

Expatriate Immigration in Rural Vorarlberg

Problems of highly skilled foreigners moving to small villages in the region.

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Abstract

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Moving from one country to another, from one cultural context to a different one comes with many challenges and problems. The expatriate adjustment process, in general, has been evaluated extensively in the literature. Little is known if the knowledge in the literature is also valid for the situation of expatriates in rural Vorarlberg. In this paper was examined, which are the most common problems for highly skilled immigrants that are moving to Vorarlberg. In a mixed-method approach, information was gathered with an online questionnaire whose results served as a basis for a series of semi-structured interviews. In addition, an expert talk with a local relocation consultant was conducted. It was found that by far, the most severe difficulty is based on the domestic language situation. An expatriate needs to talk and understand German, but the local language is an Alemannic subsection of the German language that is not easy to understand. Additional difficulties that cause culture shock are limited opening hours, mobility troubles, and several others. The awareness about the composing of these problems might help to find the appropriate measures to support expatriates to come in the future.

Kurzreferat

Expatriate Einwanderung ins ländliche Vorarlberg

Der Umzug von einem Land in ein anderes, von einem kulturellen Kontext in einen anderen, bringt viele Herausforderungen und Probleme mit sich. Der Expatriate-Anpassungsprozess im Allgemeinen wurde in der bestehenden Literatur bereits ausführlich untersucht. Ob diese allgemeine Kenntnisse auch auf die Umstände im ländlichen Vorarlberg gelten ist jedoch nicht bekannt. In dieser Arbeit wurde untersucht, welche Probleme für hochqualifizierten Einwanderern in diesen Regionen begegnen.

Unter Verwendung gemischter Forschungsmethoden wurden Informationen mithilfe eines Onlinefragebogens, dessen Ergebnisse als Grundlage für eine Reihe von halbstrukturierten Interviews dienten, gesammelt. Zusätzlich wurde ein Expertengespräch mit einer lokalen Einwanderungs- und Umzugsberaterin geführt. Es hat sich herausgestellt, dass die mit Abstand schwerwiegendsten Probleme ihre Ursache in der sprachlichen Situation in Vorarlberg fußen. Ein Einwanderer muss Deutsch sprechen und verstehen können, trotzdem wird er mit der lokalen Bevölkerung nicht vollwertig kommunizieren können da diese einen Alemannischen unterzweig der deutschen Sprache sprechen. Weitere Schwierigkeiten welche unter Umständen einen Kulturschock auslösen, sind eingeschränkte Öffnungszeiten von Geschäften und dem Dienstleistungssektor, Mobilitätsprobleme und noch eine Anzahl weitere. Die Kenntnis der Zusammenstellung dieser Probleme könnte dazu beitragen, geeignete Maßnahmen zur Unterstützung künftiger Einwanderer zu finden.

Preface/Acknowledgement

As a native of Vorarlberg, I know the customs and habits here in the country. Nevertheless, when I moved to different small villages, I was repeatedly faced with adoption problems myself.

Also, during my time at an exchange semester and other stays abroad, I came across circumstances that were fundamentally different than those at home. Sometimes it has been only small things, but of those kinds that made it difficult to get used to them.

These experiences have led me to take a closer look at the 'Problems of Immigration into Rural Areas'. If I had difficulties myself, how is someone doing that comes from a different culture and may not even speak our language?

I like to thank everyone who played a crucial role in carrying out this study. Without their support and contribution, this research would not have been possible.

Mainly I want to thank my family, who helped me to concentrate on my work. My wife and children have made many sacrifices so that I can complete my studies and this thesis. Thank you for the cooperation, because without your support I would never be able to finish my work.

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List of Abbreviations and Symbols

CCT	cross-cultural training
MPOs	mismatch priority occupations
SFE	self-initiated foreign work experience
POS	perceived organizational support

1. Introduction

1.1 Starting Point

Vorarlberg, located on the brink of lake Constance, is the westernmost federal state of Austria. It is one of the economically most prosperous regions in the country (Statistik Austria 2019a) with a distinct net export surplus (Römisch 2012). Coincident Vorarlberg is the federal state with the second-lowest number of inhabitants and the second smallest area in Austria (Statistik Austria 2019b).

The physical proximity to Switzerland, a region with a much higher wage level (Deloitte 2017), and the too-long absence of an own university are just two of several reasons for a shortage of skilled professionals in the region (Schaffenrath 2018). Vorarlberg could be labeled as a high-tech location, and there are quite some well-known company names and world market leaders domiciled there (Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung 2019). To retain their position and continue the positive development in Vorarlberg, many companies are forced to attract part of their workforce from other regions in Austria and the world. Technology companies are going a long way to fill their void and are very successful in their approaches. Omicron electronics, for example, has gathered a workforce consisting out of people from more than 45 nations in the tiny village of Klaus (Gratt 2019).

Following earlier migrating waves in the 60s and 70s when the primarily cheap workforce was brought into the country, nowadays, a new migration takes place. Less driven by push factors like poverty and economic hardship, but more by pull factors like structural change international recruitment strategies and European labor market (Häfele 2015).

Finding the appropriate employee is the one thing, keeping them for a long time a completely other. Besides the usual challenges which are typically associated with the relocation from one country to another, from one cultural environment into a different one, newcomers to Vorarlberg are facing additional problems founded in the size and structure of the region itself. These additional challenges may be reason enough for some people to terminate their employment and move back home or to a more urban area somewhere else.

Depending on the definition, only marginal parts of the federal state consists of urban or urbanized areas (Eurostat 2010). The whole of Vorarlberg only inhabits

390.000 people in 5 cities and 11 market towns and 80 villages. Dornbirn, the biggest city, does not even reach the number 50.000 residents and the smallest community, Dünserberg is home of only 147 people. In general, Vorarlberg is more rural than urbanized (Wikipedia Various Authors 2020).

Regardless of this fact, conditioned by its topography, the region is short at living space and cost of land, and real estate prices are on top of the Austrian scale, only surpassed by explicit tourist regions and the inner-city districts of Salzburg and Vienna (Statistik Austria 2020). Therefore, the incoming workforce has to either reduce their requirement to a space of living or avoid the high price areas in the cities and move to one of the more affordable rural places.

Migrating as a foreigner to one of the smaller communities is packed with a lot of additional difficulties than just the typical expatriate experience. Depending on the nationality and the cultural distance, it can be virtually impossible to accommodate and integrate into already existing village structures.

Even though public transport is surprisingly cheap and well developed as long you travel along the axis Bregenz – Bludenz, it is a long-lasting task to reach your destination when you are living in a more remote area of Vorarlberg. Mostly these regions are not fully integrated into the traffic concept (Lenz; Rudolff; Ulm 2016).

Not even all communities have their own primary school, and for local amenities, doctors and dentists people have to travel to another municipal. Cultural and leisure offers are often only located in more significant agglomerations and involve a reasonably long journey if someone would like to take advantage of them.

An additional difficulty when migrating to an existing community in a small village in Vorarlberg is the language. The local dialects can vary significantly, even from one village to the nearby place. Fundamentally the dialects belong to the family of High Alemannic languages, which are quite distinct from High German (Ender; Kaiser 2009). According to the acculturation model by John Schumann, the social distance will remain bigger as the expatriate is not able to speak the local dialect. The smaller the village of residence is, the more fatal this fact is for the integration of the incoming persons.

Last but not least, there is the role of the expat's spouse. If in existence, chances are given that this person is not working, but in charge of home and childcare. At the same time, the working part leaves the village on a daily base and also maintains social contacts at work. One partner is stuck in a difficult situation, so to speak, being

in the community all the time with difficulties to adapt and accommodate (Bélanger 2019).

These are just some points that may make the process of migrating to a rural area even more challenging than moving to a big city or urban area. Of course, there are also many advantages. Still, the purpose of this paper should be to figure out the problems and difficulties and probably to provide help and guidelines on how the situation can be improved.

These points will not have a significant impact on the first steps of the expatriate adjustment cycle. Ideally, if the circumstances in the new area of living are known in advance, measures could be already taken in preparation for the relocation phase. At this time, a company - the future employer of the expatriate - should already recognize their social responsibility. By adapting their onboarding process for incoming workers in a way that not only business matters but also affairs of everyday life in the region are dealt with, a big step in this direction could be taken. During the honeymoon phase of the cycle, first experiences with local particularities of small problems can arise. Still, they will, in the euphoria of experiencing new and exciting things, mostly be neglected.

Once the initial honeymoon phase has faded, the reality of living in a rural community starts to set in. The culture shock often comes with feelings of being lost, isolated, and frustrated.

‘Culture shock is about being out of place in a certain place and time.’ (Irwin 2009). In this phase, people often feel a sharp disconnection from their surroundings.

As a reaction to the culture shock, there are, according to John Berry, four different acculturation strategies that the expatriate could choose in the adaptation phase of the adjustment cycle.

Integration: ‘The individual maintains his or her own cultural identity while at the same time becoming a participant in the host culture.’

Assimilation: The individual gives up his own cultural identity and becomes absorbed into the host culture.

Separation: The individual maintains his or her own cultural identity and rejects involvement with the host culture.

Marginalization: The individual does not identify with, or participate, in either his or her own culture or the host culture.

To a lesser extent, the host community is also responding with one of these strategies to the incoming persons. Depending on the combination of the chosen approach by the individual and the host community, the acculturation can work out, be problematic, or even become a toxic situation (Zagefka; Brown 2002).

A guideline on how companies could support an incoming expatriate and how persons and families could improve their overall experience in rural Vorarlberg would be helpful in the challenging process of integrating and therefore 'to arrive' in the new location.

1.2 Research Question

This study collected information about the adjustment process of immigrants to rural Vorarlberg. The goal was to find out what problems and pain points a highly-skilled foreigner will encounter, what his reactions are, and what measures can be taken to mitigate the consequences.

To answer the main research question this study focused on the following sub-questions:

- What are the biggest problem fields for expatriates in Vorarlberg?
- Are the problem fields interrelated?
- In which phase of the adjustment cycle, the problems occur?
- Which acculturation strategy chooses the expatriate, and is this choice related to the problem fields?

The main question remained, more or less, the same throughout the period of creating this thesis, but the sub-questions evolved and extended during the process. The analysis and investigation of the open-ended questions and interview results showed that the experienced problems should either be viewed together and interrelated than separately.

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis was structured in five main sections: introduction, literature review, research methodology, findings, and discussion.

In the beginning, the introduction presents the starting point, the research question, and the structure of the thesis. Secondly, the review of literature examines the relevant literature of topics as expatriates, cross-cultural adjustment, shortage of skilled professionals, migrating to rural areas, migrating to Vorarlberg, acculturation and immigration challenges and problems. If necessary, these topics were supplemented and divided into correlative sub-topics. Thirdly, the research methodology is described. In particular, the background to the decision to choose the data collection models, the sampling decision, the process of data analysis followed by the limitations, and the trustworthiness of the study are outlined. Fourthly, the results and findings of the online survey and the interviews are presented. Fifthly, the results are discussed in comparison with the existing literature. The resulting implications and consequential suggestions are explained. Further research possibilities are discussed.

2. Review of Literature

2.2 Expatriate

In their article 'Theorizing the Meaning(s) of "Expatriate,"' McNully and Brewster claim that a legitimate definition of the term expatriate was missing for many years. Therefore, earlier research results regarding expatriation might be inconsistent with respect to results (McNully; Brewer 2017). The term expatriation (from the Latin *expatria*: out of country) has evolved vastly over time.

Prior to 1997, the term expatriate has been mostly used to describe managers or experts that have been sent, for the purpose of achieving a goal, for a limited amount of time to another country (Barmeyer 2012).

In their article 'Expatriate Assignment Versus Overseas Experience' the authors Inkson, Arthur, Pringle & Barry defined the term much broader, including also the self-initiated foreign work experience (SFE) (Inkson et al. 1998).

Today, the word describes a person involved in any form of international experience covering a span that extends from either work-related nature over international students, SFEs, to immigrants and refugees (Suutari; Brewster 2000).

However, some researchers take the opposite view and define the term very narrowly. They were referring specifically to dispatched workers of international business organizations that are in another country and cultural surroundings for a limited timeframe (Harrison; Shaffer; Bhaskar-Shrinivas 2004).

Based on the available information, it can be concluded that there is still no uniform and precise definition of the term and that each author has to specify what exactly he understands when using the term 'expatriate'.

2.3 Cross-Cultural Adjustment

Moving to a foreign country requires a process of adjustment. The most commonly known theory regarding this topic is Kalervo Oberg's four phases model.

It consists of four distinct stages or phases that follow each other in a specific chronological order: 1. The initial 'honeymoon stage', 2. Culture shock, 3. Adjustment, and finally, 4. Mastery.

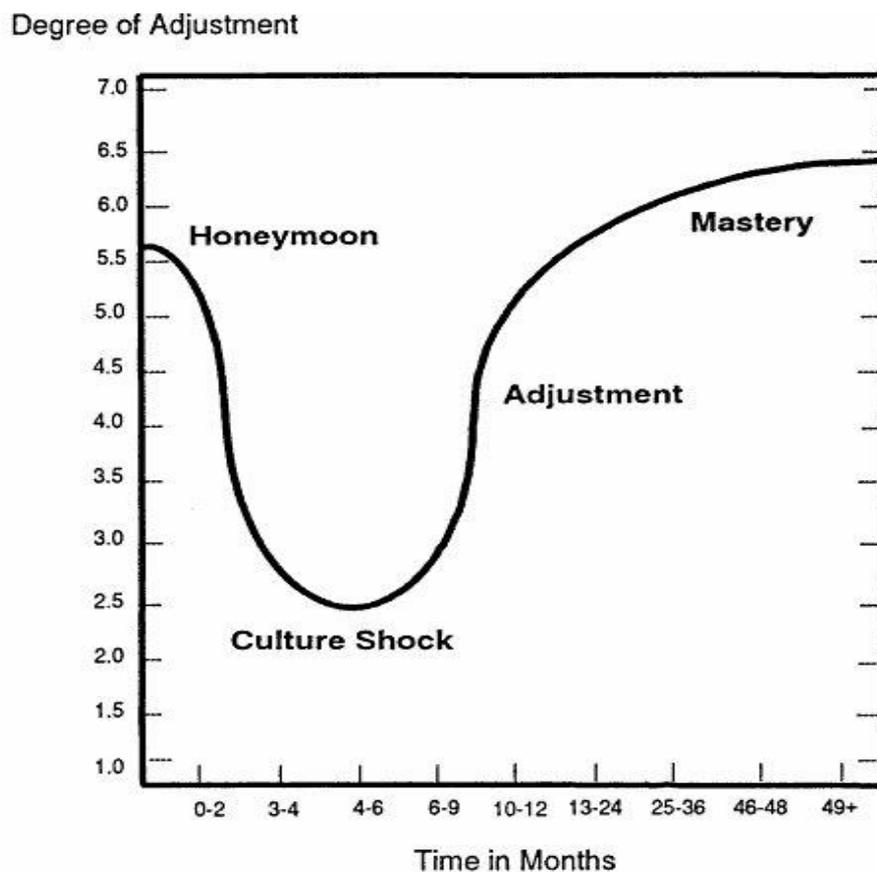


Figure 1: U-Curve

In the 'honeymoon period', the first phase, everything seems exciting, engaging, and exotic. At this time, the expatriate or traveler is open and receptive to the new culture and in a mood for new and unknown experiences.

