

Micheline van Riemsdijk and Matthew Cook

## International talent recruitment to Norway

Opportunities, challenges, and lived experiences of skilled migrants



# Co-author

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## **Matthew Cook**

Ph.D. student in Geography

Survey coding and data analysis

Background research

# Global competition

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# Demand for skilled workers

- Shift to services and knowledge-intensive industries
- Ageing workforce
- Need for highly skilled workers in engineering, health care, information technology
- STEM shortages



# Overview

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- Employer perspective
  - Recruitment of skilled workers
- Migrant perspective
  - Institutional and personal opportunities and challenges
- Integration initiatives
  - Company and private initiatives
- Contributions to migration debates

# Skilled migrants

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- Highly skilled workers possess a tertiary education or the equivalent in experience (Salt 1997)

# Skilled migration literature

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- Global cities (Sassen 1991; 1998)
- “Elite” skilled migrants (Beaverstock 2002)
- “Middling” transnational migrants (Conradson and Latham 2005)
- “Human face” of global mobility (Smith and Favell 2006)



# Research questions I

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- How do HR managers, recruitment agents, and private agents attract skilled migrants to Norway?
- Why do skilled migrants decide to migrate to Norway?

# Research questions II

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- What institutional and personal opportunities and challenges do skilled migrants experience in Norway?
- What initiatives have been developed to welcome and retain skilled migrants in Norway? What more could be done to improve the experiences of these migrants in Norway?

# IT and oil and gas industry

- International sectors – English-spoken, easier transfer of international qualifications
- Contribute to technology development and innovation
- Key labor shortages in Norway



# Methods

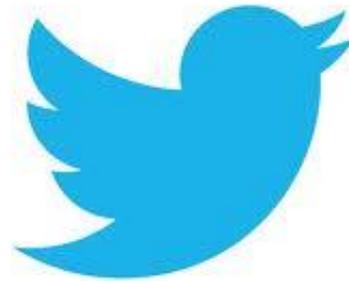
- Fieldwork Summer 2011, 2012, 2013
- Interviews with 52 foreign-born IT specialists and engineers; 28 HR managers; 10 recruitment agents; 8 leaders for immigrant organizations; 30 other stakeholders (128 interviews)
- Survey: 204 respondents
- Participant observation



# Recruitment

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- Traditional recruitment channels
- Social media
- Referral bonuses
- Friendship networks



# Move to Norway

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- Why do skilled migrants move to Norway?
  - Professional opportunities/ challenges
  - Salary
  - Company reputation
  - Ease of migration within Europe
  - English-speaking company
  - Adventure
  - Exotic location

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- Institutional and personal challenges

# Institutional challenges

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- UDI response time
- Personal number
- Tax system
- Obtaining a driver's license
- Down payment for a home



# Personal opportunities

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- Quality of life
- Work-life balance
- Work environment
- Proximity to nature

# Personal challenges

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- Norwegian weather
- Language proficiency
- Company location (Kongsberg, Stavanger)
- Housing market
- Establishment cost
- Social isolation

# Local integration

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- Company initiatives: hot lunches; social programs
- Immigrant organizations
- Hobbies



