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Migrant lives. A comparative study of work, family and belonging among low-wage Romanian migrant workers in Rome and London

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Abstract

Framed within the context of growing economic changes generated by globalisation in Europe and of the transition towards an increasingly service-based economy and therefore labour market restructuring, the present study investigates the intersecting lived experiences of work, family and belonging of intra-European migrant workers and their families in Rome and London. In particular the comparative examination focuses on the dynamics of mobility and work which Romanian women and men are embedded in and enact within the transnational geo-political space of the enlarged EU, as well as on the mechanisms and processes influencing their transnational mobilities.

The analysis, based on a longitudinal multi-sited fieldwork conducted in two European locations – Rome and London - develops within three key institutional sites of migration: labour market, family and "community"/belonging. Within each of these, a specific process of migration is then explored: access to and participation in the labour market, transnational family formation and activities, formation and meanings of belonging/"community" in the two cities. The overall aim is to compare and provide an in-depth account of the various dimensions of Romanian migrants' experiences in the context of different national and supranational policies, labour market realities, and socio-cultural institutions.

Furthermore, the in-depth exploration, which combines narrative interviews and participant observation, provides empirically grounded insights into the existence of variables such as nationality, gender, class, historical experiences and long term individual or collective/family goals, which, together with social and immigration policies, labour market demands, work permit systems, and new geo-political openings of the European Union, are involved in and effectively influence migratory and settlement decisions and practices.

As such, the study provides a valuable contribution to the empirical and theoretical advancement of studies on transnationalism in the current evolving space of the EU.

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First of all I must thank my supervisors Dr. Patrick McGovern and Prof. Claire Alexander, certainly for sharing their knowledge with me and for their detailed comments on my work, but most of all for their thoughtful support and patience in supervising a rather long and turbulent PhD during which they witnessed work and maternity-related interruptions as well as continuous travels which culminated in their student relocating at the antipodes of Britain.

In the first stage of my PhD I was fortunate to be based in Oxford where I benefitted from access to COMPAS (Centre for the Study of Migration and Society). Many of my ideas around issues of migration generated and developed within that research environment and thanks to discussions I had with members of the staff. I would particularly like to thank Prof. Ellie Vasta for always making herself available both professionally and personally. Special thanks also to Nando Sigona for his intellectual and social inspiration which most probably caused the starting of this PhD.

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Finally I thank Alessio for the never-ending discussions and exchange of ideas, for his serenity and calmness, and for his endless loving encouragement which helped me greatly to get through some of the most difficult moments of this PhD. But most of all I thank him for taking our family "to the other side of the world" where I wrote this thesis and where new ideas and projects are blossoming up for us.

Contents

Introduction

Paradoxes of recent East-West intra-European mobilities

In the early 1990s, when the post-socialist states began a process aimed at integration into European structures and institutions, a crucial "question of who belongs to Europe" surfaced in the political and public debate (Morosanu, 2007). It became clear that the "fall of the wall" and a future scenario of European integration, would not necessarily bring to an end historical symbolic divisions separating the "Eastern bloc" from Western Europe; quite the opposite, those were growing strongly and were likely to persist (Stråth, 2000). Longstanding stereotypes outside the region, which have depicted Eastern Europe as the "second world, as different from the civilised West" (Hann, 1994: 229), were jeopardising their "right" to re-join Europe, to enter the "club".

Processes going on in the "East", the so-called "transition", started to be described pejoratively by the term "Balkanisation", coined after the name of the geo-political space which has been constructed as the "dark side" of Europe (Todorova, 10097; Morosanu, 2007). The Balkans have in fact historically been created as "the *Other* of Europe", and "Balkan" has become a negatively connotated label standing for the "the tribal, the backward, the primitive, the barbarian" (Todorova, 1997: 3). Cingolani (2009) also observes how social-sciences scholars, through the use of expressions such as "Balkan Orientalism", "goulash or second economy", "semi-periphery", have also contributed to the construction of a homogenised image of Eastern Europe as a remote, primitive, dangerous yet fascinating space. Similarly, Hann (1994: 230) points to the role of creative writers, such as G. Orwell, who differently have also been "influential in this process" by producing "the most powerfull rapresentations of the communist Other".

The weight of those derogatory representations appears to be still standing. Discourses of Otherness have in fact re-emerged with renewed power with the arrival, after 1989, in the Western countries of Europe of the first Eastern European migrants (Morosanu, 2007). Since then, East-West intra-European migration has been commonly thought to be dominated by low-skilled, irregular migrant workers, human trafficking, and so called "bogus" refugees. A negative view of the "East" has therefore been cast

on its people and has been closely experienced by those who decided to try their luck in one of the Western European countries.

In actual fact, during the 1990s, Western European governments appeared to show some degree of acceptance towards Eastern European migrants as opposed to "immigrants from the South and minorities who were phenotypically different" (Castles, 1998: 26). Because of their white, European and mostly Christian origins, Eastern European workers appeared almost as a blessing at first for they epitomised the perfect cheap worker willing to fill gaps in the western labour market without necessarily triggering locals' hostility and concerns with long-term social integration.

Yet, those favourable perceptions overlapped with the spread in some of the richest Western European nations of fears of mass-migration from "the problem child of Europe"[1]. In 2002 for instance, when Schengen visa restrictions were lifted for Romanian citizens, "images of Eastern post-socialist states waiting for the chance to flood Western Europe with waves of migrants" (Woodcock, 2007: 494) were used by populist politicians and sensationalist media to describe the influx of migrant workers[2]. "Frightening" numbers soon made their way into the public domain, with estimates ranging between 25 and 50 million Eastern Europeans potentially "swamping" the Western European labour markets and welfare systems overnight (Thränhardt, 1996). Those worries grew alongside subsequent stages of the EU enlargement process which saw considerable numbers of citizens from Eastern European countries moving west in search of work (Castles and Miller, 2009). Since then, migration from Eastern Europe has become a highly controversial topic in most Western European countries (A. Datta, 2008).

This approach towards labour migration from Eastern Europe can be framed within a well-known discourse which deploys two different views of current global migration: on the one hand migration is viewed as a positive value and economic asset (Pastore, 2008) for all highly-developed economies which, "because of demographic and socio-economic reasons, find themselves increasingly reliant on immigrant labour" (Castles, 2008: 2) – from this point of view human mobility serves the needs of the free market well. On the other, over nearly four decades, a negative attitude towards migration has been growing in political debates at national and local level where the *immigrant* –

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[1] Bran, M. (2002) "Les Tsiganes Handicapés, de la Roumanie à l'Europe des riches", *Le Monde* 12 July.
[2] In France for instance, in the course of that year almost sixty articles were published by the two main national newspapers, *Le Monde* (32) and *Le Figaro* (26), about Romanian illegal immigrants entering the country (Woodcock, 2007: 5).

almost always imagined as a low-waged, probably irregular, migrant worker or asylum seeker from the "Global South" – is depicted as posing a danger to the wealthy nations' well-being and identity[3] (Huysmans, 2000; Pastore, 2008; Schierup et al., 2006).

There is more than one reason explaining this ambivalence (Yuval-Davis et al., 2005; Pastore, 2008; Anthias et al., 2006). The politicisation of the immigration issue is one factor to be considered (Sigona, 2011). Dominant political discourses depict migration, especially during electoral campaigns or periods of economic crisis, as "*the problem* that needs to be fixed" (Castles, 2008: 3). But most of all the instrumental political use of anti-immigration rhetoric is employed when governments wish to conceal the fact that labour migration to Western Europe is "fuelled by a structural demand for cheap migrant labour", that "democratic states have limited means to effectively stop migration as long as this demand persists" (de Haas and Paoletti, 2011: 1), and that often public policies and labour market regulations of those very same states in actual fact contribute to the growing demand for low-waged (irregular) migrant workers (Anderson and Ruhs, 2012). Furthermore, as Favell and Hansen (2002) have argued, freedom of movement is an integral component of the European Union's philosophy, while "the demand for cheap illegal labour in the EU countries is an acknowledged part of this free movement" (Woodcock, 2007: 496; see also Castles and Miller, 2009).

But, who are these *new migrants*[4]? Who are these individuals so much needed by the wealthier states' economies and in the meantime increasingly under the spotlight in the media and policy debates? Who are these workers to whom Europe has opened its gates but still "pretends" to keep its labour markets closed? Who are these workers, by now EU citizens, for whom irregularity often becomes an imposed strategy and way of life in a global economy that fails to acknowledge its own needs?

These question marks represent the starting point for this study as they have highlighted the need for an in-depth investigation into the social processes informing current mobilities and patterns of settlement of Eastern European migrant workers in Europe, as well as into the social changes their migration inevitably brings about.

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[3] What is labelled "mobility" of the so-called highly-skilled international recruits is almost always considered positively, while "migration" of low-waged workers is seen as "out-of-place in shiny new post-industrial economies" (Castles, 2008: 2)

[4] By the term "new migrants" I mean those labour migrants who have arrived in Western European countries since the end of the 1990s, a period in which "there has been an upward curve in demand for migrant labour" in these countries (Hickman et al., 2008). Those new arrivals have been predominantly from Eastern Europe.

At a time when immigration is a widely debated and politically sensitive topic in most European countries, and when large parts of current migratory flows are coming from Eastern Europe, the overall aim of this dissertation is to explore micro-level migratory experiences, reading them in their continuous dialectical relation with the wider societies and institutions in which migration processes are embedded.

The present study, therefore, sets out to investigate the lived worlds of Eastern European migrants by focusing on the transnational migratory experience of low-waged (irregular) Romanian migrant workers and their families in two different European contexts: Rome in Italy and London in the UK. The cross-national comparative analysis is enriched by taking into account the dynamics of mobility these migrant workers are embedded in and enact within the transnational geo-political space of the enlarged EU, as well as the mechanisms and processes influencing their transnational mobilities. In particular:

- What are the structural and individual factors impacting on the construction of a transnational space of action and belonging for migrants in the two locations?

- How do these factors intersect in various institutional sites of migration such as labour market, family, and social relations?

- How are these political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions challenged/shaped by the actions of these migrant workers in the European transnational setting? Here the analysis of migrants' daily lives, activities and social relationships will consequently flesh out some of the institutional transformations engendering migration as they stem specifically from the agency of migrants themselves.

To be able to answer those questions I adopt a small-scale cross-national comparative methodology that, rather than attempting to reach broad-spectrum quantitative generalisations (Alexander, 1996), provides an in-depth account of the various dimensions of the Romanian migrants' experiences in the context of different national and supranational policies, labour market realities, and socio-cultural institutions such as family and "community". Reflecting on the intersection of personal factors with a number of other socio-economic and policy related factors, at both state and European supra-national levels, may help in developing a multifaceted account of what influences decision-making processes and practices vis-à-vis migration and settlement within the evolving geo-political space of the EU. Along with a particular concern with the

contextual embeddedness of migratory processes and the significant impact of structural aspects, the analysis here, therefore, gives central stage to the migrant as an individual who filters through her own experience those social worlds that she inhabits throughout the migratory journey.

This "agential" approach to migrant transnationalism (Kivisto, 2001; Morawska, 2003; Faist, 2004) springs from Glick Schiller and colleagues' (1992: 5) conceptualisation of transnationalism as "grounded in the daily lives, activities, and social relationships of migrants", and aims at portraying an alternative vision of Eastern European migration: one that is not "a unified and homogeneous, externally defined and structurally constrained entity, but a collection of individual lives, choices and experiences" (ibid: 18) accounting for the intersection of both opportunity structures and individual action. Moreover, through a process which consists in interrogating actors' strategies and social practices, the analysis also aims to reveal the organisation and creation of new economic and socio-cultural patterns in the space of transnational intra-European migration.

With this in mind, and inspired by Parreñas' (2001) work on Filipina domestic workers, I analyse Romanians' transnational migratory experience in the two chosen locations by tracing and comparing their transnational embeddedness and subject-formation in three key institutional sites of migration: (1) labour market, (2) family and (3) "community"/belonging. Within each of these institutions I then examine a specific process of migration: (1) access and participation in the labour market and the specific strategies used by Romanian women and men; (2) transnational family formation and activities; and (3) the formation and meanings of belonging/"community" in the two cities.

If transnationalism provides the overall conceptual framework for this discussion, the relationship between nation states and transnational migration is still crucial here. On-going debates in transnational studies show in fact, how identity constructions and performances are always in some ways spatialised, embedded as they are in the lived places and spaces (Massey, 1994; 2005). Unlike globalisation theory, therefore, transnational approaches do not abandon the importance of place and local context – both the places of home, in terms of both memory and ongoing material links, as well as the social and political particularities of the places of migration in the construction of subjects' lives and identities (Pratt, 1992).

The point that is stressed here is that transnational processes reflect globalization but they develop between two or more localities, and therefore institutional practices of those states still play a role in shaping them (Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999). The discussion of the relationship between states and transnational migration is therefore crucial because of states' structural dependency on migration (Castles, 2004), and, as cases analysed in this dissertation will also show, because immigration policies and other socio-economic policies (i.e. welfare, labour-market) of potential receiving countries are still (to different degrees) important actors in regulating migration flows (Zolberg 1989: 406) as they can limit or direct mobilities. This is even more evident when labour migration is under scrutiny, for "nation states have been particularly prominent in restricting immigration in response to fears about 'hordes of foreigners'" (McGovern, 2012: 3).

This perspective appears particularly relevant when looking at transnational migration within the space of the EU, where a hybrid (often controversial) implementation of national and supranational policies has impacted on the strategies and transnational practices enacted by individual migrants as well as on the way migrants construct their identity and status within this transnational space. Furthermore, it contributes to research on transnationalism and transnational family practices by looking at "the ways in which broader institutional landscapes in which migrant families are embedded shape their propensity to experience spatial ruptures, the character of these long distance relationships, and family members' ability and willingness to negotiate and manage their personal lives across borders" (Landolt and Wei Da, 2005: 626; see also Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004).

Finally, unpacking traditional conceptual codifications regarding the definition of "economic migrants" and trying to bind together the "invisible aspects" of migration with the more structural aspects of the societies in which they act, may not only help in providing information on changes in migrant pathways, and in facilitating a better understanding of migrants' needs in a newly developed intra-European transnational migration system, but may also contribute to the broadening of a more informed theoretical debate in which local narratives need to be perceived as vital features of a wider global discourse around issues of migration and settlement.

Reframing transnationalism through a comparative lens

Favell (2008) observed how little work has been developed with regard to the European migration system from a comparative perspective. Research has been done in

the area focusing on the impact of market-led forces (Favell and Hansen, 2002), on Europe's tacit reliance on undocumented and irregular migration (Samers, 2004), or on the emergence of migrant networks to facilitate irregular migration (Düvell and Jordan, 2003). I would add here also the innovative contributions in the field of political science and sociology, such as the work of Brubaker (1992), Ireland (1994), Sowell (1996), Soysal (1994), Schierup et al. (2006). Yet their comparative analysis can be defined under the rubric of classification, "effectively providing the researcher with 'data containers' into which empirical evidence is organized" (Landman, 2002: 4). It in fact focuses on European nation-states' "models" of reception and policies for integration, or on the impact of different welfare states (and the crisis of these welfare states) in generating the need for immigration and how those social and migration policies affect migrants' employment in specific sectors of the European labour market.

Similarly, as Franca van Hooren (2008: 3) observed, B. Anderson (2000), in her comparative study of migrant domestic workers in Europe, "analyses migration policies, but omits a range of other policies that could be important", while Williams (2008) theorises migration and home-based care in different European welfare states but marginalises the interaction with policies for immigration within those European immigration countries. A combined analysis is however carried out in van Hooren's comparative research (2008) that looks at both social and immigration policies and their impact on migrants' employment in the domestic/care sector in various European countries. Yet her research also investigates policies but is not concerned with migrants' lived worlds. What has therefore been underplayed by those studies is the agential role of migrants and their families and therefore their lived worlds.

On the other hand, research on transnational migration has privileged a subject oriented approach and has mainly focused on migratory practices and dynamics in one single context of settlement – Parreñas's (2001) seminal work is one of the few examples of a comprehensive comparative study in this area. As a result, it has been argued that transnational migratory decision-making processes and arrangements have not been adequately situated from a spatial as well as socio-economic and political point of view (M. P. Smith, 2005).

What appears to be lacking, therefore, is a comparative research that gives central stage to migrants' lived experiences and their routine practices of settlement (Knowles and Harper, 2009), yet without neglecting structural and organisational facets of the

migratory process[5] (Korac, 2001). To put it differently, what is still little developed is an empirical analysis of transnational social lives in migration which builds on the strength of a comparative analysis investigating the interaction between states' social policies and policies regulating migration and their labour markets, and migrants' interpretations and therefore agency over those spaces and their resources or constraints.

Certainly, "which unit of analysis is meaningful, however, depends on the research question" (Lucassen and Lucassen, 2011: 301), and this present study, given the outlined research questions it aims to respond to, seeks to set the grounds for further developments within the above perspective. In this respect, I believe my methodological argument follows Green's statement on the importance of comparison for migration studies "as a way of going beyond national categories" and to "understand both the structural constraints and individual cultural choices framing the migration experience" (1994: 3). With this in mind, my analysis aims to contribute both to literature on current intra-European transnational mobility and to the literature on transnational migration and transnational families in more general terms, by pushing the argument forward and introducing a comparative lens which opens up on a range of multi-scalar elements – from the regional, to national, local, network, and family scales. It therefore adopts a multi-sited comparative approach to the challenging topic of current (irregular) intra-European labour migration and looks at the experiences of a group of recent Eastern European migrant workers in two different European cities: London and Rome.

Romanian migrant workers in Rome and London

Given their different histories of migration and its management, different labour market contexts and welfare systems, the two chosen contexts may provide relevant insights on the ways in which EU member-states are dealing with current developments, as well as on strategies of mobility and/or settlement enacted by intra-European migrants in different locations. As a matter of fact, if we compare the immigrant population in Italy and the UK, some relevant distinctions can be highlighted. First of all, in-migration from the colonies has been much less important for Italy than for Britain, due to the country's short-lived colonial empire experience. Differently from other countries in Europe with a stronger history of migration where few nationalities accounted for a great part of the migrant population (i.e. UK, France), migration flows in Italy have been characterised by greater diversity (King and Andall, 1999; Caponio,

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[5] Looking specifically at the London case, McIlwaine and colleagues (2006: 9) have also observed how although research has been tracing broad patterns of ethnic and gender segregation of the labour market, "far less is known about the experiences of low-paid migrant workers in London" and therefore further research is needed to examine the nature of low-paid migrant identities.

2005) – by the second half of the 1990s, there were about 130 different nationalities within the country (Corti, 2003).

Furthermore, while in Italy "labour migration has been the driving force of immigration flows" (Salis, 2012: 1), in the UK immigration was not very much conceived in relation to employment policy and industrial growth, but predominantly as a response to (post-) colonial obligations and international interests. In fact, migration has been dominated, in the post-war period, by people from the New Commonwealth and significant changes have instead been registered only in the last twenty years (May et al., 2006). However, in more recent years, British cities, London in particular, have also witnessed an increasing (super)diversification of their migrant population (Vertovec, 2006). Yet in the last decade, in both cases the largest inflows have come from within the EU, in particular from the new Accession countries, bringing about a strong Europeanisation of their migrant populations.

The regulatory framework of labour migration is another element which differentiates the two contexts. While the work permit system had already been introduced in Britain in the aftermath of the First World War, an effective regulatory framework for labour migration was introduced in Italy only in the late 1990s. Furthermore, the Italian context is also characterised by "the presence of a *dual labour market* with on the one hand, a small, highly regulated core labour market with large companies and a strong presence of trade unions, and on the other hand, a large peripheral labour market without any regulation and a significant problem with irregular work and (fake) self-employment and agencies" (Fellini et al. 2007: 285). As a result, most migrant workers had to enter the country, settle and access its labour market irregularly (Salis, 2012) while the massive recourse to regularisation programmes (*sanatoria*) (Barbagli et al. 2004; Blangiardo and Tanturri, 2004) is another significant factor of differentiation between the two countries.

However, also in the Britain, an ambiguous and incongruous immigration policy, implemented by the British government through its system of managed migration put in place since the 1990s (Boswell, 2003), combined with the persistence of a *de facto* deregulated labour market (Fellini et al., 2007), has resulted in the growing phenomenon of irregular migration or irregular employment among migrants living and working in British cities, and in London especially.

As far as immigration and integration policies are concerned, as I will illustrate later, the Italian context appears to be characterised by the strong prevalence of the

security/criminality issue engrained within its emergency, rather than by a long-term strategy (Ribas, 2004; Quassoli, 2004). At both national and local level, and in Rome in particular, many alarmist campaigns against Romanian migrants came to the attention of the national media over a brief period of time. Yet that was not an exceptional event as it mirrored similar past situations in which other migrant groups were the target (Quassoli, 2004; Mai, 2009). The presence of migrants has been depicted within the public discourse and in the policy realm as the cause of lack of security within the cities, by normalising the use of the intentionally created blurred category of "illegal/criminal immigrant" (Quassoli, 2004). As far as the British approach to immigration is concerned, the strategy developed during New Labour's second term had three main goals: to create new channels of entry *only* for specific typologies of (highly skilled) workers, to further control/reduce the entry of asylum seekers, and to shift from a policy of multiculturalism to an assimilationist discourse and a policy of social cohesion or integration (Schuster and Solomos, 2004; Anthias et al., 2006) with increasing demands put on migrants. Indeed, the 2002 Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act included sections on citizenship that refer to the need for those migrants allowed to enter and settle to develop a "shared sense of belonging and identity" (Home Office, 2002). Although in a different manner, in both Italy and UK the state is problematising migrants through discourses which depict them as a threat to "national security" in the first case and to "social cohesion" in the British case. And in both cases debates about migration focus on issues of control. Yet, what again differentiates the two contexts is the fact that Italy's concern with migrants' social integration (as addressed in its immigration policies from the late 1990s on) is relatively recent, as compared to Britain's longer history of policies addressing the social integration of migrants (since 1960s) (Hope Cheong et al., 2007: 25) and interrelated issues of ethnic diversity, community cohesion and immigration (Solomos, 1989; Solomos, 2003; Hope Cheong, 2007).

As mentioned above, most of those recent migrants who experience irregular lives in both Italy and Britain have arrived from within Europe. Research has been done on the implications of migration and on the labour market experiences of A8 Eastern European migrants (Spencer et al. 2007). Some of those studies looked at different migrant groups coming from the newly enlarged EU (B. Anderson et al. 2006; Spencer et al. 2007; A. Datta, 2009) but most of them focused on Polish migration (Düvell, 2004; Garapich, 2005; A. Datta, 2008; Burrell, 2009; Datta and Brickell, 2009),

unarguably the most significant flow of international migration from the newly incorporated member states between 2004 and 2008.

By contrast, little has been said to date about the lives of migrants from the accession states that joined the EU in 2007 (A2) and about the impact this geo-political transformation has on the lives of nationals of those countries involved in migration. "In 2008, EU member states received nearly two million migrants of other EU nationalities" (Oblak Flander, 2011: 4). Among these, Romanians were the most mobile and they are the second biggest group of non-nationals, after Turks, settled in another EU Member State – "6.2 % of the total foreign population" (Eurostat, 2011: 18). At present, an estimated 2,910,000 Romanian migrants live abroad, comprising approximately 1,329,000 migrant households (IASCI and SOROS, 2011).

Furthermore, Romanian migration provides us with an exemplary case study as it passed through a number of different phases and displayed a high degree of diversification in less than two decades. The various status changes of Romanian migrants in a relatively short period of time – often irregular migration and working status before 2002; right to travel, but not to work, within the Schengen area after 2002; EU citizens since 2007 but with restrictions concerning employment – are quite exceptional today and make them an interesting case study for the understanding of ways in which supra-national factors impinge on everyday transnationalism of low-wage new intra-European migrants and therefore on processes of identity construction and perception of status.

Moreover, if pre-enlargement international movement of Romanians to destinations such as Italy or Spain has by now been relatively well documented[6], the same cannot be said about post-enlargement decisions to settle in those countries and most-of-all about their migration and settlement strategies in the UK[7]. Comparative studies concerning Romanian migration to different destinations within Europe are also scarce[8] and there is only one comparative study on Romanian migration to Italy and Germany based on fieldwork conducted before and after Romania's accession to the EU (see Anghel, 2010).

In more specific terms, the respondents have been chosen among low-wage migrant workers in two areas of the labour market: the domestic/care sector and construction.

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[6] See for instance research done by: Diminescu, 2003; Bleahu, 2007; Stan, 2005; Sandu, 2006; Alexandru, 2006; Anghel, 2008, 2010; Vlase, 2006; Torre, 2008; Cingolani, 2008, 2009; Ciobanu, 2005
[7] The very few studies included: Potot, 2002; Csedo, 2008; Torre, 2008.
[8] Potot, 2002, 2006; Anghel, 2010.

Because of the high informality of working arrangements and the deregulation characterising both sectors, they are seen as favourite entry points in the labour markets of the two countries. As a result, they register high numbers of *migrant workers* in most immigration countries, and Romanian workers in particular tend to concentrate in these occupational niches.

Although the large scale of Romanian migration to Europe is a recent phenomenon, Romanians have quickly become one of the most controversial, or certainly one of the most talked about, migrant groups in both national contexts chosen for this research. In the UK, a feeling of hostility and moral panic, or as Mai (2009) has labelled it, "Romanophobia", towards Romanian migrants spread when the time for Romania's accession to the EU was approaching. Sections of the British media, which equated Eastern Europeans in general with "bag snatchers" (Sveinsson, 2008), described Romanians as a serious "threat" to the integrity of the nation because of their inclination to crime and reluctance to integrate. Articles warned British citizens not only about the danger of losing their jobs and of seeing wages drop with the arrival of "up to 140,000" new communitarians[9] who "are poised to jet into Britain" with thousands of one-way cheap airline tickets, but also that "towns will be hit by crime waves"[10], as Romanian migrants arriving in the country have endemic problems of organised crime and corruption[11].

Similarly, in Italy, crime-related events taking place at the end of 2007 and which saw Romanian citizens involved became the catalyst for a heated debate that erupted in the local and national media and in the political arena, and transformed Romanian migrants into "public enemy number one" for Italian society (Sorin Cehan, Founder of the Romanian League in Italy, interview, Rome, April 2007). An erroneous belief, based on the "common sense connection between 'culture', 'community' and crime", has logically led to the creation of a generic category in the printed media and public discourse (Sveinsson, 2008: 4), with the entire Romanian migrant collectivity being accused of criminal behaviour[12]. Since then, countless anti-immigration and often

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[9] *The Sun*, "See you all here in January", 27.09.2006.
[10] *Daily Mail*, "45,000 criminals bound for Britain", 27.07.2006.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Moreover, media discourses have been backed by political debates and ad hoc official policy measures which have focused exclusively on Romanian citizens. A more detailed account of these anti-immigration measures, specifically targeting Romanian migrants, is given in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

highly racist articles in the local and national press have targeted Romanian migrants (Sigona, 2008) to the point of defining them as "monsters"[13] or even "beasts"[14].

In the Italian context

Italy has become one of the most attractive destinations for Romanians since 1989 given the geographical proximity, linguistic and (perceived) cultural affinities, gaps in the national immigration policy, and a relatively easier labour market integration, partly triggered by regularisation of migrants and bilateral agreements with CEE countries, but also by its developed informal economy and labour market (Dell'Aringa and Neri, 1987; Pugliese, 1989; Reyneri, 2002; Hiriş et al. 2008). Before the 2007 EU Enlargement, migrants from Central and Eastern European countries represented more than half of irregular foreign workers in the country, with Romanians (17%) at the top of the list (Bonifazi et al., 2008).

