

Transnational Mobility and Social Capital of Early-career Academics: A Network Approach

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- Growing expectation for early-career researchers to be transnationally mobile in order to pursue an academic career
 - Mobility is linked to the idea of excellence, of establishing transnational scientific networks, broadening one's scientific horizon, acquiring academic social capital
 - A positive link between transnational mobility and social capital is often assumed as existing

- Research question:

In the context of their most recent mobility experience, is there a link between the degree of transnational mobility of early-career academics and their academic social capital?



METHODOLOGY

- Interviews conducted at three universities
 - University of Zurich (Switzerland), University of Cambridge (UK), University of California-Los Angeles (USA)
- Biographical and qualitative network interviews with early-career academics
 - maximum 10 years out of the PhD
 - holding an academic position of any (academic) level
 - had moved abroad at least once after the PhD
- Ego-centered interview to grasp the ‘mobility network’
 - Name generator + name interpreter
 - t0 = before mobility (decision-making and preparation)
 - t1 = during mobility
- Network data
 - Coded and analyzed quantitatively
 - Network database: information about 40 egos and 710 alters (17.75 alters per ego in average)
 - Purposive sampling strategy → Descriptive statistics

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK – Academic social capital

- Network approach of social capital
 - Following Bourdieu, Lin, Flap & Völker, Dahinden
- Core idea
 - Resources accessed through social relationships facilitate the individuals' actions in achieving their goals
- Academic social capital
 - Social relations providing the academics with academic resources related to their career advancement
- Academic social resources
 - Social resources useful in building career progression and finding employment in academia (e.g. job offer, information, advice and support related to employment)



VARIABLES – Academic social capital

- Proxy:
 - “Professors”
- Various measures:
 - Volume: Number of professors
 - Multiplexity: Proportion of professors mentioned for more than one dimension
 - Diversity: Distribution of proportions between ‘local’ and ‘transnational’ professors

	ACADEMIC SOCIAL CAPITAL		
	Proxy "professors"		
	Volume	Quality of relationship	Structural quality
t0	Volume	Multiplexity	Diversity
t1	Volume	Multiplexity	Diversity

VARIABLES – Mobility & transnationality

- Variables characterize either ego or their networks
- Most variables had to be construed for each temporality

	EGO	EGO'S NETWORK	
t0	Mobility degree (low/high)	Network transnationality (low/high)	Prop. of local ties
			Prop. of transnational ties
			Prop. of transnational ties "same"
			Prop. of transnational ties "not same"
t1	Mobility degree (low/high)	Network transnationality (low/high)	Prop. of local ties
			Prop. of transnational ties
			Prop. of transnational ties "same"
			Prop. of transnational ties "not same"

Example

Ego did PhD in CH → 1st postdoc in the UK (t0) → 2nd postdoc in the USA [interview] (t1)

RESULTS – I

Highly mobile academics have a more transnational network than low mobile academics

	Mobility degree	
	Low	High
	Median	Median
t0	(N=22)	(N=18)
Number of alteri	9.5	8
Network transnationality		
Transnational ties	29.29%	47.22%
Transnational ties "same"	19.38%	17.16%
Transnational ties "not same"	0.00%	15.48%
t1	(N=22)	(N=18)
Number of alteri	8	10
Network transnationality		
Transnational ties	30.95%	38.28%
Transnational ties "same"	24.05%	13.39%
Transnational ties "not same"	0.00%	20.19%

RESULTS – II

Having a more transnational network is not linked with having more academic social capital

	Network transnationality	
	Low	High
	Median	Median
t0	(N=20)	(N=20)
Number of alteri	9	8
Academic social capital		
Volume	2.5	3
Multiplexity	22.50%	25.00%
Diversity	50.00%	50.00%
t1	(N=20)	(N=20)
Number of alteri	7	9.5
Academic social capital		
Volume	3	2
Multiplexity	0.00%	37.50%
Diversity	0.00%	25.00%

Network transnationality					
Low			High		
0	]0;100[	100	0	]0;100[	100
55%	30%	15%	40%	30%	30%
75%	20%	5%	50%	35%	15%

RESULTS – III

Highly mobile academics do not have more academic social capital than low mobile academics