# Interactions outside work

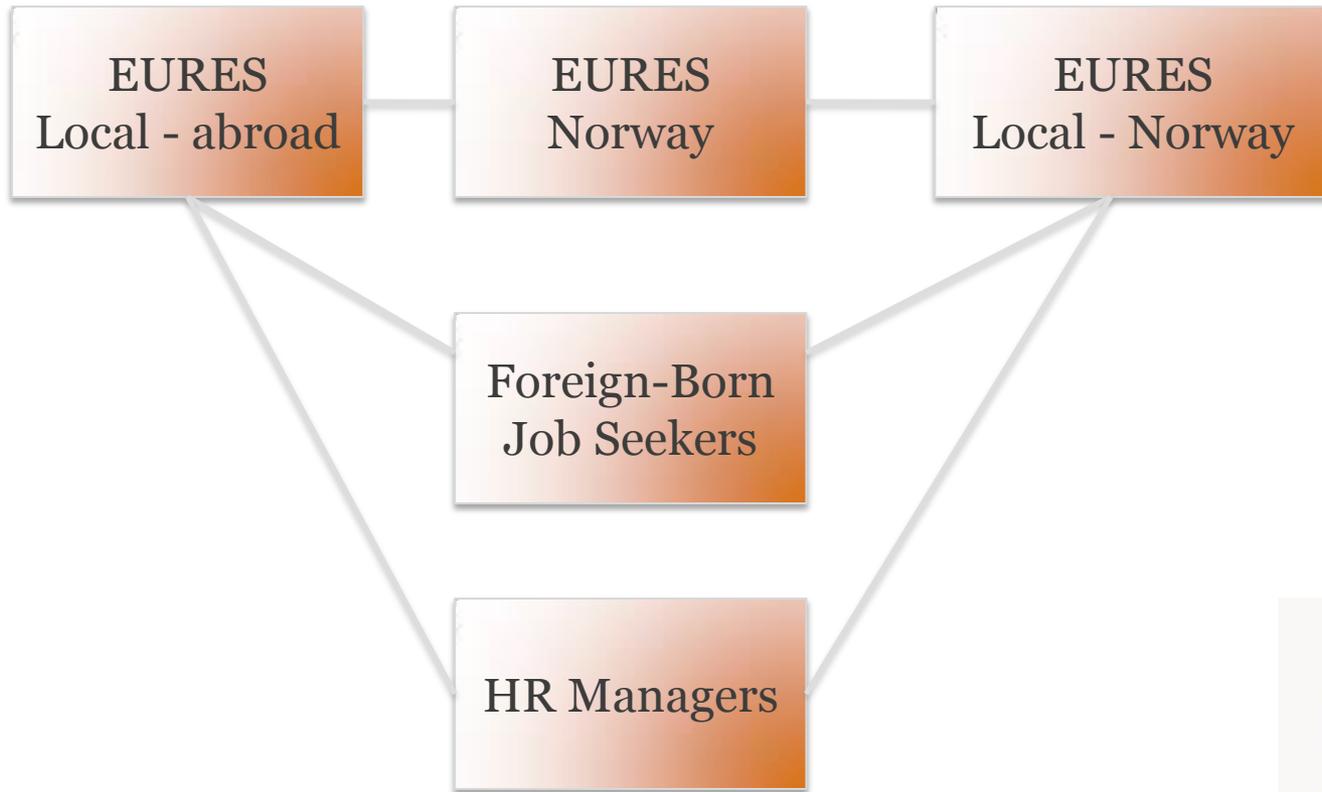




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- Scale and network map



# Stakeholder collaboration I

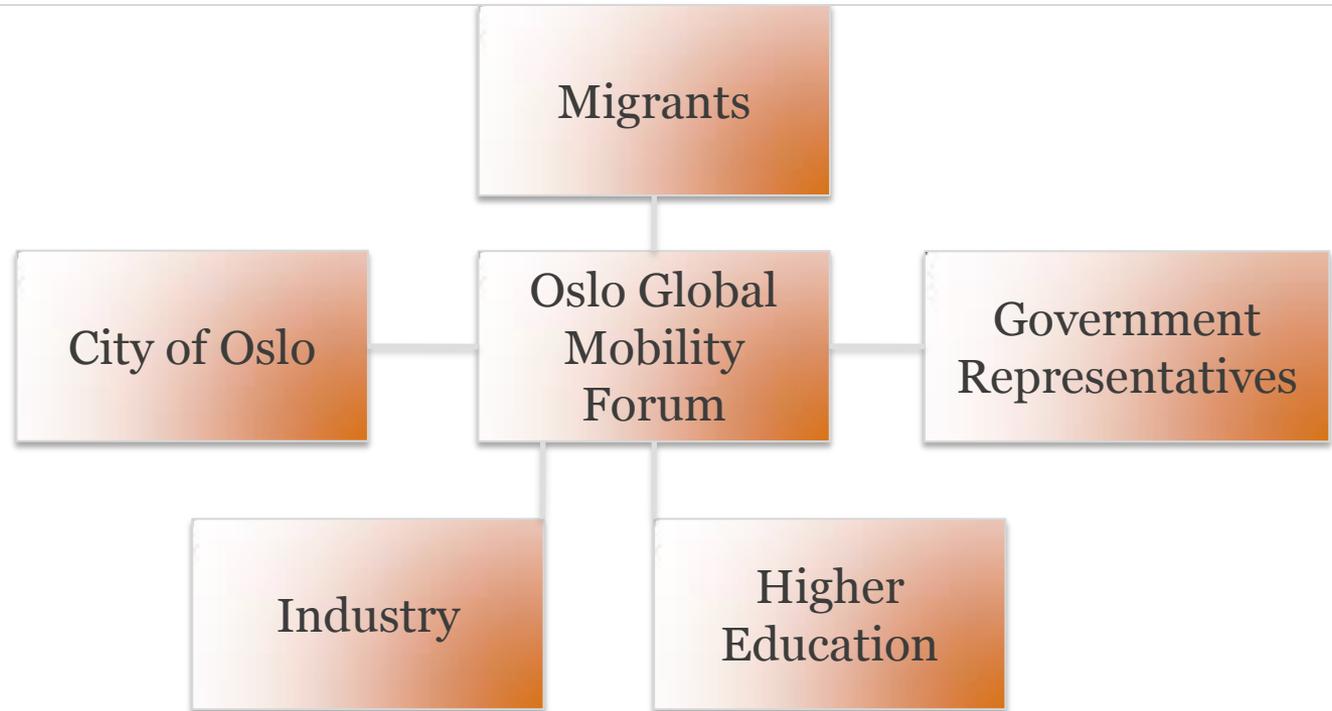


Information about

- Educational system
- Culture
- Language



# Stakeholder Collaboration II



# Information providers in Oslo



# Recommendations

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- More collaboration between stakeholders
