2002). On the other hand, speakers of Western European languages are located in neighbourhoods in which the proportions of immigrants are below the HMA average (Vilkama 2011). The rates of homeownership vary between immigrant groups: whereas the rates among Nordic and West European immigrants resemble those of the natives, the majority of immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa live in social rental housing (Vaattovaara et al. 2010b: 217-218).

In practice, skilled migrants start their housing pathway in the HMA in the private rental sector, which accounts for 24 per cent of the dwellings in Helsinki (HRS 2014b). The majority of private rental dwellings are flats, most detached houses being occupied by their owners. Private renting is not regulated; the market determines the price levels.

Current studies focusing on the HMA report signs of socio-spatial segregation in the city region, especially in terms of education, income, unemployment and foreign-language speakers (Vilkama 2011, Vaattovaara 2011). Although the differences between areas are not as dramatic as in other European cities, they are growing rather steadily. Neighbourhood effects are also visible in the labour-market outcomes of unemployed people (Kauppinen et al. 2011), and in educational outcomes between students and schools (Bernelius & Kauppinen 2011). Fear of segregation affects the current debate on the planning and governance of the region (Vaattovaara 2011). Although local housing policy promotes ethnic mixing, the policies alone are not enough to combat residential segregation: immigrants’ position in the housing market should be strengthened and their integration into the host society should be improved (Dhalmann & Vilkama 2009: 437). It should also be noted that immigrants do not comprise a homogenous group: in her qualitative study, Dhalmann (2013) explored the different residential preferences of Somalis and Russians, which are among the largest minority groups.
Against this background it is not surprising that when residential areas are discussed in the context of the Finnish government’s immigration strategy (Government…, 2013: 22), the focus is on the prevention of residential segregation and the acceptance of diversity. However, it is interesting that topics such as the quality of housing, the availability of options and immigrants’ position in the housing market are not mentioned.
4 Research method and data

4.1 The background of the study and the research approach

The study is positioned in the field of urban geography, which has long traditions in examining the housing and spatial locations of different population groups. The origins of research on ethnic-minority housing can be traced back to the Chicago School of urban sociologists, who saw the city as an ecosystem in which different population groups compete for urban space (Park 1915, Burgess 1925). Later studies have enhanced understanding of ethnic-minority housing in different geographical contexts (e.g. Dahya 1974, Alba & Logan 1992, Andersson 1998, Borjas 2002, Clark 2003, Blokland & van Eijk 2010). This investigation into the housing of skilled migrants, who differ from traditional immigrant groups by being more mobile and often economically better off, widens the perspective.

Many studies on housing, especially among ethnic minorities focus on the role of structures that constrain the housing and the choices that individuals are able to make (e.g. Dahya 1974, Massey & Denton 1993, Logan et al. 2002, Heckmann et al. 2001, Özüekren & van Kempen 2003, Posthumus & Kleinhans 2014). This approach is based on Giddens’ (1984) structuration theory, which acknowledges societal structures as both limiting and enabling people’s actions, but also recognises the potential in individuals to make choices and affect the structures. Societal structures may constrain individuals’ actions, but they do not determine them (Giddens 2009: 89-90). Structuration theory has influenced previous studies on housing (Dear & Moos 1984, Sarre 1986, Moos 2012) and migration (Goss & Lindquist 1995, Findlay & Li 1997). According to White & Hurdley (2003: 688), in the context of skilled migration, “the uncovering of processes involved in the residential incorporation of skilled migrants in destination cities can add considerably to the understanding of the migration and labour processes themselves and, in particular, the balance between structural forces, mechanisms and individuals”.

Given that skilled migrants tend to be seen as a somewhat footloose group (Nagel 2005), the question of their staying or leaving assumes relevance, especially when regional policies highlight their importance for local economies (Government… 2013). Rossi linked mobility and housing in his pioneering work, Why families move (1980: 17), arguing that “residential mobility could be looked upon as a phenomenon of the housing market”. Later studies have enhanced understanding of residential satisfaction and how it affects households’ residential mobility (Améïro & Aragonès 1990, Lu 1999, Parkes et al. 2002, Clark et al. 2006, Vera-Toscano & Ateca-Amestoy 2008, Dekker et al. 2011). However, given that most studies are quantitative in nature, it has been suggested that the research field would benefit from a qualitative approach that would give more insight into the opinions of residents (Dekker et al. 2011: 495). In response to this call, this study contributes novel, qualitative information on the factors affecting residential satisfaction among skilled migrants.

A further theoretical approach on which this study draws relates to research concentrating on skilled migration and its motivators (Florida 2004, Conradson & Latham 2005b, Boyle 2006, Pethe et
al. 2010), and the settlement of migrants in various destinations (Tseng 2011, Walsh 2011, Meier 2015b, Yanasmayan 2015). The current study offers insights into the migration decisions of skilled migrants in the context of an off-beat destination, and in analysing their housing expands current knowledge of their everyday lives.

In the Finnish context, this work is aligned with the growing strand of research on urban geography. The origins of this research approach are in the work of Waris (1932), who studied the settlement of the working class in the capital city, Helsinki. Several studies have later analysed the social and functional structures of Finnish cities (Aario 1951, Sweetser 1973, Andersson 1983). The deep economic recession of the 1990s, as well as increasing immigration, rekindled interest in research on the regional and social structures of cities. Vaattovaara (1998) used versatile methods, including geographical information systems (GIS), statistical data and interviews with residents, in her dissertation showing that the HMA was becoming socially differentiated. Findings on social differentiation led to new questions on housing preferences, residential segregation and neighbourhood effects. Ratvio (2012) found that the lifestyles of residents in the HMA varied depending on the neighbourhood: those who lived on the outskirts of the region had different housing preferences and daily mobility patterns than those who lived in the inner city. According to Bernelius (2013), socioeconomic and ethnic segregation in the HMA also affects urban schools and the educational outcomes of pupils. Vilkama (2011) revealed how the patterns of ethnic residential segregation in the HMA strengthened during the 2000s, and that the differences between residential areas were strongly linked to the selective migration dynamics of the native population and the various immigrant groups. Dhalmann (2011, 2013) provides a qualitative view, showing that Somalis and Russians who live in the HMA have different residential preferences: propinquity to their own ethnic group is important to Somalis, but less significant to Russians.

