

# Negotiating Integration in Berlin's Waxing Studios: Brazilian Migrants' Gendered Appropriation of Urban Consumer Spaces and 'Ethnic' Entrepreneurship

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## Abstract

Current discussions on immigration in Germany emphasize the economic benefits of migrant economies and ethnic entrepreneurship, pointing to the positive effects on the 'integration' of migrants into the German labour market and into German society. This article focuses on the ethnographic example of Brazilian small-scale businesswomen in Berlin, who run cosmetic salons specialized in body hair removal, and how they embed their businesses in the Berlin landscape of multicultural consumption. On the basis of their migration trajectories I discuss these women's manifold cultural, gendered and class-informed strategies of negotiating integration, encompassing not just their economic activity, the role of independent work and the associated social effects, but also the commodified beauty practice itself. Thereby, the article inquires into conceptions of emancipation connected to migrant women's entrepreneurship in their everyday life that is still highly constrained by migration and gender regimes.

## Keywords

beauty practices, Brazilian business women, ethnic entrepreneurship, migrant integration, work

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In current debates on immigration in Germany high-ranking politicians allege that multicultural policies have failed due to the persistent deficiencies in integrating migrants socially and culturally. Some politicians even accuse migrants of just reaping the benefits of the German social welfare system instead of endeavouring to integrate into German society. They argue either for 'more effective' integration politics or for stricter laws to hinder immigration.<sup>1</sup> This position often relies on arguments that emphasize stereotypic and static notions of culture, such as the contention that certain migrant groups like the Turkish are essentially different and therefore less capable of adapting to German values and a German *Leitkultur*, or German guiding culture. This position is contested by proponents of immigration, some of whom pinpoint its benefits with regard to its possible contribution to demographic growth. They affirm that migrants guarantee the financing of Germany's social systems in view of the continuous decrease of the German population due to low birth rates.<sup>2</sup> Other advocates report the success stories of migration and resort discursively to the figure of 'the good migrant'.<sup>3</sup> They emphasize the economic value of migrant economies and 'ethnic' entrepreneurship. These debates, however, tend to polarize. Moreover, the latter stance generalizes the positive effects of migrant economies on the labour market and on 'integration', thus limiting the evaluation of immigration to the context of the migrant's entrepreneurial activity and its economic benefits for German society.

This article argues for a more complex view of migrant economies by focusing on the gendered dimension of independent work and its distinctive contribution to 'integration' in Germany. I will discuss the significance of work, entrepreneurship and its cultural inscription into German consumer spaces, while drawing on the ethnographic case of Brazilian migrants' engagement as small-scale entrepreneurs in Berlin.

These entrepreneurs have created a relatively new sector of 'ethnic' entrepreneurship by establishing waxing studios, cosmetic salons which specialize in the removal of body hair. One of their characteristics is that they are run predominantly by Brazilian women migrants. Besides this and the active ethnic and cultural labelling of this business branch, these beauty salons display further features that merit their more detailed study as an emergent sector of the migrant economies. Their novelty status allows for the observation of the strategies currently implemented by the business owners to promote their services and to brand them culturally. Due to the relatively small number of studios operating in Berlin an

1 Chancellor Angela Merkel gave a remarkable speech at the Tag der Jungen Union [a gathering of the youth organization of the Christian Democratic Union Party] in Potsdam (15–17 October 2010) and declared that 'multiculturalism has failed'. Two months before, Thilo Sarrazin, a former Senator of the Social Democratic Party in the city council of Berlin, had published his controversial book *Deutschland schafft sich selber ab* ['Germany abolishes itself'] alluding to Germans reputed loss of influence and privileges due to the increased migration from, especially, non-European countries to Germany.

2 Besides members of the left-wing parties and organizations of the German civic society, proponents can be also found throughout the conservative political strata, and they highlight especially the economic advantages of immigration.

3 Even politicians who take up a more hostile stance regarding migration, predominantly within the Liberal Party, are among those who resort to the figure of 'the good migrant'.

in-depth analysis of all of them is possible. This analysis focuses on the business-women's narratives as well as their spatial, social and entrepreneurial practices. A special characteristic distinguishing these Brazilian migrants from many other migrant groups – such as the majority group of Turkish origin – is that they are not negatively stigmatized within German public discourses. Despite being categorized as 'foreigners' [*Ausländer*],<sup>4</sup> Brazilian women manage to overcome this categorization in everyday interpersonal encounters by referring to their Brazilian nationality or origin. This enables them to negotiate their social positioning between discriminatory interpellations as foreigners/aliens and the positive connotation of their nationality as it is linked to a globalized image of 'Brazilianness'.<sup>5</sup> They take advantage of this latter resource to inscribe their businesses into the (multi-) cultural consumer spaces in Berlin.

While taking the historically produced structural circumstances of migrants' accessibility to the German labour market into account, this article pays special attention to the entrepreneurs' present agency and how it is situated in interdependent categorizations: gender is the primary focus, as well as its intersections with racial/ethnic and class related categorizations.<sup>6</sup> Viewing migrant entrepreneurship from this gendered perspective is still an approach that is underrepresented not only in the German academic discussion but also in general.<sup>7</sup> Labour migration, or more precisely migrants' incorporation into the dominant labour market, tends to be viewed as an essentially masculinized phenomenon. In German contexts, the mainly male-oriented guest worker programs (directed first towards migrants from

4 The term *Ausländer* has a literal meaning of exclusion and besides connotes a racialized and socially inferior imaginary of the Other who does not belong to the German nation. M. Jung et al., *Ausländer und Migranten im Spiegel der deutschen Presse. Ein diskurshistorisches Wörterbuch zur Einwanderung seit 1945* (Wiesbaden 2000); N. Räthzel, *Gegenbilder: Nationale Identitäten durch Konstruktion des Anderen* (Opladen 1997); D. Thränhardt, 'Ausländer als Objekt deutscher Interessen und Ideologien', in H.M. Griese (ed.) *Der gläserne Fremde. Bilanz und Kritik der Gastarbeiterforschung und Ausländerpädagogik* (Opladen 1984), 115–32. This term has been replaced with 'person with migration background' [Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund] in German statistics since 2005. It is a reaction to the blurring of the conceptions of 'Aus'- and 'Inländer' due to second and third generation immigrant living in Germany and aims to avoid the negative connotations of the term *Ausländer*. Nevertheless, the latter term is still widely used in public and political discourse.

5 For a more general discussion on the issue of Brazilian migrant women negotiating cultural identity in everyday life in Berlin, see M. Lidola, 'Appropriating "die Brasilianerin": Negotiating belonging and unbelonging in everyday practice in Berlin', *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, 136, 2 (October 2011/February 2012), 155–76.

6 Gender is understood here as a social category with normative implications that are constructed within, and which structure, social practices, interactions and symbolic/cultural orders. See e.g. J.P. Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'* (New York, NY 1993); S. Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Los Angeles, CA 1993); S. Ortner and H. Whitehead (eds), *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Constructing of Gender and Sexuality* (Cambridge 1981). I also analyse gender in its intersection with other social categories of difference, like ethnical/cultural/national belongings and class. In reference to authors like Patricia Hill Collins, I start from the premise that these intersections modify quality and outcome of the gender categorization. See P. Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment* (New York et al. 1990); F. Anthias, *Ethnicity. Class, Gender and Migration* (Aldershot 1992).

7 One of the recent works that combines the intersectionality approach with ethnic business approaches is Z. Valdez, *The New Entrepreneurs. How Race, Class, and Gender Shape American Enterprise* (Stanford, CT 2011).

European countries such as Italy, Spain and Yugoslavia as well as Turkey), and their social (and cultural) short- and long-term implications and effects, have dominated the discussion on migration and labour market incorporation since the 1970s. The consequent increased self-employment of former guest workers and of other 'labour migrants' (from non-European countries) have been implicitly analysed as a male domain.<sup>8</sup> The entrepreneurship of migrant women has, until recently, rarely been an object of research; the intersections of gender with ethnicity as well as racialized and class related ascriptions and interpellations is even rarer. A similar statement can be made regarding debates on integration which focus on the aspect of labour, in which men are again placed centre-stage.