After Romania's alignment to the Schengen Treaty in 2002 – an event which enabled Romanians to enter the countries of the Schengen area with a tourist visa lasting three months – Romanians became the largest foreign group in Italy. Since then, they have quickly outnumbered groups with a longer immigration history, such as the Albanians or the Moroccans, and their number increased further once Romania joined the EU in January 2007 – estimates at the beginning of 2009 range between 850,000 and 1 million, while figures as of 1st January 2011 show 997,000 Romanians legally residing in the country[15]. If we are to look at the figures published by the Dossier Statistico Immigrazione Caritas/Migrantes, instead, they estimated a total of 1,163,000 Romanian nationals living in Italy in December 2009[16] (see Table 1). On the whole, "between 2002 and 2010 the Romanian presence in Italy increased about 10 times (+919%) (Salis, 2012: 36)" . This has not happened which any other new EU Member State. Furthermore, it needs to be mentioned here that the highly temporary and circular transnational mobility of significant numbers of Romanian migrant workers can hardly be captured by statistical figures[17].

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[13] *Corriere della Sera*, "Lo spettro dei mostri venuti dall'Europa" ("The ghost of the monsters coming from Europe") 1.11.2007.

[14] *Repubblica*, "Napolitano firma il decretto. Prefetto: linea dura contro le bestie" (Napolitano signs the decree. The prefect: tough measures against the beasts), 2.12.2007.

[15] ISTAT (2011) - *Indicatori demografici* .

[16] Caritas' data adds to the total of legal residents another 12% of migrants who still need to register their residency – migrants may need more than a year to regularise their housing and work position in order for the legal residency to be registered by the local council.

[17] ISTAT (2010), *Indicatori Demografici* http://www3.istat.it/salastampa/comunicati/in_calendario/inddemo/20110124_00/testointegrale20110124.pdf

Table 1 Estimates of total Romanian population in Italy (31.12.2009)

Registered residents	Minimum estimate (1)	Central estimate (2)	Maximum estimate (3)
	+57,000	+157,000	+210,000
953,000	1,010,000	1,110,000	1,163,000

(1) including a conservative estimate (57,000) of those not registered by the local councils

(2) including a conservative estimate (57,000) of those not registered by the local councils and the estimated number of new arrivals (100,000)

(3) including a maximum estimate (110,000) of those not registered by the local councils and the estimated number of new arrivals (100,000)

Source: Caritas/Migrantes (2010)

Romanians now account for a quarter of all foreign nationals residing in the country and for the same proportion of the immigrant labour force. They are also very active in the creation of new businesses. There were 28,000 businesses opened by Romanian nationals in Italy in 2009, most of them in the construction sector. Moreover, 53.1% of Romanian nationals are women, most of them working in the domestic/care sector[18]. More than 50,000 Romanians have been born in Italy since 2000 and there are 105,000 children in primary and secondary Italian schools.

In the British context

As highlighted above, the year 2002 proved a significant turning point in the development of Romanian intra-European migration. New migratory strategies were formed in response to geo-political changes which reshaped European borders. For instance, countries of the Schengen area, to which Romanians had gained easier access, started to be used as a first step for further movement towards other EU countries. Romanians working in Italy and Spain started moving up to Northern Europe, especially to Ireland but also to the UK, where there were greater employment and income possibilities (Stan, 2005: 8).

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[18] More detailed data on Romanian women employed in the domestic sector in Italy are discussed in Chapter 5 of this dissertation.

Romanian migrants in the UK, therefore, are often "secondary migrants", or "twice migrants" (Bhachu, 1985), a characteristic of the Romanians interviewed for this research too. They arrived in Britain after spending time in other European countries such as Italy; and although Britain was not among the favourite countries for Romanian migration in its first phase, the situation has certainly changed in more recent years. In fact, if the 2001 census recorded just over 7,500 Romanian nationals living in Britain, estimates published by the Labour Force Survey a year after Romania's accession to the EU (April–June 2008), showed that the number of Romanian citizens residing in the UK had reached 39,227.

More recent figures based on the Annual Population Survey estimate that there were 84,000 Romanian nationals residing in the UK between July 2010 and June 2011 (annual average), i.e. 1.8% of the total stock of foreign nationals[19]. The same data for the year before the Accession suggests that there were only 14,000 Romanian nationals living in the UK in 2006[20], which makes it a six-fold increase since accession. Figures for National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations of Romanian nationals also testify to the increase of Romanian migration to the UK after the 2007 EU enlargement, with the annual number of NINo registrations to Romanian nationals (aged 16+) increasing from about 2000 or 3000 to about 20,000 after the Accession (see Table 2) – it is worth noting that most probably a significant number of those who applied for the NINo after the enlargement did not arrive in the country as a result of Romania's accession to the EU but were already living and working in Britain.

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[19] ONS online data, released 23 February 2012.

[20] ONS online data, released November 2006. However, due to the small numbers involved this figure is affected by a potentially high sampling error (the 95% confidence interval provides a range of 9000–19,000).

Table 2 NINo Registrations to Adult Romanian Nationals, by sex. UK and London, 2002–2011

Year	UK		London	
	N	Female (%)	N	% of UK total
2002	1,570	46%	960	61%
2003	2,630	47%	1,670	63%
2004	3,630	48%	2,000	55%
2005	3,000	50%	960	32%
2006	2,440	55%	810	33%
2007	19,17	32%	13,120	68%
2008	23,44	35%	14,300	61%
2009	20,06	44%	9,750	49%
2010	18,96	46%	8,090	43%
2011[a]	20,44	43%	10,240	50%
Total 2002–2011	115,3	35%	61,900	54%

Note: (a) January to September only
Source: Department for Work and Pensions, NINo Registrations to Adult Overseas Nationals

Although figures are not as high as in Italy, there is evidence that the country is growing in popularity. In 2003 Britain ranked fifth in Romanian migrants' preferences after Italy, Spain, Germany, and the US[21], and a more recent poll has revealed that Britain has become the third most desired destination after Italy and Spain (Nitulescu et al., 2007). Moreover, according to a survey conducted among Romanian migrants in

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[21] Data from the 2003 survey on Romanians' migration intentions (Statistical Yearbook of Romania 2004, Romanian National Institute for Statistics).

Italy, Britain was the first destination named in case of further mobility plans (Caritas Italia/Romania, 2010).

A road map to this dissertation

This dissertation is divided into three Parts: Part 1: **Theory, Methods, and Contexts**; Part 2: **Migratory Working Lives**; and Part 3: **Family and Belonging**. After the **Introduction**, where I highlight the focus of my work, main research questions, and the rationale for this research, **Part 1** includes three chapters. Chapter 1 – **Literature review and analytical framework** – after briefly reviewing some of the more classic theories developed within research on migration, sets out the conceptual and theoretical framework of my research. Chapter 2 – **Research design and methods** – looks in detail at methods of research and methodological issues which arose before and during fieldwork. It also introduces the national and local contexts of migration and the respondents. Chapter 3 – **Contexts of migration** – sets out the background by illustrating the national context of origin and the developments of Romanian migration before and after December 1989. It then presents the main migration patterns and regimes in Italy and the UK, and the main changes that happened during the time of my fieldwork when the last EU enlargement process was completed.

In **Part 2**, Chapter 4 – **Working in the construction sector –** and Chapter 5 – **Working in the domestic sector –** start looking at the (temporary/permanent) settlement process of Romanian migrants in the two cities by focusing on their labour market experiences in the domestic and construction sectors. The theoretical framework within which the analysis is developed is enriched here with a sociological discussion of theories of labour market incorporation so as to better account for Romanians' insertion into specific local labour market niches.

In **Part 3,** Chapter 6 – **Transnational family life** - approaches another sphere of Romanian migrants' life, that of the family. After clarifying the notion of family used in my discussion, I focus on the different types of practices and activities Romanian transnational families are involved in, and on the transformations of this institutional context of migration in the transnational space of their migration. Chapter 7 – **Identity, belonging and "community"** – instead, looks at narratives of history, nationality, family, language, food, which were mobilized by Romanian transnational migrants as part of a discursive positioning within a range of social interactions happening at different stages of the migration process.

Finally, this comparative journey into the Romanian transnational experience of migration in Europe, ends with a **Conclusions** section which highlights the main findings, focusing on differences and similarities in the two contexts, and envisages ways in which this study can contribute to knowledge about current intra-European mobilities and settlement processes.

PART 1 THEORY, METHODS and CONTEXTS

Chapter 1 Literature review and theoretical framework

1.1. Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, Romanians can be considered as an exemplary migrant labour force which has been viewed as problematic by host collectivities because of the perceived potential negative impact they may have on local labour markets. This hostile climate surrounding Romanian migration in both localities considered for this research has increased even more in post-accession Europe when populist politicians and sensationalist media have further politicised the topic of migration, warning against the myriad of desperate workers now free to *get in*, *drag down* working and living standards, *put under pressure* public services, and *threaten* the integrity of prosperous Western European nations. Yet research has shown how migrants are employed in various sectors of the European cities' economies and how some of those sectors have become highly dependent on migrants' work. These are mainly low wage sectors such as cleaning services, catering and hospitality, care and household services, and the construction sector (LSE, 2007; Wills et al., 2010).

These brief considerations on the social needs and political discourses around migration prompt the need for a theoretical framework for the investigation of migration processes which should not start from the consideration of migration as a problem. Rather, theorisations of migration should take their start from the hypothesis that migration is "a normal aspect of social life" (Castles, 2008: 3). What this stand pint would imply is that dynamics of migration are part of the divers and multifaceted processes of the global and local societal change of our times.

This chapter starts by exploring some of the more classic theories based on economistic views of migration as labour movement. Despite their limits, those theories may bear some relevance for my analysis given my focus on Romanian workers, who represent an exemplary migrant labour force. The following sections will then unpick some of the arguments about changing forms of "new migrations" and will therefore look at aspects such as the increasing participation of women in labour migration, the proliferation and shifting of legal statuses with a focus on forms of irregularity, and the

academic and policy discourses around forms of transnational intra-European "circular migration".

Those arguments have some explanatory power as far as some of the *dislocations* (Parreñas, 2001) intrinsic within recent forms of "new migration" in Europe are concerned, as for instance the "peculiar configuration of European citizenship" (Hartman, 2007: 195) faced by Romanian and Bulgarian citizens since 2007 which allows freedom of movement but not of work. Furthermore, they also highlight the need for an analytical approach able to explore the complexity and multidimensionality of the migration experience.

Final sections of the chapter will illustrate the general framework of transnationalism, which I argue can still be particularly inspirational when processes of East–West migration are interpreted and theorised from a comparative perspective. Yet, being concerned with dynamics of social organisation of migration, the analysis also requires a sound engagement with the structural factors impinging on the migratory process, specific geo-political and economic contexts, as well as concepts emphasising the complexity of migrants' activities and their agency within the migratory, settlement and international labour market incorporation processes.

1.2. Theorising migration: from economic analysis to migration systems/networks theory

Contemporary debates within the field of research on migration tend to approach the topic from a variety of angles based on differences in theory and methods. Traditional labour migration research assumes that migration for work is set off by pull and push factors related to the labour shortages in the secondary segment of the labour markets of the so called "developed countries" (Massey et al., 1998; Piore, 1979): the migrant is an individual market-player moved by well-informed rational choices which compare costs and benefits of migration across countries (Borjas, 1989).

This functional approach focuses on migrants as isolated rational actors who move from regions scarce in resources but rich in labour to regions rich in resources but scarce in labour. In this approach migration is essentially an aggregation of individual practices and, consequently, migration should eventually bring about a global wage equilibrating effect. The *new economics of labour migration* theory (Massey et al. 1987; Taylor, 1987), rather than having the single individual as the only decision maker, sees units of related people acting collectively to maximise income and minimise risk in a longer-term perspective. A more sophisticated picture of migration started therefore to

develop with the shift in focus from the individual as the principal unit of analysis to migration as a collective project also influenced by a range of noneconomic factors.

Within this perspective, demand side strategies intersect migrants' agency and show the relevance of institutional formations of migration (such as social networks) and migrants' structural locations (determined by their ethnicity, racial/national belonging, gender and class) besides structural processes impacting patterns of migration and labour market insertion. More recent research with a greater focus on the social nature of work has also added employers' recruitment decisions and practices to this equation, to further explain labour migratory flows (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; Fellini et al. 2007). In those studies, particular attention is given to the social dynamics at the bottom end of the labour market; in other words to the employers' strategies of finding and selecting suitable workers for specific jobs.

Such developments are grounded in Piore's (1979) *dual* or *segmented labour market theory* which argued for a division between primary and secondary labour markets within the advanced economies. The duality of labour markets (Piore, 1979) and the development of capital create demand for cheap labour, so migration appears due to the disparities in wealth, labour supply, and demand (Phizacklea, 1998). Piore's work has paved the way for a more complex analysis of international migration by explaining the role played by state institutions, by employers' demands, and therefore by gender, ethnicity or legal status in the labour migration process.

The largely labour oriented type of mobility that characterises migration from Eastern Europe may direct research towards explanations based mainly on the classic economic and/or structural determinants illustrated above. And in fact not all the arguments proposed by economic theories should be discarded for a type of migration where determinants are partly influenced by higher income opportunities or by higher employment probability at destination. Yet a number of significant aspects of the migratory process fail to be explained by push-pull theories and have been in part explored within more complex reconceptualisations of the migration process.

1.2.1 Migration systems/networks theory

The migration systems and migration networks theories adopt a more inclusive understanding of migration by taking into account both destinations and departure places and the connections between them (Fawcett and Arnold, 1987). Most crucially, the migration systems approach brings into light the interactions between *macro-* and

micro-structures as the originating core of any migratory movement. The intermediate mechanisms linking those two levels of analysis are then referred to as *meso-structures*.

While *macro-structures* "include the political economy of the world market, interstate relationships, and the laws, structures, and practices established by the states of sending and receiving countries to control migration settlement[22]" (Castles and Miller, 2009: 28), *micro-structures* refer instead to the "informal *social networks* [often referred to as social capital] developed by the migrants themselves in order to cope with migration and settlement" (ibid.) and often ensure the continuity and self-perpetuation of migration[23].

What the *meso-structures* constitute is the intermediate mechanisms which link the two previous levels. Their purpose is to mediate between the migrants and the institutions they interact with. Terms such as "industry of migration" (Harris, 1996) have emerged to define those mechanisms which ensure the perpetuation of the migration movement in contemporary liberal economies, often despite governments' efforts to regulate or even stop flows. Once migrants have settled in their chosen migratory setting, a number of other factors enter the scene and ensure the perpetuation of the migratory process through networks.

Already in 1958, Petersen (quoted in de Haas, 2008: 5) argued that "migration becomes a style, an established pattern, an example of collective behaviour. Once it is well begun, the growth of such a movement is semi-automatic". Those words anticipated what de Haas (2010), in his theorisation of the internal dynamics of the migration process, labels "feedback effects" taking place in the context of origin, and which contribute to increasing both aspirations and capacities for migration. What he refers to can be termed forms of networked economic and social remittances instrumental in facilitating further migration in both practical terms, by financing the movement and settlement of family or collectivity members, or more abstract terms, by fuelling aspirations to migrate through the exposure to new information, ideas, and life-styles. Social remittances in fact, as theorised by Levitt (1998), may lead to a "culture of migration" in which migration is seen positively within the collectivity and becomes an accepted means for economic and social mobility.

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[22] I would add here regional supranational/regional institutions such as the EU.
[23] C*umulative causation model* (Massey and Espinoza, 1997).

It can thus be said that what more economistic theorisations of migration lack is a "theory of the societal conditions that shape migration strategies, and especially the role of migrant networks" (Boswell and Ciobanu, 2009: 1358) but also of opportunity structures within specific locations that provide migrants with the possibility to integrate into the labour market (Bommes, 2006). Those theories alone cannot for instance explain the geographically clustered morphology of migration[24] by simplistically looking only at higher earnings opportunities. More complex views which, among other things, pay attention to the above mentioned intertwining and interactions between macro-, micro-, and meso-structures are better equipped to explain recently developed transnational mobilities.

1.3. Changing forms of contemporary intra-European migrations

Scholars in the field of European migration have argued for a need to distinguish current intra-European population movements from previous accounts of international migration in Europe (Morawska, 2001; Favell, 2008; Recchi and Favell, 2009; Spencer et al. 2007). Despite clear similarities which still persist between earlier and new intra-European migration flows, such as migrants' socio-economic situation and some predominant working contexts in which migrants are still largely employed[25], changes in volume, dynamics, and diversification of flows and destinations have been highlighted in recent studies.

These changes are related to economic growth combined with a serious decline in birth rates in Southern European countries, which led to a shift in countries such as Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, from being predominantly sources of emigration to receivers of in-migration; to the growth of the informal economies in wealthy countries which was accompanied by the significant spread of casualised, flexible, and increasingly insecure conditions of employment which have strongly fuelled (irregular) migration (Castles, 2010); and to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet bloc which led to instability in Central and Eastern European countries and brought down those barriers that had prevented international mobility.

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[24] Flows such as Romanian migration to countries of Southern Europe, for instance, where income opportunities were certainly lower compared to northern European countries.

[25] Both groups, in fact, were largely performing low-skilled manual work and in both cases migrants have suffered substandard housing at least at some stage of their migration. Industries and construction were the two sectors in which migrants between 1945 and the 1970s were mainly concentrated. Construction still is one of the main sectors of employment for the new migrants, yet industry has been replaced by the flourishing service economy where new migrants find low paid employment in areas such as cleaning, catering and increasingly private domestic and care services.

The Old World has therefore witnessed the birth of new geographies of transnational mobility (King, 2002) characterised by a greater diversification of the flow, not only as far as countries of origin and therefore, ethnic identities or languages are concerned, but also in terms of the structure and socio-professional stratification of the migrant population, gender[26] and age[27], reasons for migration, channels for mobility, as well as *statuses* (legal categories) and *status mobility* and *time-frame*[28] of migration (Pugliese, 1995; Geddes, 2000; King, 2002).

I find these last two features of particular concern for the present discussion of current intra-European mobilities, both because they are increasingly at the centre of both academic and policy discussions, and for their centrality in the lived experiences of transnational migration and work of my respondents. The emphasis has turned from *immigration* and/or *settlement* to *circulation* or *temporality*, while new migrants are shifting between a variety of *statuses* (legal categories), either according to their own will or because forced to do so by national and supranational immigration regimes or labour markets' tacit rules. A discussion of those features can therefore be relevant for a better understanding of respondents' experiences, and for the advancement of the discussion on transnational migration within the European context as regards current dynamics of mobility, and also inequality, embedded within the changing transnational space of the EU.

1.3.1. Circular migration or *transmutable* circuits?

While academic discussion over practices of circular migration has mainly considered migration from the Caribbean, Central America, and Mexico to the United States (Massey et al., 1987; Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Duany, 2002; Basch et al., 1994; Smith, 2006), it is especially with regard to intra-European transnational mobility that a focus on circular migration is increasingly dominating academic and policy discourses.

Circular migration has been defined as "the creation of a regular circuit in which migrants retain their claims and contacts with a home base and routinely return to that base after a period of activity elsewhere in the circuit" (Tilly, 1990: 88). Migrants' agency is therefore highlighted here, as circulation represents a flexible survival

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[26] As such, women have been observed to be increasingly represented, in some cases becoming the initiators of migratory chains from specific contexts of origin.

[27] People involved in different types of migratory processes also include children who are being reunited with their parents already living and working abroad, or who are unaccompanied minors (forced) involved in forms of "labour migration". Migration of students and pensioners has also increasingly characterised specific routes which in some cases are different from the traditional South–North paths of migration.

[28] see King, 2002: 93 for an analysis of the blurred distinction between temporary and permanent migration.

strategy in response to shifting economic circumstances in the contexts of migration (Duany, 2002). Yet, strictly economistic views which inspire some of the theoretical discussions underpinning circular mobility, seen as triggered by individuals' will to maximise their purchasing power, fail to bring in a more complex reconceptualisation of the changing forms of contemporary intra-European migration as a process in which cultural, social, political and economic conditions and factors, in both sending and receiving contexts, all work together (Castles and Miller, 2009: 25).

Transnational temporary migration from Romania after 1989, for instance, has been explained as an extension of the internal rural–urban commuting widespread in Romania during the socialist state. In those localities where internal commuting from villages to industrial centres occurred on regular basis, the phenomenon has been identified as conducive for a particular future attitude towards international migration. In other words, those experiences offered an initial form of "migratory capital" to those communities later involved in international mobility (Cingolani, 2009). Although internal migration and commuting is different from international migration, the former created the context for people to credit migration as a successful strategy, as well as the social structures that people can activate and adapt for international migration[29].

In the case of both internal and international migration, mobility emerged as a "life strategy" intended to help in dealing with socio-cultural and economic changes triggered first by forced industrialization and subsequently by the so-called "transition" period (Sandu et al., 2004). Yet, the additional explanatory power of migration laws, reception policies, work permit systems, and therefore states, which also still "play a major role in initiating, shaping and controlling movements" (Castles and Miller, 2009: 25; see also McGovern, 2012), needs to also be accounted for when looking at the developing patterns of current migration.

What the European experience therefore reveals is how the temporary/circulatory movement can be attributed also to immigration and labour-market policies and practices of both national and supra-national[30] character. The lack of policies aimed at facilitating integration, specific economic strategies of employers which keep migrants

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[29] A very good example is Ciobanu's (2010) study of migration from two villages with divergent histories of internal and international mobility. In the village of Luncavița, where a self sustained economy did not push people towards communiting to nearby urban centres, people were less open to migration. By contrast, seasonal internal migration for work from Feldru brought about a migration-oriented mentality among the villagers.

[30] For instance, the regulation concerning Romanian citizens who, before 2007, were allowed to enter Schengen countries of the EU as tourists for three months. This determined both back and forth migratory flows and irregular work, as Romanian "tourists" were engaging in working activities (which they were not permitted to as tourists) or were overstaying their tourist visa.

in a condition of instability and disadvantage, together with increasing possibilities of being mobile due to reduced costs of transportation and communication within the changing geo-political space of Europe, are also determinants for migrants' decisions to organise their mobility for work following an "intermittent pattern" (Cingolani, 2009).

Moreover, in more recent times, national and supra-national political discourses have increasingly started to emphasize the so called "win-win-win" character of circular migration which is portrayed as benefiting both origin and destination countries as well as migrants themselves. Whether these processes also entail absolute temporariness is a matter that needs further discussion, however, and that this thesis touches upon in different sections.

During my fieldwork the circular character of migratory movements came to light particularly when looking at women's working strategies in the Italian context. Yet, the in-depth, longitudinal fieldwork observation revealed the semi-permanent character of those circular movements instead of their temporariness. Rather than defining them as short-term forms of mobility, I argue for a theorisation of contemporary intra-European circular migratory circuits as *transmutable*. The experience of my respondents shows how those mobilities have transformed and grown into transnational flows that cannot be explained only within a perspective of temporary circular migration.

Tilly (1990) has observed "circular migration" gradually turns into "transnational chain migration" given the active participation of circular migrants in the development of localized social networks at destination. The process of migration, therefore, "alters origin and receiving localities in such a way that further migration is encouraged. Subsequent migration is done to and from communities that are undergoing profound cultural, economic, social and even physical changes" (Massey et al. 1994: 1503). In time, the transnational nature of migration, and in the specific case, of intra-European migration, can contribute to the nurturing of a generalised socio-economic practice which the label of circular migration cannot fully explain.

Based on the above discussion, I maintain that the conceptual framework of *transnational social practices and transnational social fields/spaces* within which those mobilities are developed and maintained, can offer a valid platform for the analysis of those movements and of the various factors impinging on their development.

1.3.2. Irregularity and status mobility

Research into migratory processes and migrants' experiences of settlement and work emphasises that the division of migrants into mutually exclusive categories, such

as *legal/illegal*, or *documented/undocumented*, is "neither clear in practice, nor conforms to migrants' own experiences and conceptions of their status" (Sigona and Hughes, 2010: 6). Moreover definitions such as "undocumented' or "illegal", dominant in both political discourses and public debates, are not only derogatory but they also fail to capture the complex variety of statuses and routes experienced by migrants.

Migrants may use several entry routes when entering a country and the same can be said about their integration into different local labour markets. Moreover, within a system of complex conditions of stay, there are greater possibilities for individuals to, consciously or not, step outside the rules (Bridget Anderson, 2007). The last two rounds of EU enlargement have for instance created intricate rules and restrictions especially with regard to access to the labour markets of the older EU member states for citizens of the new EU countries, which may be one of the principal causes for current migrant workers' mobility between legal statuses (Schuster, 2005).

In the attempt to theorise migrant's status, three dimensions have been identified as contributing to its determination: "entry", "residence", and "employment" (Düvell, 2008). "Each aspect can be regular or irregular and various combinations are possible along a spectrum which goes from total regularity to total irregularity" (ibid.: 487). Precisely for this reason Ruhs and Anderson (2006) suggest adopting the notion of "compliance" in relation to residence and work entitlements to provide a more nuanced conceptualisation of migrants' condition of "undocumentedness"[31]. Furthermore, their definition brings in also a less static perspective which sees such condition as resulting from the intersection of process and status. The legal status of a migrant's entry, residence and employment, therefore, depends on "compliance with state policies governing admission (such as visa regulations) and, once the migrant has entered a country, with the rules and conditions attached to the migrant's immigration status" (Anderson, 2007: 9). Different degrees of "compliance" determine different access to entitlements, rights and privileges. As such, "compliant" implies an entirely legal residence and working status; "semicompliant" involves legal residence but working in breach of some of the rules attached to your immigration status; "non-compliance" means lack of both legal residence and legal working status.

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[31] They identify three levels of "compliance": compliant (i.e. fully legal in relation to residence and work entitlements as immigrants); semicompliant (i.e. legally resident but working in violation of some/all conditions of immigration status); and non-compliant (i.e. without rights of residence, and therefore also without the right to work).

By introducing the idea of *semi-compliance* as a blend of residence and work statuses Ruhs and Anderson have clearly challenged the above mentioned dichotomy. They also brought to the fore the complexity of rules and the structural tension between flexible labour markets and the current drive towards the "management of migration". In most of the old member states of the EU, despite populist and racist claims, current in-migration still provides cheap, flexible and most often unprotected labour employed within the most degrading and low-wage sectors and, through new outsourcing and franchising networks, also by large corporations that do not themselves directly employ informal labour.

This final insight is of great relevance particularly for research on migrant workers, given that labour conditions that used to apply only to the informal sector are also spilling over into various sectors of the formal economy. In the British context, for instance, it is precisely the flexibility of its economy that has created a significant demand for irregular, either "semicompliant" or "non-compliant", workers. Forms of subcontracting fulfilled mostly by self-employed workers is an example (Anderson and Ruhs, 2006). This aspect is relevant in my comparative discussion as it brings into view similarities between the two European locations analysed here, given the already mentioned relevance of the shadow economy in the Italian context.

Yet my aim here is to differentiate "irregularity" and conceptualise it within the discourse of transnational redistribution of labour by highlighting the very different and complex ways in which it may be lived by transnational migrants while pursuing feasible strategies of migration, settlement and work in different European countries. What an in-depth theoretical understanding of the condition of irregularity and status mobility within the transnational migratory space needs to account for is how transnational migrants handle the routes to and in-between statuses and therefore their different positioning within interactions with different actors within transnational fields (i.e. political and economic contexts of migration, national collectivities abroad, family and social relations in their country of origin etc.). "Undocumentedness", "illegality" or "irregularity" therefore cannot be understood only from an institutional perspective and therefore only as final, predetermined and static-status; differently, because of its dynamic and relational character, it must be looked at as a process and/or strategy of migration and settlement. Migrants' agency and perspectives therefore need to be considered when investigating their legal statuses (Bloch et al., 2009).

As Vasta and Erdemir have emphasised when analysing Turkish migrants' working strategies in London, migrants "accommodate irregularity by developing flexible or fluid life and work strategies in order to deal with new economic and socio-political contexts" (Erdemir and Vasta, 2007: 16). They apply Levitt's (2001a) concept of "dual consciousness" to provide a better understanding of this process. What this perspective acknowledges is that migrants often move between different statuses, and that they can be regular in one sense and irregular in another (Sigona and Hughes, 2010: 6), and that forms of "irregular formality" may be imposed upon migrants, accepted by them or deliberately chosen as strategies to combat exclusionary structures (Erdemir and Vasta, 2007; Vasta, 2008) developed within national migratory contexts and transnationally.

