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Mobilities – Migratory Experiences Ethnographically Connected

Guest Editors: Tilmann Heil, Andrea Priori, Bruno Riccio, Inga Schwarz

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Mobilities – Migratory Experiences Ethnographically Connected: An Introduction

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Introduction

Migration studies and mobility studies have long inhabited different academic fields, creating their own discussions and conventions. In recent years, however, the mutual enrichment of the two fields in theory and method has inspired scholars of both fields. Rather than opposing the two terms, thereby risking essentialising the differences among its proponents, we argue that in starting from ethnographic cases, cross-fertilisation between migration and mobility studies is particularly productive in several respects. It promotes overcoming artificial distinctions into forms of spatially bounded mobilities (local, regional, international migration) and provides informative, empirically rich and theoretically fresh analyses of complex migratory configurations and resulting diversifications. There is no one single way of juxtaposing and connecting migration and mobility conceptually, politically or empirically; each paper has its own proposition. This introduction highlights how the papers speak to each other, foregrounding the spatial, temporal, and social interconnections that emerge from the analyses of migratory experiences, which broaden and deepen the study of diversities as heterogeneous forms of social difference.

Our common starting point is *ethnography*, that is, its force to connect various, often separately analysed movements in the same analysis. Ethnography is particularly apt in exploring the everyday social accommodation and navigation of such multiple, intersecting and seemingly contradictory stories (cf. Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Letting the messiness of the ethnographic

situation guide the analysis is different from the majority of approaches which already address their fields through a specific lens such as transnationalism, diaspora, international or internal migration, among others. We argue that if a field researcher working on migratory experiences pays attention to the complexity of his/her ethnographic field, which requires reaching beyond the immediate focus of one's project, s/he will most likely witness multiple co-occurring or intersecting im/mobilities. Here lies the innovative potential of the special issue, which will question existing analytical distinctions into migration and mobility or internal and international migration leading to disconnected analyses.

Contrary to spatially, temporally and socially bounded approaches characteristic of some of migration and mobility studies (Hickey and Yeoh 2016, Hui 2016, King and Skeldon 2010), various forms of (migratory) movements are almost always connected in our empirical cases, sometimes in unforeseen and counterintuitive ways. Therefore, the conceptual proposition of this special issue is to take specific ethnographic sites as points of departure to explore (i) why and how various forms of im/mobility become parts of the same account, or are excluded from it, (ii) how we compare, contrast and relate different kinds of im/mobilities, (iii) how established concepts of migration and mobility studies preconfigure the respective research design, (iv) how they could be re-combined in new ways to broaden our insights on migratory im/mobilities and (v) what the advantages and obstacles of

the conceptual and methodological approaches are in the various research fields. Following this approach, the authors in this special issue make innovative contributions in the connected fields of migration and mobility studies. The ethnographic situations we propose as starting point of the analysis are thus not only to be understood as territorially bound locations but often consist of a certain form of migratory movement. Looking at migratory experiences through the lens of movement leads us beyond spatially demarcated ethnographic sites by following the respective im/mobilities (Hannam, Sheller, Urry 2006).

Therefore, contrary to much of the existing literature, the contributions to this special issue do not establish a single line of when it is analytically preferable to use either migration or mobility, nor is the distinction between the two their primary focus. Rather, each contribution takes up the task to critically define how the two terms are positioned to each other within the particular ethnographic context. In general, mobility is the overarching and more encompassing term, while migration clearly relates to social process induced by physical movement on various scales. However, both concepts share the destiny of existing only in a mutually constitutive relationship to periods of immobility and feelings of stasis. In this sense, understanding interconnected migratory experiences as an intertwined trajectory of mobile and immobile experiences not only furthers insights into the diversification of migrant trajectories (Schapendonk and Steel 2014, Schapendonk et al. forthcoming), but also into countless migratory configurations in diversifying localities (cf. Vertovec 2015).

In this introduction, we will further develop these above points by intertwining them with the existing literature, showing the particular strengths of the contributing papers. Based on the accounts of the contributions to this special issue, we argue that the diversity of migratory experiences encountered in the field compels us to go beyond contained concepts of migration by incorporating theoretical as well as methodological insights from mobility studies. Thus, the

contributions to this special issue exceed spatial, temporal and social frameworks which are broken up (Cresswell 2006), following connected forms of im/mobilities that combine distinct historical, spatial and social dynamics.

Ethnographically interconnecting spatial, temporal and social dimensions of migratory experiences

In addressing the questions raised by this special issue, the contributors start from their particular ethnographical cases and engage with authors from different research fields (internal, international, circular, onward migration and im/mobilities) and various disciplines (anthropology, geography, history) that best help to address them. In doing so, they bridge the sometimes separated strands of research and make the interconnections and the potential of cross-fertilisation more explicit.

The role of ethnography

Starting from ethnography demands a short reflection on the underlying assumptions and caveats of this methodology. Firstly, rather than presupposing anthropologists are empty vessels able to collect everything possible in the field, we are positioned in it according to our own personal characteristics as well as through conceptual and theoretical lenses. Only by reflecting on such limitations can we eventually widen our horizons. Secondly, funding structures are such that questions need to be clearly formulated before the empirical work can be done, results ought to be published quickly, and the political and societal outreach must be clear. This is unavoidable particularly in the politicised field of migration research. While the contributors are aware that these kinds of challenges are linked to academic production, their papers take a second look, or one outside established, politically relevant and fundable lenses, to include spatial, temporal and social dynamics that are often neglected.

Instead of choosing to study a specific mobile subject in the first place and then thinking about

the methodological consequences (cf. Salazar et al. 2017), we attempt to do the opposite. Rather than exploring different methods or reconceptualising existing ones, in order to study im/mobilities, we return to ethnography as an apt way to find out about underestimated or overlooked interconnections of diverse migratory experiences and the deeper understanding of people's lives that emerge from them. Vergunst has argued that "ethnography is an excellent way to get at important aspects of human movement, especially in relating its experiential and sensory qualities to social and environmental contexts" (2011: 203). The interconnections between different forms of im/mobility and migration are part of these important aspects of human movement. It is not one form of ethnography that is best to study these interconnections, but various ethnographic fields/situations reveal their specific interconnections. Such ethnographic methodology can be adapted to movement and mobility in the first place (Hannam, Sheller, Urry 2006), or it can actually address a specific locality that might seem immobile at first, but turns out to be the crossroads of various mobilities.

As for the contributors, Cingolani, while studying the transition to adulthood, rethinks the combination of various forms of geographical im/mobilities and meanings attached to them in a longitudinal and therefore historically contingent way. Studying the return of expats to their home country, Bal et al. explore the secondary and parallel migrations of employees and family members that co-constitute the mobility regime of India's gated communities. Blanchard, in her analysis of return migration into the Alps, considers both internal and international mobilities that stretch beyond generations. She supports family stories with historical insights into seasonal mobilities in the Alpine region. All the accounts are anchored in the ethnographic situation engaging with the repertoire of individual and collective tactics and their interplay with the hazards, unpredictables and power relations shaping them. In such a vein, Müller and Camenisch argue in favour of a "mobilities-informed, and

data-grounded ethnographic research" (43) relying on the emic perspective of Swiss expats in China and expats in Sweden, which stems from their biographical analysis. The introduction proceeds following this perspective.

Spatial interconnections

As Salazar et al. convincingly argue, mobile ethnography is by no means new in anthropology and can be traced back as far as to Bronislaw Malinowski, who followed exchange patterns of the Kula across different islands (2017: 4; following Basu/Coleman 2008; cf. Hannerz 2003). The long tradition to track people and things in anthropology includes Arjun Appadurai's call to "follow the thing" (Appadurai 1986; see Salazar et al. 2017: 8 in detail) as well as approaches of multi-sited ethnography, claiming to follow the people, the thing, the metaphor, the plot/story, the allegory, the life/biography and, finally, the conflict (Marcus 1995). Concerning migratory experiences, mobile approaches further developed during the last years including auto-ethnographic accounts like the masterfully personated life-story of the "'Illegal' Traveller" by Shahram Khosravi (2010) as well as trajectory approaches that aim to follow open-ended migratory journeys and thus consider the migratory process as the primary focus (e.g. Triulzi and McKenzie 2013; Schapendonk and Steel 2014; Schapendonk et al. forthcoming 2017). Besides moving along with mobile people, trajectories can be explored through biographical tools or life histories (as in many articles of this special issue), which often allow an in-depth analysis of experiences, changing views, sudden changes of plans, expectations, and perceptions.

Even though mobile approaches seem to have been quite common in ethnographic research long before the much quoted 'mobilities turn,' what we deem necessary to remind scholars in migration and mobility studies is the way in which mobile ethnographic approaches may be used to counterbalance theoretical models containing our research in distinct research areas. Taking migratory movement as the entry point

of our studies enables us to discover spatial, social and temporal linkages which may not be foreseen in our theoretically informed research designs since “all depends on what one is actually researching, and on the ways in which ‘the field’ is allowed to intrude into one’s methodological infrastructure” (Salazar et al. 2017: 10). A mobilities-informed, and data-grounded ethnographic approach in migration studies inevitably needs to permeate both the methodological and the conceptual infrastructure of our research projects to allow for unforeseen aspects and interconnections to be taken into account. Priori (in this issue) demonstrates this clearly. In his research on migrations from Bangladesh to Rome, he initially focused on local insertion and its links with transnationalism. Following the trajectories of his interlocutors along a considerable period of time and collecting their life-accounts, though, he was introduced to a complex overlap of different spatial im/mobility patterns. This led him to draw from the dialogue between anthropology of migration and mobility studies in order to engage with fragmented multi-scalar trajectories in his ethnography.

Temporal interconnections

Questioning our ethnographic material beyond the initial research questions, which are inevitably linked to a certain period of the proposed research project and suitable methodological as well as theoretical approaches, does not only widen our spatial field of inquiry but also calls attention to temporal aspects stretching beyond our preconfigured research. Most of the authors in this issue thus felt the need to stretch their analysis of temporary contained migratory experiences and adopt a long-term perspective on their respective ethnographic sites. This implies (i) to include an extended understanding of the migratory process going beyond a temporal limited relocation from country of origin to destination country (Camenisch and Müller in this issue); (ii) to take intergenerational patterns of im/mobility into account and take a closer look at migrants following a family tradition of migratory

movement (Blanchard in this issue) as well as (iii) incorporating a broader historical perspective on migratory experiences in the research area.

(i) Pre- and post-migratory experiences

The temporal interconnections emerging from such inductive accounts reveal that migratory experiences cannot be conceptualised as temporally contained or strictly limited to a seemingly specific form of movement, such as a linear relocation or a movement between two specific places only. Pre-migratory experiences may be mobile as well as immobile and include various factors like seasonal work in the region, rural-urban migration, confrontation with causes for flight and migration, as well as with those who migrated before or long to migrate, stories about migratory journeys, possible destination countries and much more. All of the contributors to this special issue show an awareness for this and thereby broaden a longstanding debate particularly evident in African Studies, among others. For instance, Miriam de Bruijn and Rijk van Dijk use the examples of two very different mobile groups, namely, cattle herding Fulbe from Mali and Ghanaian Pentecostals, to show how mobility has always been a ‘way of life’, a field of practices, institutions and ideas that has a specific dynamism in its own right (de Bruijn et al. 2001). In the American context, Jeffrey Cohen (2004; cf. Cingolani in this issue) shows that a “culture of migration” developed within Mexican internal migration before it went on to sustain the ongoing and widely researched phenomenon of transnational migration between Mexico and the US. Indeed, historical, geographical and cultural links between local, regional and international migrations can be found on every continent.

(ii) Intergenerational dynamics

A fine example of how an ethnographic approach creatively re-combines what at other times has been separated conceptually, is Blanchard’s (this issue) study of household histories and intergenerational im/mobility patterns in two Alpine regions. Stretching her analysis over various gen-

erations, she mainly critiques her initial interest in return migration, showing how so many more movements have followed each other, intersected, amplified and inversed each other. The same holds true for Cingolani's (this issue) analysis of three generations of young men in Romania who draw from a number of different physical mobility options in order to become socially upwardly mobile. Another version of intergenerational dynamics emerges from Bal et al.'s analysis (this issue) of entangled mobilities of inhabitants of gated communities and their parents.

Contemporary migrants act within complex systems of movement that are sometimes circular, and which also integrate other trajectories directed towards more extended transnational and transcontinental destinations. New forms of migration are similar to older ones in many ways, or have been developed out of these older trajectories, even if they have been geographically more restricted at times (cf. Blanchard, Cingolani and Bal et al. in this issue). This is yet another reason why time plays an important role in affecting migratory development and why an historical perspective helps framing the interconnection between internal and transnational mobilities.

(iii) The historical context

The history of migration within, from, and towards the Alpine region clearly invites reflection about overcoming the 'gap' between internal and international migrations (King and Skeldon 2010; Hickey and Yeoh 2016) and focuses instead on the "internal and international nexus in migration" (Riccio 2016: 9), through a mobility lens. As Blanchard (in this issue) and Viazzo (1989) before show, the Alps are "good to think with" as a geographical, historical and economic region in which internal, international and transnational mobilities intersect or converge. The case of Albanian migration also provides a very good example of the "links between internal and international migration" (Vullnetary 2012). As King clearly states, Albania witnessed the "most massive dislocation of its population due to a combination of emigration and internal migra-

tion since 1990" (2016: 93). Those regions, however, are no exception but a rule to most research areas we use as starting points for our ethnographic engagement. Cingolani and Blanchard (in this issue) clearly demonstrate the importance of the broader historical context of the research areas we work in as to understand the multiple processes facilitating or hampering migration. Embedding migratory experiences into extended temporal contexts does not only reveal the migratory history of certain research settings but often refers the social ties influencing the migratory process as the intergenerational im/mobility patterns demonstrated already.

Social interconnections

Mobility studies have been criticised for extending the concept of mobility beyond analytical value to cover a wide range of issues, studying everything from commuters to itinerant populations, from tourism to forced migration, as well as framing mobility as a virtual synonym for either freedom, personal fulfilment or the social fluidity or liquidity of society per se (Bauman 1998). What is more, the interest in "mobilities" often neglected differences created by class, gender, power, nationality etc. and was thus criticised as demonstrating a lack of interest in inequalities. Some scholars thus called for including power relations and the analysis of inequalities into mobility studies (e.g. Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013; Gutekunst et al. 2016). Taking power dynamics into account, a mobilities-informed ethnographic account queries concepts of exclusionary groupism and may both help to enrich accounts focused on privileged movement (Camenisch and Müller in this issue) and overcoming what Hui called "migrant exceptionalism" (2016; cf. Dahinden 2015). It challenges the scientific construction of "the migrant" as a unique subject through the study of "sometimes-migrants," as it raises awareness for similar im/mobilities contained in other concepts describing mobile groups like "expatriates," "tourists" or "internationally mobile students." Countering migrant exceptionalism may be use-

ful “as a means of modulating existing boundaries and opening new spaces for interdisciplinary dialogue” (Hui 2016: 66).

The authors in this issue contribute to opening such spaces by critically reflecting on (i) the interactions between the nation state as a defining force of relevant but problematic categories in academic analysis and everyday commentary; and (ii) influences and interdependencies of mobile groups others than “migrants” and interconnections with actors who are not considered as part of the mobile group but who form part of the social setting. In this respect, the collected papers do not limit themselves to usual forms of sociality, such as kinship and ethnic networks, but also consider social dynamics of non-kin care, service and exploitation. At this moment, migratory movements become closely intertwined with concerns about social upward/downward mobility.

(i) National container models

The central and key role in bringing about migrant exceptionalism is the nation state and its normative force in defining collective identities. Due to this and the co-development of the social sciences and the modern nation state, many approaches in migration research continue to bear the imprints of either methodological nationalism (Glick-Schiller and Wimmer 2002), the ethnic lens (Glick-Schiller and Caglar 2006), or methodological regionalism (Lipphardt and Schwarz 2018). They point to the problem of an assumed congruence of geographic borders and boundaries of groups or nation-states which precludes a critical investigation of this relationship. Furthermore, both ‘migrants’ (here only referring to those crossing national borders) and ‘ethnic minorities’ (by means of migrants categorized by their ethnic affiliation) received attention not least as the quintessential other of the nation and its legitimate national population. The contributors to this special issue engage with this critique. However, they also show an awareness that the nation state remains a central structuring power which reveals itself in both the com-

mon sense of mobile and immobile people and the actual structures of opportunity and constraints (laws, labour markets, welfare systems) continue to ‘see’ like a (nation)state (cf. Priori in this issue, Scott 1995). The authors in this special issue therefore pay attention to the working of ethnic lenses and the nation-state’s perspective as a historical and social fact. If we want to take emic perspectives seriously, we may appreciate how even the (high skilled) mobile professionals, with whom Camenisch and Müller (this issue) worked, provide us with narratives stressing the importance of the Swiss state in affecting (emotionally as much as strategically) their mobile decisions and practices.

(ii) Im/mobile groups

In contrast to the migrant exceptionalism predominant in migration studies, mobility studies shed light on “all those who travelled within a country or circled the globe – whether they were seeking refuge or were students, consultants, volunteers, tourists, labour or return migrants” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013: 183-4). However, the diverse mobile groups researched were mainly analysed independently and their experiences of im/mobility thus decoupled. Interconnecting experiences of diverse mobile groups bears new insights into our preconfigured fields, however. As Schapendonk, van Liempt, and Spierings have argued for example, “‘the journey’ – as embodied form of travel from one place to another – is a fruitful analytical starting point to bring migration and tourism studies in closer dialogue with each other” (Schapendonk et al. 2015: 49). This interconnection of diverse mobile experiences is not only convincing from a mobility-informed perspective, but is integral to the case of data-grounded ethnographic migration research and holds true for a whole variety of mobile groups. This cross-fertilisation also enriches a critical diversities studies agenda.

As Camenisch and Müller (this issue) argue, a perspective informed by mobility studies broadens “the still somewhat static and state-focused gaze of migration studies and adds consider-

ations about all sorts of economic, political and social fluidities and fixities and the diversity of human movement to the agenda of those who study human migration” (45). It thus allows them to include privileged migratory experiences into the field of migration studies which often describes less privileged forms of migration. The comparison of privileged and unprivileged migration, however, points to interdependencies and similarities which lead us beyond a contained prefiguration of “the migrant.” Furthermore, Blanchard (this issue) includes agricultural workers and their seasonal mobility patterns into her analysis of international returnees into the Alpine area and illustrates intergenerational mobile practices and their alteration in highlighting the interdependency of seasonal and international mobilities.

In their analysis of gated communities of returning international high-skilled migrants, Bal et al. (this issue) speak of “sites of mobility convergence, where migration and mobility patterns of the diverse groups of residents (returnees, their relatives, and staff) have become entangled and mutually constitutive” (15). On the one hand, the creation of these estates has caused thousands of low-skilled workers from various parts of the country to move with the hope of finding work, but now reside in slum settlements close to the estates. On the other hand, the parents of the returning transnational migrants also migrated from different parts of India in order to live with their children in their new residences.

Apart from this first insight into the multiple intersections of migratory movements of distinct social groups, Bal et al. furthermore come to speak of the asymmetrical and classist consequences of the immobilisations which resulted from the privileged mobility of transnational returnees. While initially the domestic staff had moved for work and circulated between slum and estate on a daily basis, on a larger scale, they had to be immobile – both socially and geographically. The estates functioned at their cost: first, on the basis of their continued low wages and second, since they had to stay put when their employ-

ers travelled. Awareness for the social interconnections between distinctly im/mobile groups advances our understanding of complex ethnographic situations substantially, a conclusion which Cingolani also obtains from his analysis of the changing links between physical im/mobility and being socially upwardly mobile.

Finally, the interconnections of the im/mobility between specific social groups extends beyond physical and social im/mobility and also include the dimension of the imaginary (Priori in this issue; cf. Salazar 2011). As recent anthropological work has demonstrated, many people primarily experience mobility in its absence, as the unavailability of departure (Gaibazzi 2016). Nonetheless, “cultures of mobility” develop (cf. Cingolani and Blanchard in this issue), as traditions of migratory movement and involve migrants and non-migrants alike. These complex interconnections of migratory experiences and more encompassing dimensions of the social dynamics of im/mobility provide a fertile basis on which to enquire into the local dynamics within the sites that our ethnographic analyses encompass.

The diversity in “sites of mobility convergence”

While in the prior section we engaged with three sets of interconnections separately in order to obtain a closer understanding, eventually it is the cross-sections between the temporal, spatial and social interconnections which really matter. While the individual papers do this skilfully for each ethnographic case in its singularity, in this last section we provide such a general view in relation to the localities that are part of the configurations which emerge from an ethnographic engagement of migratory experiences and the multiple interconnections between im/mobilities. We argue that such regimes of im/mobilities contribute with their various temporalities and social dynamics to the diversification of the resultant interlinked localities, the “sites of mobility convergence” (Bal et al. in this issue). Exploring the full spectrum of im/mobilities, the papers thereby also contribute to a refined understand-

ing of new diversities. Apart from old and new diversities in a particular site (Vertovec 2015), a mobilities-informed perspective multiplies the diversifications which can be – and indeed should be – combined within a single ethnographic analysis. For example, the different profiles of mobile populations become apparent in all of the contributions to this special issue, be it in the gated community in India, among the Bangladeshis in Rome, or the Romanians. Apart from the obvious questions of socio-economic background, the contributors also show a refined analysis of life-style (Priori and Camenisch and Müller in this issue) and ideologically charged habitus due to changing political systems, social remittances and generational dynamics (Cingolani).

The analyses of the contributing authors do not remain bound to a particular site, but can stretch – if need be – along the migration trajectories or make connections between particular sites. As such, return migration leads us to consider the diversification of Alpine localities under the impact of decades spent abroad (Blanchard). Furthermore, we become aware of the new diversities in migrant-sending contexts and how they define the horizons of future migrants (Cingolani). Finally, as shown by Priori, we can see how the perception by social actors of multiple and intersecting diversities inspires representations that, in order to find an “appropriate” place for the migrants’ families, partition the space on its different scales according to these differences.

Another noteworthy aspect of considering the conceptual contributions of mobility and migration studies together for understanding diversity becomes most apparent in following Swiss professionals around the globe. Camenisch and Müller (this issue) make it explicit how geographical mobility is closely linked to aspirations to social mobility and progress. Social-cum-geographical mobility becomes negotiated in a fluid time frame which raises questions of how we understand such fluctuations as part of the more or less temporary diversification of specific localities and the churning up of social class structures.

Finally, maybe the most complex of new diversifications emerges from the confluence of mobile populations in Indian gated communities (Bal et al). The co-occurrence and interdependence of the geographical mobility of very different social classes intersected with generational dynamics and life-style choices and the resulting conviviality explicate why diversity research, always having maintained strong links to migration research, can also profit from a mobility lens and the complexification that comes with it.

In taking multiple and intersecting im/mobility patterns and regimes into account, this special issue contributes importantly to a nuanced understanding of new configurations and encounters of diversity that we see taking place around the globe. It also highlights new diversities in sites (e.g. Alpine regions, seemingly homogenous gated communities) and among “communities” (e.g. Bangladeshi migrants in Rome) that go unnoticed under the predominant angle the diversification narrative stresses (i.e. urbanisation, mega-cities, new and old migrations). Discussing the multiple interrelations of im/mobilities, the special issue thus broadens the understanding of diversifying societies in significant ways.

Outlook. Drawing from the breadth of ethnographic cases

This special issue thus aims at scholars from the interdisciplinary fields of migration, mobilities and diversity studies, since it contributes to the rethinking of both intersecting and interconnecting migratory experiences as well as of the diversity at the “sites of mobility convergence” (Bal et al. this volume). It does so by drawing from a set of ethnographic studies which would not normally come into conversation, which strengthens our argument. To conclude, let us reiterate the diversity and breadth of the ethnographic material combined in this issue. **Bal, Sinha-Kerkhoff and Tripathy** observe how different forms of im/mobility overlap inside gated communities in three Indian mega-cities in which the return of highly-skilled migrants is entangled with the

internal migration of their elderly parents and the low-skilled work force coming to facilitate their lifestyle. They understand the estates as “sites of mobility convergence” under a complex mobility regime. **Priori** anchors his ethnography in Rome while his interlocutors’ lives span the globe, back to Bangladesh and onwards to the United Kingdom and other Western countries. This translates into a fine analysis of fragmented migratory routes which are in constant struggle with the legal and economic frameworks. **Camenisch and Müller** explore the life histories of Swiss citizens in Scandinavia and China and argue for a “mobility-informed migration lens,” empowering scholars to differentiate their analytical categories from those of the common sense and political power, and to overcome the theoretical and methodological pitfalls of both mobility studies and migration research. In contrast, **Cingolani** explores the historically variable significations of mobility in the case of three generations of Romanian men, whose mobility patterns evolve in close interaction with the evolution of the national state, the public representation of im/mobilities and actual economic options. Finally, **Blanchard** brings us to the Alpine region and shares the biographic accounts of families combining short-range and seasonal mobilities as well as international migrations. She understands mobility as a “‘total social fact’ (Mauss 1966) encompassing multiple dimensions of human life” (75) stretching beyond generations.

Together, the papers of this special issue provide the basis for a mobility informed, ethnographically rich exploration of interconnected migratory experiences. They each provide a critique of the multi-layered relation of the concepts of migration and mobility. Despite their distinctiveness, they contribute to the spatial, temporal and social interconnections of diverse lived experiences, empirically and theoretically. They thereby go beyond the usual focus of studies of diversity in providing nuanced readings of new diversities in particular sites and among particular migrant populations. The picture that emerges from this special issue is thus one which

broadens and deepens the arguments around diversifying socialities in an ethnographically “deep” way.

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Unequal Mobility Regimes of Indian Gated Communities: Converging Regional, National and Transnational Migration Flows in Indian Metropolitan Cities

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Abstract

Examining high-skilled professionals of Indian origin who decide to return to India to settle down in so-called gated estates or communities, which now form part of Indian mega cities' landscape, this article describes the mobility regimes of these estates' diverse populations in three South Indian cities and the power relations between these high-skilled professionals and their staff. We address the lacuna to study these estates as sites of human capital mobility convergence where international and regional migration and mobility patterns of the diverse groups become entangled and mutually constitutive. Combining theoretical models pertaining to skilled migration research as well as mobility studies and ethnographic description and analysis, we aim to conceptualise gated communities in a way that highlights not only the interconnectedness of local, regional, national and transnational migration, but also their correlation with different forms of (physical, social, cultural, economic) (non-) mobility. At the same time, we argue that these interconnecting social fields are marked by power differences, social and economic inequality, and disparate access to mobility. These factors lead to a differential outcome for the different social actors implicated in our study and eventually to the sustenance of huge economic as well socio-cultural disparity in contemporary India.