  - Identify needs of skilled migrants
  - Streamline goals and programs for skilled migrants

# Debates on skilled migration

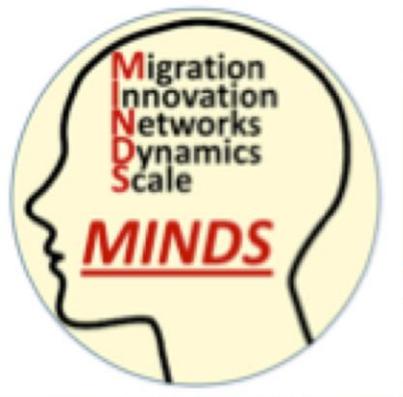
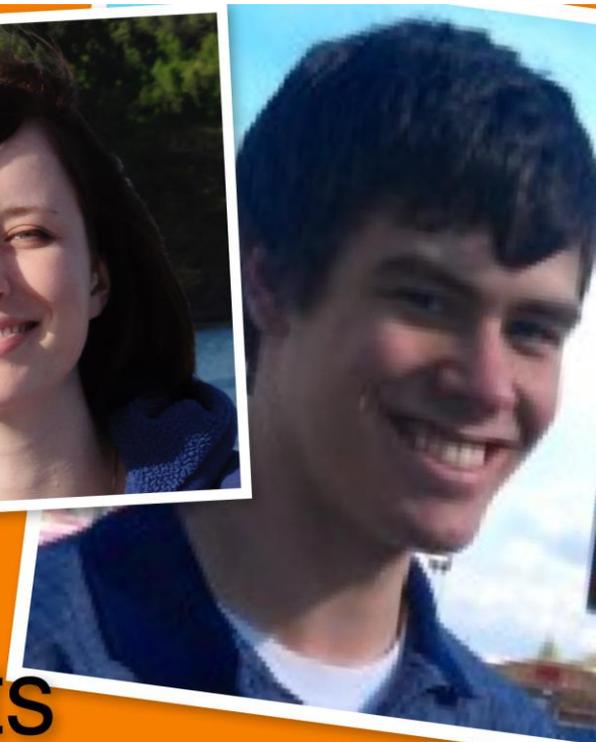
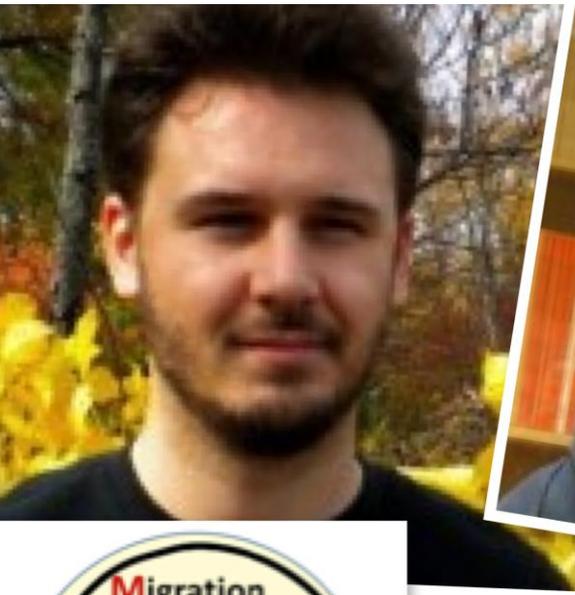
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- Focus on migrants who already are in Norway – retention
- Pay attention to personal challenges of skilled migrants
- Migration regulations