For this reason, this article takes an actor-centred perspective which emphasizes both women's entrepreneurial perspectives and their biographical trajectories leading to independent work with the aim of elucidating their agency in 'ethnic' entrepreneurship and migration debates. My insights are based on ethnographic fieldwork and in-depth interviews with Brazilian migrant women in Berlin.<sup>9</sup> Before presenting these case studies and results on 'ethnic businesses' and 'integration' from the perspective of Brazilian entrepreneurial women, I will first introduce both the business branch and the entrepreneurs in general.

Like many of the world's larger cities and capitals Berlin hosts and creates a range of spaces for cultural consumption.<sup>10</sup> Within the city, migrant economies play a vital role in creating multicultural landscapes. Anyone walking through the streets of Berlin will come across a broad range of culturally or ethnically marked restaurants, shops, bars, dancing studios and other urban sites of consumption. These mainly small-scale businesses are not solely located in districts where the majority of migrant communities seem to concentrate, even though they might appear more visible in these areas. Instead, many migrant business branches count on a 'mainstream' clientele, focusing on globalized, but yet culturally distinguishable, consumer tastes. They can therefore be largely found in German-dominated districts with a higher percentage of members of the middle and upper classes.

In 2005, the first so-called *waxing studio* (the English name is used in Germany too), until then a completely unknown business form in Germany, emerged in Berlin city centre. Their numbers increased rapidly since then. They can be characterized as cosmetic or beauty salons which specialize exclusively on the removal of body hair. The non-ethnically marked cosmetic salons in contrast usually offer

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8 Authors who point to this gender bias are: F. Hillman, 'A Look at the "Hidden Side": Turkish Women in Berlin's Ethnic Labour Market', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23, 2 (June 1999), 267–82; U. Apitzsch and M. Kontos (eds), *Self-employment Activities of Women and Minorities: Their Success or Failure in Relation to Social Citizenship Policies* (Wiesbaden 2008).

9 Narrative and semi-structured interviews have been carried out with 18 studio owners since 2010, including multiple interviews to inquire into their labour biographies, migration experiences and body-related images and imaginations.

10 In reference to S. Zukin, 'Urban Lifestyles. Diversity and Standardisation in Spaces of Consumption', *Urban Studies*, 35, 5–6 (May 1998), 825–39; S. Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (New York 1995).

additional services such as facial care, manicures and pedicures. All of these waxing studios promote their service as the 'Brazilian method', hence Brazilian waxing – a term referring to the use of warm, honey-based wax to remove body hair.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, hair removal is not only offered to women and for the more conventional body parts like legs, armpits or the bikini area, a non-controversial practice in the case of women. Instead it is offered to both women and men, and extended to other body parts like the whole pubic zone (men and women), arms and facial hair (women), and back and chest (men). Most studios are run by Brazilian migrant women, and they are advertised using symbolic representations that connote an image of Brazil in the eyes of a German audience. The storefront or/and the interiors of some beauty salons, for example, are designed in the colours of the Brazilian national flag. They may show photos and posters of Brazilian landscapes, especially palm-tree beaches, Rio de Janeiro's Sugar Loaf Mountain or its carnival parade. A considerable number of the salons' names also refer directly to Brazil, like Copacabana Brazilian Waxing, Rio Wax, Brazil Wax, Brazilian Waxing Center and Bella Brasil. Others refer to it more indirectly by using the Portuguese language and/or Brazil-related images, like for example Morena Bonita, Sempre Bonita or Amazon Waxing. Finally, most of the business owners rely on employees called *depiladoras* (hair removers) of Brazilian nationality or of other ethnic origin.

The first waxing studio offering body hair removal using the 'Brazilian method' in Berlin was opened by two German women in 2005.<sup>12</sup> They had become acquainted with the honey-wax method while visiting a beauty salon during a holiday trip to Rio de Janeiro. Back in Berlin, they decided to set up their own waxing studio business and as one of their first steps recruited experienced *depiladoras* from Rio de Janeiro to come to Berlin. Their business proved to be successful in a very short time, and so the two entrepreneurs solicited for further *depiladoras* from Brazil. At the same time they developed an in-house training programme for Brazilian women who already lived in Berlin, but who had no experience in cosmetic work. Most of these women had come to Germany several years before and since then had been working in service sectors like cleaning or restaurant work. They had worked under physically hard conditions in these primarily semi-informal or even informal sectors, with low wages. The majority of them were already quite fluent in the German language due to partnership with or marriage to German men, their civic engagement as mothers and wives in social institutions and life within a bi-national family.

It was some of these women who, after having finished the training and having worked as a *depiladora* in Berlin's first waxing studio, decided to leave that salon to

11 The term 'Brazilian waxing' was coined in the United States of America where Brazilian migrant women first managed to establish Brazilian beauty salons focusing on body hair removal. In contrast to Germany, the US waxing studios do not necessarily advertise the honey-based method, but instead emphasize hair removal in the pubic area.

12 This is based on information given by several of the interviewees who had worked in this first waxing studio or knew someone who had worked there. Information is also offered on the salon's homepage.

open their own waxing business. They were able to count on the help of their partners, friends and/or relatives. Almost simultaneously, a 'second generation' of waxing business women emerged, mainly consisting of other Brazilian women who had noticed the other salons' success. Some of them had already worked in the beauty business in Brazil before migrating to Germany. Others specifically undertook training as *depiladora* during their longer stays in Brazil. In contrast to the non-ethnically marked cosmetic salons in Germany, conventional beauty salons in Brazil include the removal of body hair as an integral part of their services. Training as a *depiladora* is not only acquired on a private basis, through instruction from a friend or acquaintance who works in or owns a beauty salon, but also through the training programmes in cosmetic care offered by a range of state-sponsored and state-approved institutions. The state-approved and union-affiliated National Service for Commercial Education SENAC (Serviço Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial) in the city Belo Horizonte, for example, implemented a short-term training programme in beauty therapy in response to the increased demand from women living abroad. In order to target migrant women who only spend a limited period of time in Brazil, the ordinary training period of three months was reduced to four weeks. Furthermore, the courses focus solely on depilation and manicure/pedicure.<sup>13</sup> As an alternative to training in a Berlin waxing studio, this way of becoming a *depiladora* was increasingly sought by women who have recently started businesses.

At present, there are about 45 cosmetic salons in Berlin that focus exclusively on Brazilian waxing. More than three quarters of them are run by Brazilian women. The more successful salons have started to export their business concepts, knowledge and even their studio design through franchising agreements not only within Berlin but also in other German cities like Frankfurt, Munich and Hamburg. They have established networks of knowledge and carried out business transfers well beyond the range of friendship and family ties.

These observations on Brazilian waxing studios in Berlin seem at first glance to be in tune with what is widely defined as 'ethnic entrepreneurship'. In countries that acknowledge and have built on a long and profound history of immigration, such as the USA, immigrant businesses are conceived as being an integral part of the national economy but – in its entrepreneurial and hence individualistic character – also part of the American (immigrant) dream narrative.<sup>14</sup> In contrast, the presence of migrant economies in German urban landscapes, their contribution to the

13 Information offered by the coordinator of the cosmetic care training of the SENAC in Belo Horizonte in an interview (Adraciana F., Belo Horizonte, 17 March 2010). She further pointed out that besides Brazilian waxing, the 'Brazilian way' of *fazendo unhas* or manicure has become a popular business activity for Brazilian women living in the USA. Belo Horizonte is the capital of the federal state with the highest emigration rate since the 1980s. The coordinator referred to migration success stories, especially of women working in the beauty sector, in the Brazilian media affirming that this contributed to the increased demand for short-period training in both depilation and manicure by women living abroad.