Keywords: Indian gated communities, Indian return migrants, Indian knowledge workers, Indian diaspora, new Indian cityscapes, changing Indian urban geographies, new strategies for social exclusion, new civic islands, manufactured communities, new Indian infrastructure havens, models of urban withdrawal/urban participation

Introduction: Migration and Development

India has placed itself as one of the most dynamic countries in transition, becoming the second fastest growing large economy in the world (behind China) (Drèze and Sen 2013; Tejada and Bhattacharya 2014: 5). India's elites, with their access to high-quality training (in India or abroad), are the great beneficiaries of these record-high growth figures. In terms of overall social and human development, however, India seriously lags behind. India was ranked 136 out

of 187 countries listed by the UNDP Human Development Index (HDI) in 2012. India's large majority, in other words, has not benefitted from India's recent introduction into the neo-liberal global market economy (Tejada and Bhattacharya 2014: 6). One fourth of India's population is still living in absolute poverty, while, at the same time, there are extremely mobile groups that form an emerging middle class. This class constitutes a significant proportion of the entire population forming "pockets of prosperity and

islands of well-being" (Nayyar 2012). The well-known Indian economist Nayyar goes as far as to argue that today there are two different, almost dichotomized, worlds in India: a new global India and a local one (which he calls Bharat) (2012: xii). The first is referring to economic growth, wealth and prosperity, and the second to the "old" India, involving those people and social fields that have remained excluded from socio-economic growth and its benefits. In other words, India's development has been lopsided, beneficial to some, and excluding most others. This article focuses on one type of these "pockets of prosperity," also known as housing estates or gated communities in India's southern metropolitan cities, where many so-called high-skilled Indians who worked abroad, mostly in the USA, decided to settle. We, however, describe that in these estates, "old" and "new" (global) India meet each other, and analyse the ways in which the poor are not excluded, but form an indispensable part of gated communities.

Transnational migration has constituted an important element of contemporary processes of social transformation in India. Official figures showed that in 2013, India was the country of origin of more than 14 million international migrants (Tajeda and Bhattacharya 2014), while one decade earlier the Government of India (GoI), had already boasted an Indian diaspora of 20 million Indians, including people of Indian origin but with foreign passports (Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal 2003). In many cases, migration has been seen as a symptom of underdevelopment. In the last decade or so, the potential positive role of migration for development has been recognized, both in countries of origin and receiving countries. Policy makers and researchers are trying to determine under which conditions migration is favourable for countries of origin, countries of settlement, multinational corporations, and the migrants themselves (Blakewell 2007).

Since the early 1990s, the Government of India (GoI) has moved from a position of indifference to one of actively seeking the involvement of the "Indian diaspora" in India's development

(Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal 2003). Several recent studies on returning Indian professionals have described these returnees as important factors in the socio-economic development of India (e.g., Chacko 2007; Tejada and Bhattacharya 2014). They see the transfer of advanced technical skills and managerial knowledge as important contributors to India's development. Others describe that the returnees turn towards the "new" India, as seen in Ilkjær's PhD dissertation (2015), but nevertheless incorporate select elements of the values and lifestyles associated with the "old" India, especially in relation to inter-generational family ties and in commitments to giving back to the community. Ilkjær contends that the orientation "the returnees" maintained towards the "new" India did not constitute a complete rejection of everything from the "old" India. Rather, parts of the "old" were carried forward and pieced into their projects of return to the "new" India. They were thereby incorporated into the returnees' ways of being "global Indian citizens." In this article, we analyse that in order to maintain these "ways of being" "appropriately Indian," as Radhakrishnan (2011) articulates, the upscale estates where most of these professionals decide to settle require a continuous inflow of low-skilled workers from various parts of the country.

Our article is based on ethnographic data that was collected over a two-year period, in 2013 and 2014.¹ It is one of the outcomes of a larger project on the presumed development-(return) migration nexus. Ratnakar Tripathy, our main researcher in India, carried out a study of ITs/ITES (information technology and IT-enabled ser-

¹ Our joint research project entitled "Migration, Development, and Citizenship: notions of belonging and civic engagement among Indian (knowledge-) migrants in The Netherlands and return migrants in India" was funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research NWO/WOTRO. Ratnakar Tripathy was the main researcher in India. Kate Kirk was the main researcher in the Netherlands. All names of informants and estates mentioned here are pseudonyms as to protect the anonymity of our interlocutors.

vices) in three Indian mega-cities and selected only those informants who had spent a considerable number of years abroad as professionals. The larger purpose of the ethnographic work was to assess the impact of so-called highly skilled knowledge workers on development processes in different parts of India. For the purpose of this article we addressed our ethnographic material from a different angle and discovered something new. In fact, we found that the relation between Indian skilled return migration and development is very complex and a genuine assessment of return and the development (mobility) impact needs to go beyond a simple (economic) study of knowledge and skills transfers. It must also include not only return migrants and their relatives, but all other socio-economic groups and adopt a holistic development approach.

The large majority of our approximately seventy informants were in their forties and early fifties, male and married, often with one or two children. Only ten women were officially “interviewed,” and mostly in presence of their husbands. Though Tripathy also interacted with skilled return migrants in technology incubation set ups, this article is based on observations and conversations he had with inhabitants of two gated estates in Hyderabad, two in Pune and one in Bengaluru (Bangalore), as well as on observations and informal interactions with service staffs frequenting these estates. Srivastava (2015) describes the mushrooming of “New India’s” gated enclaves that regulate physical mobilities as much as they trigger emotions such as fear and moral superiority. Our main interlocutors reiterated that they had opted for these segregated spaces because they found it difficult to cope with the existing conditions in the “real” or “old” India and prefer to live in spaces which are gated and secured (cf. Illkejaer 2012). They share migratory trajectories, class, professional and often religious (but normally not caste and linguistic) backgrounds, as well as lifestyle norms and values and could therefore be considered as a “community” in some sense. Though some of our interlocutors stated that they had returned

to India because of termination of employment contracts (and visas), many claimed they could have stayed on abroad but came back to India because they believed that India now offered an enabling economic environment with adequate career and future prospects. Yet, apart from such structural conditions, personal reasons were more often quoted as having determined return. Family, and the presence of ageing parents in particular, was often the primary reason they provided for return. The desire to have their children socialized in “Indian culture” was also mentioned as an important factor.

Our “return” migrants remain highly mobile, however, and one of the reasons our elite professionals provided for having “settled down” in gated estates was because these upmarket residential areas (cf. Varrel 2012 and 2016 and Searle 2016) offer them the possibility to remain transnational. Furthermore, these estates reunite them with their family and provide a suitable Indian but secure milieu for their children, as well as a cosmopolitan setting commensurable with the place they had left behind. In fact, our interlocutors explained that these communities combined the good of the “West” with India, while “New India” simultaneously shut out the undesirable realities of “old India,” as well as corrupting elements of “Western culture” (cf. Radhakrishnan 2007: 156).

We found that these estates function as sites of mobility convergence, where migration and mobility patterns of the diverse groups of residents (returnees, their relatives, and staff) have become entangled and mutually constitutive. By using the regimes of mobility framework (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2012), we aim to highlight the interconnectedness of local, regional, national and transnational migration, mobility and sedentarism, and the “old”/local and the “new”/transnational India. In line with Glick Schiller and Salazar, we explore apparent conceptual binaries that often characterize studies of development, mobility and migration. By observing case-studies of the inhabitants of a number of gated estates in Southern India, we demonstrate

how tightly interwoven the old and the new India have become precisely through the interconnected nature of local and transnational migration within these gated communities. At the same time, we argue that these interconnecting social fields are also marked by power differences, old and emerging social and economic inequalities, and disparate access to migration and mobility, leading to highly differential outcomes and new forms of exclusion for the different social actors implicated in our study.

Gated communities as Sites of Mobility Convergence

Upmarket housing estates in Pune, Hyderabad and Bengaluru are places where transnational, national, regional and local migratory flows of various groups are connected and tightly interwoven. The gated estates are inhabited by affluent transnational return migrants, partners and children. Yet another significant migration flow is formed by the parents of these return migrants, who are often persuaded to leave their own residence and start residing close by— if not together with— their children and grandchildren in the gated community. Besides, these estates have attracted a substantial number of much less affluent male and female labourers who provide essential services to these return migrants, which are indispensable to the infrastructure of the gated communities. The availability of this labour is the result of internal migration (within the city/region/nation). Migration often does not follow a clear-cut route, and step-by-step migration is part of the migratory process. Individual/family, societal and cultural and, often, economic considerations have motivated unskilled, semi-skilled and skilled labour to move on and work in the gated estates should not necessarily be the end of these migratory flows in their lives. Yet, we demonstrate in this article that inbuilt power relations within these estates often result in the immobility rather than mobility among these service-providing groups.

In this article, we describe this convergence of local, regional and international migration

patterns and use the term mobility as a key analytical term to unravel its differentiated workings. We use the term with reference to spatial as well as socio-economic and cultural mobilities and argue that these apparent binaries of difference should in fact be understood within the same frame of analysis. For instance, within one group physical/spatial mobility may lead to socio-economic (im-)mobility and/or be its consequence. Besides, mobility flows amongst groups are interwoven and high-skilled (spatial-) mobility may cause low-skilled (socio-cultural, economic or spatial-) mobility and/or sedentarism. (cf. Glick Schiller and Salazar 2012; Hackl et al 2016).

Although there are indeed fundamental differences between internal and international migration, our research findings underline the need to acknowledge that both internal and international mobilities create an integrated system, which can be observed at a range of scales: family/household, community, national, and the constellation of countries linked by migration flows (King and Skeldon 2010: 1620). This study focuses on the interrelations between different forms of migration, unequal class relations, and socio-economic im/mobility. Although migration is one of the key issues in our article, we feel that mobility captures the confluence between migration and the configuration of class (and gender) in contemporary globalizing India more adeptly. We do not consider mobility and immobility as two extreme ends of the same continuum, but rather as two sides of the same coin. One may experience spatial immobility and social mobility at the same time, or be immobile in terms of living conditions but potentially be highly mobile. In other words, we consider mobility, immobility, migration and sedentarism as structurally interconnected conditions, albeit temporary and dynamic at the same time (cf. Götz 2016:10; Raitapuro and Bal 2016). Our article does not only demonstrate how different forms of migration and mobility of various groups mutually influence and shape each other, it also reveals how the implications of these convergences may be beneficial to some but curb the mobility of others.

In the following sections, we elaborate on how and why these gated estates came into existence and we analyse the ways in which the individuals living in these estates govern the place as fairly autonomous “mini-states.” We examine the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion they employ to regulate the relationships between upper classes and lower classes, the inside and the outside, and the “new” and the “old” India. The last section argues that workers in these gated communities form the backbone of the new lifestyle designed and chosen by the high-skilled professionals. Here, we focus on poor female domestic workers and their affluent employers and argue that they live in a kind of structural, albeit inherently unequal, interdependence with each other (cf. Ray and Qayum 2009). We closely analyse the dynamics of this process of convergence, where both the employees and the employers assist the other to attain their separate goals, albeit to different extents, for some facilitating and for others (further) limiting their mobility.

Re-ordering India: Return to the “Gated Communities”

Mega-cities in India are generally described as the most important destinations of massive poverty-induced migrations of illiterate and unskilled peasants and labourers (Mukherji 2013: 36). Only very recently, scholars have developed an interest in the highly skilled Indians residing in these same mega-cities and who have no intentions to emigrate because of the emerging opportunities in their home economies, higher education levels, and declining wage differentials between India and the so-called more developed North. What is more, with the declining North-South divide, in some instances some of these Indian urban giants now accommodate migrants from the more affluent North, including high-skilled return migrants from the “North” (cf. Gollerkeri and Chhabra 2016: 52-53).

Most of our informants identified family ties and their patriotic feelings as the most important reasons for their return to the country (also see

Chacko 2007). Nearly all of them had left their Indian “home-towns” or “home-states” – in which they were born/did primary schooling – for good, choosing to live in newly created urban spaces. Their migration trajectory, either on their own or often with their parents, had typically begun with educational migration to elite institutions of higher studies in other parts of the country. This change was followed by transnational migration, before or after marriage. After returning to India, some had tried to settle down in the region where they were born, but rarely remained there. Hemant, for instance, a proprietor of a software start-up in Hyderabad, spent several years in his home district of Tirupathi looking for business opportunities related to agriculture. He had to finally settle down in Hyderabad, however, because the employment opportunities it offered were better. Moreover, some informants like Naga, an angel investor from Bangalore, invested heavily in his hometown of Madurai, but continued to live with his wife and children in Bengaluru. He was attracted to the mega-city not only for work, but also because of access to better educational, residential and other infrastructures. Seen from a migration perspective over a long stretch of time, the high-skilled migrant left his/her home town to an Indian urban centre, went to the USA, and finally (but not definitely) ended up in an Indian mega-city, more commonly described as an “India-USA-India” life journey. Indeed, in most cases, it is difficult to say whether the tale of internal migration embeds the tale of transnational migration, or the other way around. However, this is only one of the ways in which internal and transnational migration converge.

The gated communities notably attract a variety of categories of people, including non-(transnational/regional-) migrant citizens, expatriates, residents (of Indian origin) who were not born in India, and foreigners on relatively long stints of work in India. We thus find in the gated communities a web of mobilities crisscrossing each other, with little fixed pattern. Even though the movement of the Indian return migrants

seems to follow a fairly regular pattern, we hesitate to call these migrants “return migrants” as is usually done by policy-makers and scholars alike. This is because the residents in gated communities want to keep their migratory options open, thus ruling out the finality of return. In the early 1990s, the Government of India’s (GoI) began to value the Indian diaspora’s multiple associations and long distance connections with India (cf. Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal 2003). The government also began to see in return a great benefit as it seemed to compensate for the outflow of highly skilled migrants, establishing a brain gain instead of a brain drain. In this “diaspora option,” highly-skilled migrants are viewed as carriers of social, cultural, and economic capital that is waiting to be harnessed to the advantage of India (cf. Ilkjaer 2012; Sinha-Kerkhoff and Bal 2003).

The gated estates, a form of walled or fenced residential complexes, are found all over the world. Even though they are established for different purposes and come in many shapes and sizes, many of them seem to pivot on notions of exclusion and segregation on the one hand, and social integration on the other (e.g., Atkinson and Blandy 2013; Caldeira 1996; Coy and Pöhler 2002). An important additional clue on the classification of these gated communities was provided by Mr. Kulkarni, the 85-year-old chairman of a housing society in Pune. He used the shorthand “cosmo” (i.e. cosmopolitan) for residential estates that housed Indian residents from different cultural, linguistic, and sometimes even caste who rarely had different religious backgrounds and often had ancestral roots in different parts of the country. Being the chairman of a society predominantly occupied by high-skilled Maharashtrian (return) migrants, he was aware of other complexes that mimic not simply the civic orderliness of developed countries, but more diverse Indian cultural traits as well. In the Palm Beach Retreat in Bengaluru, for example, which could be described as “highly cosmo,” the residents celebrate the American Independence Day and Thanksgiving with as much zeal as the Hindu festivals Holi or Diwali.

According to Kulkarni, real estate companies often specialize to accommodate certain types of clients. For example, Green Park Constructions in Pune mostly deals with those who have close family ties with the state of Maharashtra in India, whereas Anand Constructions are considered to be more “cosmo.” For instance, a gated community dominated by Maharashtrians more strongly maintains more Indian culture because of features like a temple, a shared language and cuisine. An intermingling of residents from different corners of India, on the other hand, seems to lead to a more “Western,” largely “American” milieu around the premises duly reflected in the architecture, the demography of the staff and the estate’s layout, not to mention the numerous activities and facilities at the estate clubhouses. A highly cosmo complex like Palm Beach in Bengaluru may not even consider building a temple, not because the residents are any less devout, but because it would be near impossible to elect the god to be installed among residents from such disparate parts of the country. Very often the (mostly Hindu) residents thus leave a space for worship in their homes for the deity of choice.

There are three other aspects of the gated communities that will now be discussed. First, the residents of these communities are aware of their unique place in the society and identify with people “like us,” which generally indicates a high level of income, exposure to the west, and high levels of civic sense, i.e. similar habitus. Second, the process selecting homes starts early and may be the first decision in the process of returning to India. During their temporary annual visits to India, the migrants often update themselves on the residential options available. Third, even though the return migrants are also driven by nostalgia and attachment to the country that motivates them to come back, they are wary of returning to the same India they left behind. They thus attempt to create their own heavily modified version of India that is built around the gated residences, schools and office spaces, all of which seem like replicas of institutions more prevalent in the “developed West” where they lived

before. They are then able to largely stay away from pollution, dirt, crowds, poor infrastructure, poverty, and insecurity commonly faced by “others,” particularly the poor women and children inhabiting these cities. Once these are eliminated, the return migrant adds to this lifestyle recipe a strong “Indian flavour” by employing a large number of domestic staff the family could not afford in the US. Especially for the “reluctant female returnee” (cf. Ilkjær 2016), it is the existence of a “culture of domestic servitude” in “old India” (cf. Qayum and Ray 2003) that makes the (husband’s) plan to return more acceptable or even attractive. Vaishali, a former professional-now-turned-housewife in Pune readily admits that the lure of domestic help was a major reason to come back. She confirms the same is true of a great majority of the return migrants, especially females. Any visitor to a gated community will be struck by the number of staff members scurrying about the premises. They range from gardeners, repairmen, drivers, gym attendants to female domestic labourers, not to mention the employees seated in the estate office complex. These employees can be divided into two main groups – first, the ones employed by the families individually and second, those employed by the housing society for general maintenance services, clerical jobs and administration. A household was found to employ on average three people: a female cook, a “driver” and a part time so-called maid servant (paid domestic worker).

The well-known software boom in India in the past few decades provides the broader economic background to the gated communities. The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) that started in the late 1970s and continued in the 1980s, was accompanied or replaced by a growing trend of “off-shoring” from the mid-1990s and which became attractive to a wider range of companies in developed countries. Mazumdar (2010: 243-244) explains that “outsourcing and off-shoring thus began to combine and a number of Indian companies, including software corporates, entered the BPO field considerably aided by the Indian government’s policy of “no

taxation on IT export earnings.” Even Western multinational BPO companies began to locate some of their operations in urban India and all this went hand-in-hand with increasing numbers of IT-enabled services (ITES) located in the Indian metropolis. Our informants, almost all men, were not just employees in ITES/BPO combines, but often directed them or were entrepreneurs delivering IT-enabled services. In any case, their work required the mobility and transnational allegiances they possessed.

As the term “gated” would indicate, the estates enable the knowledge worker to shut out many features of Indian life that they find undesirable, letting in only those characteristics/commodities/people of real or old India that they need or can tolerate. The estate gates that isolate these communities from noise, dirt, chaos, poverty, etc. thus symbolize a stern social filter. In many ways, they resemble what Sreekumar (2013), drawing on the notion of *heterotopias*, described in the context of Bengaluru as a contested space that is at once real (as an existing geographical place), as well as imagined (as a future anterior). The new transnational techno-class in India’s mega-cities indeed created such *heterotopias*, which include both elements of “real” or “old” India as well as their own imagined India, which together form a transnational new India in these gated estates (cf. D’Costa 2012). Importantly, the migrant communities that reside in these estates turn into agents of development, spreading the message of the new India in the real India (cf. Upadhy 2013: 141-161).

The New India of the Gated Communities

Blakely and Snyder (1997: 85-99) identify three basic categories of “communities” living within gated estates: (1) “lifestyle communities,” (2) “prestige communities” and (3) “security zones.” In India, we find that gated communities form residential clusters in the fashion of industrial clusters where contiguity, functionality and utilitarian supply-chain related issues are the foremost identifiers rather than a deeper sense of community bonding. Our gated communities are

known for their harmonious living, minimizing conflicts through a system of social relationships which may be termed “distant neighbourliness,” ridding relations of intimacies characteristic of close communities. Notably, Royal Indian Raj, a real estate company in Bengaluru, used the innovative phrase “couture community” to describe their Italian-style villas, openly admitting the synthetic exclusivity of the community (Outlook, August 18, 2008). The sense of “community” in the gated estates in urban India is thus based on a common transnational identity both Indian and global (transnational), making it more like commonality than community.

The GoI as well as MNCs and Indian firms invite the highly skilled professionals to return to India, not despite their transnationalism but because of it (Varrel 2011). These “pendle communities,” or “highly-skilled globetrotters,” involved in a human capital “emigration-return cycle” or even “brain circulation” (quoted in Seele 2008: 98) establish ties between the country of return and previous residence, allowing the accumulation of social/cultural and economic capital at different places and thereby creating a transnational value-added migration chain (cf. Seele 2008: 99). The ever-present tension between the transnational sentiments and Indian-ness is well illustrated by the case of the children in the gated communities. A large number of returnees admitted that an important reason for coming back to India was to ensure that the children absorb some “Indian-ness” and not become rootless individuals. This may happen more tangibly through frequent interactions with the grandparents and other family members, but also and more often via full-time or part-time female domestic workers. These reside within staff quarters or in squatter settlements in close proximity to the gated estate or even within the particular family’s apartment which architecture is often specially designed to house such “servants” and who impart a minimal level of “Indian-ness” to the children. Merits derived from this “entangled urbanism” (cf. Srivastava 2015) i.e., their ability to afford domestic staff were enumerated in unambiguous ways.

Amardeep, for instance, admitted that his wife was quite satisfied with the gated estates as “the cost of running a household is cheaper here than running it there [in the USA].” It also leaves her more time for what she would like to do. This serial entrepreneur from Hyderabad added that “if she has her way she would like to stay here. She feels quite comfortable over here. Because I think she has much more freedom in terms of help, infrastructure, and the household support which is here.” In similar fashion, Kumar, a software start-up founder from Hyderabad, explained to Tripathy that he had seen “certain people who had returned with the intention of staying put in India but could not do so and had to go back” to the US. Unlike these people, he had decided to stay put and he elaborated that a foremost reason for this choice was the availability of domestic staff, which he almost likened to extended family:

one doctor family, they came back. Their kids could not get comfortably settled here so they returned. That is one thing. But as you must have seen, I personally feel life in India – types of servants or cooks we engage, lively things around us ...I think we have much more.

Ravi, another informant explained:

The clarity of coming back from the US dawned on me when my daughter was born. Multiple reasons why it became clear why I had to come back [indistinct]. So, what happened after our daughter was born – first of all the help we could get in the US which is pretty limited. You are on your own and it’s hard to manage a little baby at that point of time and we thought we need external help. That was one reason [for return].

Though many returned couples depend on such an arrangement for child-care, the presence of this human being from “old India” does not easily fit however in their imagination regarding “new India” often conjured while still living in the USA and which proposes day care centres and/or an equal and contractual relation between employers and employees (cf. Qayum and Ray 2003: 538). Besides, “entangled urbanism” also has its dangers and not too much of “old India”

is tolerated within gated communities. What is more, most of the parents show a clear preference for the “international” schools that mimic the western patterns of education and even award European or American certificates such as an International Baccalaureate.

We found that upon return to India, residents often persuaded their parents to stay with them in the gated estates, or at least in close proximity. This provides another example of mobility convergence in the estates: in this case, the internal migration of the parents who join their transnational children, who have often returned to look after these elderly or ailing family members. These parents often have well-defined roles in the gated communities. In the Somvihar Society in Kothrud, Pune, Tripathy discovered that the entire administration of the society was run by a group of above-70 parents who occupied their children’s flats. Mr Kulkarni, the 85-year old president, already quoted before, jokingly claimed that Somvihar is an instance of a gerontocratic government. On a more serious note, he explained that the younger lot in the society either live abroad or are too busy with work to make time for the society. As a result, the Somvihar society carried a strong touch of an old-age home with separately marked spaces for elderly women and men in the club buildings – an area for card-playing men, spiritual lectures for the aged, and provision for yoga classes for the old. Senior citizens of the estates often played the role of custodians for their children’s properties and were responsible for the smooth running of matters within the estates.

During conversations with the managers and office holders from all the five societies surveyed in Pune, we also inquired about the most recent crisis or system breakdown faced by the gated communities. In every case our informants failed to come up with a significant example of a real disaster except a case of minor theft in a Pune estate. The gated communities justify their very existence by anticipating and pre-empting all possible crises likely to be created by the malfunctioning of the city’s municipal systems

in India, thereby practically functioning as near mini-states. In all the five estates, the communities pursue their autonomy by ensuring the following: (1) Back up source of power when the city supplies fail; (2) Back up of water supply with wells and tankers apart from the corporation’s supplies (one estate in Hyderabad had even installed a water filtration plant); (3) Internal security at the gates and constant patrolling – in every case residences were connected with residences through intercoms and with each other through walkie talkie; (4) Independent system for sewage management – Somvihar in Pune applied composting and produced fertilizers for their own gardens and other neighbouring societies. (5) A wide range of staff to carry out the routine tasks such as gardeners, cleaners, plumbers, electricians, repairmen, overseers, swimming and sports coaches and yoga instructors, and even tailors and washer men, to name a few.

Clearly, such an intricate system is also highly labour-intensive. In some instances, most of the required services are outsourced to external agencies and companies to ensure that the governing committee of the gated community is not responsible for overseeing everything. In most cases, the residents have to deal directly only with the domestic staff. As one of the resident chairmen put it through a classic Laplacian clockwork metaphor for an automated system: “you need to rewind the clock occasionally but it mostly runs on its own.”

Symbiosis between the Transnational and the Internal Migrant

Clearly, however, the system does not run without a wide range of labour employed in the estates and perhaps the most visible and vital are the female domestic workers. Our special focus on these female domestic workers in this last section of the paper aims to demonstrate the myriad ways in which the lives of transnational returnees have become intertwined with those of labourers who migrated to the same megacities from rural areas or (small-) towns and cities within the state or beyond, and have often

continued to move locally (within the mega-city), in search of work and trying to escape exploitation elsewhere. Though our project focused in particular on the category of high-skilled migrants, our ethnographic material did not only uncover the confluence of the migration trajectories of our high-skilled informants and their employees, but also the unequal power relations between them. We discuss the severe implications of these relationships in terms of mobility and immobility of both employers as well as employees.

