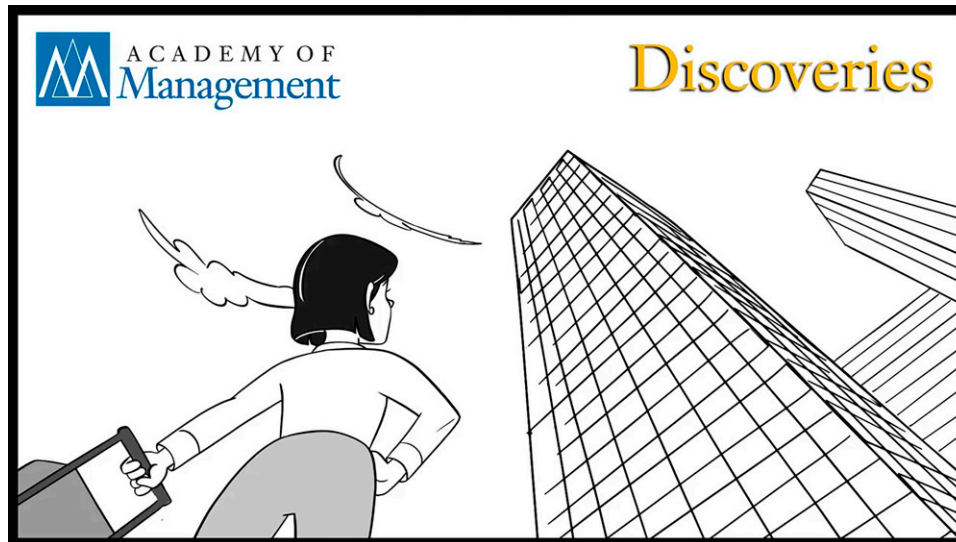


# UNTANGLING SPACE AND CAREER ACTION: MIGRANT CAREER RECONTEXTUALIZATION IN THE HOST CITY

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As many skilled migrants settle in global cities, we explore how physical and social embeddedness in host cities may predispose migrant career action and integration. We highlight the significance of migrants' desire for spatial continuity and belongingness as the foundation for their career efforts. In crossing city boundaries, migrants interact and learn from host city artifacts; thus, we illustrate the facilitating and constraining role of the host city on migrants' ability to apply and translate their foreign career capital locally. We discover career recontextualization that embodies not only transfer, but also translation and transformation, of career knowledge from home to host city context, through local boundary objects (e.g., city artifacts) as intermediaries. Career recontextualization is enacted via three unique types of career action: career orienting, cross-boundary career adaptation, and creative career action (e.g., new boundary object creation). Thus, we extend boundary object theory to the city context and explore the role of transferring work-related knowledge as well as the ability to control and influence careers of newcomers. Finally, we provide a novel perspective on the intricate relationship between career recontextualization and migrant integration in the host city, leading to a discovery of two unique types of integration (functional and holistic).

Many skilled migrants choose to settle in global cities. Big urban centers are perceived as offering more attractive career opportunities and an environment that is highly conducive to social and family life (Buhr, 2018; Walton-Roberts, 2011). Thus, skilled migrants<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Skilled migrants arrive at the host city based on their accumulated human and social capital. Usually, to be admitted to the host country (based on human capital migration model) they will possess a minimum of a bachelor's degree and some work experience from their home country.

arrive to the host city hoping to apply their accumulated foreign career capital in search of new work opportunities. Yet, as a completely new and unfamiliar spatial and social context for most migrants, the role of the host city context in enabling versus constraining migrant careers and integration is still largely unknown. While career scholars have shown renewed interest in better understanding the role of contextual factors in contemporary careers (Kim & Rousseau, 2019; Mayrhofer, Meyer, & Steyrer, 2007; Tams, Kennedy, Arthur, & Chan, 2020), overall, "decontextualization of career theory" (Hanchey &

Author's Voice:  
What motivated you to undertake  
this research? (Zikic)



Author's Voice:  
What motivated you to undertake  
this research? (Voloshyna)



Berkelaar, 2015) and the predominant emphasis on studying careers as an individualized phenomenon persists.

In this study, we explore the unique ways in which space and career action are deeply entangled. Specifically, we unpack the centrality of the city context for enabling or constraining not only migrant careers but also their overall integration. Thus, we go beyond acknowledging the immediate and external role of context in people's everyday work experiences (Cohen & Duberley, 2015; Guo & Baruch, 2021). Instead, we focus on in-depth, emic understanding of careers in the city from an "inside out" perspective; through migrants' lived work experiences across time and space (Buhr, 2018). We seek to discover the "how" by exploring migrants' initial contact and reliance on the city and its artifacts (i.e., city's boundary objects), and ways in which these may affect newcomers' capacity to learn and continue their careers locally (Ingold, 2000; Knowles & Harper, 2009). As a result, we build on existing research that has mainly looked at cities as sources of external influence (i.e., effect of "institutional capital" or effects of primary, secondary, or urban versus rural context [e.g., Guo & Baruch, 2021; Kozhevnikov, 2021]), and instead explore physical and social embeddedness in the host city as integral to migrant career action.

The existing research on migrant careers has mainly focused on individual career capital challenges, discrimination, and integration issues in the local labor market (e.g., Al Ariss, Koall, Ozbilgin, & Suutari, 2013; Dietz, Joshi, Esses, Hamilton, & Gabarrot, 2015). Notably absent is the role of the host city in which migrants must translate their foreign career capital and seek integration. Thus, we also extend this research by seeking to discover the intricate connections between migrant careers and the physical or social context they navigate.

There is a vast array of perspectives from which cities can be studied in relation to our work lives (i.e., the architectural, urban, or social impact cities may have on their inhabitants); yet the role of a city's boundary objects (Portugali, 2004; Star & Griesemer, 1989) is one avenue closest to our goal of understanding the enabling or constraining role of city

context in migrant careers. Boundary objects are defined as knowledge tools that help diverse groups communicate and generate mutual learning (Zuzul, 2018). We explore the role of specific boundary objects that are locally encountered in transferring work-related knowledge and influencing career actions of migrants in the host city. To date, boundary objects have been typically studied within institutions (e.g., Savolainen, 2007; Star, 2010, 2015; Yakura, 2002) and when used by organizational actors seeking to communicate, learn, solve organizational problems, or develop new products (e.g., Koskinen, 2005). In the current paper, we extend the study of boundary objects beyond organizational boundaries to understand their role in facilitating versus constraining career-related learning and knowledge transfer.

In addressing these questions, we offer several discoveries and preliminary advancements of theoretical and practical importance. First, we provide new knowledge and responses to how the physical and social space of the host city may predispose career action. As a result, we discover the process of *career recontextualization* as the new phenomenon explaining migrant independent career action and learning in the host city, with host city boundary objects serving as intermediaries in this process. Career recontextualization embodies not only local knowledge transfer and boundary crossing but also translation and transformation of career capital from home to the host city context.

Specifically, we discover that based on established continuity and belongingness to the host city, migrants recontextualize their careers by relying on three types of career action: career orienting, cross-boundary career adaptation, and creative career action (i.e., boundary object creation). For example, career orienting helps to navigate easily accessible work information, while career adaptation involves deeper learning and capital translation. Yet, the third type of career action, or boundary object creation, involves creative solutions and creation of new objects that helps others communicate and collaborate more effectively.

Second, we question the accepted understanding of the mechanisms underlying the role of boundary objects (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Christianson & Whiteman, 2018). In this way, we extend boundary object theory to the city context (instead of the institutional context) and identify an important role of boundary objects in migrants' careers. While the

Author's Voice:  
How did you come to focus on  
boundary objects?



existing literature has described boundary objects as serving to bridge and negotiate the divide between different groups, our findings also highlight the opposite; how boundary objects can sometimes further accentuate boundaries between different groups and communities in the city context (Kaplan, Milde, & Cowan, 2017) and serve to maintain and negotiate status as well as preserve control beyond organizational boundaries (Bechky, 2003; Henderson, 1998).

Finally, our third discovery centers on broadening our understanding of migrant integration as a major outcome of successful migrant management in many local economies today. Our findings highlight how career recontextualization cannot be divorced from the broader social integration processes that take place at the same time. Rather, proactive career action simultaneously contributes to two different types of integration, holistic and functional. Specifically, we discover a functional type of integration, whereby individuals focus most on guarding their own career success, while being somewhat closed toward the local society and the context in which they live; while holistically integrated migrants are much more open, seek connection, and enjoy giving back (i.e., beyond own career goals) to the local society and communities in the host city.

### CITY AS THE CONTEXT FOR MIGRANT CAREERS

Career scholars have noted the inseparability of careers from their context (e.g., Andresen et al., 2020; Mayrhofer et al., 2007). Yet, the role of the host city context in which migrant work lives evolve remains undertheorized and poorly understood (Kennedy, Tams, Arthur, & Chan, 2018; for an exception, see, Kozhevnikov, 2021). In fact, it is only recently that scholars have started to consider the influence of the city context on the career paths of its inhabitants (e.g., special issue by Tams et al., 2020). These studies have mostly considered the city context as an exogenous factor and explored its influence via “city identity”—the city’s institutional capital or the symbolic properties of the city. Importantly, most of these studies have relied on comparisons of different city contexts (e.g., primary vs. secondary cities, metropolitan creative cities vs. more peripheral cities, urban vs. rural, and even company towns [e.g., Alacovska, Fieseler, & Wong, 2020; Guo & Baruch, 2021; Kozhevnikov, 2021; Montanari, Mizzau, Razzoli, & Rodighiero, 2021]) in relation to career success of its locals. Therefore, we still lack understanding of the dynamic relationships between migrant career actors and the host city context, specifically

how individuals as newcomers may contextualize their careers in the city.

Unlike locals who may easily recognize and navigate the local city in search of career opportunities, migrants must simultaneously manage the initial uncertainty and discontinuity in their lives and careers (Buhr, 2018). To effectively apply and use their accumulated career capital locally, as newcomers they must quickly understand and familiarize themselves with the new city context (e.g., spatial and visual aspects). Thus, acquiring “host city know-how” may be necessary for learning about local work opportunities and a matter of great relevance for continuing migrants’ productive work lives (Buhr, 2018; Fullilove, 1996). While this contextual change for migrants may be stressful and potentially anxiety-provoking, it also offers an ideal opportunity to study the interplay of careers and context (Richardson, 2000), specifically through learning and interacting with city artifacts (Portugali, 2004), as described next.

### Boundary Objects and the Host City

As migrants move to a host city they engage in important boundary crossing; that is, they enter a new social world made of up of host city institutions and communities that need to be understood and navigated (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Buhr, 2018). Moreover, all cities are composed of artifacts or systems of material objects; as “arenas full of landmarks, paths, and other elements,” they are cognitively perceived and experienced by their inhabitants (Portugali, 2004: 589). Given the lack of existing theory for understanding the role of cities in careers, one way to study cities as the context for career development is by understanding the intricate connections between city artifacts and their inhabitants.