	Mobility degree	
	Low	High
	Median	Median
t0	(N=22)	(N=18)
Number of alteri	9.5	8
Academic social capital		
Volume	3	2
Multiplexity	25.00%	22.50%
Diversity	50.00%	50.00%
t1	(N=22)	(N=18)
Number of alteri	8	10
Academic social capital		
Volume	3	2
Multiplexity	29.00%	7.00%
Diversity	0.00%	0.00%

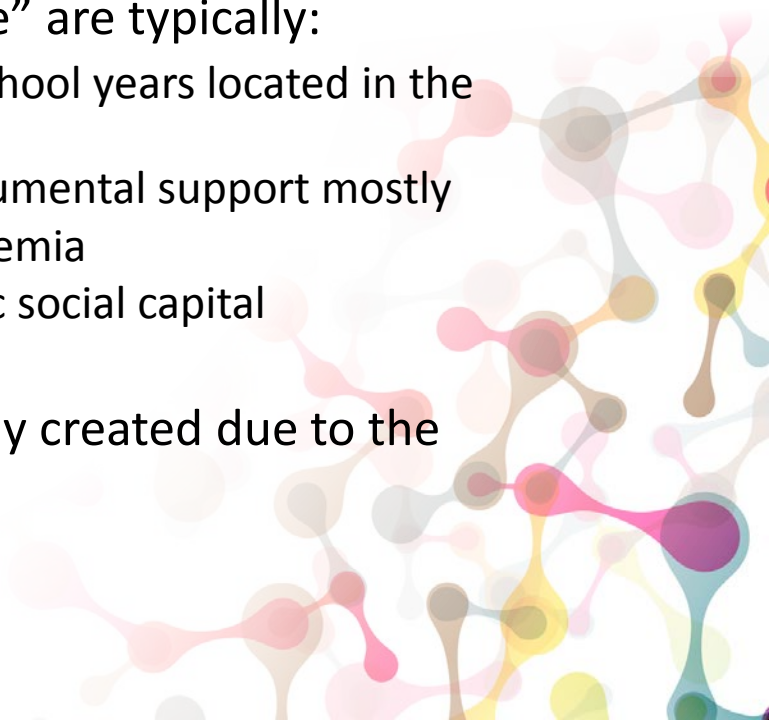
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS – Preliminary results

Quantitative results: No clear link between mobility degree and academic social capital in our sample:

Highly mobile academics have more transnational ties. However neither a higher degree of mobility nor a higher degree of network transnationality provide more academic social capital.

Two results from the qualitative analysis

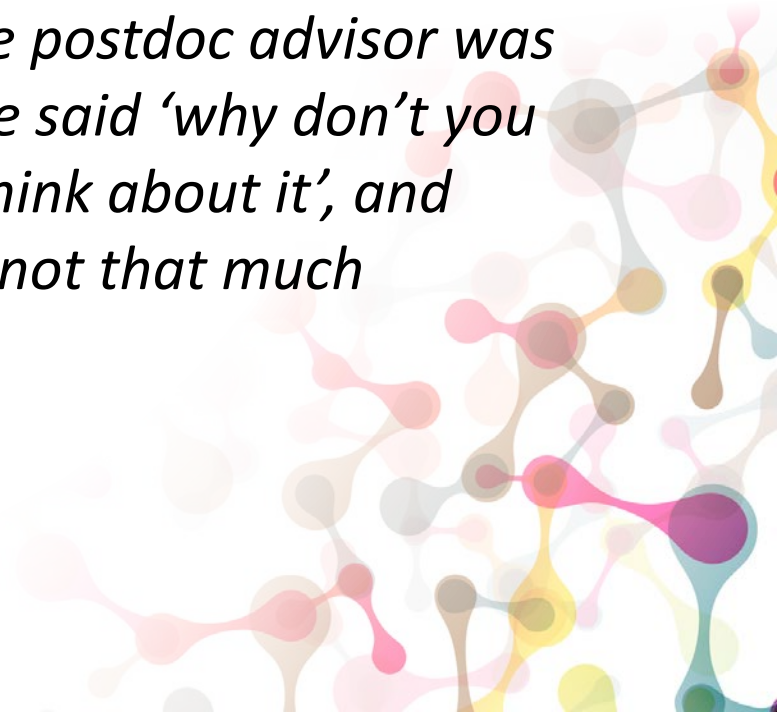
1. These additional transnational ties “not same” are typically:
 - family ties and ties with close friends from school years located in the country where ego grew up
 - strong ties mobilized for emotional and instrumental support mostly
 - in most cases not ties with people from academia
 - And so they do not bring additional academic social capital
2. Transnational academic social capital is largely created due to the mobility of the professors themselves