I argue that this applies to migration from Romania too. Romanian migrants' statuses in fact moved through a number of stages and they became increasingly mobile after and through their country's accession to the EU. Before 2002, the entry, stay and work of Romanian citizens in Western Europe were irregular. In 2002 Romanians were allowed freedom of movement within the EU, especially through the right to travel without visa requirements within the Schengen space. Yet, their stay above a period of three months and work in the EU were still irregular. In 2007 Romania became an EU member state and the status of the Romanian migrants changed again. Their stay is now legal, whereas work remains in many cases irregular for a certain period of time which differs from country to country.

Yet, despite the relevant increase in the number of Romanians living and working abroad after 2007, many of them did not arrive in their countries of migration in the immediate aftermath of Romania's accession to the EU. The EU enlargement process certainly impacted on Romanians' migration strategies in varied ways, yet it did not necessarily trigger the actual act of migration of all Romanians counted by the official statistics since January 2007 – many of those migrants were already living in their country of migration prior to 2007. What the accession in fact provided them with was an opportunity to regularise their immigration status (although employment remained irregular for many), to travel with ease between Romania and Britain or Italy, to be joined by relatives (i.e. particularly children), and to make plans which appear more indefinite because more open to the triple possibility of settlement, return or remigration.

To conclude, a theoretical discussion on different migration statuses which develops within the broader perspective of transnational migration, should begin from the

understanding that migrants' negotiated spaces and mobility between categories and the packages of rights and entitlements attached to them (Kofman, 2002) over time and space are related both to structural/contextual factors and to their migratory plans and objectives.

1.4. Transnationalism

Research on *transnational migration* developed principally in relation to studies conducted on Latin American migration, particularly Mexican, directed towards the United States. It acknowledges migration as a multi-faceted process operating at multiple scales and it seeks to counterbalance purely economistic and macro-level approaches by enquiring how these processes are experienced and activated at the micro-level of local collectivities and of the subject. As Guarnizo and Smith (1998: 18–19) argue: "it is the everyday practices of migrants that provide a structure of meaning to the acts of crossing borders...and reproducing transnational social relations".

The body of theory on transnational migration stresses the idea that migrants' activities, networks and patterns of living "span" their home and settlement societies (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Basch et al., 1994; Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 2002). What has surfaced throughout various empirical investigations of migrant groups in the US and Europe is that a study of contemporary migration and its impact has to consider not only migrants' experience in host countries but also the social, symbolic and material cross-border relations and therefore social interlocking networks which connect migrants to their homeland or to dispersed networks of people from the same family, country, religion, or ethnic group (Boyd, 1989; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004). Moving further form mentioned economicistic perspectives on migrants' practices and strategies, notions of social and symbolic capital have entered the discussion (Levitt, 2001a).

This perspective, which incorporates the discussion on migrants' settlement in receiving countries with the specificity of the migrant's own story before migration, allows for a shift of focus which is also a shift in the research paradigm. The boundaries of the debate are, therefore, redefined and the migratory process is understood as a process coming out from "a single social continuum", that transnational *social field or space,* that the migrant is experiencing and embodying (Guarnizo et al., 1999; Appadurai, 1996; Levitt, 2001a; Levitt and de la Dehesa, 2003; Faist, 2004). In a similar vein, Castles suggests the use of the term *migratory process*, "a term which underlines that migration is not a single event (i.e. the crossing of a border) but a life-

long process which affects all aspects of a migrant's existence, as well as the lives of non-migrants and communities in both sending and receiving countries" (2000: 15–16).

Following this perspective, the traditional approach to migrants' integration, which tends to look at this process in terms of the "binary polarisation of origin and destination" and the "more-or-less definitive and statistically measurable relocation between the two" (King, 2002: 9), has to be re-thought to allow addressing the already mentioned *diverse* and *changing* patterns of current permanent, unidirectional, circular, secondary or return European migration and settlement processes (King, 2002; Vertovec, 2006).

Transnational theories, therefore, have aimed at challenging those approaches which see migration as a "one size fits all" type of process that can be measured in stages, starting with arrival and settlement and progressing towards integration or accommodation of the migrant into the structure of a nation state (Soysal, 1994; Favell, 2001; Banton, 2001; Brubaker, 2001; Grillo and Pratt, 2002; Boswell, 2003; Alba and Nee, 2003; Penninx et al. 2004). The transnational perspective argues for the progressive character of the migration process as well as for the constant/never-ending connectivity between "home" and destination/s which is made of both economic and socio-cultural relationships (Basch et al., 1994; Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Guarnizo and Smith, 1998; Levitt, 2001a).

In doing so, the transnational perspective overcomes the equation between the nation-state and society on which "methodological nationalism" is based and which implies that "the nation/state/society is the natural social and political form of the modern world" (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002: 302). This conceptual tendency has often influenced studies on migration and, according to scholars of transnationalism, has impeded the understanding of important phenomena intrinsic in the social process of migration. In other words, what transnationalism highlights is how those interconnected linkages play down the function of geography in the construction of individual and collective identities and generates alternatives for memberships across-borders (Levitt, 2001a).

These phenomena have been theorised under the label of transnational social fields or spaces and refer to "sustained ties of geographically mobile persons, networks and organisations across the borders across multiple nation-states" (Faist, 2006: 3). What the empirical observation of these migrants' realities highlights when understood within this framework of analysis is that "migration and re-migration may not be definite,

irrevocable and irreversible decisions", but that they can become "a strategy of survival and betterment" in which mobile and not-mobile agents are involved (ibid.).

Scholars of transnationalism have explained the necessity to use a new conceptual tool which was able to expand the theoretical and empirical investigation of migration beyond the "nation state containers", and which refers to the space created between different locations in which migration takes place (Wimmer and Glick Schiller, 2002). Yet, despite growing interest in transnational migration studies, some scholars have doubted that transnational practices are widespread or very influential, and they have contested some features of transnationalism.

First of all, they have questioned the extent to which transnational migration is in actual fact new and different from other types of migration, and whether it can bear some significance for second generations (Morawska, 2003; Faist, 2004). Moreover, the generalisation of some models of behaviour has also been an argument for discussion. According to some scholars, such feature should be related only to a small section of migratory flows (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo, 2002), namely that of the so called "transnational elites" (Guarnizo et al., 2003; Portes, 2003).

On a more analytical level, scholars have emphasised the difficulty, or maybe even the impossibility, of measuring the intensity or frequency which would allow differentiating between transnational social links and other links which should not be labelled as such (Morawska, 2003). In other words, what is the difference between *transnational* and *international*? Another ambivalent aspect concerns the idea of a continuous link between "transmigrants" and their contexts of origin (see Waldinger and Fitzgerald, 2004). According to these scholars, those links, rather than representing an emergent form of cosmopolitanism, represent a variant of *localism* given that most of the long-distance links migrants have with their contexts of origin are actually with specific local communities. In other words, there is an unspoken conflation of quite different objects of migrants' involvement at distance: one's home country, one's local community, one's family, one's earlier life. Given these circumstances, what Waldinger and Fitzgerald suggest is that instead of talking about transnational migrants – an adjective more suited to describe the political and economic elites moving between

countries without any specific link to local territories – the use of the notion/label of *translocal* migrants would be more appropriate[32].

Finally, another issue which lies at the centre of the debate concerns the most recent transformations of communication systems, and their role in facilitating continuous contacts between migrants and their countries of origin. What critics of the transnational perspective are questioning is whether these changes have truly meant a turning point in the way migratory experiences are lived, or have simply accelerated some processes that have always accompanied the development of migratory flows. Or as Vertovec puts it in his list of the criticism to transnationalism: "are contemporary forms of migrant transnationalism merely a function of today's modes of real-time communication and cheap transportation?" (2004: 3).

Although critiques have both questioned the novelty of the process, and therefore the actual need for a renewed conceptualisation and re-labelling, and emphasised a certain degree of ambiguity of transnationalism linked to the proliferation of competing definitions and levels of analysis (Kivisto, 2001; Portes, 1998; Vertovec, 1999), scholars concord with the idea that concept remains a persuasive and useful term and one which unambiguously describes migrants' ongoing cross-national activities and experiences that may not have altered considerably over time but certainly have, for a number of reasons, unique manifestations nowadays (Foner, 1997; Levitt et al. 2003).

It is important therefore to understand the concept's limitations, and to search for complementary theories that can help us ground an answer with regard to the cultural, socio-economic and political transnational environment and its impact on migration. This has led Portes (1999) to argue for instance for the significance of comparative research within transnationalism.

1.5. Transnational social fields and practices: a conceptual framework

The above critiques have highlighted that the existence of links between societies of departure and of settlement could be seen as an obvious and intuitive statement concerning a whole variety of aspects of migrants' daily life, but lacking explanatory power as to the developments of these relationships. In most of the fieldwork

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[32] Aware of the semantic differentiation of the two terms, I still find the use of "transnational" as more appropriate for my study as I believe encompasses both a notion of multi-levelled practices and cross-border relations and a more abstract/"imagined" notion of belonging and symbolic national/historical positioning (see Chapter 7 for instance) which may also transpire from my respondents' narratives. See also Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) for more alternative terms.

research, therefore, the initial reference to this definition is then enriched by indications of more specific types of links, so that the effects of this interdependency on migrants' life conditions, or on the lives of the communities of origin, can be better explored.

The pioneering notion of Basch and colleagues, for instance, reads transnationalism as "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (1992: 1). Portes and colleagues, on the other hand, restrict its field to "occupations and activities that require regular and sustained social contacts over time across national borders for their implementation" (1999: 219). Within the same framework, Levitt and Waters (2002) have defined the transnational perspective as the study of social, economic and religious practices and relationships connecting migrants and non-migrants across borders.

It is precisely this approach, grounded within empirical research, that has been developed over the last decade when research on migrants' transnationalism has shifted from a primary concern with *transnational migrants* – aiming to identify specific groups of people (or even communities) somewhat qualifying as transnational (Portes et al., 1999) – to a wider focus on the *transnational practices* of migrants' everyday lives. Within this perspective, the attention moves from the transnational *links* per se to the individual or collective *actions* fuelling them in migrants' day to day lives.

As an analytical tool, this approach reveals migrants' structures of opportunities and their subjective experiences (Vertovec, 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky, 2007) within transnational social spaces that can be more informal, such as intra-household or family ties, or of a more institutionalised nature (Faist, 2006). The emphasis is therefore on the material and spatial practices of social actors: both men and women, and the ways in which they make (gendered) connections across and between societies, revealing the ongoing interdependence (if any) and the interplay between "here" and "there". This includes an interest in practices of powerful elites – often termed "transnationalism from above" – as well as in those which are "grounded in the daily lives, activities and social relationships of quotidian actors" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992: 5): "transnationalism from below" (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998).

Levitt (2001a, 2001b) provides a more nuanced theorisation of transnational practices which takes into account the extent of the actual physical mobility, the

regularity and contextualisation of the contacts, and the level of institutionalisation versus informality of the contact. Levits's conceptualisation, however, builds on the overriding definition provided by Guarnizo et al. (1999) and which defines transnationalism as a set of processes which "transcend the confines of territorially bounded jurisdictions of the nation-state; and are an inherent part of the habitual lives of those involved" (370). Yet what Levitt insightfully adds to this is the understanding that "movement is not a prerequisite for engaging in transnational practices" (Levitt 2001b: 198); even those that stay behind are active actors of transnationalism, and infrequent and/or informal contact are also of some significance (ibid., see also Itzigsohn et al. 1999). This argument has reformed the study of migration by splitting its focus and emphasising the need for a simultaneous analysis of the practices of both those who leave and those who stay behind - as both *active* actors of migration - as well as for contexts of origin and single or multiple destinations.

Furthermore, for a better understanding of the reasons behind the development of this process which sees migrants simultaneously integrating into the society of migration and its institutions and preserving their relations with their contexts of origin, Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo (2005) had enriched the theoretical analysis by devising three explanations for transnational involvement:

1. "linear transnationalism", according to which transnational practices originate out of the relationships that migrants maintain with their contexts of origin and with their families back home. "Immigrants send remittances, travel home, and build ethnic institutions within their countries of reception in order to maintain their social relations with and their involvement in their place of origin" (ibid. 899).

2. "resource-dependent transnationalism," argues that migrants make an effort to recreate their ties with their context of origin only later in their migration. During the first stage of their migration they may in fact lack resources. "From this point of view, the emergence of transnationalism is slow, appearing only when immigrants have enough resources to engage in philanthropic or business projects in the country of origin" (ibid., see also Mahler, 1995; Portes et al., 1999).

3. "reactive transnationalism", introduces transnational practices as "a reaction to a negative experience of incorporation" (Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005: 899). Disappointment with the lack of opportunities for carrier development or

with the social status in their country of migration may push migrants towards activating a number of practices which strengthen their relations with contexts of origin, without necessarily diminishing the drive to settle. Discrimination can be another reason for migrants' different degrees of identification with the "back home". In those cases transnational practices can be seen also as a compensatory practice as migrants may enjoy a higher social status "at home" because of the remittances they send back and therefore because of the idea (not always corresponding to reality) that family and collectivity back home has about their achievements abroad.

Empirical research looking at migrants' experiences in the United States, for instance, has revealed how they have built their manifold identities within "transnational social fields". They did so by engaging simultaneously in both contexts, and therefore by fulfilling their responsibilities as well as by activating a set of narratives derived from and functional to both socio-cultural settings (Fouron and Glick Schiller, 2001). What this means is that, even if their daily routines may not involve highly visible transnational operations, practices of situating the self in terms of belonging and "community" highlights inherent dynamics which extend across border and position them in relation to "imagined communities" (Anderson, 1983) in both their country of migration and their context of origin (Portes et al., 1999; Glick Schiller and Fouron, 1999).

Looking at Filipino migrants in particular, Espiritu (2003: 70-1) shows how transnational practices can be "a disruptive strategy […] enacted by immigrants to challenge binary modes of thinking about time and space and to resist their differential inclusion in the United States as subordinate residents and citizens". In this sense, transnationalism may provide a space in which migrant subjects can challenge and impact on hegemonic power relations. As Urry (2002) argues, it is in these transnational quotidian actions that the ambivalence and dynamism of the power relationships which bind the global and the local can be seen. Migrant agency functions through the construction of socio-cultural, economic, and/or political activities of everyday life, and transnational migrants can manage to reach their goals by means of cross border, temporary or open-ended movements, and, as the case of women workers in the domestic sector will illustrate later in this dissertation, by way of distribution of jobs within their own migrant network.

Migrants therefore put together a constellation of strategies at different stages of their lives, combining sending-country involvement and host country incorporation strategies (Levitt, 2003; Morawska, 2003). Transnational migrants create fields of practice and belonging, in other words alternative strategies which allow them to cope and/or react to marginalising realities that they experience throughout migration (Portes et al., 1999; Vertovec, 1999). Yet these reactive strategies where migrants' anchorage in their context of origin is central develop in parallel with their determination and therefore strong involvement in the process of settlement within their migration setting. Transnationalism does not exclude settlement and integration practices, on the contrary, it may act as complementary and therefore facilitating an otherwise challenging and often hostile process (Vertovec, 1999; Portes, 2003; Levitt and Waters, 2002).

I will also be exploring Romanian migrants' experience through the notion of *transnational practices* of everyday life, for they are the means through which people appropriate and subvert the rituals and representations that institutions impose upon them (De Certeau, 1984). For individuals experiencing the precarious condition of (irregular) migration, the *everyday* can become the (only) space for resistance to more global structures of domination, but also for transformation of those very institutions in which migration takes place.

My analysis here acknowledges that transnational agents are "classed, raced and gendered bodies in motion in specific historical contexts, within certain formations and spaces" (M. P. Smith, 2005: 238), and that "transnational practices from below" are not inherently subversive or resistant (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). Yet the empirical material presented in the following chapters will show how migrants' practices actuated within different *transnational social fields/spaces* can be evidence of autonomy and adaptability of migration strategies and actors' subjectivities aimed at coping with the social risks inherent in mobility processes and work access, and at gaining (some) power balance in what are intrinsically precarious and unbalanced social relations.

Focusing the analysis upon those discursive and material practices within specific institutions in which migration is enacted appears crucial in the process of understanding how migrants' transnational social spaces and positionalities are produced and maintained. What the transnational perspective adds to this analysis is the awareness that everyday life in transnational migrants' experiences, as well as their social construction of belonging, is permeated with the discursive knowledge emerging on one hand from the localities they inhabit and on the other from the transnational

social webs they are part of (Levitt and Glick-Schiller 2004). As respondents' narratives will show in sections of the following empirical chapters, those transnational networks, which may appear physically intangible, are hardly distant as they shape and socially construct migrants' localities, everyday practices and decision making.

In order to grasp conceptually those transnational social spaces, I turn to these transnational networks/ties of social relationships which are the core of transnational social formations and which are vital in understanding experiences of transnational migrants interviewed for this research. Despite cases of migration from Romania (migration of Romanian ethnic Germans to Germany, Roma asylum seekers to the UK, highly skilled Romanians to London) which also benefited from institutional support from their destination country, all my respondents experienced some form of "irregular" status, especially in the first stage of their migratory process when they did not benefit from any form of institutional support and their migration was by and large facilitated by their own social networks.

1.6. Transnational networks

As Burrell has rightly observed, "migration is rarely undertaken in isolation [and] without the involvement of family or friends at different stages in this process" (2006: 34). Migrants' choices are integral to their own networks. Those networks can take many forms, they overlap and change over time, but the importance of all networks – regardless of whether they are informal and family oriented, based on relations with co-villagers or co-nationals, friendship and acquaintance connections, or institutionalised through government policies – lies in their ability to facilitate communication of information and risk reduction strategies essential to migratory flows in their process of movement and settlement.

Today this perspective is extensively applied in research on migration, and it is very rarely challenged (Krissman, 2005). Migrant network theory stresses that irrespective of the social structures in the receiving and sending countries and the specific factors that initiate migration (recruitments, economic crises or labour shortage), migration tends to develop its social structure that perpetuates migration over time (see Boyd 1989: 661).

As briefly mentioned in a previous section of this chapter, migrant network theory is an integrative approach which aims to overcome the limitations of the classical structural and functional theories of migration (Goss and Lindquist, 1995). It attempts to bridge the gap between structures and individuals in explaining international migration (Goss and Lindquist, 1995). It argues that it is the supply side of migration that explains

contemporary migration to a large extent, and that the development of migration relies on social ties and the spread of networks (Massey et al., 1993). Krissman's (2005) critique of the network theory lies precisely here. He argues that social networks alone cannot explain international migration and that we have to include in the analysis other factors facilitating migration as well. Those factors may encompass "the employers that demand new immigrant workers, […] the labour smugglers and all other actors that respond to this [labour] demand" (Krissman 2005: 4), the recruitment programmes, and official state policies. Some of those factors will be looked at in the following chapters of this dissertation.

Migrants' transnational social networks, therefore, rather than being rooted in specific local formations, such as neighbourhoods, may be dispersed over wider geographical areas. What has emerged throughout various empirical investigations of migrant groups in the US and Europe is that a study of contemporary migration and its impact has to consider not only migrants' experience in host countries but also the social, symbolic and material direct and indirect cross-border ties and social interlocking networks which connect migrants to their homeland or to dispersed networks of individuals from the same family, country, religion, ethnicity/nationality and which have vital role in the migration and settlement process (Boyd, 1989; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004).

1.6.1 Types of networks

Once the central significant of migrants' relations has been identified as far as bot migration and settlement processes are concerned, an exploration of the characteristics of these networks is required. This exercise may allow going beyond definitions and therefore identifying the variety and most of all the multidimensionality of those networks, in other words of the "social capital" (Goulbourne and Solomos, 2003; Zontini, 2004) on which transnational migrants rely.

Two different units of analysis have been identified in the social network approach: the individual and the domestic unit (Boyd, 1989). In addition to these, Tilly has emphasised the importance of a third one defined as a "collective unit" and which is "the network itself" (Tilly, 1990: 84). Starting from the idea that "agency" is central to the migratory process, Tilly argues that "networks migrate". From this perspective researchers should not be looking at individuals involved in migration processes, but rather at collectives "linked by acquaintance, kinship, and work experience" (ibid.). What this definition implies is that the migration process is a constant process of

"collective transformation involving the use of old social networks and categories to produce new ones" (ibid.: 83–4).

To add to this characterisation, Engberson differentiates between "substantial" and "limited" networks. "Lasting support" as opposed to "temporary support" is the result of those two different typologies (Engberson, 2001: 231). Different groups of migrants may rely on different types of networks substantial or limited in kind, but in the same group the two typologies may also coexist (Düvell and Jordan, 2002). Furthermore, networks are not static and they can evolve in time from one type to another – this may happen when divisions within the collectivity occur and therefore limited networks may start to prevail (Gold, 2001) or with the arrival of "new migrants" in a context characterised by the presence of long established collectivities. As will be illustrated later on in this thesis with regard to recent Romanian migration in London, for instance, new waves of Romanian migrants have built new sets of social relations that rarely, and only in part, include members of the longer standing communities and that more often have grown apart from them.

Granovetter's (1982) seminal work must also be mentioned here for its clear diversification between "strong" and "weak ties" both *within* and *across* networks. "Social ties are a continuing series of interpersonal transactions to which participants attach shared interests, obligations, expectations, and norms" (Faist, 2000: 101). Strong ties refer to ties among close relatives and friends, whereas weak ties may be seen as "friends of friends", indirect relations. While "strong ties" have been identified as crucial attaining "community cohesion", according to Granovetter's argument, the use of weak ties offers more chances for status attainment because of the "bridging" function of "social capital". Social actors have more opportunities to find jobs using weak ties than strong ties which, instead, can occasionally run counter to their own interests (Granovetter, 1982) – later Putnam has developed his conceptualisation of "social capital" (Putnam, 1993) which has built on these earlier definitions[33].

Discussing the centrality of strong ties, Lin (2001) have argued for their role in preserving resources as opposed to weaker ties which can be more functional in the process of achievement and/or development of resources. The sociological literature on labour market segmentation has highlighted the power of social networks in the work

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[33] For a discussion on the differences between different conceptualisations of "social capital" developed within the work of Putnam and Coleman, see Zontini (2004). The work of Zetter et al. (2006) also provides a very good overview of existing theorisations on the subject in relation to migrant communities.

place for instance (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003), where employers may find significant value in hiring through their migrant employees' social networks, for this would appear more secure and would lower recruitment efforts and costs. Yet, migrant workers themselves may also find the process of hiring through social networks of considerable value. The method in fact can be helpful in obtaining specific jobs for members of their own group, implicitly excluding outsiders. Moreover, the ability to mobilise resources and the possibility to rely on networks with an already acquired "risk knowledge" (Kindler, 2008), helps in guaranteeing a safe employment in sectors of the labour market (e.g. the domestic sector) where migrants may have to work in a private space and in direct contact with their employer.

However, the positive side of transnational social networks, which consists precisely in providing migrants with information, contacts and opportunities in the difficult task of looking for a job in a new and often unfriendly environment, can be paralleled by a more ambiguous effect (Hellermann, 2006). A side-effect of labour market incorporation through social networks is that it may lead to national or gendered specialisation for specific occupations (Cox, 1999): in other words, a process of ethnic/national or gendered niching which sees the clustering/segregation of particular groups in particular segments of the labour market (Massey et al., 1993; Portes, 1995) (e.g. Romanian and Polish men in construction in Italy and the UK; Romanian or Ukrainian women in domestic service in southern European countries).

One example is represented by migrant women from Romania and their integration into the international labour market in Chapter Five of this dissertation. Framing the discourse within a global context which sees migrant women engaged in reproductive work in the households of the "global North", Eastern European women are one of the main sources of domestic labour for western European countries. What this mean is that women migrants are increasingly directed towards specific ethnic and, most of all, gendered niches of local labour markets, and are rarely found working in other sectors.

The assumption here, following theories of labour market segmentation (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990; Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; Rubery et al., 1999; Padavic and Reskin, 2002; Bridget Anderson, 2007), and moving forward from a standard definition of labour market segregation which refers to separate and non-competing labour forces, is that together with structural factors, ethnicity, gender, religion and discrimination shape migrant workers' experiences – and the creation of both national and gender specific niches – and that human and social capital (Portes, 1998) activated

transnationally counts more than training in gaining access to specific labour market sectors.

Transnationalism is highly dependent on social capital, meaning that those people "with higher levels of social capital would be more likely to forge transnational linkages than those with less capital" (Kivisto, 2001: 562). This type of consideration relates to Bourdieu's (1984) concern for different forms of capital, the unequal distribution of power within social relations and therefore the reproduction of inequalities. For the French cultural theorist, social capital was a key element in the perpetuation of models of social dominance. As such, social relations cannot be seen as symmetrical; there are unequal power relations within networks and migrants for instance may use the available resources differently. As Vasta (2004: 17) observes,

> "while social networks consist of high levels of social capital, they can also be exploitative and marginalizing of various members; there may be unequal forms of political control and unfair redistribution of resources; differences between older and newer members may exist; differences may also exist between the cultural brokers and cultural preservers in the network; there may be changes to the regulatory and political environment, namely state policies and the role of the media; and of course, there may be undue pressure and discrimination on women by the network so that women may find it difficult to change old gender roles".

Moreover, there are also negative network externalities which are not always taken into consideration in the literature. Self-reinforcing network mechanisms are not always linear and migration processes are not always "self-perpetuating". As a result they do not always develop into migration systems. As de Haas has observed, "if the number of immigrants increase, there is potentially more competition for jobs, which potentially lowers immigrants' wages. Such negative network externalities may eventually cause the attractiveness of a destination to decrease" (2008: 40), or it may cause the closure of the network. This for example may explain the increasing centrality of Britain as a destination for Romanian secondary migrants who moved from traditional destinations such as the Italian or Spanish cities to London, or the restriction of the network to close ties as happened after the geo-political policy change regarding the Schengen area which was implemented in 2002.

Networks of migration have been identified as one of the main pull factors behind international migration from all Romanian regions. This is documented in most migration research on Italy (Anghel, 2010; Cingolani, 2009; Vlase, 2006; Alexandru, 2006), Spain (Elrick and Ciobanu, 2009), or France (Diminescu, 2003). To a lesser extent this was identified as true for Germany (Michalon 2003; 2009). The adaptability

of networks, their "lock-in" (Guilmoto and Sandron, 2001) effect in specific locales, may therefore account better for the regional distribution of Romanian migration in particular within the European context.

In this present research I will also pay attention to networked social relations precisely because of their vital function of mediators between migrants and their wider economic and socio-cultural contexts of migration. Yet my emphasis will be on transnational family networks and their variations as Romanian migrants developed migratory and settlement strategies in the two European capitals before and after Romania's accession to the EU. In particular, the gendered character of transnational networks appears relevant when discussing labour market integration in both London and Rome.

1.6.2 Gendered transnational networks

As the analysis of empirical data in the following chapters in this dissertation will show, transnational gendered and family networks allowed for greater viability of circular migration for instance, especially for women involved in domestic or domiciliary care work. When leaving, but also once at destination, migrant workers could generally rely on the existence of a workplace, thanks to an extended social network providing for it. Efficient female migratory chains, in this case, have produced different forms of support: most of all the obtaining of a job and some accommodation. The two often coincided as, when arriving in Italy for the first time, migrant women usually ended up working as live-in caregivers – thus gaining access to a basic livelihood, besides being protected from controls, if undocumented.

Transnational gendered networks used to facilitate employment are not uncommon to other migrant groups also, in destinations different from Southern European countries. In London, as Bridget Anderson (2001a) has observed, out of 2,800 migrant domestic workers registered with Kalayaan, an advocacy group for migrant domestic workers, only 2 per cent used an agency to find a job. Informal recommendations through friends or relatives, also in those cases mostly women, to employers or friends of employers were more common than the use of agencies.