Based on existing knowledge from sociology of work studies, city artifacts can be understood and studied at a more micro level as boundary objects (Star & Griesemer, 1989). In the current study, boundary objects are defined as locally encountered knowledge tools (i.e., job search newspapers, training programs or certificates) used to promote work-related knowledge sharing and boundary crossing in the host city (Star, 1993; Star & Griesemer, 1989). Boundary objects are said to “inhabit several intersecting worlds and to satisfy informational requirements of each of them” (Star & Griesemer, 1989: 393); in this case, they inform and transfer knowledge to both local and foreign career actors. Thus, boundary objects’ structure is common and plastic enough to adapt to the needs and the constraints of several parties employing them in more than one context (Dar, 2018; Star, 1993; Star & Griesemer, 1989),

and with potentially different meanings for different communities.

Overall, the established function of boundary objects is to serve as “anchors or bridges” (Star & Griesemer, 1989: 414) between different groups; to help in solving everyday problems by reducing uncertainty or improving information-seeking processes; or even to change users’ behavior (Savolainen, 2007). Yet, what allows boundary objects to fulfill this bridging function is boundary crossing, which refers to a person’s transitions and interactions across different sites (Suchman, 1996). It has also been noted that boundary crossing is a “little understood process” (Engeström, Engeström, & Kärkkäinen, 1995: 321), yet boundaries and boundary crossing carry great potential for the learning of individual actors (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011). Boundary objects are said to act as “common information spaces that enable interaction and coordination without consensus and shared goals” (Bartel & Garud, 2003: 333; see also Oswick & Robertson, 2009).

So far, boundary objects have been studied within organizations as knowledge tools that allow for knowledge transfer across diverse stakeholders, or closed communities of practice (i.e., teams of scientists or software development groups working on projects, new technologies, and innovation groups [e.g., Barrett & Oborn, 2010; Bechky, 2003; Dar, 2018; Fox, 2011]). For example, Dar (2018) studied how boundary objects, such as company reports, serve as knowledge tools that can be experienced and interpreted differently depending on the status of various stakeholders involved. On the other hand, Fox (2011) studied the role of boundary objects (i.e., technological devices or processes) during innovation. Similarly, Hawkins, Pye, and Correia (2017) found that boundary objects may have a facilitative or even inhibitory influence in employees’ learning.

Most recently, researchers have started to explore the dynamic nature of boundary objects and their users—for example, how written texts may change and evolve over time and the role that boundary spanners who collaborate using these texts may have in this process (De Pourcq, Verleye, Langley, & Voets, 2021). Relatedly, Fabbe-Costes, Lechaptois, and Spring (2020) studied how boundary object creation takes place (particular map creation) and how personal aspects of the creator—that is, underlying characteristics of those who built them (personal biases)—may have impacted the process. Others have also started to extend this literature into the education domain (Williams & Willett, 2019), studying how librarians perform boundary work as well as the boundary-spanning possibilities of adult education programs (e.g., English as a second language programs (ESL programs) [Shiffman, 2019]).

Thus, while the role of boundary objects within organizational boundaries has been established, in this study we seek to discover their potential for learning and career-related knowledge transfer when taken outside of organizational boundaries. Specifically, by crossing host city boundaries, how do migrants, as outsiders, apply and transfer work-related knowledge by interacting with local boundary objects?

Given the lack of existing theories addressing the role of the city context on careers of its newcomers, we examine the arrival to the host city as the critical boundary-crossing event. This serves as a trigger for migrants to proactively seek local boundary objects, to learn and exchange career knowledge (i.e., apply their career capital), and eventually to integrate. Thus, crossing city boundaries, much like a right of passage, implies a discontinuity or an unfamiliar territory, where an individual must “face the challenge of negotiating and combining ingredients from different context[s]” (Engeström et al., 1995: 319). By focusing on city boundary crossing, we explore boundary objects as intermediaries allowing for learning local work-related information and, more broadly, facilitating transfer of migrants’ career capital, thus connecting migrants to the host city context (i.e., local jobs, communities).

Finally, by seeking local career opportunities and crossing host city boundaries, migrants may be involved in broader social integration processes that take place at the same time (i.e., interaction and integration with different groups in the local society [Knowles, 2011]). Thus, embedded in these relationships between local boundary objects and groups that interact with them is individuals’ learning and understanding of the city’s culture and its inhabitants. By focusing on the role of career-related contact and activities, we also explore migrant integration beyond basic intercultural immersion (Berry, 1997; Vora, Martin, Fitzsimmons, Pekerti, Lakshman, & Raheem, 2019). Yet, prior to integration, migrants must transfer their foreign career capital to the local context. We address this next.

### **Migrant Career Capital Transfer: Host Country Versus Host City**

**Career capital transfer: Host country focus.** Based on human capital theory, upon arrival to the host country skilled migrants bring certain stock of foreign human capital—such as education, knowledge, skills, and abilities. In contrast to this more static aspect of human capital, the flow component is a more dynamic facet and includes those conscious investments in human capital in the form of additional training and education (Becker, 1976; Fang, Zikic, & Novicevic, 2009). In fact, skilled migrants

are typically invited into the host country based on the stock of accumulated foreign career capital (i.e., the human capital-based migration system looks for those with credentials and previous work experience [e.g., Reitz, Curtis, & Elrick, 2014]). Thus, career capital can be seen from the perspective of the host country (i.e., shortage of labor in specific sectors or occupations), and it is usually based on the assessment of education and work experience necessary for making the cross-country skill transfer. This is often evaluated by the local immigration authorities and based on country-specific immigration policies. For example, having obtained a certain level of education in one's home country may satisfy the host country authorities that the individual is a "highly qualified" or skilled migrant. This allows migrants to enter and settle in the host country based on their foreign education and credentials (i.e., foreign career capital).

However, this general source of human capital (i.e., stock of original education or work experience) does not necessarily guarantee successful employment in the host city labor market. In other words, while at the level of the host country career capital is assessed more broadly as a way *into* the country, once in the host city migrants face a different context and may need different types of competencies to put their skills to use. In fact, Csedő (2008) pointed to the difference between being "highly qualified" for the national-level transfer and what is needed for skill transfer in the particular social context. Therefore, the value of skilled migrants' human capital is not the same in all contexts. Specifically, what may allow a cross-border move and entry into a host country may not be enough once migrants start navigating and looking for career opportunities in the host city.

**Career capital transfer: Host city focus.** Skilled migrants are especially attracted to global host cities as central hubs with a variety of career and learning opportunities, where international networks of relationships and resources are also more likely to flourish (Csedő, 2008; Sassen, 2012; Smith, 2003). Many of these global cities have been described as very diverse (Vertovec, 2007), as they are fundamentally shaped by migration and their ability to attract heterogeneous groups from all parts of the world. Thus, global cities may offer a unique social and cultural context for both career reestablishment and integration of skilled migrants. As a result of these characteristics, once migrants arrive in the host city they face a different context (e.g., diverse and competitive labor market) compared to the initial requirements to enter the host country.

Specifically, the paradox that skilled migrants typically face upon arrival to the host city is that their foreign stock of human capital (which was sufficient

at the time of migration to the host country) is no longer afforded equal value compared to the education and experience acquired locally (Dietz et al., 2015; Zikic, Bonache, & Cerdin, 2010; Zikic & Richardson, 2016). For example, Zikic et al. (2010) compared skilled migrant experiences in three global cities (i.e., Madrid, Paris, and Toronto). In each case, respondents were unlikely to enter their original occupation or find a job commensurate to the work they had done in the home country. Similarly, their status as migrants (unlike other types of international workers, such as expatriates) may also imply a type of precariousness, described as the liability of foreignness (Harvey, Novicevic, Buckley, & Fung, 2005), which is a disadvantage compared to local workers (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Underhill, Groutsis, Van den Broek, & Rimmer, 2020; Van den Broek, Harvey, & Groutsis, 2016).

Therefore, despite having crossed multiple boundaries (i.e., geographical or cultural) in their seemingly boundaryless career move (Kozhevnikov, 2021; O'Connor & Crowley-Henry, 2019), questions related to the value and transfer of foreign versus local human and social capital in the context of the host city remain unclear. Moreover, there is currently a lack of theory on "how" or "why" in relation to the challenges and this context-dependent nature of foreign career capital. Based on some initial work on this topic, it may be the less tangible individual characteristics that become more relevant for the transfer of career capital in the host city context (Csedő, 2008). For example, transfer in the host city may be dependent on one's capacity to navigate the new context and negotiate the value of one's skills to potential employers in the host city labor market. This includes knowledge of the local language, but also specific communication skills that may enhance one's ability to both entrain everyday situations as well as negotiate new work opportunities (Tharenou & Kulik, 2020).

In addition, the diverse global city context is characterized by an already high level of diverse competencies of its inhabitants (Csedő, 2008). Therefore, the competition for career opportunities may also be higher in global cities as high stock of skills may already exist in this context. Thus, transfer of career capital in the host city may be dependent not only on the individual's human capital but also on the average level of human capital around (i.e., the level of skills of the setting in which the individual is working, living, or both [Stark, 2004]). Finally, skill transfer is also dependent on the city institutions and local networks that mobilize and activate human capital in the social context in which they are situated. Thus, the host city's context may also present migrants with new networks and organizational requirements (e.g., local occupational certifications or licenses) that they must learn to access and navigate.

As a result, the “how” of career capital transfer at the level of the host city largely remains unknown and will also depend on migrants’ ability to understand which career opportunities and resources are available and tangible in the new host city (i.e., “things that can be done” in the city [Ritchie & Crouch, 2002]). Yet, existing research has paid little attention to *how* the local city context may inform and influence one’s proactive career behavior. Thus, we seek to discover how the host city may predispose migrants’ career and integration efforts.

## METHOD

### Research Context

The study took place in Toronto, Canada. Canada has been welcoming skilled migrants as a major source of its human capital and growth for decades (Reitz et al., 2014). The city of Toronto is known as one of the main gateway cities in the country and one of the largest international, financial, and business centers attracting skilled migrants from all over the world (Sassen, 2012; Walton-Roberts, 2011). Most importantly, as such, Toronto resembles many other global cities that similarly attract an exceptionally diverse and skilled population of newcomers. As an important context for studying migrant careers, Toronto allows access to a diverse sample of skilled migrants, which is known to be “large and growing workforce that often falls beyond our reach and hence is typically neglected in classic management research” (Bamberger & Pratt, 2010: 668).

### Sample

We adopted a theoretical sampling approach (Miles & Huberman, 2013) composed of skilled migrants that had spent a minimum of five years in the new country. This time period was chosen as it was found to be the optimal amount of time for newcomers’ adaptation and integration into life and work in Canada (Aurora, 2019). In addition, our study focused on a group of skilled migrants that came from a variety of cities internationally and chose Toronto as their immigration destination (for more information about the cities and demographic characteristics of the respondents, see Table 1). Thus, our participants differed in terms of cities they had worked and resided in previously; the types of work or occupations they had engaged in; and their age, gender, and the length of residence in Canada.