The above-mentioned studies have enhanced understanding of the development of the HMA and the effects of housing preferences, residential mobility and segregation. This dissertation contributes to this growing strand of research in analysing the housing of skilled migrants, who have received less attention as a population group, and adds to current knowledge about residential areas through the analysis of qualitative interview data. The analyses also reflect the opinions and experiences of individuals within the larger framework of economic competitiveness in city regions in the era of the new economy.

Complementing the above-mentioned scientific contributions, a further aim in this dissertation is to provide practical information on the settling and housing of skilled migrants for use in developing local housing and immigration policies.

4.2 Research setting
The housing expectations and needs of an individual or a family are generally contrasted with the existing physical dwelling and neighbourhood. According to Morris and Winter (1975), families evaluate their housing in terms of cultural norms, which are dependent on the society in which they live, and on family norms that “may or may not coincide with the cultural norms” (Morris & Win-
ter 1975: 83). In other words, there are inner norms that are contrasted to the situational conditions. Such norms include aspects of housing such as space, tenure, type (e.g. single-family house), quality, and the neighbourhood and location. If these norms are not met, dissatisfaction arises, and this “normative housing deficit” is adjusted through residential mobility, or residential (e.g. renovating the dwelling) or family (e.g. postponing childbearing) adaptation. As Morris and Winter (1975) argue, residential mobility differs from migration in that it involves shorter distances and occurs within the same labour and housing markets. However, given that the theory was developed 40 years ago when people were less mobile than nowadays, it could be assumed that residential dissatisfaction may also lead to migration, especially in the case of skilled individuals who have the necessary resources (mental, monetary and professional). Morris et al. (1976) showed in their empirical study that residential satisfaction and normative housing deficits are good predictors of the propensity to move.

Kortteinen’s classic study (1982) on housing in the HMA adopts a similar approach, contrasting people’s norms with their actual environment. Public discussion in the 1970s and 1980s criticised newly built suburban neighbourhoods for offering poor living conditions to rural families moving to cities that led to social problems and suffering. Kortteinen interviewed people with different cultural backgrounds who had moved into a standardised living environment and analysed the similarities and differences between their experiences. His findings revealed how not only the deprived living circumstances in the suburbs but also urbanisation and the transition to paid work transformed the rural, communal way of life into a family-oriented, private mode in which it was difficult to deal with social problems.

This very general perspective in the social sciences – studying the interaction between individual norms and the situational conditions - dates back to sociologist Talcott Parsons and his book *The structure of social action*, published in 1937 in which he presents a synthesis of the classic works of European sociologists, highlighting especially the thoughts of Weber and Durkheim. According to Parsons, the study of world events should focus on action. At the core of his action frame of reference is the unit act, which is the basic unit as an analytical category: it “is the ‘smallest’ unit of an action system which still makes sense as a part of a concrete system of action” (Parsons 1967: 731). The unit act comprises the goal, two or more means of achieving it, situational conditions, a normative orientation and the actor (Figure 2). In essence, it describes how the normative orientation of an individual and the changing situational conditions are always present in action.

This dissertation analyses the experiences of housing among skilled migrants in the HMA. The research setting is built so as to maximise the diversity of the sample of skilled migrants, and these diverse people evaluate one single housing-market area. The selected migrant groups are different in terms of cultural and socioeconomic background, therefore representing a research strategy of “maximal difference”, which is based on John Stuart Mill’s method of induction (Mill 1941: 253-266, Arminen & Alapuro 2004: 8-9). The varying research subjects – skilled migrants – assess the same phenomenon or environment, in other words housing in the HMA, against their cultural backgrounds and previous experiences. In its general nature this perspective offers a natural research setting in which to explore immigrants’ thoughts about and interpretations of local housing conditions.
4.3 Research method

This research is based on qualitative methodology, specifically semi-structured interviews. Previous studies on immigrant housing (Dahya 1974, Tomlins et al. 2002, Müller & Smets 2009, Dhalmann 2013, Nielsen et al. 2014) and skilled migrants (Meier 2015b, Mulholland & Ryan 2015) support the use of this method. Similar structures were used in all the interviews, which were conducted in 2008, 2011 and 2012 (the data sets are described in the next section). The purpose of the interviews was to understand the choices and experiences of the individuals and households, as well as to uncover the structures of the local housing market. As in earlier studies on residential satisfaction, the interviewees’ opinions on and experiences of the dwelling, the neighbourhood and the neighbours were elicited and discussed in the interviews with a view to obtaining relevant information on residential satisfaction (Amérigo & Aragonés 1990, Lu 1999, Dekker et al. 2011).

The importance of the temporal perspective on migrant housing (Magnusson Turner & Hedman 2014: 271) became increasingly clear during the study. Clapham (2005) used the concept of housing pathways: similar concepts include housing histories (Watt 2005, Forrest & Murie 1987) and housing biographies (Forrest & Murie 1987). Clapham’s approach (2005) recognises the importance of social relationships and household changes to the housing choices of individuals. Past housing experiences affect the assessment of the current housing situation: this is evident in the case of immigrants who come from different societal and cultural backgrounds. “Biographical interviewing” (Clapham 2005: 241-243) is one way of obtaining longitudinal qualitative information on respondents’ housing, and Clapham paid particular attention to the respondents’ housing pathways, par-
particularly in the later interviews (2011, 2012). Biographical approaches have also been used in research on skilled migrants (Kõu & Bailey 2014).

All the interviewees contributing to this study were asked to choose the location of the interview. The majority of the interviews were conducted at the interviewee’s workplace/university, or in a café, and some took place in homes or parks. The interviews lasted for about an hour on average, varying from half an hour to two hours. The majority of them were conducted in English, but some were done in Finnish. The interview topics covered the migrants’ background and education, their move to Finland, their working/studying life, their current and past dwellings and neighbourhoods, their opinions on the housing market, their housing preferences, their free time and social life, and their future plans. All the interviewees also filled in a form requesting background information such as education, address, household composition and monthly household net income.

All the interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and were processed both manually and electronically, the ATLAS.ti program for qualitative data being used for the coding. The interview themes, which were based on earlier research findings, functioned as natural starting points for the analysis, although recurrent, interesting details that emerged from the data were also followed up (Cope 2003: 449-450, Sánchez-Ayala 2012: 132-133). The concept of a housing pathway (Clapham 2005) was applied in the analysis through the creation of a chronological chart of all the dwellings in which the migrants had lived while in Finland. The aim was to shed light on the process through which the interviewees chose or ended up in certain dwellings, how they experienced them and why they moved on.