Gender therefore has now been recognised as one of the organising principles of migration and settlement performances (McIlwaine et al. 2006). Arguing for the need to include gender in the analysis of the roles and functions of networks in the process of migration and settlement, Boyd (1989) highlighted the urgency of discussions on both

productive and reproductive work, and gender divisions of labour and decision-making processes within both the household and labour markets (656–57).

In other words, access to networks and therefore to resources, but also membership and content of social interactions, depend in part on gender hierarchies, and transnational projects are thus shared along gender lines (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999). This perspective has been incorporated into research accounting for the gendered political economy of migration. Here, in particular, analyses of reproductive labour have been developed within the discussion of the international division of labour. By focusing on reproductive labour, researchers have emphasised that gender is a controlling factor of the outflow of labour in globalisation and that it shapes the division of labour (by allowing access to specific gendered networks, and specific gendered jobs) in migration (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2004; Parreñas, 2001).

As early as 1984, Morokvasic for instance argued that migrant women from peripheral zones living in Western industrial democracies "represent a readymade labour supply which is at once the most vulnerable, the most flexible and, at least in the beginning, the least demanding work force. They have been incorporated into segregated labour markets at the lowest stratum in high technology industries or in the 'cheapest' sectors in those industries" (1984: 886) which are labour intensive and employ the cheapest labour to remain competitive

Gender-segregated labour markets have become a crucial feature of the new global division of labour increasingly characterised by the growth of *temporary* migration as well as temporary employment, especially for women (Rosewarne, 2012). Migrant women domestic workers form a category of gendered and racialised labour that has expanded remarkably in virtually all advanced industrial economies (Bridget Anderson, 2000; 2007; Cox, 2006). Domestic work has become an expanding niche for migrant women (Schrover et al. 2007); however bad the conditions, it is often perceived as offering a chance of a job.

Yet, McIlwaine and colleagues (2006: 5) observe how current research on migration processes very rarely considers male and female migrants together, or explores the relational aspects of masculinity and femininity. The use of gendered networks for accessing labour markets in London and Rome, as well as ways in which labour market experiences of Romanian migrants are "shaped by ideologies of domesticity/femininity and masculinity, thus reinforcing gendered occupational stereotyping" (McIlwaine, 2006: 6) are some of the aspects I will be looking at in Chapters Five and Six of this

dissertation. The reason behind the decision to devote two chapters to the analysis of working experiences of Romanian migrants in the two cities is to be found precisely in the effort to account for the gender differences related to men's and women's different labour market incorporation and the emotional impact of such transnational working experiences.

Furthermore, studies on transnational families explore processes of "care and emotional work" in which migrants involved from a distance. Within this framework of analysis it has been observed how "although both immigrant men and women provide economic support to their families in their communities of origin, women engage more 'transnational motherhood'" (Viruell-Fuentes, 2006: 339). Women are therefore portrayed[34] as providing more emotional support to children and other family relations who remain in their country of origin (Aranda, 2003; Zontini, 2004). Adopting a gendered approach which looks this time at both women's and men's parenthood realm, analysis in Chapter Five and Seven of this dissertation will also emphasise fathers' emotional and subjective experiences of transnational child rearing, a process which is rarely considered by current research.

1.7. Concluding remarks: a theoretical framework for this study

The snapshot of the major developments in research on migration provided at the beginning of this chapter highlights how despite the often taken for granted idea that economic differentials are the main factor influencing migration, they cannot be adopted as single explanation of the patterns - of geographic or demographic nature for instance - that develop within specific migration flows. Major "structural forces in the international political economy such as warfare, colonialism, conquest, occupation and labour recruitment as well as factors such as shared culture, language and geographical proximity" (de Hass, 2010: 1589) must be taken into consideration for the vital role they can play in initiating those processes. The influence of actors such as family members already at destination, first/pioneer migrants or labour negotiators (as Chapter 4 in particular will emphasise) also needs to be accounted for given its centrality decisions concerning destination, type of work, accommodation and so on.

As stressed in this present chapter, transnational studies have been concerned with the development of an analytical approach exploring precisely this multidimensionality of the migration experience, and, more specifically, the ways in which power can be

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[34] Some of the cases presented in Chapter Seven of this dissertation may partially contradict this perspective.

seen to operate at multiple levels of social organisation. It can be said that the enquiry of transnational research is similar to that of globalisation in that they both explore the dynamics through which national socio-economic, demographic or cultural processes develop also beyond nation-states' borders. However, transnationalism takes a self-consciously more grounded approach in that it looks at empirical evidence of how these processes are activated in and between nation states rather than at some more abstract or theoretical level of "global space" (Mahler and Pessar, 2006; Kearney, 1995).

More critically, it strives to include the "local" as well as the "global" in its analysis – not in a frame based on any sense of binary opposition, but through a bifocal lens which views the nation-state and transnational practices as mutually constitutive (Yeoh and Willis, 2005). The emphasis is therefore on the material and spatial practices of social actors and the ways in which they make (gendered) connections across and between societies, revealing the interplay of both the "here" and the "there" within transforming transnational social spaces. To put it differently, by taking on board the dimension of the *local* in the different settings in which the migratory process occurs, this framework of analysis allows for a comparative cross-national examination of migration from the level of the agent and therefore paying attention to her decisions, intentions, practices and emotions. This challenge is also taken up by this present dissertation.

Within this framework, the main research questions highlighted in the introductory chapter, and that I wish to develop and answer in this dissertation, allow for an examination of the ways migrants are situated and strategically move within social processes of migration without disregarding structural (national and supra-national) determinants of migration and settlement (Parreñas, 2001). The analysis of the material presented in the empirical chapters of this dissertation develops therefore within the wider conceptual framework of transnationalism and along three interconnected levels of analysis:

- a *macro-level*, whereby "migrants are found in gender-specific labour market segments in the receiving context, like domestic work and construction sector, which exert a pulling power on female and male actors respectively" (Lutz, 2010: 1658)

- a *meso-level*, which refers to the organisation of migrants' work and develops in relations to several factors such as gendered models of family care, networks or opportunity structures[35]
- and a *micro/agent-level* where "individual practices, identities and positions come into sight" (ibid.) and where the intersections of those socially-constructed categories such as nationality, gender and legal status affect migrants' positions in transnational social spaces which span work and transnational family life.

In doing so, the investigation meets Lutz's (2010) model for a gendered investigation of the migration process, but further enriches it with the aforementioned focus on corresponding institutions of migration as the contexts/locus in which migrant agents exist and act, and from which particular subject-positions may emerge (Parreñas, 2001).

Within this theoretical framework, the analysis therefore strives to also bring to light some of those institutional transformations engendered in the migratory process itself – such as for instance constitution of the migration flow, labour market incorporation, "community" formations and transformation of the family. Such a conceptual framework will make it possible to observe how "transmigrants are transformed by their transnational practices and how these practices affect the nation-states of transmigrants' origin and settlement" (Basch et al. 1994: 8). Those quotidian practices, and the feelings and emotions that accompany them, may have the power to modify those very institutions in which transnational migration is enacted and in which subjects are acting. The above discussion therefore implies that the notion of transnationalism needs to be developed further in relation to the existing theorisation models of social processing, as well as to the multiple intersections of nation, "race", class, and religion which strongly structure the phenomenon of transnational migration for work in low-wage sectors of European labour markets (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2007; Yeates, 2009; Itzigsohn and Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005; Anthias, 1992).

Furthermore, this perspective, combined with a focus on transnational migration as a gendered phenomenon, can add to current conceptualisations of the incontestable multifaceted links between economic and social lives. The family is often at the heart of these lives, which intertwines the economic, the social and the cultural in the workings of the neoliberal economies. By adopting an agent level approach which sees the

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[35] E.g. the need for full-time or prêt-à-porter workers in the construction sector as opposed to domestic work which adopts a combined live-in/job-sharing type of system.

migrant as always part of a larger unit – the family – my analysis, in each chapter of this dissertation, once again tries to highlight those intersections between migrants' transnational social spaces. In particular, Chapter Five and Six will reveal how transnational working and motherhood and fatherhood experiences are deeply intertwined and therefore how an in-depth analysis of transnational migration needs to pay equal attention to the multiple social fields in which migrants' lived experiences are taking place. This understanding can only be achieved if family is conceptualised as a set of fluid, and constant development, transnational relationships which often transcend the household, rather than as an un-variegated, single decision-making unit (see Chapter 6 of this thesis).

To conclude, this perspective has methodological implications for my study in that national and supranational social actors and institutions of the transnational context of migration also need to be taken into account when looking at current intra-European (irregular) transnational migration from a comparative perspective. Düvell (2005) observes how different national contexts offer different conditions for migrants, thus requiring different uses of networks and social capital for migrants' labour market incorporation and settlement. The analysis of networks, for instance, used by transnational migrants in different European countries displays great diversity (if compared to migration in the United States) as there are sizeable differences in different European contexts (Engbersen, 2001). Such networks can be differently used for incorporation into different labour markets and can react differently to state policies.

In the next chapter I will provide an overview of the research design and methods adopted to account for migrants' experiences within the above discussed conceptual framework. Moreover, the chapter also briefly introduces the two migratory contexts at the centre of this comparative analysis and the actors involved.

Chapter 2 Research design and methods

2.1. Introduction

The assertion that methods of research should follow the framing of questions suggests that research methods should be suited to fit specific research purposes (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In accordance with this claim, both the topic of research, which is migrants' transnational experience, and the comparative approach I chose required fieldwork to be conducted in more than one location. The Italian and British capitals were therefore chosen as principal sites for my observation, while two short trips to Romania conducted during and immediately after my fieldwork allowed for my data to be complemented with insights from the country of origin.

In-depth narrative interviews, combined with multi-sited fieldwork observation, appeared particularly appropriate to address the already illustrated research questions and objectives, as well as the rationale of my study. Besides the political potential of the biographical/narrative method which may give space to formerly unheard voices from the margins (Chamberlayne et al., 2000), this interviewing strategy enables the researcher to acknowledge both structure and agency in answers given by respondents, without privileging individual meanings over structural forces in understanding migration (Findlay and Li, 1997; Halfacree and Boyle, 1993).

The use of participant observation and its focus on migrants' everyday practices was also purposeful to the methodology of this research which wishes to identify "migrants' agency in the ways they shape and adapt daily routines and mundane social interactions to changing circumstances and precarious livelihoods" (Sigona, 2012: 61).

Furthermore, the use of in-depth qualitative methods implies that this study is not based on a wide-scale representative sample, but rather on a small number of respondents with whom I spent a considerable amount of time and engaged in extensive conversations and a variety of daily activities and events. I decided that this method of data collection was the right one for my research, partly because of the economic and time-related limitations involved in conducting fieldwork as a PhD student, but most of all because I am convinced that only small-scale, detailed research is able to portray the very complex and personal dynamics of a social process. When it comes to the representation of migrants and their experiences of migration, I argue that this

methodology is all the more appropriate. Too often, in fact, migrants are regarded by the media, public opinion, state policies and even certain types of academic research as simple *numbers*, entities without a soul, mere labour to be let in when needed and to kick out when no longer required.

This research therefore makes no claim to being representative of the situation of all the Romanian migrants in the two contexts, or of being capable of producing ambitious generalisations. This is not my aim here. What I instead wish to attain by using in-depth qualitative analysis, is a number of valuable indications of the practices migrants put in place within the constraints of those two contexts and transnationally, and of the complexities that lie behind their lived experiences.

For a better understanding of the research methodology involved in my analysis and of the methods used throughout my fieldwork, in the following sections of this chapter, I will be looking in more detail at the research "instruments" used in the specific case of multi-sited comparative empirical research on contemporary intra-European transnational migration, and will discuss access to respondents as well as the researcher's positionality. But first I will briefly discuss the strength of engaging in comparative analysis and introduce the two contexts in which the experiences of migration and settlement of Romanian migrants interviewed for this research were inscribed.

2.2. Multi-sited comparative analysis

In empirical terms, the one "nation-centred approach" to the country as a case-study, has been remarked on as no longer adequate for understanding current processes and dynamics of migration flows and settlement (Soysal, 1994; Wimmer and Glick-Schiller, 2002). Recent European east–west migration has in fact privileged multi-local mobility rather than permanent migration to one destination. Furthermore, its development, as is the case for Romanian migration, needs to be read also in light of existing (and in progress) supranational geopolitical changes impacting migrants' strategies and decision making processes. Contextualising case studies within more than one national setting, and also within the wider European framework, therefore proves useful for a more in-depth understanding of specific cases' experiences and for a wider representativeness of these cases.

The transnational turn in migration studies has brought with it not only a shift in theoretical perspective but also a renewed attention to the refining of methods in researching migrants' transnational movements, networks, and practices. The multi-

sited research model came to be regarded as an appropriate method for studying global/transnational dynamics and practices crossing local or national boundaries, as it envisages the development of participant observation in multiple interrelated locations (Hannerz, 2002; Marcus, 1995). As Appadurai (1997: 116) has observed, "practices of intimacy are no longer contained in those envelopes of space and time", no matter whether we call them "localities, communities, cultures, or even societies" (ibid.). Rather than restricting the analysis to a limited physical and relational context, the researcher should grasp, from more than one perspective, the processual and multi-local nature of the research object and the interrelations among its fields of action (Fitzgerald, 2006).

But how can transnational comparative analysis be done? In an investigation of the possible approaches to comparative research, Clark and colleagues (2002) identify three methods of comparative study. The first one is the "theory-centred model of comparative study". This approach assumes that an "integrated theoretical perspective", highlighting correspondences while explaining differences based on by reference to the legacy of nation-states and places, can be applicable to different contexts in more general terms. Differently, "the case-centred approach to comparative study", based on a more anthropological perspective, focusses on case studies and emphasises local differences due to specific cultural, social and political factors in action. A third approach, the "institution-centred approach to comparative study", is driven by the idea that institutions "shape the choices faced by individuals" (Clark et al., 2002: 265-67).

All three methods have their strengths and can be differently applied in doing comparative analysis. While considering the weaknesses that are also embedded in these rival theories, and which mainly lie in a "static view of culture, institutional change" and human behaviour in the first case, in the limitations in providing "a complete account of a society's historical complexity" in the second, and in the "marginalised role of agents in the formation of institutions" in the third case, Clark and colleagues suggest an alternative model which focuses primarily "on the nature of human cognition, while acknowledging informational and institutional constraints" (ibid.: 272). Their "agent-centred approach" is based on the assumptions that agents' "consciousness and intention are fundamental to human existence". Yet their capacity to act can be "bounded by limited resources, interests and knowledge, as well as by history and geography" (ibid. 271). As a result, agents are able to learn and therefore

consequently operate within the institutional frameworks that both enable and restrict their actions.

The agent-centred approach may be criticised for idealising "choice" and "strategy" as well as of overemphasising the position and acting of the agent. But, what this model also introduces, and what I believe can be useful for the approach I am adopting in my research, is the idea that individuals "are not passive or prisoners of their environments" (ibid. 274). Respondents' accounts in this study will show, in fact, how their practices can be influenced and configured by institutional constraints just as they themselves as agents can configure the development of those very same institutions. Without adopting an idealistic stand which ignores the possibility of agents being trapped within antithetical institutional regimes, Clark et al. (2002) therefore highlight the idea that agents are never "simply and solely the bearers of institutional structures" (ibid. 280) to the point of being totally unreflexive and non-cognitive. This conceptual understanding, therefore, allows us to overcome a view which is embedded within some *classificatory* cross-national analysis (Landman, 2002). This type of cross-national comparative analysis tents to explain migrant integration in terms of "national models" of incorporation (Clark et al., 2002) and deploys very limited concerns with "human agency". In other words the resulting picture is almost depurated of the "flesh-in-motion" (K. Knowles, 2010: 26) which constitutes the very act of migration. In my comparative examination I therefore apply an agent-centred approach which pays attention to how structure is played out in people's lives, and I combine it with a "divergent comparison analysis" (Green, 1997) – meaning that the comparison is deployed in two different locations but the focus is on migrants from a single country of origin and who therefore lived through similar pre-migration experiences[36]. As such, the dissertation draws on two empirical case studies based in two different locales: Rome and London. The overall aim is that of comparing Romanian workers' experiences of migration and settlement in the two contexts. In the next sections of this chapter I will introduce the two field locations with the intent to give a glimpse of the local socio-economic contexts in which the migratory experiences of Romanian migrants in this research are inscribed[37].

2.3. Local contexts

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[36] I.e. individuals who shared a similar socio-economic and educational system, or similar cultural traits or traditions

[37] A detailed picture of aspects related to social policy as well as national characteristics and developments of the labour markets in the two locations will be presented in Chapters Five and Six in relation to issues of work and labour market integration analysed in those chapters.

When analysing globalisation and its development in the context of European cities, London has been defined as a post-industrial global centre where financial, legal and business services are concentrated (Sassen, 1988; 1991; 1996; Hamnett, 1994; May et al., 2006; Spence, 2005). This has increased the number of people living in the city and earning high wages (Sassen, 1991) who can afford to pay other people to provide services for them (Cox, 2006).

In other words, London has witnessed a shift to service economies, which in exchange has generated the need for low-paid occupations which are often filled by migrants (May et al. 2006; Spence, 2005). Currently London has the largest proportion of migrants in the UK. Recent estimates show that "around 40% of the UK's migrants live in London", making up about a quarter of the population (26%) (MRN, 2011: 1).

More interestingly, what these new inflows have brought to the city is also an increase in the diversity of the migrant population (Vertovec, 2006). This diversity can be observed with regard to status and reasons for migration and settlement in the city (i.e. family reunion and long term settlement, migrant students, asylum seekers and refugees, new economic migrants), but also in relation to nationality and therefore countries of origin. In the last twenty years, there have in fact also been important variations in areas of provenience of the migrant population. If in 1986, 76% of the 1.17 million London's foreign-born population originated in the former British territories and most of those migrants were coming from only six countries: Cyprus, Ireland, Kenya India, Bangladesh and Jamaica, in 2006, "of the 2.23 million foreign-born population of London, the proportion of those from former British territories had dropped to 59%". Nigeria, Poland, Sri Lanka, Ghana, South Africa, Pakistan, Somalia, the United States of America (USA) and Turkey were new countries contributing significantly to the increase and diversification of the London's foreign population (Gordon *et al.*, 2007: 13). New postcolonial flows originating in various other countries have therefore added to the pool of migrants servicing the London economy.

London has attracted migrants for a variety of reasons (e.g. family reunion, asylum, study, work), and certainly work has been one of the most significant. The expanded economy of the British capital has in fact offered numerous opportunities to enter the labour market for people with different skills, and a large market for entrepreneurs. Fielding (2007) has defined London as an "escalator region" as it often functions as a socio-occupational escalator, and it is certainly this *reputation* (whether real or not) that

attracts many international migrants, Romanians among them. According to recent figures from the Labour Force Survey for 2009–2010, migrants account for four out of every ten employed people in London.

Two broad patterns can be observed to operate in London's labour market: a "migrant division of labour" (see May et al. 2006), and a gendered and ethnic division of labour (McIlwaine et al. 2006). As for the first pattern, a significant share of low-paid occupations in London is filled by migrants (McIlwaine et al. 2006; Spence 2005). "This demand for 'low end' workers has been created by the large amounts of office space to be cleaned and maintained, together with massive building programmes in the construction sector, and a health and care sector that has become heavily dependent on sub-contracted labour" (McIlwaine et al. 2006: 8). Given the low wages and precarious working conditions which characterise those kinds of jobs, (irregular) migrants are often the majority willing to take up such positions.

When looking instead at the cross-cutting of London's labour market by lines of gender and ethnic segmentation and segregation, it has been said that "women mainly worked in 'semi-private' spaces such as hotels (where they will work as chambermaids), or in the houses of their clients when doing care work" while men are employed in "semi-public" spaces such as offices (cleaning), the underground (ibid.) or, I would add, construction sites.

The above characterisation of the London labour market applies to Romanian labour migration in the city. In fact, despite previous research which has shown that London is a popular destination for Romanians with secondary and tertiary education (Csedö, 2008), forms of subaltern labour-market integration are very common. In many cases, secondary or even university educated Romanians are working as builders, in the domestic sector, cleaning or catering industry. My respondents, despite different qualifications, were working, at the time of my fieldwork, as builders, baby-sitters, waitresses, domestics or handymen.

Romanian workers are among the new migrants entering the British labour market and London is for them by far the most popular destination. In 2001 3,000 Romanians were living there, accounting for 40% of the total Romanian population of the country. At the beginning of 2006, the Labour Force Survey estimated that this number had risen to 4,300, while between April and June 2008 the number was 21,343.

In London, their presence tends to be dispersed and not very visible on the ground although small pockets are slowly developing, mostly in the northern boroughs where a

few grocers and some Romanian restaurants have also opened. With over 10,000 people registering for a NINo (National Insurance Number) between 2002 and 2011, Brent is the London borough hosting the largest number of Romanian migrants. Newham, Waltham, Harrow and Barnet are also popular residence areas for the Romanian community with at least 5,000 NINo applications from Romanian nationals. Of those, Harrow is the borough where the Romanian population makes up the largest proportion of foreign residents (11%) (see Table 3).

Table 3 Top 10 London Boroughs with largest number of NINo registrations to adult Romanian nationals, 2002-2011

Local Authority	N	% of all foreign nationals
Brent	10,090	6.8%
Newham	8,210	4.8%
Waltham	6,340	6.8%
Harrow	5,890	11.2%
Barnet	5,790	6.9%
Haringey	3,860	3.9%
Enfield	2,330	4.2%
Redbridge	2,250	3.9%
Barking	1,320	3.6%
Ealing	1,300	1.0%

Source: Department for Work and Pensions, NINo Registrations to Adult Overseas Nationals

I conducted my fieldwork in two of those areas of the city (Brent and Newham), from which my respondents would move mainly for work related reasons or, in some cases, to attend religious celebrations at the Orthodox Church located in the city centre.

2.3.2 Rome

Rome has been included in the so called *Southern European, or Mediterranean model of migration* (King et al., 1997; King and Zontini, 2000; King, 2000). Yet specific features of the city of Rome have to be related to those of the Italian context at large. In other words, profound economic and social differences that have characterised the various geographical areas of the country can be observed within the capital too. In fact, migrants' integration into the labour market mirrors the socio-economic dualism that characterises the Italian reality. Based on those differences, it has been observed how migration to the various regions has been (at least in part) driven by the needs of the labour markets of those areas. In the northern regions migrant workers are mainly concentrated in industry but also in the domestic sector, trades (large number of private businesses), and services as far as metropolitan areas are concerned. In the central and

southern areas, migrants are integrated mainly in the domestic sector within the cities and agriculture in the rural areas. Migrants' integration in the construction sector is by contrast widespread across the country.

Lucciarini (2010: 64) has observed how the city and its surroundings (the Province of Rome) can be placed between the above described northern and southern models. Here, in fact, migrants have registered lower levels of employment in industry compared to a strong presence in agriculture and the domestic sector. Yet, in the meantime, similarly to migrants in Italy's northern cities, migrants in Rome are also largely present in the service sector and entrepreneurial activities.

With regard to presence of the migrant population on the ground, it has been observed how Rome is characterised by low levels of spatial segregation and a high degree of suburbanisation. The former has been explained by looking at a number of structural factors characterising this specific urban context (Lucciarini, 2010: 85–87). Among these are:

- the lack of housing policies for migrant workers (unlike cities in France or Germany for instance) and informalisation of the real estate market has allowed for a more individualistic organisational process. As a consequence migrants have settled in the various less expensive areas such as the periphery of the city or within the suburban areas just outside Rome. This tendency, which also characterises sections of the local population (especially young couples with children) is justified as far as migrant workers are concerned not only by lower rents but also by the possibility to access work both in urban areas of the city of Rome (work in the service industry and construction) and in the semi-rural areas of the Province of Rome (work in agriculture and construction).

- super-diversity of the migrant population: unlike other European contexts such as Britain or France for instance, weak relationships with the ex-colonies did not allow for the development of privileged migratory flows towards Italian cities from those territories. As a consequence Rome is characterised by a great multiplicity of migrant groups, which favoured a variegated ethnic characterisation of its urban panorama. Although some conglomerates of specific nationalities can be observed in specific areas of the city, they have not developed into ethnic neighbourhoods.

- heterogeneity of the city's urban fabric: although the situation has been changing considerably in recent years, Rome is still characterised by low levels of socio-

professional segregation of its territory. Social classes have been homogeneously distributed in the different neighbourhoods, where social stratification has occurred more on a "vertical" basis with families belonging to the lower classes inhabiting the lower levels of buildings across the city. It is within this heterogeneity that specific migrant housing niches have emerged. Within the city, migrants have inhabited green areas within parks and along river banks but also abandoned buildings and archaeological areas[38], as well as apartments in rundown buildings which were no longer rentable to locals. But, as previously mentioned, migrants have also started to look for accommodation in the suburban areas just outside the city of Rome, a dynamic common also to young Italian families and which has delayed the process of ethnicisation of specific areas in the city.

Romanian migrants in Italy are spread across the entire country but the Region of Lazio has the largest Romanian population. Rome, the main city in the region, has been defined as the "national core" of immigration within the Italian scenario (CARITAS/MIGRANTES, 2007). Romanian migrants here constitute the largest migrant group, accounting for 122,000 residents in the whole province – a quarter of the total immigrant population – (see Table 4) and 92,258 in the city alone – a third of the total immigrant population. They have overtaken longer established migrant collectivities such as migrants from the Philippines, Bangladesh, and Albania.

Table 4 Total of Romanian residents by region and province (31.12.2008)

Region	Romanian residents	Province	Romanian residents
Lazio	158,000	Roma	122,000
Piemonte	121,000	Torino	86,000
Lombardia	118,000	Milano	41,000
Veneto	91,000	Padova	25,000
Toscana	64,000	Bologna	15,000
Emilia Romagna	54,000	Firenze	15,000

Source: CARITAS/MIGRANTES 2010

In Rome respondents are employed in the existing plethora of low-waged jobs – from housekeeping and care work within families, to agricultural activities, petty trade or jobs in catering or the building industry. Their presence constitutes a central as well as an invisible element of economic and social growth. The growth of the building industry has in fact found in the presence of Romanian migrants its essential engine,

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[38] A phenomenon that has increased with the arrival of Eastern European migrants, Romanians in particular.

while their social role in Rome, as will be emphasised in Chapter Five of this dissertation, is also particularly relevant given women's high involvement in providing domestic and care help to Italian families.

Romanian migrants deploy an interesting pattern of settlement both within and just outside the city. Romanians in fact are among those migrants living on the outskirts of the city and increasingly in those suburban areas of the Province just outside Rome. The movement towards areas outside the city has increased since 2007 when family members, children and grandparents, started to join those already in Rome. The need for larger and more comfortable housing conditions to accommodate the necessities of a family oriented type of migration[39] have therefore become, at a different stage of their migration, another reason for migrants' movement towards more suburban areas well connected to the city by public transport – again a dynamic very similar to what local families have experienced in recent years.

Towns in the south-east area of the capital, such as Tivoli, Fonte Nuova, Pomezia and Velletri, but also in the north-west suburban areas, such as Guidonia and Ladispoli, are among the favourite settlement destinations in recent times. From those areas, Romanian workers leave every morning to work in the private households in the city centre of Rome or in the various building sites spread around the city. This phenomenon, which certainly differentiates recent developments of migration for work in the Italian cities, is also reminiscent of previous internal commuting for work among localities in Socialist Romania (a phenomenon discussed in the next chapter of this dissertation).

Inside the capital, Romanians tend to be scattered throughout with some concentrations in the south-east area – Municipalities VII, VIII, and XI – and south-west – Municipalities XIII and XV. An interesting factor that has been observed with regard to the Romanians' settlement within the city is its intersection with gender and type of work. In fact, the large scale employment of Romanian women in the domestic/care sector for private households, also explains their presence in areas of the city centre of Rome.