We built our sample by contacting major immigrant settlement agencies as well as a national immigrant magazine that assisted us by providing a list of potential interviewees. The list contained names and contact information of skilled migrants that had

either been featured in their magazine in the past five years (i.e., shared their transformational stories of challenges in settlement and integration that could inform other migrants), or had been in contact with various agencies as clients who had overcome barriers in their integration and settlement. Thus, our respondents came from a pool of skilled migrants identified as respected professionals, some community leaders, or entrepreneurs in the Toronto area. The list contained a total of 525 migrants living and working across Canada, including their short biographies. Given the focus of our investigation, we chose to consider those who lived in the Toronto area, a total of 114 individuals. These individuals represented a theoretically relevant population, as they seemed to have overcome various barriers in the host city environment, thus presenting a case of successful migrant integration and some level of career success, both of which are relevant to our focus of research (Gehman, Glaser, Eisenhardt, Gioia, Langley, & Corley, 2018; Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006).

Given that our research aimed to understand the connection between careers and the host city, by studying biographies of potential interviewees we ensured that our respondents had previous work and life experience in the urban context as well. Thus, living and working in the new city was not in itself a complete novelty, allowing us to study the role of the focal city in migrant careers. Previous city experience is also a relevant criterion as each city is known to have its unique “ethos” or “character” (Jones & Svejnova, 2017), which residents must learn to adapt to. Out of 114 migrants from the Toronto region, and based on our criteria, we contacted 83 to solicit their interest in sharing their career and life stories with us; 42 responded to our invitation and 38 were interviewed (a 45.78% response rate).

Semi-structured interviews with 38 skilled migrants were conducted between 2018 and 2019, and each interview lasted between 50 and 120 minutes in length. As suggested by Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988), we conducted interviews jointly (i.e., both authors were part of the interviewing process). While one of us was conducting the interview, the other was observing and taking notes. Our in-depth interviews allowed for a more holistic and greater “emic” understanding of migrant career contextualization, which included reflections on both visual and social aspects of the host city, as well as migrants’ interactions with local boundary objects. Specifically, our interview agenda focused on the following key areas: (a) initial city perceptions and experiences in seeking work opportunities and settlement in the new context. (b) career narratives (i.e., barriers and coping) in the new city, and (c) local contextual (i.e., social and institutional) factors and experiences of

**TABLE 1**  
**Demographic Information**

No.	Participants	Age Group	Gender	Years in Canada	Home City and Country of Origin	Occupation in Canada
1	Anna	45–50	Female	23	Bucharest, Romania	Professional
2	Diego	60+	Male	30	Manila, Philippines	Educator
3	Oprah	40–44	Female	5	Odessa, Ukraine	Manager
4	Arthur	55–59	Male	16	New Delhi, India	Manager or Entrepreneur
5	Robert	30–34	Male	5	Bangalore, India	Professional
6	Violet	45–50	Female	23	Bucharest, Romania	Professional
7	Ethan	60+	Male	35	Hong Kong	Politician
8	Scarlett	35–39	Female	8	Saitama, Japan	Manager
9	Rose	60+	Female	33	New Delhi, India	Politician
10	Mason	40–44	Male	15	Hong Kong	Professional
11	Henry	60+	Male	29	Dhaka, Pakistan	Professional
12	Carter	41–45	Male	5	San Salvador, El Salvador	Sales manager
13	Fiona	55–59	Female	29	Hong Kong	Social worker
14	Lucas	50–54	Male	14	Karachi, Pakistan	Professional
15	William	60+	Male	35	Hong Kong	Politician
16	Robert	30–34	Male	6	Bangalore, India	Professional
17	Marie	41–45	Female	5	Georgetown, Guyana	Social worker
18	Leonardo	55–59	Male	33	Punjab, India	Professional
19	John	45–50	Male	30	Karachi, Pakistan	Manager
20	Flora	40–44	Female	23	Bucharest, Romania	Educator
21	Gabriel	55–59	Male	35	Hong Kong	Entrepreneur
22	Tom	40–44	Male	9	Tehran, Romania	Musician
23	Boris	45–49	Male	23	Mumbai, India	Manager
24	Emma	60+	Female	35	Manila, Philippines	Executive director
25	Adriana	40–44	Female	7	Caracas, Venezuela	HR Manager
26	Oliver	50–54	Male	28	Tehran, Iran	Manager or entrepreneur
27	Peter	41–45	Male	5	Boulder USA	Professional
28	Mia	55–59	Female	35	Mumbai, India	Professional
29	Hugo	50–54	Male	15	Manila, Philippines	Social worker
30	Kathrin	35–39	Female	5	New Delhi, India	Manager or consultant
31	Rudolf	45–49	Male	26	Rome, Italy	Dancer
32	Noah	41–45	Male	7	Afula, Israel	Worker
33	Martin	45–49	Male	21	Cairo, Egypt	Manager or entrepreneur
34	Nataly	35–39	Female	7	New Delhi, Ukraine	Social worker
35	Sophia	35–39	Female	8	Tehran, Iran	Manager
23	Alberto	45–49	Male	25	Colombo, Sri Lanka	HR professional
36	Carlos	45–49	Male	21	Beirut, Lebanon	Manager or entrepreneur
37	Lincoln	41–45	Male	20	Tirana, Albania	Sales manager
38	Lidia	41–45	Female	18	Tehran, Iran	Professional

integration locally. After conducting a few interviews and carefully analyzing and discussing our data and our interview notes, we realized that our respondents shared some intriguing and unexpected stories—about their current relationships to various communities in the city, for example. Thus, we somewhat revised our original interview protocol and included a few additional questions related to their current integration status and relationships with the local society.

### Data Analysis

We applied grounded theory principles (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), which allowed for inductive understanding of

the complex social phenomena (Suddaby, 2006) that was the focus of our research: how the host city context and its boundary objects constrain or facilitate migrant careers (i.e., applying their foreign career capital locally). Our analysis of interview data proceeded in three stages (open, axial, and selective coding), while constantly applying a comparative method and going back and forth between interviews and the literature that informed our thinking.

**Stage 1: Open coding.** All interview data went through several iterations of coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), during which we moved between emerging themes and our data. To begin, all transcripts were read word for word and independently coded by each author. We then had joint meetings where we discussed each transcript individually and worked

together on “meaning condensation” (Malterud, 2001) wherein we extracted and kept track of the most relevant themes (“codes”) from the data. Codes were assigned to sections of a text that ranged from one sentence to multiple passages. We carefully compared our independent coding and resolved any discrepancies to reach an agreement on coding for each transcript (Locke, 2001).

In this initial stage of coding, we stayed as close to the data as possible, using actual words or passages from the respondents as a way of capturing the original meaning in our data (Miles & Huberman, 2013; Rogers, Corley, & Ashforth, 2017). This open coding allowed us to examine, compare, and categorize our “raw” data, while trying to assign each discrete idea or incident a “name” that would represent a specific phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For example, a direct participant quote referring to the individual’s initial experiences of navigating the streets of Toronto in search of work and seeing streets “simply as boxes” (compared to his home city), was recorded as the first-order code “visual simplicity of the host city.”

In addition, during this stage we tried to distill potential causal links between our codes and kept record of their potential relationships in our notes. Later, these links helped us during axial coding to elicit connections between causal conditions—for example, between city comparisons and respondents’ belongingness to the new city.

Finally, to fully understand our data during this stage and to maintain theoretical sensitivity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) we focused our attention on words or phrases that we felt contained deeper meaning, searching for metaphors, and asking related questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For example, when respondents described how they “sought to find solutions to migrant career challenges” (i.e., how to navigate local career information), we grouped these together as first-order codes all describing migrants’ desire to assist and solve problems; this eventually led to the second-order theme (i.e., boundary object creation). Lastly, throughout our analysis, we used NVivo 2.0 to enter all our codes, facilitate coding links (i.e., connections among codes in the data), perform text searches, and count instances and intersections of codes.

**Stage 2: Axial coding.** During the second stage of the analysis we moved to axial coding (Locke, 2001). The goal of this stage was to reduce the number of initially created codes into second-order themes based on commonalities; that is, based on their conceptual similarities or differences and grouping them into separate, more abstract themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These second-order themes present higher levels of abstraction and should have more

“conceptual power” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), serving as building blocks for our theoretical model. In this way, the goal was to translate raw data into language and terms similar to those in the literature to which we wished to contribute (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). While trying to reduce the number of first-order concepts, we combined concepts that were identified as indicating similarities or differences in respondents’ career action and life in the host city. For example, in talking about their motivation for learning and accessing a certain boundary object, some spoke about “using them to learn new skills that were valuable only for their individual career success” as well as “networking strictly in search of personal benefits”; these first-order concepts were aggregated and led to identifying the second-order theme of “*functional integration*,” defined as migrants learning and integrating themselves locally but only inasmuch as they could function effectively and reach their own goals.

At this stage we also concurrently reviewed related literature (e.g., on place attachment and identity motivations), which led us to identifying *self-continuity motive* (Becker et al., 2018), a construct that immediately struck us as closely relating to a cluster of our descriptive codes, specifically the relatedness between migrants’ comparisons between their home and host cities and their desire for continuity and belongingness. This insight led us to use the concept of *spatial continuity* as a sensitizing concept (Blumer, 1954; Bowen, 2006), which guided our analysis of patterns that had emerged from our data. Thus, we used this to inform and extend the original self-continuity motive into the spatial domain. We later understood that spatial continuity was the foundation for migrant career recontextualization.

**Stage 3: Selective coding.** Finally, the selective coding stage allowed us to build relationships between themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). At this point, by relating the analytic categories to one another, our goal was to distill an overarching theoretical model. In this process, we repeatedly went between transcripts and the literature to ensure that our model accurately represented the data. Our model was meant to expand existing knowledge on the role of the host city in migrant careers. Specifically, we discovered that career recontextualization was a vehicle for learning local career information by accessing and interacting with boundary objects; moreover, through career capital translation and career action migrants also integrated into the host city’s society. Our final theoretical model (see Figure 4) embraced relationships between second-order themes. A sample relationship we identified through selective coding was how specific types of “career action” related to skilled migrants’ “integration outcomes,” or, for



example, how the experience of “spatial continuity” lead to “creating belongingness.”

## FINDINGS

Below, we present our findings, starting with participant reflections on how they recognized and responded to the initial visual, spatial, and social context of the host city, setting the foundation for later career-related efforts. Subsequently, we describe how migrants accessed and learned work-related knowledge from local boundary objects and, through career action, translated their foreign capital locally (see Table 3).

Finally, we turn to two related integration outcomes. We provide additional selected quotes that support our analysis in Table 2.