The culture shock phase often comes with the feeling of confusion and being lost when facing a big challenge in the new host culture. Oberg states:

'Culture shock is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. (Oberg 1960)

A person in this phase is anxious and confused until the point in time when understanding the new culture has gained, and he or she has adopted their set of values and behavior to the new surroundings.

Following the line in the graphic, the situation improves, and happiness rises over time when symptoms of culture shock ease and adjustment occur. This period is called the adjustment phase.

In the final stage, mastery, the new culture longer feels strange or foreign but becomes more of a second home for the expatriate. Mastery occurs when an individual has fully adjusted to the host culture, seeing positive aspects of his new surroundings and feels happy there.

At first glance, the U-model seems to draw a clear and understandable picture of the actual circumstances and is, in general convincing. However, it dramatically simplifies reality as the progression of the process is, by its own nature, not necessarily linear. One might jump back and forth in the curve according to circumstances and the current situation. Furthermore, each human being reacts in a different way to a given situation and may progress differently, skipping stages, or even experiencing multiple stages at once (Irwin 2009).

In the case of the expatriate returning to his home country after a certain amount of time, the U-curve will be expanded and takes the form of a W. As repatriation comes with similar difficulties than the initial expatriation itself (Oberg 1960).

2.3.1 Cross-Cultural Adjustment and Cultural Dimensions

Up to the year 1980, Geert Hofstede collected and analyzed data from 62 countries to develop his four cultural dimensions: Power distance, collectivism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance. He defines these dimensions as follows(Hofstede 1980).

- a) **Power Distance:** Power distance describes the extent to which unequal power relationships are accepted and expected within a society. A big power distance indicates that those in higher positions are not questioned and that they have to lead the way. In cultures with a lower power distance, the balance of power is distributed more evenly. In these cultures, it is easier to ascend to higher classes through education, position, and income.

- b) **Individualism versus Collectivism:** Individualistic societies are characterized by the fact that the decisions are made independently, looking primarily after oneself and members of their inner circle or core family. In collectivist cultures, on the other hand, group bonds are more robust. Large families and a close connection to friends and relatives are common.
- c) **Masculinity versus Femininity:** A high value in the masculinity index indicates a society where competition and performance are highly valued. Material success self-confidence and insistent behavior testify of high status. In a community with a lower masculinity level, the focus is more on building good relationships and trying to make it for everybody possible to ensure a high quality of life. Being the best takes no such important role in such societies.
- d) **Uncertainty Avoidance:** The uncertainty avoidance indicator explains how group members feel and behave in unknown situations. People tend to avoid risks and unexpected situations if this factor is high. More predictable and controllable conditions are preferred as the unknown causes stress and uncertainty. A low uncertainty avoidance indicator means that the uncontrollable is more tolerated. Uncertainty is part of everyday life, and people are generally more relaxed and flexible.

Cultural similarity is an essential factor when it comes to cultural adjustment. As is to be expected, if an expatriate is confronted with a culture less distant, he can adjust much faster than in a high distance culture. Additionally, the national cultural level Wondwossen & Qui identified the individual cultural level as a significant factor in pace and ease of adjustment (Wondwossen; Qin 2017).

Among many other influences living conditions and geographical conditions are also an altering factor. Similar climate, the availability of the same vegetable fruit and other products leads to a higher level and faster adjustment compared to regions where these things are different (Guðmundsdóttir 2011).

2.3.2 Cross-Cultural Adjustment and Family Members

Like the average person, highly skilled professionals might relocate with a spouse or their family. These family members were identified as a critical success factor for adaptation. If parts of the family fail to adapt, the final consequence might be that the expatriate cancels his assignments and decides to return to his home country (Shaffer; Harrison 2001). Spouses tend to be a critical influence in the decision-making process if an expatriate accepts, completes, or even extends their stay abroad. Supporting spouse adjustment, helping them find a job, integrating them into society, and enabling them for personal, interactional, and cultural adjustment is crucial to the success of the expatriation (Bélanger 2019).

2.3.3 Cross-Cultural Training and Expatriate Adjustment

Cross-cultural training (CCT) is a broad concept that utilizes different motivational, sociological, and individual theories. The idea of CCT is, in general, to help an individual become more aware and sensitive to different cultures, enabling them to spot and identify distinct characteristics that are different than their home culture. Starting before embarking on their assignment, language training, cultural assimilation exercises, and sensitivity training about the new host culture are some of the most common cross-cultural training practices (Tung 1981). Various studies researching the effectiveness of CCT come to different conclusions about the real impact of this form of training. Almost all studies and empirical research do, however, recognize that at least a minor positive effect of CCT can be felt. The extent of this effect, after all, remains unclear as the differentiation from other influencing phenomena is neglected in most of the studies (Polón 2017).

2.4 Shortage of Skilled Professionals

A skilled professional is someone who has the appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities within his or her profession. A lack of experienced professionals is, therefore, the missing or lack of qualified people referring to a branch of industry or specialist area. The term is used synonymously to describe the presence of people with insufficient education and qualification (Schaffenrath 2018). As a consequence, in particular regions or industry branches, there is a demand for personnel, but there are no or only limited qualified persons available. In general, stimulating the mobility of high-skilled employees between countries can contribute to the reduction of skill and workforce shortages (Karytsas 2013). Within the EU, this process is further supported through the standardization of degrees and the freedom of settlement.

‘Priority professions affected by skills imbalances (mismatch priority occupations, MPOs) are those where an acute shortage of supply or excess supply seriously affects the economy concerned (including strategic sectors) and has consequences for education and training’ (CEDEFOP 2016).

The ‘European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training’ is monitoring the labor markets within the European Union and is stating that across the EU, there is a shortage of skilled professionals in MPOs at higher skill levels.

The main reason for this shortage is, according to the study, that there are too few graduates of upper secondary schools and universities to fulfill the growing demand in specific fields of education (CEDEFOP 2016).

2.4.1 Shortage of Skilled Professionals in Vorarlberg

In her 2018 Master Thesis, Maria Schaffenrath describes the causes, consequences, and possible solutions for a shortage of skilled professionals in Vorarlberg (Schaffenrath 2018).

Caused by the proximity to Switzerland and Liechtenstein, both countries with much higher wages, many Vorarlberg residents work across the border but live in Vorarlberg. In the year 2018, 17.177 persons with their primary residence in Vorarlberg were commuting to neighboring countries for work. The vast majority of them, about 95 percent, are working in Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Compared with the number of active workforces in Vorarlberg, the dimension of workforce drain becomes visible. Vorarlberg had in 2018 a population of approximately 393.000 inhabitants. Out of those, about 188.000 were in an employment situation of some kind. This means, close to 10 percent of the working population of Vorarlberg are cross-border commuters (Statistik Bodenseeregion 2018).

The most severe shortage of skilled workers in Vorarlberg occurs in small and medium-sized enterprises. Seventy-seven percent of the deficit materializes in this commercial sector. Whereby only 11 percent of the shortage concerns the big industrial global players.

These companies tend to have a big enough human resources departments that are recruiting worldwide to find the best fitting employees(Schaffenrath 2018).

As causes of the shortage of skilled professionals in Vorarlberg, Schaffenrath identifies an interaction of demographic trends, changes in values, changes in the labor market, and globalization. The lack of a university in Vorarlberg does its part to ensure that highly qualified persons from Vorarlberg do not return to their home region but stay close to the place where they studied or spread around the world.

2.5 Migrating to Rural Areas

Evidence suggests that, since the EU enlargement in 2004, the majority of migrant workers found employment rather in rural areas than in urban areas or traditional migration centers (Jentsch 2007). A reason for that is the fact that companies in rural areas tend to invest more effort to attract migrants to fill their gaps in the qualified workforce (Jentsch; De Lima; MacDonald 2007). However, the majority of self-initiated expatriates opt for the big cities when migrating to another country. Surprisingly, from an economic point of view, this could be the wrong decision. At the example of Canada migrants settling to the big cities are facing a 1/3 more significant salary gap to the native population than their counterparts in rural areas. Moreover, this gap is closing slowly in urbanized areas where the migrants in rural areas earn more than the Canadians after just four years (Bernard 2008)

Almost all developed countries in rural areas experienced a sharp outflow of people in the past, while cities and agglomerations were attractive due to job opportunities and new economic activities. Nowadays, the high rate of aging and, therefore, difficulties in replacing the workforce, which leaves the market, provides excellent opportunities to foreign immigrants seeking work (Pinilla; Ayuda; Sáez 2008).

Another trend is the decentralization from large urban centers to nearby rural or semi-rural municipalities. These Movements involve mostly middle- and upper-class people and have been associated with lifestyle decisions. To live either in an idyllic surrounding than following the urban lifestyle. This move also represents an economic purpose as housing usually is more affordable and easier available than in cities (Pereira; Oiarzabal 2018). Pereira and Oiarzabal are also looking at the situation in small Spanish villages where typically closer and more intense social relations prevail. Therefore, the arrival of 'outside people' represents a disturbance to the long-established population, which, at least for some time, hampers and complicates the process of integration.

On the other hand, due to the limited resources available, e.g., One school, one shop, and only one tavern, people are forced to get into contact, which in turn promotes integration and cohesion (Pereira; Oiarzabal 2018).

2.6 Migrating to Vorarlberg

At the beginning of 2018, about 81.500 people with foreign birthplace were living in Vorarlberg, which represents 20.8 percent of the total population. Forty-nine percent of these are migrants from other EU countries with people from Germany taking the most significant share. About 19.100 Germans call Vorarlberg their new home, followed by people from Turkey (16.700). Bosnia-Herzegovina (5.900) Serbia (3.700) and Switzerland (2.900) follow at a considerable distance. Compared to the native population, there is a clear trend visible to settle in a city. Sixty-six percent of the inhabitants with foreign birthplace live in cities, compared to 33 percent of native people from Vorarlberg(Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2018).

Unfortunately, there is not very much current literature on immigration to Vorarlberg. However, at the Ferdinand-Porsche-Fern-Fachhochschule, where, in 2014, written two master's theses regarding the topic. 'Chancenland Vorarlberg: Was den Wirtschaftsraum für internationale Fachkräfte attraktiv und lebenswert macht' addresses the question of what factors make Vorarlberg attractive to international professionals (Pohn 2014). The thesis of Martin Brunnbauer, 'Wege zur erfolgreichen Integration ausländischer Fach- und Schlüsselkräfte' examines which problems immigrants face with integration in Vorarlberg and how companies can support their employees in these matters (Brunnbauer 2014). Sadly, the authors were not willing to share their work.

2.7 Acculturation

In his pioneering article “Immigration, Acculturation and Adaptation” John Widdup Berry formulated his model of acculturation. He grounded his theory in Lazarus and Folkman’s earlier studies dealing with stress and coping (Polón 2017). Acculturation is a process of social, psychological, and cultural adaptation to a host culture. This process involves competence in adjustment, learning, and development to face and handle new challenges that a host culture offers (Berry 1997). Further, the theory defines ‘group-level’ and ‘individual-level’ impacts. Where the group level acculturation leads to changes in the fields of culture, health care, religious practices, and other social institutions, the individual level describes the process that expatriates go through when adapting norms, behavior, cultural attitudes, and values to the host culture.

According to Mendenhall & Oddou, expatriate acculturation has four distinct dimensions related to it. Those four are thematically summarized as the ‘self-oriented’ dimension, the ‘others-oriented’ dimension, the ‘perceptual’ dimension, and the ‘cultural-toughness’ dimension (Mendenhall; Oddou 1985).

a) The Self-Oriented Dimension

As the name suggests, this dimension includes attributes and activities that are of high value for the expatriate’s self-esteem and self-confidence. The dimension consists of the following sub-items.

Reinforcement substitution describes the replacement of activities and hobbies that brought joy and satisfaction in the home culture with activities that are similar to them but still different. For example, a European expatriate to the US might value football and baseball, as a spectator or active, instead of soccer back at home.

For **Stress Reduction**, well-adjusted expatriates reportedly have save- or stability-zones where to they can retreat if their personal stress level and conditions in their host culture threaten to overwhelm them. Such safe zones are, for example, meditating, writing, religious activities, and engaging in sports and hobbies.

As each expatriate, no matter whether self-initiated or send by a company needs to be confident, **Technical Competence** is an important factor. It was also found

that well -adjusted expatriates typically feel higher confidence about having technical expertise in their job as their lesser adjusted counterparts do(Mendenhall; Oddou 1985).

b) The Others-Oriented Dimension

For the purpose of interacting efficiently with people from the host culture, the following sub-points are important.

The ability for **Relation Development** helps to establish strong and long-lasting friendships to residents and natives of the host country. Establishing a friendship to a national is said to have a similar effect to the migrant than having a mentor when starting a new job (Brein; David 1973). The native, or experienced person, leads around the newcomer showing complexities and supports when problems are on the way. In both situations, new culture and new employment, it is of high value to have someone that shows the appropriate behavior within a given situation.

The **Willingness to Communicate** in the host country language is a much more important factor than the actual fluent language proficiency. The sole willingness indicates that there are appreciations and curiosity about the language and culture of a country(Mendenhall; Oddou 1985).

c) The Perceptual Dimension

It is important to understand why a native is behaving in certain situations. Not only does this tell the expatriate how he will be treated in the future, but it also allows us to make correct assumptions about reason and causes. People from different cultures might often misinterpret each other's behaviors, and problems can arise out of such situations. Well-Adjusted expatriates will make less or not as rigid assumptions about the reason of others, and they are more willing to adapt their set of values.

d) The Cultural-Toughness Dimension

Not all cultures appear to be on the same level regarding how difficult they are to adapt (Torbiörn 1982). Torbiörn found that expatriates found it harder to adapt to certain regions of the world. Depending on where they came from, there were regions where the adaptation came easier than others. Regardless of male or female, most expatriates had more difficulties in adapting to regions in Africa, the Middle East, or Southeast Asia. It is suggested that this effect is based on the difference in male role expectations between home and host culture. The same applies to female role expectations. Therefore it appears that some cultures appear particularly hard and culturally-tough for females and some in the same way for male expatriates (Mendenhall; Oddou 1985).