14 Valdez, *The New Entrepreneurs*, 8. F. Hillman, 'Gendered Landscapes of Ethnic Economies. Turkish Entrepreneurs in Berlin', in D.H. Kaplan and W. Li (eds) *Landscapes of the Ethnic Economy* (Lanham, MD 2006), 97–110.

national economy and the German labour market and their function as a site of (multi) cultural consumption has entered the public consciousness only recently, even though academic research on these businesses started in the 1980s. Statistics display a continual increase of migrant self-employment since the 1990s.<sup>15</sup>

A broad definition given by Ulla-Kristina Schuleri-Hartje et al. (2005) identifies 'ethnic business' in the German context with the independent work of persons with a 'migration background' or with the dependent work/employment in businesses run by people with a 'migration background'.<sup>16</sup> Approaches in social sciences, geography and cultural anthropology focus, on the one hand, on migrant entrepreneurs' resources by investigating social, human and cultural capital as well as the respective 'ethnic' or social milieus in which ethnic businesses are commonly found. They thus emphasize these businesses' local social and cultural embeddedness. On the other hand, scholars inquire into the opportunity structures of migrant labour market entry set by the host society in order to explain specific circumstances and conditions of the emergence of ethnic businesses. A third group of approaches centre their attention on the biographic trajectories of the entrepreneurs, the transcultural character of their entrepreneurial practices and offered goods, services or business places and the 'mixed embeddedness' of their business activities.<sup>17</sup>

An implicit issue in many studies like that of Schuleri-Hartje et al. is whether these kind of businesses have positive or negative effects on the 'integration' of migrants on the individual level and with regard to the respective migrant community in general. As a result, scholars focusing on urban development in Germany tend to discuss the integrative or disintegrative economical and social effects of ethnic businesses on a particular urban district.<sup>18</sup> The debate over ethnic businesses' impact on 'integration' is of special interest here, and I will engage with this debate by posing the following actor-centred research question: How do the entrepreneurs position themselves vis-a-vis dominant discourses on 'integration' with regard to their economic activities?

To address this question, I will first focus, not only on the entrepreneurial activity itself, but also on the biographical trajectory leading to independent work, as Maria Kontos and others propose.<sup>19</sup> I suggest that this trajectory already reflects the entrepreneurs' entanglement with and negotiation of dominant discourses on 'integration'. For this purpose, I will retrace the migration processes

15 Cf. Apitzsch and Kontos (eds), *Self-employment Activities of Women and Minorities*, 21.

16 U.-K. Schuleri-Hartje et al., *Ethnische Ökonomie: Integrationsfaktor und Integrationsmaßstab* (Darmstadt/Berlin 2005), 9.

17 R. Kloosterman and J. Rath, 'Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Advanced Economies: Mixed Embeddedness further Explored', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 27, 2 (April 1991), 189–201; R. Pütz, *Transkulturalität als Praxis: Unternehmer türkischer Herkunft in Berlin* (Bielefeld 2004).

18 F. Heckmann, 'Ethnische Kolonien: Schonraum für Integration oder Verstärkung der Ausgrenzung', in Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (ed.) *Ghettos oder ethnische Kolonie? Entwicklungschancen von Stadtteilen mit hohem Zuwanderanteil* (Bonn 1998), 29–41. M. Kniepkamp and P. König, *Bunt tut gut: Ausländische Unternehmen stärken den Standort* (Berlin 2007).

19 M. Kontos, 'Übergänge von der abhängigen zur selbständigen Arbeit', in T. Geisen, *Arbeitsmigration. Wanderarbeiterinnen auf dem Weltmarkt* (Frankfurt am Main 2005), 217–36.

of the women who are now engaged in their own businesses as well as their former experience of work in other sectors as narrated by them in their migration biographies. Next, I will reflect on the women's interpretation and appropriation of 'integration' with regard to their economic activities and their social effects. This is evidenced in their stories of how they founded their businesses, and is reflected in the services offered there.

During the last 30 years, migration from countries of the global South to those of the global North has not only increased but also changed in profile. This also applies to emigration from Brazil since its process of democratization in 1985. Until the mid-twentieth century, Brazil was considered a typical immigration country of postcolonial constellation.<sup>20</sup> Up to the 1980s, emigration – mostly on a temporary basis – constituted a privilege of the upper classes and was motivated by political dissent or educational aspirations. As a result of Brazil's ongoing economic and political instability since 1985, combined with increased global interconnection, members of the middle class began to leave the country for longer periods of time in order to work and earn money abroad and then return. Since the 1990s people from the economically underprivileged strata of Brazilian society have followed.<sup>21</sup> Most of the interviewees are part of the latter strata that until now also comprised the majority of the non-white population of Brazil.<sup>22</sup> Brazilian emigration was first mainly directed to the USA, Japan and to southern European countries. In the late 1990s it became more diversified and included northern European countries like Germany. Until then, Germany had not been a favoured destination for Brazilian migrants. As with migration flows from other Latin American countries, only a few upper class Brazilians came to Germany, mainly for political or educational reasons, during the military dictatorship in the 1970s and early 1980s. As the social profile of Latin American migrants became more diverse from the 1990s onwards, the range of motivations for migration to Germany also broadened, ranging from economically motivated aspirations and family reunion to curiosity or changes in one's life project.<sup>23</sup> Since then, Brazilian migrants have represented the largest Latin American migrant community in

20 There was considerable immigration of Europeans, especially Italians, Portuguese and Germans, and also of Japanese, into Brazil until the beginning of the twentieth century. The majority of German migrants settled in the Brazilian south. Hence, the current migration of Brazilians to Germany is not linked to the former German immigration. With few exceptions, the majority do not have German ancestry. Furthermore, regions with high emigration rates are north and central east parts of Brazil, which do not coincide with regions of former German settlement.

21 See, for example, T. Sales, *Brasileiros longe de casa* (São Paulo 1998); R. Rocha Reis et al. (eds), *Cenas do Brasil migrante* (São Paulo 1999); M.L. Margolis, *Little Brazil: An Ethnography of Brazilian Immigrants in New York City* (Princeton, NJ 1994); I. Scherer-Warren and J.M. Carvalho Ferreira (eds), *Transformações sociais e dilemas da globalização: um diálogo Brasil/Portugal* (São Paulo 2002).

22 See, for example, A.S.A. Guimarães, *Classes, raças e democracia* (São Paulo 2002).

23 B. Hernández, '¿PUES PARA EUROPA! La Migración latinoamericana a Alemania – desde una mirada de género', in I.Y. del Castillo and G. Herrera (eds) *Nuevas migraciones latinoamericanas a Europa. Balances y desafíos* (Barcelona 2007); S. Gruner-Domić, *Latinas in Deutschland. Eine ethnologische Studie zu Migration, Fremdheit und Identität* (Münster 2005); N. Garay, *Lateinamerikaner in Berlin. Entdeckungen in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart* (Berlin 2000).

**Table 1.** The Brazilian migrant community in Germany, 2011

Nationality	Sex	Total	Age												Average age	
			0–5	5–10	10–15	15–20	20–25	25–35	35–45	45–55	55–65	65–75	75–85	85–95		+95
Brazilian	Male	9872	205	326	498	847	1637	3618	1528	736	312	115	37	10	3	29.9
	Female	23993	236	284	487	924	1799	6854	7329	4107	1441	418	85	26	3	37.2
	All	33865	441	610	985	1771	3436	10472	8857	4843	1753	533	122	36	6	35.1

Source: Statistisches Bundesamt 2012.