### Spatial Continuity and Belongingness: Foundations of Recontextualization

In navigating the new environment (i.e., streets, buildings, and street life), participants engaged in assessing the degree of similarity between living and working in their home versus in the host city. In learning to understand and navigate the new city, they relied on their strong memories of their home city (for first-order themes, see Figure 1). This allowed for some continuity in how they experienced the new city and set the foundation for other, more complex activities and tasks in the new city, such as job search and career efforts.

**Visual, spatial, and social comparisons (home vs. host city).** Our respondents recalled familiar home city images as reference points to help them navigate and interpret what they were experiencing. Thus, memories of the cities that one was most familiar and comfortable with served as a guide for the new city’s context to be absorbed and accepted (see Figure 2 as an illustration of the following quote).

When we came to Toronto I realized: oh, my God, Toronto is not New York or Hong Kong; I was expecting, you know, large Coca-Cola signs and loads of people rushing to work, because I saw this at home and in different movies with big American cities. (Gabriel)

Similarly, other interviewees who came from more visually and spatially complex cities described their very first experiences of navigating the streets of the host city as relatively easy because the streets

were “like boxes.” As a result, spatial and visual organization and features of their home city impacted how individuals made sense of their new environment.

On the other hand, those who moved from smaller cities or cities with a longer history (e.g., classical European), for example, talked about the confusing and sometimes even unpleasant feelings that the host city’s “simplicity” and different esthetics brought about. The ability to accept this local context was intimately related to having a clear sense of purpose in the new city, such as being employed or engaged in some way. For example:

In my city, you would see many traditional and beautiful old places, but here, it’s kind of simple, not as nice architecture. Everything is the same, as all streets and homes are alike. I was feeling like a stranger, I mean before finding a job or going to college, every single time I was going out I was feeling as a stranger; there was fear too, because it was a new city to me. (Lidia)

Similarly, migrants also engaged in comparisons and assessments of the new city’s social life; the level of activity on the streets, and how this context may come to influence their lives in the new city.

My hometown was quiet, I miss is being able to just walk to work and not waste so much time in traffic. In Toronto anywhere you go there so much sensory input, you see so many people and noise... it’s not something you really need on any particular day. Let’s say you are not out for a walk, but you are actually going for a business meeting, and you don’t need so much overload. I feel it’s stressful, it’s not required. The positive side is that there are so many parks, green places, peaceful places, even ... in a big city like Toronto. (Nataly)

Thus, through comparing the new environment to something familiar (visual, spatial, social), whether it was (dis)similar or (un)pleasant, individuals managed to deal with the newness and discontinuity (and even fear) involved in the settlement process. This sense of continuity created initial comfort and allowed migrants to be more focused and effective in navigating the new city. Most importantly, the sense on continuity allowed for further explorations of what the city had to offer (e.g., where to collect relevant job search information) and facilitated other types of connectedness to the new city, as described next.

**Discovering social connectedness.** Migrants further responded and adapted to the new city by discovering social connectedness (for first-order codes, see Figure 1); they looked for local social capital, especially in the context of work. In this way, they increased their sense of belongingness as well as facilitating their career efforts. For example, Emma

Author’s Voice:

Was there anything that surprised you about the findings?



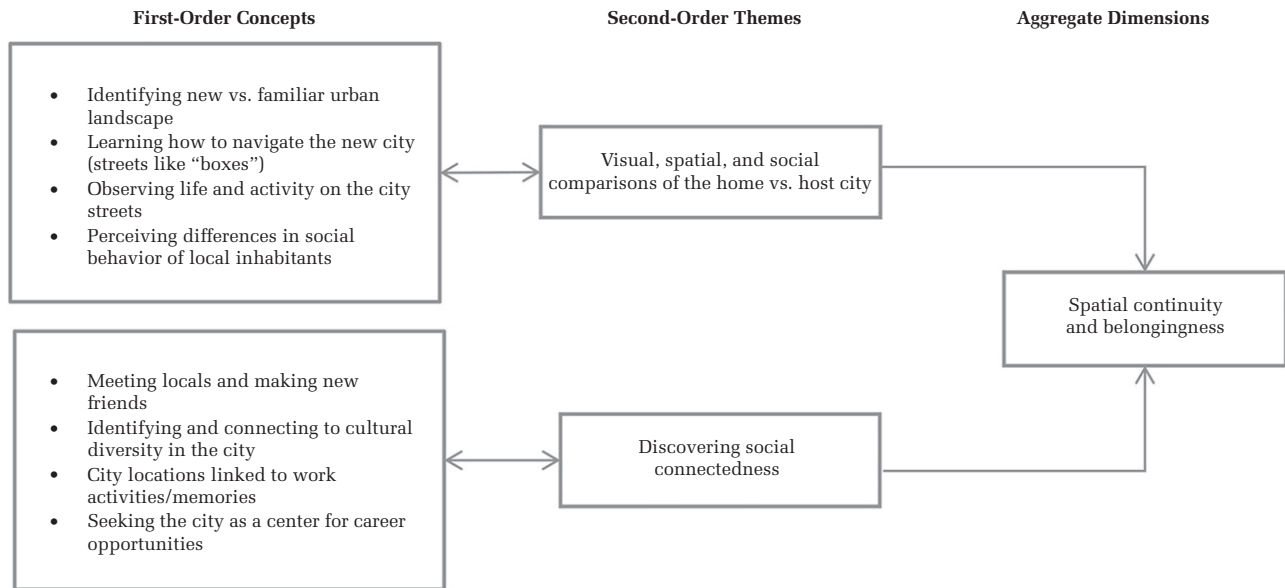
**TABLE 2**  
**Career Recontextualization in the Host City: Additional Selected Quotes**

Second-Order Themes	First-Order Codes	Representative Quotes
Visual, spatial, and social comparison of the home vs. host city	Learning how to navigate the new city (streets like “boxes”) Observing life and activity on the city streets	“Because even people said, ‘You want to know directions here?’ I said, ‘Yeah.’ And you say: ‘Yonge and Dundas. Everything is around, together.’ I said, ‘You guys live in a box here for sure.’ Because everything is boxed, you know? If you think a cross that’s how you find something. Okay, well right. That’s not helping me find something, right?” (Carlos) “My previous city [is] competitive and small, and I realized that while I was living in there and as a professional, um, I became some sort of aggressive... because you are pretty much stretched with what you have to do as a professional. We go to work every day; we take [the] subway, you can see people are pretty serious. In Toronto people are more relaxed. I guess it’s because of the environment. I am not stressed and pressured. Here in Toronto, it was easy for me to adapt.” (Arthur) “My home city was very different from Toronto... I compared how often I saw people on the streets when I moved, and I realized that I saw people on the streets just in the place where I worked. In the place where I lived, I did not see too many people, and this influenced me personally. This definitely makes [a] difference if you come to the city and you are not integrated into a group that has a lot of people.” (Anna)
Discovering social connectedness	City locations linked to work activities or memories	“I am a composer, and I am a musician, and if I needed to continue my career in this city, I decided to look for places that remind me my career somehow. If I need to find something good, I will go to Roy Thompson Hall or to Four Seasons Center, a lot of places where you can enjoy the music.” (Tom)
Career orienting	Finding work locations or information by walking independently	“I remember we have registered with one or two job agencies. We used information we found there in the magazines and newspapers, yes we grabbed of lot of magazines and newspapers and we were looking for the job advertisements.” (Lidia)
Cross-boundary career adaptation	Learning about career opportunities and entry into local organizations and education programs	“So when I sent more than 200 resumes one company responded to me, and they said sorry but you do not have the university degree from here and we cannot hire you especially in management. I understood that my access is limited so before I can have access to a good company, I need to get access to the university.” (Ethan)
Creative career action	Creating useful resources for various local communities	“You get busier and busier in a big city and you cannot really have that face-to-face contact with people as much; so I started naturally connecting with people who use technology, and that is how I started creating my own kind of networks where we can help each other, with some of the typical questions we have, how we can perhaps structure that knowledge so other people can access it.” (Nataly)
Functional integration	Networking for personal benefits	“The biggest hope is to deal, you know, with the immigrants that come from different countries since they are more thankful [for] the assistance that they are provided and will offer a bigger favor in return.” (Diego).
Holistic integration	Seeking to give back, both professionally and personally, to various communities in the city Pursuing personal career goals while also being concerned about the well-being of others	“It’s really a collective experience and the ability to give back to the community. I’ve had a chance to mentor at least 100 new immigrants one-on-one over these years. I’ve had a chance to do maybe a dozen workshops for new immigrants. Uh, I have a chance, as I said earlier, to share my experiences and passion with the city of Toronto and its diversity communities.” (Boris) “In my organization, I don’t call them employees because they’re partners. We train them. I have many associates, you know, trainees, almost about 39,000 in the whole of Canada, you know. So, the one thing that really makes me proud is seeing them all successful. I see them accomplish their dreams.” (Emma)

**TABLE 3**  
**Career Action Types and Characteristics**

Type of Career Action	Boundary-Crossing Characteristics	Boundary Objects (BOs) Used	Effects on Career Capital
<b>Career orienting</b>	<p>Surface level acting—understanding and learning about possible career options without much interaction with the external context. Information may be easily encountered in the city or passed on by others.</p> <p>Immediate, easily encountered, surface-level city boundaries, accessible through navigating the local context; career information that can be accessed by independent exploration, walking, reading signs or newspapers, etc.</p>	<p>Newspapers, job advertisements, and employment news. These BOs provide initial career information; they are readily available and accessed in the city. To use them migrants do not need to integrate into communities, nor become part of any local organization or entity.</p>	<p>Focused on gathering or encountering easily accessible local career information and reflective in terms of own career capital.</p> <p>Understanding possible career options, or what host city has to offer in relation to already accumulated stock of foreign career capital.</p>
<b>Cross-boundary career adaptation</b>	<p>Proactively seeking work-related information, learning, and gaining access to BOs that will grant migrants access to the local labor market and allow connection to local groups and communities.</p> <p>Learning and seeking to cross boundaries embedded in the local work context; adjusting and adapting for proactive boundary-crossing; seeking access to new work opportunities in the host city, entering local programs or education, or becoming part of the local institution.</p>	<p>Universities, libraries, labs, educational programs (language or bridging courses), organizations. These BOs are unique to the local context and not always easily accessible; they help migrants to penetrate local organizations.</p>	<p>Seeking ways to apply foreign career capital locally as well as actively seeking to transfer or translate it to local standards. Assessing and learning about local career options or local norms, managing barriers along the way; proactively seeking to obtain new career capital when needed.</p>
<b>Creative career action or BO creation</b>	<p>Creating new knowledge or resources to assist other career actors; reaction to what was learned or experienced locally; solutions-oriented and generative career action based on local experiences.</p> <p>Most encompassing boundary-crossing or boundary-creation as it goes beyond local organizations and instead involves forming new communities or new objects, groups, and entities themselves. Instituting new boundaries through boundary object creation itself.</p>	<p>Boundary objects are original, migrant own creations: phone directories or listings, specific education programs or courses that provide local knowledge and help others.</p>	<p>Both foreign and local career capital is put to use in the most innovative and helpful ways. New objects and entities are created to enable knowledge exchange between migrants and others, to function and integrate above and beyond their career.</p>

**FIGURE 1**  
Continuity and Belongingness to the Host City



**FIGURE 2**  
Visual and Spatial Comparisons of Toronto and Hong Kong: Street Views of Toronto and Hong Kong in 1979–1980



described how the city’s cultural diversity helped her to connect and establish social continuity:

Manila was a really big city, but when I arrived to Toronto, I asked myself—is this really Toronto? I loved Toronto because of the people. What helped me connect the most? I would say diversity, different nationalities, people from different countries. And what really made Toronto for me are the people: [lists specific people]. I made connections with the Canadians too, with the coworkers, and I made friends besides Filipinos. Toronto is not so big, and you make connections easily. (Emma)

Social connectedness to the host city often translated into new career opportunities as well. For example, participants described the potential for the bigger host city to offer a variety of career choices and further strengthen their connectedness to the local context.