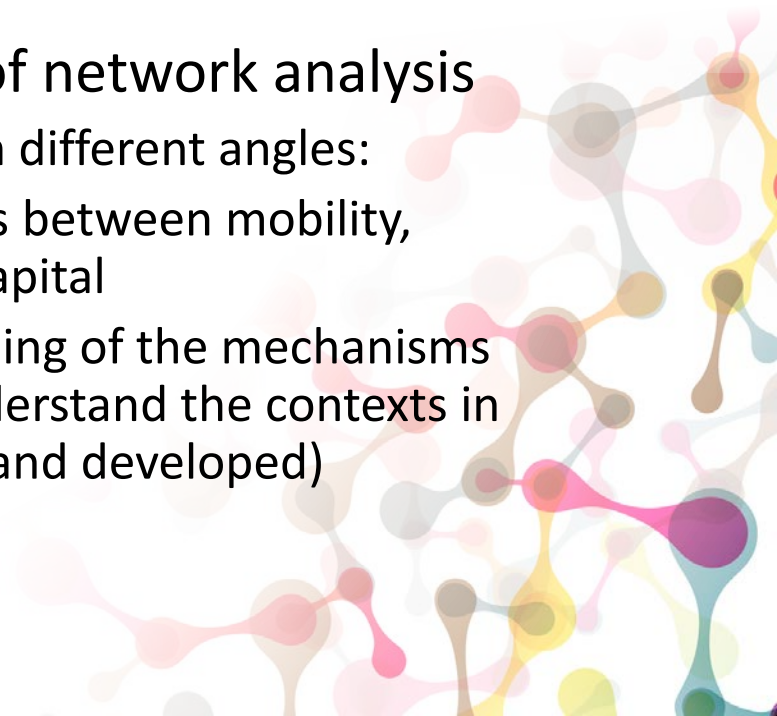
QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS – Preliminary results

“I wanted two places [to do a postdoc]. I don’t know if I had one on top of the other but, going to Oxford or going to San Diego. This was to work with specific people in my field, but none of them had money at the time, so... I had to find something else [...]. And the postdoc at MIT just fell in my lap really, you know, because my then future postdoc advisor was just spending a year at Utrecht and so he said ‘why don’t you come with me?’ And so I was ‘okay, I’ll think about it’, and [laughs], but then, you know, there was not that much thinking”

(Nathalie, Network interview).



- Results:
 - Interesting and somewhat unexpected result about the absence of link between mobility degree and academic social capital
 - It challenges the widespread idea that stays abroad should be an indispensable element of a successful academic career
- Assets of a mixed-method approach of network analysis
 - Allows grasping the research question from different angles:
 - Quantitative: shedding light on the links between mobility, transnationality and academic social capital
 - Qualitative: deepening our understanding of the mechanisms at play within these networks (e.g. understand the contexts in which social relationships are created and developed)



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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OVERALL TABLE: Respondent's network transnationality and academic social capital