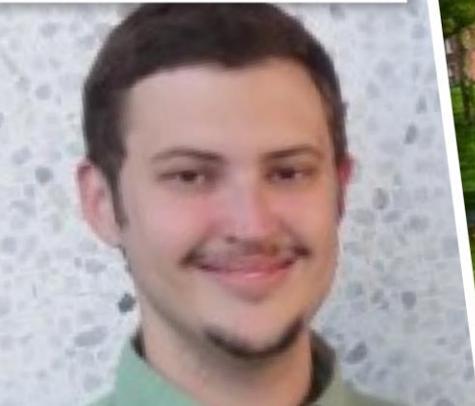
# Suggestions for future research

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- Roles of recruitment agencies, private agents, and consultancy firms
- Meanings of place in local incorporation of skilled migrants
- Longitudinal study of skilled migrants



# Research Assistants



# Skilledmigration.net

## Migration · Innovation · Networks · Dynamics · Scale (MINDS)

[Home](#)[Research Activities](#)[Student Research](#)[Research Dissemination](#)[Links](#)

### Governance of International Labor Migration: Scalar Politics and Network Relations

This website provides information about a study of the governance of international skilled migration, funded by the National Science Foundation (Award #1155339, PI: [Dr. Micheline van Riemsdijk](#)). This project investigates the governance of international skilled migration at international, national, and local scales. In particular, the project examines the networks and scalar strategies of stakeholders to attract skilled migrants and influence migration policies. The study focuses on two sectors that are in high need of skilled workers, the information technology sector and the oil and gas industry. The study is set in Oslo, Norway, which is flourishing thanks to its booming oil and gas industry. The research findings will provide insights into the actual practices of scaling, rescaling, and network modes of governance in migration policymaking. The project will make theoretical contributions to geographical understandings of scales and networks, including the possible emergence of new forms of governance. The findings of the project will enhance understandings of the processes of international skilled migration, particularly the operation of global talent recruitment. Thus, this study will inform policy debates about competitiveness and innovation in the global knowledge economy.

The research team consists of Micheline van Riemsdijk (PI), Matt Cook (PhD student), Scott Basford (master's student), Jaylyn Johnson and Ben Todd (undergraduate students).



### RECENT ACTIVITIES

[Fafo seminar on international skilled migration](#)

November 14, 2013

[Oslo Global Mobility Forum November 13, 2013](#)

[Undergraduate Research Experience in the news](#)

[Students say goodbye to scholars at the Institute for Labor and Social Research](#)

[Jaylyn and Ben co-conduct interviews in Oslo](#)



Project leader

Dr. Micheline van Riemsdijk



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KNOXVILLE

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Thank you

# Migration to Norway

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- Low interest rate and continued demand for oil and gas services (Statistics Norway 2012)
- Large public sector and social security net (Ministry of Finance 2011)
- Reduced number of new hires, budget cuts
- Changing geography of new hires
  - Southern and Eastern Europe; students

# Knowledge economy

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- A country's competitiveness depends on its ability to access, adapt, utilise, and create knowledge (Dahlman and Utz 2005)

# Initiatives



GLOBAL  
MOBILITY  
FORUM

Oslo Global Mobility Forum  
started in October 2011



Tekna conference October 2013:  
Bordelerless challenges in a globalized world



Virke 2012 XFAKTOR conference  
addressed skilled migration

**OSLO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**  
Oslo Handelskammer

Oslo Chamber of Commerce and Abelia  
launched a report on skilled migration in May 2013



Illustrasjon: Lene Jeanette Sveen

Abelia Miss Norway conference  
June 2012

# Skilled Migration Perspectives

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## Macro perspective

- Global cities literature
  - Polarized labor markets need highly skilled and low-skilled workers (Sassen 1991)
  - ‘Transnational capitalist class’ (Sklair 2001)
- Networks of TNCs
  - inter- and intra-company transfers, successful return of expats

# Skilled Migration Perspectives

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## Macro perspective

- Governance of skilled migration

## Macro/ meso perspective

- Transnational networks (Vertovec 1999, 2002, Beaverstock 2005)
- Innovation networks/ knowledge transfer
- Regional knowledge clusters

# Studying the Local

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- Study how the ‘global’ is constructed and understood by operations of individuals in local spaces (Willis et al. 2002: 506)
- Skilled migrants are embedded in localities through professional and social networks that are both local and global-local (Beaverstock 2005, Smith 1999, Smith 2001)

# Studying the Everyday

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- Studies of globalization should pay attention to the spaces, places and localities of globalization – study the household, community and the body (Nagar et al. 2002)
- Study the “human face” of global mobility (Smith and Favell 2006)
- Study top-down *and* bottom-up processes that shape the everyday experiences of migrants