I realized that [a] huge city like Toronto provides me with a lot of career opportunities. You may go to different events; you may see lots of people. There are lots of conferences happening here and workshops from different universities. Also, headquarters of lots of associations are usually in big cities, not in small cities. So, I think living here, I can take advantage of this. (Lidia)

For others, connecting socially also played an important role in easing the initial uncertainty and loneliness related to coming to live and work in a new city. Peter, for example, spoke of an almost

immediate connection that he felt to his future colleagues and the city in general, which allowed him to create a sense of belongingness to the new city.

To me it all immediately clicked, even during my job interview [for a faculty position]. Communication with colleagues who were interviewing me, who come from different parts of the world, just like myself. The vibe on the streets, it all felt immediately like it was the right place for me, I didn't feel alone. (Peter)

Finally, social connectedness was based on personally relevant events and initial work and life experiences in the new city; these events created new meanings and established belongingness to the host city. For example Flora remembered: "I felt that I belong to this place, my kids went to school here, I recall the club that was here, and all this belongs to me now."

These initial social and emotional city connections created a sense of belongingness; they were the foundation for more direct engagement within the city and its boundary objects toward more concerted career action.

**Career Recontextualization: Boundary Objects and Career Action**

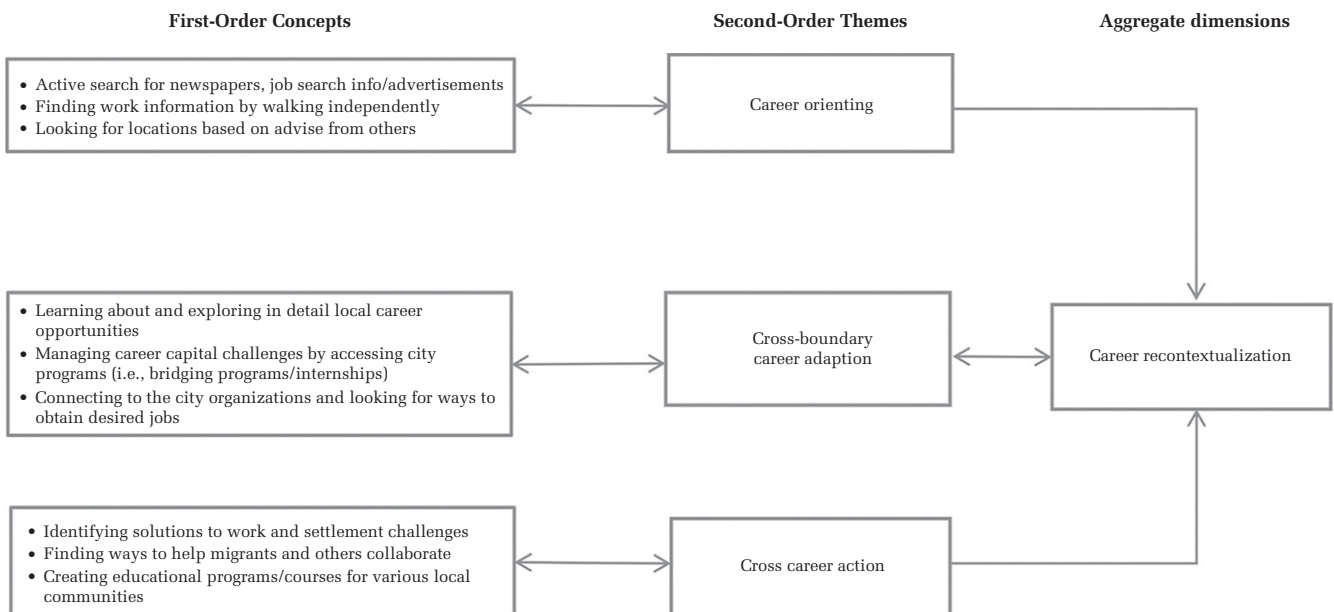
By crossing city boundaries, migrants experienced discontinuity in action and interaction. Yet, by reestablishing some sense of continuity and belongingness locally (as described above), migrants were able to engage with local boundary objects more directly

in search of local career opportunities. By accessing a variety of boundary objects in the host city, migrants were "learning their boundaries"; they engaged in different types of career action that assisted them in adjusting and applying their foreign career capital, to cross boundaries and eventually integrate (see first-order themes in Figure 3).

Specifically, our analysis led to discovering *career recontextualization*, which was enacted by three unique types of career action (see Table 3): (a) *career orienting*—that is, searching and locating easily accessible boundary objects that could inform and guide their local job search (e.g., identifying relevant institutions, finding job search information) and eventual boundary crossing; (b) *cross-boundary career adaptation*, involving deeper penetration into the local context by learning new local information and understanding available career options or barriers (i.e., ways to enter specific education programs) which allowed for career capital translation or transformation; and (c) *creative career action*, which assumes the formation and development of new objects as tools to maintain cooperation or knowledge transfer between various groups, even beyond skilled migrants. Respondents engaged in these types of career action in various combinations and did not use them in any specific order. While most individuals engaged in career orienting and adaptation, some also pursued creative career action (Figure 3).

**Career orienting.** The analysis revealed that in learning about work opportunities in the new city, some of the respondents relied on direct physical engagement, by walking around and seeking relevant

**FIGURE 3**  
**Career Recontextualization: Boundary Objects and Career Action**



career information. For example, Mia described her experiences:

We settled in Montreal first, I walked around a lot, and visited McGill University. I asked around and found several courses I wanted to take; I realized that I could take programs in English there, even if Montreal is mostly French speaking! This worked out for me well until I started to look for a job. Without French language, it wasn't easy, we eventually had to move to Toronto.

Mia's career orienting also highlights the importance of learning the local language in navigating the new city and eventually finding work. Career orienting was also based on the advice of others (e.g., friends, roommates, acquaintances) and illustrates a more passive form of orienting. For example, Emma and Fiona relied on their newly acquired friends from church, whom they trusted, rather than looking for work by walking and exploring the city on their own.

Go buy the *Toronto Star* to get [a] job, they were telling us. I didn't go around much, it was more about where we get that newspaper. I looked at the newspaper and I remember—I can never forget this, it said, "Girl Friday." "Oh, my gosh. I like this. Girl Friday. You only work on Fridays" ... the next day [I] went for an interview. (Emma)

In contrast to the above experiences, others spoke about lacking any guidance or advice related to local work opportunities and noticing that people had little time or no interest in helping them. They relied on independent exploration of the host city in search of work options and information, relying much less on any external advice.

There was no guidance anywhere. People were absolutely uninterested in helping in our job search. All our friends were busy, they could not help us. We walked and just came across this magazine in a job center, on employment news. You know, it's a free magazine you pick up. (Sophia)

These individuals exemplify a more autonomous type of career orienting, sometimes even encountering certain objects serendipitously. Overall, through career orienting, migrants looked for easily accessible information and looked for local information through basic surface-level action (i.e., asking and walking through the city).

**Cross-boundary career adaptation.** While career orienting served as a compass to navigate basic career information, a more proactive type of career action was needed to obtain more deeply embedded career information (i.e., in harder-to-reach boundary objects). As migrants continued to discover the local context, many experienced difficulties and barriers

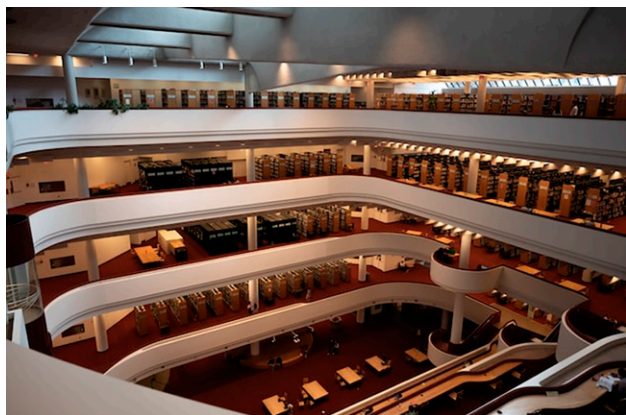
in accessing specific boundary objects; this made further learning about the local norms or practices, career capital transfer, or any related boundary crossing in the host city more challenging. In this case, the boundary objects explored were often part of well-established local institutions (e.g., local educational or training programs, or certificates), which were highly regulated by the institutions and often characterized by a high level of local competition. Most importantly, this type of recontextualization required time and resources to translate and adapt foreign career capital to local standards. This sometimes meant accessing a range of related objects (e.g., local language programs, career center information) that would assist in boundary crossing. Through proactive career adaptation and obtaining local career information, migrants understood the exact steps and hurdles involved in applying or translating their foreign career capital locally. This also meant seeking advice and information from the locals or local agencies, as well as competing for some opportunities with local job seekers. For instance, Tinu described how Toronto had specific services and agencies that informed his job search in a specific way:

Career was one of the most important things when I settled here, that is precisely why I chose Toronto. Otherwise, it would be very difficult to find a job in another place and in my specific field. Here, the settlement agency helped a lot, even before landing [in] Toronto! It was the best tool in a way, learning from the settlement agency that there was a specific bridging program in Toronto in my field that would allow me to reenter my profession. (Tinu)

Career adaptation involves a variety of costs (e.g., time, emotional, and career resources to learn new practices and change oneself or adapt one's career capital). Career adaptation means first deciphering local career meanings, while sometimes also abandoning established ways of doing things followed by interpreting barriers in accessing certain objects and negotiating and adapting oneself. As a result, and despite much learning occurring at the boundaries, respondents also reported feelings of rejection and even anxiety related to meeting their career goals in a new context. For many migrants, proactive cross-boundary adaptation led to the realization that they needed additional action, such as acquiring more training locally (i.e., to increase their flow of local human and social capital). More importantly, this proactive career action over time allowed them to identify ways to recontextualize and overcome career barriers (see Figure 4).