Germany and one that is constantly growing and diversifying in its social composition.<sup>24</sup>

What is remarkable is that women form the majority of Brazilian migrants in Germany, comprising about two thirds of the Brazilians officially registered.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to women's migration biographies predominantly discussed in feminist scholarship, the motives of a considerable number of Brazilian women in moving to Germany were and still are closely connected to a relationship with a German man.<sup>26</sup> Thus a high percentage of immigration to Germany occurs – in addition to increased temporary migration such as middle-class Brazilians who come for educational purposes – within the frame of family reunion, as can be deduced from some of the immigration statistics.<sup>27</sup> Several factors have contributed to the intensification of socializing and the formation of relationships between Germans and Brazilians, including the expansion of international north-south tourism and its accessibility for Europeans of almost all social strata, as well as the increased

24 According to the Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Department of Statistics), ca. 34,000 Brazilian citizens lived in Germany in 2011. About 71 per cent of them are female. (Women's percentages are even higher in the 25 to 55 age group to which all of the interviewees belong.) This number does not include naturalizations and the many Brazilians who entered the country with a European passport, predominantly of Portuguese or Italian citizenship. Brazilians who can trace European ancestry back to the third generation are able to obtain a dual citizenship. Therefore, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs estimates the total number of Brazilians in Germany at 91,000. Ministério das Relações Exteriores, *Brasileiros no Mundo. Estimativas*. Terceira Edição (Brasília 2011) available at: <http://www.brasileirosnomundo.itamaraty.gov.br/a-comunidade/estimativas-populacionais-das-comunidades/Brasileiros%20no%20Mundo%202011%20-%20Estimativas%20-%20Terceira%20Edicao%20-%20v2.pdf> (accessed 10 April 2012).

25 Statistisches Bundesamt, *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit. Ausländische Bevölkerung Ergebnisse des Ausländerzentralregisters 2011* (Wiesbaden 2012).

26 For feminist discussions on women's migration trajectories, see, for example: P. Sharpe, *Women, Gender, and Labour Migration: Historical and Global Perspectives*. (London 2001); K. Willis and B. Yeoh (eds), *Gender and Migration* (Cheltenham 2000).

27 Auswärtiges Amt, Referat 510: *Erteilte Visa zum Ehegattennachzug in Brasilien 2005–2010* (15 March 2011); Statistisches Bundesamt, *Bevölkerung und Erwerbstätigkeit*. Besides love related individual motivations for migration, family reunion is almost the only option for gaining legalized German residence due to German migration regimes. See E. Kofman (ed.), *Gender and International Migration in Europe: Employment, Welfare and Politics* (London et al. 2000). Marriage with their German partners, therefore, is often sought by Brazilian women but also by Brazilian men, who similarly gain their legalized residence in first instance via family reunion.

professional and educational transnational mobility of Europeans who temporarily reside abroad. German men and Brazilian women in particular feel encouraged to interrelate due to a variety of factors stemming from both sides of the Atlantic. Brazilian women are not necessarily enticed by the still persistent social imaginary of Europe's immense wealth and of the opportunities which are, supposedly, only available to them there. Instead for many women it is rather the attraction of white masculinity, with its social implications of status and a less macho attitude that they find tempting. The former implication – the affiliation of white masculinity with an elevated social standing – can be traced historically to the period, well before independence and the abolition of slavery, when Brazilian society was formed in the context of the country's history of European colonization and immigration, and African and indigenous slavery. Individuals were able to advance their social position through the politics of marriage.<sup>28</sup> To this day marriage with a European man or woman offers the possibility of a social upgrade. However, marriage to a European is not automatically put on a level with a strategic step towards migration, although leaving the country is a frequent consequence of it.<sup>29</sup> A handful of studies on bi-national marriages between Brazilian women and German men show that these German men, on the other hand, feel attracted to Brazilian women due to a persistent idea that Latin American woman in general have a 'natural' vocation for being caring mothers and wives.<sup>30</sup> A still considerable number of German men visit Brazil for the explicit purpose of meeting Brazilian women, ranging from more spontaneous contacts during their vacation trips up to institutionalized forms of matchmaking via one of the innumerable international marriage agencies. Thus, the feminization of migration registered on a general level in many instances cannot be attributed to labour migration alone, but rather is to a considerable extent related to affective relations and subsequent bi-national family networking. The majority of the Brazilian entrepreneurs I worked with initially came to Germany due to an invitation from a German man they had got to know and had fallen in love with in Brazil.<sup>31</sup>

Thus, migration cannot be primarily explained by financial motivations in reaction to the international labour market dynamics and by an individual search for economic benefits, which is an argument often proposed when discussing south-north-migration flows. This does not preclude that people whose migration has been motivated by other reasons feel incited to seek employment and work in their new

28 See A.S.A. Guimarães, *Racismo e anti-racismo no Brasil* (São Paulo 1999).

29 A. Piscitelli, 'Sexo tropical em um país europeu: Migração de brasileiras para a Itália no marco do "turismo sexual" internacional', *Revista de Estudos Feministas* 15, 3 (September–December 2007) 717–44.

30 See V. Kahrsch, 'Perspektive des Lebens der brasilianischen Immigrantinnen in Deutschland', in D. Briesemeier and S.P. Rouanet (eds) *Brasilien im Umbruch: Akten des Berliner Brasilien-Kolloquiums vom 20. - 22. September 1995* (Frankfurt am Main 1996), 333–9. D. Engel, *Debaixo da mesma neve: relatos das brasileiras que são – ou foram casadas com alemães* (Recife 1998).

31 Notice that even those women who came to Germany due to other personal networks, like friends, relatives or acquaintances, saw themselves forced to marry shortly after their arrival. One of the few possibilities for non-European migrants to acquire a legal status in Germany is by means of marriage to a German national or someone with permanent residence permit.

country of residence: labour in general constitutes an integral part of almost any form of migration.<sup>32</sup> From the perspective of the Brazilian interviewees, 'work', however, only became a major issue of concern after having experienced everyday life in Germany. When they had decided to stay in Germany they saw themselves forced to tackle this issue. Some of them needed to find a job to make a living, since their German partners earned low wages and counted on a financial contribution to the household. But even in cases in which their husbands earned higher incomes, women sought employment. Besides desiring continuity in their work history, one of the main reasons was that they wanted to earn their 'own money' that they could spend for their personal needs without having to account to their husbands. This provided them with independence within an everyday life which was otherwise characterized by dependency due to their status as 'foreigners' in German society.

A further dimension regarding their search for a job became visible in the course of in-depth interviews with these women. This pertains to the women's social positioning in interpersonal relations with their husband's relatives, their own relatives, members of the German majority society and acquaintances within the Brazilian migrant community in Berlin. 'Having a job' was associated with notions of a person 'not taking undue advantage' in multiple ways. Many reported that their husbands' relatives interpreted the fact of the Brazilian wife 'having a job' as a criterion of her 'feeling of true love' for her husband.<sup>33</sup> In their view it allowed them to appraise how seriously the foreign woman was 'willing to integrate into German society' and to 'contribute [her] share to the family'. Laura, for example, declared:

In the beginning, they [her partner's parents] treated me in a very polite manner, probably because I appeared very exotic to them. But when Michael [her partner] asked me to marry him... well... they started telling him that I was just after his money. That's when I realized: they will never accept me if I don't have a job.  
(Laura M., 21 February 2010, Berlin)

As with others, Laura told me that this notion changed when she got pregnant with her first child. After learning the German language and after an unsuccessful effort to find regular work, Laura finally managed to work informally as a nanny in a private household. After two years of parental leave, she sought to go back to her job, but faced harsh criticism from her mother-in-law. Now she was expected to dedicate herself to the role of caring mother and wife. Laura stated that this view contradicted her own experiences in Brazil, where women are expected to work from six months after childbirth. So for Laura, as for all other interviewees,

32 T. Geisen, *Migration als Vergesellschaftungsprozess. Zur Konstruktion von Arbeitsmigration als Sonderfall* in T. Geisen (ed.) *Arbeitsmigration: WanderarbeiterInnen auf dem Weltmarkt für Arbeitskraft* (Frankfurt am Main et al. 2005), 19–35.

33 General statements and comments made by several of the interviewees using a similar expression are rendered in quotation marks without naming an individual. All interviews were conducted in Portuguese, some partly in German.

working and being a caring mother and wife were not mutually exclusive. Furthermore, some interviewees pointed out that within the German context, being only a mother would rather reduce their social position to merely reproductive tasks and thereby affirm the stereotypical notions of Brazilian women that associated them with a vocation for mothering by simultaneously disconnecting them from work ethic and diligence.