The value of qualitative interviews is that they facilitate the investigation of individuals’ attitudes and values, producing a deeper and more complex picture of experiences and opinions than survey-based approaches, for example (Byrne 2004: 182). In the current context concerning the housing pathways of migrants, the interview as a research method gave ample opportunity to specify details and ask follow-up questions, thereby allowing the interviewer to address unexpected or unclear issues.

4.4 The interview data

The versatility of skilled migrants as a group, as recognised in the literature (e.g. Scott, S. 2006, Ewers 2007), and the research setting that was chosen to maximise the cultural and socioeconomic diversity of the participants led to the selection of three groups of skilled migrants to be investigated. A total of 70 interviews are used in this dissertation, grouped as follows (the year of the data collection in parentheses):

- 25 employees in the creative and knowledge-intensive industries (Table 1) + 5 experts on issues concerning skilled migrants in the HMA (Table 2) (2008)
- 25 international degree students (Table 3) (2011)
- 15 Indian migrants (Table 4) (2012)
Given the still relatively low numbers of immigrants in Finland and the HMA, the specific countries of origin (except for the Indians) and ages of the interviewees are concealed in order to ensure their privacy.

The 25 employees in the creative and knowledge-intensive industries and the five experts on issues related to skilled migrants were interviewed for the ACRE project (Accommodating Creative Knowledge - Competitiveness of European Metropolitan Regions within the Enlarged Union) in 2008. The project covered the competitiveness of the HMA and the lives of skilled migrants in the city region. The author of this dissertation participated in planning the interview sample, conducting the interviews and the data analysis, and compiling the co-authored project reports (Kepsu et al. 2009, Vaattovaara et al. 2009, Vaattovaara et al. 2010a). The analysis conducted during the ACRE project is narrowed and deepened in Article I, which focuses on housing issues among migrants. Later on, the author of this dissertation was responsible for the planning and execution of the interviews with international students and Indian migrants.

Different methods were used to locate the interviewees. The first and the last interview sets (2008 and 2012) were collected mainly through snowballing: the first interviewees were found through the researcher’s network, and they provided the contact details of acquaintances or friends who would be suitable. The use of multiple initial contact points ensured the versatility of the interviewees (Valentine 2005). The international students (2011) were selected from the student registries of the University of Helsinki and Aalto University, which host the largest numbers of international students among Finnish universities (Higher education institutions 2009). The Faculty of Arts at the University of Helsinki and the School of Science at Aalto University were chosen because they had the highest proportions of international students (7 and 11 per cent, respectively). The locational diversity of the international students was also taken into account: as the registers included students’ residential addresses, it was also possible to select interviewees who were accommodated in different parts of the HMA. Unlike the snowballing method, register-based sampling facilitated the identification of interviewees who were independent of each other, thereby also balancing the possible ill effects of the snowball samples.

Of the first 25 interviewees in 2008, 19 worked in knowledge-intensive sectors (IT, higher education, marketing and business consultancy) and six worked in creative fields (music and design). These migrants moved to Finland for career or family reasons. The five expert interviewees provided valuable insights into the housing and settlement process of skilled migrants in the HMA.

The students at the Faculty of Arts were studying subjects such as theatre science, musicology and Finnish language and culture, whereas those in the School of Science were majoring in subjects such as computer science, physics and mobile computing. The interviewees represented the nationalities present in the two educational units: the School of Science attracts Asian students, whereas most of the international students in the Faculty of Arts are from Russia and Europe. In total, 74 students were contacted in the search for a suitable number of interviewees (25). Chinese, Russian
Table 1. The 25 employees in the knowledge-intensive and creative industries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of origin</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Current position</th>
<th>Length of stay</th>
<th>Household type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>post doc researcher</td>
<td>less than a year</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>software engineer</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 North America</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>music</td>
<td>composer</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>43-48</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>software engineer</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Europe (non-EU)</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>PhD candidate</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>senior manager</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>IT project manager</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>37-42</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>IT analyst</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>project manager (IT consulting)</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>43-48</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>music</td>
<td>musician, part-time cleaner</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 North America</td>
<td>43-48</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>professor</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>design</td>
<td>design specialist</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Asia</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>research associate</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 South America</td>
<td>37-42</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>design</td>
<td>PhD candidate, freelancer/consultant</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Europe (non-EU)</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>research assistant</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>senior test designer</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Europe (non-EU)</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>marketing and business consultancy</td>
<td>internal auditor, consultant</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 South America</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>design</td>
<td>entrepreneur</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 North America</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>music</td>
<td>professor</td>
<td>less than a year</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 North America</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>marketing and business consultancy</td>
<td>marketing director</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 European (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>software architect</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Asia</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>marketing and business consultancy</td>
<td>senior marketing manager</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 North America</td>
<td>over 48</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>senior research scientist</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Africa</td>
<td>26-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>higher education</td>
<td>PhD candidate</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Europe (EU)</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>software engineer</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2. The five expert interviewees.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expert</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Annika Forsander</td>
<td>City of Helsinki</td>
<td>Director of immigration affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henni Ahvenlampi</td>
<td>City of Helsinki</td>
<td>Relocation advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jutta Evokari</td>
<td>Vuokraturva (real estate agency)</td>
<td>Relocation services agent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marjo Lautjärvi</td>
<td>Finland Relocation Services</td>
<td>Managing director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paul Brennan</td>
<td>Jolly Dragon (social network)</td>
<td>Founder and director</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and Estonian students were particularly hard to recruit: despite many attempts to include them, no Estonians are in the sample.

The skilled Indian migrant group suits the definition of “migrant professionals” (Meier 2015a): they were all employed as professionals in the fields of business and administration, science and IT. Indians are a growing professional immigrant group in Finland: in 2012, half of those who were granted residence permits on a specialist basis were of Indian origin (Foreign… 2013). As noted in previous studies, “geographical mobility has become a normative part of professional careers of highly skilled Indians and it is employed as a strategy for enhancing competitiveness on both domestic and international labour markets” (Kõu & Bailey 2014: 113). The interviewees included 12 men and three women, most of them in their 30s: this corresponds well with the overall demographic structure of Indians in Finland, almost two thirds of them being between 25 and 39 years old (OSF 2013b). The period of residence in Finland varied between seven months and eight years; about half of the interviewees had been resident for more than five years.