	All academics	Sex		Mobility degree		Degree of network transnationality		Level of academic position	
		Female	Male	Low	High	Low	High	Fixed-term	Permanent
	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median	Median
t0	(N=40)	(N=20)	(N=20)	(N=22)	(N=18)	(N=20)	(N=20)	(N=36)	(N=4)
Number of alteri	8.5	10	8	9.5	8	9	8	8.5	9.5
Network transnationality									
Transnational ties	38.18%	36.67%	38.18%	29.29%	47.22%	16.67%	55.64%	40.00%	9.03%
Transnational ties "same"	18.47%	19.38%	17.42%	19.38%	17.16%	16.67%	31.67%	22.50%	9.03%
Transnational ties "not same"	0.00%	0.00%	2.27%	0.00%	15.48%	0.00%	20.83%	2.27%	0.00%
Academic social capital									
Volume	3	3.5	2	3	2	2.5	3	3	4.5
Multiplexity	25.00%	33.00%	17.00%	25.00%	22.50%	22.50%	25.00%	25.00%	17.00%
Diversity	50.00%	50.00%	40.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	50.00%	35.00%
t1	(N=40)	(N=20)	(N=20)	(N=22)	(N=18)	(N=20)	(N=20)	(N=30)	(N=10)
Number of alteri	8.5	11	8	8	10	7	9.5	9	8
Network transnationality									
Transnational ties	36.61%	38.28%	25.00%	30.95%	38.28%	16.67%	45.45%	37.80%	28.57%
Transnational ties "same"	18.33%	22.25%	10.71%	24.05%	13.39%	14.29%	29.72%	18.33%	11.54%
Transnational ties "not same"	6.90%	8.12%	0.00%	0.00%	20.19%	0.00%	20.19%	6.90%	6.25%
Academic social capital									
Volume	2.5	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	3.5
Multiplexity	19.50%	41.50%	0.00%	29.00%	7.00%	0.00%	37.50%	0.00%	37.50%
Diversity	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	25.00%	0.00%	0.00%

Academic researcher – 2nd interview – Network interview

Mobility Network – Currently mobile academics

For respondents who are currently experiencing post-PhD transnational mobility.

The interviewer checks with the list of persons mentioned during the biographical interview.

Respondents name their alters the way they want, providing that it is made clear “whom” they talk about. The interviewer writes each alter’s name (or role) on a card, specifying the question number(s) for which alter was mentioned.

Introduction

Interviewer: Today, we are doing the network interview. We are going to focus on your mobility network and more specifically on the persons relevant to your mobility from [...] to [...] and your current experience in [...].

I will first ask you questions about who is relevant to you as regards certain issues or situations. And then, in a second phase, you will have time to tell me more generally about each person and about your relation with them.

The persons you mention may include family members, partners, friends, people from academia, staff from institutions or mentoring programs, acquaintances, etc. You may also mention resources, such as programs or grants for instance.

Name Generator

[The interviewee elicits names for each question and is encouraged to tell more about the specific situation and support from each mentioned alter as regards the contexts referred to in the questions.]

1. Decision-making process

[GENERAL]

Thinking of the time when you were deciding upon moving to [...] and taking up this [specify position or funding opportunity] at the university here, ...

- 1.1** With whom did you discuss your decision of taking up this position [or funding opportunity] here?
- 1.2a** Before leaving, during your decision-making process, who encouraged you moving here and taking up this position [or funding opportunity]?
- 1.2b** Before leaving, during your decision-making process, who discouraged you from moving here and taking up this position [or funding opportunity]?

[PROFESSIONAL]

- 1.3** How did you hear, or who did tell you, about this position [or funding opportunity]? (Or did someone contact you, and if yes, who?)
- 1.4a** Before coming here, did you know or did you contact someone here at the university?

- 1.4b** Before coming here, did you know or did you contact someone here in [city name] or in [country name]?

[GENERAL]

- 1.5** Is there another person somehow implicated in your decision-making who has not been mentioned yet?

2. Transition period (organization before leaving and situation upon arrival)

[Q2.1-2.3 do not need being asked as such during network interview. Information to answer these questions is available from biographical interview. Interviewer writes the names on cards prior to network interview.]

[GENERAL]

- 2.1** Who triggered this transnational mobility?
(Did you have a job or a funding opportunity abroad, or did you initially “follow” your partner or someone else?)
- 2.2** Who did move with you, or who joined you later?
(Did your partner move with you? Did your children move with you? Did other persons move with you?)
- 2.3** Who did not move with you?
[Here we are interested only in partners – whatever the marital status and co-habiting situation – and children].

[INSTRUMENTAL]

- 2.4a** What did you organize before leaving [city or country name]?
[Interviewee generates items, e.g. regarding housing, childcare, school, administrative formalities (visa, working permit, insurance, etc.)]
- 2.4b** What did you organize upon arriving in [city or country name]?
[Interviewee generates items, e.g. regarding housing, childcare, school, administrative formalities (visa, working permit, insurance, etc.)]
- 2.5a** Who helped you with item “1”?
- 2.5b** Who helped you with item “2”?
- 2.5...** Who helped you with item “...”?