I attended an open house in a huge pharmaceutical company. There were, like, 500 people from many countries, such as India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and

**FIGURE 4**  
**Toronto Reference Library: An Example of a**  
**Boundary Object Used by Participants to**  
**Recontextualize Their Careers**



all wanted to work there. I had a biology degree, not a chemistry degree. I understood that I had no chances, I had to go back to school to take other courses ... but there was a woman who said to us all that “the game was over.” “You will never make it in Canada,” she said to me. I needed to adjust to this reality. I made a decision to do whatever it takes [to] enter a specific science course. I made a plan and worked on writing, grammar, and speaking modules. Toronto libraries were also perfect for me, they had free books and prep materials. (Anna)

Just like Anna, who, despite gatekeepers and challenges, found relevant boundary objects in the city to move her career forward, Tom also noted that choosing Toronto was specific to the skills and career capital that he had acquired previously.

I was a professional musician and teacher all my life; I was performing with the orchestra. I wanted to continue my career in a place where I could obtain a PhD in music, or a master’s degree in orchestra conducting. In my home city I have reached the peak in that community, [due to the] limited place and [the fact that everyone knows] each other. The program at University of Toronto gave me a possibility to restart my career in Toronto. It wasn’t easy getting into the program, but it was the right place to continue to learn and play. (Tom)

Thus, participants noted the uniqueness of local institutions and opportunities in the big city. These places and programs offered them the ability to learn, transfer, and exchange knowledge that was key to their career adaptation.

In general, cross-boundary career adaptation required individuals to be very persistent yet flexible in becoming part of local organizations. Thus, with the help of boundary objects, career recontextualization required time, effort, and new resources to cross local

boundaries. Career recontextualization sometimes took the individual a few steps backward in order to progress and fully embrace local career options. By learning from boundary objects, migrants also became aware of new career options that were uniquely available in the host city. This knowledge allowed them to make the necessary adjustments to their career plans and enhanced their ability to cross new boundaries. For example, Mason independently explored a variety of internship programs available in the city, allowing entry into various jobs and occupational fields.

I explored, through my own research, how things are done here, and first found a paid internship program, so I applied to that organization. At the same time as I was searching, I saw different bridging programs offered by the government and city of Toronto, and so I looked further into the engineering programs and found this engineering software skills enhancement program at a local college. It was open to everyone and competitive at that time, but I got in. (Mason)

***Creative career action: Boundary object creation.***

Once aware of the boundary crossing challenges, this knowledge sometimes triggered the creation of new objects. This unique way of using context-specific knowledge was often motivated by difficulties the migrants encountered in translating their foreign human or social capital. In this way, migrants were able to help others who were experiencing similar recontextualization challenges in the host city. Among the newly created boundary objects were resources that transferred a variety of city-specific knowledge to others (e.g., websites, telephone directories, educational programs). For instance, Henry recounted his motivation to create a new boundary object motivated by the needs of his ethnic community.

I published a telephone directory of Bangladeshis in Toronto. I was calling everyone and asking: “You know anybody else from our country?” [In this] way I contacted a lot of people, helping others to get in touch and connect. There was little communication at that time; this helped, I think. (Henry)

Others also broadened the scope of their boundary object creation to appeal to a variety of audiences. As an example, Diego founded a unique educational institution that provided internship programs to students who were immigrants from any background. Similarly, Violet was motivated by her own struggles to adapt and translate medical career capital in particular:

We now have power to help migrants with [a] medical background and any other medical students as we have 110 partner schools. We created one of the most successful pre-medical/postbaccalaureate and International medical graduate (IMG) programs in North America. We believe in giving back to the community. (Violet)

Furthermore, Rose talked about her philanthropic work, which targeted absolutely anyone who needed help. She felt that she was “addicted to helping” and promoting the well-being of anyone in need (e.g., she created a platform for the education of disabled people).

I have created a platform in the parliament, so that we can educate the people about an important issue, that is about blindness. It is important for different communities. I have also created my website to educate people about their health, worked for foundations for disabled and blind people, and raised money for charity ... so that disabled [people] can normalize their lives. (Rose)

Through this solution-oriented career action, migrants further enhanced their recontextualization. By giving back through boundary object creation, they became more connected to local communities and increased their local social capital. For example, Carlos metaphorically compared this process of boundary object creation as a tree trunk that was growing branches (connecting him further to people, cultures, and communities locally). This type of career

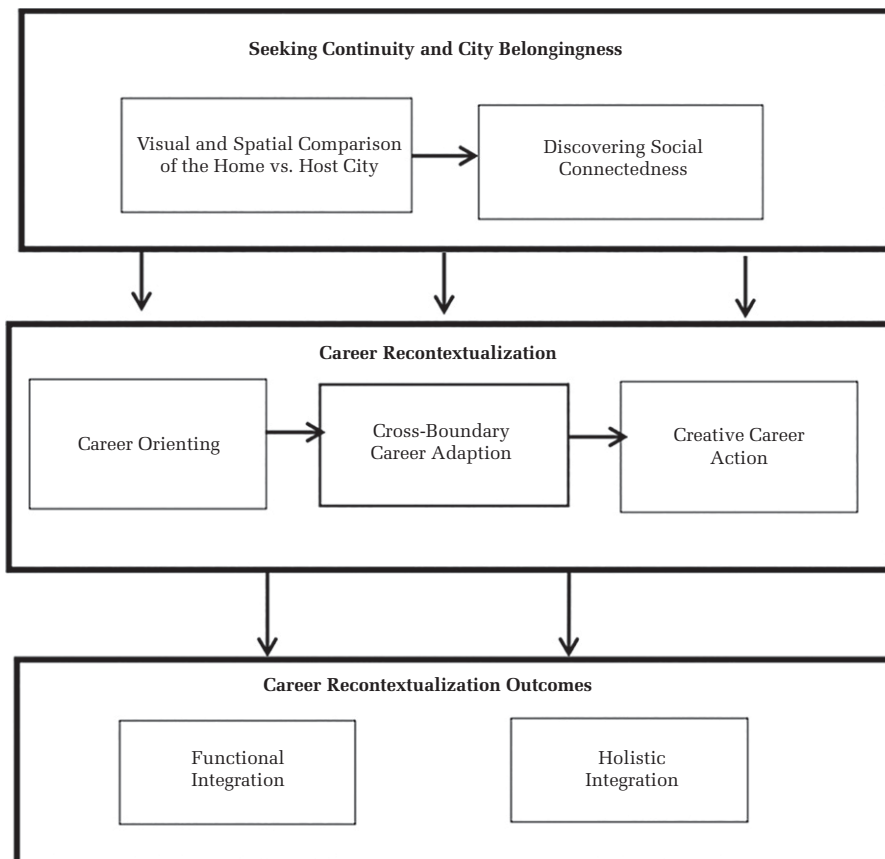
recontextualization allowed for further embeddedness in the host city.

In conclusion, the three types of career action described above illustrate migrants’ career recontextualization and boundary crossing. These actions also facilitated social and human capital translation in the host city context. Next, we describe two specific outcomes resulting from migrants’ career recontextualization efforts.

### Career Recontextualization Outcomes: Functional and Holistic Integration

As shown in Figure 5, migrants’ ability to navigate the host city and recontextualize their careers (via career action) simultaneously impacted their ability to integrate into local society and host city communities. It is the very connection between engaging with local boundary objects, crossing various boundaries, and learning through intercultural contact that led to integration outcomes. Specifically, *how* migrants interacted and learned via boundary objects in the context of their career also influenced their social integration. Thus, one’s ability to find purpose and

**FIGURE 5**  
**Migrant–City Relationships**





meaning through work and career success in the new city assisted migrants' integration into local society.

Specifically, some migrants used boundary objects with a very practical orientation in mind, strictly looking to apply their foreign career capital locally and only cross the necessary boundaries, which allowed them to function effectively and reach their personal and career goals. We define this as *functional* integration. On the other hand, while engaging in career recontextualization efforts, others developed a more open and holistic interest in being part of the local context beyond personal career goals, often seeking to give back to the local community. The latter was defined as *holistic* integration. Next, we describe functional and holistic integration outcomes (for first-order codes, see Figure 6).

**Functional integration.** For some participants, interacting with local boundary objects and seeking to apply and translate their foreign career capital had a very purposeful focus, such as achieving a better living standard, a higher perceived career status, or enhanced professional opportunities. Thus, their attempts to recontextualize their careers were narrowly focused on opportunities that would most importantly allow them to reach their personal career goals, such that they would not settle for less. For example, Ethan metaphorically described his goals and purpose in the host city as follows:

I was so proud of myself for everything I have now ... Yes, I was very poor at one time but I believed that, you know, one day I will have my own castle and if it is, you know, on a sand base, it's not my life. (Ethan)

These individuals were driven by functional and pragmatic goals. They explored certain boundary objects, crossed specific boundaries, or engaged in social networks only if they saw them as useful to their own career success. For example, they talked

about building relationships with people (through being mentored or providing mentoring to others) and organizations, in a strictly reciprocal way, seeking some benefits from them in return. Yet, others preferred even distancing themselves somewhat from the local communities, complaining about the lack of gratitude from the locals.

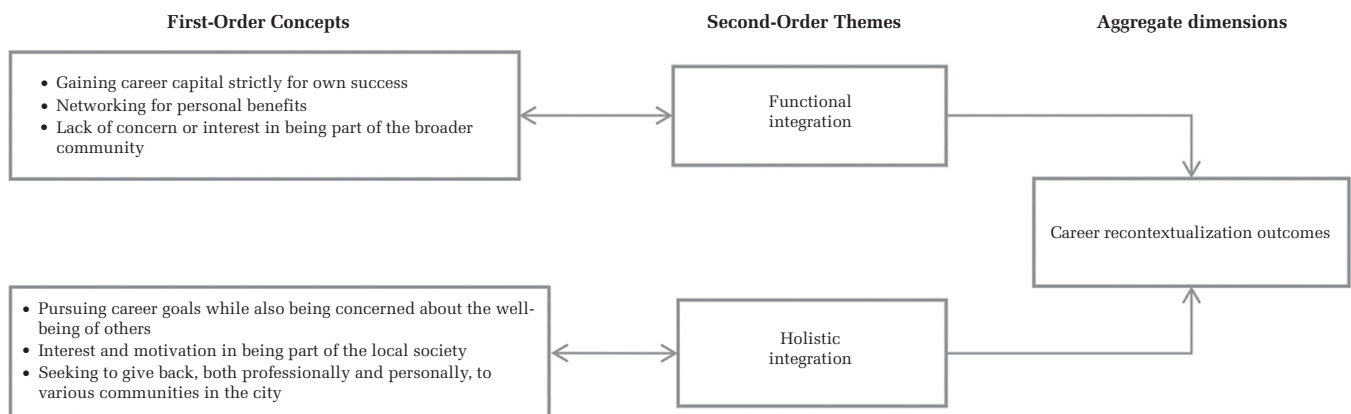
Thus, their career adaptation efforts were seen as a means to an end, such as obtaining the necessary knowledge to achieve specific career goals. For example, Anna explained that she was most interested in finding a specific pathway (i.e., seeking specific boundary objects such as training programs or work opportunities) to gain unique skills locally, as it made her probably "the only person in Toronto that could do electrophysiology." Functionally oriented individuals used boundary objects to compete with other local professionals and achieve desired career success.