Thus far, we have argued that the “disorganized” and “unpredictable” reality of the outer world made it vital for the return migrants to follow organized procedures in their residential spaces (cf. Illkejaer 2012). Yet, their organized “transnational” life-styles in the gated communities can only be maintained through the daily circulation of service workers. In fact, service providers such as chauffeurs, maids/domestic workers, nannies, cooks, plumbers and guards are essential for the segregated and insulated spaces (cf. Chase: 2008). We found that the workers employed in the estates, whether by the individual employer or the estate office, were often migrants from distant as well as nearby places. In the case of Pune, the Janawadi slum near Senapati Bapat Road provided a steady source of labour to a whole string of gated societies including the two estates we surveyed. Paradoxically, the migrant worker plays an essential role in keeping the larger Indian reality at a safe distance, while being from the “old India,” also brings a homely Indian touch to the lives of the return migrants. Transnational mobility of the whole family is also assured by these staffs who are paid throughout the year, even if the family is occasionally or most of the time abroad. Besides, during such absences, many staffs also look after the well-being of aged parents who stay put. In other words, they facilitate both the (transnational) mobility and immobility of their employers and/or their parents/children. Representing the “real India,” these workers are allowed, and are indeed welcomed, inside the gated commu-

nities, though they often require gate passes and record daily entry at the gates.

The Indian middle class’s obsession with the housemaid (commonly labelled as “maid woes”) is a widespread feature in living room conversations across the country. In the case of the gated communities, this dependence may in fact be seen as a basic prerequisite for the relative autonomy of the gated communities. In such set-ups, the migrant labour, disciplined by the gated milieu, would seem to represent an airbrushed and easily acceptable version of the “authentic” or “real” India as against the heavily processed Indian-ness of the return migrants. As Nimita, a part time software consultant and housewife from Bengaluru with Bihari origin (and thus a Hindi-speaker) narrated, her only real and consistent contact with the city is her Telugu maid from Telangana who is quite fluent at Kannada, as well. Nimita’s borrowed Kannada vocabulary, however sparse, proves to be very useful when she goes out in the city.

Our informants seemed aware of discourses on gross (physical and socio-economic) exploitation of female- domestics and continuously replicated that maids employed at the gated estates received salaries two or two-and-a-half times as much as the prevalent rates outside. Tripathy was also repeatedly told how satisfied these employers were with their female workers, who they treated “respectfully”, unlike the reality in “old India.” Indeed, our informants talked about their “homemakers,” often carefully avoiding to call them “servants” and during a visit to one of the Hyderabad estates, Tripathy could indeed spot “the homemaker” eating her breakfast at a table in the kitchen, which is not common among Indian households with no exposure to the workaday equalitarianism in Western Europe. Several employers also told Tripathy that they looked after the educational needs of employees’ children and provided health care if needed to the whole family. In short, our informants consciously or unconsciously tried to avoid talking about the structural (socio-economic and cultural) inequality that exists between them and staffs.

Tripathy was informed that domestic workers in estates are trained and recruited through training and placements agencies which also teach these women to use an apron and amenities and gadgets like toilet paper, silver foil, as well as vacuum cleaners. However, such training and recruitment agencies disguise the basically informal character of this labour. Besides, while these women personify “the real India” in the gated community, they are advised to leave most of this “traditional” India behind once they enter “New India.” In the gated communities, these women have to keep their hair combed, come in clean and simple clothes, and be sparse with their traditional Indian jewellery and make-up (cf. Soofi 2011). It also remains a fact that these women do not have (labour-) unions or other institutional support providing (socio-economic and physical) security and in case of exploitation these women have no other option than silently bear with it and stay put or move on and lose their only source of income.

Indeed, these employees often work fixed hours and get paid holidays. They perform routine daily tasks, and part-timers who often work for more than one family in one or even more gated estates generally are assured ‘autonomy, flexibility and mobility absent in the lives of their live-in counterparts’ (Panchadhari 2014: 73). Moreover, their work is made easier through the use of gadgets such as vacuum cleaners, hot water, washing machines, dishwashers and other electric appliances. The lives of these domestic workers may come to resemble the lives of women in other “Service Factories of the New Economy” in contemporary India, such as the social reality faced by girls working in ICT-based call centres (Mazumdar 2010: 225-309). Mazumdar explains that the rapid expansion of this new form of employment, combined with the relatively higher earnings, regulated working hours, acquirement of new English-language communication skills and social and culture capital, exposure, etc. have provided much more positive inclination toward employment in call

centres among the Indian lower-middle-class and relatively young females in India. Mazumdar reminds us however that such jobs in call centres contain formal but insecure employment relations within an oppressive and unfree atmosphere as girls are constantly monitored to intensify the labour process (280). Likewise, female domestic workers in estates might experience some kind of mobility, yet this mobility is monitored, limited and conditional. Through the close proximity with their employers’ transnational life-styles, homemakers learn about alternative ways of child care and food preparations, conservation and hygiene. However, in order to ensure the transnational life-styles of their employers they have to be domesticated in this “New India” and distanced from the actual daily reality of the slums outside the gated estates where most of them reside. Besides, in absence of their employers, they are required to stay put, even if (family) obligations and/or festivals outside the city or state, require mobility. Thus, whereas the gated estates are “spaces of unlimited flows” for the transnational returnees, they are not so for the domestic service workers who work there. The close and intimate relations between a local employee, her transnational employer and his/her family members in these new working places does indeed engender mobility amongst these female domestic workers through the provision of new social, cultural and more economic capital. At the same time, this mobility is still based on structural inequalities, not only between the rich and the poor in India but also between the “transnational” and the Indian national. The gated estates provide a secluded space for successful Indian return migrants, without curbing their transnational mobility. Although employment in an estate represents some form of upward social and economic mobility for the domestics, physical and even other forms of mobility are curbed. Moreover, there is no possibility for any career movement. Farhan, an activist in Hyderabad who also resides in a gated community, explained the discrepancy through his remark:

When I used to run my small company, a kilometre from here, my driver used to earn more than what the rookie programmer would earn. But the rookie programmer had a growth path. There is nothing for the driver. That's not for the maids. They are drivers and maids because the state has completely withdrawn from education.

The work of these women and other labouring classes frequenting these gated communities thus allows them a great deal of proximity with the "global" life-styles of their employers and indeed a great proximity with "transnational" new India, which is even sustained by their labour. Yet, the same forces also distance them from their own daily reality in the city and other people that reside therein and they now form a sort of class by themselves with different and new aspirations. One of these is even greater mobility but the unequal power equation does set limits to the transformation of these employees into the transnational and privileged subjects their employers constitute. Instead, they are expected to facilitate the freedom of movement for their employers by staying put in their estates to watch their houses and their families. In other words, employment for the low-skilled workers in gated communities is a vehicle for social-cultural and economic mobility but simultaneously restricts their physical mobility, and especially their scope for transnational migration.

Conclusion

This article focused on the inhabitants of a number of gated estates in three South Indian cities. We described these estates as sites of mobility convergence where migration and mobility patterns of the diverse groups of residents (high-skilled Indian return migrants, their relatives, and staff) become entangled and mutually constitutive. By using the regimes of mobility framework, we highlighted the interconnectedness of and between local, regional, national and transnational migration and physical, socio-economic and cultural (im-) mobilities amongst variously mobile inhabitants in gated communities constituting both "old" and "new" India. We also demonstrated that in these secluded gated spaces,

these interconnecting social fields are marked by power differences, social- and economic inequality, and disparate access to mobility, leading to differential outcomes for the different social actors in our study. In other words, the return of high-skilled migrants to India has transformed the local and national landscapes of mobility/immobility in different albeit asymmetrical ways. We showed how the convergence of the migratory streams and social and economic mobility, and the limbo-like quality of the gated lifestyles, are closely related. The fact that the residents of these gated communities impose on themselves a uniformitarian and automated system that rids their lives of the rich variety seen outside the gated estates ("old" and "real" India) with all the attendant chaos, insecurity and dirt, distinguishes these secluded estates from "ordinary" residential areas. This self-imposed seclusion and ensuing restrictions in their movements and connections, is a price the residents are clearly willing to pay.

Satyam, a top scientist with an Indian multinational pharmaceutical firm, was the only returned knowledge worker among all our interlocutors who settled in his own ancestral house in Hyderabad. He felt that returning to India to settle in a gated estate would have defeated the very purpose of return. However, he was clearly an exception. In fact, the knowledge workers constituting our ethnographic study, and most of whom worked in the software industry, seemed to prefer to live in a "new" India, adopting a lifestyle ruled by predictable algorithms and an iterative logic, to use a metaphor lifted from their professional lives. The constant quest for certainty, predictability and repetitiveness aimed at some kind of security and insulation from the untidy world of the Indian cities, perceived by our informants as "old India." Apart from secured sedentarism, these gated estates also guarantee constant and transnational mobility of our highly skilled "return" migrants. However, and somewhat contradictory, the confluence of these two qualities, i.e. mobility and sedentarism available in "new India" is only assured by the in-flow of

service workers from “old India,” not in the least female domestics. The entrance of the latter in gated estates does entail physical, socio-economic and even cultural mobility and distancing amongst these poor female migrants. Yet, the unequal power equation within these gated communities not only limits these mobilities but even dictates immobility of these less privileged (often female) inhabitants of “New India.” The continued growth and spread of such gated communities at a rapid pace and their increasing predominance in Indian urban spaces is therefore expected to lead to, and already has, grave socio-political consequences and further deepen the existing (gendered-) socio-economic disparities and inequalities in India’s urban landscape.

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Bangladeshi Multi-Scalar Im/mobilities: Between Social Aspirations and Legal Obstacles¹

by ANDREA PRIORI (University Roma Tre)

Abstract

This contribution analyzes data collected during fieldwork from 2007 to 2016 in Rome (Italy), and partly in Dhaka and Narayanganj (Bangladesh), to ethnographically engage with Bangladeshi mobilities. Starting from the analysis of life-trajectories of certain urban middle-class migrants, the paper investigates the relationship between im/mobilities and power on different scales, taking into account both peoples' subjection to regimes of mobility and other structural conditions, and their agency in pursuing projects that intertwine social and geographical mobility. Bangladeshis' multi-scalar lives show that mobility and immobility are strictly interconnected, highlighting the persistent importance of relationship with places, and calling attention to possible affinities between widespread mobility and the neoliberal agenda.

Keywords: Bengal diaspora, Bangladesh, mobility, emplacement, anthropology of migration, transnationalism, ethnography, neoliberalism, mobility capital, urban anthropology

Introduction

Social scientists mainly studied mobility and immobility as separate phenomena during the Twentieth century, but in the last three decades many scholars overcame this binary approach. In the 1990s, anthropologists started to be increasingly concerned with the "interrelationship of moving and dwelling in a world of global interconnections" (Fog Olwig 1997: 19), while, in more recent years, mobility studies have also claimed that "movement and spatial fixity are always co-constituted" (Sheller 2011: 3)². The need to focus

on the relation between mobility and immobility (cf. Alexander et al. 2016), or between transnationalism and locality (cf. Gardner 1995), also informed research on Bangladeshi migrations: *probashi* (the Bengali term for people who live abroad) strictly intertwine movement and stasis, they are simultaneously cosmopolitan and locally rooted, being engaged in multi-scalar dislocations that interconnect neighborhoods, cities, and countries.

attitude to movement. It does not refer *tout court* to "social mobility," except when it is accompanied by an adjective. I also use the plural form, "mobilities," in order to highlight the coexistence of different forms of mobility in the migrants' stories.

Conversely, the word "immobility" stands for the individual (or familial) condition of being geographically fixed in a place. Obviously, just as nobody is completely "mobile," nobody is entirely "immobile," especially if we consider different scales of movement, or extend our analysis to the imaginary of mobility. In this sense, I use the expression "im/mobility" in order to highlight the mutual coexistence and entanglement of mobility and immobility.

¹ I am grateful to the co-editors of this SI and to the anonymous reviewers for their comments and precious insights. Any mistakes and omissions are entirely my own.

² In this paper, the word "movement" indicates bare geographic dislocation, while "mobility," at a macro level, stands for social processes based on widespread movements (of things, people, ideas) endowed with cultural meaning. When the term "mobility" (or the adjective "mobile") refers to individual persons, it indicates the condition of being in movement or their

This article analyzes three ethnographic cases from fieldwork on Bangladeshi migrations to Italy carried out between 2007 and 2016 in Rome and partly in Dhaka and Narayanganj³. It will show how different forms of mobility and immobility coexist in the same family and in the life-course of a single person, and how people's choices can be simultaneously driven by their social aspirations and constrained by different forms of power on various scales.

Surely, the *probashi*'s continuous dislocations display a widespread yearning for movement, but their life-histories also present situations in which people are unwilling to move, bringing into question the attractiveness of mobility. As Salazar (2010: 54) observes, the necessity to overcome sedentaristic models and nation-based research designs drove some scholars to substitute a "nomadic metaphysics" (Cresswell 2006) to a preexisting "sedentarist metaphysics" (Malkki 1992), projecting "movement itself as liberating, valuable" (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013: 186). In order to avoid participation in this nomadic metaphysics, I take into account Bangladeshi mobilities without losing sight "of the continued importance of place-based practices" (Salazar, Smart 2011: iii; cf. Gupta, Ferguson 1992) and, in general, of people's emplacement.

Starting with the assumption that "it is not movement per se which provides social protection [or affluence], but the relationships that are formed in particular places as the result of movement," (Gardner 2008a: 145), that is, access to the social relations and networks available locally, I utilize the expression "emplacement" to describe a situation in which the subject is "positively situated in a relational landscape" (Bjarnesen, Vigh, 2016: 10). In this sense, emplacement is not a mere question of physical

presence, but it is rather about being successfully entangled in a field of locally hinged multi-scalar relations.

In this contribution, I pay attention to the institutional, economic and social aspects of emplacement rather than to its bodily dimensions, as Englund and other scholars do (cf. Englund 2002; Gardner, Mand 2012). This choice also draws from the work of Katz (2001). Building on the premise that "social reproduction (...) is almost always less mobile than production" (Ivi: 709-710), Katz asserts that after the neoliberal turn national governments tend to exclude migrants from the welfare system, forcing them to be mobile and to cover the cost of the reproductive work in their country of origin. This argument inspired me to consider the restructuring of the Italian job market, which took place in the second half of 1990s⁴, and its reverberations on people's life-trajectories, on their choice to form a transnational family, as well as on their legal situation. Katz's reflections also compelled me to focus on the participation in the welfare system and its relationship with im/mobility, so as to understand whether a successful insertion in the welfare society, together with a stable work position and legal status, necessarily fosters immobility.

Probashi projects undergo "regimes of mobility" that impose "barriers on the emigration and immigration of some individuals and [facilitate] the movement of others" (Glick-Schiller, Salazar 2013: 192), regulating both movement and stasis. The following ethnographic cases show how the legal frame, together with the job market, limit/foster im/mobilities on various scales, and will enable us to observe the way in which people cope with the restrictions, creating routes of circulation that facilitate their movements.

³ I carried out my research as part of my doctoral studies and within research projects in collaboration with University Roma Tre. Participant observation is the primary methodological tool I utilize for this paper. As a way to protect their identities, I altered the names of the people who feature in my contribution and other details that could offer significant clues.

⁴ Beginning in 1997, the Italian government approved a series of reforms aiming to the flexibilization of labour. The government simultaneously abandoned an immigration policy based on relatively permissive amnesty laws and introduced harsher rules. I will refer to this radical change, that resulted in augmented difficulties for the local insertion of migrants, as the "Italian neoliberal turn."

People's lives are influenced by economics and legal factors, which interplay with life-events, and personal and family projects. Analyzing this interplay will allow us to appreciate the weight of both people's agency and the external agency of established forms of power.

Indeed, in spite of the limitations imposed by these structural conditions, people's agency does not disappear. Previous research demonstrated that in Bangladesh even the less fortunate are in some ways able to cope with adversities (cf. Siddiqui 2003; Alexander et al. 2016), and this holds particularly true for the interlocutors of my research. These *probashi* come from urban middle-class families, and do not fit into the typical, penniless representation of the "migrant." They are well educated and relatively wealthy, and they are not simply *subjected to* power, they are also *subjects of* power. In their life-histories, class consciousness and logics of distinction play an important role, together with aspirations of vertical social mobility. In this way, this article examines the interdependence between geographic position and social ranking by observing multi-scalar representations of space that often clearly relate to projects of social climbing.

The middle-class background of the Roman *probashi* is far from being an anomaly in the Bangladeshi diaspora. As shown by Alexander, Chatterji and Jalais (2016), Bangladeshi international mobilities involve people who have enough "mobility capital": "a bundle of capacities, predispositions (...), connections, often rooted in the family and group histories of mobility" (Ivi: 12), as well as "some transferable assets" (Ivi: 56), enabling movement⁵. Whilst networks seem to play a more crucial role compared to socio-economic status per se (Ivi: 75; cf. Gardner

2008a), generally the bulk of *probashi* originate from middle-class families, both rural and urban. This stands true for the agrarian Sylheti little tenants who have been the rank and file of the postcolonial migrations to the UK (cf. Adams 1994; Gardner, Shukur 1994; Mahmood 1995), for those who undertook "short term migrations" towards other Asian countries, whilst they represent the less fortunate part of the diaspora (cf. Siddiqui 2004), and for those who aimed for South European destinations. In Italy, similarly to Portugal and Spain (cf. Mapril 2014; Zeitlyn 2006), Bangladeshi migrants can be organised in two macro-groups: rural middle-incomers, whose families own land and/or other properties (in Rome, mainly from the district of Shariatpur), and people from urban families (in Rome, mainly from Dhaka) who, besides owning properties, have a good educational background (cf. King, Knights 1994; Knights 1996a; 1996b).

Probashi who are discussed in this paper belong to the latter category, as their parents are entrepreneurs or public servants. For them, mobility often represents a strategy of reproduction, or improvement, of a "vulnerable" middle-class life-style (cf. Mapril 2011; Priori 2012a; Della Puppa 2014). They are generally wealthier than their rural counterparts, but access to international migration is, paradoxically, less expensive for them. In fact, while villagers from rural districts spent on average 5,000 Euros to reach Italy, these urban *probashi* simply bought an Italian tourist visa from a broker for a few hundred Euro. They had the connections and know-how to do so, being inserted in networks which already included many migrants. For the same reason (and because of their age), most of them had also been able to seize the right moment to move to Italy, in the first half of 1990s, when Italy presented a relatively permissive legal frame and a labour market characterised by a relative abundance of work and long-term contracts (cf. infra: note 4). This allowed them to establish stronger relationships with Rome, although their emplacement produced unexpected outcomes.

⁵ Alexander, Chatterji and Jalais offer two slightly different definitions of "mobility capital": a definition based exclusively on capabilities, access to networks and skills (2016: 12; cf. Ivi: 249), and a more comprehensive definition which also includes "assets" (Ivi: 56), or "cash" (Ivi: 71). I adopt the second interpretation. It is worth noting that the concept of "mobility capital" is not completely new (cf. Murphy-Lejeune 2002; Kaufman et al. 2004).

Dovi: Reactivating Mobility

The history of Dovi, a 48-year-old woman, illustrates the importance of relationship with places, especially with regard to a “social reproduction” that is still fundamentally “place-bound” (Katz 2001: 716). This ethnographic case shows that both mobility and immobility are at the same time desirable and limiting. People’s projects must face regimes of mobility and structural conditions that do not completely overwhelm their agency but considerably restrain their freedom, together with life-events that seem to perform a fundamental role in Dovi’s case.

Dovi’s life-trajectory interconnects different geographical scales, showing an interrelation between her im/mobility and her expanding agency. She started moving on the international scale as a “dependant” and, once in Rome, she initially lived a neighborhood-based existence. But, in just a few years, she has been compelled by life-events to widen her understanding of the city and lead her family to a “better” and “adequate” position on the international scale.

Dovi was born in a rural middle-income household, and in the 1980s moved with her family from their village to Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, where her parents own a shop. In 1988, she married Mohammed, a Bangladeshi man who was living in Russia, and moved to Moscow. Two years later, feeling unsatisfied with their situation, Mohammed managed to obtain a tourist visa from the Italian embassy. After their arrival in Rome, he applied for an immigration amnesty and immediately obtained a residency permit. Mohammed worked as a cook and achieved a relatively strong economic and legal position thanks to his open-ended contract, while Dovi was unemployed. They rented a flat in the suburbs of Torre Angela, where their children Asif and Abir were born in 1998 and 2000. Dovi and Mohammed both grew up in secular and liberal families and, as she says, consequently “tried to give the children a European based education”: Asif and Abir did not receive an Islamic education, did not follow Bengali language classes, and fully share the lifestyle of their autochthon peers.

They settled in a neighborhood where Bangladeshis were present but not in as many numbers as in Torpignattara (the “Roman Banglatown”). As Dovi says, their plan was to live in Rome not “as Bangladeshis,” but “as Italians,” and although they met with other *probashi*, they mainly frequented “places where Italians also go,” and mingled with individuals of the the local middle-class in shopping centres and leisure centres. Furthermore, despite being Muslims, they chose a private catholic school for their children, as it was considered “the best school in the neighborhood.”

Dovi’s family established an intense relationship with the district. Mohammed worked in the centre, but spent his free time in Torre Angela, while Dovi took care of the children and almost exclusively frequented this particular neighborhood. Although Torre Angela is a working-class suburb with poor living standards, its western side appears more like a middle-class neighborhood. Their house, the school Asif and Abir attended, and the park where they played with friends were all located in this area. In Dovi’s opinion, here the children could live a “clean,” “safe” and “adequate” life, where “adequate” stands for adequate to both her social origins (a peasant family that turned itself into an urban middle-class family) and her aspirations for assimilation into the local middle-classes.

In this period, Dovi only knew of “Torre Angela and its surroundings,” as she lamented years later, but this investment in the local dimension beyond offering a plausible landscape to her social aspirations also provided her with substantial help. In Asif and Abir’s school, she met other families who assisted her in many ways and the parish church in the quarter partly covered the school fees. Moreover, their legal position supported Dovi and Mohammed in strengthening their emplacement, enabling them to access a wide range of local services and various forms of social security.

In 2008, Dovi, Asif and Abir’s life-style changed dramatically due to the death of Mohammed, a life-event that forced Dovi to become the bread-

winner. The death of Mohammed seriously jeopardized her emplacement projects; she obtained a short-term contract as a kitchen hand, which made her legal status and her economic situation very precarious. She started to worry about the annual renewal of her visa and had to move. She had to share the new flat with other foreigners, which she considered disappointing and inappropriate.

At the same time, Dovi focused less on the Torre Angela area and instead considered life in the entire city. During the day, she worked in the centre while her children stayed in Torre Angela. They were cared for by the local recreation centre, the school, the parish, and her neighbors. At night, she returned to the suburbs to be close to her sons. This shift reflected her changed role and her new personal situation. As the breadwinner, she also started to frequent municipal offices located in the city centre and she faced legal problems that reminded her she is a “migrant” in Italian law, not an urban middle-class woman. She also started to attend community meetings in Torpignattara, where, in 2009, she fell in love with Mamun, a fifty-year-old Bangladeshi man.

Unfortunately, Mamun was not able to solve Dovi’s legal and economic problems. He could not include her in his residency permit as a “dependent” because he was, by law, still married to another woman. In addition, he already had two children and could not economically afford to support two families in a city “as expensive” as Rome. In 2010, the lack of financial means together with legal obstacles eventually persuaded them to form a transnational family: he would stay in Rome (Torpignattara), where he owned a shop, she would move to Bangladesh, in a place more fitting for the needs of her sons.

In Mamun’s opinion, his neighborhood in Narayanganj was the best available place to raise their children, but Dovi wanted to preserve an urban middle-class lifestyle and, considering Narayanganj too rural, she eventually convinced Mamun to base their new family in Wari, a gentrified quarter in Old Dhaka. Here she has largely reproduced the class-related form of life she led

in Torre Angela before Mohammed’s death. She stopped working and found an “adequate” and “clean” flat in a modern building, quite similar to her house in Torre Angela. Asif and Abir are still registered in “the best school in the neighborhood,” a private Bengali-English school, a typical option for Bangladeshi urban middle classes with transnational ties, especially in sight of a re-migration or a study sojourn abroad (cf. Gardner 2008b). In this way, and also through a style of consumption which includes western food and visits to amusement parks and shopping malls, she established a modernised, middle-class identity again in Wari. In Bangladesh, Dovi also maintained the same im/mobility pattern as in Torre Angela. While living in Rome, she concentrated her life in her neighborhood and used the rest of the city mainly for leisure and shopping. In Dhaka she uses the urban space in a similar way. Wari is a sort of hideaway from the chaos and the smog of the Bangladeshi capital city, a ‘safe place’ which she leaves just to reach other islands in the city, such as theme parks, shopping centers and relatives’ houses⁶.

As Mamun is now more mobile, and spends about six months of the year in Bangladesh, the opposite is true in Dovi’s case: she only returned to Italy once since her departure. However, her investment in the international mobility seems to be stronger than Mamun’s. In fact, he plans to close his shop in Torpignattara in the next few years and to rejoin his birth family in Narayanganj⁷. In contrast, Dovi looks at her return to

⁶ Dovi’s use of space resonates with traditionalist concepts about women’s “curtailed movements” and “(relative) confinement to particular places and spaces” (Gardner 2002: 205; cf. Zeitlyn 2012; White 1992; Mandelbaum 1988). This “relative confinement” relates to expectations about women as caretakers of children and, above all, about their exclusion from the job market. Significantly, once Dovi became the breadwinner, she considerably widened her knowledge of the city, and when she got married to Mamun and stopped working, she returned to a more limited use of the space. Nevertheless, it must be noted that her relative confinement also reflects the material conditions of Rome and Dhaka.