[FINANCIAL]

- 2.6** Who financially supported your moving abroad, what financial resources could you count on to finance your moving abroad?

[EMOTIONAL]

- 2.7a** Before leaving, if you needed to discuss personal concerns about your moving abroad and taking up this position here, whom did you turn to?
- 2.7b** During the first weeks after your arrival, if you needed to discuss personal concerns about your mobility situation and your new position here, whom did you turn to?

[GENERAL]

- 2.8 Is there another person who somehow was implicated when you were organizing your move and your stay here and who has not been mentioned yet?

3 Current mobility situation at the time of interview

[INSTRUMENTAL]

- 3.1 Today, if you need practical help to solve the problems of everyday life, be it regarding administrative or organizational issues, whom do you turn to?
[Ask respondent to specify the problems and their contexts].
[If respondent has children and did not mention childcare, then ask 3.2].
- 3.2 Who takes care of the children while you are working or when you travel?
[In the "home" country for the ones who stayed and in the current country of residence for the ones who followed].

[FINANCIAL]

- 3.3 Today, if you are confronted with financial difficulties, or if your income is not enough for particular or exceptional expenses, whom do you turn to or what resources can you count on?

[EMOTIONAL]

- 3.4 Today, if you need to discuss concerns or worries of any kind, whom do you turn to?

[PROFESSIONAL]

- 3.5 Today, if you need to discuss professional issues or if you need professional advice, whom do you turn to?

[GENERAL]

- 3.6 Is there a person who is currently very important to you in any respect and who has not been mentioned yet?
[If yes, add this person on the cards].

Name interpreter

[Hand the cards with alters' names to the respondent.]

4 Name interpreter

[If during the name generator the interviewee has not fully addressed the ways in which each alter was relevant to him/her as regards the situational questions, the interviewer ask for further details now.]

[Then, the interviewer asks about each alter more generally:]

Now, I would like you to tell me more about each person mentioned on a card, starting with the first person you mentioned and so on.

- 4.4a When and on what occasion did you meet?
4.4b How long have you known each other?
4.5a On what occasions do you meet nowadays?
4.5b How often do you have contact with each other?
4.5c Do you meet face-to-face, on skype, or by phone?
4.6 How has your relationship developed?
4.7a What was this person doing at the time you met?
4.7b What is this person doing now?
4.8a Who is this person for you?
4.8b What kind of relationship do you have?

[The respondent talks freely about each generated name, describing the person and the relation he/she has with him/her. The idea here is to trigger a narrative and to grasp the factual information from that narrative.]

5 Socio-demographic information about the mentioned alters

[At the end of interview, fill out the table on separate sheet.]

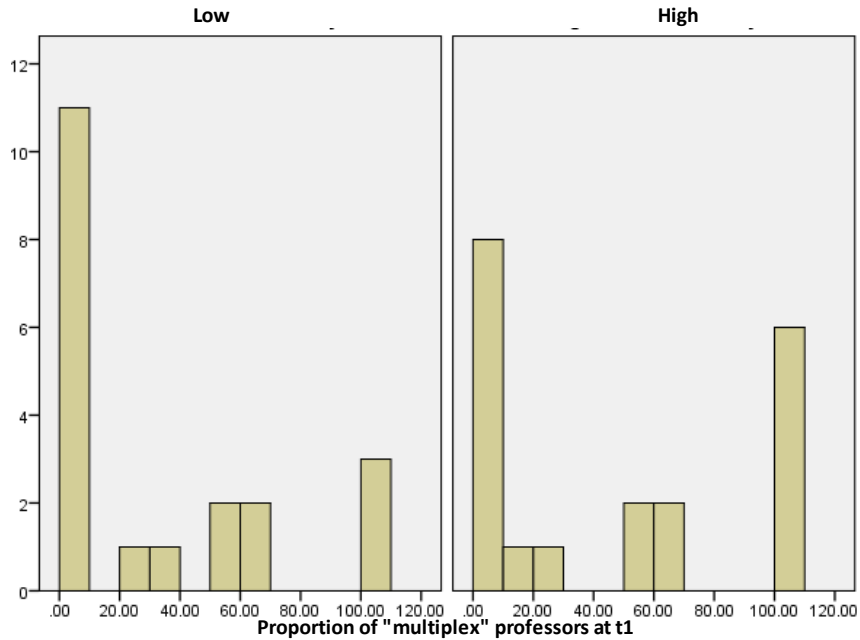
- *The sex of alter*
- *The age of alter*
- *The nationality/ies and country of birth of alter*
- *The place where alter currently lives*
- *The family situation of alter (civil status and number of children)*
- *The current professional activity and position of alter*
- *The field of education and the educational level of alter*