There was wide variation in household income. For example, one single-breadwinner Indian family with children reported a monthly household net income of between 2,000 and 3,000 euros, whereas another similar family received more than 11,000 euros per month. The lowest incomes were among the international students. However, there may be errors in reported income, in that combining all income in one question can result in underreporting and misreporting (Goldman & Smith 2001: 1359), and there are many potential sources of error in how income questions are understood and answered (Moore at al. 2000).
Table 3. The 25 international degree students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of origin</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Degree in process</th>
<th>Major (University)</th>
<th>Length of stay</th>
<th>Household type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 North America</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Spanish philology (Helsinki)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Asia</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Theatre science (Helsinki)</td>
<td>less than a year</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Western Europe</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Finnish language and culture (Helsinki)</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Russia</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Finnish language and culture (Helsinki)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Russia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Russian language and culture (Helsinki)</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Asia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Industrial engineering (Aalto)</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Western Europe</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Computer science (Aalto)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Western Europe</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Service design (Aalto)</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Eastern Europe</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Theoretical philosophy (Helsinki)</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Russia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Industrial management (Aalto)</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Africa</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Service design (Aalto)</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Asia</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Finnish language and culture (Helsinki)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Western Europe</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Media technology (Aalto)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Eastern Europe</td>
<td>over 36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Finnish language and culture (Helsinki)</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Asia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Bioinformatics (Aalto)</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Middle East</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Mobile computing (Aalto)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>couple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Western Europe</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Intercultural encounters (Helsinki)</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Asia</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Computer science (Aalto)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 South America</td>
<td>over 36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Musicology (Helsinki)</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Middle East</td>
<td>over 36</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Comparative literature (Helsinki)</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Western Europe</td>
<td>over 36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Finnish language and culture (Helsinki)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Asia</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Computer science (Aalto)</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>couple with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 Asia</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Security and mobile computing (Aalto)</td>
<td>less than a year</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 Asia</td>
<td>19-24</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>Master's</td>
<td>Mobile computing (Aalto)</td>
<td>less than a year</td>
<td>room in a shared flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Eastern Europe</td>
<td>25-30</td>
<td>f</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Physics (Aalto)</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>single</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4. The 15 Indian migrants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age group</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Field of work</th>
<th>Employer</th>
<th>Length of stay</th>
<th>Dwelling type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 m</td>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Physics</td>
<td>Research organisation</td>
<td>less than a year</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 f</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Research organisation</td>
<td>6 years</td>
<td>owner-occupied house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Research organisation</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>owner-occupied house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 m</td>
<td>37-41</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Chemistry</td>
<td>Research organisation</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>owner-occupied flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Bio-informatics</td>
<td>Research organisation</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>Systems biology</td>
<td>Research organisation</td>
<td>8 years</td>
<td>rental house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 m</td>
<td>37-41</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>IT</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 m</td>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>rental house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 m</td>
<td>31-36</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>5 year</td>
<td>owner-occupied house</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 m</td>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>owner-occupied flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 f</td>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>owner-occupied flat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 f</td>
<td>28-30</td>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Private company</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>rental flat</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
5 Summary of the results

5.1 Determinants of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants

The main research question was this. What are the determinants of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants? In line with previous studies on residential satisfaction (e.g. Amérgio & Aragonés 1990, Lu 1999, Dekker et al. 2011), answers were sought in analyses of migrants’ opinions about their dwellings and neighbourhoods, and further by eliciting their opinions about relocation services and the overall functioning of the housing market, as discussed earlier in the case of skilled migrants (Musterd & Kovács 2010, Kim 2014, Meier 2015b). The results presented here draw mainly from Article I, which focuses and deepens the analysis conducted in the ACRE project (Kepsu et al. 2009). Articles III and IV, which are based on two other data sets, namely the interviews with international students and Indian migrants, are also utilised in strengthening the arguments.

According to the results of the ACRE study (e.g. Kepsu et al. 2009, Kepsu et al. 2010), both domestic and foreign workers in the creative and knowledge industries see housing as the most problematic feature of the HMA. This finding contradicts the common understanding that housing is not problematic for skilled migrants (Samers 2010: 163). The empirical findings of this dissertation further reveal in detail the various difficulties these migrants have with their housing in the HMA. Increasing the cultural and socioeconomic variation in the interview sample brought an international perspective to the research. According to the housing pathway approach (Clapham 2005), different issues are dealt with during different stages of migration: the newly arrived face different problems than those who have lived in the region for longer. Skilled migrants are also in different situations depending on whether they come with a job contract or independently (Kim 2014).

The results reveal that whereas the corporate-driven Indian migrant group enjoyed the settlement help offered by their employer (Article IV), the more diverse group of employees in the creative and knowledge-intensive sectors did not receive as much help (Article I). The employers’ help tended to be in the form of temporary accommodation that was available for a short time (between three weeks and three months), echoing Meier’s (2015b) findings. This temporary help was considered highly necessary. Many of the Indians also received relocation assistance (the help of an estate agent in finding an apartment) from their companies, as in the case of corporate-driven migrants in Kim’s (2014) study and the Japanese in London (White & Hurdley 2003). Most of the 25 international degree students were offered student housing when they arrived in Finland (Article III): the housing of many of those who initially came for purposes other than studying was arranged by their (Finnish) spouses.

The initial apartment search proved to be difficult for many of the 25 skilled migrants, who frequently had to search for accommodation by themselves (Article I). It was difficult for them to understand how the local housing market functioned, and most property advertisements are in Finnish. There is no specific housing sub-market targeted towards skilled migrants, as in the case of the Japanese in London (White & Hurdley 2003), and they face the same challenges in finding information as
other immigrants (Özüekren & van Kempen 2003). Some of the interviewees had received help from friends or colleagues, whereas others had to tackle the housing market by themselves. The situation is complicated by the constantly growing demand for rental dwellings in the HMA: migrants have to compete with natives in the viewings. Although the interviewees reported no direct discrimination, the oversupply of tenants encourages Finnish landlords to take another Finn as a tenant rather than a foreigner.

As the time spent in the host country increased, the migrants learned how the housing market functioned and it became easier to find accommodation. Those who had purchased property were generally satisfied with the process (Articles I and IV). Many had received help and practical tips from colleagues or friends who had bought their dwellings.