Yet, besides intra-family expectations of the women, ‘having a job’ became an important criterion in everyday exchanges with German citizens in general. Asking them if and how their social positioning as an *Ausländer* changed from the moment they had managed to find work, it became clear that ‘having a job’ influenced the women’s perception of how others would categorize them as *Ausländer* – diligent and therefore willing to adapt to German values and virtues, or idle and consequently not willing to ‘integrate’. Both extremes dominate contemporary public debates on ‘integration’ as well as informal conversations in German society, and were imposed on these women in sometimes subtle ways. Carminha, a salon owner of the ‘first generation’, explained:

‘What are you doing here?’<sup>34</sup> That’s such a typical German question. Sometimes people don’t even know your name, but they will ask where you come from and what you are doing here, thus how you earn your money. (Carminha S., 10 February 2009, Berlin)

As described above, Laura had decided to stay in Germany to live with the German man who later became her husband. After dedicating herself to learn the German language during the first three years after her marriage, she sought official acceptance of her professional qualifications as a primary school teacher in order to get a job in teaching and failed. She detailed her feelings after that, when people would ask her ‘what are you doing here?’: ‘I had no possibility to present myself to others. This made me realize how I was just a nobody’. (Laura M., 21 February 2010, Berlin)

Statements of the kind discussed above reveal the mistrust Brazilian women experienced for having come to Germany and for living with a German man. They also display overriding prejudices against the foreign Other. Since they are constantly classified as *Ausländer*, as these women emphasized repeatedly in their narratives, they were forced to position themselves with regard to the question ‘what are you doing here?’ To be able to answer affirmatively and to position themselves as ‘having a job’, required from them the faculty of referring to a job discursively, of centring this job in a conversation. To be able to enhance one’s job, in turn, depended on the kind of occupation, on its formal status and on the education and vocational training required for it, since others would deduce its quality from these

34 In German the expression is ‘Was machst du hier?’ This question is ambiguous, since it can also be used to inquire what kind of work a person has. Carminha imitated this question using the German language in an interview conducted in Portuguese.

characteristics. For an *Ausländer*, however, occupying and talking about one's prestigious job is in itself problematic, since it could lead into a further discourse frequently expressed as: 'The *Ausländer* are taking Germans' jobs'.<sup>35</sup> This attitude has become dominant during periods and in regions of high unemployment. In addition to established explanations on how and why this discourse periodically gains popularity, I suggest a more socio-cultural perspective that encompasses the general status of dependent and independent work in German society. Maria Kontos points out that a 'culture of dependent work' developed in Germany in the course of the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> For this reason the employee's labour force became considered something culturally familiar, complying with the social normative expectation of a labour biography. Until today independent entrepreneurial work is considered the exception to this rule, even though state programmes endeavour to change this situation.<sup>37</sup>

In recent German history, the *Ausländer* was only permitted (and even recruited) to intrude into the German sphere of dependent work in sectors that Germans shunned due to their low status and lack of opportunities for social upward mobility.<sup>38</sup> This is still the case in low-wage employment in industrial manufacture, in construction and in many service sectors. Foreign workers' incorporation into the low-waged and often informally operating labour market segments is now broadly perceived as an underlying principle of global labour market dynamics while simultaneously constituting an integral component of national labour market politics.<sup>39</sup> Foreign women mainly have access to jobs in the hotel and restaurant business, in cleaning services and in private care and domestic work, the latter constituting a highly informal sector.<sup>40</sup> Almost all of the interviewees had worked in one of these sectors. Luciana, a salon owner of the 'first generation', said: 'I used to ask myself all the time how much longer I would be able to stand cleaning. I felt so much pain and earned so little money' (Luciana D., 15 February 2010, Berlin). And Lilian, who is married to a well-to-do police inspector, commented ironically: 'Was I going to tell my husband's family and friends that I was

35 See for example Rätzl, *Gegenbilder*; K.N. Ha, 'Die kolonialen Muster deutscher Arbeitsmigration', in H. Steyerl and E. Gutiérrez Rodríguez (eds), *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch? Migration und postkoloniale Kritik* (Münster 2003); U. Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland* (München 2001).

36 Kontos, 'Übergänge von der abhängigen zur selbständigen Arbeit', 220.

37 These efforts range from cheap credit given by public-law institutions to a variety of other financial and logistical aids.

38 Herbert, *Geschichte der Ausländerpolitik in Deutschland*; Ha, 'Die kolonialen Muster deutscher Arbeitsmigration'.

39 See, for example, S. Sassen, 'New employment regimes in cities: The impact on immigrant workers', *Journal for Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 22, 4 (October 1996), 579–94; H. Bauder, *Labor Movement: How Migration Regulates Labor Markets* (New York, NY 2006).

40 See M.d.M. Castro Varela and D. Clayton (eds), *Migration, Gender, Arbeitsmarkt: Neue Beiträge zu Frauen und Globalisierung* (Königstein/Taunus 2003); S. Sassen, 'The Feminization of Survival: Alternative Global Circuits', in M. Morokvasic-Müller et al. (eds) *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries* (Opladen 2000), 59–77. B. Ehrenreich and A. Hochschild (eds), *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy* (New York, NY 2003).

cleaning other people's toilets?' (Lilian S., 5 March 2008, Berlin). This form of labour market incorporation points to a double discrimination of migrants: they are not only discriminated in the labour market because of their status as *Ausländer* (in its juridical as well as social and economical dimension), but in the society in general as well. By permitting them only to access, and also by expecting them to only perform, these kinds of low-status jobs, the majority society constrains the possibilities of integration. Scholarly work on ethnic businesses argues that migrant economies emerged in Germany because of this marginal positioning of foreign workers, their growing unemployment after the recruitment ban and the economic recession in 1973. This tendency was bolstered by a change in law that permitted self-employment activities to most foreign workers with permanent residence rights (*Aufenthaltsberechtigung*).<sup>41</sup>

Persons of non-German nationality have developed a wide range of entrepreneurial self-employment since the 1970s.<sup>42</sup> The appeal of small-scale businesses is that they offer a certain degree of self-determination in comparison to employment in the German labour market with its restrained access. In small-scale businesses actors encounter no restrictions with regard to their formal level of education and professional qualification (with the exception of craft enterprises). Their labour relations are less liable to be exposed to discrimination. On the other hand, even small-scale business ventures require a high degree of organizational effort and knowledge of business management, accounting and taxation, and 'bureaucratise'. Nevertheless, this mode of participation in the formal labour market has become increasingly popular among people with a migration background who appreciate it as an alternative way of earning money, if not a strategy of survival when facing unemployment or structural barriers to the labour market.<sup>43</sup> And as most of the Brazilian waxing studio owners pointed out, these efforts are valued as new gained skills that would equip them to start – if needed – a small-scale business in any other part of the world. They mentioned also that their German language skills would increase significantly due to their intensive interaction with German bureaucracies in order to establish their cosmetic salon.

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41 Until 1991 German law (with only a few authorized exceptions) did not permit a foreign person living in Germany with a permanent residence permit but only with a permanent right to residence to engage in independent work. Kontos, 'Übergänge von der abhängigen zur selbständigen Arbeit', and Pütz, *Transkulturalität als Praxis*, among others, state that independent work was considered as proof of the intentions of an *Ausländer* to reside permanently in Germany and therefore contradicted the aims of the German *Ausländerpolitik* which did not seek to 'integrate' (labour) migrants permanently into German society (and labour market). This posture was reflected in Germany's denial of the concept of being an immigration country (lasting until the beginning of the twenty-first century in dominant political discourse). See also K. Bade, *Ausländer, Aussiedler, Asyl in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Hannover 1994).

42 C. Wilpert, 'Germany. From Workers to Entrepreneurs', in R. Kloosterman and J. Rath (eds) *Immigrant Entrepreneurs: Venturing Abroad in the Age of Globalization* (Oxford and New York, NY 2003).