2.7.1 The Fourfold Acculturation Model

Early acculturation studies were carried out in the field of anthropology. They were designed to investigate how indigenous people assimilate to the influences of modern world influences. Later the concept was carried forward to groups of immigrants and their process of adapting to new cultural circumstances after changing their area of residence. Based on earlier studies, John W. Berry developed his fourfold acculturation model. Other than earlier researchers, he did not choose a unidimensional approach but decided to create a bidimensional model. He put the focus on differentiating the individual's orientation to the own culture (maintenance of heritage culture) and the influencing factors of the host culture (cultural adaptation) (Ozer 2017). One could describe the dimensions with the following questions: "Is it considered valuable to maintain one's own cultural identity and characteristics?" for the maintenance of heritage culture and "Is it considered valuable to establish relationships with people from other cultural groups?" for the cultural adoption. In the area of tension between these two questions, four acculturation strategies emerge. Berry named them Separation, Integration, Marginalization, and Assimilation.

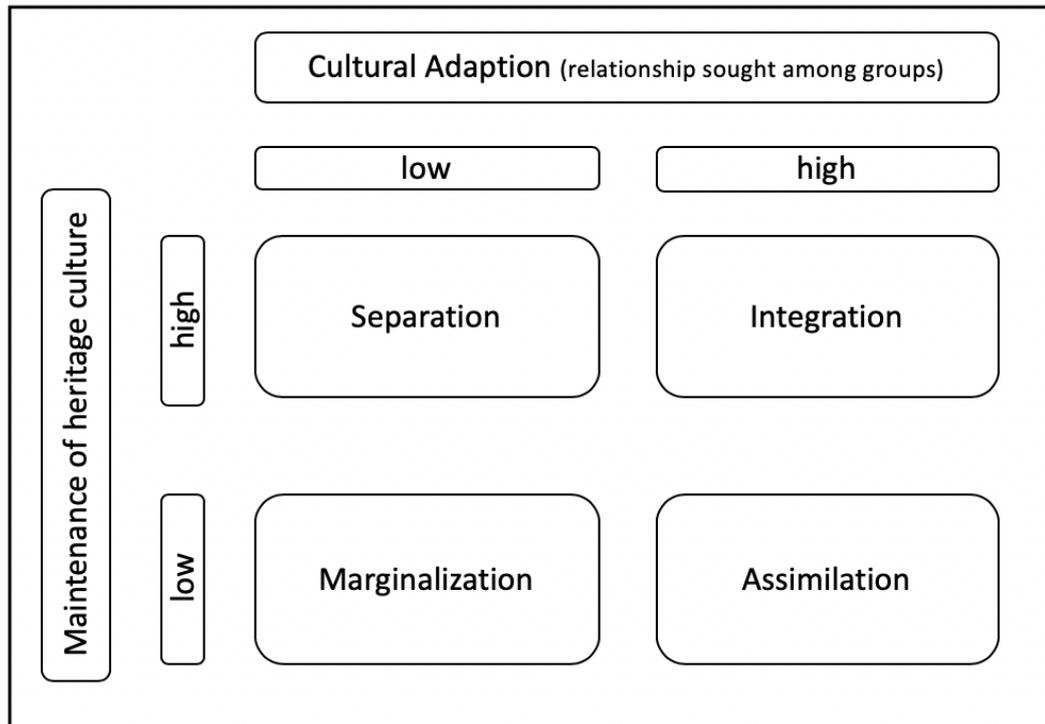


Figure 2: Fourfold Model

The separation strategy describes when the individual wishes to maintain his own cultural identity but, at the same time, tries to avoid interaction with the host culture. Integration means that both dimensions are of high interest. One wants to maintain his own culture yet interacts daily and closely with the host culture. When there is little or no interest in maintaining the own culture and as well no interest in dealing with the other culture, the marginalization strategy is present. Finally, when there is no real interest in maintaining their own culture but high interest in the new culture, we speak of Assimilation.

In his 2007 article “Acculturation strategies and adaption,” Berry described his model in more detail, especially concerning another dimension. He added another layer dealing with strategies that are forced by the dominant group.

‘Assimilation, when sought by the dominant group, is termed the Melting Pot. When Separation is forced by the dominant group, it is Segregation. Marginalization, when imposed by the dominant group, is Exclusion. Finally, Integration, when diversity is a widely accepted and valued feature of the society as a whole, including by all the various ethnocultural groups, it is called Multiculturalism’ (Berry 2007).

To a lesser extent, the host community is also responding with one of these strategies to the incoming persons. Depending on the combination of the chosen strategy by the individual and the host community, the acculturation can work out, be problematic, or even become a toxic situation (Zagefka; Brown 2002).

2.8 Immigration Challenges and Problems

In 2006 the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reported on the biggest challenges immigrants and refugees are facing in the US. Their top ten in order of significance where:

- 1.) Legal status
- 2.) Language -lack of proficiency
- 3.) Exploitation and discrimination
- 4.) Stress
- 5.) Undiagnosed and untreated mental health conditions
- 6.) Problems with the schools
- 7.) Lack of Job mobility and low-paying jobs
- 8.) Lack of transportation and physical isolation (especially for a woman)
- 9.) Safety
- 10.) Lack of cultural understanding

Some of these points may be over-represented due to the nature of the people surveyed (Mexican, Chinese and Arabic immigrants, Refugees from Somalia). Still, in general, a clear trend is emerging.

Language seems to be the key issue. Missing or inadequate language skills are, therefore, at least partly, responsible for the other problem areas (Lake et al. 2006). In 2014 'Global Citizen', an organization dedicated to helping to end extreme poverty in the world until 2030, reviewed this and other reports and compiled their own list of challenges (Nuñez 2014).

1) Difficulty speaking and learning English

Having insufficient language proficiency in English makes many areas of daily life way more difficult or impossible. Getting a job, making friends, do shopping, or filling out forms are just some examples for activities that require at least some language knowledge. Many immigrants address this fact by attending language

courses, but finding time besides job and family can be difficult(Nuñez 2014). Not being able to communicate in the host countries language, on the other hand, might lead to difficulties when trying to establish social contacts. If these endeavors do not work, the migrant will most likely experience feelings of loneliness and isolation(Richardson; Zikic 2007).

2) Raising children and helping them succeed in school

Parents report that they are struggling with raising their kids in an unfamiliar culture. They get the impression their kids are assimilating quickly and overtake them with picking up the language. These factors confuse the parent-child dynamics and cause alienation between them. Adding to this fact, there are more unintentional difficulties to expect as kids might be relocated in the middle of their school career or even in the middle of a school year. Changing from one national curriculum to another one is, in this case, even one more difficult situation the pupils have to adopt (Adams 2016).

When it comes to helping the children with school problems or homework, their own insufficient language knowledge hinders them in this regard, and they feel disappointed to see their offspring struggling to keep up with their schoolmates(Nuñez 2014).

3) Securing work

When arriving in a new country, many immigrants are willing to take whatever job they can get. However, finding a job and slowly working oneself up the ladder is extremely hard. Educated immigrants are disappointed that they, due to language reasons, cannot obtain jobs at a similar level as back at home. The missing work experience within the country represents another problem when searching for a job as there is no reference from within the regional labor market(Nuñez 2014).

4) Securing housing

With doing low-level work comes not being able to rent a decent flat. As housing is expensive large families might choose to live together. Being packed on little space creates additional stress and a noisy surrounding that hampers concentrated learning and good recovery(Nuñez 2014).

5) Accessing services

Immigrants seeking services do not have an easy stand. Not being able to speak the language, having difficulties getting a time off at the job, and limited mobility possibility makes this difficult (Nuñez 2014).

6) Transportation

Likewise, language barriers transportation issues are affecting many problem fields of immigrants. Relying on public transport means that each and every extraordinary activity has to be properly planned and most likely does take way more time than it would need with an own vehicle. Many immigrants, however, do not have enough funds and language proficiency to be able to obtain a driver's license, not to speak from a car. Public transport, especially outside of bigger cities, often involves the changing to other lines or means of transportation. If someone is a stranger in the region, finding the right line or combination of lines to the desired target is complicated and difficult (Nuñez 2014).

7) Cultural barriers

Depending on the immigrant's origin and history, he might face cultural misunderstandings in many situations. Even the best intentions can lead to serious situations if the cultural meanings differ greatly (Nuñez 2014).

3. Research Methodology

The aim of this chapter is an in-detail description of the research methods and methodology used in this study. It should explain the decision to choose inductive research strategies and qualitative research for this specific study.

The target of this thesis is to find out what are the biggest pain points for expatriates trying to make themselves a home in rural areas in Vorarlberg. Further, it should be shown why individuals choose their personal strategy of acculturation. For this study, there is no existing theory available, which leads to an inductive approach. This study utilizes mixed methods research and therefore combines qualitative and quantitative research methods so that evidence of the semi-structured individual interviews and the survey questionnaire may be mixed, and the results raise the theoretical knowledge in a more meaningful way (Morgan 2007).

Qualitative research helps the researcher to understand the social nature of the sitting situation to be examined (Mey; Mruck 2010), where quantitative research helps to understand the subject to investigate on the basis of numeric values.

I chose the mixed methods approach to compensate for the known deficiencies of the individual research methods. The insight gained from a small number of semi-structured expert interviews will, in this case, be supported by the knowledge extracted out of a larger number of questionnaires. For the interviews, after transcribing the interviews, I used qualitative content analysis to cluster and group the results.

To gain a first insight into the topic and the biggest pain points, internet resources, and Facebook communities by expatriates in Vorarlberg form a good starting point. Based on these sources on the internet and the findings in the literature review, the survey questionnaire was designed further to discover the actual pain points for immigrants in Vorarlberg. Although quantitative data collection is not the main method used for data collection and analysis, some parts of the survey results will be presented in this study.

Aim of choosing these methods was to explore the different dimensions of "Pain Points" and subsequently acculturation strategies.

3.1 Online Survey

The survey was compiled of 47 questions structured in 7 topics and a section for demographic data (see Appendix). The sample recruitment was carried out as passive online recruitment (Brandenburg; Thielsch 2009). The online survey link was posted in different forums and newsgroups on the internet to get a wide variety of responders. Namely, they were the 'Expats in Vorarlberg', group on Facebook, the 'Vorarlberg International Meetup' group on Facebook, the mailing list of the 'Österreichisch–Finnische Gesellschaft Vorarlberg', the Vorarlberg section of the Internet forum of 'justlanded.com and the mail distribution list of the 'International Management and Leadership' course at Fachhochschule Vorarlberg. Furthermore, a contact in the HR department of Omicron electronics in Klaus forwarded the link to parts of their workforce, which are immigrants in Vorarlberg.

The questionnaire was open to answering for six days, and 53 people responded. For a purely quantitative survey, the sample size would be too small with 'only' 53 respondents. According to Horst Otto Meyer and his simplified formula to determine the sample size, in case the sample does not exceed 5 percent of the basic whole, $n = 1/d^2$ the sample size to reach a 95 percent confidence interval would be 400, for the confidence of 90 percent still, 100 respondents are needed (Mayer 2013). In the case of this study, the confidence intervals value is 86,3 percent.

Fifty percent of the respondents stated they live in one of the five cities. The other half divides nearly exactly into two-thirds villages with more than 4000 inhabitants and one third in smaller villages.

What size of town do you live in Vorarlberg?

52 Antworten

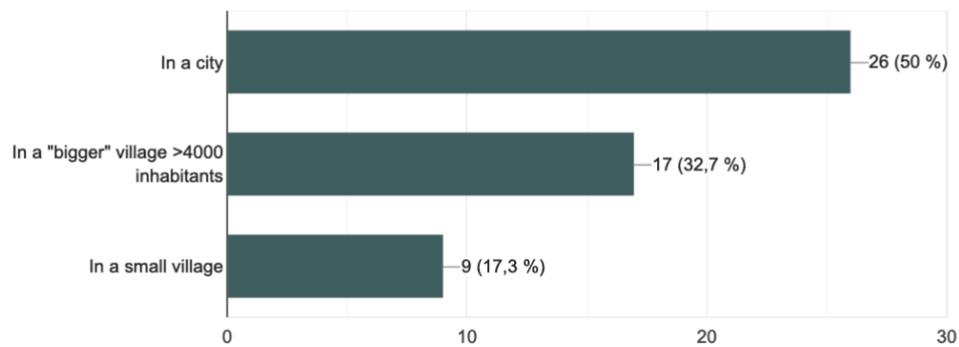


Figure 3: Size of Place of Residence

This result differs significantly from the 66 percent living in cities, which are mentioned in the Integrationsfonds study (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2018). The participants that replied were 32.7 percent male and 67.3 percent female, with one person not answering this question.

The majority, 53.8 percent of the responders, ranged in an age bracket from 31 to 40 years when they came to Vorarlberg. 36.5 percent were between 21 and 30 years old and 9.6 percent older than 41. None of the responders has been younger than 20 when he came to Vorarlberg.

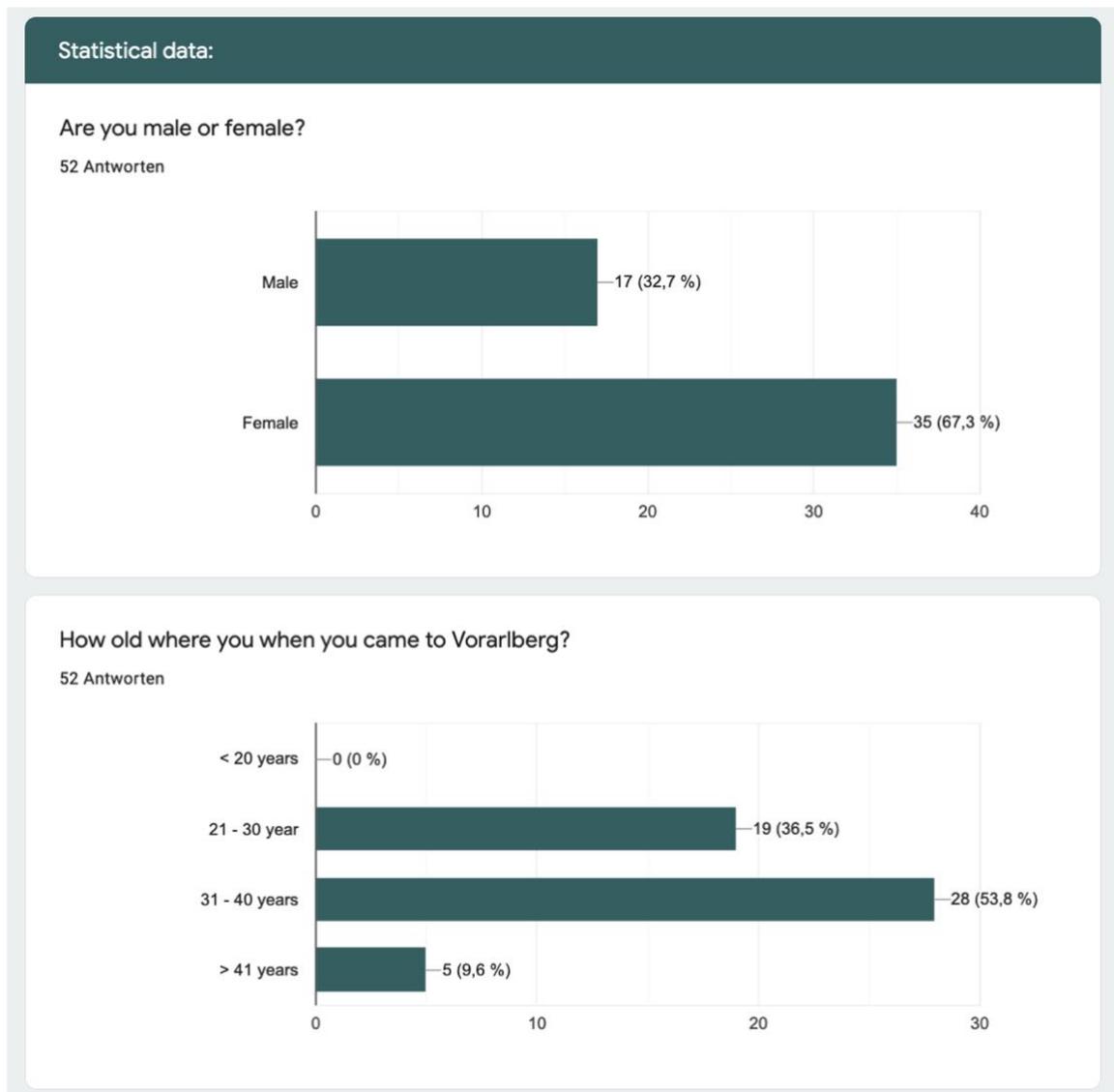


Figure 4: Statistical Data

The seven topics of the survey and their underlying intention where:

1) Finding Accommodation

The purpose of this section was to find out how difficult expatriates rate finding housing in Vorarlberg, getting an estimate of how hard it is compared to their home countries, and hear what their biggest challenge in the process was.