Even when thinking about the local city context more broadly, it was not necessarily seen as a place where one could embrace diversity or learn to connect with others; it was rather a place serving very practical purposes, as described by Noah:

The city and the neighborhood where we lived in the beginning had relatively cheap rental properties. It was important to me to be close to amenities, to save time and money. I also felt more comfortable in my ethnic area as we did all grocery shopping there. Later I chose to stay in [the] Toronto suburbs just because of convenience and quietness. I was just looking for a place that could provide me similar way of life as home. (Noah)

Noah still wished to have a similar lifestyle to what he had had back home, and echoed the importance of establishing continuity post migration. Yet, Noah's functional and more practical perspective did not necessarily open doors for true integration,

**FIGURE 6**  
**Career Recontextualization Outcomes**



embracing diversity, or changing the way he used to live before migration.

Finally, even when functionally oriented migrants created new boundary objects that involved creative solutions and applying their human capital locally (e.g., creating new educational programs and companies), they spoke about their new businesses as opportunities to further find personal satisfaction or even as a form of retaliation for challenges they had experienced earlier (e.g., lacking assistance from locals in the past).

I think that we are helping ourselves to relive the fact that we were not helped. With each of them (our students), I want to prove my story. Yes, we now show a new way of doing medical school in Canada... With each of them [my and my colleagues' students] we want to prove our story... we relive all the hardships and everything with each student. (Anna)

Thus, individuals who exhibited functional integration used career orienting, adaptation, and even creative action with a narrow focus in mind; that is, as personally relevant career efforts that would meet their immediate career goals. They were much less interested in integration into the broader context of the host city or its communities, and even less so in giving back locally.

**Holistic integration.** On the other hand, for other respondents career recontextualization led to a more holistic and embracing orientation toward the host city and its inhabitants. While still seeking to achieve personal career goals, they were equally engaged and demonstrated genuine interest in knowing and accepting the local context, as well as in giving back to the local communities they were becoming part of. Above and beyond seeking career opportunities locally, these individuals spoke about their desire to integrate and to connect to the local society and the host city.

Robert, for example, demonstrated holistic integration through specific career action and boundary crossing. He not only increased his career capital but was also able to help other migrants move ahead in their careers: "I wanted to give back to the profession, to the community, and to the environment." He also pursued his volunteer efforts as a way of giving back to the local society while learning from others and expanding his own career options. Thus, this group did not see their personal career efforts independently of becoming part of the local context.

This more holistic integration narrative is also vividly illustrated in the experiences of Mia. While being extremely dedicated to her profession and having achieved her desired career success, she was equally proud of helping others and being part of the Canadian society.

After a while you dissolve, you know... I started dissolving. I integrated. I want this world to become one. I believe more and more in integration. I belong to Canada, but I belong to my country too. I'm saying integration, integration is a way of thinking. Whether it was politics, whether it was charity, whether it was for disabled [people], whether it was for the blind, whoever asked me for help, I did it. That's what I can do—and that's my legacy. Through my position as a health promoter or health practitioner I would always be someone who makes a difference. (Mia)

In general, these migrants were also much more likely to see value in acquiring local social capital as a way of learning from the locals, beyond strictly personal career motivations: "Immigrants, don't isolate. What do you learn in isolation? You need a variety of people to learn from... your knowledge comes from others... if I isolate myself, I'll be lonely, unhappy" (Boris).

This view is clearly contrary to functional integration as described above, where the focus was less on the value of local human and social capital and learning from others, and much more on reciprocal and functional relationships that could assist career actors in achieving personal career goals.

Finally, due to their desire to be helpful citizens in the local context, and to unify different groups in the city, holistically oriented individuals also created new boundary objects with these goals in mind. Their career focus was not divorced from the social and physical context in which they were embedded. Martin provided a strong example of holistic orientation; in running a restaurant, he clearly acknowledged his cultural and social capital motivations beyond his business or career goals:

We don't just introduce the great food... we introduce diversity, which is what Canada is made of. Eating together, it breaks a lot of borders, it breaks walls between people. I realized that through food and through the dining experience I could explain to Canadians about different cultures. I could make them see a more positive view of people from the Middle East. When you go and start eating with someone, people tend to talk about their family. They put their pen and paper aside. And I realize how I can get to their heart and how we can do things together. And then people also start coming to me and saying, "We want some help from you because you're a great businessman." (Martin)

Thus, by understanding how newcomers went about career orienting, cross-boundary career adaptation, and creating new boundary objects, we were simultaneously able to identify two distinct integration outcomes, ways in which migrants embraced life in the host city and became embedded in its society overall.

## DISCUSSION

Given the lack of theory on the role of the host city in migrant careers, our starting point was to explore the experience of physical and social embeddedness of migrants in this new context. Relatedly, we discovered *career recontextualization*, which embodies not only transfer but also translation and transformation of career capital from the home to the host city context—through the use of local boundary objects as intermediaries. The process of recontextualization is founded on early city comparisons and establishing basic belongingness to the host city. Career recontextualization is then enacted via three unique types of career action: career orienting, cross-boundary career adaptation, and creative career action (i.e., new boundary object creation; see Table 3). Finally, through career-related contact and activities, migrants simultaneously integrated (functionally or holistically) into the local society and the host city, providing a novel perspective on the intricate relationship between migrant careers and integration, facilitated by the local context (Bamberger, 2008) (see Figure 5).

### Continuity and Belongingness: Foundations for Career Recontextualization

Cities, as representations of society, are assumed to satisfy and respond to the basic needs of their inhabitants (Portugali, 1997). For migrants, arrival to a new host city creates discomfort and introduces discontinuity in their lives (Fullilove, 1996; Kennedy et al., 2018; Trajka, 2019). In this context, we found that migrants' desire for continuity was the major motivating force behind their initial perceptions and experiences of the new urban context. These served as the foundation for later career action and navigating the work context.

This discovery allowed us to establish a meaningful connection between spatial embeddedness, self-continuity motives, and careers (Vignoles, 2011; Vignoles, Sani, Easterbrook, & Cvetkovska, 2017). Thus, the physical environment that individuals navigate (De La Chaux, Haugh, & Greenwood, 2018)—the host city, in this case—plays a direct and powerful role in how migrants' careers evolve and the resulting sense of self. This fundamental human motivation for self-continuity, as the core self-motive, also has important implications for personal well-being (Becker et al., 2018); this is even more pertinent in

the context of migration, as one of the more challenging life and career transitions (Fullilove, 1996).

Relatedly, while the initial city comparisons served as shortcuts for immediate spatial understanding; new social connections and relationships in the city made the place more legible, and together facilitated the sense of belongingness (Carmona, 2010). This is further evidence for the intricate relationships between the physical landscape (i.e., spatial integration), and how meanings for places and belongingness are created (Ujang, 2012), allowing for more demanding and complex work-related tasks to take place. Thus, our findings also inform existing research on the psychology of place beyond emotional bonds that people develop with a place (Low & Altman, 1992) and instead point toward a cognitive or perceptual basis for place attachment, as well as more functional work- and career-related connections.

### Migrant Career Recontextualization: Career Action and Learning across Boundaries

**Cross-boundary career action.** The desire for self-continuity (in relation to physical and social space) and resulting belongingness motivated more direct engagement with local boundary objects and boundary crossing. In this context, we discovered that boundary objects served as intermediaries in migrant *career recontextualization*, negotiating transfer and often transformation of career knowledge from the home to the host city context. Specifically, we discovered career recontextualization as the answer to how, through intricate connections between the physical city context, its artifacts, and migrant career action, skilled migrants reestablish their careers in the new city (e.g., Kozhevnikov, 2021; Tams et al., 2020). Career recontextualization therefore illustrates ways in which career knowledge is transformed across different social worlds and how learning occurs at boundaries (Carlile, 2002; Henderson, 1998). In this process, the mediating function of boundary objects is present even though social actors are not directly interacting or collaborating on the same task or as part of the same organization (Shiffman, 2019).

While skilled migrants come from many different communities around the world, the host city context and its boundary objects are used as the common ground for continuing their careers. Therefore, migrants act as independent careerists, and to some extent outsiders to the local social worlds. However, as social actors within the physical and sociocultural boundaries of the host city, migrants are bound by and navigate their careers within those host city boundaries. In this way, we also respond to calls for expanding what is thought to be a narrow range of

#### Author's Voice:

What is the social relevance of your research?



boundary objects studied to date (e.g., Fox, 2011) and also expand their role as artifacts that transfer important work-related knowledge in the city's labor market. Thus, boundary objects not only serve as tools for social action as found earlier (Bechky, 2003), but also for career action.

In addition, we identified three unique types of career action that facilitated recontextualization and played a role in the little-understood relationship between city context and migrant careers. Specifically, migrants engaged in career action by using local boundary objects to orient themselves in the new career landscape, to adapt and cross career boundaries, as well as to create new objects. For example, *career orienting* served as a compass allowing migrants to navigate and obtain basic, easily accessible career information; on the other hand, *cross-boundary career adaptation* efforts were needed to decipher and learn new knowledge that was embedded in harder-to-reach boundary objects. In this way migrants proactively accessed new information and learned local rules and practices related to using and applying their foreign career capital (i.e., embedded career meanings, requirements, and societal norms [Barrett & Oborn, 2010; Dar, 2018]). As a result, seeking career opportunities in the host city stimulated the generation of new career knowledge, as well as letting go of some of the old or established career practices (Oswick & Robertson, 2009), with boundary objects serving as vehicles for this knowledge transfer. Therefore, through career recontextualization we illustrated how physical objects and city artifacts can have an important signaling function (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011) indicating locally acceptable ways to search for work, as well as requirements needed for career capital transfer or translation.

Finally, our findings provide unique new knowledge on the third type of career action that constituted career recontextualization, namely *creative career action*, indicating innovative problem-solving and creativity by migrant career actors. This involved highly independent boundary object creation and was often motivated by personal career struggles and lived experiences of the local labor market (Wehrle, Klehe, Kira, & Zikic, 2018); importantly, it goes beyond the earlier context of innovation in relation to boundary objects used by organizational teams (Zuzul, 2018). In fact, we found that migrants themselves become the "carriers" of new knowledge to other groups in the city (both migrants and others), and by creating new boundary objects they facilitate learning and communication of others.