⁷ Mamun has a long story of mobility in Bangladesh, Latvia, Russia and Italy. Notwithstanding this, he al-

Dhaka as a temporary step (a step back in reality) and aims to move again. In 2012, she got in contact with a cousin who lives in Montreal and applied for a migration visa to Canada. For Dovi, a transfer to Canada would represent an "improvement," mainly "for the children," who could avail themselves of "better universities," "better welfare," and a "better job market." But, for Bangladeshi citizens, it is difficult to enter Western countries, even if they have close relations there. In 2014, bureaucracy stopped this new mobility: Dovi's application was deemed "incomplete" and she was compelled to reapply. Currently Dovi, Mamun, Asif, and Abir are still waiting to hear the good news from the Canadian immigration office.

Dovi's history shows that the choice of a place or a pattern of mobility is not necessarily definitive nor voluntary. As Gardner demonstrated (2002; 2009), attitudes towards mobility and places significantly change with the passage of time. Projects and desires modify themselves under the pressure of ageing and household development processes, and on the basis of historical processes which, in our case, take the form of adverse structural conditions. Initially, the situation in the job market in Rome and the legal frame facilitated her local insertion, but in 2008, when her life dramatically changed, she encountered worsened conditions that contributed to her return to Dhaka. Similarly, the legal frame has a fundamental role in preventing her from moving to Canada, and in making her feel trapped in Dhaka. Nevertheless, these external powers do not automatically determine Dovi's life. She tries to cope with these limitations using her kinship network and has not abandoned

ways dreamed of his neighborhood in Narayanganj "as the place where [he] will experience [his] twilight years and as the locus of [his] spiritual and emotional needs" (Gardner 2002: 22; cf. Fog Olwig 1997). This attitude surely relates to the idea of getting old, but it also has to do with shifting historical conditions. Significantly, as a result of his concerns about the political (and environmental) situation in Bangladesh, Mamun recently stated that "Bangladesh is no more a good place for raising up children."

her quest for "better places." Her trajectory is rather an unpredictable product of the interaction among her projects, the economic and legal landscape, and life-events that in her case reactivated mobility on various scales.

Dovi realizes a multi-scalar process of ranking that represents space as a non-neutral entity, categorising neighborhoods, cities and countries on the basis of the social aspirations she nurtures for herself and for her children. In Rome, she favoured Torre Angela over Torpignattara because it was not a place for migrants. On a smaller scale, she concentrated her life in the wealthier sector of her neighborhood. Also in Bangladesh, places are not all the same, and different locations can influence the educational model and her sons' futures, giving them access to different social relations. On the regional scale, Dhaka is more "adequate" than Narayanganj, or her village of birth. On the urban scale of Dhaka, she projects on Wari her transnational middle-class consciousness, while on the international scale she prefers Italy, and above all Canada, to Bangladesh. In Dovi's discourse, "the identity of a place emerges by the intersection of its specific involvement in a system of hierarchically organized spaces" (Gupta, Ferguson 1992: 8), a feature which we will find again in the next life-trajectory.

Nazir: the ease of moving

Nazir's history shares many common points with Dovi's story. Nazir also leads a multi-scalar life, ranking the various places according to his class consciousness and social aspirations. At the same time, this second ethnographic case introduces new aspects of the interplay among personal projects, life-events and structural conditions. If Dovi has been constrained to revise her local projects partly because of a tragic event, Nazir seems to be in "constant search for new destinations" (Gardner 2008a: 136). He never stopped thinking of a better place to live, for him and above all for his sons, irrespective of life-events.

Nazir has a relatively comfortable situation in Rome and has settled down in his neighbor-

hood even more profoundly than Dovi and Mohammed. Like Mohammed, Nazir has built his emplacement around an open-ended contract that has enabled him to obtain a solid legal position, a stable income and full participation in welfare. In addition, he has established strong political connections, and obtained through these connections a deeper knowledge of Italian civil society.

This advantageous situation contributed in leading Nazir and his family to the acquisition of Italian citizenship, a step that might have apparently further fostered their emplacement in Rome, solving their legal problems definitively. On the contrary, “naturalisation” reactivated mobility in Nazir’s family, opening doors to the European Union, thanks to a kinship network that links different countries.

Nazir is a fifty-year-old *probashi*, and his family is from Komilla, a city in Southern Bangladesh, but moved to Dhaka when he was young. Whilst his father was a prominent functionary, Nazir was not interested in a career in the public administration and could not find suitable alternatives in Bangladesh. Thus, in 1990, when he heard about an imminent amnesty law in Italy, he bought a tourist visa from a broker and headed straight for Rome. He immediately obtained a residency permit and then an open-ended work contract as a manual laborer in the construction industry. A few years later, he married Hasina and moved from Torpignattara (a ‘Bangladeshi quarter’) to an apartment in Centocelle, a neighborhood in the eastern outskirts where migrants mingle with working-class and middle-class autochthons.

Nazir and Hasina carried out an educational model quite similar to the one employed by Dovi and Mohammad. Their children Kausar and Babu (born respectively in 1994 and 1997) did not receive a religious education and regularly frequented the neighborhood. Hasina and Nazir also concentrated most of their lives in the quarter. Hasina did not have a job and Centocelle was important for her, primarily because of her commitment to the children’s education and her relations with other Bangladeshi women (cf. Infra:

note 6). Nazir, on the other hand, prioritized community issues. The firm he was working for had many building sites in Central and Southern Italy, and Nazir constantly moved around the country as a pendular worker for many years. Nevertheless, he always spent the bulk of his free time in Centocelle, maintaining a strong interest in the local activities of the Bangladeshi community. In 2009, along with other activists, he established two Bengali schools in the neighborhood, and became the president of one of them.

Nazir’s personal and political connections exceed the Bangladeshi community’s network. In Centocelle, he is also popular with Italians, is a member of the *Partito Democratico*, and has used this connection to empower himself and his association. The *Partito Democratico* provides the space for the Bengali school and his ties with its prominent activists have allowed Nazir both to widen his knowledge of Italian law and politics, and to emerge as the leader of his organization.

However, despite apparently being deeply rooted in Centocelle, Nazir’s family members demonstrated a wider approach to their projects. In 2014, they obtained Italian citizenship and their first-born child Kausar moved to Leicester, where his mother found him a job in a factory thanks to her relatives. She moved in with Kausar and they rented a flat in Leicester where, two years later, Babu also joined them, in order to continue his education at a British university. Just like Dovi with Canada, Nazir also perceives the UK as a country that can offer his sons more opportunities in the educational sector as well as in the job market, “because Italy is a good place to live but England is better.” Nevertheless, his family has not completely severed its ties with Rome: Kausar and Babu maintain their relationship with their peers through virtual social networks, while Nazir has remained in Centocelle, because of his work and his dedication to the Bengali school.

Unexpectedly, in the same year Babu left Italy, Nazir experienced a significant setback to his professional career. In 2016, he was laid off work and started receiving unemployment benefits. Many

of his friends lost their jobs once the economic crisis hit Italy in 2007, and Nazir is rather pessimistic about the possibility of being re-employed by his old firm. Notwithstanding this, he has not altered his projects. He is certain he will stay in Rome as long as he can obtain unemployment benefits, and he is also confident about the future. Since 2016, he has obtained more and more work commissions from private clients in the neighborhood and his economic situation is stable. Moreover, thanks to his Italian citizenship, he has now definitively solved his legal problems. Thus, Nazir is not sure he will leave Rome. He seems determined to exploit his social network in the city further and perceives Leicester as a sort of safety net. What seems to matter for him is that his sons are in the UK, removed from Italy's precarious job market.

While the reactivation of mobility works as a kind of coping strategy for Dovi and her family, it is different for Nazir's family. Their mobility was not prompted in response to an external situation or to life-events, but was simply due to their desire to locate the household in the best place among those available in the kinship network.

Both Nazir's and Dovi's stories show a constant overlapping between different forms of mobility within the same household, a recurrent feature in the Bangladeshi mobilities (cf. Alexander et al. 2016). Nazir also interconnects different scales. He is rooted in Centocelle, where he intensively cultivates his investment in the local space, but for many years moved continuously around Italy, and between Italy and Bangladesh. Since 2016, he stopped moving on the national scale but added the UK to his patterns of international mobility.

Moreover, Nazir and Hasina interpret the urban space on the basis of principles that openly recall the approach maintained by Dovi. While Dovi's family was mainly based in a limited section of Torre Angela, a gentrified sector, Nazir and Hasina frequented a similarly established place on the northern side of Centocelle. Many urban middle-class Bangladeshis live and raise their children in this area, which, not coinci-

dentally, is where all the local Bangladeshi associations are based and where community events and other activities usually take place. In this way, this part of the neighborhood is constructed as a place imbued with identitarian meaning.

For both Dovi and Nazir, meaningfulness of places does not exist in and of itself, but is constructed "within hierarchically organized space of unequal relationships." (Hastrup, Fog Olwig 1997: 7), and "in close relation to (...) centers of power" (Ivi: 9). Thus, multi-scalar hierarchies among different places are experienced by *probashi* on the basis of their relationship with these centers. For example, class-consciousness operates spatial distinctions that imply social distinctions, and oppose the centre of the city to the outskirts, but also different quarters and different areas in the neighborhood. The same is true in the ways in which Canada or England can be compared to Italy and evaluated as "better" or "more powerful" countries.

In Nazir's case, if the circulation on the urban scale depended mainly on his buying power, his international mobility faced limitations created by the legal frame that partly disappeared when he changed his legal status. In his case, the acquisition of citizenship opened the doors for both local insertion and international mobility, at least inside the European Union, widening the alternatives at his disposal.

In the two life-trajectories so far considered, im/mobility significantly intersects with gender. Initially, these heterosexual couples (Dovi-Mohammed, Dovi-Mamun, and Hasina-Nazir) seemed to follow a traditionalist interpretation of the relationship between gender and mobility: the men were more mobile, while women were more focused on getting settled in their neighborhood (cf. *infra*: note 6). In both cases, however, if the man organised the first migratory step (and in Mohammed's case, also the second one), it is woman who organised the next step, coordinating it with the reproductive work at a lineage level. Besides showing the women's pivotal role in maintaining relationships between places and between different households, this turnover

also seems to relate to the acquisition of a “more active and mobile role” by aged women (Gardner 2002: 139).

Maruf: Trapped in mobility

It is not by chance that many of those who tried to focus on Rome and on their quarters belong to the first generation of *probashi*. As previously outlined, people like Mohammed and Nazir found better legal and economic conditions that allowed their families to insert themselves locally thanks to a stable income, long-term visas, and access to the welfare system. This does not mean that those who arrived in the second half of the 1990s or later did not have the chance to insert themselves locally, but they did have objectively less opportunities than the pioneers (cf. *infra*: note 4)⁸.

After the neoliberal turn in Italy, many migrants are aware that it is not easy to take root in the Peninsula, and consequently do not try to realise a deep local insertion. Maruf, a forty-year-old man who arrived in Rome at the end of 1990s, is among those who follow the pattern of pioneer migrants (cf. Eade et al. 2006) and do not even try to concentrate the whole family in the same city. A choice that in the vast majority of cases entails a traditionalist interpretation of the relationship between gender and mobility: the men migrate to Rome, women and children stay in Bangladesh.

Maruf also leads a multi-scalar existence. His life characterizes itself by a pendular mobility between the capital city and Northern Italy, as well as by periodic trips to Bangladesh. Unlike

Mohammed and Nazir, when Maruf came to Rome, he found a precarious job market and harsher immigration laws. He could not obtain an open-ended contract and consequently did not gain full access to social rights. For the same reason his legal status is also highly precarious, Maruf continuously alternates between the statuses of “illegal” and “legal migrant.” Therefore, his im/mobilities are even more problematic compared to Nazir or Dovi.

His work conditions urged him to build a stronger relationship with the national scale. Just like many itinerant sellers and seasonal workers, he lives Italy as a wide urban sprawl, ranking different places on the basis of his experience in the local job markets. Moreover, he looks at the Roman territory with different eyes compared to the other people I have taken into account. Having split his family between Italy and Bangladesh, Maruf is relatively free from familiar concerns in Rome, and does not evaluate its neighborhoods according to their socio-economic characteristics or to the needs of his children, but sketches a leisure-centered map of the urban space.

Maruf was born to a middle-class family in Dhaka, where his wife Misty and their children live, supported by his family of origin. In 1997, feeling dissatisfied with his life as a university student, he decided to move to Italy and procured a tourist visa through a friend. Once in Rome, he worked in restaurant kitchens and, in 1998, obtained a yearly renewable residency permit. However, since 2005, Maruf has been unable to find suitable conditions in the local job market. He found his first job in Northern Italy, thanks to the help of another Bangladeshi friend. He then started working as a waiter or as a chef's assistant in upmarket hotels in the Alps or in other popular tourist destinations. His current work is based on short-term seasonal contracts that last no longer than six months. Consequently, Maruf has no residency permit for at least six months of the year and he is supposed to leave Italy as soon as his contracts expire. Sometimes he conforms to the rules and uses this period to be with his family, but often he remains in Italy, moving

⁸ Among the Bangladeshis involved in my research, those who arrived in Italy after the second half of 1990s are generally less rooted in Rome and, in many cases, have split their family between Italy and Bangladesh. Notwithstanding this, a large minority succeeded in their local insertion. For example, Mojnu arrived in Italy in 2005 and immediately found a job in a grocery store in Centocelle. In a few years, he obtained an open-ended contract and, in 2012, he got married with a Bangladeshi woman. In 2013, after his first son was born, his wife and child joined him in Rome, where they currently live in a middle-class flat in Centocelle.

from Northern Italy to an overcrowded “bachelor’s house” in Torpignattara (cf. Priori 2012b). He feels “safe” from the police there, as Rome is a “secure place” in his opinion, especially when compared to other Northern Italian cities.

During his stays in Rome, Maruf often lives as if he is on holiday. He does not have a full-time job; he earns a little money with occasional work and has plenty of free time to spend with his friends. As he maintained his wife and children in Bangladesh, Maruf, has less of a need to engage with the local community. Consequently, he does not evaluate Rome because of the opportunities the city can offer his children or for the cleanliness of the neighborhoods, but for the appeal of its night life and its women. In this way, Maruf offers a deeply gendered representation of the city. He constructs a masculine middle-class identity “based on desire” (Mapril 2014: 701) by underlying his participation to a widespread leisure-based lifestyle. He does not show the climbing austerity of other urban middle-class *probashi* who devote most of their time towards building a “better” future for their family and evaluate the urban space on the basis of this concern. He has the appearance of a young local autochthon and, while in Rome, he leads an existence in some way comparable to that of a university student. Thus, Maruf describes a map of bars, clubs, public squares scattered around the eastern side of the city, where scuffles or unforgettable nights of fun with friends take place. In his leisure-centric ranking of the Roman neighborhoods, Maruf favours Pigneto, San Lorenzo and Torpignattara over Centocelle and Esquilino because of the attractiveness of their bars.

Shifting to the national scale, he establishes a second interpretative key based on work opportunities. He prefers Northern Italy over Southern Italy and Rome, which he considers a “bad place” for work. At the same time, Maruf reads the urban scale and the national one on the basis of a third key. As touched upon, he also evaluates the space according to his personal safety from police checks, favouring Rome over Northern Italian cities but also the Eastern outskirts of

Rome (and particularly Torpignattara) over the city centre.

Obviously, Maruf’s multi-scalar geography includes Bangladesh too, and particularly Dhaka. This seems to introduce us not only to a third spatial dimension but also to a third existential dimension. For Maruf, Dhaka represents a place related to family, in his words “my house” (cf. *infra*: note 7), but his mobility on the transnational dimension is subject to harsh limitations. He travels periodically to Dhaka, where he spends about two months a year, but needs to coordinate his movements with his constantly changing legal status. When he has a residency permit that will allow him to freely travel to Bangladesh and return to Italy, Maruf is working in Northern Italy and cannot travel. When he is done with his work obligations, he cannot travel to Bangladesh unless he has found at least the promise of a new contract. He would otherwise run the risk of being trapped there, as he is not allowed to return to Italy without a visa. This alternation prevented him from returning to his family for many years.

The legal frame deeply affects Maruf’s trajectory on different scales. His international movements are limited and expose him to the risk of being trapped in Bangladesh. When he remains in Italy without a residency permit, he tends to avoid Northern Italy and is virtually confined to Rome. In the urban territory of the capital city, he is forced to illegally reside in Torpignattara and he looks at the city centre as a “dangerous” place. The job market also limits his im/mobility, influencing his choices. He is forced to move around Italy in search of new opportunities to make money, although he did not expect to cope with this situation when he arrived. He likes living in Rome, but his job insecurity discouraged an emplacement in the city, also because he does not have access to all the social security benefits that people with open-ended contracts have. The very choice to form a transnational family seems to be inevitably connected to the conditions he found in Italy, and to the lack of opportunities to settle down, an aspect that the anthro-

pology of migration already stressed in the 1970s (cf. Meillassoux 1975), and which provoked some scholars to compare the transnational migrants' condition to that of the *gastarbeiter*. In this respect, Maruf's family fully experiences the "emotional costs of transnationalism" (Gardner, Grillo 2002: 180).

Maruf's story sheds more light on the issue of constrained life-trajectories. He avails himself of greater freedom with respect to the reproductive needs of his family, but undergoes greater limitations to his im/mobility compared to Dovi and Nazir. Nevertheless, subjection to external systems of power does not automatically produce a pre-established life-trajectory, but it does affect it in peculiar ways, interplaying with opportunities, mutable statuses and choices that do not always respect the conditions established by these systems. Structural conditions do not completely overwhelm *probashi's* agency, people continuously attempt to overcome the settled limits. If Dovi and Hasina used their kinship networks to move in the international space, Maruf uses his friendship network to move around Italy, and to hide from the police.

Conclusion

The use of an ethnographic standpoint enabled us to observe an interdependence between mobility and immobility. The mobility of some members of the family engenders "pressures for others to stay behind" (Alexander et al. 2016: 22), while at the same time "people who are mobile (...) are of great importance to the more settled" (Hastrup, Fog Olwig 1997: 5). The superimposition of different forms and scales of im/mobility we observed demonstrates that *probashi* do not choose between movement and stasis, and the very distinction between mobility and immobility is purely heuristic. Movement often resolves itself in a search for new moorings, while a strong emplacement can result in new dislocations.

Moreover, looking at mobility from the perspective of those who want to be immobile, and *vice versa*, it was clear that neither movement or stasis are desirable in themselves

(cf. Massey 1993; Faist 2013). Mobility can entail new (or old) forms of exploitation (cf. Salazar, Smart 2011), acting as a Foucauldian dispositive which produces "normalized mobile subjects" (Sheller 2011: 2). At the same time, immobility is often perceived as a constriction. Some may feel trapped in a neighborhood, in a city or in a country, while others are forced to move against their will.

People's projects must face harsh limitations on the various scales, primarily because of the persistent role of the nation-state, which institutes, and limits, "migration" as an aberration in a "natural" order (Sayad, 1999; cf. Smith, Guarnizo 1998; Ong 1999), dividing the field of mobilities into enclosed areas (cf. Glick-Schiller, Salazar 2013). Nation-states institute regimes of mobility that, besides limiting people's "motility," their capacity "to be mobile in social and geographic space" (Kaufmann et al. 2004: 750), it also limits their *immotility*, or their capacity to insert themselves into the local sphere. Nazir's life-history demonstrated that obtaining a stable legal status or gaining citizenship guarantees both the right to move and the right to settle, and provides access to a nation-based welfare system.

The legal frame created by national governments significantly interact with a second external agency which drives and limits people's im/mobility, the job market. *Probashi's* legal position strictly relates to their work situation. Those who arrived in Italy in the second half of the 1990s or later found a post-Fordist job market and obtained short-term contracts, which weakened their legal position as well as their economic situation, and contributed to create forced im/mobilities, splitting families on the transnational scale. In this respect, Maruf perfectly realizes the model outlined by Katz by maintaining the rest of his family in the "world periphery," and Dovi has also been partly compelled to split up her new family because of the Italian neoliberal turn. But these are not assumed results. As in Mojnu's case (cf. infra: note 8), *probashi* are not automatically excluded from obtaining a strong position that allows them to start a fam-

ily in Italy just because they are late in moving. Structural conditions influence life-trajectories, and interplay with projects, personal situations and life-events, but the result of this interplay is unpredictable.

This does not exclude the individuation of general trends: if Nazir follows a pattern of mobility that has been demonstrated to be a widespread trend among Italian Bangladeshis in recent years (cf. Della Puppa, Sredanovic 2017), Maruf and Dovi adhere to Katz's model. Moreover, if we consider, as Gardner and Mand do (2012), a "periphery" not only as the "world-periphery," but also the various peripheries which proliferate on different scales, such as the urban outskirts, we inevitably notice that the reproductive costs are almost always transferred to the periphery.

Nevertheless, people's agency maintains an important role in coping with external powers and in constructing the space. People we took into account often overcome the settled limits, establishing moorings and routes of circulation by using the most effective part of their mobility capital, that is kinship or friendship networks which give these urban middle-class *probashi* a conspicuous advantage over their rural counterparts, who seem to rely more on their economic resources (cf. *infra*: Introduction). As we have seen, if those who split their families between Italy and Bangladesh seem to be less inclined to project on the space an aspiration for social climbing, others sketch multi-scalar geographies of prestige in which "places are hierarchically arranged, at both global and national levels and access to these different places is central for the construction of status and economic hierarchy" (Gardner 2008a: 136; cf. 2008b). Space incorporates geometries of power into which my interlocutors try to insert themselves, in a search for a mutual coherence between their geographic position and their socio-economic position, and in the hope of realizing an ideal trajectory complying with "cultural representations of mobility (that) almost automatically link voluntary horizontal or geographical mobility with vertical (...) 'climbing'" (Salazar 2010: 54). On the basis

of this logic, after marriage, people move from a "Bangladeshi quarter" to a gentrified quarter, or perceive a return to their motherland as a step back. They immediately start to plan further movements towards a country they consider more prestigious than Italy. This process was often started by the former generation, which relocated from the village to Dhaka.

In this way, *probashi* perform their agency not only by aiming to reach the best possible place to live, but also in creating their own space, so as to "exercise at least some control over the definition of their own—and others'—identity" (Sørensen 1997: 161). Someone, like Dovi and Hasina, voluntarily concentrated their life in a specific sector of a neighborhood in order to domesticate the diversity of multicultural suburbs, aiming to filter the social differences and to protect her children from poverty and from the identity of "migrant." Whilst they are pushed away from the city centre through processes of socio-economic exclusion and gentrification (cf. Okely 1997), people reconstruct their own centres by virtue of the same processes, in Centocelle, in Torre Angela, as in Wari. In this sense, the stories we took into account demonstrate that "coercion and agency" are not necessarily "in an antithetical relationship" (Gould 2017: 416), at least for the most fortunate migrants.

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From (E)Migration to Mobile Lifestyles: Ethnographic and Conceptual Reflections about Mobilities and Migration*

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Abstract

Departing from on-going fieldwork in China and Northern Europe among Swiss nationals, the aim of this article is to contribute towards clarification of the often somewhat unreflected use of concepts within the 'migration-mobility continuum.' We sketch a mobilities-informed and data-grounded ethnographic research approach and investigate the various forms, meanings and outcomes of mobility and migration throughout three life stories. In conclusion, we argue for an empirically grounded, sophisticated usage of theoretical frameworks and concepts, and we discuss how this can contribute to a more critical, differentiated research about mobility and migration.

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Keywords: skilled migration, mobilities, migration trajectories, theoretical frameworks, migration terminology, ethnography, life stories, regimes of mobility, China, Northern Europe

Introduction

Departing from ongoing fieldwork in China and Northern Europe among Swiss nationals, the aim of this article is to refine our research approach and to analyse life stories of three interview partners.¹ On this basis, our article seeks to contribute towards clarifying of the often somewhat unreflected use of concepts within the 'migration-mobility continuum.'

This analytical interest was piqued by two related constellations:

* This is a co-authored paper to which each author has equally contributed.

¹ Our research project "The Swiss abroad" consists of two ethnographic case studies on Swiss migrants living in Northern Europe (Seraina Müller) and Mainland China (Aldina Camenisch). The three portraits presented in this article form thus part of larger sets of data with 33 interview partners in Mainland China and 35 in Northern Europe that we collected during over two years of extensive fieldwork in our respective fields.

Our initial research focus is on how contemporary forms of (e)migration are unfolding and experienced by Swiss people living in Northern Europe and Mainland China. This may initially look like a potentially methodological nationalist conceptualization of migration, dealing with one-way movements from one 'nation container' (Switzerland) to others (Northern European countries and China). Keeping the powerful role of migration-mobility research in mind, and its capacity to create or perpetuate ways of perceiving social reality, we thus unpack the assumptions that prefigure research in migration and mobilities, and then we revisit our own approach.

Secondly, our research deals with rather privileged, skilled and frictionless forms of migration. Our respondents hardly describe themselves as 'migrants.' Rather, by resorting to a vocabulary of flexibility and mobility, they present their experience as somehow different from what they understand as migration. Hence, we reflect how

to approach these 'daily language' conceptualizations and how to link them with slightly different and potentially more nuanced meaning(s) of the same terms in scientific discourse.

The first part of this article explores the field of the 'migration-mobility continuum.' Theoretically and methodologically, we sketch an approach to mobilities-informed, ethnographic migration research. In the following section, we investigate the various forms, meanings and outcomes of mobility throughout a life story. In conclusion, we argue for a well-reflected, nuanced and data-grounded usage of theoretical frameworks and concepts.

Coping with uneasy labels and blurring conceptual borders in the field(s) of migration and mobilities

Clarifying the migration-mobilities continuum

The International Organization for Migration defines a migrant broadly as

"any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is."²

Research about migration emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century as a result of the global political system of nation-states that "set and control the parameters of (transnational) movements and prefer relatively immobilized populations" (Salazar and Smart, 2011, iii). Therefore, and despite the broader actual meaning of the term, the focus of early migration studies was to concentrate on human movements between 'nation containers,' treating them as potentially problematic. To this day, studies mostly investigate cross-border migration and often focus on how those seemingly different migrant 'others' can be incorporated into the host society (Söderström et al. 2013, 8). Migration studies have thus

been reproducing categories of and assumptions about 'foreigners' and 'migrants' created by the "nation-state migration apparatus" (Dahinden 2015, 2207).