According to the interviewees, the most problematic feature of housing in the HMA was the high price level. Almost all of them reported difficulties in finding reasonably priced property. This is not surprising in the light of a recent survey of European cities (Quality of life… 2013: 63-64) in which Helsinki ranked among the top three (with Paris and Amsterdam) with regard to the number of respondents disagreeing with the statement, “It is easy to find good housing at a reasonable price”. Although the interviewees varied significantly in terms of income - those representing the “corporate elite” were well-paid, but many degree students, freelance artists and single-breadwinner-families, for example, had to manage with small and insecure incomes – the general assessment was that housing in the HMA was too expensive. The temporary nature of work life seems to enhance the perceived risk related to high-priced housing: scientists and IT professionals said that the price level and uncertainty of working life in Finland had affected their decision to postpone moving to homeownership (Article IV).

The quality of housing provoked lively discussion among the migrants (Articles I and IV). Housing quality is defined here as the features the migrants brought into the discussion, such as the size of the dwellings, the types of housing and the condition of surfaces and fixtures. On the positive side was the reliable functioning of the basic amenities: the dwellings are warm, and water and electricity function without problems. However, the migrants expressed general dissatisfaction with the small size of property in the HMA. Some also commented on the poor condition of surfaces and fixtures, which echoes previous findings on the importance of quality for residential satisfaction (Lu 1999, Baker 2008, Dekker et al. 2011). The interviewees also complained about the lack of detached and semi-detached options alongside blocks of flats. This is not surprising either in the light of statistical information on the uniform structure of housing stock in the HMA (Chapter 3.3). Indian migrants in particular, including well-paid managers, criticised the lack of high-quality detached houses: it was clear from an analysis of their housing pathways that detached housing is common in India.

Discussions on the “creative class” (Florida 2004, 2007) imply that skilled workers value an authentic urban atmosphere and want to live where there are plenty of entertainment amenities. However, most of the 25 migrants (Article I) and the 15 Indian migrants (Article IV) did not show a preference for “urban buzz”: they resided in suburban neighbourhoods. Interestingly, they had settled in
residential areas preferred by skilled native workers, which is with the results of previous European studies (Glebe 1986, White 1998, White & Hurdley 2003). This finding could be interpreted as a sign of spatial assimilation, to use a traditional term in the context of ethnic-minority housing (Massey & Denton 1985, Alba & Logan 1991). Because public transportation functions well in the HMA, distance from the workplace was not a top priority in the choice of neighbourhood: the high cost of housing in the city centre directed the migrants to suburban areas in their search. However, it was not only structural factors that guided the Indians’ choice of neighbourhood, but also social relations: many wanted a “good” residential area and asked their Indian friends in Finland for advice.

Most of the migrants were satisfied with their neighbourhoods (Article I). They appreciated the better price-quality ratio of the property and the urban greenery in the suburban areas. The safety of the residential areas was praised in particular: Helsinki is clearly perceived as a “city of social harmony” rather than a “conflict-ridden city”, referring to skilled migrants’ descriptions of Singapore and London, respectively, in Meier’s (2015b) findings. Families with children valued the safety of the neighbourhoods and the proximity of (international) schools, as reported in earlier studies (White & Hurdley 2003, Meier 2015b). On the other hand, the fewer migrants who lived in the city centre appreciated the central location and the urban buzz, reflecting earlier descriptions of the creative class and skilled migrants (Florida 2004, Scott, S. 2006). However, the current study again shows how the family life cycle affects household housing needs (Rossi 1980): all the migrants with children (Articles I and IV) lived in suburbia. On the theoretical level this indicates that skilled migrants’ housing choices are driven by the traditional needs of family life (more living space, peaceful residential areas and a convenient commute to work) and not the desire for an urban lifestyle: this contradicts earlier comments on the importance of an authentic urban atmosphere for skilled migrants. The interviewees certainly did not show signs of returning to the inner city, a family phenomenon that has been reported among the HMA native population (Lilius 2014). The negative aspects of suburban life included the scarcity of services and the lack of social interaction with neighbours. Social disturbances (from alcoholics) were also mentioned as a negative factor. Local social ties are discussed further in Chapter 5.3.

The findings resonate with previous results indicating that immigrants are less satisfied with their housing than natives, but more satisfied with the neighbourhood (Dekker et al. 2011: 494). Dekker et al. (2011) attribute this difference to the different housing needs of immigrants and natives, and the data at hand supports this explanation. Highlighting the experienced crampedness, for example, some of the interviewees mentioned that they needed a separate bedroom and living room to house visitors from abroad. The interviewed housing experts (Article I) also explained that it was the custom in many countries to carry out surface renovations in rental flats before new tenants move in – most flats in Finland are rented out as they are.

The determinants of residential satisfaction among skilled migrants in the HMA could be divided into factors that have positive and negative effects. Positive factors include assistance from the employer in the form of temporary accommodation or relocation, the reliable functioning of basic amenities such as water and electricity, the smooth process of purchasing property, and the safety and
greenness of (suburban) neighbourhoods. On the negative side were the high price level of housing (both owner-occupied and rental), the small size of dwellings, the scarcity of housing-market information in English, the poor condition of surfaces and fixtures in rental apartments, and the scarcity of services and lack of social interaction in urban neighbourhoods.

Despite the cultural and socio-economic variation, the interviewees gave surprisingly similar assessments of local housing conditions. The findings reveal a mismatch between what Morris & Winter (1975) call the cultural norms and the family norms of housing. Cultural norms refer to the societal context, in this study the Finnish housing market and the general level of housing, whereas family norms among the skilled migrants and their households relate to housing and reflect their personal and their families’ housing pathways. It seems that immigrants bring their normative orientation with them when migrating, and assess the housing conditions in the host country accordingly. The tension between their normative orientation and the situational conditions (local housing) manifests as low residential satisfaction, particularly with the dwellings. This mismatch was generally shared by a variety of skilled migrants with different backgrounds and income levels: the implication is that there is something very particular about housing in the HMA from an international perspective.