Therefore, while career orienting and adaptation were the result of the proactive career action and independent learning (motivated by achieving career goals in the host city), boundary object creation

instead was a more reactive, externally oriented, and generative type of career action. Migrants created new objects to build common ground, ease the challenges, and enhance collaboration between various audiences (Bechky, 2003; Boland & Tenkasi, 1995) in the city. In this way, we also examined the little-understood role of human agency, specifically creative career action, in the context of boundary object theory (Dar, 2018; Fox, 2011).

Together, the three types of career action constituting career recontextualization further highlight the value of proactive career behaviors (i.e., career self-management efforts [Van Hooft, Kammeyer-Mueller, Wanberg, Kanfer, & Basbug, 2021]); this is possibly even more relevant in the new labor market where foreign career capital is discriminated against and afforded lower value. In this way, our findings also inform the emerging sustainable career concept (De Vos, Van der Heijden, & Akkermans, 2020; Van der Heijden, & De Vos, 2015), by identifying the dynamic interplay of context and proactive career action, as sometimes supporting but other times constraining sustainable careers of migrants.

***Constraining role of boundary objects in career recontextualization.*** The established role of boundary objects inside of organizations is to promote knowledge sharing and encourage collaboration between diverse groups of actors (e.g., Oswick & Robertson, 2009; Star & Greisemer, 1989). By extending the study of boundary objects beyond the boundaries of a single organization, we discovered how various social actors can indirectly regulate access and maintain strong control over some of these objects (i.e., through local work- or career-related knowledge and norms embedded in boundary objects). As a result, our findings highlight unique ways in which social and physical embeddedness in the host city can directly influence migrant career action, thus further clarifying the context-specific value of foreign versus local career capital (Al Ariss et al., 2013; Groutsis, Vassilopoulou, Kyriakidou, & Özbilgin, 2020).

Specifically, we emphasize a dual function of boundary objects in career recontextualization. On the one hand, they serve as "bridges" assisting migrants in obtaining new knowledge and crossing boundaries, while on the other hand they can also act as "barricades and mazes" (Oswick & Robertson, 2009), constraining boundary crossing to some extent (i.e., entrance into local professions and certain jobs) and therefore protecting and privileging certain types of knowledge or career capital. The latter function forces migrants to proactively seek ways to transform and translate their foreign career capital (i.e., through career adaptation) and in this way acquire new knowledge and negotiate meaning at boundaries. As

a result, boundary objects can simultaneously bridge and accentuate boundaries between different groups and communities in the city.

Thus, we see migrants in the context of career recontextualization needing to act as *boundary spanners* (Kaplan et al., 2017; Shiffman, 2019); first learning to become experts in the host city landscape and local career practices to then needing to bridge, transfer, and apply their previously accumulated knowledge in crossing local boundaries (i.e., entering local organizations). By learning new knowledge from local boundary objects migrants also reflect and change their behavior. This boundary-spanning behavior reflects the fact that boundaries “belong to both one world and another” and may lead to “discontinuity in action and interaction” (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011: 141, 133). In this context, boundary objects as intermediaries in this process also perform a *career negotiating function* (Huvila, 2011; McLeod & Doolin, 2010), negotiating access to foreign human and social capital as well as reinforcing boundaries in the labor market. Therefore, through a variety of career action, described above, migrants sought to gain access and cross boundaries while also managing the costs involved (e.g., time and resources needed to learn embedded career meanings, and ways to overcome career obstacles [Kaplan et al., 2017]).

Finally, we identified the social and relational dynamics embedded in local artifacts and their ability to symbolize and differentiate status between local and foreign career capital, for example (Thomas, Sargent, & Hardy, 2008). As evidenced in our findings, career recontextualization required migrants to learn idiosyncratic scripts and local norms about accessing specific boundary objects (i.e., degree accreditation requirements or certificates, or additional training). These findings extend earlier work in relation to the role of local gatekeepers, such as local professional bodies and employers (Risberg & Romani, 2021; Zikic & Richardson, 2016), and their power to control the entry of foreign professionals into specific occupations. Here, we provide further evidence for how physical artifacts can serve as intermediaries, communicating unique career meanings (i.e., the value of local vs. foreign career capital), and further reinforcing boundaries while emphasizing the value between local and foreign career capital (Briers & Chua, 2001). Next, we describe the two integration outcomes that resulted from migrants’ career recontextualization experiences in the host city.

### Functional and Holistic Integration Outcomes

Engagement with and learning from local boundary objects not only constituted career recontextualization but simultaneously facilitated migrant

integration. Through migrant career action and related boundary crossing, migrants connected to the city inhabitants and its communities. In this context, while we illustrated the “how” of career recontextualization, we also discovered two major integration outcomes: functional and holistic integration in relation to a migrant’s life and connection to the new city.

These outcomes illustrate a unique new way to understand a complex and often difficult-to-define migrant integration phenomenon (Ager & Strang, 2008). Specifically, through career-related action and learning, mediated through city artifacts, migrants absorbed and became part of the local context. Our findings contribute to the current understanding of migrant integration, which has so far mainly focused on participation, incorporation, and acceptance into the receiving society (Penninx, 2005). The discovery of functional and holistic integration types allowed us to situate migrant integration at the boundary between career-related experiences and the physical and social context of the host city. This also extended earlier work on integration of migrants typically captured by host and home culture relationships or attachments (Cox & Blake, 1991; Vora et al., 2019).

Similarly, by highlighting the power of initial city comparisons followed by career and social interactions in the host city, we provided new knowledge on the lasting and inherent consequences of initial integration experiences (i.e., society’s reception of migrants). Later, during career recontextualization, some migrants described a lack of assistance from locals and other work-related hardships; these events often led to creating a narrower (i.e., closure toward local society), more functional orientation toward work and life in the new city. These findings can also be informed by the recent threat versus benefit model (Tartakovsky & Walsh, 2016), highlighting the power of societal attitudes as a dichotomy of viewing migrants as a threat or benefit to the local society. Thus, even in the current multicultural and migrant-friendly context where the study took place, we still observed differing attitudes toward migrants, and importantly the impact of these attitudes on migrant integration into local society.

Another way to explain these two integration outcomes is by highlighting the role of migrant–local reciprocity in the host city (Phillimore, Humphris, & Khan, 2018)—an important dimension in how migrants orient themselves and eventually integrate (Ager & Strang, 2008). Specifically, our findings showed how positive settlement and career experiences made migrants more likely to reciprocate and give back, yet migrants who experienced less positive treatment or less interest from locals were more hesitant to do so. We highlight the norm of reciprocity as

an important individual and societal value and a fruitful avenue for future research on migrant integration.

While our findings are uniquely based on migrants' perspectives and their subjective experiences, we highlight the importance of studying migrant integration as a relational two-way process, where not only newcomers but also local inhabitants play an equally important role (Klarenbeek, 2019). Thus, inherent in the interactions with the host city and its artifacts is the role of the local population (i.e., local gatekeepers, professional societies, local recruiters, neighbors, local acquaintances). We invite future research to further explore migrant integration as a relational process, especially the role of early career and settlement interactions, to further understand the relational or social bases that constitute integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; Crul & Schenider, 2010; Klarenbeek, 2019).

### PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

Our findings are relevant for local organizations and employers, policy-makers, and migrants themselves, as they point to the complexity and the connectedness between specific migrant career action and the context of the host city. First, local city organizations and even employers should not underestimate the importance of initial visual, spatial, and social experiences in the host city; these played a powerful role in migrant belongingness and importantly facilitated migrant search for local career opportunities. Thus, related to city planning and migrant infrastructure, making the city more relatable and welcoming, both socially and visually, not only impacts immediate settlement and navigation needs but can also impact migrant readiness for career action and integration. As a result, our findings inform local organizations and policy-makers on the importance of signaling and knowledge transfer inherent in local artifacts.

Relatedly, we highlight the importance of negative, or unwelcoming, experiences of settlement and job search in the new city. These may have a lasting impact on migrants' relationships locally, and most importantly on how they choose to integrate. Individuals with less positive experiences may feel less inclined to connect socially and give back to the local society, and instead prefer to focus solely on achieving personal career goals and gaining their own resources. On the other hand, those with more positive initial work and social experiences in the host city may be much more externally focused and play a major role in giving back to the local community and the host society. These findings are relevant for many countries and migrant-receiving cities

globally, as they commonly struggle with finding effective ways to integrate newcomers (Phillimore et al., 2018). We illustrated how integration of newcomers to the host cities begins as early as their first interactions (i.e., initial job search) with city artifacts. In seeking to apply and translate their foreign career capital locally, by using boundary objects as intermediaries, migrants learned about what the host city had to offer, and they connected to the local society more broadly (i.e., local norms and challenges related to boundary crossing).

Second, through career recontextualization, we highlight the importance of three types of migrant career action and the need for proactive career self-management. Migrant settlement agencies should consider cross-boundary career adaptation findings and use them to inform their programs and strategies (e.g., career coaching and workshops). Relatedly, we also found unique ways in which skilled migrants can greatly contribute and give back to local societies through innovative boundary object creation (i.e., creating useful objects or tools, programs that solve local problems). This is an important finding for local economies wishing to integrate migrants but more importantly benefit from the foreign human and social capital they bring to host cities.

Finally, while the city that was the focus of this study resembles many other global, migrant-welcoming cities, future studies should examine how cities and regions with different integration strategies (i.e., cities and societies that are known to be fairly closed to newcomers) may influence migrant careers and integration. Similarly, as our study began to elucidate the complexity of migrant career recontextualization, it may be insightful to extend this study to cities characterized by even more diversity (Mor Barak, 2000; Vertovec, 2007); namely, cities and regions marked by extreme sociocultural and demographic complexity, possibly with no coherent majority culture or where populations are frequently super mobile (Phillimore, Grzymala-Kazlowska, & Cheung, 2017).

Despite the current context being known as migrant-welcoming and extremely multicultural, we still found a mix of positive and negative career and settlement experiences, which impact important migrant integration outcomes. It is possible that with additional strong and particularly positive experiences in the host city those functionally integrated individuals may eventually become a bit more holistic in their approach and integration attitudes. We also see further potential in studying career recontextualization over time, as well as focusing on migrants' social networks in more detail (i.e., both local and ethnic). Perhaps specific place-making processes of different

ethnic communities in the city may help us understand at a more micro level how embeddedness in any given local community may affect career recontextualization and integration.

Lastly, our research uncovered the process of career recontextualization, yet we acknowledge that future studies may further explore various ways in which recontextualization may be facilitated or even made more arduous. Issues such as language proficiency (Zikic & Klehe, 2021) or demands for specific occupations locally may, to some extent, impact how career recontextualization occurs. Given that our current sample was diverse on a variety of characteristics, as well as our exploratory approach and unique discovery of this process, we invite future investigations to address some of the other factors that may further illuminate and explain additional intricacies related to the career recontextualization process.

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