2.4. Into the field

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[39] The family oriented and therefore more stable character of current Romanian migration in the Roman area is also seen in the number of Romanian children enrolled in local schools as well as the number of private enterprises started by Romanian nationals. In 2010, 37.2% of foreign secondary school students in the area were Romanian nationals, and there were 4,496 Romanian private enterprises.

I decided to use a socio-anthropological approach based on qualitative methods (i.e. multi-sited comparative direct observation and in-depth narrative interviews) to explore in depth the dynamics of migrants and migrants' families in two European contexts. This methodological approach allows for the reinterpretation of migrants' daily social relations with possible transnational character, within a spatial and temporal frame which is broader than the actual act of migration (Glick Schiller, 2003). This is the case for such phenomena as the redistribution of care (global care chain, transnational motherhood), the use and redefinition of family (transnational family), or the use of the internet in creating sociality and long-distance communication (Greschke, 2008).

Most importantly this approach considers migrants as actors and allows one to capture migrants' self-representations, through the use of biographical/narrative interviews for instance, but also, through extended field (participant) observations of their behaviour and of the context/situation in which such behaviour is performed.

The fieldwork in each city was divided in two stages[40]. The first stage mainly involved reviewing of secondary data on Romanian migration in the chosen locations[41] and a number of meetings with key informants[42] who provided me with more grounded information on locations of Romanian migrants in the cities, their employment and housing situation as well as on formal community formations. Some of the informants were also helpful in providing me with access to some of my first respondents.

In the second stage of my fieldwork, I combined in-depth narrative interviews and participant observation. While interviews were crucial for exploring, from migrants' subjective perspectives, the distribution and consistency of their experiences and transnational practices, the information gathered was enriched by direct observations in the field and numerous informal conversations. When in my respondents' houses or in their company, in both London and Rome, I spent a good deal of time participating in their daily life routines (cooking, drinking coffee, cleaning, watching Romanian TV), I attended meetings, celebrations and religious observances, I was in the hospital when one of my respondents gave birth in London, I accompanied one of my respondents

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[40] I conducted fieldwork in London between September 2006 and beginning of March 2007, while fieldwork in Rome was conducted between March 2007 and October 2007. However, in both cases, I was also able to visit or talk over the phone with some of my respondents once fieldwork was concluded.

[41] The review included available information and statistics, such as those provided by EUROSTAT, OECD, IOM, national statistical offices, CARITAS Italy, and IPPR.

[42] In London, I interviewed representatives of three Romanian churches (Orthodox, Catholic, and Pentecostal), four representatives of the Romanian embassy and consulate, one newspaper director and four representatives of community organisations. In Rome, interviews were conducted with two Romanian priests, one national party president, one Romanian trade unionist, two embassy representatives, and six representatives of community organisations.

when she took her son for his first school day in Rome and so on. When I was not in their houses, I spent time with them in their workplaces, or stores or parks.

Visiting participants in their own environment, either their own house or their work-place (which at times coincided) was, where possible, my favoured option. Observing and taking part in respondents' routines was important as it allowed me to get closer to their daily life, but also to "locate them in their living environment, to give a context and a background to the story they were telling" (Sigona and Torre, 2006: 20). The addition of participant observation also proved helpful in the creation of a strong relationship of trust, which allowed me to spend longer periods of time with my respondents in different contexts of their daily routine. I could therefore learn more about their quotidian practices and dynamics and also complement my knowledge acquired through in-depth narratives by taking part in and observing fragments of their life, yet in those cases without asking too many questions about their personal histories.

Trust was also significant in defining the interviewee–interviewer relationship and therefore the kind of story, the "narrative truth" (Lieblich et al., 1998), that was produced. It also allowed for my return to the field to meet respondents more than once and at different (later) stages of their migratory experience. Given the particular concern of the thesis with changes that the 2007 EU accession brought to migrants' experiences in migration, this proved very relevant for scrutinising the changes in migrants' situation over a longer period of time. It allowed me to return for instance to London, where fieldwork was conducted mainly in 2006, and have conversations with some of my respondents later in 2007, and even 2008 when fieldwork was concluded and I was in the process of analysing my data. Similarly, at the end of my fieldwork I could meet again the family that moved from Rome to London in 2007.

The verbal and observational material gathered during those occasions was recorded in my research diary and constitutes a central part of this research, as it helped to better contextualise, and sometimes verify, information gathered throughout the interviews.

2.4.1. Access

In London I started my interviews using two entry points: contacts provided by the two Romanian priests interviewed in the first stage of my fieldwork, and two Romanian migrants previously interviewed for research I collaborated on in 2005. Those first contacts introduced me to other Romanians living and working in the city. To avoid limiting the research to a convenience sample, one of the main risks of snowballing, I therefore diversified my access points by using more than one "gatekeeper". This

helped me to meet people from different backgrounds, who may have had different experiences of migration and settlement in the city.

Despite having lived in Italy since I was twelve years old, I did not have many contacts with Romanian migrants in the capital. Before leaving for Rome, at the end of March 2007, I therefore envisaged contacting a Romanian church – some time ago I had interviewed a Romanian priest in Rome – and using that, and possibly some NGOs working with Romanian migrants, as entry points. Yet, my plans suddenly changed: the night before leaving, one of my respondents in London called me saying that a Romanian family, her sister's brother in law, his wife, and their ten year old child, were about to leave Rome and move to London in few days. They were thus looking for someone to rent their room in the two-room apartment they were sharing with another Romanian couple. She asked me if I was still looking for a place to stay in Rome, and if I was interested in that room. I answered yes, and from that day on I found myself catapulted into the lives of two Romanian families living in Rome.

Another way of getting access was through some Italian friends' families. Almost all of them were in fact employing a Romanian woman for cleaning, cooking or as carer for their elderly, either on a "live in" or hourly basis. I could in those cases have access to their workplace and more than once conversations were carried out there.

However, the social field that I addressed during fieldwork for my research was not easy to access. There were at least two reasons behind the difficulties encountered: the first one was related to the personal condition of "irregularity" of most of my respondents at the time of our first encounters, while the second one relates to the more general prominence in the public debate of a negative picture of Eastern European migrants, and Romanians in particular.

In fact, migration currently is a very sensitive and politicised issue anywhere in Europe and a high degree of suspicion characterises relations among migrants, between migrants and locals, and even more between migrants and official authorities. As some of my respondents told me, they tended to be suspicious towards everyone coming from outside their circle and therefore even towards other Romanians living in the same situation and, as one of my respondents said, "competing for the same things I am here, jobs, and a quiet and decent place to live; and this is hard to have when you are forced to hide, to be a ghost"[43].

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[43] From the interview with Adriana (London, 2006).

At the time of my fieldwork, most of my respondents had an irregular status which often confined them to a life of quotidian uncertainty. As I learned from interviews with Romanians I met in the two cities, but also during sporadic conversations with Romanians I met while travelling on public transport in Rome, Romanian migrants passed through difficult situations at various stages of their migration, when they sometimes had to sleep for weeks in parks, on the river side or in abandoned buildings or archaeological sites on the outskirts of Rome. In some better cases they could stay in overcrowded town houses or apartments.

Irregularity and precarious living and working conditions have therefore created some sense of distrust and unwillingness to become visible. In those circumstances, the presence of a researcher asking questions about their experiences of migration, a particularly difficult and for some dangerous moment of their lives, could be unwelcome, posing serious methodological challenges concerning access to people and gathering information.

To overcome difficulties related to access based on mistrust and suspicion on the part of my respondents, I decided that snowballing (Salganik and Heckathorn, 2004) was the best way to gain access to my future respondents. Despite being aware that snowball technique may create a biased sample, the nature of my study and the research questions I wished to answer throughout my research, as well as the characteristics of the population I aimed to investigate, informed the choice of this method.

In addition, previous experience of conducting interviews with Romanian migrants in London without actually living in the city, taught me the disadvantages of living far away from the fieldwork site and meeting respondents once only. Building a relationship of trust or at least a comfortable environment for the interviews was always very difficult and interactions would, in most cases, remain on a very formal level. Based on that experience, and despite being aware of the "fraught-advantages" (Alexander, 2000) of being closer to the people I was going to involve in this research[44], I decided that living with some of my respondents in London and subsequently in Rome was going to help me in establishing some degrees of familiarity with my respondents and enable them to get to know me and better understand the ends of my research.

In London, therefore, three of the families I was in contact with hosted me in their houses more than once during fieldwork for three to seven days at a time. As far as

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[44] I.e. overlapping of my position as a researcher with that of becoming, or being seen as, a friend and the ethical impacts this situation may have.

other families and individuals are concerned, I visited them more than once, each time spending no more than one day in their company. In Rome, I lived with two families in the same apartment for about two months. Moreover, I had privileged access to another family (a woman and her daughter) living and working in the house of Italian friends who also hosted me on various occasions during my time in Rome.

Finally, access to my respondents was certainly facilitated also by my personal background. The fact that I am originally from the same country, I speak the language of the respondents, I share some of their cultural background and a an experience of life in migration which was at least partly similar, helped in creating some sense of "communality" (Song and Parker, 1995) with my respondents which was crucial in helping me to avoid some of the obstacles I could encounter when trying to meet Romanian migrants.

2.4.2. The sample

Romanians interviewed for this research have been chosen from the so-called "new migrants," people who arrived in London and Rome in the last 10 to 15 years. Although the decision to exclude long-term Romanian residents meant that the study was not going to be representative of the wider population of Romanian migrants living in the two cities, there are three main factors which I argue have made the choice relevant: firstly, new migrants represent the majority of Romanians living and working in both capitals; secondly, as already mentioned in the Introduction to this dissertation, the arrival of Eastern European migrants, including Romanians, has in recent years significantly added to and thus transformed the social landscape of the two cities; and thirdly, they have been at the centre of the public concern with the imminent 'invasion' from eastern Europe.

The empirical relevance of this study and the in-depth analysis of the experiences of a small number of migrants in the two locations were enhanced by its comparative nature as well as by the long periods of time I spent with some of my respondents and by the recurring character of my visits. This allowed me to scrutinise changes in migrants' situation since I first met them and obtain a more longitudinal perspective on some of the families. Moreover, being able to establish close relationships with some of my respondents allowed me to have an "insider" view on their working arrangements and conditions, as well as more family related aspects of their life in migration[45]. As a

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[45] In fact, it has been stressed how difficult it may be for researchers to observe domestic workers' working conditions for instance, because of their geographical dispersion in the private spaces of individual households (Bridget Anderson, 2000).

result, findings from my fieldwork can serve as an indication of potential patterns and dynamics that have so far remained under-researched in existing studies of intra-European migration.

The age of my respondents ranged from 25 to 54 years old and I am talking about *families*[46] and not individuals because in both locations most of the Romanians interviewed were living with at least another person to whom they were related. Moreover, in all but two of these cases (Fabiana and Hansi), respondents had relatives in the cities where they were living. Rodica's case was extreme. She had more than 15 relatives living in Rome and its surroundings; "we are a small community here", as she said. Families were also divided between the two locations included in this research, and in some cases moved from one location to another[47].

Unlike previous research, therefore, which described migration to the UK as involving mostly young male individuals (Csedo, 2008) compared with that to Italy which comprises more families (Ciobanu, 2005), findings from my research emphasise how migration in both contexts was lived prevalently as a family experience rather than an individual one. The focus therefore is on family units rather than on individuals alone and the reason for this is based first of all on the assumption that there is no such thing as the "autonomous immigrant" (Walton-Roberts, 2003). Secondly, the literature on migration (see Chapter 1 and specifically Chapter 6 of this thesis) has emphasised how "family" relationships are at the centre of decisions to migrate and to settle permanently or not, and therefore how they facilitate this process through their role in the creation and nourishment of the human, social but also economic capital needed by the migrant (Boyd, 1989; Khoo, 2003; Zontini, 2004, 2006; Goulbourne et al. 2010).

2.4.3. Introducing the respondents

2.4.3.1 In London

In London I had access to six families and three single individuals who were not in a relationship at the time of my fieldwork.

Fabiana

Fabiana (27) arrived in London with an au-pair visa in 2003. In Romania she graduated in Modern Languages in 2001 and she taught for about two years, first in

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[46] See Chapter Seven.
[47] See the case of Liliana and Doru who from Rome joined relatives in London in their first stage of migration, then came back to Rome for a few years before moving again to London during my fieldwork. Maria also moved to London to join her husband to be, while her mother was still in Rome. A few years later, after the birth of Maria's daughter, her mother also moved from Rome to London. Aurel also had a brother working in Rome whom he helped to move to London. Yet after few months in London his brother decided to move back to Rome.

a school in her hometown, Oradea, and then in a remote village school. "This [*to teach in the countryside*] would have been my prospect for the foreseeable future because it is very difficult to get a place in the city". When her au-pair visa expired she applied for a self-employed visa which was denied. At the time of our interview she was considering staying further in the UK on forged documents.

Hansi

In Romania Hansi (29) trained as a nurse in Sibiu, a city in Transylvania. After a brief working experience in a private care-home for the elderly he found it difficult to get another job. In 2000, he decided to try his luck in Italy where he heard about the demand for elderly care. After looking for a job as a carer for about two months he ended up on a building site. He worked in construction for about three years before migrating to the UK in 2003.

Pelin/Alex

Pelin (25) arrived in the UK from Romania in 2004. He joined his brother who was already living and working in the city. In Romania he trained as waiter and worked for about a year in two pizzerias in Bucharest. Similarly to other Romanian migrants who entered Britain after 2004, he first travelled through some of the new accession countries before arriving in Italy where he purchased a forged passport. He then travelled through Paris before arriving in London where he used that passport at the immigration check. His name on the passport was Alessandro and Alex became his new name in London.

Viorel and Jana (Vio, son, with them in London) + Soriana (Jana's sister)

Viorel and Jana are in their 40s. Back in Romania Viorel was a carpenter while Jana used to work as a dressmaker. Before London, Viorel tried his luck in Rome where he worked for two years (1999–2001) irregularly on several building sites together with his brother. He then decided to come to London where he arrived with a German passport. Two years later he went back to Romania to bring his wife and their six year old son. In London Viorel worked with forged documents for another two years. After that he went back to Romania again and applied for a self-employed visa which was granted to him. A dependent visa was then granted to the rest of the family at the end of 2006. *Soriana* (32), Jana's sister, came to London in 2001. Back in Romania she studied economics but did not graduate. Her plan was to come to London for six months and work so that she could earn enough money to be able to pay for her studies. She came with a student visa and was helped by Viorel to find work as a domestic. Once Jana arrived in London Soriana moved into the same house with her sister's family. When her visa expired she decided not to go back. She set up a cleaning company and applied for a self-employed visa.

Ion and Ana (Petru, their son, with them in London)

Ion (about 50) arrived in London in 2002. In Romania he was working for the local police force in a small town in the Moldova region while his wife Ana was a housewife. Before coming to London he worked for about two years in Germany and Italy. In the last three years he has been working in a small café run by an Italian family in central London where he is one of the two irregular employees. He arrived in London alone and his wife joined him in 2004. She worked for about one year doing hourly-paid cleaning in several private households before finding work in catering. One year later they were joined by their son, Petru (20), who entered the country on a student visa. He was the only one holding a regular status. Ion also had a brother working in Rome whom he helped to move to London. Yet after few months in London his brother decided to move back to Rome.

Vali and Corina (Ancuta, daughter, in Romania)

Vali (38) and Corina (36) arrived in London together on forged passports in 2003. Their daughter, four years old at the time, was left with Corina's parents. Previously in Romania, after completing their high school, and a diploma in catering for Corina, they had opened a small restaurant in their hometown not very far from Suceava, Northern Romania. In 2006, they decided to go back to Romania using the IOM Voluntary Return Programme. They returned in January 2007 but migrated again, one year later, to Spain; this time together with their daughter.

Andreea and Marin (husband, in Romania) (Ionel, son, with her in London)

Andreea (27) arrived in London with a student visa in 2003. She was not alone; she arrived with her three year old son while her husband remained in Romania. He joined them later on during my fieldwork. Andreea had just finished her undergraduate studies in Sociology in Romania when she decided to move to London to further her studies. She studied for an MSc for one year and after that she worked on short contracts for different NGOs in the field of media and human rights. Between jobs and to increase her earnings, she also worked informally as a cleaner. In 2007 Andreea applied for a self-employed visa.

Maria and Cornel (Aura, daughter born in 2008) + Dana (Maria's mother)

Maria (29) comes from Cluj, a city in Transylvania, where she studied foreign languages at university level and trained as secretary. Maria is fluent in English, French and Italian. After a few months in Italy where she joined her mother and worked as a baby-sitter, Maria decided to travel to London to join Cornel, her husband-to-be, in 2002. Cornel (29) arrived in London in 2000 and since then he has worked irregularly in construction. They married in 2007 and had a daughter in 2008. In the same year they were joined by Dana, Maria's mother. In 2012 Maria became a British citizen.

Gabriela and Ion + Anda (Gabriela's sister) and Nicu + Tudorica (Gabriela's mother) + Betti (Gabriela and Ion's daughter born in 2007)

Gabriela (34) and Ion (31) arrived in London in 2002. Back in Romania she was a midwife and he had just finished a veterinary degree. They were planning to stay in the UK for a few years to allow them to save up money. Gaby found work as cleaner and baby-sitter while Ion moved between different small jobs on building sites or as a handyman. In 2006, they were joined by Gabriela's sister, Anda and her husband Nicu. Anda came to help out and replace Gaby at her work-place during Gaby's pregnancy. In 2007, Gaby's mother, Tudorica, joined them too. Gabriela also has one cousin living in London with his wife and their children.

2.4.3.2 In Rome

In Rome I had access to seven families who disclosed their experiences. Yet central to my understanding of strategies and dynamics of migration, settlement and mobility in the city were also the numerous conversations I had with Romanian migrant workers on public transport, in the local markets, and on Sundays at the Anagnina bus/metro station.

Rodica (Alexandra, daughter, with her in Rome; + Matei, son, in Romania + Viola, Alexandra's daughter)

Rodica (40), a separated mother, was living with her daughter (24) in her

employer's house. Back in Romania she worked for a local factory and she had another younger child who was living with his father and his new partner. Alexandra also has a daughter (Viola) who was living in Romania with Rodica's mother. She joined her mother and her Italian partner in 2010. Rodica had more than 15 relatives living in Rome and surroundings, "we are a small community here" as she said.

Jana and Gheorghe (Paul, son, in Romania, later in Rome) + Gherghina (Jana's mother) + Alice (Jana and Gheorghe's daughter born in 2007)

They arrived in Rome in 2002. Jana (38) has a degree in Economics and worked as an accountant for a private company in Craiova (southern Romania) while Gheorghe (40), after completing high school worked as a postman. In Rome they work in the domestic sector and construction respectively. Their first son, Paul, was left in Romania with Jana's mother, Gherghina. They joined the family in Rome in 2007 when the second child was born. Gherghina came to help out with the two children and also to replace Jana at her workplace for six months once Alice was born. Gheorghe has another brother and one sister in Rome, an uncle and a cousin.

Liliana and Doru (Gigi, son, with them in Rome)

Doru (45) arrived in Rome in 2001 together with his brother Viorel (see above). Liliana (39) joined Doru in Rome in 2002 together with their son who was four at the time. When Doru's brother moved to the UK they also decided to try their luck in London, but after a few months the family decided to return to Italy. When I met them in Rome, Liliana, who was pregnant, was working as a domestic in two houses while Doru was employed by the Telecom phone company. They moved to London again in 2007[48].

Cristi and Cristina (Liviu, son, in Romania) + Katia (Cristi's sister in law)

Cristi (35) and Cristina (32) arrived in Rome in 2004 while their son, who was eight years old at the time, was left with Cristina's parents. He joined them later during my fieldwork. In Romania Cristina was working in a textile factory while Cristi was employed by a local construction company. In Rome Cristina worked as a domestic and baby-sitter while Cristi worked on building sites. In June 2007 they went back to Romania to take their son and they applied for a residence permit. *Katia,* Cristi's sister in law, was helped by them to find a job in Rome when she decided to come in 2007. In Romania she was working in the same textile factory as Cristina and she came to Italy while on annual leave. She worked as a domestic, carer, and baby-sitter for an Italian family where Liliana used to work. Her initial intention was to stay only for one month, yet, when we talked she seemed inclined to extend her stay[49].

Aurel and Viorica (Violeta, daughter, in Romania)

Aurel (26) and Viorica (25) arrived in Rome in 2004. After completing a vocational training in tourism and catering, they both worked in hotels and restaurants in holiday destinations on the Black Sea coast. They migrated first to Spain in 2002 then, after a two months break in Romania in 2004, Aurel came to Rome to work as a builder. Viorica was pregnant. She would leave Romania and

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[48] Liliana and Doru were living in a one bedroom apartment which they were sharing with another couple (Cristi and Cristina). When they decided, for the second time, to join Doru's brother, Viorel, in London, I moved into their bedroom and lived with Cristi and Cristina for two months.

[49] Six months later I talked to Cristina over the phone and asked about Katia: she was still in Rome.

join Aurel at the end of 2004 when her daughter was six months old. She started "job sharing"[50] as live-in carer together with a cousin of hers already working in Rome. Aurel and Viorica moved into Cristi and Cristina's apartment when I moved out. It was the first time they had moved in together since their arrival in Rome.

Aura and Ionel (Tiberiu, son, with them in Rome)

Aura (38) was Rodica's sister-in-law. She arrived in Rome in 2001 together with her husband. She started work immediately in an Italian family where her main duties were to look after the old grandmother and clean the house. She was also living in that house. Her husband worked in construction for few months after finding work as a handyman for a local church.

Dana

Dana (53) was a divorced mother[51]. Back in Romania she worked in a local grocery store. She arrived in Rome in 2000 and since then she worked as a domestic. In 2002 she was joined by her daughter who, after a few months, decided to move to London. Dana joined her in 2008 when her granddaughter was born.

2.4.4. The interviews

Besides numerous informal discussions recorded in my fieldwork diary while conducting participant observation, eighteen in-depth narrative interviews, ranging between two and four hours, were conducted in London and fourteen in Rome. To complement respondents' accounts, I also had informal discussions with some of the respondents' relatives back home during four short trips to Romania in 2007 and 2008.

I conducted the main in-depth narrative interviews in Romanian and I either tape-recorded them or took detailed notes if respondents did not consent to being taped or if the situation appeared to me as not conducive for a tape-recorded interview. The research diary was very useful in those cases as it allowed me not only to somehow register those interviews but also to record observations and information gathered during casual talks with migrants, their relatives and other individuals met in the field.

As narrative interviews should be perceived as the respondents' constructions of the reality of migration, in order to keep distortion of the data to a minimum, I decided to present fragments of interviews as such rather than offering a more narrative translation of their words. The researcher's own interpretation already carries significant weight when research is conducted in the same language in which the final text will be written. When research is conducted in a different language from the one used for publishing, the nuances of language as well as the contextual inscription of specific terms may inevitably be distorted or lost in translation (Temple and Edwards, 2002; Temple and Young, 2004). Respondents' words may in fact be distorted by the researcher's own

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[50] The practice of work-sharing will be discussed in Chapter 5.
[51] Maria's mother (see above).

decisions on the kind of terms to be used in the process of translation. Furthermore, non-verbal modes of communication, such as voice inflexions or gestures, so crucial in expressing feelings, may also be lost in the transcription process.

During interviews I asked my respondents to tell me about themselves and their lives, after which I emphasised certain periods of time and picked up on events that seemed particularly relevant for my research purposes and which I would then ask them to explore further. In this way, the interviews came to be about their experiences in general, rather than migration solely, and respondents could present events central to their lived experience while at the same time expressing their opinion and impressions of the event narrated.

Some of the main topics investigated during interviews concerned education and employment before migration, family life in Romania, different forms and dynamics embedded within the migratory experience, migration strategies, access to work and services, the role of the family, transnational networks and practices, feelings about life in migration, future prospects and desires. In doing these interviews, I focused on and tried to understand, bit by bit, on one hand the discontinuity created by migration within relationships with family and with friends of the community of origin more generally; on the other, the readjustments produced in relation to identity and networks at distance through the enacting of transnational social practices.

Furthermore, as the fieldwork for this research happened during a crucial time for the Romanian migration, participant observation and interviews were conducted before and after the expected date (January 2007) of Romania's EU accession. This event gave me the opportunity to explore migrants' expectations, and effective changes or disillusionments in relation to a significant structural change that inevitably was to impinge on their transnational migratory experience. When interviews were carried out after January 2007, retrospective questions about living and working experience and expectations before EU enlargement were asked.

2.5. The strength of narrative interviews

The narrative approach, therefore, was central to my work for this dissertation for it appeared relevant in two ways: first, it helped me find out information from the migrants without leading their answers; second, it enabled me to fit together the pieces of the puzzle and direct myself towards new questions that would contribute to my narrative of Romanian migration in the two cities. Narrative interviews therefore

provided longitudinal information, allowing for the understanding of a longer period associated with more stages in migration.

Furthermore, the advantage of narrative interviews derives from the fact that storytelling constitutes a natural way of communication, meaning that the interview situation can be transformed into a casual conversation. This opens the discussion, and the respondent feels (somewhat) free to give his opinion and also discuss how events developed. The information received through stories is not limited to events that took place and the factual experience of migration, but includes also attitudes, values and beliefs. A further benefit is that the stories are contextualised by the migrants and the migration picture is thus more consistent. Therefore, the information as a whole received through narrative interviews is rich, providing the researcher with contextualised material and dense information.

With regard to the *reliability* of the method, however, all the narratives need to be read bearing in mind that the narrator's story is also influenced by her opinions, ideologies, feelings, attitudes as well as by the context in which the narration is produced. As such, migrants' narratives develop a logic of their own that restricts access to some events "in" the story while disclosing others. The narrator may intentionally exaggerate and embellish her account in relation to specific events, while neglecting other things altogether because they do not fit in with the narrative logic.

For Anthias (2002a: 511), interview narratives "are produced in relation to socially available and hegemonic discourses and practices", but also in relation to the immediate and broader contexts, and their understanding and interpretation, to which they are a dialectic response.

It is crucial to bear these elements in mind in order to avoid what Bourdieu (1987) termed "the biographical illusion" in relation to much life history-based research and more generally the tendency of much interview-based research to "naturalise" interview data as a "stable set of *social facts* that have an objective existence independent of the linguistic and contextual settings in which they are *expressed*" (Briggs, 2004: 1055). Of course, a reflection upon the researcher's positionality may also disclose reasons for respondents' behaviour during interview, as interviews are a joint act/construction between two actors (Schwandt, 1997: 79). By engaging in this type of interview, therefore, the researcher also needs to "position [herself] in relation to [her] research, consider the impact of research encounters on data, and reflect on what researchers

'bring' to their investigation and how this impacts on what they 'discover'" (Knowles, 2006: 394).

Without minimising the importance and usefulness of other methods for the collection of information on social relations, Anthias argues that biographical narratives are "of particular interest to scholars of collective imaginings around belonging" because of their potential to unveil "the ways individuals understand and interpret their place in the world" (2002: 498).

What I therefore aimed at when deciding to listen to migrants' stories about themselves and their lives, was to try and tap into the (micro) everyday events and practices through which larger (macro) processes of inclusion and exclusion take place and/or boundaries between "us" and "them" are expressed as well as produced/reproduced. The strength of the biographical/narrative approach is in fact given by its ability to reveal the situatedness and rootedness of migration in the flow of everyday life, as the method itself reveals the contextual, situational, and relational (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 2004; Rose, 1997) character of the knowledge "co-construction" in the research encounter (Knowles, 2006). Using this method, which gives particular significance to the dimension of time, carefully observed during interviews, the researcher is therefore able to contrast instrumentalist views which consider migration as an event occurring at a given moment in time. In other words, the meaning of individual migration decisions cannot be fully appreciated without framing them in the wider everyday routine which precedes and follows the migration act itself and which is responsible for both processes of identification and practices actuated in migration (Findlay and Li, 1997).