5.2 Migration motives and related expectations regarding the residential environment

The first sub-question (What motivates skilled migrants to migrate, and what related expectations do they have of the residential environment in the case of Finland?) is linked to the general discussion on the drivers of migration among talented people. Some authors highlight the importance of soft factors such as entertainment amenities and qualities of the built environment as drivers of skilled migration (Florida 2004), whereas according to others, hard factors such as job opportunities dominate the decisions (Boyle 2006, Niedomysl & Hansen 2010, Kennedy 2010, Musterd & Kovács 2010, Musterd & Kovács 2013a). This research sub-question is addressed through the analysis of interviews with 25 international degree students studying at Aalto University and the University of Helsinki (Article II), supplemented with information gathered from the Indian interviewees (Article IV).

The students migrated to the HMA for reasons that correspond to earlier findings on student migration (Findlay et al. 2012, Hazen & Alberts 2006): usually for professional and academic purposes, but also for reasons connected to travelling and experiencing a new culture. In other words, the factors that drive the location decisions of international students are similar in the case of an off-beat destination (Finland) as in well-known destinations such as the USA and the UK. As shown in Article II, students carefully assess various destination universities and research teams in search of a “world-class education” (Findlay et al. 2012). This result highlights the important role of universities in regional attractiveness (Lester & Sotarauta 2007, Ciriaci 2013, Musterd & Kovács 2013b): the students tended to make their migration decision solely on the basis of the university and the study programmes, and the location (country) was rarely mentioned. Therefore, having a renowned research team or an inspiring study programme can be a crowd-puller for a remote country such as Finland. The lack of tuition fees also turned out to be an attractive factor.
As mentioned above, travelling and new experiences were also motivating factors in the migration decisions of students. However, the interviewees seldom mentioned the destination itself or the specific urban environment in this connection. In fact, many students admitted that their knowledge of Finland was almost non-existent when they moved, which highlights the adventurous nature of their migration. Consequently, they did not have specific expectations of the residential environment. Similarly, the Indian migrants (Article IV) did not know much about Finland when they moved, but tended to have secured a job beforehand, meaning that the move was not as adventurous as it was for the students. White & Hurdley (2003) report similar findings in their study of Japanese corporate movers in London, who also had very little previous knowledge about their destination. The results reported here show that international students, as well as more “traditional” corporate-driven skilled migrants for example, may also migrate for reasons other than the destination.

With regard to the discussion on hard and soft factors, the empirical findings of this study attest to the major importance of hard factors in the migration decisions of skilled migrants, but also show that travelling and experiencing a new culture may be motivating factors. Interestingly, these soft factors were not place-specific, but related more to personal preferences and individual development. In conclusion, the students did not come to Finland to live in a specific city or a certain residential environment.

As reported in Article II, the international degree students were educated when they came to Finland, and 17 of the 25 worked in knowledge-intensive sectors, some even full-time. The boundaries between studying and working were blurred in many cases, reflecting the multifaceted migration trajectories of skilled Singaporean migrants in London (Ho 2011). This notion challenges the conceptual separation of student and labour migration and sharpens the position of international students as a target group in research on skilled migrants.

5.3 Local social ties and housing
The second sub-question was this. What factors affect the establishment of local social ties among skilled migrants, and what effect do they have on residential satisfaction? Previous studies have shown that local social ties contribute to residential satisfaction (Amérgio & Aragonés 1990, Parkes et al. 2002, Buys & Miller 2012), and are particularly valuable for people whose social networks are limited (Henning & Lieberg 1996, Ryan 2007). Furthermore, according to an Australian study, physical distance creates social distance among international and local students (Fincher & Shaw 2009, 2011). Article III analyses the local social ties of 20 international degree students living in student housing in two contexts: shared flats and neighbourhoods. Articles I and IV provide additional information on the experiences of other skilled migrant groups.

The results presented in Article III reveal that although international degree students in the HMA are allocated the same student housing as the natives, and even live in the same, shared dwellings, the physical closeness does not create social interaction. In some cases the interviewees did not even know with whom they would be living, never having seen their roommates. Almost all of them said that they had tried to initiate discussions, but usually this did not result in social interaction. One
contributing factor was cultural differences: many of the students felt that they were more talkative than Finns, and also wanted more interaction. This finding supports previous results on the difficulties involved in establishing inter-ethnic social relationships (Smets & Kreuk 2008, Müller & Smets 2009, Blokland & van Eijk 2010, Dhalmann 2013). However, other factors hindering social interaction also emerged from the interviews: the personalities of individuals, sharing accommodation out of necessity and the lack of common living spaces. The international students may also have had higher expectations of social interaction with their roommates, possibly feeling lonely in the new country. The few who had managed to make friends with their Finnish roommates were happy, but acknowledged the rarity of such relationships.

A surprising finding on the neighbourhood level was that the social ties of the international students varied according to the housing form. Those who lived in student housing provided by Hoas (the Foundation for Student Housing in the Helsinki Region) had less interaction with their neighbours than those who lived in other accommodation (private rental or owner-occupied housing, or the Aalto University Student Union’s housing on the Otaniemi campus). Weak social ties develop in everyday encounters, which happen more often in housing forms other than Hoas student accommodation. A versatile population structure and voluntary neighbourhood work (private rental housing), as well as familiarity through studies and student parties (the Otaniemi campus), facilitate such encounters. One student, for example, said that elderly people in his building were happy to practise their German skills with him, and another told the interviewer how she had started to talk to families with children who lived in her building because she liked children. This finding on the effect of the housing form on social relations provides a concrete example of how social inclusion is affected by housing: there is indeed a “need to take more seriously the geographic patterns of student housing and populations within understandings of wider processes of segregated societies” (Smith & Hubbard 2014: 99).

The scarcity of local social ties among skilled migrants is also acknowledged in Articles I and IV. Employees in the creative and knowledge-intensive sectors as well as the Indian migrants would have liked to have more social contacts in their neighbourhoods. However, they did not wish for close friendships, but expressed a need for brief, everyday encounters. These findings expand the results of previous studies on the difficulties among skilled migrants of establishing a social life in Finland (Merimaa & Oilinki 2010, Kobak 2013, Koskela 2014) to include the residential area. Furthermore, the majority of the interviewees indicated that the lack of local social ties had a negative effect on their residential satisfaction. The housing-pathway approach (Clapham 2005) goes some way to explaining this finding: many interviewees enjoyed regular social interaction with people living in their neighbourhood before they moved to Finland. The difference between their current life and their previous experiences was notable, and many experienced it negatively.