2) Finding a Job

This section should clarify if people who moved to Vorarlberg already had a job offer. How hard they rate the search for a job here and back in their hometown and if they had help looking for employment. Again, the question for the biggest problems in the process was part of the section.

3) Administrative Matters

The third topic revolved around problems with institutions in Vorarlberg. Did difficulties occur? If yes, with which organizations. Did the respondents need help, and who provided it? The comparison between Vorarlberg and their home country and the free text question about the single biggest problem were part of the section as well.

4) Language

In this category, the understanding of high German and dialect was asked. Further, if participants faced severe problems due to language barriers, where they emerged, and if and where language courses had been attended were the questions.

5) Cultural and Social

The questions in this section should show how far the expat integrates him- or herself and how common social interaction with native persons from Vorarlberg is. An open question about the cultural differences to their home culture and a question if they faced racism in Vorarlberg closed this chapter.

6) Mobility, coming around in Vorarlberg

This section intended to find out how mobile expatriates are in Vorarlberg. What are their means of transport for commuting and in leisure time? And again, the open question regarding the biggest pain points concerning this topic was part of the questions.

7) Local supply and opening hours

The last section aimed to find out what shops or services are available in the participant's municipality, how they cope with the limited opening hours, and how long they need to reach entertainment facilities.

At the end of the survey came several questions that should clarify the demographic cornerstones of the attendee, how long he or she resides already in Vorarlberg and whether he/she came alone or with a partner or family.

3.1 Semi-Structured Interview

For practical reasons and to facilitate a close relation to the respondent's, qualitative research should concentrate on a small number of cases (less than 20) (Crouch; McKenzie 2006). This helps to mitigate some of the endangerment in qualitative research like bias and validity threads. However, due to practical reasons and the special circumstances caused by the 2020 pandemic situation, it was necessary to cut down the number of interviews drastically. Furthermore, the interviews could not be conducted personally but had to be performed online without direct contact.

The interview guideline comprised 16 main questions, and five possible follow up questions, clustered into five topic areas that emerged as the dominant problem areas in the findings of the questionnaire (see Appendix). A total of five interviews were conducted. With people from different regions of the world who live or have lived in different villages in Vorarlberg. The participants were chosen from existing contacts with an eye on getting people from different cultural and socially important areas of the world. Specifically, the regions in question are; within the European Union, Eastern Europe, North America, South America, and Western Asia. The interview partners compiled of four women and one guy.

The five topics of the interview and their underlying intention where:

1) Language:

The expatriate's concrete experiences should be discovered. How often language problems occurred and how the situation had changed over time should be learned. How the person faced the situations and dealt with it was asked.

2) Opening Hours:

Actually, it was a surprise for the author that opening hours were such a big issue and culture shock for many participants of the online survey. This section should bring a more exact insight, clarify what expatriates experienced and how they were coping with this unfamiliar situation.

3) Mobility:

This section of the interview should explore how the participants are coming around in Vorarlberg, either when commuting or for leisure time. Did the

interview partner change their mobility situation, and which further changes would benefit them?

4) Dealing with Administration:

The questions in this part of the interview have the intention to find out which of the entities of the public sector is the most challenging to deal with for the interviewee. What are the reasons for these difficulties, and how did the situation develop over time?

5) Cultural Difference:

The last part of the interview should clarify the most obvious differences between Vorarlberg and the participant's home culture. The answer to the second question should outline the acculturation strategy that was utilized. The final question of the interview aims to an outlook of the participant to his future in Vorarlberg. This should solidify the impression of the acculturation strategy.

3.2 Data analysis

This research mostly uses qualitative methods due to the nature of the research. However, in order to get an overview of the initial situation, quantitative research methods are also utilized. More precisely, statistical elaborations are used for the evaluation of parts of the survey questionnaire. The answers to the open-ended questions were thematically analyzed, ordered, and grouped. Based on the first findings, in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted to complement and validate the information derived in the initial step.

The interview texts were transcribed, read multiple times and broken down into single topics. Key data points were extracted from every single interview and subsequently grouped into themes.

3.3 Limitations

This study has limitations.

Firstly, the author had no influence on the compilation of the sample for the online survey. Consequently, the findings are not generalizable and may not represent all expatriates in Vorarlberg. It cannot be ruled out that certain immigrant groups are over or underrepresented.

Secondly, the majority of the study participants are recruited from people who are active on the internet expatriates communities and newsgroups. People who do not participate in such groups could not be part of the sample.

Thirdly, due to the extraordinary situation in which the world was in spring and summer 2020, both the number and the type of interview had to be adjusted to the situation. In online and telephone interviews, some information like body language and behavior of the interviewee might get lost. But in general, the sum of advantages of this method is convincing (Sullivan 2012).

Fourth, English the language of this study, the survey and the interviews were mostly not the mother tongue of the participants nor of the author. Some words or phrases might be interpreted differently depending on the origin of the participants. Therefore, the answers and results might be tainted in a certain way.

Despite these limitations, this study makes an important contribution to enhancing the so far limited literature concerning immigration to Vorarlberg.

4. Findings

4.1 Findings Survey

A total of 53 expatriates undertook the online survey. One person, unfortunately, did not answer the demographics section of the questionnaire. The remaining participants were evenly distributed between persons living in a city and persons who live in a smaller community. When further distinguishing based on the size of the village, the division is as follows. Fifty percent of the participants are living in a city, 32,7 percent are living in a village that has more than 4000 inhabitants, and 17,3 percent are living in one of the smaller communities in Vorarlberg. The distribution of the immigrants segmented in male and female, split up by the size of place to live, was like shown in the table below.

	<i>total participants</i>	<i>in a city</i>	<i>village > 4000</i>	<i>small village</i>
total	53	26	17	9
male	17	7	7	3
female	35	19	10	6

Table 1: Participants Segmented

Based on the topics of the questionnaire, the evaluation of the answers gave the following picture:

Section1: Finding Accommodation

In general, the analysis of the data shows that there seems to be descent in the difficulty of finding an appropriate form of accommodation dependent on the size of the community. Both groups of participants, males and females report consistent

that the values decrease on average with the size category of the town. This means that finding appropriate housing in the city is harder than finding it in a bigger village, and in small villages, it is the least difficult. However, the individual values are, all together, well beyond the mean (2,5 on a scale from 1 easy to 5 extremely hard) of the scale. This fact indicates that expatriates, in general, find Vorarlberg to be a hard place to find accommodation.

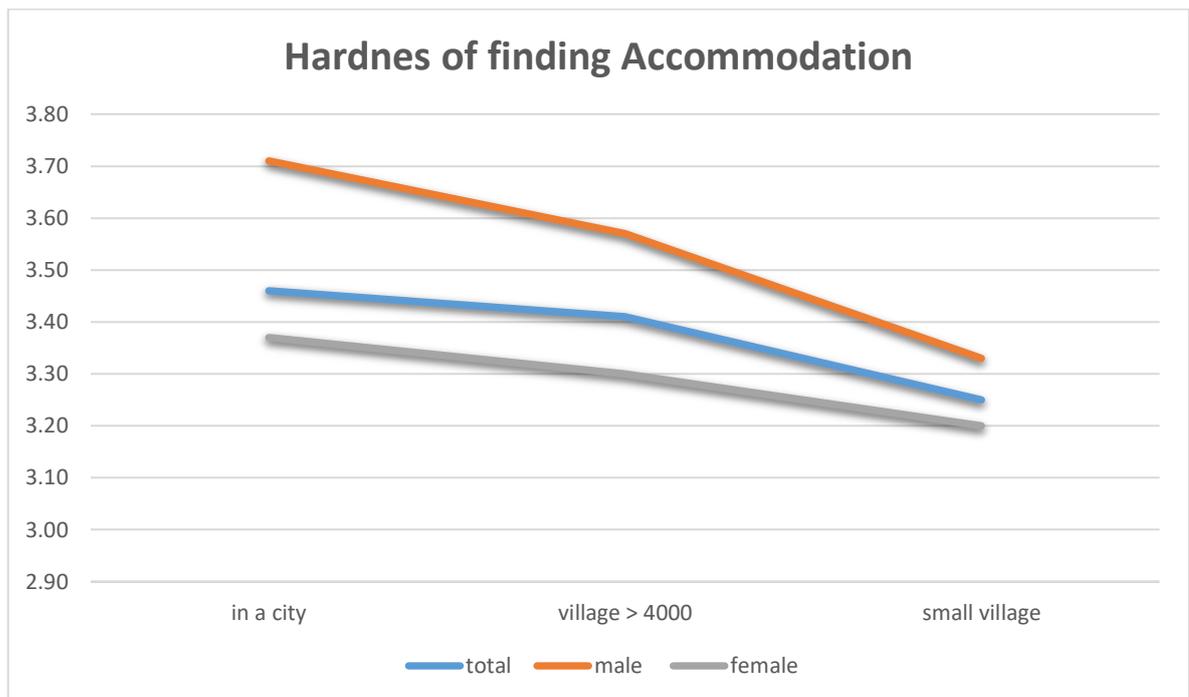


Figure 5: Hardness Finding Accommodation

Consequently, 62 percent rated the search for a flat in Vorarlberg as harder than in their home country. About 21 percent took no help finding accommodation. The majority of the others (53,8 percent) had informal help from friends and acquaintances. Help from their employer had 25 percent, and only 7,7 percent relied on the services of an agency.

For the open-ended questions, the single answers were clustered and consolidated in subtopics. In the case of 'finding accommodation', there were 6 clusters of difficulties that could be summarized as; availability, discovery, language, location, prejudices, and price.

Availability: several participants remarked that the demand exceeds the offer and that there is only a small number of flats or houses available, especially if one is restricted to a certain area, for example, in close proximity to the place of work.

Discovery: A big concern seems to be that newcomers to Vorarlberg do not know where to look for housing advertisements. Besides not knowing where to look, a special feature of Vorarlberg comes to retribution, 'everybody knows everybody' so the most decent flats are never advertised but change their resident by word of mouth.

Language: Not being able to communicate sufficiently in German reduces the choice of available places to life dramatically. Not all landlords are able to speak a foreign language, or they might also not be willing to do it.

Location: As mentioned at the availability cluster, some expatriates prefer to live close to a specific location. In some cases, this is the working place in some other cases, the proximity to public transport stations as the expat might not possess its own vehicle.

Prejudices: Foreigners from certain areas of the world, or with different skin color are, unfortunately, not immune to prejudices. Several participants have experienced some form of discrimination up to sheer racism when looking for a place to live. One responder experienced that different landlords refused to rent out their property to a family with little kids.

Price: A negligible offer in a region leads to rising prices. Therefore, the prices for decent flats and houses in good locations are quite high. Several participants in the study thought the prices in Vorarlberg are way too high, especially in regard to the price-performance ratio. Also, the agency's brokerage fees and the security fees were considered too high.

Section 2: Finding Employment

Unlike in the previous section, the result of the questionnaire shows a less clear picture of the hardness of finding employment in Vorarlberg. When considering the mean values, the search for a job is, with a value of 3,46 (on a scale from 1 easy to 5 extremely hard) the hardest when living in a city. The second most difficult job search with an average value of 2,89 was chosen by the participants from small villages. The easiest it appears to be to find a job when you are residing in a bigger village. The total mean value for this subsegment was 2,82. Segmented by genders, the curves show a noticeable gap (see figure 7). Women assess the difficulty of finding a job significantly more serious than their male counterparts. Where the most distinct difference in the previous section is 0,34 points, the highest difference in this

section is 0,91 points for the difficulty of finding a job when living in a bigger village. The overall level of difficulty to find a job in Vorarlberg is, similar to the first section, rated for the greatest part as difficult. Only one subgroup, male participants in big villages, rate with a value of 2,29 below the average of the scale (2,5). Consequently, the share of people who rate finding employment in Vorarlberg harder than in their home country is with a value of 52,9 percent also the majority. However, it should be noted that finding a job is rated less hard than finding accommodation.