However, this state-centred, problematizing perspective has been challenged by various scholars who aim for a more reflective and critical approach to migration. Their contributions shift the gaze away from the 'nation container' and also investigate assumptions of the migration apparatuses in itself. Thus, writings about transnationalism (e. g. Glick Schiller et. al 1995; Portes 1997) provide a major impetus for revisiting migration research by delineating how migrants engage in social fields and negotiations of belonging that are rooted in two or more nation states. Other substantial criticism addressed methodological nationalism (Beck and Grande 2010; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002), and the ethnic lens (Glick Schiller et al. 2006).

Additionally, Sheller and Urry have launched the mobilities turn to shift the focus of social sciences as a whole towards the fluid and moving rather than the fixed and sedentary. They call for an interdisciplinary and crosslinked "socio-technical" (Sheller and Urry 2006, 211) study of all sorts of movements of people, material and information as well as of infrastructures, powers, discourses and spaces that channel, link, facilitate or block those movements.

The mobility lens thus reverses the assumption of social sciences that stasis is normal and movement exceptional and potentially problematic. Furthermore, in contrast to traditional migration research focusing mostly on movement between states, mobility is more comprehensive and multi-scalar, mainly concerned with the "process of movement" of "people, objects, or ideas" (Söderström et al. 2013, 5).

Salazar (2016, 2) summarizes the complex 'new mobilities' discourse postulating that it is partly shaped by (neo-) capitalist ideologies, transported by way of favourable images of globalisation and "links mobility to three positively valued characteristics: (1) the ability to move, (2) the ease of freedom of movement, (3) the

² <http://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>, accessed January 26, 2017.

tendency to change easily or quickly.” Hence, change through mobility is broadly perceived as bringing about positive outcomes.

As a result, the mobilities discourse has increasingly been adapted in migration studies.

While migration research often focuses on forced and illegalized forms, migration is actually much more diverse. There has been a rising number of studies about migration of elites since the 1990s (Koser and Salt 1997; Beaverstock 2002; Sklair 2000; Yeoh and Huang 2011) which have been complemented with more recent research about migrants positioned somewhere between the lowest and highest echelons of social orders (Amit 2007; Conradson and Latham 2005; Benson and O’Reilly 2009). These forms of migration are often described with terms that either specify the nouns “migrant” or “migration” with an additional, often ‘positive’ word (such as “talent,” “(highly) skilled,” “elite,” or “lifestyle”), or with expressions (e.g. “middling transnationals,” or “expatriates”) that replace “migration” altogether. In a similar vein, migratory movements of these groups are often coined as “mobility.”³ As Dahinden (2015, 2221) points out, this use of “mobility is often juxtaposed with migration. Mobility (within the EU, of highly skilled individuals) is desired, while migration is undesired and problematic.” This ‘avoidance’ of migration terminology in research about rather privileged migratory movements may thus derive from an intention to mark them as somehow different from the often-negative connotations associated with “migration.”

Another recent trend is to apply a mobilities lens in research associated with precarious and illegalized migratory movements (Moret 2016; Schapendonk and Steel 2014). Here, the aim is to overcome the migration apparatus and to show such forms of migration in new light.

We agree that mobility studies can help tackle dilemmas in migration research. It broadens the still somewhat static and state-focused gaze of migration studies and adds considerations about

all sorts of economic, political and social fluidities, fixities, and the diversity of human movement to the agenda of those who study human migration. However, we argue that simply replacing “migration” with at first sight less problematic and more positive “mobilities” categories may take the underlying assumptions of both terminologies for granted, thus unintentionally reinforcing stereotypes.

On the other hand, (anthropological) migration scholarship has introduced concepts, critiques and methodologies, e.g. multi-sited (Marcus 1998) or itinerant (Schein 2002) ethnography, that have been adopted by mobilities researchers. Furthermore, to investigate relevant mobility patterns through the lens of migration studies offers the possibility to review the liquid conditions of “the assumed mobile world” (Fortier 2014, 65) and the power relations involved in peoples’ mobile life(styles). Thus, we understand migration studies as a way of focusing the somewhat hard-to-grasp (Adey 2006) and metaphorical rather than empirically reflected (Favell 2001) ‘new mobilities’ paradigm.

In this sense, we argue, along with other colleagues (Hui 2016; Moret 2016), for a cross-fertilizing analytical stance. We suggest a mobilities-informed migration approach with the following three key components:

Firstly, the traditional understanding of migration needs to be broadened by investigating how migratory movements are embedded in more comprehensive, multi-scalar themes of mobility. Such a focus is more extensive and captures, for instance, geographical and social mobility and how they may precede, intersect with, and shape trajectories of internal and international migration. More generally, we suggest to address migration as a process and to contextualise it in its temporal dimension. Points of reference for such an approach provide writings on lifestyle migration (e.g. Benson and O’Reilly 2009; 2016; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016) with its emphasis on migration pre- and post-phases, Knowles (2010; 2012) and Schapendonk et al. (2014) suggests to understand migration as “journeys” as

³ For example, as conceptualised by Favell 2008 or Kennedy 2010.

well as studies that have employed a life course approach to migration trajectories (e.g. Bailey and Mulder 2017; Kou and Bailey 2014; Moret 2016).

A second central concern is the aim of “tracking the power of discourses and practices of mobility” (Sheller and Urry 2006, 211) and to address “questions of inequality, domination and constraints” (Söderström et al. 2013, 6). “Politics” and “regimes” of mobility are helpful concepts in this regard: Cresswell (2010, 21) traces “politics of mobility” and demonstrates that human movements are happening within “social relations that involve the production and distribution of power.” From a macro-level perspective, Glick-Schiller and Salazar (2013) postulate a mobility regimes framework. Hereby, “the term ‘regime’ calls attention to the role both of individual states and of changing international regulatory and surveillance administrations that affect individual mobility.” (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013, 189) The aim is to discover what we “see if we do not think about mobility like a nation-state” (ibid., 193). As a result, states are no longer hidden, naturalising apparatuses but rather exposed as powerful actors (Söderström et al. 2013, 11).

Thirdly, another, related requirement for nuanced mobilities-informed migration research is a critical reflection of epistemological and historical contexts of and a differentiation between ‘common-sense’ and ‘analytical’ categories. Once detected, “(...) these common-sense categories and the social realities they help constitute, are part of our object of study and should be investigated by using analytical categories” (Dahinden 2015, 2214).

Methodological ways out

A mobilities-informed research requires a correspondent methodological approach. We suggest a reflexive, data-grounded methodology based on ethnographic fieldwork. An (anthropological) approach to mobility and migration starts with the questions of how migratory movements are experienced by the people studied and how concepts are construed in this context rather than

letting a predefined conceptual setting determine the analysis.

Along with other studies that have applied a similar, ethnographic approach (for example Benson 2011, Moret 2016, Schapendonk 2015), Kalir’s study “Moving Subjects, Stagnant Paradigms” is exemplary for the approach we suggest. Kalir looks “at regimes of mobility from the eyes of those involved (...)” (Kalir 2013, 312). Accordingly, he provides an account of how various forms of mobility and stasis interact with internal and international migratory moves of his respondent and “the ways in which a powerfully global, neo-liberal economic and political regime moulds the spatial strategies of individuals (...)” (ibid., 312)

In our own research, we investigate trajectories and experiences of the ‘Swiss abroad’ in life story interviews⁴ in which our respondents tell their trajectory in a self-guided way. Thereby, various forms of mobilities and moorings, crucial experiences, themes and the meanings attached to them become visible as the life story unfolds. As a result, as we carve out wider discursive, political and economic constellations that structure our respondents’ trajectories and perceptions, we capture their common-sense understanding of categories and are able to link them to scientific concepts.

Investigating three life stories with a mobility-informed migration lens

The following section introduces the three life stories of Boris, Veronika and Ricardo. We then analyse their trajectories by applying the previously outlined approach. Thus, the presented stories and analytical insights serve to illustrate general findings of our research.

Boris

Boris (age thirty), living in a major city in the Pearl River Delta, was born to a Swiss family and

⁴ Our approach is based on Atkinson (2002, 122): “In a life story interview, the interviewee is a story teller, the narrator of the story of his or her own life; the interviewer is a guide, or director, in this process.”

raised and educated in the German speaking part of Switzerland. He first gained a vocational diploma in computer science, then went on to study management and concurrently had been running a variety of small entrepreneurial businesses since he was a teenager.

Boris's father worked for the former Swiss national airline Swissair, so even at a young age, he was accustomed to traveling often. "I like traveling. (...) I flew around all my life. (...) I have always been quite internationally-minded."

After a previous exchange year in the US, Boris came to China for the first time in 2007 for a one-year internship. He developed an interest in the country because of its fast-developing economy and perceived different culture. By exposing himself to this unfamiliar environment, he intended to broaden his horizon: "I knew it will improve my personality, to get along better with people that are very different. (...) That is a way to develop myself and to get to know the country." On the other hand, he had been to Asia before: "Well, I had been to the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia, and Singapore. I know how Asia is. I thought, the Chinese cannot be very different."

During this year, he found China to be an inspiring and welcoming environment in social and cultural terms, and also a promising market for young entrepreneurs. Accordingly, he soon established a social network among Chinese people, started to learn Chinese, and kept his eyes open for business opportunities.

After his internship, he returned to Switzerland and continued his studies. He simultaneously started to import Chinese furniture to Switzerland in collaboration with Chinese friends. The trading was successful and enabled him to subsidise his studies as well as to put aside start-up capital for other business endeavours. He soon left Switzerland again for six months, participating in a student exchange program to Taiwan. He then moved back to Southern China, where he has been living since 2010. After graduating in 2011, he became a full-time entrepreneur. However, furniture trading did not provide the chal-

lenge that Boris was looking for. Therefore, he built a more innovative, ICT-related company serving the local Chinese market that is currently in a start-up phase. Additionally, he imports watches to China and runs a number of ICT-services for companies in Switzerland.

Boris spent his first seven months in China together with his former Swiss girlfriend. As a result, they spent most of their time together and did not get to know many Chinese and foreign people. After his girlfriend left China, he started to go out more often and to build up a circle of Chinese acquaintances in several cities in the Pearl River Delta. In recent years, he has also established friendships with other foreigners living in the Pearl River Delta and joined several business networks. Meeting other Swiss people gives Boris a feeling of familiarity and his closest friends are Swiss who live or have been living in China, or Asia and thus share similar experiences. On the other hand, he finds it difficult to keep up old friendships in Switzerland: "The problem is, one develops differently. It is sometimes difficult. What can you talk about? And opinions may differ."

The Chinese environment, meanwhile more familiar to him, still teaches him a lot: "You learn something new every day in China. I learn so much. You have so many experiences, it is really crazy." He finds it challenging to run his business due to high fluctuation of employees as well as cultural differences that require a different style of management than in Switzerland. However, he does not negotiate this as an obstacle but rather as a way to improve his social and management skills.

Migrating to China for Boris is thus a way to realize his personal and entrepreneurial ambitions. Accustomed to a traveling lifestyle and going abroad since his childhood, the actual spatial move to the other side of the globe is not perceived as a far-reaching act of migration. Rather, Boris negotiates it as just another (potentially temporary) transition in a generally mobile and flexible life course:

"Well, I never said that I want to make my life abroad. If I get up tomorrow and say: 'I go home,' then I go home. (...). Or I go to another place."

Aldina: "So, coming to China was not a major issue for you?"

Boris: "No, I am open-minded. I like traveling."

At the same time, Boris also displays a strong sense of belonging in Switzerland. On the one hand, it is an emotionally important place of childhood and family ties. On the other hand, he has come to appreciate aspects of life in Switzerland more than before: "It is almost unique in the world (...) The standards that we have, the values, the education and the whole environment. How safe it is, the quality of life, sincerity and all those things." He also maintains active professional ties with a couple of Swiss clients and as board member of a company in Switzerland. This is the main reason why he keeps up his domicile in Switzerland. In China, Boris has been holding a business visa since 2007.

Even though he will continue to plan his life in a flexible way and intends to stay internationally mobile, a return to Switzerland is a viable option for Boris. Asked about his future, Boris says: "I am in China for the time being, that is for sure. If you establish a company and then you leave the next day, that doesn't make sense. Therefore, I will stay in the short run. Let us see how long for. I have no idea." He specifies later on in the interview that he might move back to Switzerland in five to ten years' time. One reason to return is the possibility becoming a parent:

"I have thought about this a few times already, if I had children, I would find it good for them to grow up in Switzerland. Maybe not straight from the beginning, maybe a bit later so that they can also experience other cultures. But (...) the values in Switzerland, I find this very important."

Veronika

Our interview partner, Veronika (age thirty-seven), settled in Stockholm (Sweden) in 2011. She was born and raised in the German part of Switzerland, and later lived in different Swiss cities. Her professional career started in hotel

management before she moved on to business consultancy. Prior to her move to Sweden, Veronika worked as a consultant and gained a degree in Sustainability Studies. Her goal was to work at the intersection of these professional interests, but she did not succeed in finding a suitable position in Switzerland.

Therefore, she looked for other ways to move on: "It was just time for something new. I needed a period of self-reflection. Probably, it also could have happened in Lugano⁵ or Lausanne⁶. But not in the German speaking part of Switzerland. A new dimension was needed." Her partner at the time was working for an international company and was offered a new in-house position close to Stockholm. Sweden was not the ideal destination for the couple but they were both interested in Scandinavia.

The final motivator to move up North was a mix of career opportunities and a quest for personal fulfilment.

"I guess the crucial factor was (...) that I was ready for something new, to broaden my horizon. At that time, I was already working for five years at the same business consultancy and I didn't like it there anymore. My boyfriend at that time and I had been together for about four years. We decided that we wanted to do something new. A new phase of life and children were not an option. And then the subject of going abroad came up, living somewhere else, and most of all finding a new job was the big theme."

Veronika felt a desire to challenge herself in an unknown setting. She was convinced that her life in Switzerland was too familiar and would not challenge her to grow. Moving abroad was the key to open new doors both for her private and professional life.

After a rather long process of looking for jobs and apartments in Sweden, everything was finally in order to make the transition. Shortly before leaving Switzerland, however, Veronika split up with her boyfriend. Nevertheless, she

⁵ A Swiss city and the capital of the Italian speaking Canton of Ticino.

⁶ A major city in the French speaking part of Switzerland.

decided to keep up her plans, and she left Switzerland without knowing anybody in Sweden.

Despite having already had a job contract, the move to Sweden was not an easy one. For instance, it was difficult for Veronika to find a place to live. Housing space in Sweden is primarily for sale, and it is thus very hard to find a flat or house for rent. Moreover, a mortgage from a Swedish bank requires a local, Swedish warrantor, which makes it difficult for foreigners to buy property. Another obstacle was getting a Swedish national ID number which makes official or administrative actions possible, including opening a bank account or securing insurance. However, the freedom of movement within the European Union⁷ provided Veronika with an advantage in her job search and in taking up residency in Sweden.

Furthermore, she found it challenging to establish a new social network:

"It is not easy in our age to build up a circle of friends without having children. I realized that it is difficult in business to build up a network, too. Here [in Stockholm], like in other big cities, a lot is working through acquaintances. People know each other from their time at school or university, from the military, from volunteering and so on. This way, it is easier to get access to potential clients and to be invited to meetings. I did not quite manage yet to network successfully in career terms."

In order to get to know people, she first tried to socialize with other foreigners. "In the beginning, I joined some so-called expat events. But that was not my world. I did not enjoy it." After a while, though, thanks to a sports club, she found some friends and became increasingly familiar with Swedish.

Since 2012, she has been together with her Swedish partner. This relationship has changed her perception of living in Sweden. It makes it more fulfilling and satisfying and she spends most of her leisure time with her boyfriend. Veronika explains how her new relationship

eased her attempt of making Sweden her new home: "It [the new relationship] contributed a lot, that I just felt better. It is like a catalyser. It helps to understand each other, to feel good and comfortable. You are not fighting alone anymore, it is not a lonely adventure anymore."

Overall, Veronika feels welcome in Sweden in terms of how she is received by the society. In her experience, as a Swiss migrant in Stockholm, she belongs in the category of 'good immigrants' from a local point of view— or is not perceived as a migrant at all.

Veronika describes herself as a person who is happy with a small circle of friends. In Switzerland, she only maintained a few close friendships. This character trait helped her to better adjust in Sweden, as she does not depend on a big social network in order to feel at home. However, more and more, she has started to appreciate this small but long-standing circle of old friends. They are the last "points of references" of her old life, as she puts it. Veronika feels close to them even though she lives ten thousand kilometres away. "It is as if I would just live in a different city. But for my friends, that feeling is not the same. For them, I am far away living a different life in a different country."

Speaking about her future plans, Veronika mentions the new and growing ambivalence towards Switzerland. On the one hand, she misses the diversity, the differing ideas of what a 'good life' is, and the individual space Swiss society grants. On the other hand, she has learned to appreciate not having too many social obligations and enjoy her freedom and the distance from her family. "This I would not have had in Switzerland. The expectations would have been different in Switzerland." However, lately she finds herself thinking more often about living in Switzerland again. She appreciates the long-lasting friendships and thinks of her parents growing older and older. Another reason for her to return to Switzerland would be the possibility of having children. She would return mainly because of, in her opinion, the poor quality of public schooling in Sweden.

⁷ Switzerland is not a member of the European Union but it participates in the EU-freedom of movement scheme.

She also discovered her adventuresome side in the past years. She spends most holidays with her partner, travelling to various countries all over the world. Besides moving back to Switzerland, Veronika also considers a new beginning in a different country, one with a similar standard of living, such as Canada, USA, New Zealand or Australia: "I feel like pressing the start button again. I really liked the phase of departure and arrival when moving to Sweden." In this regard, her boyfriend's lack of interest in moving abroad is a challenging situation. He is very much rooted in Sweden and does not see himself living elsewhere.

Interestingly, Veronika thinks she would have taken similar decisions regarding career, relationship, hobbies and other aspects of her life, had she stayed in Switzerland. She says that she did not "reinvent" herself. So, to her, the relocation to Sweden represents a fulfilling project that could have happened elsewhere as well.

Ricardo

Ricardo (age fifty-one) was born as the child of Italian immigrants about whom he said: "They were workers, Italians (...) migrants from the 1950s, 1960s." He grew up, worked and lived in the same city in the German speaking part of Switzerland until he moved to China in 2009.

Moving to China was Ricardo's first own experience of international migration but mobility in a broader sense has been a life-long theme: "It has settled down to periods of approximately eight to ten years after which I have to start something new." He started his professional education with a vocational training as an electrician but turned to car sales soon afterwards and later earned a degree in Business Administration. After nine to ten years in car sales, Ricardo decided to try a fresh start and became Human Resources-consultant. After working for approximately a decade in Human Resources, he looked for a new challenge again and became a manager. Before moving to Shanghai, Ricardo held a senior managerial position in a major state-owned Swiss company.

His decision to migrate to China was inspired in part by a long-standing fascination with the country and his earlier first-hand experiences living as a tourist and language student. Ricardo is unable to tell when and why this fascination with China started and mused, half-jokingly, that he might have been a Chinese emperor in one of his former lives. He practiced Chinese martial arts and Tai Chi for many years when he was younger and travelled to China regularly as an adult. Later, in 2008, he took a sabbatical leave and spent several weeks studying Chinese in Shanghai. When he returned to Switzerland, he decided to resign from his job. He then went back to Shanghai in 2009 to pursue his language studies for six months, which he later extended for another year. Over the course of the year, he gradually came to the decision to stay in Shanghai.

According to him, he had a good life in Switzerland. Yet, it had become too easy for him and the opportunity to move to China and become an entrepreneur was a way to face yet another challenge.

"Well, this company (in Shanghai), I founded it because (...) I wanted to do something that not everybody does. To leave Switzerland. I had an apartment, a beautiful apartment, a nice car. I had everything there, a good, decent life. To pull up stakes and start from scratch here, one needs to be a bit crazy, right? (...) But you also need the will that it takes to build something here. And the will to start a new life (...) with all the necessary paperwork, visa, and so on."

Ricardo continuously sets and reaches new goals throughout his life course. This happens not through absolute, static planning, but by way of flexible adaption and continuous change. According to him, this is common nowadays and a result of macro-level processes:

"I used to work in HR and I used to ask: 'What are your plans for the next three to five years?' Today, I would only ask: 'What are your plans for the next months, maybe one to two years?' Right? Life today, in our world, in our globalizing world, it is not possible to make three year-plans anymore."

Ricardo's professional career in Switzerland afforded him a relatively affluent lifestyle. This

enabled him to stop working, focus on Mandarin studies and then to contribute towards the start-up capital for his company in China. In order to realise his ambition of becoming an entrepreneur in Shanghai, he had to downsize.

Therefore, once in China, Ricardo became aware of the conveniences and privileges that come with living in and being from Switzerland: "One learns to highly appreciate Switzerland. How well off the Swiss population actually is. (...) The quietness, for example, but also the safety. The social security. The Chinese don't have all this." Ricardo is, to some extent, still participating in this Swiss public old-age insurance system. Furthermore, his health insurance is covered by a private Swiss company for people who are living abroad. However, he dropped out of the second pillar of old-age insurance, the occupational pension fund system.

Switzerland's characteristics that make it feel like a safe haven also contributed to Ricardo's decision to risk the move to China and become an entrepreneur in the first place: "It cannot go worse than wrong. And I can always go back to Switzerland. (...) That is why I said, I will give it a try."

While he describes his daily life and his personal interactions with Chinese people in a positive way, Ricardo expresses mixed feelings about the Chinese state:

"Because the Chinese state can come from one day to the other and say: 'We don't allow foreigners into China anymore'. (...) I have experienced this here a couple of times already, in terms of decisions made by the state. (...) And I do not like depending on a state too much. (...) And it is obvious that China wants to cut down on the number of foreigners. They are reducing the numbers. I know this from a reliable source (...)."

His closest friends, his parents, and his sister live in Switzerland and he stays in touch with them over social media or on his yearly trips to Switzerland. In Shanghai, he has established a diverse social and professional network consisting both of people with Chinese and Western backgrounds. He lives together with his Chinese

partner, whom he met after he had settled in Shanghai.

Talking about his plans for the future, Ricardo explains that his professional activity as well as his whereabouts will eventually be subject to yet another change. If his health allows, he intends to work as long as possible. However, he plans to pull out of his company once it is consolidated. At this point, a decade of staying in China will be over and it will be time again for something new. As he does not see himself aging in China, this could take him either back to Switzerland or to another country. The choice of destination is flexible and will also depend on his partners' circumstances: "I will maybe leave China. Again. (...) I do not know where to. It may be to Thailand, but maybe also to Bali or Indonesia. No idea. I have to see with my boyfriend how he sees it. But it can also be to Switzerland."

As these three examples show, approaching their experience through life story interviews enables our respondents to trace the unfolding of their migratory trajectory in their own way. By telling their individual stories, their major motives for their actions and important stages of their trajectory become apparent. Furthermore, it is possible to identify the ways in which regimes and "politics of mobility" are experienced by our respondents and what kind of language they use to describe their mobile and migratory practices. The following sections explore these insights more in depth.

The unfolding of mobile migration trajectories: antecedents, patterns and stages

The exemplary cases presented above show how (e)migration is often preceded by other forms of geographical mobility. A focus on the processual character and different (pre-) stages of migration, as mentioned earlier, especially well-developed in writings on lifestyle migration (e.g. Benson and O'Reilly 2009; 2016; Benson and Osbaldiston 2016), helps to unpack how migration is linked to mobility: Frequent moves within one's home country as well as travels to, or short-term stays

in the future ‘host’ country or other destinations are common experiences of our interview partners. Boris has travelled regularly since his childhood and lived abroad temporarily several times, both in the US and Asia, before moving to China. Similarly, Ricardo first travelled to China to spend several holidays. Then, during a second language study stay, he gradually decided to turn his temporary mobility to China into (im)migration. Veronika had lived and worked in several cities in Switzerland before moving to Sweden. Thus, understanding migration as a journey, as Knowles (2010; 2012) and Schapendonk et al. (2014) have described, is a helpful perspective for the analysis of our collected life stories.

Another crucial element we observed are the various life events that play important roles in shaping both the form and direction of migration, and become visible when applying a life course approach (see also Bailey and Mulder 2017; Kou and Bailey 2014; Moret 2016) to our respondents’ migration journeys. For instance, in certain cases, love acts as a powerful incentive to leave one’s home country. Meeting a new partner in the country of arrival, like Veronika and Ricardo did, can change the way one feels in the current situation and influence plans for onward movement. Other life events, such as becoming a parent as Boris and Veronika had discussed, a divorce or separation, and aging have the capacity to spark reflection about the country of residence’s meaning and consideration for onward migration. In some cases, the native country becomes more appreciated and return migration is taken into account.

However, professional careers are another central aspect shaping the migration trajectory of many of our interview partners. New job-related opportunities can be a major incentive to migrate. Boris was attracted by the Chinese market’s opportunities for young entrepreneurs like him. For Veronika, the perspective of new challenges and professional alternatives were one of the main reasons for her move to Sweden. This holds also true for Ricardo, who had the wish to do something truly pioneering and challenging,

and he found a good place for realizing such an endeavour in China.

Nevertheless, the evolution of social networks (Schapendonk 2015) plays a crucial role as well. Like in Ricardo’s and Veronika’s case, long-term relationships with old friends in Switzerland may last and remain important. However, Boris realises that he slowly loses common ground with his old Swiss friends while he feels closest to other Swiss with similar international experiences. At the same time, all three life stories illustrate that it matters how the social contacts in the country of residence evolve. Dating a ‘local’ partner, being a student, or having a family can have a positive effect on the set-up of a new social network, lead to a feeling of belonging and be conducive for business. In Boris’s case, having come to China with his Swiss girlfriend initially kept him from building up new contacts, and he only become more socially active when she had left. Difficulties with establishing new, lasting friendships, on the other hand, has the potential to affect one’s well-being and facilitate a decision for onward movement. Yet, a small or fluctuating social network can also be perceived as a form of new personal and social freedom. Veronika suffered from her initial lack of contacts but also came to relish having fewer social obligations in Sweden.

In the same way, once our respondents took the first step to detach from a place and their own social network, they began to develop the desire for and a certain flexibility to relocate to a new place or country (Kalir 2013). Boris has grown up travelling and accordingly sees himself moving again at some point in the future. Veronika feels like repeating the exciting experience of arriving in a new country, and onward migration is a valid option for her as well as for Ricardo.