43 R. Pütz, 'Berliner Unternehmer türkischer Herkunft: "Ethnic" Business?', *Die Erde*, 134, 3 (2003), 257–75.

Studies that focus on the integrative potential of ethnic economies are especially interested in the position and contribution of the migrant to the German labour market.<sup>44</sup> They conclude that these economies foster structural and economic integration due to the fact that they offer training opportunities to the entrepreneurs themselves as well as to their (migrant/co-ethnic) employees and provide both groups with jobs (a tendency that can be observed only in parts in the Brazilian cosmetic sector as I will show below). Therefore self-employment would favour upward social mobility, entailing the social recognition of the migrants by the majority society.<sup>45</sup> Ethnic businesses are considered to be most prevalent in urban districts that are perceived as marginal due to their ethnic and social composition and would contribute to a gentrification of the district.<sup>46</sup> Other scholars, however, warn that migrant economies might be conducive to establishing 'ethnic colonies', thereby hindering 'integration' in a broader cultural and social dimension. Still other scholars emphasize that the integrative potential of migrant businesses consist mainly in their function as (informal) places of information exchange and as social meeting points. Newcomers, in particular, would profit from these places as an initial contact point, from where they would orient themselves towards the majority society.<sup>47</sup>

An additional field of study focuses on the consumption potential of ethnic businesses.<sup>48</sup> A common approach is to classify most ethnic businesses in their initial phases as creating a niche economy. It is presumed that they primarily provide goods and services that are in demand by co-ethnics and are not supplied by the facilities of the majority society. Since these new businesses would at first not suffer from competition with mainstream businesses they can establish themselves without being pressed for time. Goods and services offered by ethnic businesses achieve a higher degree of integration if they become consumed not only by an ethnic clientele but by members of the majority society and therefore cater to the mainstream consumer landscape. These scholars usually do not take a change of tastes and consumer habits among the majority society into consideration, but instead assume that the 'ethnic' offer adapts to mainstream tastes. This readjusted offer of 'ethnic' goods and services in their view has the potential of bringing an innovative economic branch into existence. The city of Berlin is viewed as a remarkable example of how these potentials are used and promoted for the city's

44 Due to space, I have to leave out a detailed discussion on definitions and dimension of the term 'integration' in German political and public discourse. For a general introduction, see A. Schulte and A. Treichler, *Integration und Antidiskriminierung: Eine interdisziplinäre Einführung* (Weinheim/München 2010).

45 See Schuleri-Hartje et al., *Ethnische Ökonomie*.

46 For example, Kniepkamp and König, *Bunt tut gut*; S. Henn, *Ethnic Business Districts: Gutachten im Auftrag der Stadt Leipzig* (Leipzig 2007).

47 Schuleri-Hartje et al., *Ethnische Ökonomie*.

48 For example, J. Blaschke, *Ausgrenzung und Integration in der ethnischen Ökonomie Berlins* (Berlin 2001); Heckmann, 'Ethnische Kolonien'; R. Pütz, 'Von der Nische zum Markt? Türkische Einzelhändler im Rhein-Main-Gebiet', in A. Escher (ed.) *Ausländer in Deutschland. Probleme einer transkulturellen Gesellschaft aus geographischer Sicht* (Mainz 2000); Schuleri-Hartje et al., *Ethnische Ökonomie*.

economic purposes and the creation of a multicultural city image.<sup>49</sup> By adapting their offer to mainstream consumer landscapes, the businesses' integrative potential enhances due to face-to-face-encounters: they encourage contacts and relationships between members of migrant communities and members of the German majority society, an intercultural exchange having integrative effects on both sides.<sup>50</sup>

This debate on the integrative potentials of ethnic businesses addresses their contribution to and effects on labour, the labour market and on the local consumer landscape. The entrepreneurial women I interviewed employed catchphrases from this 'good migrant' discourse by referring to the economic surplus generated by their businesses. They declared: 'We migrants keep Berlin's economy going', 'we are the ones who ensure the Germans can retire', or 'we don't live off the Germans' money, it's the other way around'. What caught my attention was their use of 'we', identifying with 'we migrants' in a more collective way when referring to the 'good migrant' discourse. I interpret this as a strategic positioning relating to an assumed collective experience of all migrants of double discrimination: when being addressed as *Ausländer* in everyday life and the previous experience of a marginal incorporation in the German labour market. The Brazilian businesswomen challenge their interpellation as 'them' in public discourse by inverting the subject-object-order of the discourse: they transform 'them' into an empowered 'we', becoming thereby the subjects 'doing difference', at least within their narratives.

The interviewees also highlighted the more individual integrative effects of being businesswomen as opposed to their former jobs in dependent work sectors that are primarily ascribed to migrants in the labour force. They related it to how they feel when they are now being perceived and treated with respect by their husband's family members or friends and by German bureaucracy. Reference to self-employment provided them with the means to talk about their job on an equal level with others. It discouraged questions regarding the content of their work or its formal status with the threat of embarrassing situations and made them feel more comfortable in general. Before analysing the embeddedness of their economic activity in the local consumer landscape, I will briefly introduce the distinct attributes of the Brazilian waxing studios within Berlin.

In contrast to the general portrayal of ethnic businesses in Berlin as indicated above, Brazilian waxing studios are not concentrated in city districts with a higher presence of the Turkish, Arabic and African migrant communities such as Berlin-Neukölln, Kreuzberg or Wedding. Instead, they can be found in districts like Berlin-Mitte, Steglitz or Charlottenburg-Wilmersdorf, where the upper middle class, which consists primarily of white Germans, is concentrated. Although the Brazilian community is constantly growing, it is still small in number and has not

49 S. Kleff and E. Seidel, *Stadt der Vielfalt: das Entstehen des neuen Berlin durch Migration* (Berlin 2009); for a critical discussion see S. Lanz, *Berlin aufgemischt: Abendländisch-multikulturell-kosmopolitisch? Die politische Konstruktion einer Einwanderungsstadt* (Bielefeld 2007); A. Färber (ed.), *Stoffwechsel Berlin: Urbane Präsenzen und Repräsentationen* (Berlin 2010).

50 Schuleri-Hartje et al., *Ethnische Ökonomie*.

shown a tendency to concentrate in a particular district.<sup>51</sup> For these reasons it is not possible to draw a correlation between these ethnically marked businesses, their ethnic entrepreneurship and a demand made by co-ethnics or co-nationals. The business places do not display a cultural-territorial embeddedness. The spatial position of the businesses indicates that they rely on other criteria to attract their clientele.

This leads to questions about the nature of the service itself. The removal of body hair can be achieved by a wide range of techniques and by applying them in private spaces. Products such as lady shavers, depilation creams or epilators are offered at retail outlets. How, therefore, did body hair removal by means of honey waxing develop into a commercial service? I cannot deal with this extensively here, but do want to remark that I consider Brazilian waxing to form part of the wellness industry (this might not seem evident when bearing in mind the pain depilation causes). The willingness to pay for a service (that superficially leads to the same results as methods applied at home), however, does not only depend on its accessibility and/or the financial resources of its clients, but on social and cultural components as well. The customers of Berlin's first waxing studios were, in the first years, heterogeneous with regard to their national and migration backgrounds, but were predominantly from the upper class. They shared the view of hairless skin constituting the norm of cleanliness and beauty.<sup>52</sup> Recently, however, the clientele of waxing studios has changed; it is increasingly dominated by Germans. The Brazilian entrepreneurs attribute this change to shifting beauty concepts as they are mediated via national and international media. Due to this, hair in more visible areas such as armpits and legs has become unacceptable, especially among young women. Some salons have begun to offer specific campaigns to promote their service also among the low-income population by advertising discounts to students or unemployed people. Other salons have opened branches in districts with a higher density of students, like in Kreuzberg and Neukölln – which are also districts associated with the multi-cultural consumer landscape.