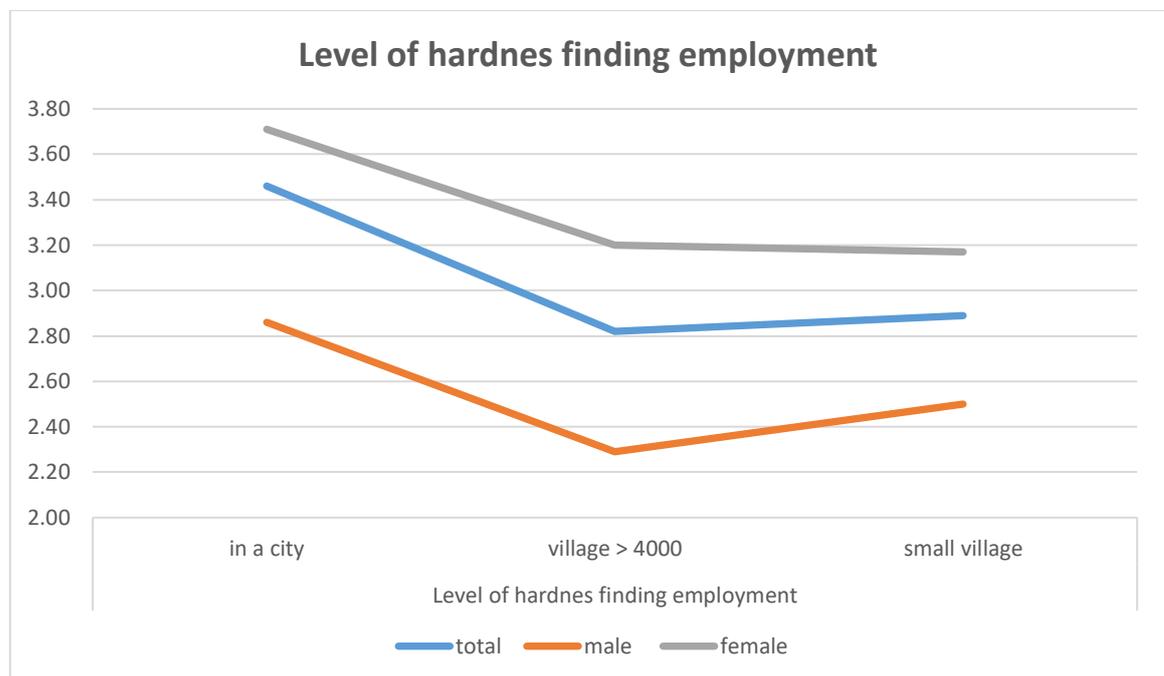


Figure 6: Hardness Finding Employment

Two-thirds of the respondents provided the information that they had no help finding employment and managed it by themselves. Twenty percent utilized help from friends and acquaintances, and 10 percent got their job as the company reached out to them and recruited them actively. Only 6 percent of the expatriates, that took part in this study, tuned to a job placement agency to find their current employment. Again, for the open-ended questions, the clusters, and subtopics where made. In the case of 'finding employment', there were six problem clusters that could be summarised as; availability, duration, language, legal process, unknown degrees and xenophobia.

Availability: Many of the responders stated that the labor market in Vorarlberg is rather slow. As they tend to send their applications to the bigger, international companies, there is only a limited offer in the area. In small and medium-sized enterprises, the openings for applicants with no or insufficient knowledge in German is even smaller. One participant mentioned that there is no big diversity in open job positions.

Duration: The process duration of finding, applying, and finally getting a job is way too long, according to some expatriates. Not only do HR departments take their time to reply to applications, for most jobs two or even three rounds of job interviews are common. Sometimes with weeks in-between them.

Language: Not being able to communicate sufficiently in German reduces the choice of available jobs to companies with English as a working language. Otherwise, expatriates have to work in positions for them they are seriously overqualified. Even when the language capabilities grow with time, it is then very hard to climb up the career ladder.

Legal Process: Especially for immigrants from third countries who are not part of the European Union, it is quite complicated to get a work permit and find a company that supports them in this process.

Unknown Degrees: Some of the participants experienced troubles with their degrees when applying for a job. Either they were not per se valid for Austria and the European Union and had to be re-registered by Austrian authorities, or they were not known and recognized.

Xenophobia: Three people faced some form of xenophobia when looking for a job. They described it between 'problem because being a foreigner' over 'hostility towards foreigners' to 'racism'.

Section 3: Dealing with Administrative Matters

With 44,2 percent of the participants of this study, almost half of the people had some serious problems when dealing with administrations and public sector entities. Of those who answered this question with yes, 64 percent had these troubles with their local Bezirkshauptmannschaft (a form of district administration)! Other institutions that caused inconveniences were banks with 36 percent, insurances, and municipals with 20 percent each and the Austrian employment agency as well as the tax office with 8 percent, respectively. Twenty-three participants or 46,9

percent of the sample stated that they needed other people's help to overcome these difficulties. In most cases they relied on local friends, their native partners, or people from their company to help them out. One person sought help from a professional relocation scout. The following topics emerged during the clustering of the full-text answers; complexness, lack of guideline, language, offline only, service quality.

Complexness: Persons not familiar with our system of bureaucracy are easily overwhelmed with all the rules and paths they have to follow. The participants criticized the complexity of different tasks when trying to settle to Vorarlberg. The limited opening hours of some institutions do not help either to make the process easier for the expatriate. For example, the four district administrations of Vorarlberg (Bezirkshauptmannschaften) have service times Monday to Friday, 8:00 -12:00 o'clock only.

Lack of Guideline: In Austria there is apparently no system of consultation for newcomers in institutions of authorities. The immigrant has to know what permits and certificates he needs. Several participants complained that there are no actual guidelines on what kind of paperwork is needed for a seamless start in Vorarlberg.

Language: Even more than in other situations, the language plays a crucial role when dealing with administrative matters. As many tasks require the precise understanding of the officialize, even German-speaking natives had problems as officials intentionally did not speak high German or dis switch back to dialect involuntary. For English speakers, many tasks are impossible to accomplish alone because there are none or only pool translations for certain forms available.

Offline only: There is no system for e-Government in place in Austria. If someone has a concern related to administrative matters, this person needs to visit the authorities. Especially people from the Nordic countries criticized this system as they can do most of their administrative tasks on the internet. Actually, there is the 'Bürgerkarte,' which allows residents of Austria to manage several tasks within the internet. But one has to be registered in Austria in advance to activate it, and the handling of it is incredibly complicated.

Service Quality: A big concern in the answers of the survey has been the lack of service quality at administrations and public sector entities. This point covers a range from giving wrong advice to complete refusal to provide service to a person. (A bank refused to open an account for an American as this would mean they have

a high administrative effort for this person due to governmental regulations.) The unfriendly tone towards foreigners and that officials seem to be just willing to do the bare minimum was also mentioned.

Section 4: Language

Already in the preparation phase for this study, it became abundantly clear that language will be one of the main reasons for all kinds of problems that immigrants might face. The various dialects that are spoken in Vorarlberg are part of the Alemannic language family. To be precise, except for the 'Große Walsertal', a valley close to the city of Bludenz where they speak Highest Alemannic, the dialects are Lower Alemannic languages. Löffler & Bösch wrote in their book 'Alemannisch' that for pupils that were raised speaking Alemannic dialects, High German could not be assumed their mother tongue, moreover it is the first foreign language they have to learn (Löffler; Besch 1977). Consequently, it is also the problem field where the most roots of problems are to find. Close to 80 percent of all respondents have experienced a major problem caused by some form of language matter. Interestingly, even among the persons that rated their German level as 'native', 60 percent came in such a situation.

% of people had severe problems caused by language by language level

<i>native level</i>	<i>somehow fluent</i>	<i>beginner level</i>	<i>only some words</i>	<i>overall</i>
60	79,30	78,90	100,00	78,80

Table 2: Faced Language Problems

It is gratifying that a majority of the responders to the survey have committed to learning the German language. All but 10 participants did attend German language courses prior to coming to Austria or since they arrived. When subtracting the six persons that have German as their mother tongue, only four people or about 7,6 percent of the responders have not taken any German classes. This is also confirmed when we consider the self-assessment of the language level. About two-thirds of the participants rate themselves as native level (9,6 percent) or somehow fluent (55,8 percent). The biggest chunk of remaining persons rates themselves to be at a beginner's level (36,5 percent), and merely 3,8 percent say they speak just some words and phrases. No-one was unable at all to speak or understand German. Nearly half of the participants (46,2 percent) already attended German classes before they settled over to Austria, 26,9 percent had courses at the university or Fachhochschule, and 11,5 percent joined a language course provided by their company. The rest of the people who attended coursed did them with institutions like Arbeiterkammer, Berufsförderungsinstitut, WIFI, or even private lessons. Regarding dialect, it was just asked for the capability to understand it. Naturally, the values differ significantly from the ones in the previous question. With about 50 percent of the attendees that have a more or less good understanding and one third that gets some words and phrases. Not at all able to understand the dialect are in this case, 17,3 percent of the expatriates.

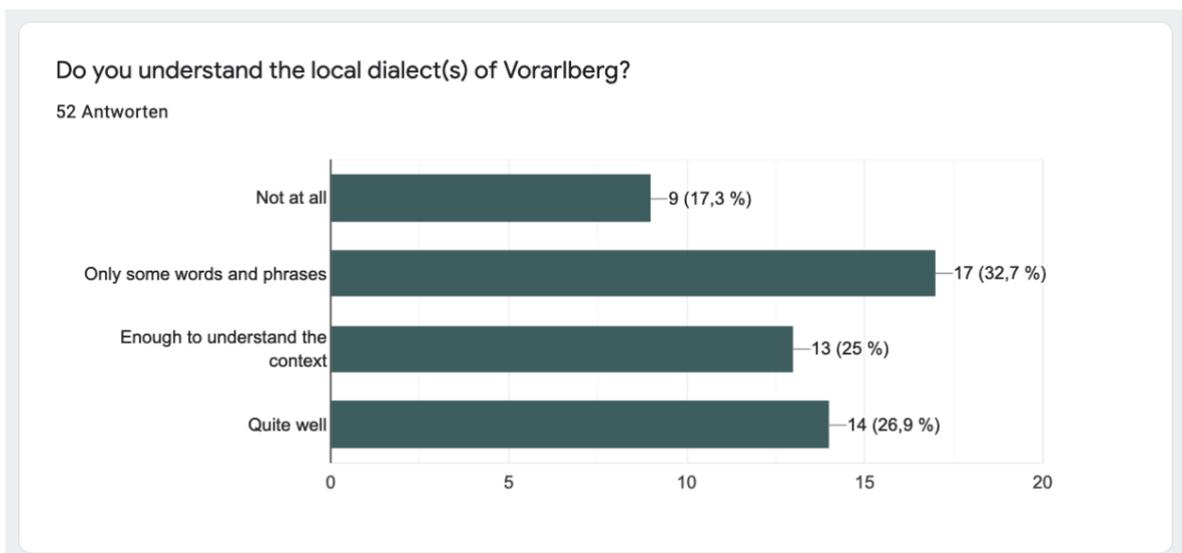


Figure 7: Understanding Dialect

Section 5: Cultural and Social

Within this section, the author wanted to learn two important points. Does the immigrant interact with the local culture and / or with his own culture, and what are the biggest differences between the immigrant's own and the local culture? Regarding the connection to the own culture, the overall picture shows that more than 50 percent of the participants are convinced that there is no active community of their home country in Vorarlberg (28,8 percent) or they do not know about (25 percent). Whereas the according values of the genders differ a lot. Male responders to the questionnaire answered at 47,1 percent that there is no active community in the region, and 17,6 percent admitted they do not know. The respecting values of the female responders were 20 and 28,6 percent. Both genders stated with just below 30 percent that there is a community, but they do not join them. A very different picture is presented by those who take part in the activities of their cultural community. Whereas women stated with 11,4 percent in both cases, rarely or on a regular basis, only 5,9 percent of their male counterparts rarely take part in such events. None of the male expatriates that took part in the study said he is taking part on a regular basis.

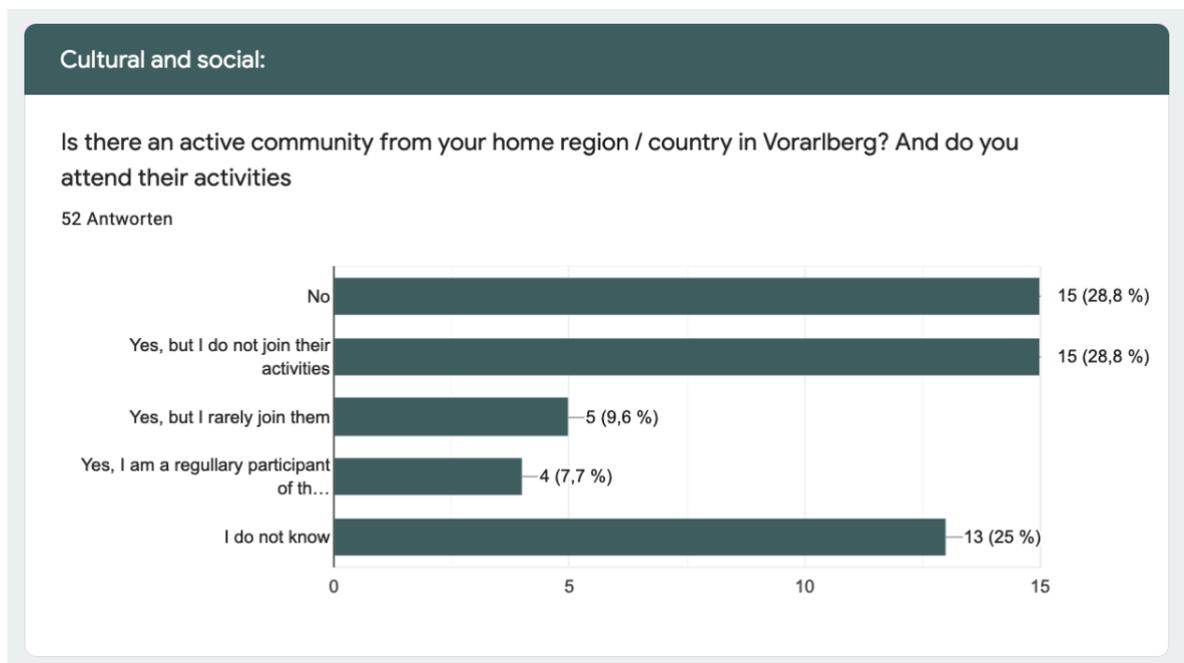


Figure 8: Home Community in Vorarlberg

Further, it seems that the expatriate community is very active when visiting cultural events of Austrian culture and also such from other countries. The female contenders are visiting both categories quite exactly 10 percent more than their male counterparts and reaching 74,3 percent for Austrian events and 68,6 for events of other nationalities.

When it comes to how much the participants talk with their Austrian neighbors, the distribution of the values is not as one might expect. Male participants do talk more with their neighbors as females. When combining the values of those who said they talk rarely and regularly with Austrian people living next to them, males have a total value of 95,1 percent as females only reach 85,7.

	City	Bigger Village	Small Village
I do not talk to neighbours			
male	14,3	0	0
female	10	20	16,7
overall	11,5	11,8	11,1
I do rarely talk to neighbours			
male	28,6	42,9	66,7
female	26,3	20	33,3
overall	26,9	29,4	44,4
I do talk to neighbours regularly			
male	57,1	57,1	33,3
female	63,2	60	50
overall	61,5	58,8	44,4

Table 3: Communication with Neighbors

However, split up in the single segments the distribution shows more of a random spread, as shown in table 3.

When it comes to interaction with locals, club memberships are a good way to establish that. However, the survey showed that not very many expatriates choose this way. Only a small minority of 3,8 percent are members of more than one club,

and 13,5 percent of one club. The remaining 82,7 percent have chosen not to join such a local assembly.