The migration-mobilities continuum in practice and in discourse

As mentioned in the previous section, we observe how lines between geographical travel, mobility, and migration are blurring in our respondents’ trajectories. This applies not only to movements

in space but also to other forms of mobility. In all three life stories, constant self-development figures as a major guiding principle and results in a high degree of professional and upward social mobility. Scholarship on Lifestyle Migration has contributed substantial analytical tools to look at questions of individualism and self-development (e.g. Salazar 2014; Benson and O'Reilly 2009).

From our respondents' perspective, moving to Sweden and China was another step – a project, in Veronika's words – in a generally mobile and change-oriented life course. In this sense, migration is one way of staying mobile but is, by no means, the only one. This insight goes along with Hui's (2016, 78) approach where she states that "moving beyond migrant exceptionalism is important because in the context of people's whole lives, migration is not the only frame that helps to make sense of change, adaptation, social roles, power or inequality."

In our respondents' cases, rewarding migration experiences reinforce their long-standing preference for varied and mobile lifestyles. As a result, both Ricardo and Veronika consider moving to other places for another fresh start. And for all three of them, a return migration back to Switzerland figures as a possible way of further self-development and mobility.

Another crucial, related aspect is how our respondents present their trajectories in a positively-connoted language of individualism, agency and change. Hence, the underlying values of the favourable and entrepreneurial mobilities discourse (see above), resound strongly in the way Boris, Veronika, and Ricardo negotiate and assess their life stories. This is further reflected in Ricardo's explanation about how people, including himself, plan in shorter and shorter cycles in order to accommodate the demands of a globalising world. Moret similarly points out the importance of looking at how "mobility may transform into a form of capital" (2016, 1455) which can be used individually for different purposes.

Accordingly, our respondents generally do not apply the labels 'migrant' and 'migration' to their own experience. Rather, by resorting to a vocab-

ulary of travel, open-mindedness and mobility, they presented their trajectory as somehow different from what they would describe as migration. Boris, for instance, emphasises that his stay in China is not a "life abroad" but a flexible condition that could be changed any time. This confirms the juxtaposition discussed above of some migratory movements understood as 'mobility' and others as 'migration.' The 'common-sense category' of migration as something problematic and linked to disadvantaged people is also evident when Veronika reflects that she is rarely perceived as a migrant in Stockholm, or, if she is, she is considered a 'good' migrant. Ricardo, on the other hand, refers to his Italian parents as migrants. This mirrors the 'common-sense distinction' between his own, favourable and thus 'non-migrant' status as mobile and skilled Swiss entrepreneur in China as opposed to his parents' situation when they migrated. They moved to Switzerland as economic migrants in the 1950s/60s and thus belong to a group of immigrants long stigmatized by the Swiss society.

Mobility politics and regimes of mobility

Powerful discourses of individualism and flexibility, and 'good' mobility versus 'problematic' migration shape the experiences and negotiations of our respondents. Furthermore, politics (Cresswell 2010) and regimes (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013) of mobility operate on various levels, as exemplified in the life stories of Ricardo, Boris and Veronika.

In this regard, the comparably affluent and powerful Swiss state with a relatively balanced distribution of wealth plays an important role in mediating our respondents' possibilities and attitudes.

For instance, Swiss nationality gives access to a very favourable regime of international mobility, granting visa-free entry to around 170 countries in the world, as well as Switzerland's participation in the freedom of movement scheme of the European Union. As a result, our respondents can easily and regularly go abroad for tour-

ism or short-term stays. Furthermore, potential barriers to (future) migration, such as visa regulations or exchange rates, are largely absent in our respondents' considerations. On this basis, migratory movements can be negotiated within a framework of personal freedom and multi-optionality.

Furthermore, comprehensive social insurance schemes, a relatively stable economy and political system in Switzerland, along with a comparably low rate of unemployment, grant a sense of security to our respondents. This expounds the power of a state to shape its citizens' life and, as in our case, mobility decision (Kalir 2013; Söderström et al. 2013). Should a Swiss abroad return to Switzerland, the chances of finding a lucrative job is likely and, worst case scenario, social welfare would be provided. Swiss citizens living outside the EU, such as Ricardo and Boris, have the possibility to participate in pension and health insurance schemes and are thus able to keep a considerable level of social security, often higher compared to residents in their current country of residence. Moreover, most interview partners, including Ricardo, mention that having the 'safe Swiss haven' to return to facilitated the decision to become mobile and migrate to another country in the first place. Keeping domicile in Switzerland is another strategy that many of our respondents, mainly those living in China, employ. Boris continues as a board member of a Swiss company, but most others keep domicile in Switzerland in order to benefit from the more favourable conditions of the Swiss social security system for residents.

Moreover, their education and professional experience in Switzerland provides our respondents with globally competitive economic and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1983; Moret 2016). As exemplified by the experiences of Ricardo, Veronika, and Boris, many Swiss (and citizens of other privileged countries) who go abroad are well-endowed to participate in "politics of mobility" and can convert their capital into a broad range of options concerning destinations, careers and lifestyles.

However, Ricardo's feelings about the Chinese state show that nation-states' regimes of mobility unsettle even rather privileged and affluent migrants. The latent threat that his visa might be renounced, as well as the legal system in China, affect his sense of security and stability. For Veronika, while she faces no obstacles in terms of residence and employment, the regime of the Swedish state becomes evident in the mortgage regulations that makes it hard for foreigners to buy property and settle in Stockholm.

The migration trajectories we observe in our ethnographic research may be presented in a language of fluidity, agency and multi-optionality, but they are by no means state- and frictionless mobilities. We argue that the relatively privileged socio-economic and national backgrounds enable our respondents to participate in this discourse of being independent, mobile and entrepreneurial individuals in a globalizing world. The Swiss citizenship and the option to go back to Switzerland, if necessary, provide our respondents with various options denied to a majority of migrants in the world and fundamentally influences their migration decisions and experiences.

Conclusion

In this article, we shed light on the migration-mobility continuum by approaching it from different angles. Initially, our study about Swiss people leaving their home country for a longer period of time prompted reflections about the pitfalls of methodological nationalism and the somewhat limited scope of migration both as an academic and common-sense category. Yet, we find that replacing a migration studies with a mobilities lens approach provides only a superficial solution for overcoming these dilemmas in our research. Instead, we conclude that the key lies in a cross-fertilizing combination of critical mobilities and migration research, and a thorough exploration of its underlying assumptions. The methodological approach we put forward is based on ethnographic research and a data-grounded analysis using life story interviews.

As a result, we are able to discover and relate aspects of our respondents' life stories that may have remained invisible otherwise. For instance, we find that other forms of mobility preceded and intersect with the actual move out of Switzerland. Moreover, motives for migration are often embedded in a discourse of personal progress and flexibility rather than presented as a far-reaching, one-time and permanent emigration. Still, many respondents who initially intended to leave for a limited period of time happen to spend a larger portion of their lives abroad. Yet, their current situation is often negotiated as impermanent, with the option of forward or return migration. Had we employed a traditional conceptualization of "migration from A to B," these aspects might have remained hidden. On the other hand, intent on avoiding the pitfalls of methodological nationalism and thus trying "not to think about migration like a state" (see Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013, 193), we were surprised by the importance of the Swiss state and Swiss citizenship in shaping emotional negotiations, as well as actual options for our respondents' mobile practices. This might have become less evident had we tried to design our research as a mobilities study.

Furthermore, as we have elaborated in the introductory part to this paper, common-sense meanings of 'migration' and 'mobility' differ greatly. It is thus interesting to observe how our respondents represent their migration trajectories accordingly – in a language of fluidity, mobility and multi-optionality. Moreover, we trace how those seemingly state- and frictionless mobilities occur within mostly favourable and thus invisible politics and regimes of mobility that influence our respondents' perceptions and actions.

Hence, a critical and data-grounded mobilities-informed migration lens offers a more flexible and open model to approach life-stories without denying the 'migratory facticity' of mobility experiences. Seemingly unrelated aspects like professional and socio-economic mobility, studying (abroad), tourism, and migratory moves can be dis- and re-entangled. Thinking about these

aspects blur the lines between migration and mobility both in human experience as well as in its analytical understanding, which can be further explored.

In our opinion, investigating privileged forms of migratory movements under the umbrella of (critical and mobilities-informed) migration research strengthens its potential analytical breadth and depth. This also has the potential to challenge its often misleadingly narrow and problematizing use in both areas of research. Instead, this may open up new ways of approaching more disadvantaged forms of migration analytically and enable researchers to emphasise that all migrants, despite their more or less advantageous situations, are equal people and thus share experiences and emotions.

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Transitions to Adulthood in Romania: A Diachronic and Intergenerational Approach to Mobility Regimes

by PIETRO CINGOLANI (University of Turin and International and European Forum on Migration Research (FIERI))

Abstract

Although internal and international mobility are two phenomena that have long involved the Romanian population, they have rarely been studied as interrelated. Different forms of mobility have assumed such social relevance in local contexts that they also play an important role in young men's transition to adulthood. In this article, I demonstrate how domestic and international mobility are interconnected in the local system of meanings of young men growing up in three different historical periods: in the 1970s, in the 1990s and in the last ten years. Young men consider their mobility or immobility practices in continuity, but also in contrast to those of the previous generations. Their choices are particularly complex today because mobility patterns have become more diverse, encompassing additional internal and international destinations, short term and circular migration, as well as onward and return migration.

Keywords: Regimes of mobility, Youth transitions, Generations, Internal migration, International migration, Romania

Introduction

This article contributes to the debate on the transition to adulthood in societies with high rates of migration, exploring the nexus between geographical and social mobility and the ethnographic connections between international and internal migration in Romania from the 1970s to today, two widely present phenomena yet little studied with regard to their mutual relations. I will focus on the symbolic dimensions and values that are associated with mobility, through the life experiences and perspectives of young men, analysing how, in different historical phases, mobility has been related to accessing adulthood. Although various mobility practices were present in all of the periods analysed, their symbolic weight has changed. Internal and international mobility have always been linked in people's imaginaries; thus, although they have been sub-

ject to different hierarchies over time, all types of mobility were evoked by my interlocutors.

Recent anthropological studies analyse the relationship between the life cycle and mobility in departure contexts from a youth perspective, especially in Africa (Gaibazzi 2011 for the Gambia, degli Uberti 2014 for Senegal, Vacchiano and Jimenez 2012 for Morocco). Many of these studies have analysed the ideas and practices of youth with respect to international migration (Azaola 2012, Crivello 2011), while others have focused on internal migration (Herrera and Sahn 2013, Gavonel 2017). In this study, I adopt the recent theoretical stance proposed by some scholars (Riccio 2016; King and Skeldon 2010) to not consider internal and international migration separately, but rather as interlinked processes that can occur within a person's lifetime. I focus on the diverse forms and importance that mobil-

ity takes throughout a young person's biography. These may change according to the social groups and geographical areas considered (Pelican 2013).

The concept of mobility is more inclusive than that of migration because it has the capacity for studying movement at vastly different scales (regional, national, international). Furthermore, mobility studies have given importance to the long-run temporal approach because they "theorise migration as co-constituted historically and geographically in the production of human relations within specific temporal and spatial contexts" (Hickey and Yeoh 2016, 649).

The recent 'mobilities turn' in migration studies has highlighted the need to analyse the relationship between social and geographic mobility, as the two do not necessarily go hand in hand. In an initial phase, mobility scholars described mobility as a form of emancipation generating new cosmopolitan identities (Canzler *et al.* 2008). Geographical mobility was placed in opposition to immobility, the latter seen as the lesser of the two. However, later work has shown that physical hypermobility could generate socially downward mobility and that physical immobility could produce a strong social mobility (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). Furthermore, people choose to move towards specific destinations not least depending on their expectations of social mobility (Cresswell 2010). As Hannam, Sheller, and Urry (2006) explain, "analysing mobilities thus involves examining many consequences for different peoples and places located in what we might call the fast and slow lanes of social life. There is the proliferation of places, technologies and 'gates' that enhance the mobilities of some while reinforcing the immobilities, or demobilizations, of others" (2006, 11).

Intergenerational transmission is another relevant aspect in the study of mobility. Ideas about mobility are communicated first and foremost within the family. Many youth grow up in families that are created through migration and that have transnational forms where some members are located in one country, and other

members in others (Baldassar and Merla 2013). This experience has a strong impact on young people as they grow up (Mazzucato and Schans 2011) and in later life stages (Moskal and Tyrrell 2016). Studies have shown that when parents worked abroad, the propensity for young people to migrate is much higher (Cohen 2004). In societies where different mobility patterns prevail (regional, national, international), young people experience these different realities first and foremost through their parents. It is thus important to understand how, depending on the historical moment, these different mobility experiences get transmitted to young people.

This article thus employs three axes of analysis: the connection between internal and international migration; the relationship between geographical and social mobility; and intergenerational transmission of mobility experiences. It also uses two fundamental theoretical concepts, that of "cultures of migration" and that of "regimes of mobility". These concepts were useful to analyse youth mobilities in three different periods: the communist regime, the 1990s and the current period.

Although in Romania geographic mobility has involved both men and an increasing number of women (Piperno 2012, Vlase 2012), I decided to focus only on male mobility for two reasons: firstly, female mobility was not a major phenomenon in the years of socialism (Sandu 1984), and intergenerational comparison would not be possible. Secondly, the transition to adulthood has different timing according to gender; for this reason, including mobility trajectories for women is beyond the scope of this paper.

In my research I ask how mobility has historically affected youth's entrance into adulthood, what imaginaries are linked to mobility practices and how young men relate their experiences of mobility to those of their parents. In answering these questions by carving out both similarities and differences between the three time periods, I aim to demonstrate that, in societies with a high rate of mobility, ideas and values associated with mobility represent a culture that is

transmitted from generation to generation; they are the material and symbolic capital that young men use when they become adults. While there is no automatic transfer of models, young men creatively appropriate and renegotiate known models in economic and political contexts radically changed over the last fifty years.

In the first part of the article, I introduce the concept of “cultures of migration” and discuss its theoretical contribution to migration studies, as well as its links with the concept of “regimes of mobility.” Then I present the connections between different forms of mobility in Romania during the three historical phases and the research methodology. The last part is devoted to the discussion of the results of my ethnographic research.

Cultures of migration, regimes of mobility and transition to adulthood

In studies on international migration, the concept of “culture of migration” has been established. Scholars dissatisfied with an exclusively economic reading of migration proposed this concept in the early 1990s; it identifies the sets of meanings and values that, within a certain context, concern the migration process (Cohen and Sirkeci 2011). Migration is part of everyday life, of the normality of various communities. In these communities, migration receives a substantially positive assessment that favours the decision to go abroad. Migration is a “culturally embedded” phenomenon, that is, not an isolated social phenomenon but rather one that must be connected to various other aspects of socio-cultural organization, in particular those related to status, socialization and the transition to adulthood. Some scholars have used the concept of “culture of migration” in connection with the concept of a “rite of passage” and have demonstrated how migration represents for the young a strongly symbolic and ritualized transition to adult age.

Chavez (1991), for example, used the model of initiation rites proposed by Van Gennep (1909) to describe the migration of young Mexicans

to California. Mexican undocumented migrants face the three phases – separation, transition and incorporation – but often they remain in a liminal condition, betwixt and between, for many years. For young nomadic shepherds in Somalia, the departure is strongly ritualized and their adult identity is built through travel (Rousseau *et al.* 1998). Congolese youngsters who migrate to Belgium realize a ritual of initiation to a new religion called *Kitendi* in which the body is socially promoted by clothing (De Clercq 2001).

The concept “culture of migration” points out the central role that the imaginary has in local societies. People’s choices are not only influenced by direct experience, but they are often based on images circulating in their societies. As Salazar describes migration from Africa to Europe, he argues that often young people oppose their homeplace where things go wrong, in favor of someplace where everything is good: “The West does not just stand for better education and more money; it also means fame, victory, respect, and admiration. Young Africans in general have a strong desire to belong to this fantastic cosmopolis, to the promising world out there” (Salazar 2011, 589). These images are not only cultivated by migrants, but are produced by many subjects, mass media, politicians, and non-governmental organizations. They are not just about the act of migration but have a strong link with the perception that people have of their social contexts (Bal and Willems 2014).

The concept “culture of migration” has thus undoubtedly enriched anthropological reflection on migration processes; nevertheless, it has been overused (Viazzo and Zanotelli 2006) and has sometimes overlooked socio-political dimensions. The concept of “culture” has become something of a black box containing all the factors that do not make immediate economic sense and are thus defined as cultural, merely understood as unexplained adherence to a particular behaviour. This is a deterministic vision, which gives little value to subjective agency and which employs a logic of aggregation to explain the social practices of people.

People, in fact, adhere differently to systems of meanings and values. Phenomena described by mobility are nuanced and they vary – both practically and symbolically – in local contexts and in different historical moments. As shown by Pelican (2013), the meanings that people in countries of origin attribute to mobility are not homogeneous; they take shape differently within a single country at a particular point in time. These meanings should thus be placed in the context of the forms of political regulation that are present at different levels – regional, national and international. Attention to these dynamics is what prompted scholars to introduce the concept of “mobility regimes” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013). It reflects “a notion of governmentality and hegemony in which there are constant struggles to understand, query, embody, celebrate and transform categories of similarity, difference, belonging and strangeness” (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013, 7).

As already stated, spatial mobility could have a central role during the difficult transition to adulthood (Thomson and Taylor 2005). In many economic and social contexts in transformation, such as the post-socialist countries of Eastern Europe, it is one of the main tools available to young people for achieving autonomy (Nugin 2014; Vultur 2004). The transition to adulthood consists of a process for young men of progressive recognition and mastery of autonomy and it always involves a conflictual dimension, a phase of distancing from the adult world followed by the reincorporation into it. In the past, the transitions were marked more sharply and were ritualized with greater force. One of the characteristics of youth trajectories in contemporary societies is their reversibility, the ability to come and go between youth and adulthood. Today, the lines marking the borders between youth and adulthood are much more fluid, and young people increasingly feel their lives to be discontinuous and reversible (Bynner 2005; Wyn *et al.* 2012). Young men are influenced by a culture of mobility, but their adherence to cultural patterns is always the result of a negotiation and can be reversible.

Internal and international mobilities interconnected

In order to situate my research, this section provides an overview on Romanian international and internal migrations from the socialist period until today. The literature in recent years is highly focused on the emergence of transnational circular forms of mobility (Anghel *et al.* 2016), thus giving less importance to internal mobility. In the still scarce literature on internal mobility (Kupiszewsky *et al.* 1997, Alexe *et al.* 2014), these migrations are rarely shown in direct relation to international migration. The interconnections between different forms of mobility, however, exist and deserve more attention.

In the socialist period, mobility was strongly controlled by the regime. Internal mobility was a response of the people to modernization plans, and it produced shifts at different scales, from the local scale to the interregional (Sandu 1984). International emigration in the socialist years concerned the ethnic minorities, such as Jews and Saxons who were repudiated by the socialist regime, or the irregular migration of asylum-seekers to Western Europe, who were highly stigmatized by official policies.

After 1989, scholars proposed a mobility periodization corresponding to the most important changes at the political and economic level (Baldwin-Edwards 2005). Immediately after the revolution (1990-1993), urban-rural migration was quite strong because of a sharp drop in employment in the cities. Internationally, ethnic minorities and asylum-seekers migrated especially to Germany and Israel (Bleahu & Grigoraş 2006). Shortly after 1993, Romanian migration to Germany nearly ceased and new destinations appeared. Migration reoriented towards France, Spain, Italy, and Greece. Internally, the flow from small towns to the countryside continued (Kupiszewsky *et al.* 1997).

Since 1997, scholars coined the phrases “settled in mobility” (Diminescu 2003), “incomplete migration” (Okólski 2001) and “lasting temporariness” (Grzymala-Kazłowska 2005) to describe a growing circular and often irregular international

migration. Within Romania, migration to rural areas almost quadrupled (Alexe *et al.* 2014).

In 2007, Romania became an EU member. After 2007, there was officially a period of restriction on the EU labour markets for Romanian citizens. Thereafter, Romanian migration reoriented again towards the Northern Europe. A number of Romanians from the first emigration countries moved to new countries of emigration, a phenomenon that scholars defined as “onward migration” (Ciobanu 2015). As for internal migration, there has been a growing polarization: the elderly and retirees migrate to rural areas, while young people migrate to the big cities (Alexe *et al.* 2014). Current mobility patterns have become more diverse, encompassing more internal and international destinations, short term and circular migration, onward migration, return migration and reemigration.

Considering different historical periods, mobility patterns had specific characteristics related to geographic distances and to duration of stay abroad. The Romanian political and economical situation influenced the young men’s choices.

Methodology

Although the connections between different forms of mobility – domestic and international – emerge strongly in the biographies of individuals and households, there are few qualitative analyses of these interconnections, as if the phenomena were mutually exclusive. This article is based on ethnographic observations and qualitative interviews collected over seven years in several parts of eastern Romania. I collected thirty in-depth interviews among young men of the village of Marginea, in the Suceava province, and in the surrounding countryside between 2006 and 2008. All the interviewed men were between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four.¹ In addition to these young men, I interviewed forty adults and elderly people who lived in the same region, with

previous experience of migration, and some with no experience of migration. During the same period, I interviewed other young Romanians and the parents of the young men, whom I had encountered in Romania, in Turin, Italy, one of the main international destinations for Romanian migration in that period.

In 2011, in collaboration with other colleagues (Sacchetto 2011), I interviewed thirty students attending the final year in high schools in four Romanian cities (Radauti and Suceava, in the northeast, Craiova in the south and Cluj-Napoca in central Romania). These new interviews allowed me to compare the perspectives of young men of the same age in different social contexts and with different experiences.

The choice to interview not only young men with rural backgrounds and not just those with experience of international migration allowed me on the one hand to avoid the “methodological ruralism” present in much of the research on Romanian international migration (Meeus 2012), and on the other the “migrant exceptionalism” present in many studies on migration (Hui 2016). Additionally, I completed participant observations among returnees in two locations in eastern Romania, Peatra Neamt and Bacau, in 2014.

In selecting the interview sample, I paid particular attention to choosing people with different social and professional profiles who had different levels of schooling and a variety of family mobility experiences. Table 1 briefly summarizes the socio-demographic characteristics of these respondents.²

In order to address the connections between different forms of mobilities, in the following sections I compare the experiences of men born into different historical periods: men born in the 1960s and who came of age in the 1980s; those born in the 1970s who became adults in the 1990s; and finally, men born in the 1990s who have entered adulthood in the past ten years.

¹ To select my respondents, I used the United Nation’s definition of ‘youth’ (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs).

² I changed the names of my respondents in order to protect them.

Table 1: Respondent characteristics

Name	Born	Education	Marital Status	Number of children	Current profession	Migration trajectories
Ilie	1955	8 years	Married	4	carpenter	1972-1976: Timisoara (Romania) 1980-1985: Bucharest (Romania) 1992-1994: Israel 1998-2014: Italy 2015-now: Suceava (Romania)
Dorin	1959	10 years	Married	2	bricklayer	1967-1987: Oradea (Romania) 2004-now: Italy
Cornel	1970	5 years	Married	2	owner of a grocery store	1994: Costanta and Oradea (Romania) 2001-now: Italy
Vasile	1972	University	Single	-	secondary school teacher	-
Gheorghe	1974	8 years	Married	1	electrician	1994-1996: Germany 1997-2000: Suceava (Romania) 2001-now: Italy
Vintila	1976	University	Married	2	journalist	1996-2000: Iasi (Romania)
Razvan	1994	Student in class 12	Single	-	student	-
Daniel	1995	Student in class 12	Single	-	student	Father in Italy (1999-2003) and in Germany (2005- now)
Dorel	1994	Student in class 12	Single	-	student	Mother in Italy (2000-2008)
Viorel	1992	University student	Single	-	student	-
Filip	1996	Student in class 12	Single	-	student	Mother in Spain (2000-2010)

Due to the time gap, the early experiences of mobility of the first and second cohort have been reconstructed through their narratives and personal and collective memories. Memory is never neutral and is conditioned by many factors, such as how much time has passed, the subjective disposition, and the experience. For the third cohort, I collected both narratives and observed their mobility practices. This crucial difference, in my material, however, did not obstruct my argument.

My research, although involving people from different regional backgrounds, has focused particularly on people born in the eastern part of Romania, Moldovan Romania, as the change of mobility regimes over the years has been particularly evident in this region. Although this article does not conduct an intraregional comparison, it is important to emphasize how significant the regional variable is; the mobility rates and domestic and international destinations are in fact very different within Romania. Western Romania, with low birth rates and a high level of economic development, has always been the destination for internal migration within Romania and since the 1990s has also become a target for international migration. Moldova, in the East of Romania, on the other hand, is a region that has always exhibited high rates of domestic and international emigration for several reasons: demographic growth higher than the rest of the country, scarcity of resources, few productive investments, and low growth rates. Mobility imaginaries are also very different. Western Romanians perceive themselves as more developed and sophisticated than their eastern compatriots, and mobility has never been a life strategy for them as it has been in Eastern Romania. The importance of mobilities for Moldovan young men is described in the following sections.

Transition to adulthood and mobility during communism

For current seventy-year-olds, the experiences of internal mobility in Romania were fundamental to their lives. In many rural villages in eastern

Romania, the majority of the male population was forced to migrate, since the collectivization policies and the reorganization of the agricultural sector left many families without the means for sustenance (Verdery 2003). Departures took place under two circumstances: military recruitment and seasonal work.

The young men left the countryside for longer or shorter periods in order to bring economic resources to their households. At the same time, they experienced contact with other areas that allowed them to define themselves, even on a symbolic level, as different from their parents. Leaving the parents' house allowed young men to accumulate material and social resources which were then the basis for their autonomy: economic independence and creation of a new family.

Leaving home was a highly ritualized moment. When a group of young men was departing for the first time for military service or to go to work, parties and dances were organized in the village center and unmarried girls were attending the events. These organized dances were an important chance for women and men to meet and know each other. The departure was celebrated along with the promises of coming back home.