Berlin waxing studios have further particularities when viewed in comparison to the general academic discussion on ethnic businesses. Their interiors – such as the entrance and waiting area – are decorated with symbolic representations referring to dominant images of Brazil or to Brazilian 'beach culture', and also with other wellness- and holiday-like references. The treatment rooms, by contrast, are noticeably sterile and neutral in appearance; they are more like a medical treatment room than a typical 'spa'. With regard to their employees, the business owners apply different criteria: some will only hire Brazilian women and privilege those who have

51 Berliner Senatsverwaltung: *Statistischer Bericht A I 6 – hj 1/10*. Available at: [http://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/Publikationen/Stat\\_Berichte/2010/SB\\_A1-6\\_hj02-10\\_BE.pdf](http://www.statistik-berlin-brandenburg.de/Publikationen/Stat_Berichte/2010/SB_A1-6_hj02-10_BE.pdf) (accessed 2 March 2011). According to official statistics, about 2700 people of Brazilian nationality lived in Berlin in 2011, constituting the largest Latin American migrant community. Around 1600 (60 per cent) of them were female.

52 These clients were predominantly Russian, Spanish and Italian nationals, but also Turkish women. The reasons they give for visiting waxing studios and the cultural values they ascribe to a hairless body ideal may vary considerably depending on the country of origin and their cultural belongings.

just arrived in Germany, supposedly in order to facilitate their first steps into an unknown environment and culture. Some admitted that their preference for newcomers had also to do with the assumption that they would not be inclined to leave the studio soon after they had been trained and gained their first work experiences. Dalva explained her decision to contract newcomers by referring to her own experiences: 'I know how hard it is to get your first job in Germany' (Dalva C., 27 February 2010, Berlin). She and others declared that German language skills and professional cosmetic qualifications played a less important role since both could be acquired along with in-house training and work experience. Other entrepreneurs stated their preference for employees who, due to their appearance and behaviour, would be categorized by their German clients as of Latin American origin, but who are able to speak German and thus can communicate with their clients.<sup>53</sup> Most studios had a mixed staff with regard to these criteria. Only a minority of businesswomen considered formal cosmetic qualifications or previous experiences in the cosmetic service sector as a prerequisite and as more important than language skills and the Latin American origin or look. The majority of the businesswomen told me that Brazilians and other 'Latinas' would acquire the dexterity rapidly since for cultural reasons they had been brought up with practices of body hair removal in their families since adolescence. The businesswomen do not only rely on a heterogeneous staff, but also on diversified networks to develop and manage their studios. As already mentioned, almost all of the business women are married to German men who often have helped considerably in financing and equipping the cosmetic salons. They further rely on friends of Brazilian, German or other nationality to design or renovate the studios and for help in administration or as a secretary. Summarizing all these aspects unique to waxing studios raises the question of whether these beauty salons can be identified as 'ethnic' businesses at all and how this relates to 'integration'.

We have seen that the salon names, the business owners and even, perhaps, the staff might display a 'Brazilian' cultural provenance; so too do the salon advertising schemes. Advertisements mainly refer to the specific method of hair removal practiced and to images of the aspired-to body and corporeality in general. The images used in digital and print advertisement converge with those of the entrepreneurs' narratives to convey 'genuine Brazilianness'. When asked about the origin of the employed technique and the ideal of a hairless body, some women stated that they could be traced back to the body care habits of indigenous societies before European colonization.<sup>54</sup> The interviewees connect the technique and body ideals

53 The Latin American origin is believed to be sought by German clients because they appreciate these women's alleged behaviour (being cheerful, lively, sensitive, communicative). German clients commonly derived a Latin American origin from women's look (neat and 'rassig' ['hot-blooded'] which is deduced from certain body characteristics like dark hair and non-white skin) and sometimes accent.

54 These ideas have been fostered by historical accounts on the hairless bodies and cleanliness of indigenous woman in early Portuguese chronicles, like Gabriel Soares de Sousa's *Tratado descritivo do Brasil* (1581). The social imaginary of the indigenous woman of the Colonial period is constantly reproduced in Brazilian popular media.

to ideas of hygiene, femininity and 'culture' (understood as contrasting to 'nature'). They convey cultural authenticity to their practice in part through the belief that it was transmitted from woman to woman in Brazil for centuries, hence conceiving themselves as the legitimate heirs and practitioners. In their view, being Brazilian provides them (and other Latin American women from countries with similar traditions and body ideals) with an appropriate disposition to acquire the knowledge and manual skilfulness required for hair removal. In interviews, they often compare the amalgamation of their own nationality and their service to other ethnically marked business lines. Mariana, a young second-generation studio owner, said:

When you want to eat a pizza you go to an Italian restaurant. When you want to eat a kebab, you go to a Turkish or Arab kebab kiosk [*Döner-Bude*]. So, when you want to get depilated, you better go to a Brazilian waxing studio. (Mariana L., 13 October 2010, Berlin)

By marking the waxing practice as 'Brazilian', these women actively assign a cultural/'ethnic' embeddedness to it that contributes to legitimating their competence. All in all they convert Brazilian waxing into a brand.

Their views on whether they would be eager to open up a similar studio in another German city suggest a further explanation of why these women convey an 'ethnic'/cultural label to their studios. All interviewees stated that they would only engage in a similar project in a city as tolerant and open-minded as Berlin. They perceive Berlin as open-minded because of its large migrant population. Some women gave extensive descriptions of the advantages of running a business in a 'multicultural city' like Berlin. This aspect is interesting when considering that most of the salons are located in areas where a majority of businesses are not ethnically marked and with a low migrant population. Moreover, their clientele is now predominantly German. They, nevertheless, develop a powerful idea of the exceptionality of their urban everyday surrounding, contrasting it to other supposedly more 'German' cities with a lower number of migrants and therefore with more racist discrimination and violence – many of these concepts are grounded on hearsay. Teresa for example believes that 'Berlin is something special, an island' (Teresa N., 5 October 2010, Berlin). The women's intent to embed their businesses into a 'multicultural' environment constitute an appropriation of the discourses on a 'multicultural' Berlin which have been promoted in image campaigns of the German capital. For some years now, local politicians and city representatives have engaged in creating a cosmopolitan image of the capital with a 'colourful' (with regard to its cultural diversity) and 'creative' (with regard to its new economic branches) city landscape.<sup>55</sup> The City of Berlin's Carnival of Cultures (*Karneval der Kulturen*) constitutes one of these institutionalized and controlled spectacles of multiculturalism. The city also actively promotes a

55 Kniepkamp and König, *Bunt tut gut*. For a critical discussion, see Lanz, *Berlin aufgemischt*.

multicultural consumer landscape ranging from ‘Oriental’ dance studios, to ‘African’ restaurants, to ‘Asian’ relaxing therapy centres, the exotic promising better trade accounts.<sup>56</sup>

Taking all this into account, the entrepreneurs strategically resort to ‘doing ethnicity’ based on their acquaintance with German standards and tastes.<sup>57</sup> They transform Brazilian waxing into a transcultural product which can neither be found in Brazil nor as part of German majority society’s pre-migrant repertoire. In particular the studios’ dual composition – with their culturally marked entrance area and the sterile treatment area – reflects the businesswomen’s interpretation of what they think is appealing to German consumers: wellness and multicultural exotic, but also sterility and cleanliness when it comes to intimacy with the body. They subsequently also place the method they use and the aspired body image within the following narrative: they allege that a hairless body is more hygienic and the honey-wax method healthier for the skin in comparison to other hair removal techniques.

The women also seek to capitalize on a feminized imaginary of Brazil and its correlative stereotype of Brazilian female beauty. Accordingly, they attribute a central role to the female body for promotion. But a shift has taken place and they have moved from displaying mainly ‘exotic’, non-white women and references to the tropical Brazilian ‘beach culture’ and now instead increasingly advertise with images of white ‘German’-looking women. The imagery of a sensual, erotic Brazilian beauty, however, is still conveyed in the entrepreneurs’ narratives, where they have been appropriated for their business interests and needs. They maintain that the secret of Brazilian woman’s beauty can be found in a specific Brazilian form of body care based on special methods of ‘fabricating’ one’s own body.<sup>58</sup> Luciana states:

The Brazilian woman is considered beautiful because she is well-groomed. She knows about how to do so: the way she cares for her hair, how she ‘makes her nails’ [style of manicure]. She is aware of all her body parts being neat. (Luciana D., 27 January 2010, Berlin)

The interviewees connected these views to a further narrative on integration also relating it to the service they offer to their German clients: According to them German women have serious deficits regarding body care and beauty practices and for this reason they are in serious need of education in these spheres. This argument was commonly mentioned in response to my asking how they came up

56 Färber, *Stoffwechsel Berlin*; G. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London 2001).

57 See H. Lutz, *Vom Weltmarkt in den Privathaushalt: die neuen Dienstmädchen im Zeitalter der Globalisierung* (Opladen 2007). ‘Doing ethnicity’ is a mode of boundary work between people negotiating social positioning. This concept proposed by Helma Lutz parts from ‘ethnicity’ as relational category that is realized in constant interpersonal interactions producing and reproducing social structures. Contrasting to Lutz, I use the concept here as a marked-oriented strategy of the ‘ethnic’ entrepreneurs.