The open-ended question for the main cultural differences brought a wide variety of points and topics. The mentality of the people from Vorarlberg was described as more closed in many regards. Not only was stated that it is difficult to make friends with local people as they have closed circles, but it also seems that socializing at the workplace doesn't happen either. Consequently, some of the participants had the feeling that Vorarlberger are more closed towards foreigners and immigrants. How the Austrian behave with respect to drinking alcohol has been mentioned several times. Also, the more structured way of life here in the region was discussed with its advantages and disadvantages. Migrants that came from metropolitan regions, or have at least lived there for some time, found the opening hours of shops and service sector a big cultural difference.

Half of the participants stated that they have at least once faced racism in Vorarlberg.

Section 6: Mobility, coming around in Vorarlberg

According to the answers to the questionnaire, owning a car is key to be pleased with the traffic and mobility situation in Vorarlberg. Where in the mean, 34,6 percent of respondents state that they find it difficult to get from one place to another in Vorarlberg only 25,7 percent of the car owners think the same. If the immigrant at least possesses a driver's license, the according value is at 50 percent. People without a car and not owning a license do think it is difficult at a rate of 60 percent. However, even the car owners think at a rate of 42,9 percent that it takes too much time to reach certain places in Vorarlberg. People without a license are more patient, and only 40 percent of them have the same impression. Remarkably the persons that are owning a license but do not own a car state at a whopping 58,3 percent that it takes them too much time to reach places in Vorarlberg.

Consequently, the car is also the most used mean of transport, no matter if commuting or for leisure activities or daily errands.

Asking for the pain points in the open-ended questions, the most frequent answer was about the low frequency of public transport connections. Most buses and trains run every half hour during weekdays and at working hours. But comes to night-time and weekends or bank holidays they are reduced to once an hour or even less. The public transport connections to neighboring countries were also rated as

unsatisfactory. The timetables between these lines are not synchronized and therefore resulting in long stops and waiting times. Some routes demand the passenger to take a detour, as no direct connection is available. In general, it was stated that, from within rural areas offside the main axis Bregenz – Bludenz, the infrastructure is not good enough to encourage people to use public transport.

Section 7: Local Supply and Opening Hours

Intentionally this section should shed light on the supply offer that expats lack at their place of residence. The problem, however, turned out not to be the absence of certain shops or services, but the not availability caused by limited opening hours. A full 75 percent of the people that took the survey do find it difficult to get their tasks done as the opening hours collide with their working time. Only 7,7 percent of them have been able to avoid taking time off at work to fulfill their errands. 42, 3 percent of the people had to compensate or to take a vacation day at least occasionally. For 50 percent of the expatriates, this is a common situation, and they have to take time off regularly. Public institutions such as Bezirkshauptmannschaft and the Austrian health insurance company (ÖGK) are particularly striking in these regards as these institutions in some cases are open for public business only from Monday to Friday 8:00 to 12:00.

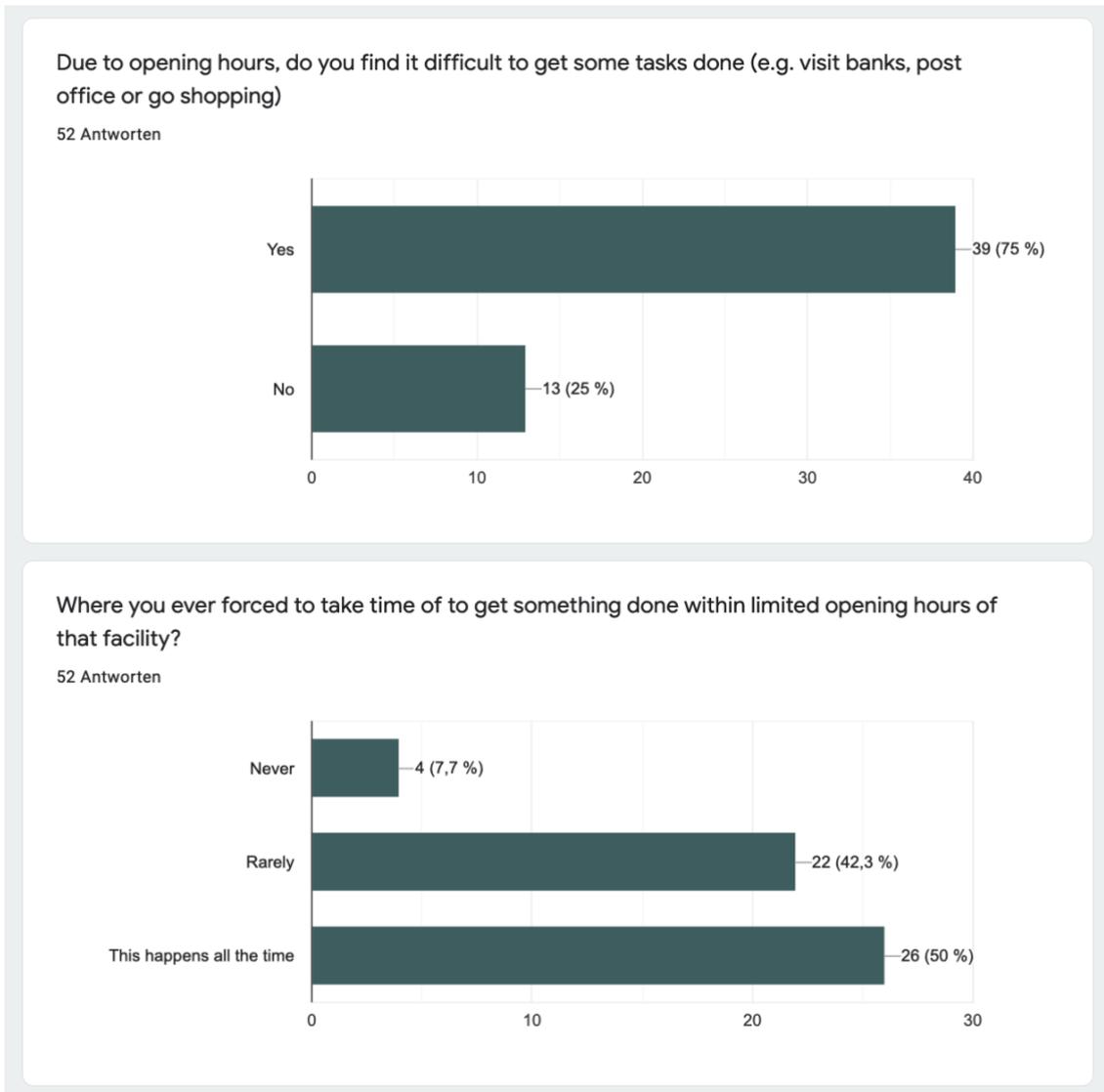


Figure 9: Opening Hours and Consequences

Surprisingly the people that do not have a driver's license at all are evaluating the situation concerning the opening hours significantly more positive than the groups with driver's license and the ones with a car. Still, 60 percent of the expatriates that have no license find it difficult to get things done within the regular opening hours. The group of people who have a license, but no car answered at 91,7 percent that they have this problem, far more than the ones with a car (71, 4 percent). The opening hours were hence also often mentioned in the open-ended question of this section. More in detail, people had problems as there is no uniform system of opening hours. Each shop appears to have his own system was stated. Some of the participants had troubles to accommodate to the fact that shops are closed at all on Sundays. Surprisingly, only one person mentioned that it is, in fact, impossible for

her to get a dentist's appointment. When designing the questionnaire, there was the expectation of many such answers.

4.2 Findings Interviews

A total of five semi-structured interviews with highly skilled interviews have been conducted, and an additional conversation with a relocation scout that lives and works in Vorarlberg was held. The interviews were analyzed by means of thematic analysis. The results provide the following overview.

Language: There appear to be two different scenarios when an expatriate is confronted with the spoken language in Vorarlberg. One for people that had some kind of understanding of German prior to moving into the area, and one for people with no knowledge regarding the language. Where the group of people, that has not been confronted with the German language find that the basics of daily life and ongoing errands are manageable in English. However, for better integration and more straightforward communication, they recognize the value and advantage of leaning German.

“My experience has been that you definitely need to know the language here. You need to know at least High German and that's why that I took a lot of courses by WIFI and also offered by the school FH Vorarlberg. I took a bunch of courses there as well to speed up my learning of German.” Interview #4 00:01:06,250

The group that already had some German language capabilities, however, were quite shocked when they recognized that the spoken language in Vorarlberg is far from what they used to learn. They, therefore, tend to stick with English and are easily frustrated with their German knowledge.

I didn't face any problem with that because also at work we always spoke English. Then on the street the dialect was really a problem. I was learning German, but it was complete different from what I thought at the beginning that my German would develop. When I moved to Vorarlberg, it was the opposite. I stopped using the German.

I could not improve because how they speak, I could not understand, so for me that meant to communicate always in English. Interview #5 00:00:38,000

In general, all the interview partners agreed on the fact that it is inevitable to learn and talk German to integrate successfully and find friends other than members of

the expatriate community. The attitude of the people also changed with advances in learning German. Of course, people recognized the progress, but from some time on, an interview partner also mentioned there was the expectation that he had to continue getting better and try to stick with talking German.

It was stated a problem that Vorarlberger tends to have difficulties talking in High German. They often unintentionally switch back to dialect what makes it rather difficult for the expatriate to understand them. Further, it can be felt that the local population does not necessarily like to speak High German.

I can see that I'm, inconveniencing people by forcing them in a way to speak High German, which I know that they're not necessarily as comfortable with. Interview #4 00:01:36,875

Both groups, however, believe it is easier to speak English for the first year or two, as long as the personal level of German is not high enough for a conversation. As soon the expatriate is convinced enough about his language capabilities, the people from Vorarlberg are described by the participants, as preferring bad German over good English

Having the impression to not be able to talk proper German with the native people lead, for some, to a withdrawal into the expatriate community where they chose to communicate in English with each other.

When it comes to speaking and learning dialect, all interviewed agreed that learning dialect is not an option in order to speak. They recognize that it helps tremendously to understand the locals, but they will never be able to speak it in a sufficient way. However, knowing and using some words or phrases will be appreciated by the Austrian people.

So, when you try to speak or incorporate some dialect then I think people get a real kick out of that and you'll enjoy that and appreciate that. Interview #4 00:11:10,250

Opening Hours: All of the people interviewed come from nations and areas with more liberal opening hours than what Vorarlberg is used to. Accordingly, all of them were surprised or even shocked to find stores and service facilities closed on Sundays and having only limited time of service on weekdays.

I'm somehow adopted, but for me it was complete shock. Because it's my own country Sunday is a completely normal working day, so I used Sundays to go shopping but here you can forget

about it. Here you can finish everything on Saturday by 6 p.m. That's It! And for me that's quite uncommon... Interview #1 00:05:23,250

The service hours of the Bezirkshauptmannschaft were also criticized by all of the participants. As they only are open for the public on working days from 8:00 to 12:00, the immigrant is forced to take time off when they need to join an appointment there. To address the situation with the limited opening hours, the interviewed persons developed a variety of strategies. From moving from spontaneous to more planned shopping, putting all appointments with doctors, hairdressers and so on, to the earliest possible time in the morning over delegating all possible tasks to a partner was the bandwidth of answers. All of the interviewees found a way to adapt to the situation so that it was no longer a big problem but more an inconvenience. Most interviewees would wish that, especially for grocery stores, opening hours would be expanded. At the same time, they are aware that exactly this narrow opening hour is responsible for a very high work-life balance in the region.

Mobility: Not all expatriates do possess a car when they settle over to Austria. Some don't even have a driver's license and are therefore dependent on public transport. The car owners in the interviews were rather satisfied with their personal mobility situation. Nevertheless, they recognized that the situation would be looking differently without their own vehicle.

You need a car! If you have a car, I don't see any issues, but without a car it becomes more difficult. Interview #3 00:13:48,500

What caused some participants to buy a car or another motor vehicle was the missing flexibility in the public transport sector. Not every place in Vorarlberg is easily reachable, and, in some cases, it takes a multiple of the time compared to using the car. While conducting the interviews, it became more and more obvious that the satisfaction and the personal approach towards public transport depend in particular on how much the home culture relies on this kind of Transportation. The participant from the US stated that coming from his culture, having a car is way more than getting from A to B. The car is often associated with personal freedom, and therefore, the use of public transport scarifies part of this freedom. The person from Brazil, on the other hand, was very impressed with the busses and trains in Vorarlberg, as they are punctual, very clean, and the supporting smartphone app helped to complete a good user experience. Asked for the improvement suggestions

for the public transport section the consents were on more frequent connections, especially in the evening and on weekends.

Dealing with Administration: Depending on the bureaucratic systems that the interview partners already experienced, they were, again, divided into two groups. People from nations that are heavily bureaucracies did state they thought it is fairly easy to deal with Austrian administrations. However, on one or the other occasion, all of the interview partners had some difficulty when they had the need for fulfilling administrative tasks. Most of these problems are based on language matters. In many cases, there are not even forms in English available, or the translation might be really bad.

I think the problem was just the forms. When you have to fill in the forms and they are only in German. Interview #5 00:13:32,625

Moreover, people working for administration or other institutions might not be used to talk English and, therefore, will try to avoid it. In Austria, there is mandatory school English for some years, but if you chose so, you hardly need it anymore once you finished education.

... Then you have got to go, find the one person in the back that speaks English that's willing to actually deal with you. And that's how it feels like: 'Okay, we need to deal with this person' interview #4 00:26:21,500

Some comments were made about the business attitude of communication and internet providers. They were described as inflexible and painful to deal with when trying to deal with them via telephone. When visiting their local subsidiaries, the expatriates could, at least in some cases, find the desired help. In the interviews, most of the participants stated that they tried deliberately to talk to the same contact person within one entity. And preferably they choose to visit the place in person instead of doing a phone call. Thereby they established some more personal contact with the person in charge what gave them the impression that they are more seen as a human being than just a case number.

Cultural Differences:

As one could expect, the interview question for the biggest cultural differences between Vorarlberg and the expatriates home country brought quite a wide variety of points. Interestingly the interviewees laid the emphasis mostly to, on a first glance,

tiny aspects of life like 'in traffic cars stop for pedestrians and bikers', people take off their shoes when entering somebody's house, or waste separation and recycling. Only after numerous of these little points the individual's perception socializing and ease or hardness of finding friends was discussed. The common tenor of all voices was that it is harder to establish a friendship with people from Vorarlberg, but if you can establish one, it is a closer relationship. In one of the interviews the parable of coconut and peach was quoted. Austrians are said to be coconuts, having a hard, outer shell, but when you get through it you are rewarded with a sweet center. People from many other cultures seem to be like peaches. The skin is easy to get through, but to become a close friend you have to crack open a very hard stone in the middle. Interview partners who came from regions in the world that do not have stable democracies counted human rights, actual freedom, and the existence of reliable laws also as cultural differences. The question regarding the acculturation strategies revealed that in real life, one could not tie oneself to a single strategy. Even though all of the interviewed people stated that they have adopted to the Austrian culture in large areas, they mix up or even stick with their own culture in other points. As acculturation is a sociopsychological phenomenon, it has not only an impact on the expatriate but also to the surrounding.