These young men lived at a distance for quite some time, separated from their communities of origin, and they shared this experience in all-male groups. Those experiences of mobility strengthened their gender identity. The contact with the broader world was also a contact with objects and ideas they had only dreamed about until then. By migrating to the big cities, young men changed their attitudes and consumption habits. Ilie, at the age of seventeen, migrated with his brother to the Timisoara region and worked there as an agricultural labourer:

In 1974, I came back from Timisoara with long hair. When my father saw me, he did not want to let me in, could not accept me like that. He called the police to make me cut it. Whenever a guy like me arrived, everyone commented that he had made a lot of money [...] We were the terror of all those who remained in the village. At the Saturday dances the

girls always chose those of us who had been away. (Ilie, born in 1955, 8 classes completed, carpenter in Italy)

While young men spent long periods outside of their home villages, it was in the home village where they participated in festivities and showed off their new consumer goods. They sought and found recognition in the social space of the community from which they had departed. The mobility experiences also became instrumental in finding a wife.

Internal migration and international migration were often interconnected. A small number of the young men who migrated within Romania later undertook international migration. Those who went to work in the cities near the borders in Western Romania came into contact with new social realities, and these contacts were fundamental in the decision to undertake international migration. International migration was regarded by young men as a subsequent step following the internal migration, but it was often considered to be too radical a break because the risk of being unable to return was great. Practical information on international destinations was still limited and filtered by few direct personal contacts.

Dorin, at the age of eighteen, left his village and settled in western Romania where he worked as a mason for several years. After the fall of the regime he returned to his native village and then emigrated again to Italy, where he currently lives. Contacts from the internal mobility facilitated his latter international migration.

When we left the village, there were four of us, peers, and we all went to Timisoara to work in construction. Living there we gathered a lot of information. My cousin Mihai knew a Romanian girl who had contacts with the Red Cross in Yugoslavia, and so they decided to leave together. I was afraid to go and I preferred to go back home... Once the revolution ended, I decided to leave Romania; I've been lucky at that time because my cousin Mihai was already living in Italy and he helped me. (Dorin, born in 1959, 10 classes completed, bricklayer in Italy)

The socialist regime produced polarized public representations of internal and international

migration. Internal migrants were depicted as "good migrants," because they constituted a workforce which had participated in the great socialist industrialization of the country. For the socialist regime, the international migrants were considered "bad migrants", and were accused of national treason and doomed to public oblivion. However, in the communities of origin popular representations of the young emigrants were far more nuanced. All migrants were said to be "*în strainatate*" (abroad) (Kligman 1988), regardless of geographic distance.

People in our village were saying that all of us were abroad whereas my situation was very different from my cousin Mihai's one. Since he left for Yugoslavia, we didn't receive any news from him for a long time. The Police controlled all the letters that my aunt was receiving; my aunt lost her serenity and she had to work in the cooperative for her son too. During public speeches, the Secretary of the Party was often referring to those young men who betrayed Romania pursuing a false dream of the Western world. (Dorin, born in 1959, 10 classes completed, bricklayer in Italy)

Due to the regime's negative stance, international migrants experienced a condition of social suspension over long periods of time. These young men could not return to their starting location and communications were difficult; thus, they did not achieve any social reintegration in their communities of origin. International migration led to a break with the familial and social context of the departure location. The socialist state exercised strong control over mobilities but also over their meaning. Internal migration was supported and promoted by the regime's policies, while international migration was discouraged. Young men internalized these arguments and assessed their geographical mobility trajectories within Romania positively, whereas international mobility was often looked upon with suspicion or fear.

Transition to adulthood and mobility in the 1990s

Young men born in the 1970s entered adulthood at a time of profound changes, both political and

economic. These young men witnessed the disintegration of the socialist state and the great social uncertainty that followed. International migration had an important role in coping with the lack of resources and it allowed the men of this generation to achieve autonomy and to define their own specific identity. Cornel was one of the first emigrants from Marginea to arrive in Italy in 1994. Before arriving in Italy, he had experience working in the south and west of Romania and currently lives in Turin, where he owns a grocery store and where his two children were born.

In 1994 I was twenty-four years old. In Romania there was nothing to do, I had spent a few months in western Romania as a bricklayer but all the work-sites were blocked. I still had to do my military service, and if I left for Italy nobody could come and take me. My father did not want me to leave, he hid my passport, but then I convinced him and he gave me his blessing. (Cornel, born in 1970, 5 classes completed, owner of a grocery store in Italy)

For these young men, traveling abroad represented an act of rupture with the established order. Departure made it possible to avoid military service, which was perceived at the time as a tyranny by an intrusive state power. Instead of being a key requirement for entry into adulthood, the years of military service only expanded the transition period, and this resulted in a totally different attitude of young men in relation to military service. They didn't consider it something that would guarantee social prestige anymore; rather, it would be something to avoid (Kay 2006).

The departure was highly ritualized, as in the socialist period. Many young men went to the monasteries to ask for blessings and prayers. In some cases, young men took little talismans with them on their migrations, such as pieces of fabric or blessed oil bottles which would protect them from danger.

Their trips also assumed the typical characteristics of a rite of passage, with critical moments at the border crossings, when young men faced the most difficult initiation tests. These tests, however, did not end upon arrival in the foreign

country, but continued throughout their engagement with the new social reality.

The experience of the first international migrants served as a model for those who stayed; they represented a link between distant worlds and often conveyed to family members, relatives and fellow villagers the information, knowledge and the practical know-how necessary for orienting oneself abroad. This led to a phenomenon involving ever more people each year. For the young men who migrated, the other European countries were a "hard-earned" destination, and they built their group identity around this perception of themselves as migrants and hard workers.

The young migrants, similar to their parents, began to transfer back home tangible signs of the new well-being they experienced abroad. Cars (Cingolani 2009), new foods, clothing, and "dream houses" (Moisa 2009), became markers of their new social identity and fuelled and strengthened practices of international mobility in many starting contexts. With the material and symbolic resources they accumulated abroad, these young men could enter adulthood; they became attractive on the marriage market and created new families.

Although migration to the west and the south of Romania has not disappeared, for many years, young men have viewed it as a second-class mobility, diminishing its value in their descriptions of it. In the 1990s, internal mobility rarely ensured the kind of social mobility that had been produced over the years of socialism.

Vasile is a secondary school teacher in the town of Radauti, the only one in the family who never emigrated, relates to this:

My family is split in two. Three brothers, the unlucky ones, in 1994 went to work in the west of Romania, while others went to Germany. It was not the same thing, because those who emigrated abroad are much better off today. (Vasile, born in 1972, teacher in Romania)

Young men in this period had various perceptions about the different mobility options. Romanian cities didn't have the same appeal as foreign

destinations. European countries were perceived as wealthy locations and places where a person's dreams would quickly come true. A popular saying easily expresses this common perception: "Italy is the country where you can find dogs with donuts tied to the tails". Furthermore, there was a hierarchy among European countries. Germany was the most appealing one, due to the favorable working conditions for Romanian workers. Italy and Spain followed Germany because they were considered the closest places for overlaps in cultural and linguistic characteristics, as well as countries where integration was easier than in others.

If we look at the intergenerational dynamics, we can identify two complementary processes. On one hand, young international migrants defined their behaviour as a break with respect to their parents' authority. On the other hand, young international migrants described their migration abroad as a continuation of their parents' internal migration.

Gheorghe is forty-four years old and since 1996 has lived in Turin, where he is an electrician. He likened his migration to Italy in the 1990s to the internal migration of his father in the 1970s and equated it with the same spirit of enterprise and attitude of resistance to the system:

We leave home because the state always forgets about us. My dad did it, when he went onto a worksite because the communists had collectivized and removed them from their land, and I did it because the Romanian state no longer guaranteed us anything. (Gheorghe, born in 1974, 8 classes completed, electrician in Italy)

Although international migration was widespread and collectively shared, public institutions and the media have represented such behaviour in an ambivalent way. While in the early years, international migration went unnoticed in the media, it has become highly visible since the late 1990s. The press and Romanian television spread the concept of the *capsunaro* (strawberry pickers), used to describe the young men who emigrated to perform low-skilled jobs abroad and who, back in Romania, flaunt their prosper-

ity. Another widespread concept was that of the *euronavetisti* (European commuters) which described the intra-European mobility of young Romanians, with an obvious parallel to the internal mobility of the socialist past. This is an image with many shadows and hardly celebratory.

These emerging public representations have influenced the ideas on migration of young men, particularly those who have not emigrated. People with a high level of education are the most judgemental. Vintila was born in Radauti in 1976, attended the journalism institute in the city of Iasi, and is a local newspaper editor.

At first there wasn't enough information on what was going on abroad and people living abroad would always tell good stories. Then the newspapers and the TV started to report stories of mistreatments and failures of Romanians that were abroad and we started to be more sceptical. I could have done like my cousins who all went to Spain and Italy, but instead I stayed. I wanted to try to establish myself here in Romania. (Vintila, born in 1976, university completed, journalist in Romania)

To sum up, in the transition years, international migration prevailed as a reaction from the bottom to the crushing state and socio-economic gyrations, whereas internal migration, from cities to the countryside, was a survival strategy. International migration, after becoming a common practice, also gradually produced articulate discourses and imaginaries within the departure communities.

Coming of age in contemporary Romania

Romanians currently in their twenties are going through a new, different phase of history when compared to their parents' experiences. Romania has been part of Europe for more than ten years now, and was hit hard by the crisis that began in 2008; at the same time, certain areas of the economy show strong development. Labour market conditions in the traditional European emigration countries have dramatically worsened. In addition to economic difficulties in Romania, Romanian migrants have experienced rejection and sometimes explicit racism. In Italy, for example, between 2008 and 2009, Roma-

nians were subjected to violent political and media campaigns, comparable to those carried out against the Albanians in the early 1990s (Caritas Italiana 2010).

Some European countries have become, in the eyes of young men living in Romania, places with strong social uncertainty. The diffusion of mobility patterns does not mean that young men unconditionally and uncritically choose to migrate abroad. International mobility, although still a desirable option, is not a normative behaviour that automatically transmits within families (Perrotta 2011). For many, international migration is not always equivalent to social upward mobility, but rather, often dooms them to regression of social status.

These aspects are clear in many interviews I collected among high school students:

Here, they talk a lot about Italy. They talk about what happened to other Romanians who have lost their jobs, who have not been paid, and even those who have relatives abroad say that is not easy. Hearing 'Romanian shit' on the street is not nice at all. And then there are many who return empty-handed, like the gypsies who only go back and forth. (Razvan, born in 1994, student in high school in Romania)

These words speak of a disenchantment and even a condemnation of forms of mobility towards localities where migrants feel threatened. The views of young men often echo the dominant discourses of the Romanian press and politicians, who, for example, have strongly criticized the Roma migration. The Romanian Roma are considered responsible for the negative image of the Romanians who went abroad and the reason for all the discriminations suffered by them (Cretu 2014).

The feeling of psychological insecurity is also linked to the changing economic conditions in destination countries. In Romania, as in many other European countries, the time of transition from youth to adulthood has expanded; and international mobility is no longer a guarantee of a linear process. Indeed, it could further delay the achievement of important objectives such as economic independence and family formation.

International mobility has lost both its novelty and the symbolic value it had for the generation currently in their forties. For these reasons, the departure of young men is no longer ritualized in the local communities.

Many young Romanians today express the desire to move abroad as tourists or as travellers for short periods, but not with the purpose of seeking employment. As in previous periods, a hierarchy emerges regarding international destinations, with certain countries appearing much more desirable than others. It is a new and evolving geographic imaginary, where the southern European countries occupy the lowest positions, while the United States, Canada and northern European countries occupy the highest ones (Cingolani 2016).

In their words, young men are at a critical distance from their parents' migration. Daniel's father emigrated to Italy in 1999 when he was four years old. In 2003, his father returned to Romania and is currently a seasonal worker in Germany. Daniel grew up with only his mother.

To my father and those of his age it seemed that Europe was freedom, and perhaps in the beginning it was. Our parents worked like crazy but were not able to defend their rights. We want something else and we know that we have to find our way in the world, in our own way. (Daniel, born in 1995, student in high school in Romania)

Several young men criticized the choices made by their parents, yet many acknowledge the material advantages they have thanks to the sacrifices their parents made. As Ionela Vlase (2013) highlighted, the parents' international mobility often resulted in the social mobility of their children in Romania. Their savings allow their children to study in the best Romanian universities and start an independent life.

Social mobility, in the imaginary of young men, is today disconnected from international migration. A preference for shorter range and internal migration forms has reappeared because there is more employment and income security in some Romanian cities than in many other European localities. Dorel comes from a middle-class fam-

ily; his father is a postman, and his mother is an elementary school teacher. For some years, his mother worked in Italy, and her savings allowed him to study.

Next year, when I finish high school here, I'll move and go to the Faculty of Engineering at the University of Cluj. It's a great university and I think with that degree it will be easy to find work. There is no point in going abroad without a safe objective. (Dorel, born in 1994, student in high school in Romania)

The discussion of professional career opportunities also overlaps with reflections on lifestyles and consumption that are no longer guaranteed exclusively through international migration:

In large Romanian cities, the lifestyle, for those who have money, is the same as in other European cities. It's not like in the 1990s, when our parents didn't have anything here in Romania and had to bring everything from abroad. It's just a matter of finding your own space: it is difficult in Romania, just as it is difficult outside of Romania. (Daniel, born in 1995, student in high school in Romania)

One of the most important changes from the past is that, for the new generations, mobility is not always linked to autonomy. Today, mobility for many young men is an experience that allows you to acquire important cognitive tools but never allows you to become economically autonomous. Some young men, after spending short periods of study or work abroad, return to Romania and still live for a while in their parents' home.

Many respondents are aware that opportunities for social mobility are distributed unequally in society and that not all people have the same chances of success, either in Romania or abroad. Filip is seventeen and comes from a middle-class family. His father is a farmer, and his mother worked as a caregiver for ten years in Spain:

Our parents went abroad because there was little or nothing here. Now there is everything here; that is, there is a great choice, but many people can only stand by and watch without being able to consume. If you are born in a poor family is hard to

successfully change. (Filip, born in 1996, student in high school in Romania)

These words clearly express that what worries many young men today is an involuntary social immobility (Carling 2002), which allows no vision for the future. Access to adulthood, which always involves a crossing of symbolic and material boundaries, is increasingly difficult. In this context, in recent years, internal migration, especially from the countryside to the cities, has come to represent an alternative to international mobility in a context of general social and economic uncertainty. The travel experience of the parents doesn't result directly into the mobility of their children, but it has an effect on their children's perceptions of living abroad. For this reason, it is possible to say that it still exists as a legacy on the culture of mobility among generations. This culture of mobility creates images of here and elsewhere, and young men build their projects on these images.

Conclusions

International and internal migration have occurred with varying intensity at different stages of Romanian contemporary history. At times, geopolitical conditions have made one option more viable and widespread among the population than the other, but these processes have always coexisted. Scholars have long maintained a separate analysis of internal and international migration, yet using a mobility studies approach, this study highlights the need to overcome the rigid divisions between the two. Such an approach allows for a long-term vision and an inclusive approach to study mobilities. This article has analysed how different forms of physical mobility and the imaginaries associated with them have resulted in various mobility regimes among young Romanians. These mobility regimes have had different characteristics in the different historical periods. During the communist period the state exercised strong control over mobilities, supporting internal migration and discouraging international migration; in the 1990s international migration prevailed as a

bottom-up strategy to survive the political and economic transformations in Romania; in the last period no mobility regime prevails anymore because social insecurity is widespread both at national and international level.

In this paper, I have focused on the forms of mobility in the Romanian Moldovan region, aware that the regional differences deserve further exploration. I focused my attention on imaginaries which guide individual actions. In different historical phases, mobilities have intersected with the processes of transition to adulthood among young Romanians. The experiences of three cohorts have been chosen for comparison, exploring aspects of continuity and difference.

For young men in the 1970s, physical mobility allowed them to accumulate relational skills and resources needed to start adult life; the steps towards adulthood were clearly marked and geographical mobility ensured social mobility. The departure of young men from home received a public recognition and was ritualized. Where international migration was present, it was a minority phenomenon and judged ambivalently by young men. It implied a break with sending communities, and not everyone had the necessary resources or desire to tackle a step so radical and full of uncertainties.

For young men in the 1990s, international mobility has had the same role that internal mobility had for the previous generation. This generation crossed geopolitical borders but also social boundaries in European destination countries; the act of migration was highly ritualized in the starting contexts. International migration enabled young men, at least in the early years, to improve their social position at home, especially if compared to those who did not migrate; internal migration did not stop but was rather perceived as a survival strategy; it lost its attractiveness and no longer guaranteed social prestige. Thus, in the juvenile imaginary, internal migration was ruled out. Young men of this generation viewed their international mobility ideally in continuity with that of their parents, considering it a fundamental step towards adulthood.

For young contemporary Romanians, paths to adulthood are much less defined and less linked to geographical mobility. These paths are no longer ritualized. Although intra-European borders have weakened, and the crossing is now easier, the social borders within societies have multiplied. There is a growing awareness among young men that international migration can produce social immobility, even a negative social mobility, and internal migration has once again become an option to ensure upward social mobility.

Returning to the initial claim, the life stories collected confirm that experiences of mobility have spread and have been reinforced in local contexts, along with ideas and images of elsewhere. Young men of every generation took advantage of this culture of mobility as they became adults. The transition to adulthood happened for each generation inside different mobility regimes; young men preferred internal mobility, international mobility or immobility depending on different historic periods. In all of the historical stages, the transition to adulthood involves a struggle with the parents' experience of mobility. The social institution in which cultures of mobility are transmitted is above all the family, but adherence to certain models may fluctuate. In this sense, it is important to highlight, in addition to the continuity from one generation to the other, the creativity and capacity for innovation that young men have always shown. It is in this respect that the meanings associated with mobility can be endorsed, but can also be challenged and negotiated, throughout the entire process of transition to adulthood. As I demonstrate, it is important to adopt a perspective that goes beyond "migrant exceptionalism" and that allows for an understanding of the mobility experience within broader social processes.

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Observing the Multiple Intersections of Mobilities through “Return Migration” in the Alps

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Abstract

Through a comparative study of “return migration” from Latin America towards two Alpine regions in Italy and in France, this article questions the scientific distinction between forms of spatially-bound mobilities. By analyzing different generations’ mobilities within the same family network over time, it sheds light on the tropisms underlying the taken-for-granted distinction between migration and mobility. It proposes to use “migration” only to refer to movement across State frontiers, and it critically examines the notion of return.

“Return” is a common feature of Alpine mobility. As it was part of the internal circular skilled-work mobility that developed in the early modern era, it constituted an essential component of transatlantic migration that later occurred. The comparison of “return” in the two regions shows that different paths of mobility are influenced not only by economic opportunities and migration policies, but also by inheritance norms. The article thus calls for a “systemic” study of mobility, encompassing history, economics, policy, law and kinship. Insight from long-lasting, taken-for-granted-yet-unknown European migrations, which are still going on in the contemporary era, not only helps understand some of the socio-economic changes European societies are facing, but may also bring light to some issues that are at stake in more recent and more visible migrations.

Keywords: mobility, immobility, return migration, inheritance norms, emigration’s money, policies, Alps, Latin America, France, Italy

Introduction

This paper questions the scientific distinction between forms of spatially-bound mobilities from the standpoint of the Alpine area. Building on research I carried out on “return migration” in the French and Italian Alps from Latin America, it analyzes different generations’ mobilities within the same family network. It argues that immobility, internal mobility and international migration are intertwined before and after “return.” It also attempts to bridge the gap between mobility and migration studies, so as to apprehend movement as a complex social fact, a “total social fact” (Mauss 1966) encompassing multiple dimensions of human life.

In the modern era, the Alpine valleys have been part of a socio-economic system based on seasonal mobility of skilled workers at a regional level. In the twentieth century, this short-range circular mobility turned into international migration, but the places Alpiners settled in were part of an extended network that was tightly bound to the home-place, to which people continued to come back over time. Academic research usually separates different forms of mobility, which are conceptualized through pre-established models (Urry 2000). So, migration is linked to economic necessities, work mobility to executive and scientific professions, tourism to leisure, pilgrimage

to religious aspirations (Albera and Blanchard 2015). But the long familiarity of Alpiners with movement for professional purposes and the multiple reasons motivating their “return,” from nostalgia and family inheritance to tourism and economic necessity, bring one to question the very distinction between migration and mobility. On the one hand, this distinction seems to be founded on political concerns as well as on a class tropism, since people moving across the borders of a State are considered migrants if they are non-skilled laborers, and mobiles if they are highly-skilled professionals. While inside a State, migration usually refers to non-skilled laborers moving from rural to urban areas. In order to break with these implicit social representations, in this paper I shall use the term “migration” only to refer to a movement crossing a State’s frontier, regardless of who is moving. On the other hand, the current distinction between different types of mobility (linked to economic and religious reasons or to leisure) hides the social complexity of every human movement, which can indeed combine the motivations and characteristics usually attributed to one of these forms. Ethnographic accounts show that the distinctions between these forms of mobility are blurred, and that they interact and hybridize each other. Historic records confirm that such boundaries were nonexistent in many societies, as internal work mobility could easily expand into international migration, and economic mobility overlap with religious mobility and tourism (Albera 2000, Albera and Ottonelli 2000).

This paper will first sketch a picture of short-range and then international mobilities characterizing the Alpine region and will examine the analytical notions employed from a critical perspective (1, 2). It will then present accounts of “returnees” from South America that were collected during fieldwork (3, 4). Next, it will analyze “return migration” paths in a comparative perspective, showing the necessity to take into account the historical, economical and legal context in order to fully understand them (5). Finally, it will address the distinctions among different

mobility forms and will challenge some mainstream assumptions that run under current theorizations of “return migration” (6). To conclude, the article will plead for an integrated approach to mobility, combining anthropology with history, economics and law.

1. A Long-Term Perspective: The Alps in a System of Short-Range Regional Mobility

Since the late 80s, anthropological research has shown that families in the Alpine region have shared what has been called a “culture of mobility” (Albera and Corti 2000). Since the beginning of the modern era, the economy of Alpine valleys has been based on mixed production, a blend of agriculture and pastoralism, complemented by the seasonal mobility of skilled workers and peddlers, at a regional level (Fontaine 1993). During the snowy season, men left their villages in the high valleys and moved towards the towns on the plains nearby where they could employ their skills as stone-cutters, carpenters, masons and tinkers. Others left as peddlers, carrying wares on their back and walking through valleys and towns in the neighboring regions. Men came back in spring, when the snow melted and their families needed more hands for agricultural labor. The number of men migrating could be substantial, and life in alpine villages depended on women, who mostly stayed in place and managed the land and livestock. Due to the absence of men in these areas, Alpine women gained autonomy in decision-making at a household and at a village level, experiencing a considerable change in their status; the women’s responsibility and elevated status occurred sooner here than in other regions (Viazzo 2001). But women were not only those who made men’s mobility possible. Even if in lesser numbers, they participated in a gender-specific professional mobility that could last years: they often worked as servants, teachers and nannies (Corti 2002). The self-sufficient, sedentary peasant community is thus more an academic invention than an accurate description of past societies’ modes of life (Rosental 1999).

In the twentieth century, with new opportunities opening overseas as in Northern Europe, this short-range circular mobility easily turned into long-distance international migration (Audenino 2009). The seasonal character of mobility disappeared, as distances grew wider and the cost of travel substantially increased. Over time, entire families left their original villages, and Alpine valleys suffered heavy depopulation (Viazzo 1998). The prospect and of returning was always implicated in Alpine international migrations, and often turned into reality. The interviews I gathered during fieldwork on the Italian and French Alps show that people continued to leave Alpine valleys, on both sides, until the mid-70s, and began to come back massively at the beginning of the 80s, following world-wide economic changes (the oil crisis of 1974; the rapid economic growth of European countries in the 80s) and political upheavals in Latin America (such as the dictatorships in Chile and Argentina).¹

International migration then appears as a “stretched” version of previous seasonal mobility, in that distances and periods of absence are bigger. Nevertheless, the same “culture of mobility,” in the sense of a capability to use movement and space as resources, seems to connect neighboring and very remote areas and to be transmitted from generation to generation within Alpine families.

2. A Critical View on Return, Mobility and Migration

Before introducing the material I collected during fieldwork, let me clarify some of the concepts

¹ Counting emigrants’ “returns” is very difficult, because they do not fit into the statistical categories generally used at the State and at the regional level (King 1986, Douki 2013). To quantify these returns, I gathered information about the beneficiaries of return policies from the Bureau of Emigration of the Province of Trento, in Italy, as well as estimations made by the association *Sabença de la Valèia* and by the *Musée de la Vallée* de Barcelonnette, in France. Coupling this data with my observations, it seems that 1 out of 10 inhabitants in the Trentino is a former emigrant, and 1 out of 15 is an emigrant in the Ubaye Valley.

I shall use in its presentation. The first is the notion of “return,” which can be a contentious tool of analysis. Both emigrants and emigrants’ children use this term to refer to their movement from Latin America to Europe. However, it clearly accounts for two different experiences, as emigrants’ children are often born abroad. They do not really “come back” to Europe: moving towards their parents’ country, on the contrary, may seem more as a new migration in the eye of an outsider. The “return” of emigrants and that of their children, indeed, designate two experiences that are the opposite of one another and result in a radically different position towards identity and territory. In effect, the country in which emigrants’ children were born is the immigration country of their parents, while their destination country is their parents’ country of origin (King and Christou 2010). The notion of return must be handled with a critical perspective. Throughout the text I shall use it in inverted commas both to respect the informants’ linguistic choices and to describe the heterogeneous incoming flows that stem from the massive emigration such regions underwent in the past decades.

A second distinction relates to the different semantic range of the terms of migration and mobility. The notions of migration and mobility are linked to political concerns which legitimate or de-legitimate movement and which may reflect into academic practice (Hui 2016). The term migration usually refers to movement across the borders of a State, but there are cases in which the same phenomenon is defined as mobility. Indeed, laborers, who are commonly not welcomed by nation-states, are considered migrants, while highly skilled professionals, called mobiles, are generally welcomed. Mobility, positively connoted, entails expectations of gain for individuals and States, while migration, negatively connoted, involves control, social integration, or a threat for national identity (Faist 2013). A disparity of values and a social hierarchy, thus, underlies this terminological distinction: professional mobility applies to higher classes and movements from urban to rural areas, whereas

internal migration is for lower classes looking to increase their status and mostly moving from rural to urban areas.