2.6. One last methodological note on the researcher's positionality

While a major reason for using people's testimonies has been to explore my aims in greater detail, another motivation for my choice of methods comes out of my overall theoretical approach. Underlying this approach is the awareness that social research is neither univocal nor unquestionable. It is a discursive terrain open to strategic representation and contestation over meanings involving a constellation of social actors with different ideologies, political agendas and powers of negotiation. Hence, it is essential to discuss and be aware of the positionality of social actors in their claim for truth, including the researcher who is him/herself a social actor (see Alexander, 2004; L. T. Smith, 1999; Haraway, 1991).

In other words, being reflexive about one's own positionality represents a fundamental process, which has to run throughout the entire research and in which the researcher reflects on how she is incorporated in webs of power relations and how that has an effect on methods, interpretations, and knowledge production (Mountz, 2002; England, 1994; Katz, 1994).

One of my previous experiences as a researcher working on a project on irregular labour migrants in London emphasises the difference in perception migrants interviewed had of me when I introduced myself as a researcher working on a project on migrants' integration rather than a student interested in learning about migrants' lives. To better illustrate this situation I recall my first conversation with Maria, one of my respondents in London whom I first met for a previous project. At the time of our meeting she had an irregular migratory status and was living in London with her Romanian partner (future husband), also an irregular migrant. The following extract from my fieldwork diary provides a short account of the very suspicious behaviour her partner, and Maria, had towards this researcher wanting to ask a few questions about her experience in London, despite the fact that I was introduced by one of her best friends.

> I've called M. on her mobile. Instead of her, C., her fiancé answered my call. I told him my name and asked for M. but he was reluctant to pass the phone on to her. When she eventually picked up the phone I could still hear C.'s voice next to her. I told her that I was E.'s (my contact and M's best friend) friend and that I wanted to meet her for a chat about her life in London. She said that she knew about me and that it was fine to meet and tell me her story. Nevertheless, in a few seconds, I could hear C.'s voice in the background, he was worried. M. asked if we could do the interview by phone. I said that I was not used to doing interviews by phone and I asked her again if it would be possible to meet her somewhere in London. She paused for a little while and then said that she would call me back later and agree a place to meet, but she wanted to be assured that I'd be coming alone to the appointment[52].

Being a researcher, as a profession, could therefore be perceived by respondents as a potential threat, a condition experienced by other researchers in the field. Stoller (1997), for instance, recalls how some of the West African migrants among whom she was conducting research in New York, believed that she was an undercover cop (Stoller 1997: 90). A similar situation was also experienced by another Romanian researcher who recently conducted fieldwork among Romanian migrants in Milan (Anghel, 2010).

Entering the field as a student changed considerably the way I was perceived, and accepted, by respondents. A relationship of (quasi) trust was built with my respondents for my position was felt as less threatening. In some cases my respondents felt almost

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[52] From my field notes, Oxford, 2005.

"paternalistic" towards me and empowered by being able to help me in my studies through recalling their migratory experience.

Perceived national belonging was another factor impacting the development of field relations. I took for granted that my Romanian origins and a good knowledge of the language would ease the interaction with my Romanian respondents. What came as a surprise was that my being also Italian would prove helpful more than once, both in terms of access and of receiving more detailed information. Because I was identified by my respondents as also Italian and therefore, in their perspective, in a more privileged position because of my citizenship, I was not considered as being "in competition" with them. Some of my respondents, in fact, revealed that they would not have answered so openly questions about their work or immigration status, for instance, to another Romanian as they heard about Romanians being reported to the police by co-nationals wanting to get their job.

Besides my nationality, also sharing my life history with them and explaining that I have lived in Italy since I was a child, meant that, at times, I was perceived less as an insider – thus less familiar with, for instance, life in Romania or life as a Romanian migrant. The "taken-for-granted" of my respondents would not always have matched mine. The fact that I was speaking very good Romanian and that I was at times acting in a familiar way, could have paradoxically worked against me in particular situations. Yet because they were made aware of my Italian belonging, respondents did not always assume that I would understand their experiences back in Romania and therefore were more careful, and keen to provide me with more details, when telling about their life before and during migration. The overlapping (Mullings, 1999) between my position as an "insider" (because identified as Romanian) and at the same time an "outsider" (because identified as Italian) therefore came to be an asset in those cases.

What challenged my position most, however, was the way power relations were negotiated between me and my respondents when access was gained through their employers. This happened a few times during fieldwork in Rome where, as mentioned before, many of my Italian friends' families would employ a Romanian domestic worker. In those cases, most of our conversations happened in their employers' home, while they were continuing with their chores. Although their employers were never around, at least in the first stages of our meetings, I could feel how conversations were more formal and women were somehow hesitant in providing me with many details, especially about their status and working arrangements and conditions. Reflecting on

the "social circumstances" in which our encounters happened (Knowles, 2006: 393), and on their impact on the narratives provided by respondents, allowed me to both decide upon the strategies of data collection during fieldwork as well as on the meanings behind particular accounts. In those cases, speaking respondents' own language, starting conversations mostly by me telling about my life, and most of all meeting my respondents more than once and in different places, helped to establish some trust and therefore achieve a more relaxed atmosphere.

Besides my age and ethnic identification, gender also played a role in my relationship with respondents in the field. During fieldwork, I mainly talked to women (wives) and the interviews I conducted with men were mainly facilitated by their wives. In the first instance this was related to the way the topic of my research was perceived by my respondents. In fact, by deciding to have a focus on families rather than on individuals, I was told by some of the male respondents present when I first met both husband and wife that their wives will be "for sure more suitable in answering my questions". On another occasion, one of my male respondents told me: "I'll actually go out now and leave you girls to talk about these things. You understand each other better".

In the first instance I thought this might be a limitation as far as information concerning men's experiences was concerned. And in fact, in those cases in which respondents were met once only, and the in-depth interview was not followed by further meetings, I had to gather this kind of information mainly through the accounts women gave me about their husbands' experiences. In those cases then, I was aware of the fact that I was only able to partially access the lives of the people I was interested in. Yet when I managed to gain further access and spend time living with some of the families, this helped me to overcome those limits in some way by engaging in routine conversations with every member of the family, men included. In those cases the material gathered was perhaps even richer and multifaceted for it had been accessed from different entry points and, as the last section of Chapter Six will show, revealed relations between different spheres (i.e. impact of work conditions on family relations) of migrants' life.

What was almost impossible for me during fieldwork was to access men's workplaces. Although work was the main topic they were discussing with me, only once was I able to accompany one of my respondents close to the building site he was working on. In contrast, in both London and Rome, more than once I met or

accompanied women to their workplace and therefore was able to see and talk about their duties in their working environment.

I believe, therefore, that differences in the ways I was perceived when introduced by other Romanians or by Italians, as well as different reactions related to my position as a woman, and as a Romanian but of Italian nationality, have to be taken into account throughout the different chapters of this thesis where specific topics and issues are scrutinised.

My identification as both a "native" researcher and an "outsider" because an Italian citizen, thus not "fully Romanian", is therefore open to question and calls for a critical self-analysis of my positionality, as respondents would renegotiate our relationship on a continuous basis by placing me in various categories. I believe that the use of "reflexivity as a form of managing power relations" (Ali, 2006: 477) in the research encounter is needed here. What I thus have to acknowledge, in line with the feminist methodological debate surrounding the production of knowledge in research, is that knowledge is partial and situated and that the same can be said about the information gathered from my respondents and used in this research to inform its conclusions (Haraway, 1991; Harding, 2004; Rose, 1997; Sherman Heyl, 2001).

This information was certainly influenced by the ways in which my "cultural identities" (Song and Parker, 1995) were perceived by my respondents at different stages of our encounter and in the different locations where we conducted our interviews or conversations and by the "commonalities" or "differences" respondents could claim with me on the basis of language, gender, class, personal background or appearance (ibid.). What this means is also that the way in which respondents position and reposition the researcher during fieldwork always impact on the results of the research (Rose, 1997; Anthias, 2002b).

As interviews addressed life histories and focused on personal as well as professional details, some of the respondents may have felt that the disclosure of such information, as well as their views on the topics under investigation, may have an effect on their lives. In order to avoid this, respondents were assured that information gathered from them was going to be treated with regard for their concerns, applying at all times the ethical principles of confidentiality and anonymity. Indeed, respondents' real names, or other characteristics that may lead to their identification, are never mentioned throughout the dissertation.

2.7. Conclusions

In this chapter, besides providing a description of fieldwork and research methods used in the field, I have tried to show the link between methods and the theoretical and political stance of my study, and the subject of my research. In addition, the chapter has focused on the theoretical potential and therefore the significance in-depth narrative interviews have when comparative research of a qualitative nature is conducted on migration.

I have therefore illustrated how the emphasis on migrants' "personal verbal narratives and life histories" (Ali, 2003) enabled me to examine individual aspects embedded in the general structural and social environment in which migrants are located (Boyle et al., 1998, Halfacree and Boyle, 1993). The use of in-depth narrative interviews enabled me to set peoples' experiences of migration within their wider life experience. In this way, the analysis could then be sensitive to people's backgrounds and reference points and better understand different answers given by different people, apparently sharing the same situation, to the same question.

In actual fact – apart from general indications – it is difficult to translate, maybe even more than for single-sited ethnography, the comparative multi-sited approach into a linear and precise research design made up of a sequence of coherently connected stages (Hage, 2005; Foner, 2005). In my research, the in-depth exploration of Romanian migration has aimed to enable me to consider multiple variables that control migrants' experiences and in the process show the intricate relationship between nationality/religion, immigration statuses, gender, and class. Therefore, using a method which allows discussing migrants' experiences and voices specifically, and which allows comparison between different settings and therefore people's different (or similar) strategies and practices used in those settings, adds a theoretical potential to the research: namely the extent to which they give space to migrants' complexity, contingency, agency and resistance, challenging generalisations about "other cultures", paramount to racist boundaries, and bringing out individuals commonly reduced to merely *immigrants* or *workforce* (Lawson, 2000). In such ways research can also become an instrument allowing us to hear people's ideas, memories and interpretations in their own words and through their direct involvement in the construction of data about their lives.

Finally, engaging in comparison has proved to be a useful exercise which helps to understand the contexts within which migrants find themselves at the moment of arrival,

the position of these two settings in the broader evolution of migration and settlement patterns across Europe, and the influence exercised by the conditions in countries of immigration on migrants' decisions and practices (Brettell and Hollifield, 2000; Soysal 1994; Joppke 1998).

The next chapter starts by providing a snapshot of the migratory context and aims at embedding migrants' narratives/experiences in the historical and socio-economic contingencies, as well as in the geo-political processes and institutional mechanisms that impacted their transnational experiences.

Chapter 3 Contexts of migration

3.1. Introduction

In my respondents' stories there was a continuous dialectic between here and there and present and past, which despite being articulated differently by different respondents, was an important constant in many aspects of their lives. An exploration of the contexts in which their migration has taken place is therefore crucial as it allows a better understanding of their trajectory, and of the entire system of determinants for migration.

The first part of this chapter looks at the national context of origin and gives some hints concerning the causes at the origin of transnational mobility from Romania. It also illustrates the main internal and international migration periods and some of the main mechanisms regulating international mobility before and after the collapse of the Socialist state in December 1989. Finally the chapter looks at developments of national migration policies in the two national contexts in which respondents' migration experiences have taken place: Britain and Italy.

The intent behind this overview is twofold: first, by looking at the migrants' national context of origin, it aims to provide a background for respondents' individual stories useful for understanding the intersection of national structural factors and migrant workers' decisions, projects, and agency. Secondly, by illustrating the two different policy contexts of immigration and their developments within the EU framework, it wishes to offer a European perspective which locates Romanian transnational migration within a broader framework of understanding of the current processes of East–West mobility and settlement within Europe.

3.2. Romania: from "tele-revolution" to post-socialist transformations

It was winter time (*in Bucharest*). Christmas was approaching and houses were bustling with joy and hope. Everyone, kids and adults were waiting for one *gift* that year. And we all got it, oh yes, we all got it. But it didn't come under the Christmas tree or hanging in the grandma's socks above the fire place. It arrived, how I shall say it….. *on air,* everywhere at the same time. Everyone was sitting in front of the TV, I bet every single person in the whole country was sitting in front of a television that day. I and my grandmother had our slice of Christmas cake and our glasses ready. We were waiting, everyone was waiting, "ready, aim, fire!", prac, prac, prac, prac!! We all got our *gift*! He (*Ceauşescu*) was lying dead on the floor; they both

(*Ceauşescu and his wife*) were dead on the cold cement. And we thought our troubles were coming to an end[53].

During the 1980s, Ceausescu started to implement his "ten years reconstruction plan" which was developed in parallel with a process of repayment of Romania's foreign debt. In practical terms, what this meant for the Romanian population is that basic goods as well as services were severely rationed, and this included television broadcasting which was reduced to about two hours daily (Campeanu, 1993: 110). But certainly Ceausescu did not envisage that his regime's fall and even his and his wife's own capital punishment were going to be watched on TV by the entire nation. The December 1989 unrest in Romania in fact became known as the "Tele-Revolution" and ended with the live execution of Ceausescu and his wife on Christmas day. Yet what happened after that did not quite fulfil everyone's expectations. As one of my respondents recalled:

> We were expecting everything to change from the next day. After all those years we were all convinced the he (Ceausescu) was our only problem and that once he was removed from power, our problems were solved. We thought the West was just there waiting to help us. Well, that was not quite so. Things were different and we had to find the way to get by. (Andreea, London, 2006)

Expecting a sudden growth in living standards and overall quality of life as the Socialist state came to an end, the population's disappointment came rather quickly. After 1989, Romania entered what has been publicly defined as the "transition" phase from socialism to democracy and market economy (Verdery, 1996). Yet that process was not going to be as linear and unilateral as the term "transition" implied. As Kideckel argued, what happened next was not post-socialism but "neocapitalism – a system that reinterprets the main principles of capitalism in a new way and that promotes social injustice much more than does the Western model from which it derives" (Kideckel, 2002 cited in Wersching, 2011)[54]. In fact, in the ten years that followed the 1989 Revolution, Romania's economic performance and individuals' economic livelihood deteriorated continuously, mostly because of erroneous and slow implementing of economic and structural reforms.

One of the first and maybe best-known features of the post-Socialist economic transformation was the abolition of the land collectivisation in 1991, followed by a process of property restitution which started in the same year. Yet, strong personal

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[53] From the blue notebook of a Romanian teenager, 1995.
[54] The use of the term "transformation"/"post-socialist transformation" has been considered a better expression descibing strong transformations in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe (Verdery, 1996).

interests prevailed in a process that was accompanied by the weakening of state structures and the spread of corruption (Verdery, 1996).

For many Romanians, in particular in rural areas, the state figured as a remote entity; corruption was the main form of exchange and interaction at all levels: from the ticket collector on the train who will allow you to *mergi pe blat*[55] to the embassy employee, from the policemen on the street to the politicians. Corruption became an endemic problem of Romanian post-socialist society, to the point of becoming one of the principal criteria to be evaluated in the process of accession to the EU.

The move towards a market economy therefore became the reason for a profound crisis for many Romanian families. Unemployment increased and anger, fear and stress were the prevalent emotions experienced by the disempowered urban working class (Kideckel, 2002), but also by families in the rural areas. If before those families could count on two incomes – often men were commuting for work to the nearby factories while women were working in the agricultural cooperatives (CAPs[56]) – with the closure of factories and rural cooperatives, they were forced to rely only on the small income derived from the *restituted land*[57].

The absence of *work*, which in the socialist period had shaped people's lives in and outside the workplace (see Kideckel, 2002; Stan, 2004), had for many translated into an absence *per se* (Stenning, 2005). By shifting towards market-economy, labour had lost its value, being replaced by consumption and a constant feeling of failure for not being able to achieve those new cultural aims (ibid.). As Verdery puts it, in the first decade after the collapse of the Socialist state, Romania was experiencing not only a severe economic crisis but a social one too[58].

A general sense of hopelessness characterised those years when health, living standards, and consumption possibilities deteriorated and there was an increase in general poverty[59] (Perrotta, 2010). Reverse internal migration, this time from urban contexts to rural areas, was becoming another important social process in post-socialist

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[55] "go without a ticket in exchange for few cents" – an example of the redefined version of *blat,* the mutual aid system developed within the Soviet economy, already mentioned in Chapter Two. A system of monetary favours, based on power dynamics related to individuals' social position, spread during the Socialist state but even more since its collapse, and penetrated people's interpersonal relations in different spheres of daily life.

[56] CAP (Cooperatives for the Agricultural Production) were kolkhoz-like cooperatives (see Sljukic, 2002).

[57] Small plot of land given to former CAP members in the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution.

[58] "People's conceptions of their world, the parameters of their long-standing survival strategies, their sense of who is friend and who is enemy, the social context in which they had defined themselves and anchored their lives, all had been overthrown" (Verdery, 1996: 135).

[59] About half of the population was living on the poverty line and three and half million people were living in absolute poverty in 1992 (Perrotta, 2010).

Romania[60] (Sandu et al. 2004). In those rural areas people could work on their small plots of *restituted land* or just sell them and use the money to migrate abroad.

In 1996 new elections were held and the new right wing government appeared to bring about a change in political discourse, prompting an acceleration of the process of privatisation and industrial dismissal. During the second half of the 1990s Romania also witnessed the arrival of foreign investors, Italians being among the most active (Sacchetto, 2004). They often established their business on the site of existing industries, and made use of the local, cheap workforce[61] (ibid.).

Yet a greater dynamism of the Romanian economy could be observed only with the beginning of the new millennium. In the years between 2001 and 2008, GDP and wages were rising, inflation was decreasing, and exports were also intensifying. Unemployment also diminished in those years, with a rate that fell to a single figure level of 7%, and some sectors even witnessed a labour shortage. Indeed, it was in those years that Romania started experiencing in-migration for work from the neighbouring states and from Asia.

Consumption of goods was also greater than before, as may be evidenced by the mushrooming in the capital and in other main cities, of large shopping centres resembling the Western dream of leisure and consumerism tied together. In 2006 yet another shopping centre, at present the largest in Europe, was finalised on the edge of one of the most deprived neighbourhoods of Bucharest. Interestingly, it was built on the same spot where an enormous food hall was planned to be built during the Socialist regime. The project was never completed at the time, and for many years after 1989, the fragile skeleton of the enormous building was standing almost as a living reminder of the megalomania of that regime. The population even gave it a name, "the hunger circus", referring to the lack of food that at the time characterised even the smallest grocery, let alone a huge hall like the one planned. Now a shiny building comprising a food hall, a supermarket, several boutiques, cafés and a skating rink aspired to be an everyday reminder of Romania's "return" to the "civilized West". Yet, people from the neighbourhood are still calling it the "hunger circus", this time hinting at the incapacity of many to purchase the expensive products on offer. What this story reveals therefore, is that despite the fact that the macroeconomic stability of the country improved, not

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[60] Movements from urban centres to the countryside outnumbered those in the opposite direction from 1996 onwards (INSEE, 2006: 80).
[61] For many years the monthly minimum wage was less than 100 Euros.

everyone was a *winner of the transition*, as precarious living conditions were still endured in urban and especially rural areas of the country.

Furthermore, it was in those same years that the signs of another social phenomenon, international migration, started to surface, stimulated by Romanians' overall disillusion with the "transition"[62]. Especially after the Schengen visa relaxation in 2002, it was international migration for work that "brought the reserves of the Romanian National Bank to an unprecedented level[63], stimulating consumption and economic growth"[64]. When the 2002 Census results were published, it was evident that the country had lost more than 1.1 million – i.e., around 5% – of its population in the previous decade (Table 5).

Table 5: Population change in Romania (1948–2002)

Census	Population	Population change between censuses	Natural increase[*]	Net migration (population change – natural increase)[*]
1948	15,872,624[a]	-	:	:
1956	17,489,450[a]	1,616,826	:	:
1966	19,103,163[a]	1,613,713	:	:
1977	21,559,910[a]	2,456,747	2,248,400[**]	208,347
1992	22,810,035[a]	1,250,125	1,767,467[a]	-517,342
2002	21,680,974[b]	-1,129,061	-327,957[a,b]	-801,104

[*]For the periods 1966–1976, 1977–1991, and 1992–2002, in total [**]Estimation based on annual averages

Sources: Csedo (2009); own calculations from a (INSSE 2003) b (INSSE 2004)

And the socio-economic development did not seem to stop people from looking for a better life abroad. Research conducted in 2006, in fact, showed how 9 per cent of the adult population and 23 per cent of the Romanian young population between 18 and 24 years old, who were perceiving migration as a "resource generating practice", were planning to spend 2007 in a foreign country (Horváth, 2008: 779). This behaviour is in part the result of Romanians' earnings abroad and their remittances, but it is also related to specific migratory and working contexts experienced by Romanian migrants in Europe and to their impact on migrants' status and related positionings within specific transnational social fields.

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[62] Despite its substantial proportions, the migratory phenomenon has not been looked at in much detail within the numerous studies on "transition" in Eastern and Central Europe. One of the very few studies analysing the links between those two phenomena is Cingolani's (2009) ethnography of Romanian migration to Turin in Italy.

[63] "In 2006, migrants sent €4,797 billion home through official channels alone" (Lazaroiu and Alexandru, 2008).

[64] Chireac, B. (2002) "Cerşetorii depart Parisul de Bucureşti?" *Adevărul* 1 October.

In the following section I will illustrate some of the main periods of migration from Romania as well as exploring patterns of mobility and changes in the strategies of migration according to transnational geo-political transformations and national regulations in migrants' contexts of migration. This allows us to see Romanian migration in a long-term perspective and therefore reveal continuities within the process.

3.3. Migration from Romania: main periods and mechanisms of migration

If we understand migration as a social process, we cannot try to understand current processes of international migration from Romania to other EU countries without framing them within the larger models of human mobility which characterised Romania before and after 1989. In trying to do so in fact, a dynamic web of different but interrelated types of spatial mobility – such as internal displacement and daily commuting, regular trans-border commuting, circular or seasonal migration, and long-term temporary or permanent migration – can be traced. Moreover, by looking at those characteristics of the migratory flows, and keeping in mind that overlapping and transformations of plans and practices always occur, scholars have identified some main periods in the history of migration from Romania (Diminescu, 2003; Sandu, 2006).

Apart from those escaping the country and asking for asylum on political grounds in their countries of arrival, Romanian citizens who left the country before 1989 were mainly members of ethnic minorities[65] – Romanian Jews, Germans and Hungarians – or beneficiaries of family reunion through international treaties on human rights (Weber, 2003).

Furthermore, there were limited numbers of workers recruited by state agencies to work in foreign countries like Iran, Syria or Egypt, as well as people living in communities close to the borders who were also allowed to take limited numbers of short trips every year in the bordering countries. In actual fact, those trips were an occasion for buying and selling consumer goods[66].

Looking instead at international migration from Romania since the beginning of 1990, scholars in the field have identified some main periods of Romanian migration abroad (Baldwin Edwards 2005: 2; Diminescu, 2003; Sandu, 2006).

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[65] Ethnic migration emerged putatively due to international support for Romania's ethnic minorities, as despite "the early years of socialist internationalism … [nationalism] gradually crept back in to greater or lesser degrees" (Verdery, 1996: 85).

[66] This type of migration also continued in the immediate aftermath of 1989 when people were practising occasional or frequent trade with near or far off countries, or trans-border commuting for work.

1) 1990–1994 – intense ethnic/religious and asylum seekers' migration; pioneers trying out different strategies of shuttle-migration and petty trade

Overall, two main groups migrated in those years: members of ethnic minorities (mainly Germans, Hungarians and Roma), and people who had participated in the revolution and who feared the return to power of the Communist regime[67]. Those flows were mostly characterised by permanent stay, while temporary migration was still rather low. Migrants were leaving predominantly from urban areas (59%) rather than rural (41%), and they were predominantly male (88%) (Sandu, 2006).

Together with ethnic relations, religiously-based networks have also been significant in initiating international mobility from Romania. Yet despite the importance of the Orthodox Church as the leading religious institution in Romania, other faith-based networks have been more active in the development of the migratory process. Some examples were Catholic migrants from villages in eastern Romania who were able to get better accommodation and labour market incorporation by using their religious ties to the Catholic priests in Italy (Sandu, 2000; Stan, 2005), or neo-protestants from the same region who were helped by religious organisations to move to Germany and Spain (Şerban 2000). Similarly, Adventist villagers from the northern side of Romania were helped within their religious network to move to Italy (Serban, 2000), and Torino in particular (Cingolani, 2008)[68].

In those same years, *shuttle migration* of people living on the border (Fox, 2007) and petty trade to former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Poland, and Hungary, were also some of the strategies which had already developed in the years before 1989 but which increased to cope with the changing economic reality (Burawoy and Verdery, 1999) and institutional lack of predictability (Gülfer Ihlamur, 2010). Petty traders were among the first to experience Europe, and to look internationally for alternative economic niches while maintaining their residence in Romania. Their practices subsequently expanded and many become pioneers of labour migration (Diminescu, 2003).

2) 1994–2002: growing circular migration, irregular migration and human trafficking; moreover, from 1999 there appeared small recruitment policies

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[67] Between 1990 and 2000 Romania was second in the top five countries of origin for asylum seekers in the EU, after the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and before Turkey. The majority of the 400,000 Romanian citizens seeking asylum in other EU countries came in the early 1990s, when persecution of Roma and other ethnic minorities was also happening in Romania (Castles and Miller, 2009: 194).

[68] In the already mentioned study of migration from the village of Dobrotesti, Serban (2000) observes how, incidentally, some of the individuals involved in international migration were also members of the Adventist Church which had an increasingly positive perception of international migration. Those migrants used the network of Adventist believers to move abroad and establish migration routes. Afterwards, the Orthodox believers also started to migrate, often helped by their Adventist relatives.

During this second stage labour migration abroad augmented, being triggered significantly by the rise in domestic poverty, the return migration from cities to villages, and by the decline of permanent international migration (Sandu et al. 2004). Migrants' provenance also started to change, with an increase of younger migrants coming from rural areas (Sandu, 2006). Destinations started to change too[69] with migrants moving increasingly towards countries like France, Italy, Spain, Greece but also Canada, Ireland, Britain and the United States (Perrotta, 2010: 26). The migratory flow was however still limited, due to the visa restriction for accessing the Schengen area, while illegal mobility increased thanks to weak (and easily corruptible) border controls.

3)   2002–2007: Relaxation of visa requirements in the Schengen area

The year 2002 constituted a third turning point in the dynamics of the Romanian migration system. It marked the beginning of the free circulation of Romanians into the Schengen area as the need for an entry visa in Schengen countries was dropped. According to the criteria for travelling abroad from January 2002 to May 2006, Romanian nationals needed to be able to show €500 in cash (lowered to €300 from October 2005) at the border checkpoint, health insurance, passport, a return ticket and the booking of accommodation or an invitation from somebody who would guarantee accommodation. This significant change meant that the act of migrating shifted from being a "highly selective" process - open mainly to those who had enough money to pay for the costs, besides having a strong "social capital" - to a "more accessible" one, as costs were significantly lowered[70] and thus people from more diverse economic and social backgrounds started to engage in migration abroad (Sandu, 2004).

This change had a visible impact on the profile of the migrant population from Romania. Migrants in fact started to be almost equally male (56%) and female (44%), while the difference in terms of provenience from rural or urban areas was also more balanced - 49% versus 51%. Their profile changed also in terms of age with almost half of the migrant population being in between 15 and 29 years old (48%) and there was also a significant proportion of unmarried migrants (31%). Areas of departure were also scattered throughout the country as the importance of the ethnicity criterion, which linked emigration to specific regions of Romania, declined. Countries of Southern Europe became increasingly Romanians' favourite destinations. Data from the country

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[69] In particular migration to Germany declined because of the implementation of quotas for Eastern European migrants (Anghel, 2008: 19).