5.4 Homeownership and future plans

With regard to the third sub-question (Is there a connection between homeownership and future plans among skilled migrants?), previous studies have highlighted homeownership among immigrants as a sign of attachment to the host country (Alba & Logan 1992, Myers & Lee 1998, Murdie & Teix-
The myth of return has also been found to affect the housing decisions of low-skilled immigrant groups (Dahya 1974, Anwar 1979, Owusu 1998, Zetter 1999, Sinatti 2011): immigrants who are planning to return to their country of origin are not that keen on advancing their housing situation or moving to homeownership in the host country. This sub-question is addressed in Article IV, which focuses on the housing of 15 skilled migrants from India.

According to previous evidence from the US, many skilled migrants who come on a temporary contract ultimately decide to settle in the host country (Kim 2014). Among the 15 Indian interviewees however, only three planned to stay in Finland. Nevertheless, it seems from the interviews that homeownership is not a simple indicator of commitment to the host country or of future plans. A few of the migrants had concrete plans to return to India because they owned property there, but those who bought property in Finland did not necessarily intend to stay in the country either. Furthermore, seven interviewees were unsure about their future plans, and indicated that career opportunities would guide their decisions to a great extent. Of these seven interviewees, five had purchased property in Finland.

It emerged in the interviews that these migrants had chosen homeownership based on economic grounds after carefully weighing up all their housing options. The high prices of rental accommodation in the HMA pushed them towards homeownership even though they were uncertain about the future. Saleability and the investment potential influenced these Indians, as Forrest and Murie (1987) found in the case of affluent professionals. Interestingly, social relations also seemed to affect the interviewees’ housing decisions: many reported that they made their decisions after discussing the options with their Indian friends who also lived in Finland. Friends gave recommendations and advice on bureaucratic matters and with regard to suitable areas or properties. Buying property was experienced as a simple procedure, which also encouraged homeownership. In sum, homeownership is not a straightforward sign of emotional attachment or the intention to stay in the host country, but also depends on economic, social and structural factors.

As discussed in Article IV, the interviews provided evidence that, in some cases, the myth of return affects the housing choices of skilled migrants, as previous studies report (Dahya 1974, Anwar 1979, Owusu 1998, Zetter 1999, Sinatti 2011). However, the socio-economic position of the interviewees changed the situation somewhat. Some may have thought that it was not rational to invest money in housing in Finland because they would be returning to India, whereas others chose to allocate resources to Finland temporarily. Furthermore, their social lives tended to centre on other Indians living in the HMA, resembling the “incapsulation” of Pakistanis in the UK that was attributed to the myth of return (Anwar 1979). This empirical finding differs from Harvey’s (2008) description of British and Indian scientists in Boston, who tended to socialise with the host population. One explanation for the fact that most of these Indians were not planning on staying in Finland could be that in maintaining close relations with other Indians they remained distant from Finnish culture, and found it harder to develop an attachment to the country or the lifestyle.
6 Conclusions

This dissertation examines residential satisfaction among skilled migrants. Research on the competitiveness of city regions in the knowledge-based economy constitutes the larger framework of the study (Sotarauta 2001, Ewers 2007, Wadhwa et al. 2008, Sotarauta & Saarivirta 2012, Musterd & Kovács 2013a), which also contributes to the on-going discussion about the significance of hard and soft factors in attracting and retaining talent in certain geographic locations (Florida 2004, Mel-lander et al. 2011, Yanasmayan 2015). The study sharpens the focus and extends the depth of the findings from the European ACRE study (e.g. Kepsu et al. 2009, Vaattovaara et al. 2009, Musterd & Kovács 2010, Musterd & Kovács 2013a) in concentrating on a particular aspect of the lives of skilled migrants in a host city, namely housing, and diversifying the sample.

More specifically, the study is positioned in the recent strand of literature focusing on skilled migrants’ experiences of host cities (Tseng 2011, Meier 2015b, Yanasmayan 2015) and local housing (White & Hurdley 2003, Meier 2015b). Whereas most existing literature assesses the housing situations of lower-socio-economic ethnic-minority groups, this study sheds light on the housing of skilled migrants, who are highly educated and often (but not always) well paid. Therefore, the findings contribute to existing knowledge about the constraining effects of societal structures on immigrant housing, such as housing discrimination and difficulties in accessing information (Massey & Denton 1993, Yinger 1995, Gifflinger 1998, Bolt & van Kempen 2002, Drever & Clark 2002, Magnusson & Özückren 2002), and the contribution of immigrants’ own preferences to the development of ethnic-minority housing (Dahya 1974, Bowes et al. 1990, Andersson 1998, Peach 1998, Owusu 1998).

The research setting was designed to maximise the cultural, socioeconomic and locational diversity of the interviewees: the carefully selected sample reflects the diversity of skilled migration today, representing “corporate elites” as well as the “middling” of skilled migration including international students, artists and freelancers (Conradson & Latham 2005a, Scott, S. 2006), and living in various parts of the HMA. The analysis focuses on how the interplay between individuals’ norms and the situational conditions (Parsons 1967, Morris & Winter 1975, Kortteinen 1982) is manifested when immigrants assess a single housing market, the Helsinki metropolitan area (HMA). It incorporates the migrants’ housing pathways (Clapham 2005) in their home countries and Finland, thereby giving a more coherent picture of their housing experiences and preferences than a cross-sectional examination of their current housing would produce.

The most significant finding of the study is that despite the cultural and socioeconomic heterogeneity of the interviewees, their experiences of housing in the HMA were notably similar: the uppermost assessment was that it is expensive, cramped and uniform. In other words, skilled migrants struggled to find reasonably priced and satisfactory housing. This was a surprise to many of them, who thought of Helsinki as a remote and small city region compared to many other global destinations. The price of housing was generally considered high, and even those who had money to spend
faced difficulties in finding accommodation to suit their needs. The functioning of the housing market was also problematic for non-Finnish-speakers, especially at first when information was scarce and they had yet to develop supportive social networks. The results support previous findings indicating a notable difference in how migrants are helped with housing issues depending on whether their immigration is corporate/study related or individually driven. All of them are not among the elite receiving help in coordinating these mundane tasks.