Some of the Austrian people adapted a little bit to our culture (laughing)! #Interview 2 00:24:51,250

For the last question, 'How do you see yourself as Vorarlberger in several years?' it is necessary to divide the interviewees into two groups. One consists of people that have either already left Vorarlberg or do not plan to stay here for a longer period and the other group of people who intend to become sedentary in the region. In the first group, the focus in answering the question was put on how they do or did enjoy the time in Vorarlberg, but they do identify clearly with their motherland and the according culture. For the second group, the answers were a number of wishes regarding the future. They see themselves unanimously speaking fluent German and hope that they will understand the majority of spoken dialects in the region. With mastery of the language goes the hope to be able to fulfill the regular tasks of the daily life seamlessly. A family and deeply Vorarlberger desire for an own home rounds up their outlook.

4.3 Findings Conversation with Relocation Scout

Among the many answers to one of the open-ended questions in the online questionnaire was a reference to a relocation scout that had helped one of the participants. In order to explore yet another facet of the expat's situation, I contacted her and had a conversation. The result of this exchange is presented as follows.

The relocation scout is an Austrian woman with her own experience as an expatriate. She has been living in France for six years and has performed various internships in Great Britain, Spain and India. She offers a wide range of services in the field of relocation. In her own words, she mostly provides general support to gain a foothold in a new environment.

One of the most apparent problems, in her opinion, is linguistical. It is also the main field of activity for her to help expatriates with limited language knowledge in German to perform the necessary formalities. The familiarization phase, in general, appears to be quite challenging as a whole. Various tasks have to be completed in a short time span, and for someone, without local knowledge, these assignments are extremely demanding. As many expatriates come to Vorarlberg for the purpose of working for an Austrian company, they will have contacts and support from their employer and work colleagues. However, there is a great danger that they will be alone at home after work if they cannot find a connection to other expatriates or people from Vorarlberg. For a newcomer in the region, it is, therefore, crucial to find people who involve him or her. An excellent way to find these connections are hobbies or club memberships.

Asked for the reasons why expatriates cancel their assignment and return home early, the relocation expert reckoned that most dropouts remain connected to close with their home culture. The second most important reason to depart early is a partner who has difficulties in adapting to the host culture. In particular, this is the case if one of the partners does not follow a profession but is a stay at home mom or dad and mainly responsible for household and children. This person might then face bigger problems accommodating and establishing social bonds that probably leaves him or her frustrated and disillusioned.

5. Discussion

In this section, the findings and results will be linked to the initial research questions as well as the theoretical framework from the literature review. This chapter also discusses possibilities for organizational support to help expatriates to overcome the biggest challenges which they are faced with when arriving in rural Vorarlberg.

5.1 The biggest problem fields

Without a doubt, the one problem field that surpasses all the other is the language. This does not only apply to those who do not speak German. Rather, it is true for everyone not familiar with the Alemannic dialects. As the language distance to High German is so big (Löffler; Besch 1977), people often fall back unintentionally to speaking dialect. This might do its part to give the immigrant the feeling he or she is 'forcing' the locals to speak High German and, therefore, is leaving a sense of inconvenience for the expatriate. Regarding mutual intelligibility, the Alemannic speakers have a huge advantage as they understand almost all other German dialects, which is not the case in the other direction. Due to this fact, a person from Vorarlberg might not be aware that it is hardly possible to understand what was just said (Ender; Kaiser 2009). As Selmer & Laurin state, the host country language ability has a positive association with socio-cultural expatriate adjustment (Selmer; Luring 2011). By reverse implication, that means that not being able to speak the local language and communicate with the natives might make it harder to form social relationships. The absence of social contacts and such a network may most likely, trigger the expatriates feeling of outsidersness and loneliness (Richardson; Zikic 2007). The interviews confirmed that this is an issue, and due to the difficult language situation, some expatriates mainly socialize in the circle of immigrants in which they mostly speak English as a common language. The implications of not speaking the local language are reaching out to too many areas of the expatriate's daily life. Moreover, they might already have severe consequences in the earliest relocation phases. As the survey showed, finding employment and accommodation are negatively affected by poor or insufficient language knowledge. In regard to finding employment, this was already published by Aldashev et al. in their article 'Language usage, participation, employment and earnings' where they analyzed

multiple sources to find that the capabilities in the host countries language significantly affect the prospects of finding employment. Intriguingly they found no evidence for deviations in the salary level connected to the level of language capability (Aldashev; Gernandt; Thomsen 2009). For the fact that non fluent speakers have more difficulties finding accommodation in an own flat or house was no specific literature found by the author of this study. The empirical evidence from the survey answers, and from different conversations with affected persons clearly speaks for that hypothesis.

The second most discussed problem within the answers of the questionnaire and consequently in the semi-structures interviews has been the opening hours of Austrian authorities, shops and the service sector. In fact, Austrian regulations regarding the opening hours on workdays are among the strictest in Europe. On Sundays, Austrian shops stay closed at all, unequal to two-thirds of the European countries. When comparing how many hours of opening times are allowed per week in European countries, Austria is with just 66 particularly restrictive. In the majority of nations total weekly opening hours far above 100 hours are normal. In some countries, even the maximum possible 168 hours per week are reached (Promper 2007). The survey results represent, in this case, the perceived and actual reduction in the time available to go shopping or fulfill the daily errands. To make matters worse, in rural areas, some shops still stick to historical traditions and close already at noon on Thursdays.

Institutions of public or semi-public life, like for example, the 'Bezirkshauptmannschaft' or the 'Österreichische Gesundheitskasse' are even more restrictive when it comes to times for public business hours. With just twenty hours a week, the Bezirkshauptmannschaften in Austria (Mo-Fr, 8:00-12:00) are the institutions that have the least time open and therefore force people to take time off or compensate at their workplace. Despite yearly discussions about liberating the opening hours, especially in the weeks prior to Christmas, there are no signs that this strict legislation regarding opening hours will change. On the other hand, having limited times where the shops stay open does contribute to a better work-life balance for the employees in this sector. This was also a point that came up in the interviews. One contender said he would love to have longer opening hours but feels selfish with this wish. As he, at the same time, enjoys the fact that here, in Vorarlberg you

do not need to count on your boss calling you at ten o'clock in the evening as he was experiencing this often in his home country.

The third big problem field that came to light was mobility and public transport in Vorarlberg. In fact, it was found that a longer, daily commute to the place of work increases stress and reduces the perceived quality of life (Rüger et al. 2017). In fact, it is the case that Vorarlberg has some areas which are difficult to reach due to its topographical conditions. The survey and the interviews showed that in particular, the persons who are unable to use a car for their commute are less satisfied with the mobility in the area. However, researchers are indeed working on modeling and improving public transport for the most important routes in Vorarlberg (Lenz; Rudolff; Ulm 2016). People who reside in one of the cities of Vorarlberg are in the fortunate situation to be very well connected to the transporting network and profiting from a soon to be implemented quarterly-hour connection of trains and buses for the main routes. As a test, this was already used during the time of the World Gymnaestrada in the year 2019 and was well received by the population and visitors. Anyhow, if someone is not living in the cities, it is in fact, advisable to own a car. Not only this reduces the time to come from one place to another significantly, but one is also more flexible and has no issues transporting bigger goods. Consequently, the proportion of households in Vorarlberg with at least one car is 94 percent and, therefore, extremely high (Ashrafi; Neumann 2017). It is remarkable that the overwhelming majority of households without cars are single-person households. Twenty-one percent of these have no car, where households with more than one person relinquish having a car at a maximum of four percent. Sooner or later, most expatriates will probably decide to get their driver's license if they don't already have one and purchase a vehicle.

There are a number of additional problems that came up in the different stages of the research. In the author's opinion, several interesting topics and problems of expatriates came up. But none of them was mentioned to the extent that it could be seen as a general, big problem that affects a majority of the expatriates.

5.2 Interconnection between the problems

There is a proverb: 'misfortunes never come singly' that describes that problems always come in groups or streaks. But are these problems also interconnected? For

the biggest problem fields of an expatriate to rural Vorarlberg, this question can at least partly, be answered positively. The overarching topic, in this case, is actually the special linguistic situation in Vorarlberg. As discussed in the previous sections, even people from within Austria have difficulties in understanding the spoken language in the region of Vorarlberg (Ender; Kaiser 2009). Consecutive, the answer 'language' constantly appeared when asking for causes of problems in the conducted interviews and in the survey. Limited language capabilities are a huge cause of why it is harder to find employment. The lack of German skills makes it difficult to negotiate with a potential landlord and find a place to live. Forms and paperwork are in the majority of cases not available in English, and finding an official in an authority who is willing to communicate in English is not always easy. Not understanding German even turns out to be a problem when riding a bus, as all onboard information is solely displayed monolingual. These are just some examples of the fact that language affects many other problem fields. An interesting case is the question about the interrelation between mobility and availability of services and opening hours. There seems to be a connection, but it is more correlating than causal. Of course, access to a car makes it easier to reach various services and shops during the opening hours, but the lack of such is not the cause for difficulties with opening hours and availability of services.

5.3 Location in the adjustment cycle

Before starting the work for this thesis, when formulating the research questions and in particular the question: 'In which phase of the adjustment cycle, the problems occur?', I had an overly reduced idea of the process that describes the adjustment cycle. Whereas the U-model of Oberg clearly identifies the phases of adjustment, it does not represent the real sequential passing of them. Depending on the current situation, the prevailing feeling and the experiences made, I am convinced, the expatriate is jumping wildly between the individual phases of the model. Rachel Irwin describes a forth and back in her article, 'Culture Shock: negotiating feelings in the field' (Irwin 2009); but still, she sticks on Oberg's model. In reality, the process is multilayered and complex. For a long time, every beautiful experience in the host culture might trigger a honeymoon feeling and accordingly, each unpleasant situation might induce frustration and a little culture shock. Oberg also states that

without being fully adjusted, one cannot fully play his part on the job or as a member of the society (Oberg 1960). That would mean, if someone is not adjusted to aspects of his own culture or when he chooses not to adjust to some aspects of the host country he cannot participate fully. After reviewing the survey answers and reviewing the interviews, I am not entirely convinced that adjustment in Oberg's definition is necessary. Cultural change has always been triggered by those who were not adopted and satisfied. Therefore my belief is that adjustment, as defined in the U-curve model is not necessary and even if someone struggles with certain aspects of a culture, his own or of a host country, he might be fully functional within the culture and a valuable member of society; or precisely because of this conflict. In hindsight, the more appropriate question should have been: 'In what timely order do the biggest problems for expatriates arise?'. To answer this question, however, will not significantly expand the level of information in the field of study. Since the majority of the individual's problems naturally will occur at the beginning of the time in the new surroundings. On the contrary, problems caused by linguistic circumstances will remain until a certain language level is reached.

5.4 Chosen acculturation strategy

Likewise, as in the segment bevoor, the empirical result of this study indicates that Berry's acculturation strategies as a model, do represent a simplified representation of the truth. Of course, overall, one prevailing strategy can be named, but following the results of the survey and the interviews, it seems that expatriates have subtle nuances of which strategies apply to which cultural situation. In general, the most chosen acculturation strategy is integration. Moreover, immigrants tend to try their best to meet expectations that are placed on them by the host culture. Predominately this happens in domains that demand it but do not compromise their cultural identity (e.g., at work or economic) (Navas et al. 2007). Integration does not necessarily mean that the immigrant fully identifies and adapts to the host culture. They might even not consider some aspects of the host culture as important despite being fully integrated (Snauwaert; Vanbeselaere; Boen 2003). In theory, there might be a connection between serious problems an expatriate is facing and the chosen acculturation strategy, in particular, when contemplating the

marginalization and separation strategies. This study, however, did not produce any evidence to further proof this coherence.

5.5 Organizational support possibilities

Whenever a person starts a new assignment, he or she is faced with new circumstances and different surroundings. For an expatriate, there is even more unknown. Not only the company's culture is different, but also the whole environment, maybe the language and definitely the local culture. All these new impressions, as exciting they might be, create a stressful sphere for the immigrant. Given that stress reduces the expatriate's ability to perform and carry out his job effectively, it should be in the interest of a company to provide some organizational support. In fact, there is evidence in the literature that indicates a positive relation between organizational support and expatriate adjustment (Kraimer; Wayne; Jaworski 2006). A variety of specific types of organizational support have been examined by various researchers. The described forms of support are, for example, pre-departure support, adjustment-related support, financial support, and career support (Kraimer; Wayne 2003). In particular, adjustment Perceived Organizational Support (POS) seems to be interesting in the context of this study. Kramer and Wayne define adjustment POS as:

'the extent to which the organization cares about the employee's (including family) adjustment following a job transfer' (Kraimer; Wayne 2003)

Some of the most common practices in adjustment POS are cross-cultural training, relocation assistance, and language training (Mendenhall; Black; Oddou 1991). As the results of the online survey showed, many expatriates do, in fact, get support from their company. However, it would be appropriate to extend the level of support as still many expatriates face difficulties in certain situations during the adjustment process. Especially in some of the big problem fields discussed in this study, finding accommodation and dealing with administrations, extended POS would help the expatriate tremendously. Regardless, if this support is organized by the HR department, a special staff unit or even someone participating in a peer program as it is common at many universities, the assistance of a person which has the knowledge, experience and proper language knowledge to fulfill this task would reduce the stress level in the setting-in period significantly. When choosing the way

of a peer program, there might be even the benefit that an excellent opportunity for establishing social contacts with coworkers is given.

6. Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis enhances the literature on expatriate adjustment and the most severe problems foreigners face when they want to make themselves a home in rural Vorarlberg. As research shows, companies in Vorarlberg are facing a lack of qualified workforce to fill their vacancies and for the planned expansion of their business. Attracting foreigners to move to Vorarlberg and work for them is one of the strategies to fill this void. While companies fight to become the most attractive place to work, they often overlook the problems that appear outside of the company for a foreigner trying to settle down in the area. As Schaffenrath states, for a variety of reasons, the shortage of skilled professionals is going to worsen rather than decreasing in the coming years. Hence companies need to attract and retain even more foreign talents. Being aware of these people's biggest and most important problems enables companies to get involved and to accelerate and improve their adaption process through the support provided.

This study was set to explore what kind of problems expatriates face, especially in the rural areas of Vorarlberg, outside of the major cities in the area, by examining the participant's experiences and perceptions in their daily life. To gain this insight, the study used both quantitative and qualitative methods with a survey questionnaire, individual semi-structured interviews, and a conversation with an expert in the field of relocation support. A total of 53 people undertook the online survey, and five interviews were conducted as a second step. The knowledge gained was then supplemented and confirmed in a personal conversation with a consultant that specializes in supporting expatriates during their relocation and accommodation phases.