[70] Indeed, up to 2002, visa costs on the black market rose to around €1000, or double the amount needed for travelling after 2002. Moreover, the €500 was often presented at the border by the same people providing transportation, therefore included, as a service, within the price paid for the trip.

of origin show how, in 2006, 33% of Romanian migrants for work were living in Italy, 26% in Spain, 13% in the US and 4% in Germany and Hungary (Lazăroiu and Alexandru, 2008).

Strategies for migration to Schengen countries as well as to countries outside the Schengen space changed (Elrick and Ciobanu, 2009), and this migration has been defined as *economic-driven* migration, as temporary or circular migration, or even as *commuting* between home and countries offering jobs (Diminescu, 2003; Sandu, 2004). Migrants would often have a regular immigration status for the first few months of their stay, but would lose it by overstaying when their documents expired, or infringing the conditions of residence – through working, for example. Following regularisation programmes, a very common procedure in some of the old EU countries, such as Italy and Spain for instance, many of them became *regular* again (Schuster, 2005; Reyneri, 1999).

4)   2007 – EU Accession

In January 2007, Romania and Bulgaria (A2 accession countries) were the two new states to join the EU. Citizens of the two countries were granted the right to travel freely anywhere in the EU, but limitations, as far as access to labour market is concerned, were put in place by most of the EU countries – the next paragraphs will illustrate conditions for accessing the labour markets of the UK and Italy.

What this fourth turning point has meant for Romanian migrant workers is one of the aspects still in need of research and is certainly central to my analysis. Most probably, based on recent estimated figures presented in the Introduction of this dissertation, the flow of international migration from Romania has amplified and diversified[71]. Yet, what is of greater significance is the fact that the liberalisation of Romanians' mobility within the EU has allowed a shift in legal immigration status for many migrant workers. What this mobility of status has meant in actual fact for many Romanians who were already settled and were working in the old member states of EU is one of the features of the living experiences of migration this research has been examining.

3.4. The Italian context

"Mediterranean immigration model" is the definition most commonly used in relation to general patterns of in/out migration in the Italian context (Pugliese, 2002;

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[71] It now includes all age groups, from children who either migrated with their parents or were born abroad, to people in their 60s who have joined their children abroad mostly to help in the household.

King and Zontini, 2000; King et al. 1997). The definition may apply to all Southern European countries and highlights a number of features which characterise the Italian (Mediterranean) situation within the broader patterns of migration in Europe. Among those: the progressive replacement of emigration with in-migration for almost two decades since the early 1970s; the constant rely on migrant workers in sectors such as agriculture and services (in particular for care and domestic work); the strongly segmented labour market along ethnic/national and gendered lines; the vast underground economy which offer work opportunities to irregular workers; the late introduction of a legislation in the area of immigration and the predominance of "emergency" type of regulations; and limited implementation of social integration procedures (Pugliese, 1989, 2002; IDOS, 2004; Bonifazi, 1998 [2007]; Bonifazzi et al. 2009).

As far as its migrant population is concerned, the Italian context presents a polycentric situation with migrants originating from more than 191 countries (IDOS, 2004: 13). Among those, six migrant collectivities have experienced a process of stabilisation in the last 20 years: the Moroccan, the Albanian, the Philippine, the Chinese, the Tunisian and, despite its recent history of migration, the Romanian too (ibid.). Recent geopolitical changes within Europe have therefore accentuated the "Europeanisation" of the immigrant population and the transition from a historically largely Muslim population to an increasingly Christian one (Pugliese, 2002). Comparing the size of these migrant communities as it appeared in the 2001 census and at the beginning of 2006, Central and Eastern Europeans have grown from less than 440,000 (32.7% of the total) to 1.1 million (41.1%), with an absolute increase of about 670,000 individuals – almost half of the overall growth of the foreign population over the same period. In absolute terms, the largest increase is recorded for the Romanians (from 75,000 to over 350,000 residents).

Looking specifically at the Italian policy framework for immigration, it can be said that only in mid-1980s did a series of laws and amnesties start to regulate inflows, triggered by the growing number of migrants entering the country. In 1986, the first law[72] was passed. Governmental decrees became the route used to allow the admission of migrants for work while shortage lists started to be introduced. These were

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[72] "Law Foschi"

identifying shortages and therefore demand for labour in specific sectors and occupations[73] (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003).

The 1990 law[74] opened the route to "the establishment of annual entry quotas on the basis of existing labour market needs and at the same time creating mechanisms of control of irregular and clandestine migration" (Salis, 2012: 10). The two laws therefore mimicked other European migration policies after the Second World War, aiming at regulating migration according to the labour demands of Fordist industry (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003). Yet the small planned legal recruitments, "the higher costs and, to an even greater degree, the complexity of the procedures, were real deterrents for employers which intended to officially hire non EU workers" (Zincone, 2006: 19). These two main factors led to an increasing unfilled labour demand arising especially from small and medium sized companies, and therefore to endemic irregularity (Colombo and Sciortino 2003: 198) in a process whereby labour migration expanded through a developing "migration industry" (Castles 2004). The 1998 Act[75] delivered the first "comprehensive framework for the management of migration" (Salis, 2012: 10) which acknowledged the structural nature of labour migration to Italy. For the first time principles of equality as far as access to civic and social rights were stipulated within the legislation and the issue of migrants' integration was therefore addressed. The 1998 Act is in actual terms the first law to acknowledge migration as a permanent phenomenon (Zincone 2006b: 23).

However, channels available for legal entry for work were still limited, while the mechanisms for the management of new flows that were put in place have been considered inefficient. The system of quotas became the central instrument of policy used in the management of the admission of non-EU workers (Salis, 2012). Yet, more than once it has revealed its inadequacy in providing an efficient response to the needs of the Italian economy[76]. What has actually happened has been its use as a tool to

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[73] The 1986 legislation had the façade of a generous and liberal policy yet in practice little changed for migrants: "in theory, immigrants were not only given equal welfare but also special opportunities to study their own language and to learn the Italian language. In practice no national public funds were devoted to immigrants' rights. Non-contributory welfare, integration measures, and the burden of implementing these rights mainly fell on the already over-stretched regional and city councils" (Zincone 2006: 19).

[74] "Law Martelli" – Martelli was Deputy Prime Minister.

[75] Also known as the Turco-Napolitano Law. Tose were the names of the Minister of the Interior and the minister of Social Affairs at the time.

[76] One example is the 2007 case concerning quotas for carers for the elderly in private households. The online procedure for the applications resulted in an unexpected outcome: 136,382 applications were sent to the Ministry of the Interior in about 30 minutes for the only 65,000 places available (Polchi, 2007).

facilitate the regularisation of migrants already working in Italy, rather than to admit new migrants (Finotelli and Sciortino 2008: 5).

The centre-right coalition that came into power in the spring of 2001 introduced a new law, Law 189 of 2002[77]. The low had two main aims: tougher controls and potential suppression of irregular migration, and reduction of the channels for legal entry and permanent settlement (Colombo and Sciortino, 2003). Yet, despite its restrictive approach, the new law was coupled with one more regularisation campaign for irregular workers. What this process was therefore revealing were the actions of a government willing on one hand to portray itself as tough on immigration but which on the other had to respond to strong demands of labour in specific sectors of the Italian economy[78]. Ironically, the 2002 regularisation resulted in the highest number of regularised migrants in the history of the country (Bonifazi, 1998 [2007]: 95): "around 700,000 migrant workers were regularised between 2002 and 2004" (Salis, 2012: 7). Nowadays most of the legal migrants are in fact previous irregular migrants legalised through amnesties[79].

Despite the fact that immigration showed its permanent and structural contribution to Italian society[80] during the period 2001–2006, migration issues were increasingly framed as a public security issue. Media discourses tended to focus on sensational news concerning criminal acts having as principal perpetrators migrants, while there was a clear lack of news regarding their positive contribution to the Italian economy or society at large (Sciortino and Colombo, 2004; Salis, 2012).

The "Security Package" introduced in 2009, came as a response to the anti-immigration climate spreading in the country. Its aim was to eradicate "illegal" immigration. It in fact stipulated that being an "illegal" migrant was a criminal act and brought some changes to the Penal Code which would allow also for EU citizens to be deported if sentenced for more than two years for any crime committed. Yet, similar to past experiences, the new law was still not coming to terms with the structural tensions characterising the Italian economy which have been the main driver for "irregular"

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[77] Known as the Bossi-Fini Law.

[78] Five amnesties represented the overall outcome of this tension.

[79] The status of more than 1.5 million migrants was regularised in Italy between 1986 and 2002 (Levinson 2005).

[80] Especially in terms of demographic growth. In between 2003–2004, foreigners were responsible for more than 80% of the total demographic growth, while in 2005 the overall growth was related to the presence of the foreign population in the country (ISTAT 2008).

migration in past almost 40 years: namely its vast underground economy[81] and the lack of Italian nationals willing to work in specific stigmatised areas of the labour market characterised by hard work and very low pay.

3.5. The British context

Scholars in the field of migration studies trace the origins of the current approach to immigration issues in the UK back to the 1950s, when a lively debate around the issue of immigration started with the arrival of foreign workers in response to the labour shortages following the war. In those years, despite low levels of inflows from the New Commonwealth (the Caribbean and Indian subcontinent) compared to those from Ireland and other European countries, the prevailing discourse emphasised the idea that "Britain had a 'race' problem" (Devitt, 2012: 6). Within the academic debate, Castles and Kosack (1973) were among the few who framed the post-1945 migration in Britain within a discourse which privileged capitalist developments within Europe and class, as opposed to "race", in explaining migrants' underprivileged social positioning within British society (Schuster, 2010: 340).

An issue of "numbers" and "difference" was therefore put forward in relation to Britain's foreign population and a policy of control was seen as the only viable way. This led to the almost total lack of action as far as access to welfare (and therefore integration policies) of those new arrivals was concerned (Solomos, 1998).

"The Race Relations Act" of 1976, and the introduction of the Commission for Racial Equality would be a first step in the process of coming to terms with a population that was clearly going to become part and parcel of the British national landscape and therefore of the development of British multicultural society (ibid.). Yet the race relations paradigm triggered so much criticism as it led to the adoption of specific measures aiming at restricting and discouraging admission[82] (Carter et al., 1987). A process of racialisation of the policy, based on negative stereotyping of the newcomers (see Byron and Condon, 2008 for the case of Caribbeans; G. Lewis, 2003) happened in a more or less overt manner (Solomos, 2003; Small and Solomos, 2006) and often concealed racialised preferences for more "desirable" migrants (Small and Solomos, 2006). Those measures, which received cross party support, were based on the idea that integration into the wider society of those who were already in the country within the

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[81] Most recent figures have estimated that Italy's underground economy constitutes 22.3% of its GDP.

[82] Reference here is made to the 1962 and 1968 Immigration Acts (aiming at limiting non-white immigration) as well as to the 1971 Immigration Act (aiming at a "zero migration" country).

"race relations" framework was possible only by concomitantly reducing the possibility of entry for new migrants (Sammerville, 2007; Boswell, 2008; Balch, 2010). restrict

Labour market shortages in most of the British economy's sectors in the late 1990s resulted in a change in discourse. While the Labour government emphasised both the needs of the British economy and the positive input of migrant workers the Home Office shifted towards a system of "managed migration" aimed at addressing specific labour shortages in both private and public sectors.

"The Highly Skilled Workers Programme" (HSWP), the "Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme" (SAWS)[83] and the "Sector Based Schemes" (SBS) were therefore introduced. Furthermore, the 2002 White Paper titled "Secure Borders, Safe Haven", and the "Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act" illustrated in more details the government's strategy (Anthias et al. 2006). A "new approach" to immigration as a source of both economic and cultural enrichment[84] was therefore presented. Yet as Back and colleagues observed, "a major contradiction within the New Labour politics of race results from the attempt to reconcile an aspiration for a model of neo-liberal economic growth based on a rhetoric of globalised economic forces with an attempt to protect the social integrity of the nation state" (2002:10).

The system has in fact been criticised for the selective dimensions involved. In line with previous policies, the new "managed regime" was still setting parameters for the control and therefore limited entry of "desirable" migrants and for the marginalisation/rejection of "undesirable" ones (Schuster and Solomos, 2004). By developing around the concept of "managed migration", the new policy facilitated economic migration while setting stricter controls on unauthorised and non-economic access. That same policy line was reinforced with the following 2005 "Immigration, Asylum and Nationality Bill" that was part of a "package of measures" including the Home Office five-year strategy for asylum and immigration[85], and the Home Office strategic plan 2004–2008[86].

Similarly to previous discourses and developed policies, the government was targeting migrants considered as bearers of "considerable benefits to the UK, including improvements in economic growth and productivity" (Home Office 2002: Para 1.3) and

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[83] The SAWS scheme has its origins in the late 1940s/1950s.
[84] "This diversity is a source of pride, and it helps to explain our cultural vitality, the strength of our economy and our strong international links" (Home Office 2002).
[85] "Controlling Our Borders: Making Migration Work for Britain" (February 2005).
[86] "Confident Communities in a Secure Britain" (January 2005).

implicitly aimed at safeguarding the integrity of the nation. Within this frame, discussions started around the introduction of a new system for the management of entry of workers and students. The new Points Based System was rolled out between February 2008 and March 2009. Explicitly based on the Australian model, the new system introduced "a minimum threshold of points that must be met based on various qualitative criteria including wage, skill, linguistic competence, and maintenance funds"[87] (Devitt, 2012: 10). It consists of five tiers:

- Tier 1, "Highly Skilled", has replaced the Highly Skilled Migrants Programme. Entrants, who can bring their dependants, can enter Britain with no job offer and do not face any limitation as far as labour market access is concerned.

- Tier 2, "Skilled", has replaced the "work permit system" and is the tier used by most of the skilled workers. However, they can enter Britain only if the required skills are not available nationally or within the region (i.e. UK or EU)[88].

- Tier 3, "Low Skilled", consists in quota based low-skilled schemes for filling specific temporary shortages. Applicants cannot stay in the country longer than one year and it does not entitle to either rights to settlement or family reunion. However, this tier was temporarily suspended, based on the view that A8 nationals were meeting the demand. Similarly the Government considered "phasing out" low-skilled migration schemes in agriculture, hospitality and food processing. The hospitality quota has already been abolished since workers from the expanded EU have filled that particular labour market demand. As far as SAWS and SBS schemes were concerned, they remained open only to Romanian and Bulgarian migrants.

- Tier 4, "Students", covers a period of study at a stated and registered institute.

- Tier 5, "youth mobility and temporary workers" has replaced the previous "Working Holiday-Maker Scheme" and the "au-pair scheme". Here it is relevant to note that new Accession countries from Central and Eastern Europe, previously included in the au-pair scheme, cannot benefit of the current Tier 5.

Although the Points-based System did not concern the admission of EEA (European Economic Area) workers, with the exception of the SAWS and SBS schemes, the above description of its features can be of some help in better understanding the policy context and therefore the dominant discourse around migration in which the experience of

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[87] Points were to be adjusted to respond to the changes in and needs of the labour market, rendering the system flexible but at the same time able to control the flows.

[88] In case of specific needs " the idea is to have small and tightly managed quota based schemes for specific shortage areas and for fixed periods only, with guarantees that migrants will leave at the end of their stay permit" (Anthias et al. 2006: 14).

Romanian migrant workers in UK was inscribed before and immediately after Romania's accession to the EU. This policy highlighted that the aim was not only to control "numbers" but also, and maybe most of all, to manage "the composition of populations that may potentially alter the make-up of the British collectivity" (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 517). This approach appeared to be vital if "social cohesion" was to be guaranteed.

Embracing the "values of the host country" (Home Office 2002: 72), furthermore, was central to this end (Schuster and Solomos, 2004). Critics have however warned that the entry and settlement "restrictions for lower skilled and unskilled migrant workers, [beside creating] a workforce vulnerable to abuse by exploitative employers and [potentially] damaging the integration agenda[89], have once again created and maintained a strong differentiation between "deserving" and "undeserving" migrants" (Anthias, et al. 2006: 15).

By enforcing once again the "traditional bias towards European immigration" (Devitt, 2012: 7), this approach was not very different from that of the 1950s and 1960s when migration from European countries was favoured within the race-relations approach of the time. By opening borders to EEA nationals (in 2004) while simultaneously closing them to others[90], it once again created categories of those migrants "allowed" to "belong", and those who have to be left out (Morris, 2004). The new EU citizens from central and Eastern Europe were becoming, *at least at that point in time,* the new "insiders" (Sales, 2005).

However, as the numbers of A8 workers entering the UK were far greater than expected and the government had to face criticisms from both opposition and public opinion concerned with the impact on local public services, the open stance implemented in the first round of European enlargement was in fact abandoned in 2007. For that second round Britain restricted access to its labour market.

3.6. Conclusions

This present chapter aimed at presenting some of the structural factors affecting migration, in both origin and destination contexts. The brief description of patterns and dynamics of the first stages of Romanian international migration aimed at illustrating some of the socialist and post-socialist transformations in Romania that may have impacted on the motivations, means, and strategies of Romanian workers to migrate.

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[89] http://www.jcwi.org.uk/news/press7march06.html, see also JCWI 2006.
[90] I.e. by suspending Tier 3 and opening the SAWS and SBS only to A2 workers.

Moreover, it indicated how the national "history of migration" (i.e. internal commuting for work), as well as ethnic and faith based relations, may have impacted significantly on the rise of international migration in the aftermath of the 1989 Revolution. And finally, it revealed how "social capital" and therefore assets related to particular locations where different migration flows originated were also central in the process of network formation and therefore in directiong transnational migration from Romania to specific European countries (Gülfer Ihlamur, 2010: iv).

Furthermore, with regard to impacts of the supra-national structural changes on patterns of migration, despite the increase in the number of Romanians living and working abroad after 2007, it appears relevant to note how many of them did not arrive in their countries of migration in the immediate aftermath of Romania's accession to the EU. The EU enlargement process certainly impacted on Romanians' migration strategies in varied ways, yet it did not necessarily trigger the actual act of migration of all Romanians counted by the official statistics since January 2007 – many of those migrants were already living in their country of migration prior to 2007. What the accession in fact provided them with was an opportunity to regularise their immigration status (although employment remained irregular for many), travel with ease between Romania and Britain or Italy, to be joined by relatives (i.e. particularly children), and to make plans which appear more indefinite because more open towards the triple possibility of settlement, return or remigration.

Looking specifically at the two national contexts of migration, the chapter emphasised some of the differences and similarities between them, which have also had an impact on migrants' decision making and agency. At a national level, the two locations selected for this research are considered as representing two contrasting "models" of reception and integration within Europe. They are characterised by different migration histories as well as by different policy contexts. The UK "multicultural model", based upon cultural difference and framed within the "race relations" discourse (Soysal, 1994) and its regime of "managed migration" (Schuster and Solomos, 2004, Anthias et al., 2006), contrasts with the "fragmental" and "decentralised" Italian model, where "improvisation", "emergency", and more recently a strong (even racist) securitisation strategy, have been the main features of the political response to immigration (Soysal, 1994; Boswell, 2003).

In Italy, the shift from a country predominantly of emigration towards a country of immigration occurred only in the late 1970s, when numbers of migrants entering the

country balanced out the number of Italian nationals leaving the country[91] (Ambrosini, 2001; Zincone and Caponio, 2005; Bonifazi et al., 2009). This characteristic, which has been preserved throughout the years when new policies were put in place by different governments, has combined with a restrictive approach aiming at combating irregular migration and discouraging permanent settlement (Zincone and Caponio, 2005). The current immigration/integration legislation, even if it has enacted the largest regularisation programme ever, with 700,000 applications and over 600,000 permits granted, has put more emphasis on restrictions. Within this framework, immigration is predominantly dealt with in relation to border control and national security issues, while the condition of regularity has been considered a mandatory condition for social integration.

In the UK, by contrast, the Home Office's acknowledgment of the labour market shortages in many sectors of its economy throughout the 1990s led to the creation of a system of "managed migration". This strategy was aimed at addressing specific labour shortages and therefore, by establishing new channels of migration for particular categories of workers, at facilitating the entry of those migrant workers in demand within both public and private sectors. The economic benefits of immigration were, at the time, recognised. Yet, critics have emphasised the selective and exclusionary intent of the system pursued by New Labour which clearly privileges access of the highly-skilled. This approach was also mirrored by the restrictive policies implemented since January 2007 for the new A2.

According to the Accession (Immigration and Worker Authorisation) Regulations in fact, Romanian citizens willing to work in Britain must obtain, before starting employment, a work authorisation document, namely an accession worker card or one of two sector-based quota schemes' work permit – the SBS or SAWS[92]. Other Romanian nationals not taking employment but exercising a Treaty right in the UK could seek a registration certificate. This included: "those exempt from the worker authorisation restrictions; highly skilled migrants; those with restricted access to the labour market; and family members of main applicants" (Home Office, 2012).

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[91] In those early stages labour migration occurred mainly spontaneously, guest-worker schemes or other type of agreements for labour recruitments were not the norm here and the work that people found for themselves on arrival was often in the informal sector, though more or less regular and stable (Ambrosini, 2001).

[92] Therefore, those qualifying for the mentioned documents are generally those so-called "skilled workers" who before the implementation of the Points-based System, were meeting specific criteria for the issue of a work permit under the existing work permit arrangements, and a quota of "lower skilled" workers coming to undertake seasonal agricultural work and employment in the food processing sector.

Alternatively, under EU law, Romanian nationals have the right of establishment, which allows them to be self-employed. They also have the right to migrate and reside in any Member State as full-time students, and therefore, like any other EEA national exercising a treaty right, Romanian students are authorised to work for up to 20 hours a week.

Italy, on the other hand, adopted a more ambiguous approach. It in fact restricted the neo-communitarians' access to its labour market with the exception of a number of sectors where there is a high demand for labour, such as the domestic sector and the construction industry. Interestingly, these are also niches of the Italian labour market where migration from Eastern European countries and Romania in particular, has strongly developed in the last 15 years.

What the two national contexts can undoubtedly be said to have in common and that certainly shape migratory flows towards them, is a strong employer demand for cheap labour, especially in areas of the labour market such as cleaning, domestic/care services, construction and agriculture. In this regard, the Second Part of this dissertation looks at migrants' routine experiences of work in two specific sectors and their strategies for action within a shifting labour market, as well as at social changes and therefore changes in welfare and immigration policy in the two locations. One of the aims there is to cast some light on structural determinants for an increasing demand for and supply of cheap labour in the care/domestic sector and in the construction industry in the two cities, and therefore for migrants' access to specific areas of the labour market.

PART 2 MIGRATORY WORKING LIVES

What follows is an opening section which introduces the subject matter of Chapters Four and Five of this dissertation.

The main reason behind the decision to devote two chapters to the analysis of working experiences of Romanian migrants in the two cities is the necessity to account for the gender differences related to driving forces behind the decision to migrate, different labour market incorporation, as well as different strategies and ways to cope with the lived worlds of being an irregular migrant worker. In other words, although migrant women and men have become ubiquitous as cheap workers in the European capitals, the simplest and most common explanation based on the cheap labour argument, or on the neoclassical notion of the labour migrant as *homo economicus*, does not capture the full range of factors and crucial dynamics at play in the migratory process and labour market incorporation.

One example, which I will discuss in more detail in the next sections of this chapter, concerns tensions between welfare systems and social changes within the "shifting discourses and practices on gender orders in receiving countries" (Lutz, 2010: 1651) – women's rising labour participation rates have in fact stimulated specific migratory systems supplying *female* foreign domestic workers to *female* employers within the framework of increasingly feminised and masculinised labour markets (Mahler, 1999). Moreover, the different social spaces and networks men and women create in the process of migration may create divergences in the outcome of their migration, while differences/similarities in the way they live the migrant family experience in relation to their working experience and immigration status also have significant impacts (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994).

I argue therefore for the need to explore transnational intra-European migration following Hondagneu-Sotelo's (1994: 3) plea for a gendered analysis which sees gender not simply as "a variable to be measured but as a set of social relations that organise immigration patterns"; in other words, gender dynamics and relations impact respondents' migration and settlement experiences and on-going transnational family relations. In relation to this last aspect, the decision to look at both women's and men's work experiences was also triggered by Pessar and Mahler's (2001: 5) observation that

gender and family keep being bundled together and treated as a separate domain from, for instance, the economic/working lives of migrants. I would add here that when the two spheres intersect in the recently developed literature on care-work and transnational migration, gender is still not included as a central research focus but rather tends to be equated with *woman*. Attention to understanding female migration has in fact led to the unfortunate consequence that men's experiences of migration has become under researched, despite warnings from scholars of gendered migration of the risk of ghettoizing gender as applicable only to women (Parreñas, 2001; Pessar, 1999).

The intention in these two chapters, therefore, is to contribute to filling this gap and advancing research on migrants' transnationalism by addressing issues of work, gender, and the interrelated impact/consequences of (irregular) migrant work on families within a transnational social space as far as both migrant women and men are concerned. To do this, my analysis here takes labour markets in London and Rome as the institutional site of migration in which migrant workers' experiences are observed, and moves along the three interconnected levels of analysis highlighted within the theoretical framework developed in Chapter Two.

Moreover, by referring to a body of work hailing from economic sociology, which sees work and labour market incorporation as partially shaped by the social construction of the work itself and which pays attention to the interaction between individual agency and social structure (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; McGovern, 2007; Anderson and Ruhs, 2008), the empirical analysis brings to light the complex forces responsible for the peculiarities of specific migrants' labour market incorporation. Taking its start from theories seeing networks and national/ethnic economic niches as one of the main channel of incorporation of migrant labour (Aldrich and Waldinger, 1990), the analysis discusses in particular issues of gendered labour market integration and shows how, in the case of Romanian women and men employed in the domestic/care and construction sectors, gender-specific transnational migration patterns are developed. The assumption here is that nationality, religion, and immigration status together with gender shape migrants' labour market experiences – and the creation of both national and gender specific niches – and that human and social capital activated transnationally, as well as soft skills, are vital assets in gaining access and settling into specific labour market sectors.

As such, some of the sub-questions that I will try to answer in this present chapter are: how do Romanian migrants find jobs in the two cities? How are networks of

migration used to access and obtain work? How are changes in immigration policies in the two national contexts and at the EU supranational level affecting their labour market integration and conditions? How does legal status impact on the kind of work they choose or are directed to? Does nationality matter in accessing specific sectors of the local labour market? Does gender matter? What is the impact of labour market interactions on transnational family practices?

Migrants in a segmented labour market

The theory of segmented labour markets (Doeringer and Piore, 1971; Berger and Piore, 1980), although with a more "sociological formulation", may help in starting to understand the position Romanian migrants occupy within the labour markets of both London and Rome. If we use the theory in its simplest form of segmentation, in other words the dual labour market, we see that at the high end, hence in the "primary segment" of the labour market, working conditions are characterised by high pay, promotion prospects, high security, good working conditions, and attractive benefits (Edwards, 1973).

At the other end of the spectrum, in the "secondary segment", workers have a weaker link with the labour market. This implies poorly paid jobs, lack of extra benefits, degrading working conditions, lack of training and reduced career opportunities (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). Furthermore, demands of excessive flexibility are also put on employees, while part-time, temporary or salutary work with or often without any form of contract are very common.

As Waldinger and Lichter (2003) observe, while the top of the labour market is often characterised by an abundant labour supply and jobs available are scarce, at the low end of the labour market, labour supply is intrinsically stunted and unsteady. Those previously mentioned characteristics of work at the bottom of the labour market are precisely the reason why the local labour force does not wish to take up the so perceived "last resort" jobs. Besides low pay and unpleasant or demanding work conditions, issues of stigmatisation are also at stake here. The low social status image attributed to these jobs, and the consequent presence of stigmatised outsider groups performing these jobs, also pushes the established native workforce to "opt for alternatives – in quest of better coin, but also of greater esteem" (ibid.: 9).