Although accommodation tended to attract critical comments, most of the migrants were satisfied with their neighbourhoods, and highly appreciated the safety of the residential areas as well as the whole city region. Most of them lived in suburban areas, usually because of the lower house prices and the larger dwellings compared to the city centre, but also because of the greenness and peacefulness. All of the families with children lived in the suburbs: although the “creative class” is often assumed to appreciate urban amenities, the results of this study indicate that the family life cycle guides housing choices in the Finnish context. The singles and couples who lived in the city centre enjoyed the variety of urban amenities.

Interestingly, the findings of this study stress the importance of the social environment in creating residential satisfaction among skilled migrants. Almost all of the migrant interviewees wanted to have more interaction with their neighbours. This is a somewhat surprising result: given that skilled migrants tend to be considered relatively footloose, and that today’s communication technologies allow the maintenance of physically distant social relationships, it might be assumed that local social ties are not so important. The finding expands previous results on the difficulties skilled migrants have in penetrating professional and personal networks in the HMA (Kepsu et al. 2009, Merimaa & Oilinki 2010, Kobak 2013, Koskela 2014) in showing how these difficulties are also manifested in their residential areas. As a rule there was no need to develop deep friendships in the neighbourhood, but the migrants would have liked brief, daily encounters and acknowledgment from the people who lived near them. This finding supports Henning and Lieberg’s (1996) view on the importance of local social ties for people who do not have an extensive social network, which is usually the case for immigrants. Furthermore, the structural element of housing seemed to have an effect on local social ties: among international students the extent of such ties varying according to the housing form. It could therefore be concluded that the development of local social ties among students could be fostered through specific (student) housing policies.

The lack of local social ties is problematic from at least two perspectives: the migrants’ residential satisfaction as well as the vitality of the city region. The migrants wanted more social interaction with their neighbours and roommates, which as previous studies have also reported would increase their residential satisfaction (Buys & Miller 2012, Parkes et al. 2002, Amérito & Aragónes 1990). Furthermore, a lack of social ties weakens migrants’ attachment to the neighbourhood (Moser et al. 2002, Lewicka 2005, Livingston et al. 2010) and their chances of joining the social networks that could benefit career development (Harvey 2008). More generally, it has been shown that local social ties are beneficial in the establishment of innovative environments (Castells & Hall 1994, Sotarahta et al. 2003: 71, Saxenian 2006, Lange 2011, Glaeser 2011). If skilled migrants face difficulties
in penetrating local social networks, their input into the innovative environment is not optimised. A recent study (Inclusive… 2014) stresses the important role of inclusive innovation communities in the Finnish economy in allowing the global talent that is already in the country to better use its expertise. In practice this means welcoming skilled migrants into professional and social communities – as well as into residential environments, as this study shows.

This examination of homeownership and future plans among skilled migrants has brought new insights into the field of ethnic-minority housing. The results show that unlike previous studies on the subject suggest (Alba & Logan 1992, Myers & Lee 1998, Murdie & Teixeira 2003, Clark 2003), homeownership is not a simple indicator of the intention to stay in the host country. Structures related to the housing market – high rental prices and a simple buying procedure – tended to push the migrants into homeownership, even though some of them did not intend to stay in Finland. However, the interviews also showed how the Indians followed their individual or household preferences. Those who could allocate resources to homeownership invested either in India, because they were returning there, or in Finland, because it was economically rational and the saleability of the dwelling was ensured. Furthermore, the tightly knit Indian community strengthened the Indians’ willingness to move to homeownership, and also affected their choice of neighbourhood.

The importance of social networks was highlighted in the ACRE research on skilled workers in 13 European cities (Musterd & Kovács 2010, Musterd & Kovács 2013a). However, whereas the ACRE study revealed the essential nature of social networks and personal trajectories in the location decisions of skilled workers, the results of this study indicate that the supply of local, neighbourhood-based social ties is particularly limited in the case of the HMA, and that this has a negative impact on residential satisfaction among skilled migrants. The difficulties in getting to know neighbours and, in the case of international degree students, even roommates, were pronounced. As Clapham (2005) states, housing cannot be detached from wider life circumstances, and social relations play an important part. Therefore, the novel finding of this research is that, from an international perspective, there is something exceptional, or exceptionally undeveloped, in the social elements of housing in the HMA. The factors related to this exceptionality, its explanation and meaning remain to be investigated in future studies.

Residential satisfaction could be a tool for predicting whether or not people will stay in their current location (Speare 1974, Newman & Duncan 1979). Furthermore, recent studies stress the importance of soft factors such as the residential environment in retaining skilled migrants in city regions (Pethe et al. 2010: 188, Yanasmayan 2015). According to the above analysis of residential satisfaction, retaining skilled migrants in the HMA seems challenging. The skilled migrants investigated in this study critically observed their life and residential environment in the host country. Although professional opportunities were major factors in their migration decisions, their experiences of housing in the HMA did not encourage them to stay if they had a choice. The situation in the HMA is very different from that in Leipzig, for example, with its “surplus of dwellings in green areas and with reasonable prices”, or Budapest where a “great variety of neighbourhoods of different standards and quality is ready to meet the demands of all social strata” (Egedy et al. 2013: 136, 139).
From the societal perspective, this study offers valuable insights into the functioning of the housing market (Dekker et al. 2011), which could be used to tailor successful housing policies (Lu 1999). As White & Hurdley (2003: 704) state, skilled migrants as an incoming group to the housing market “add a new dimension to housing demand”. Lawton et al. (2013: 119) note that “policies focused on the importance of place in the retention of workers need to be cognisant of the constant shift in a person’s preferences throughout life”. This could be the HMA’s strength in the global race for talent: retaining skilled migrants with families by offering a quality living and working environment. The findings of the study highlight the safety and greenness aspects of residential areas as qualities that skilled migrants value: in fact, the Fund for Peace recently ranked Finland as the most stable country in the world based on various social, economic and political indicators (Fragile… 2014). The interviewees recognised the functionality of the city region, including transportation and schools, as a positive factor. However, the prices of acceptable family housing are out of reach for most skilled migrants. This was particularly visible in the case of the Indian interviewees, most of whom had children.

In conclusion, the study highlights the importance of housing availability, quality and affordability in enhancing residential satisfaction among skilled migrants: although many of them are in a good socio-economic position, they are not immune to problems related to finding suitable housing. Furthermore, given that local social ties have a mediating role with regard to the residential area as well as to society, policy-makers should also work to ease the formation of such ties among migrants. Cities wishing to accommodate and retain global talent should acknowledge these aspects of housing in their strategies.
References


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