Overall, the findings of this study present evidence that the biggest challenge of any immigrant to Vorarlberg, regardless of where he or she comes from or where in the region he or she finds a home, is the special language situation. A newcomer is forced to either bring with him some knowledge in High German, or he has to learn

it. Even if this point is reached, the migrant cannot, or at most, minimally understand the local people and their everyday language. The special ability of Alemannic speakers to understand almost all Upper German languages and dialects effortlessly, but conversely, not being understandable complicates the situation additionally. People from Vorarlberg are not used to talk in High German, and even if they try, they are often falling back into their own everyday language, the dialect. As a further point, the study confirmed that people from all over the world have difficulties with the limited opening hours of shops and the services sector. As Austria sits among the countries with the strictest legislation for opening and working hours in this aspect, it is a significant reduction of available time for such errands for most expatriates. In conjunction with the third problem, the mobility situation, the situation might even aggravate. Despite the small size of the region but due to its geographical structure, only the regions along the axis Bregenz to Bludenz are well integrated into the mobility concept of Vorarlberg. Leaving this axis reduces the frequency of the connections significantly, especially during the nights and on weekends. In addition to these problems, a number of others were mentioned during the data collection phase of this study, but none of them reached nearly as often as those already described.

Of course, these problems do occur more at the beginning of an expatriate's time in Austria and decrease in their frequency as the foreigner will get accommodated to the region and gets used to the habits and circumstances of the locals. However, this study initially wanted to draw a connection between the manifestation of the single problems and the single phases of Oberg's U-curve model. In retrospect, it must be said that this established model is completely unsuitable for showing these relationships. The well known and intensively discussed model is simplifying the real adjustment cycle too much to assign it to a certain timeline. However, even though the timely sequence of the single phases is, in reality, way more complex, the definition of the single phases is very well representing the feelings of the affected person. Also, there cannot be assigned a problem field to the chosen acculturation strategy as it turned out. The results of the study showed that expatriates do not choose one global strategy for acculturation, but moreover, they mix strategies up according to different topics and situations. Another point that was confirmed by the study is that the problem fields might be interrelated. In the case of language this relationship is, in fact, causal as many difficulties can be clearly traced back to not being able to

communicate sufficiently with people from the region. Other interrelations are rather correlated and not deriving from each other.

The results of this study could help in practice to rethink the range of support measures and adapt key elements if necessary. It should be in the best interest of companies, but also of authorities to make the process of arriving and integrating into the culture and society of Vorarlberg as seamless as possible. One of the most urgent steps that have to be taken as soon as possible to enable these better support is to provide all forms also in proper English.

The focus of this research was put on the most important, the biggest problem that expatriates face when they want to make themselves a home in Vorarlberg. Many problems that have not been named extensively, therefore, are not in detail taken into account for this study. However, especially the role of spouses and family of an expatriate is an interesting topic for further research. The scientific literature regarding spouses has recently been expanded, but neither for Austria nor for rural areas.

Oberg's model of expatriate adjustment has, in this study, also be found in general. A closer examination and the development of a revised, extended and improved model could also be a worthwhile research task.

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4.) In general, do you find the process of finding accommodation in Vorarlberg harder or easier than in your earlier locations?

- Harder
- Easier
- About the same

5.) In your opinion, what was the biggest problem for you finding accommodation in Vorarlberg?

Section 2: Finding a Job:

6.) Did you already have a job or a job offer when arriving in Vorarlberg?

- Yes
- No

7.) Did you have help to find employment, or did you manage it on your own?

- I had help from an agency
- I had help from an acquaintance/friend
- I managed it on my own
- I am here for study/family reasons and do not seek work
- The company reached out to me

8.) On a scale from 1 (fairly easy) to 5 (extremely hard), how did you find the search for a job?

- 1
-
-
-
-
- 5

9.) In general, do you find the process of finding a job in Vorarlberg harder or easier than in your earlier locations?

- Harder
- Easier
- About the same

10.) In your opinion, what was the biggest problem for you finding a job in Vorarlberg?

Section 3: Administrative matters:

This section combines the coping with banks, insurances, and authorities (municipal administration, Bezirkshauptmannschaft, immigration offices, etc.)

11.) Did you face any problems with any of the organizations as mentioned above?

- Yes
- No

12.) If yes, with which of the organizations? (multiple answers possible)

- Bank
- Insurance
- Municipal
- Bezirkshauptmannschaft
- Others, please specify: _____

13.) Compared to your home country, how hard is it to work with administrative organizations in Austria?

- Harder
- Easier
- About the same

14.) What was the biggest problem that surfaced with one of these organizations?

15.) Did you need help to solve the problem(s), and where did you find it?

Yes No

16.) Who provided you this help?

Section 4: Language:

17.) How well do you speak German?

- Not at all
- Only some words and phrases
- Beginner level
- Somehow fluent
- Native level

18.) Do you understand the local dialect(s) of Vorarlberg?

- Not at all
- Only some words and phrases
- Enough to understand the context
- Quite well

19.) Was there ever a situation where the language was the primary reason you faced a huge problem?

Yes No

20.) In what kind of situation, you have faced difficulties with language?

- At work
- Shopping
- Administrative matters
- At doctors or health related services
- Public transport
- Leisure activities
- Social interaction
- Others, please specify: _____

21.) Did you, or do you attend German language courses?

- No
- Yes, before moving to Austria
- Yes, at my company
- Yes, at university / FH
- Others, please specify: _____

Section 5: Cultural and social:

22.) Is there an active community from your home region/country in Vorarlberg?

And do you attend their activities

- No
- Yes, but I do not join their activities
- Yes, but I rarely join them
- Yes, I am a regular participant in their activities
- I do not know

23.) Do you join social events in your host community/region of Vorarlberg? e.g., Fröhshoppen, Club festivals, local markets

Yes No

24.) Do you join social events of other cultures in your host community/region of Vorarlberg?

Yes No

25.) Are you a member of a club in Vorarlberg?

No
 Yes, in one club.
 Yes, in more than one.

26.) Do you talk and interact with your Austrian neighbors?

No
 Rarely
 Yes, on a regular basis.

27.) What is the biggest cultural difference between the region you are from and Vorarlberg?

28.) Have you ever faced a form of racism in Vorarlberg?

Yes No

Section 6: Mobility, coming around in Vorarlberg:

29.) Do you have a driver's license and access to a car?

- None of both
- Drivers license but no car
- Both of them

30.) What is your mean of transport for going to work?

- By foot
- By bike
- Public transport
- A (own) car
- Others, please specify: _____

31.) What is your most used mean of transport for leisure time, shopping, daily errands?

- By foot
- By bike
- Public transport
- Own car
- Rental car
- Others, please specify: _____

32.) Do you sometimes find it difficult to get from one place to another in Vorarlberg?

- Yes
- No

33.) Do you sometimes have the impression it takes too much time to reach places in Vorarlberg?

Yes No

34.) What is, in your opinion, your biggest pain point regarding traffic and mobility in Vorarlberg?

Section 7: Local supply and opening hours:

35.) Which of the following shops are available in the village you live in?

- Groceries
- Clothing and shoes
- Electronics and household items
- Furniture
- Jewellery and luxury items
- Pharmacy
- Drugstore
- Others, please specify: _____

36.) Which of the following services are available in the village you live in?

- Hairdresser
- Cosmetics / Nail studio
- General Doctor
- Dentist
- Medical specialist (e.g. eye doctor, cardiologist)
- Primary school
- Secondary school

37.) How long do you need to reach entertainment facilities (e.g., cinema, theatre, nightclubs) from the place where you live?

- Up to 15 minutes
- Up to 30 minutes
- More than 30 minutes

38.) Due to opening hours, do you find it difficult to get some tasks done (e.g., visit banks, post office or go shopping)

- Yes
- No

39.) Where you ever forced to take time off to get something done within limited opening hours of that facility?

- Never
- Rarely
- This happens all the time

40.) Seen from the village where you are living, what is the biggest problem regarding opening hours and availability of services?

Section 8: Statistical questions:

41.) Are you male or female?

- Male
- Female

42.) How old were you when you came to Vorarlberg?

- < 20 years
- 21 – 30
- 31 – 40
- > 41 years

43.) What was your reason to move to Vorarlberg?

- private reasons
- career reasons
- Others, please specify: _____

44.) For how long are you living in Vorarlberg now?

- < one year
- 1 - 2 years
- 3 - 5 years
- more than 5 years

45.) Did you come here on you own, with a partner, with your family

- on my own
- with a partner
- with my family

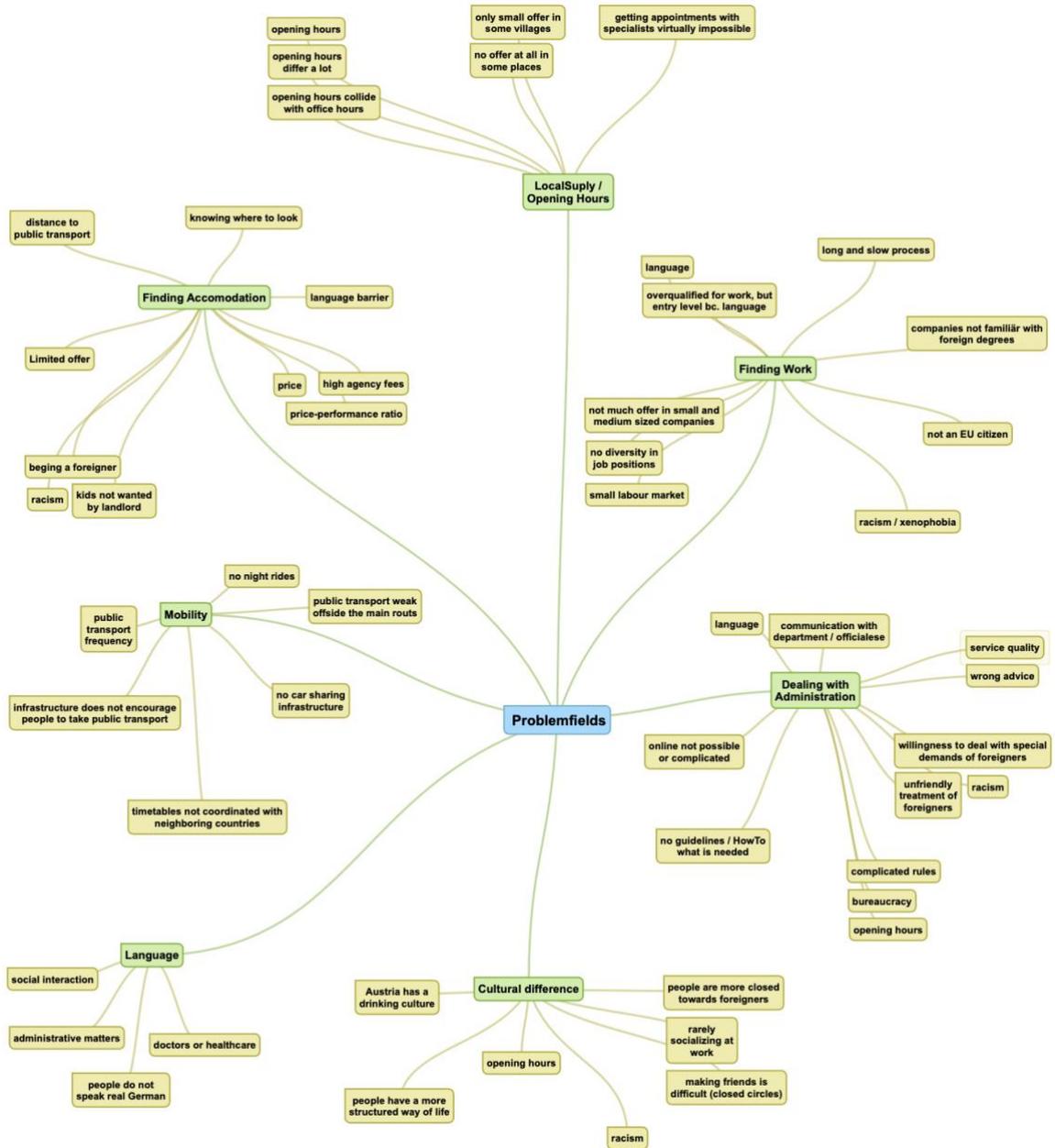
46.) What size of town do you live in Vorarlberg?

- in a city
- in a "bigger" village (> 4000 inhabitants)
- in a small village

47.) What is your main language?

- German
- English
- Others, please specify: _____

Mind map Questionnaire Answers



Structured Interview Guideline.

Introduction:

At first, I would like to thank you for your willingness to making yourself available as an interview partner.

As already mentioned, I am investigating which problems highly skilled expatriates are facing in rural areas in Vorarlberg.

In the first round, I handed out a questionnaire to identify the most common problem fields, and now I would like to get some more in-depth insight, and therefore I am speaking to you now.

First section, Language:

Let's face the elephant in the room! Not everybody in Vorarlberg is able to speak and understand English, and nobody is talking proper German. Nevertheless, without German skills, one has a difficult life in Vorarlberg.

1) Tell me about your experience regarding language difficulties.

follow up:

1a) when did this incident happen (beginning of your time, when already some time here.....)

1b) did such things happen frequently? How often?

2) Did you notice that the attitude of people changed with language advances you made, and how would you describe that change?

3) What was the biggest surprise for you? Where did you face language problems that you would never thought will happen on this occasion?

4) What is your personal approach to deal with the language situation in Vorarlberg?

follow up:

4a) is learning dialect an option for you?

Second section, opening hours:

Surprisingly for me, the questionnaire showed that most expats are not satisfied with opening hours of shops, authorities, and the service sector.

5) Where and how do you personally wish this would improve?

follow up:

5a) did you adapt to the situation? What are your strategies?

6). Would you share with me when you realized that opening hours are a little different in Vorarlberg - What did happen?

Third section, mobility:

Mobility and public transport seem to be a big topic among expatriates. As soon as you leave the Rhein valley, the connection frequency and coverage reduce significantly.

7.) Please describe how you get to work/university.... How long does it take you to get there? Are you satisfied with your personal mobility situation?

8) Besides commuting to work, how do you get around in leisure time?

9) Did your personal mobility situation change over time? How and when?

10) What kind of improvement would be great for you?

Fourth section, dealing with Administration:

Banks, insurances, municipal and regional administrations are a necessity when moving to a new place or country.

11) Which of these entities was for you the most difficult to deal with? Please explain why.

12) Where do you see the main reason for your difficulties?

13) If contact was recurring, did the attitude of the official in charge change over time?

Follow up: what do you think, what was the reason?

Fifth section, Cultural difference:

14) How significant are the cultural differences from Vorarlberg to the region you came from?

Give me some examples...

15) Do you adapt to the local culture, stick with your own culture or mix cultures up?

16) How do you see yourself as Vorarlberger in several years?

Statement of Affirmation

I hereby declare that all parts of this thesis were exclusively prepared by me, without using resources other than those stated above. The appropriately annotated. This thesis or parts of it were not previously submitted to any other academic institution and have not yet been published.

Dornbirn, 28.07.2020

Thomas Mathis