58 For a discussion about the value of body and body-culture in Brazil, see M. Goldenberg, *O corpo como capital: Estudos sobre gênero, sexualidade e moda na cultura brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro 2007).

with the idea of opening a Brazilian waxing studio. The interviewees voiced conceptions of otherness relating them to experiences they had made before migration. Carminha, for example, remembered how easy it had been to identify German women at Brazilian beaches due to their hairy bodies: 'You could make out the Germans from far away by their sprouting hair peeping out of their bikinis and under their armpits' (Carminha S., 10 February 2009, Berlin). Asked about her first impressions of German women after arriving in Germany, she recollected that they appeared to her as 'barbarous' and 'savage'. Dalva, another business owner of the 'first generation', concluded after similar appraisals: 'There is much to do' (Dalva C., 27 February 2010, Berlin). Consequently, the business women consider their contribution in Germany as part of 'educating the German woman' which encompasses in their view a human-cultural dimension. They expressed this in comments like 'Well, now I've made you a human again' after treating clients (both men and women) with a pronounced growth of body hair, or in humorous nicknames like 'little monkey' that was given to a regular female customer before treatment. Exaggerating, one could speak of a (in view of the history of Colonialism) reversed civilizing mission, implementing 'humane' Brazilian (indigenous) body care practices and ideals on European women with 'savage' habits.

The entrepreneurs emphasize the feminine dimension of hair removal practices and aspirational body images, since they not only believe in making all of their clients 'human' again, but also in transforming the female ones into 'a woman'. In this regard, Angelica, who offered the service of Brazilian waxing for a long time as house call service before opening her studio, said:

It is not only a hygienic matter or a matter of beauty, but it is a favour you do for your body, for yourself. Even if you wear long trousers, you feel good. You feel like a woman and not like a hairy beast. (Angelica M., 14 August 2011, Berlin)

Carminha took this idea even further: 'My clients observe my behaviour. The way how I walk, how I gesticulate. All very smooth and feminine. I think they appreciate it' (Carminha S.). They rate German women's behaviour and corporality as masculine by comparison to the norms and corporality of femininity they became socialized with in Brazil. By this, they do not simply sustain and celebrate traditional gender roles. They rather perceive themselves as contradicting traditional gender roles due to their agency as migrant entrepreneurs. They attribute this departure not only to their commercial independence and the new social standing they have acquired vis-a-vis their husband's families, their German and Brazilian friends, and the majority society in general. In their view, they challenge traditional gender roles due to their mere participation in the sphere of independent work – this sphere is still generally perceived as a masculine domain in the German context.<sup>59</sup> They now find themselves exercising an autonomy most of them had

<sup>59</sup> See Aplitzsch and Kontos (eds.), *Self-employment Activities of Women and Minorities*; Hillman 'A Look at the "Hidden Side"'.

not lived in their everyday life since they had come to Germany as the wives of German men. Luciane, who opened her studio in 2010, stated: 'When I arrived I was depending on my husband for everything. I didn't even know how to buy a lipstick'. Five years after her arrival in Berlin things had changed for her: 'Being a businesswoman means that it is you who makes the decisions. Nobody tells you what you have to do and when. You make the decision, but you also have the responsibility' (Luciana O., 13 August 2011, Berlin).

Entering this masculinized domain but being wives and mothers at the same time allocated these women an ambivalent position. For example, Silvana, one successful 'second-generation' businesswoman, concluded from conversations with her clientele of Berlin middle class women: 'The German woman is 100 per cent mother or is 100 per cent businesswoman. But for German women it is difficult to be both. For them it means to be less good in one or the other.' She proudly added in that interview: 'And when they see me, a single mother of three children and a businesswoman! And even though I care for myself and do my hair and nails every day. They can't understand how I manage it all' (Silvana H., 16 August 2011, Berlin). For her, being a successful businesswoman does not conflict with her qualities as a caring mother nor her daily body care practices – both associated with femininity. Due to the women's contesting of traditional gender roles as entrepreneurs and on their feminizing work on German women's bodies they affirm that they are precisely in the position to teach German women how to be feminine without negating 'emancipation'.

'Emancipation' is a keyword which the entrepreneurial women often mention in their narratives, based on their particular conception of 'integration'. For these women, 'integration' is not just the vague political catchword of dominant discourses in Germany to which they feel forced to react and adapt. Furthermore, for them 'integration' does not solely imply to contribute successfully to the German labour market by creating jobs for themselves and their (German or migrant) employees, and reaping the resulting social and economical benefits. Instead, these women interpret 'integration' in a broader and far more active manner by assessing and classifying their recently gained independence as not just a commercial and financial one, but a cultural one as well. By means of their businesses, they need not hide their cultural identification and sense of belonging or adapt themselves to a German *Leitkultur*, but instead promote their cultural understanding of the self to others. They understand their integrative contribution as a contribution to, and an education of, Germans by defining their own being and acting as more human, more cultural and more hygienic at the same time.

The businesswomen also apply a social and gendered perspective to notions of 'emancipation': owing to their position as entrepreneurs they see themselves as equal to their German (female) clients. They view their occupational independence as producing a much higher degree of emancipation than any form of dependent work. This view is also remarkable because it confers the social hierarchies experienced by these women in their former jobs, the hierarchy between the boss and the

employee to a similar one between the entrepreneur and the customer. They still experience (racialized) social hierarchies in everyday life situations aside from their place of work, where their categorization as *Ausländer* allocates them to a position at the margins of majority society. In their independent work context they are instead recognised by their customers as Brazilian entrepreneurial woman. This recognition does not refer exclusively to the women's labour-related position as business owners, but to their assumed knowledge of beauty practices attributed to them on the basis of their work performance and their different cultural belonging.

The businesswomen also explicitly refer to Brazilian men of the migrant community when making comparisons between entrepreneurial and other labour activities of men and women. As a result they often conclude that Brazilian women have managed to adapt to Germany much better than Brazilian men. They point to an assumed higher self-employment rate of women as proof. Furthermore, the interviewees position themselves in opposition to western feminist discourses regarding body hair removal. The latter proclaim that this is a transgression and violation of the 'last frontier' in the course of 'colonizing the female body'.<sup>60</sup> The Brazilian entrepreneurs contradict this discourse by defining the cultural fabrication of the female hairless body positively, contending that it produces much more civilized bodies in comparison to men's – and German women's – hairy bodies. The interviewees would criticize German women, who in their view would masculinize in order to become emancipated, in order to emphasize their own stance: they conceived themselves as women who had the courage to become emancipated while maintaining and even enhancing their femininity.

An issue that was not addressed during the interviews and research is political integration. The women's narratives on emancipation in financial, social, cultural and gendered dimensions aim to overcome dominant discourses on 'integration' by appropriating them to their own understanding. The question remains as to what extent dominant political discourses are reflected within the narratives of the businesswomen. They have to cope with the simultaneity of narratives and discourses focusing predominantly on social, economic and cultural dimensions of 'integration' while at the same time urban and national policies still deny migrants and migration recognition of being an inherent component of historical and contemporary society formation in a globalized world.

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60 Hildebrandt, 'The Last Frontier: Body Norms and Hair Removal Practices in Contemporary American Culture', in H. Tschachler et al. (eds) *The EmBodyment of American Culture* (Münster 2003), 59–71.

**Biographical Note**

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