Migration is also a legal construct, as it refers to the administrative experience of an individual changing of legal status – from citizen to foreigner – due to crossing State frontiers. The State is thus a crucial actor defining what is to be considered as migration and what, as mobility. Indeed, regulation over international migration is the crucial means through which the State claims its sovereignty (Xiang 2016). But there are countries in which the State also regulates mobility within its borders, labeling it as internal migration as a way of claiming sovereignty over its subjects (Hugo 2016). Internal migration too may thus be a State construct. If people who move are turned into migrants by States through regulations and border processes, we cannot assume that the category of migrants has an atemporal relevance, as it may not be conceptually useful for understanding the complexity of any professional movement at any time (Hui 2016).

In the Alpine region, transhumance and skilled-work mobility have been part of the everyday life of families for centuries. So, when the life of people living in a particular zone (such as the Alps) is inherently characterized by movement, are we entitled to call such movement an internal migration, applying to actors' external categories that are not meaningful for them in their everyday experience?

Breaking with disciplinary boundaries and with the epistemological biases of each term, in the following text I shall use the term, mobility, to refer to people's movement inside a State – a mobility that is not linked to crossing administrative borders – while I shall use migration to refer to movement across States, implying the crossing of borders and the submission to (or the identification of ways to bypass) an administrative experience.

3. Alpine Migrations Overseas

The case studies discussed in this article are drawn from two stages of fieldwork. A first phase

of ethnographic research took place in the Italian Alpine region of Trentino, in northeastern Italy, between 2010 and 2013. I interviewed different members of twenty families of "returnees" from Chile and Argentina. A second stage of fieldwork took place in 2016 on the French region of Alpes de Haute Provence and more specifically in the Ubaye Valley, with migrants "coming back" from Mexico. There, I interviewed members of 8 returnees' families. For the most part, I interviewed two members of every nuclear family: either two siblings or a parent and a child. In both settings, through biographic interviews, I gathered life histories and family narratives. I also focused on oral history, asking individuals for accounts of their grandparents' biography and of life in their village in the past. I focused my attention on mobility on a household basis and over generations, gathering information also on professional paths and family arrangements. I spent time with interviewees, sharing moments at home, at their workplace and sometimes in every-day village life. The interviews I collected showed the tensions and hierarchies that crisscross families and that can determine both mobility and professional paths, in relation to gender, generation, and with the position of individuals among their siblings. Examining the "return" experience of three generations – that of emigrants, emigrants' children and emigrants' grandchildren – provides an accurate ethnographic account of the complex relations linking different forms of mobility over time.

Oral history accounts I gathered from returnees from Chile and Argentina in the Trentino and from returnees from Mexico in Alpine Provence, suggest that in the countries where they emigrated, Alpiners were rarely immobile. Tracing different generations' experience, they confirm patterns that have been described by historians. The first men leaving the Ubaye Valley for Mexico were peddlers, mostly fabric traders, who left in the 1820s, to seize the trading opportunities opening with the independence of the new Mexican State (Gouy 1980). They travelled overseas with the goods they purchased in France

and roamed across the country to sell them. They then settled as fixed traders in Mexico City, where they built big stores and called other men from their village and family to come and join them. The most fortunate opened factories in other towns or in the countryside around Mexico City to produce their own fabrics and so avoid customs duties (Gamboa Ojeda 2009). They had their wives come from their native valley and in the majority of cases came back with their families once they “made their fortune” in Mexico, and they left their business to fellow countrymen (Collectif 2014). This process lasted until the beginning of the seventies.

Trentines migrating towards Chile and Argentina have a completely different profile. From the mid-nineteenth century, Trentino inhabitants emigrated to these two countries, as woodcutters or craftsmen moving through different towns and offering services to the local population (Groselli 2000). They worked for several years before going back to the Trentino, marrying and founding families. They could temporarily go back to Latin America now and then to integrate their household economy. Others emigrated to flee political persecution at different periods, especially during the World Wars. But most Trentines were attracted by the opportunities these States offered them to colonize “virgin” farmland. This was land the Argentinian and Chilean governments took from native Mapuche people in their attempt to whiten the local population. The relation the Trentino has with Chile is quite specific: almost a thousand people, grouped together in household units, emigrated in the early 50s as part of two populating expeditions organized by the Trentino-Alto Adige region and the Chilean government. This emigration was financed by the Marshall Plan. They were sent from their original region, devastated by war, to colonize lands in northern Chile, where they were promised they could acquire farmland and a house at very low rates. As the expeditions turned out to be state-organized frauds, people who sold everything they had in the Trentino in order to begin a new life in Chile found them-

selves poorer than when they left (Groselli 2011). Some of them sought fortune in other agricultural areas, while the majority moved towards the capital, Santiago, where they found jobs in the building sector or in factories opened by fellow countrymen. Others had to be repatriated by consular services. Thus, Alpine people very often remained mobile overseas, moving from rural to urban areas in search of employment, or crossing the country as merchants or skilled laborers.

4. Four Accounts of Family “Return Migration”

A comparison of “return migration” between two regions² occurring in different nation-states allows one to appreciate how different legal and historical contexts, which in turn influence the forms of family organization (Albera 2011), shape choices about coming back and moving within the return country.

Focusing on regions enables one to avoid the conceptual restrictions of methodological nationalism, which takes States and nations as “natural” units of analysis (Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). Examining these movements in terms of national migration would be meaningless, as emigrations coming from both France and Italy were built on local networks and on a regional socio-economic organization. Communities wouldn’t be useful research units either, as it would be problematic to draw the boundaries of communities “at home.” Do they coincide with valleys, with administrative provinces, with an origin village/hamlet? Ethnography reveals that even in a single valley, inhabitants may draw distinctions among themselves on the basis of the position they occupy in it. On the contrary, working with families, which I consider as middle-range social aggregates, as my research units, allows me to move beyond individual accounts and attain an intermediate dimension of comparison.

² In this paper, I use the term, region, in a broad sense, to indicate not an administrative division, but an area having a distinctive form of socio-economic organization and a single juridical and political framework.

The accounts I am presenting show that mobility is part of families' experience through all generations, both in the origin/return country and overseas.

Marina, 52, works in her in-laws' restaurant in a hamlet in a touristic upland valley in Trentino. Her family first lived in the rural area of Mezzocorona, a village in the biggest valley of the region. From Mezzocorona, her grandfather and then her father used to move towards the towns of Verona and Mantua to work as stonecutters and masons during the winter. Three generations of the family (Marina's grandfather with his seven children and his parents) emigrated to Chile in the 50s. They first headed towards the rural area of La Serena and later moved to the urban area of the capital, Santiago. When Marina's father came back, in 1970, bringing his own family with him, he headed first towards the urban area of Trent, the regional capital, and then towards the rural area of Val di Non. Maria recalls:

"I was born in Chile and I lived there until I was eight years old, in Santiago. My mother is from south Chile, but she moved to the capital and met my father, who is Trentine. For me, coming to Italy was a huge trauma. My dad wanted to come back because he was nostalgic, he wanted to return to his family. He came to Chile in the fifties, when the Italian State sent families to South America. He went with his entire family: his parents, his brothers and his grandparents. My grandfather came back with my grandmother and all his children because the arable land they promised them, next to La Serena, turned out to be impossible to cultivate. My father remained in Chile and moved to Santiago, where he began working with other Trentines in the building industry. Italians had little colonies there, where they hung out together. Then, my father worked at Carozzi, a pasta factory owned by a fellow countryman, on the outskirts of Santiago. He decided to come back in 1970, because everyone was telling him "come back to Italy, we're fine here, we've all got a car" and so on. But in the end, we had nothing! Maybe we were better off in Chile. We came back by boat, a month-long trip. My father thought he would have his family's support, his brothers and sis-

ters where in Trent. But the family did not exist anymore, after they came back, they all became Jehovah's Witnesses. When we came back, I was ten and we settled in Trent. It was very traumatic, because it is not your home. I looked at this old, ancient city and it seemed to me like I was going a century back.

We received little aid from the Province; nowadays people coming back are treated like princes! But our family benefitted only from the paid return trip. This, they owed us, since it's they who sent us there! The first apartment we had was a dump, it was above a restaurant, with shared bathrooms in the stairway and I got viral hepatitis. At school, it was very difficult for me, because I had to learn Italian, so I didn't go much further; no one taught me how to study, our parents were too busy trying to make a living. Then I met my fiancé. He was the son of emigrants too. His parents bought the family house parts from their siblings, in Val di Non, and opened a restaurant there. I have worked there since I was 23 and I still work in our family restaurant. I hope we will soon be able to convert our part of the house into a bed and breakfast, since tourism is flourishing here."

Cristina, 44, works in a family-run mountain hotel and lives in a village in Val di Sole, Trentino. Before leaving Italy, her father's family lived in the same area. Her paternal grandfather used to move towards the plains of Modena and Cremona as a *ramaio*, or tinkerer, repairing boilers and kitchen utensils. Her father didn't carry on this craft and left for Chile. Her mother's family was from another valley, Valsugana. Her maternal grandmother worked as a laborer in a silk factory in the neighboring Valle dell'Adige, where her maternal grandfather worked as a mason. Not much time was left for farming. Cristina's father left the Trentino in the 50s with his brothers, while Cristina's mother left with her parents in the same period. Cristina's parents met in the rural area of La Serena; they married and moved towards the copper mining area in northern Chile. They then went back to the Trentino, heading towards the rural areas of Folgarida and Dimaro.

"I was born in Chile from emigrant parents from the Trentino. I arrived in Italy in 1973. Dad is from Dimaro and mom from Valsugana. I was born in Copiacò, in the desert, where my father was working as a miner. We came back in 1973 because my father had a project with his brothers, which they set up a few years earlier. It was the construction of a hotel in Folgarida. We came because there was this project. They were three brothers in Chile and they had to pick one to come here with his family. He was the eldest and so we arrived. The entire family: seven brothers and sisters and my parents. But we were all born there. The whole family emigrated in 1952, when there was an agreement between the Italian and the Chilean government. Then De Gasperi, who was from the Trentino, was the Prime Minister. And here, it was a period of crisis.

At that time, a bus full of people left Dimaro; there were more than fifty emigrants. My father left with his brothers. My mother, on the contrary, left with her parents, who are buried in Chile and all her brothers and sisters are still there. We are the only ones from Dimaro who came back to Val di Sole. The others went to Trent, Rovereto, small towns. Because, you know, a backward process was set up. First we had aid for leaving, then the Province helped people coming back. For us, it was difficult to come back. We were doing well in Chile; we didn't want to come back. But we had to, because of this investment project."

Pietro, 43, works in its own spare parts replacement firm, in a middle-range town in the Trentino, Riva del Garda. His paternal family was from the rural area of the Valle di Fivè, not far from the Lake Garda. The men of his father's family used to be *carbonai*, coalmen, who moved towards the neighboring town of Brescia to sell coal. They were very poor, had no fields of their own and used to migrate from spring to autumn, when the first snow came. His mother's father was a farmer and a baker in Dro, a small town on a neighboring plain. His parents met in the Trentino and emigrated together to Argentina around the late 40s, to join a sister of his mother, who had already emigrated there with her husband.

Pietro came back some thirty years later and settled first in the rural area of Arco and then in the urban area of Riva del Garda, both on the Piana dell'Alto Garda.

"I came here 20 years ago from Argentina, where I was born. I was 23 years old and came back with my fiancée, an Argentinian of Spanish descent. She was 21. We married when we arrived, in order for her to have Italian papers. I had an Italian passport, in addition to my Argentinian citizenship, thanks to my parents. In Buenos Aires, they had a car spare parts firm. In Argentina, it was very difficult because of the economic situation, even if we had a house and our parents there. Before we left, we had a little bar, our in-laws gave it to us to run. We were going to the university in the evening and we worked in the bar during the day. But a moment came when everyone paid us with food stamps, which were paid 30 days later. They were always losing their value because of inflation, day after day. So, they didn't even cover the bar expenses, not even the pastries. So, we asked people to pay cash, or we would be obliged to raise our prices. It was a real pity, for lots of young people who got to start their lives, it was an obstacle. My parents began urging us children to go away, to seek a better future. They said there was no future there. I don't know if I could have done so. They stayed in Argentina. You see, the migrant mind? They were able to say it, so we, the children, went away and they remained there, alone. Then my father died and my mother was left alone. But since she's got a sister there, who is 90 years old, she doesn't want to come back. Otherwise she would have spent six months here and six months there. But they are very fond of Argentina. When we came, we benefited from the financial aid of the Province. They paid us our airplane ticket and helped us with our apartment rent during the first year.

My brother came a year before me; he went to Varignano, next to Arco. So, I arrived on Friday and on Sunday I was already working in a bakery. I didn't lose a moment. Then I worked as a sales agent and when our family grew, I decided to open my own company to earn more money. We were very determined. This is why we were able to do what we did. To come here leaving our families there. When my mother left the Trentino for Argentina,

she took a boat and had to say goodbye to her parents forever. Nowadays it is different; we see each other every day, with Skype, and airplane tickets are less expensive. Every summer someone is coming to see us. I didn't think my parents and my in-laws would ever use a computer, and yet here they are! We are not rich, anyway, and we cannot go as often as we would like, we miss our parents a lot".

Robert, 69, retired, is an ex hotel manager and receptionist, living in Mandelieu, a small town on the Côte d'Azur. His family settled in the rural zone next to Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye, in the Alps de Haute Provence. The men of his paternal family used to be tinkers during the winter, and moved across the surrounding region until they reached the city of Lyon. Robert emigrated to Mexico City in the 50s and came back with his own family in the 80s. They first headed towards Saint-Paul and rapidly moved to Mandelieu, a resort town on the neighboring Côte d'Azur.

"I left the hamlet where I was born, near Saint-Paul-sur-Ubaye, in 1952. In addition to farming, in my family we were tinkers from father to son: my father and grandfather used to cross the country, moving towards Lyon during winter. I didn't want to work as a tinkerer, a job that was fading anyway, or to be a peasant. I didn't want to go work in a factory or as a mason either. I was the first of four sons and two daughters and I knew I would inherit the family property. But before that, I knew that I had to live with my parents in the family house and take care of our land. I was sixteen and I couldn't imagine doing so. Then, I decided to leave for adventure and went to work in a cousin's hotel in Mexico City. You know, our valley has timeless ties with Mexico; they even set up factories there! I worked as a waiter in that hotel and later as a manager. I enjoyed that work. Then I met my wife, the daughter of a rich countryman. It wasn't easy to get her father to consent to our marriage, since I was not what you would call rich, but she managed to have him give us his approval. We had four children. We came back to see the family during summer holidays. My brothers moved too, some to Lyon and the neighboring area, others to Paris. One of my sisters remained in

the valley and took care of my parents. In the 80s I was still working in that hotel, but things were not going well. Then my father died and I inherited the house and the land. It wasn't that much, you know, but I wanted to come back anyway. I wanted to see my home-place, my sisters. I wanted my children to have a French education. So, we came in 1987; I was fifty. My eldest son was fifteen; my youngest daughter, eight. My children were happy; they wanted to see France and the Eiffel Tower, even if they knew that my family was from a small mountain village. I sold the land to a neighbor and kept the house, but we didn't want to live there. It is a little hamlet and we were used to the city. I had a little savings but I still had to work. I couldn't stay in the valley, so we moved to the Côte d'Azur, which is not very far away. I had some French acquaintances from Mexico who opened up a hotel in Mandelieu. They gave me the opportunity to work as a receptionist in this small hotel, a job I kept until I retired at age 65. We go back and forth between the coast, where we live, and Saint-Paul, where we spend our holidays."

5. Comparing "Return Migration" in two Alpine Regions

The life histories I gathered show that people continue to "return" to the Alpine area, heading towards their or their family's place of origin and sometimes moving from these locations towards new destinations, which they choose on the basis of economic opportunities. These accounts illustrate that "return" is a common feature of migrations coming from the Alps. As it was part of the internal circular mobility that developed in the early modern era, it constituted an essential component of transatlantic emigration. This is not exceptional. Even if shared representations of the emigration from Europe towards the Americas usually depict it as a one-way trip, literature shows that return has always constituted a significant part of these movements (Wyman 1993, Cerase 2001).

However, it is difficult to establish the place of return in the migratory cycle. The life histories I have presented show that migrants were mobile before going overseas, just as they were when they were in South America and when

they came back. So, we can wonder if using the term “return migration” as an analytic category we don’t simply cut a specific moment out of a wider dynamic of mobility.

Another ambiguity lies in the uneven experience of the different generations of migrants. Various generations are “coming back” in the Alps: the emigrants who left in the 1950-1975 period who are now retiring, as well as emigrants’ children or descendants, who may have distant European ancestry. These ambiguities help to understand what the life histories I gathered suggest: the places of “return” and the interconnections between international migration, internal mobility and immobility are necessarily plural, when one observes them through the lens of “return.” Choices about mobility, immobility and places migrants “return” to depend on a plethora of factors, among which are policies, economic opportunities, family relations and inheritance laws. This is particularly clear when we analyze the major differences between the movements heading to the two regions I considered in this study.

A first difference lies in norms of inheritance. Inheritance rules of Alpine Provence³ are based on the model of the stem family, in what has been called a house society. In this system, the eldest son is entitled to inherit the family’s patrimony, that is, the family house and land (Collomp 1983). The other children are compensated for their part with dowries, when possible, or they do not inherit anything. Inheritance perspectives may be a reason for coming back to Alpine Provence, as a son may inherit the whole family property. This is why, for example, Robert decided to come back to France when his father died. Inheritance norms allowed him to become the only owner of the family lands and house and, as such, to sell the land and have some cash with which he could begin a new life. On the contrary, in the Trentino, family property is divided among all sons

and daughters (Cole and Wolf 1974). Men who didn’t achieve success are not encouraged to come back as, with some luck, they would inherit just a small part of the family land and/or house.

A second discrepancy relates to the different financial investment patterns and internal mobility behaviors I observed. In the Ubaye Valley, “returnees” who earned a fortune through their trade and cloth factories in Mexico invested in monumental villas and graves. These buildings are striking in the local architectural environment, which is composed of Provençal farms and village houses (Homps 2004). The importance emigrants attributed to house building in the Ubaye Valley, compared to the Trentino, seems to testify to the central value that is conferred to the family residence in the house society. “Returnees” from the Ubaye Valley invest mainly in real estate, in their home villages – where they settle to retire, or which they frequent as a holiday resort – as on the Côte d’Azur and in Paris. Like Robert, who moved to the Côte d’Azur for professional reasons, “returnees” move across their (or their parents’) original country following professional and investment opportunities. Internal mobility is a consequence of the return from international migration, as it is fundamental to make savings fruitful and to stabilize a path of social ascension.

For emigrants of Trentine-origin, huge economic achievements are less frequent, and so are “returns” linked to the display of success and the enjoyment of money. “Returnees” both benefit from and contribute to the growth of the tourist industry, as they come back with cash they invest in construction of new hotel complexes, ski resorts and restaurants. “Returnees” heading towards the Trentino are less mobile than those going back to the Ubaye Valley. Economic investment opportunities linked to tourism are greater there, as the region is highly valued by tourists. So, Cristina’s family came back to build a holiday resort with the money they put aside through emigration, while Marina works in a restaurant her in-laws opened after coming back from emigration and plans to invest in a bed and breakfast.

³ These traditional rules still continue to apply even if the introduction of the Civil Code in the late 1880s established the division of the family patrimony among all children.

The third major difference lies in the presence of return migration policies in the Trentino. These policies include offering financial aid, housing and work facilities for “emigrants coming back” from destination countries who are willing to settle in the region. These measures, which can be seen as ethnic-preference migratory policies (Joppke 2005), were implemented in the 90s and were aimed to encourage the region’s re-population; they were also meant to discourage rural exodus. With a broad definition of what an emigrant is,⁴ these policies attracted lots of old and new migrants. Some “returnees” re-discovered a (sometimes as distant as a fifth generation) local ancestry in order to benefit from interesting financial facilities and to carry out what may be considered a new migration. Such policies imply that “returnees” will stay in the local territory for as long as they benefit from these facilities: they thus discourage internal mobility. Marina’s and Cristina’s families, as well as Pietro, the son of emigrants, benefitted from these policies in order to “come back” to the Trentino.

Nonetheless, even if “return” migration may be accomplished thanks to policies of ethnic affinity, it engenders social difference in everyday social interaction. This is maintained both by “returnees” and by the inhabitants of the places they settle in. Such a dynamic is not specific to the two regions I studied and has been extensively analyzed in the literature (Baldassar 2001).

Regardless of their generation, “returnees” are called “the Mexicans” in the Ubaye Valley. This label encompasses both envy and contempt towards people who left the valley, supposedly got rich abroad and returned with money to show off. On their turn, “returnees” openly adopt a behavior that distances themselves and their children from local inhabitants, engaging in internal mobility to signify social difference. Additionally, the valley’s principal municipality took advantage of the “Mexican” label. Without the “returnees” participating in it, in the 90s the

municipal council invented a French-Mexican annual festival, *fêtes latino-mexicaines* that is supposed to draw special attention to the hybridized identity of the valley, by celebrating its connection to Mexico. During a week, *mariachis*, Mexican artists and singers, perform in the valley capital, promoting tourism by marketing ethnicity (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009).

In Trentino, “returnees” from Argentina and Chile suffer different degrees of social exclusion, depending on the size of the town in which they settle. In high valley villages, the children of emigrants that come back at the age of retirement are considered strangers, as Cristina stresses. Her family was not able to integrate into the local social life, even if she and her brothers settled in the her father’s village. In larger towns, “returnees” are not ostracized or considered local. They rebuild their life as a foreigner would do: they create new social ties, often frequenting local “Chilean” or “Argentinian” clubs, which are composed mostly by migrants of Italian descent. However, when it comes to claiming local identity before the Italian State, in order to obtain social and economic advantages, emigrants could be rapidly reintegrated into local communities. So, the largest ethno-linguistic minority of the region, that of the Ladin, uses the Internet to reach out to its emigrant population, scattered around the world. They are summoned to come and join the local community in the annual festival showcasing the Ladin ethnic identity. The forms in which the social differences engendered by migration interact with local ethnic identity, thus, vary according to the geographical context and its legal framework.

6. The Connections between Mobility, Migration and Immobility

The cases I have presented show that international migration can stem from internal mobility and that “return” migration may lead to more internal mobility. Very often, Alpiners were already engaged in paths of circular mobility before leaving for South America. When they “come back,” migrants possibly return in/

⁴ Anyone who can prove he/she had an ancestor who left the Trentino.

to mobility: they do not necessarily resettle in the place they left, but they move around the country or around their original region following economic opportunities. Emigrants' children and descendants may easily adopt mobility, too, following a family habit. Pietro's case is exemplary, as his own migration "back" to Italy was stimulated by his parents. They were the first to urge him to leave Argentina. So, to leave them, when the economic crisis was at its peak, encouraging him to experience backwards the same journey they made when they were young. The habit of moving is transmitted from parents to children, making mobility an appropriate response in times of crisis, as it was a stable element of the family economy for the previous generations. The four accounts I presented show that, in each family, circular professional mobility was converted into international migration, as men who were used to leave for long periods decided to emigrate overseas when better opportunities presented themselves. These individuals accumulated a "mobility capital," including various skills acquired through the repeated experience of moving, such as the knowledge of migration (and return) policies, of the different opportunities available in the regions and countries of destination, as well as relational skills (Martiniello and Réa 2014). This capital forms part of the Alpine culture of mobility that is passed on through generations.

The account of Alpiners mobility urges us to reconsider the scientific division between internal mobility and international migration (King and Skeldon 2010). These appear to be part of a single dynamic, rather than being two different processes. This dynamic encompasses immobility as a third element, with which the former have a dialectic relation (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2013).

The study of Alpine mobility challenges both the postulates on the novelty of transnationalism and the fundamental assumption of methodological nationalism, the immobility of a people inside a nation-state's boundaries, which justifies its homogeneity, its "sameness." The his-

torical roots of mobility processes coming from and heading towards the Alpine area suggest that transnational movements of people, ideas, money and objects are not a novelty. This point has been widely discussed also in other case studies, comparing contemporary migrations with historic migrations to the USA (Foner 2001). This is not to say, however, that recent changes in travel and communication modes haven't accelerated such transnational processes. Methodological nationalism considers that people in single nation-states share a unique language and the same culture, while migration confronts them with "otherness." "Return migration" and the dynamics of expression of social diversity it engenders challenges these assumptions, showing the crucial place that mobility can take in a same region, exposing it to unexpected contacts with different forms of otherness.

The case studies I presented also question theories which posit that return migration to rural areas is typical of emergent countries, while return migration in developed countries is directed mostly towards urban areas (King and Skeldon 2010). But the rural regions migrants "come back" to are no longer as they were when they left. Rapid development, thanks to the growth of the tourism economy as well as to emigrants' remittances and financial investments, has completely changed the social and economic environment in the Trentino and in the Ubaye Valley.

Conclusion

Ethnography indicates that, in order to better understand contemporary phenomena, it is fundamental to take due account of history and to make a "systemic" study of mobility encompassing economics, policy, law and kinship as well as biographic accounts.

In more general terms, the research results I have presented point out the importance of integrating the study of contemporary migration, often focused on exotic movements traveling on a South-North or East-West axis and supposedly challenging Western European national identi-

ties, with insight from long-lasting, “taken-for-granted-yet-unknown” European migrations. These are still going on in the contemporary era and condition some of the socio-economic changes we are facing. Nevertheless, their influence over our society remains unseen. On the contrary, given their complexity and their depth in time, such migrations may enlighten some issues that are at stake in more recent and more visible migrations.

These case studies also show that more efforts have to be made to overstep the “immobility paradigm” that dominated European historical, sociological, geographic and demographic research in the past century. The development of anthropological research in Europe, and especially in the Alps, offering a historical perspective on the societies studied, has already questioned this paradigm at the end of the twentieth century. But the studies that have been carried out in emigrants’ original regions in Alpine Europe have often assumed that emigrants’ return corresponded to their “natural” and unproblematic integration in the local or national community they left (Lorenzetti et Granet-Abisset 2009). This means that more research needs to be done to understand the effects of emigration on European local societies, on one hand, and to build new theoretical perspectives integrating immobility, internal mobility and international migration, on the other.

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