NETWORK INTERVIEW – Interview code: _____

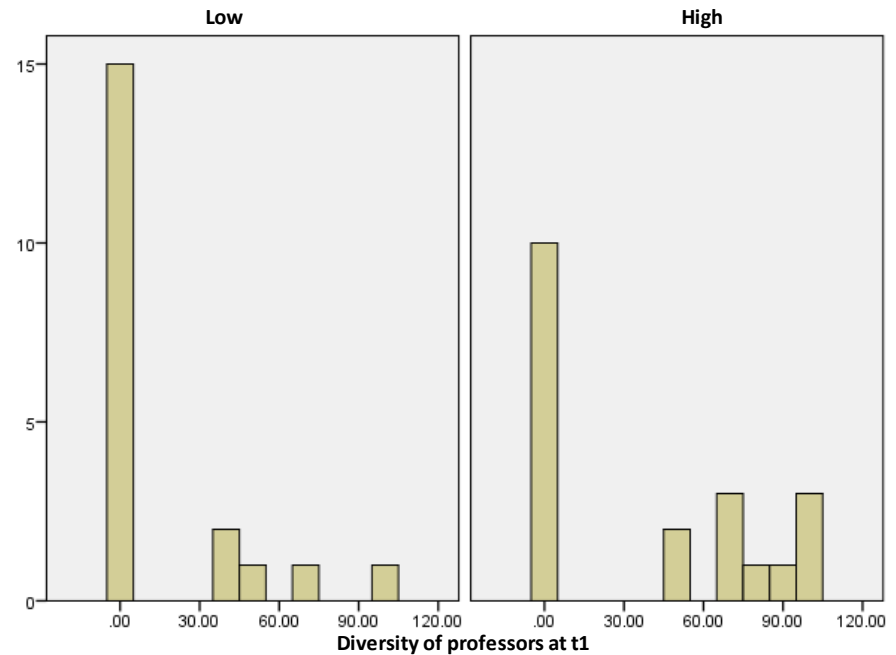
Socio-demographic data about alter	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____	Alter's name: _____
SEX								
AGE								
NATIONALITY/IES								
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN								
CURRENT PLACE OF LIVING								
FAMILY SITUATION (CIVIL STATUS; NUMBER AND AGE OF CHILDREN)								
CURRENT PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY AND/OR POSITION								
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL								
FIELD OF EDUCATION								
OTHER								

RESULTS – II

Degree of network transnationality at t1



Degree of network transnationality at t1



Proportion of "multiplex" professors at t1 * Degree of network transnationality at t1

		Degree of network transnationality at t1	
		Low	High
Proportion of "multiplex" professors at t1	0.00	11	8
	14.00	0	1
	25.00	1	1
	33.00	1	0
	50.00	2	2
	60.00	0	1
	67.00	2	1
	100.00	3	6
Total		20	20

Diversity of professors at t1 * Degree of network transnationality at t1

		Degree of network transnationality at t1	
		Low	High
Diversity of professors at t1	0.00	15	10
	40.00	2	0
	50.00	1	2
	66.00	0	1
	68.00	1	2
	80.00	0	1
	86.00	0	1
	100.00	1	3
Total		20	20

	Network transnationality					
	Low			High		
	0	]0;100[	100	0	]0;100[	100
Multiplexity	55%	30%	15%	40%	30%	30%
Diversity	75%	20%	5%	50%	35%	15%

Network transnationality					
Low			High		
0	]0;100[	100	0	]0;100[	100
55%	30%	15%	40%	30%	30%
75%	20%	5%	50%	35%	15%