Under these conditions the need for an alternative recruitment pool arises, especially when employers are reluctant to improve working conditions or raise salaries. But what is the reason for this phenomenon? The existence of an infrastructure of low-waged jobs

in the northern European "global cities" such as London, has been explained by the continuing informalisation of manufacturing employment, and by the need to service, directly or indirectly, wealthy high-income households, and to produce the goods and services used by low-income households themselves (Sassen, 1991). The growing demand for low-wage workers, therefore, has triggered an increase in levels of migration from the Global South, and in the last decade from Eastern Europe towards cities of the West (Sassen, 1996). The result is the current process of occupational polarisation in which foreign-born migrant workers account for a significant part of the wealthy cities' low-waged work force (Sassen, 2002; Spence, 2005; May et al. 2007).[93]

This picture, as King and Zontini (2000: 42) emphasise, reconfirms Piore's (1979) theory of the immigrant labour force as essential for the "restructuring of a segmented labour market" in post-Fordist capitalist states. Furthermore, it also applies to the Southern European cities (e.g. Rome) and their specific variant of capitalism characterised by small/medium family enterprises and self-employment (Mingione, 1995).

These newcomers, in fact, become the "perfect fit" for these positions as they often come from countries where wages are lower (Sassen, 1988) and may have a different perception (at least at a specific moment in time and with regard to the specific context of immigration and work) of the low/stigmatised status of bottom level work (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; McGovern, 2007). Immigrant workers, who often find themselves moving among different levels of formality and informality (Erdemir and Vasta, 2007), constitute a "reserve army" of cheap and highly flexible labour willing to work "off the books" because of their irregular status and "whose wages can be held down because of the ability of the employer to fire 'undesirable' illegals at will" (Corcoran, 1991: 34).

People interviewed for this study were all part of this cohort of low-waged migrant workers and they all have experienced work at this end of the labour market. My analysis thus draws on labour market segmentation theory, and finds it useful in explaining specific locations of Eastern European migrants. This is even more so if King and Zontini's (2000: 42) argument is taken on board. They in fact observe how Piore's dual/segmented labour market has developed into "a more complex segmentation which sees the elaboration of highly fractioned submarkets of labour

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[93] As much as 46% of London's low-waged jobs (domestic workers, jobs in the hospitality industry, jobs in the building industry, cleaners, caretakers etc.), for instance, are filled by migrants (Spence, 2005).

which are differentiated territorially, by economic sector, by type of work, ethnicity/nationality, and by gender" of the migrants employed. These clusterings can be further explained by also paying attention to other variables operating in the labour market besides neoclassical human capital theories or macro frameworks which focus on international economic restructuring. Among those are migrants' access to work through personal national and gendered networks (Corcoran, 1991; Waldinger and Lichter, 2003) and employers' tendency to hire workers with specific characteristics ascribed to specific ethnicities/nationalities (Parreñas, 2001; Anderson and Ruhs, 2008; K. Datta et al. 2008: 25)

Furthermore, looking closely at migrants' labour market practices in these two sectors it can be said that these practices display transnational characteristics in their forms. Their working experiences are in fact examples of the well-developed process of the transnational reorganisation of labour, a form of economic transnationalism developed in response to the large demand for labour in this particular field and thanks to national and gendered networks. My definition of transnational practices with regard to respondents' working experience, therefore, emerges from their ethnographic accounts and refers to the creation of a socio-economic field where a transnational redistribution of labour happens through the cross-border mobility of news about work and development of work strategies and employment patterns.

Yet the analysis in this study also acknowledges Glick Schiller and colleagues' (1992: 5) pioneering conceptualisation of transnationalism, which states that "transmigrants deal with and confront a number of hegemonic contexts, both global and national". Transnational practices cannot therefore be disentangled from the specific structural conditions of the contextual labour markets from which they emerge and within which migrant workers actively develop their strategies. With this in mind and to provide a background for respondents' accounts of their experiences, opening sections in Chapter Four and Five look comparatively at the construction industry and the domestic/care sector within the framework of the two specific national labour markets in the Italian and British contexts.

To conclude, and in line with the methodological approach illustrated in Chapter Two of this dissertation, by giving space to migrant workers' ethnographic accounts, the aim in the following two chapters is to grow apart from the rigid and deterministic approach of labour market segmentation theory, and embrace a more nuanced understanding of migrants' labour market interactions and spillovers into their

transnational private/family lives, heedful of the relationship between social structure and individual agency and lived experiences. What I mean by this is that, the effort to overcome the widespread conception of the migrant as mere *homo economicus* implies a research approach which recognises her/him as a social actor, defined by her/his "particular *habitus*, involved in complex social ties, acting within diverse social networks, and motivated by intricate strands of meaning" (Culic, 2008: 159).

Chapter 4 Working in the construction sector

4.1. Introduction

"They have occupied the building site where they have been working for the last three months. All fourteen workers are sitting on the rooftop while their wives are waiting downstairs. Their demands are very simple: a regular working contract and their pay. They have been "employed" by a subcontractor who only gave them 400 Euros at the beginning of their work and who has disappeared since the workers' protest started. [...] Is this just one of the many stories of illegal work (*lavoro nero*)? It could be; the only difference is that these fourteen workers are all Romanian workers. This is the first time that something like this has happened in Italy, this is the first time that the "new migrants" are asking for their rights as citizens of the EU".[94]

Aurel was one of the workers sitting on the rooftop that morning at the beginning of March 2007. He arrived in Italy in 2002 when someone from his own town in the Romanian region of Moldova told him that there was some work on a building site just outside Rome. In less than a week everything was ready for departure and Aurel was boarding a minibus together with four other young Romanians from the surrounding villages. The middleman provided them with the sum of money they had to show at the border and told them that they must give it back to the driver once at the destination. In Romania Aurel had left his job as taxi driver and his wife Viorica who was pregnant at the time.

Once in Rome, there was another Romanian waiting for them at the bus station. He took the new arrivals to a two bedroom apartment not far from the bus station and told them to be ready in the morning when he would come to pick them up. Work for Aurel started the next day at 7 am when he and another of the men who had arrived with him were left at the gate of a "huge and beautiful villa"[95] where another Romanian, in his 50s, was waiting. From that day, for about three weeks, their job consisted in renovating

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[94] Sciotto, A. (2007) (my translation).
[95] "*o vila mare si frumoasa*" - from a conversation with Aurel in Rome, 2007.

another edifice, a two storey building situated at the back of the villa. Aurel's entire pay for those three weeks went into paying for his travel to Italy, for all the services provided by the middleman, and for his rent. After that Aurel kept moving from one job to another, sometimes doing renovations together with other Romanians in small groups, at other times working for longer periods on larger building sites where several small groups were contracted for different jobs. His boss was always a different one, but always Romanian.

When I saw him on the rooftop, Aurel had been working for about two months on that building site. During that period of time he did not see a cent for his work despite his many phone calls to his boss and I could see that he was desperate that day. We talked only a few times, and very briefly, about his working situation but his wife kept telling me about it. Similarly to his colleagues on that rooftop, he had been working in construction without a regular contract since his arrival in Rome. As Viorica told me, "there is nothing new in this", meaning that his story was one shared with many other Romanians they met in Italy even after January 2007, when Romanians became EU citizens and construction was one of the sectors of the Italian labour market opened for them. "But now it's different, now we are different, we are not *extracomunitari* anymore and we are not going to be alone here anymore". These were still Viorica's words and referred precisely to the Romanians' formal change in status since January 2007 that everyone was hoping would also bring some change to their working conditions. Moreover, her words bring together the two worlds of work and family in migration, emphasising the intrinsic relationship between them.

Aurel's story therefore points to some significant issues that need to be taken into consideration when analysing migrants' work in the construction sector in Europe. Among these are: transnational brokers and the networked process of entering the sector which allows for clusters of specific nationalities to develop; changeable immigration status vs unchangeable labour market position; as well as the intersection between labour migration practices, nationality, gender and legal status. As Glick Schiller and colleagues (1992: 5) highlight when they lay out the "six premises" central to their conceptualisation of transnationalism: "transnational migrants, although predominantly workers, live a complex existence that forces them to confront, draw upon, and rework different identity constructs". I would add here that, besides being workers, these men are also members of transnational families, which implies that their working lives cannot be looked at separately from their transnational experiences as husbands and/or

fathers but in relation to one another in order to reflect the mutual relationships that shape transnational migrants' complex lives.

4.2. Migrant labour in the construction industry: informal practices, irregular status

The existing literature looking at construction emphasises how the sector is a "labour intensive industry", characterised by a "fragmented production process" which produces "immobile products" (Fellini et al., 2007: 279). In other words, this is a sector in which physically hard and unappealing work is required and where workers' ability to be mobile is crucial, given the impossibility of relocating the production sites to the "peripheries" where costs would be lower. Moreover, recent trends of subcontracting which have developed in other areas of the global economy are particularly accentuated in the construction industry. This process leads to "a specific division of labour between large companies that act as general contractors, and small and medium sized ones that are usually subcontractors" (ibid.). These last, in order to survive in a competitive environment, have to significantly diminish costs.

As construction projects "require a large number of labour specialities (such as carpenters, bricklayers, etc.)" (Fellini et al. 2007: 288), a general contractor most of the times outsources these different tasks to a chain of other smaller specialised companies. Subcontracting generally reduces labour costs, and it does so even more if foreign workers are employed. But most of all, this strategy allows for the creation of a working environment where control is loose, encouraging "non-compliance with regulations regarding wages and working conditions and induces informalisation" (Sassen, 1991: 87). The widespread practice of subcontracting sections of the work to self-employed workers needs to also be considered for its relevance in accentuating informalisation. It does so for two reasons: firstly it is often connected (see Italy) with the local underground economy (Fellini et al., 2007: 289); secondly, self-employed status itself allows space for a blurred understanding of the regulatory apparatus governing working conditions, social insurance and taxation[96].

As Corcoran (199: 32) has observed in her ethnographic account of Irish migrant workers' experiences in the construction industry in New York City, "in such circumstances, employers increasingly turn to immigrant workers, a high proportion of whom are undocumented, and are, therefore, willing to work off-the-books". In turn migrant workers may find the sector's informal recruitment and working practices attractive as they provide an easy entry into the labour market, especially for those in

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[96] More details on the status of self-employed will be given in later sections of this chapter.

the first stage of their migration. In more general terms, in fact, the existence of an irregular labour market is considered as a pull factor as it draws in foreign workers (Arango and Baldwin-Edwards, 1999). Low levels of control on the building site and the possibility to learn the job *in situ* make it therefore feasible to sustain employment also for newcomers with no regular immigration status, or in this specific case, with no significant construction skills (Chan et al. 2010).

This means that building sites in European cities are places witnessing the arrival and the passage of a culturally diverse and transnational labour force ready to offer its "service" through employment on housing, home renovation, or larger urban projects[97] (A. Datta, 2009). The construction industry in fact incorporates the largest number of male migrants working as employees or self-employed, and, as highlighted in following sections of this chapter, it also has one of the largest concentrations of immigrant businesses in both London and Rome.

Yet, as mentioned above, the building site is also a workplace characterised by high levels of deregularisation, casualised labour and therefore informality. Informal recruitment and "irregular" work were mentioned by all my respondents as a structural feature of the construction industry and I find this aspect particularly relevant when exploring men's working experiences in the two contexts. Their position of transnational workers is in fact very much influenced by the way they negotiate, accommodate and overcome "irregularity" and informal working conditions in this particular sector.

My fieldwork among Romanian construction workers suggests that different levels of "regularity" and "irregularity" inform their working status and working circumstances from their very first contact which will bring them to work in one of the European countries which will be their (temporary) destination. Furthermore, what also makes their condition of irregular migrant workers peculiar is their unique contradictory position as Romanian nationals and EU citizens. Their accounts show how, paradoxically, while their ethnicity (as white Europeans) and their nationality may make them feel, similarly to Polish workers, "empowered through their legal status as 'new'

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[97] The high presence of Romanian workers in the building industry relates back working activities which developed in Romania during the socialist period. At the time, the construction sector was very developed section of the economy and significant attention was paid also to the vocational training in this area. Before its collapse in the early 1990s, the industry developed also "a certain international reputation for the skills and low labour costs of its construction companies. Through the 1970s and 1980s, Romanian construction companies were very active in industrial construction projects in Libya, Iraq, Morocco and the former Soviet Union" (Ban, 2009: 27).

Europeans" (A. Datta, 2009: 355), it also makes them susceptible to a variety of exploitative practices often actuated transnationally.

As Aurel's story at the beginning of this chapter has highlighted, irregularity may in actual fact become the very condition of their employment at destination. In spite of it being easier for Romanians to enter countries like Italy since 2002 and the UK since 2007, it is no longer easy to find work, especially in sectors such as the construction industry. Employers in this sector have in fact a much larger pool from which to select their employees and the possibility of regular integration on the labour market for newcomers has therefore become very difficult. Entering these countries regularly is now possible for every Romanian citizen, yet working with a regular contract and therefore being in a condition of regularity is paradoxically still a dream to be achieved for many Romanian workers.

The condition of regularity can be attached to a regular working contract, based on which the migrant worker can then apply for a residence permit (in the Italian context). Yet obtaining a regular contract as a migrant worker in the construction industry is not easy, even in a country like Italy where this sector was one of the areas of the labour market left open for citizens of the 2007 accession countries. It is difficult because few employers are willing to offer a work contract to an irregular migrant when they can hire a migrant who is already regular – this is the case of migrants from the previous accession round in the UK for instance, or Romanians who already have a regular working status in Italy – or when they can have a much cheaper option by "employing" workers irregularly.

"Informality" and/or "irregularity" were thus two of the characteristics attached to working in construction most cited by my respondents when I asked them about their working experience in both cities. And although their narratives in some cases revealed both negative and more "positive" sides of experiencing irregularity, what their accounts mostly pointed to was the not so straight forward definition of the condition of irregularity when migration and labour market experience intersects with migration/life stages. In other words, what my respondents meant was that different grades of acknowledgment and acceptance of irregularity may emerge in accordance with different needs and constraints at different stages in their migration process.

Finally, but maybe most importantly, what was also very clear from their accounts, and what I argue is of paramount significance for this study which wishes to reveal the processes and dynamics of the lived worlds of these migrant workers, was the fact that

those very conditions of "irregularity" which certainly impacted on their experiences of work in the two cities could not be disentangled from the gendered implications within the more intimate transnational social field of family relations.

4.2.1 In the British context

In the second and third quarter of 2000, the construction industry in the UK and in London in particular, was badly hit by labour and skills shortages (A. Datta, 2009). Foreigners, therefore, were very welcome and the sector experienced rapidly increasing shares of migrants between 2002 and 2008[98] (Ruhs and Anderson, 2010). An unstable employment regime due to seasonal and geographic fluctuations, together with long working hours, hard working conditions, as well as migrants' problem-solving abilities and transferable skills, are some of the main reasons for their employment in the sector (Anderson et al., 2006; Chan et al. 2010).

A particular rise in employment was registered in 2004 when A8 countries joined the EU (A. Datta, 2009) and the percentage of migrants among London's construction workers reached more than 40% of the total (Chappell et al. 2008). Moreover, if we consider that migrant construction workers often work on a self-employed basis or irregularly, meaning that many of them are actually invisible in these statistics, their number could be considerably higher. Furthermore, despite the negative impact of the economic crisis on construction employment, demand for labour and skills in the medium term is not forecast to be stifled, especially in Greater London and the South East (Chan et al. 2010).

Among migrants in this sector, East European workers are a key group, especially as far as daily labourers are concerned (K. Datta et al. 2008). According to the Workers Registration Scheme (WRS), in 2008 3% of the A8/A2 migrant worker population registered to work in construction, and more than a third of these registered as labourers. Romanians account for 6% of the UK's migrant construction workforce[99]. They also made up about 6% of the workforce on London's Olympic site in 2008 (McSmith, 2009), making them its third-largest national group after the British and Irish.

However, because of the labour-market restrictions imposed on Romanian migrant workers since January 2007, many of those who arrived in the UK and entered the

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[98] According to an IPPR report on the UK's construction sector, the scale of migratory flows into the construction industry went from around 51,000 at the end of 2000 to around 131,000 at the end of 2007 (Chappell et al., 2008: 33).
[99] "Migrant construction workers: overlooked and in danger", *Guardian* 10 April 2010, http://www.guardian.co.uk/money/2010/apr/10/migrant-construction-workers.

construction sector started to work irregularly (A. Datta, 2009) or as self-employed[100]. The reason behind this phenomenon is twofold: first, it is related to the national characteristics and development of the construction industry in the UK; second, it has to be understood in relation to the legislation on migration and work regarding individuals from new accession countries.

In the first case it can be said that migrant workers have followed a trend well established in the British construction industry (Harvey and Behling, 2008). In fact, estimates on the extent of self-employment in the UK construction industry shows that 36% of the workforce is self-employed, compared with 12 to 13% of the total workforce[101]. The characteristics of the national labour market in the construction industry are among the determinants of the employment status of incoming migrant labour, as workers can find themselves forced to register their own economic activity so that their employers can avoid the non-salaried costs of work[102] (Harvey and Behling, 2008). In some of those cases work may still be done under supervision rather than independently[103].

The legislation on migration from new accession countries, which discriminates between employed and self-employed, is another reason why migrant construction workers from those countries are often working with a self-employed status. Despite the imposed restrictions, in fact, Romanians can benefit from the European Community Association Agreements (ECAA) which enables them to work in EU countries with a self-employed visa. This has therefore become a common strategy used by workers to counter the restrictions they have to face and acquire a regular immigration and working status in the UK.

4.2.2 In the Italian context

The construction industry has been a driver of the Italian economy in the past ten years. Its expansion has attracted numerous workers and the sector has created "440,000

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[100] Self-employment is widespread among migrants in London's construction sector and migrants from the new accession countries show a very high ratio of self-employment when coming into the UK: 11 self-employed construction workers for every 1 directly employed (Harvey and Behling, 2009).

[101] Labour Force Survey, 2002.

[102] The impact of taxation schemes has been identified as one of the main reasons for the prevalence of self-employment in the construction industry as there is no contribution to National Insurance, or pensions, to be made by employers when the work is done by a self-employed worker. Moreover, often the self-employed do not benefit from sickness pay, holiday pay, or redundancy pay (ibid.: 168).

[103] This practice has been defined as "bogus" self-employment although, from the formal point of view, the work of the registered self-employed is legal until supervisory bodies can prove that it is made under management (Harvey and Behling, 2008).

new jobs, out of a national total of 800,000 new jobs"[104]. However, similarly to the UK situation, construction workers are often "employed on fragmented construction sites with constantly shifting physical and normative boundaries: among those working on such sites are contractors, subcontractors, cooperatives and self-employed workers" (ibid.). Describing the building industry, Ambrosini (2001) observes how it perfectly fits within the Italian "dual labour market". As a matter of fact, the Italian labour market appears characterised "on the one hand, by a small, highly regulated core labour market with large companies and a strong presence of trade unions, and on the other hand, by a large peripheral labour market without any regulation and a significant problem with irregular work and fake self-employment and agencies" (Fellini et al. 2007: 285). The sector thus ranks highest in the classifications of the National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) for irregular employment[105] which "allows companies to evade social security contributions and reduce labour costs" (ibid.). Italian construction sites often lack registers listing people working on-site and migrants often suffer the most harmful effects[106] of this practice.

Looking at the ISTAT data, there were 313,000 foreign workers employed in the construction industry in Italy in 2009, accounting for 16% of the total and, similarly to the British case, most of them work as labourers (63%) (Galossi, 2010). But their territorial distribution is not heterogeneous. Central Italy, Rome and its surroundings in particular, is the second most popular area in Italy for work in this sector after the Northern part of Italy. In 2009, 39% of the total of foreign workers employed in this sector were working in Rome and surroundings (out of a total of about 70,000).

In the last fifteen years, there has been a radical change as far as nationalities working in construction in Italy are concerned. A strong concentration of migrant workers from North Africa was to be found on building sites in the mid-1990s. In fact, most foreign construction workers were Moroccans, Tunisians or Egyptians in those years. They have now been replaced by workers from Eastern Europe and their numbers have increased, especially after the 2002 Regularisation. Romanian migrants have greatly benefited from this and as a consequence 38% of the foreign workers enrolled at the "Special Construction Workers' Funds" (*Casse Edili*) in 2009 were Romanian

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[104] "Inspection drive to combat undeclared work in construction sector, Italy", Eurofound, 29 October 2009, http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/labourmarket/tackling/cases/it010.htm.

[105] In 2005, according to union estimates, the proportion of "irregular workers" was 16%, rising to 25% if so-called "gray work" is included (Cillo, 2007). The wages of irregular migrant workers amount to one third of the cost of "documented" labour, with daily pay of 40 to 45 Euros in Rome.

[106] I.e. workplace accidents, low pay, long hours of work.

nationals. They were followed by Albanians (20%) and Moroccans (9%) (IRES-FILLEA, 2010).

The 2007 geopolitical change was a major structural factor explaining the predominance of Romanian migrants working in this sector. In fact, Romanians have been able to legally enter and work in the construction industry in Italy since 2007. Although the Italian government has restricted labour market access to the citizens of the new accession countries with regard to subordinate employment, free access to some sectors with a severe workforce deficit has been allowed. The construction industry is one of these sectors and Romania's EU accession has favoured the increase of private Romanian businesses in the building industry. The number of Romanian workers employed in the construction industry has therefore grown since 2007: if in 2006 there were less than nine thousand (8,933) Romanians employed in the sector in Rome and surroundings, their number reached 17,475 in 2007. Yet, according to trade unions, the actual figure may be even higher given that as many as 20,000 Romanians are thought to be employed irregularly.

4.3 Getting the job: mixed networks and transnational brokerage

Looking in particular at the labour markets and recruitment strategies in the two locations under discussion in this dissertation, it has been observed how subcontracting is central to both Italian and British construction industries. In the Italian case, "because of the fragmented nature of the sector, large companies transfer the recruitment of immigrant labour force directly to small and very small national subcontractors, often adopting irregular behaviours" (Fellini et al. 2007: 290). Furthermore, those small subcontracting companies are increasingly owned by migrants. What happens in the UK, on the other hand, is a combination of "self-employment and agencies which employ a large number of irregular Eastern European workers" (ibid.). But how do migrant workers access this information and eventually workplaces in those contexts?

When analysing meso-level processes, the literature on migration and labour market integration tends to artificially differentiate between intermediary links and migrant networks. Within this framework, intermediary links are usually presented in the form of institutions such as ministries of labour, recruitment agencies, or individuals such as lawyers, interpreters, job-brokers, and smugglers. Those intermediary links can provide genuine help in the form of information, housing and jobs, or can have a more exploitative role. Such is the case in situations of "illegal migration or of over-supply of potential migrants" (Castles and Miller, 2009) when middle-men/women may intervene

in the process of finding and getting access to jobs. As de Haas has observed, however, the "distinction with migrant networks is often rather blurred [as] many recruiters, brokers, interpreters, smugglers and traffickers are (former) migrants themselves, and tend to extensively draw on their personal social networks" (de Haas, 2008: 7)[107]. Furthermore, what also characterises both sets of relations and interactions is often the informal character of the transaction, especially with regard to particular sectors of the labour market.

The construction sector is precisely one of those. Supported by a deregulated labour market, an increasingly common feature across European countries, and because of specificities of the job itself[108], recruitment is likely to rely extensively on informal/networked relations. What the ethnographic accounts in this chapter are however emphasising is the diversification of those networks as well as their adaptability and shifting capabilities according to different opportunity structures in a diverse transnational European context.

4.3.1 In London

Vasile was one person who had experienced work in this sector upon arrival in London, but shortly after that he "got lucky enough to get out of this and find a job in catering". At the time of the interview he was working for a small café run by an Italian family in central London. His employer, an old Italian émigré now British citizen, had three regular and two irregular employees: Vasile was one of the two irregular ones.

The frequent conversations that I had with Vasile while having breakfast at the café introduced me to some of the aspects of work in construction which appeared relevant for my discussion. He arrived in London via Italy where he had also worked in construction. Once in London, like most Romanians in the early stage of their arrival, he started to work as a labourer on a medium sized building site dealing with the refurbishment of a hotel. He was introduced to the boss by an old acquaintance, "someone who lived in my same town and who told a cousin of mine in Italy that they needed a few men to work in London. Together with my cousin I then came to London" (London, 2006).

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[107] Such is also the case of Ukrainian women employed in the domestic sector in Poland, but the practice was also observed among Eastern European women working in the same sector in Italy.

[108] Some of those features, such as project-based, casual, on-site training, will be discussed later in this chapter.

For Vasile, therefore, as I later discovered had been the case for all my other respondents in London, entering work in construction had been an informal experience. In all those cases, relatives, friends, or acquaintances acted as mediators, for they either directly introduced them to the job or provided information about places where work could be found, or about other people who were able to facilitate access.

What however was peculiar about the chain of contacts leading to construction work that first Vasile described, and that later on I could identify as a common pattern in most of my respondents' accounts in the British context, was the diversification of contacts as regards the first contact providing information or the first job, and the following ones. The first contact tended in fact to be a very close relation, "a first order contact" (Corcoran, 1991). Most of the time this was a family member, a close friend, or an old acquaintance from the same village/town. This contact was responsible for the decision to leave and to gain the "initial foothold in the labour market" (ibid: 35) as it would either provide direct access to a job at destination or sufficient information to guarantee that first access.

This was the case for Vasile but also for Pelin and Vali. Pelin was helped first by his brother who was already working in London and who called him when his boss mentioned that they needed another builder on the site as the work had to be completed earlier. Pelin arrived with his "regular" EU passport and started to work within three days. Similarly, it was a cousin who told Vali about the opportunity to come and work on a renovation site where work had just started and more workers were needed.

What also characterised the first arrival in London based on first order contacts was that respondents were starting their project individually. In other words, they were not coming to London as part of a group of workers collectively recruited abroad but on an individual basis and ready to take up the job they were told about by their own relative or friend. Contacts were therefore activated within a co-national/ethnic social network, yet the organisational process of the journey and access to the job had always happened singly.

I emphasise this feature of the networked recruitment in the case of my London respondents as it was an element of differentiation from the situation of respondents in Rome. Furthermore, it brought in the opportunity structure and the impact it had in differently shaping the actual functioning of transnational networks of co-nationals, a feature that is rarely emphasised within the migration literature on social networks and that a comparative look may bring into sight. The fact that Britain was an EU member

but not part of the Schengen area made access to the country more difficult for Romanian citizens, even after 2002 when Romania was granted access to the Schengen area, compared to those migrating to Italy. Entering the country and remaining for work purposes was in my respondents' account a riskier action which was often conducted alone, or in very few cases, together with members of the close family (husband/wife, children). People would enter the country without any immigration document or using forged passports which could be obtained in Romania, or in other countries of the Schengen area, from consular services of countries which had recently joined the EU (Hungary for instance) and where networks for visa or passport forgery had developed.

Such was the case for Pelin, Vali, and also Viorel and his family, who travelled with forged documents of EU member countries not requiring a visa to enter the UK. Pelin, as already mentioned, travelled by train with an Italian passport; Vali, who came together with his wife, had a Hungarian passport and driving licence, while Viorel and his family came with German passports by plane.

> We had a tough time on the plane, once our son recognised someone from our own town who was travelling on the same airplane. Vio called him but luckily the guy didn't hear him and my wife immediately took our son to the toilet explaining to him why he could not talk loudly on the plane. We didn't want anyone to hear us talking Romanian (Viorel, London, 2006).

Hansi, instead, who came to London in 2003 following a call from a cousin already working in construction, travelled hiding in a freight train.

> I waited for a few nights in a place where trains would have to go very slowly, and when the right one arrived I jumped on it. I went there with one of those guys who recognise train numbers indicating destination and they guide you showing you the right train to take (London, 2006).

Once in London a learning process about the job and how to act in this specific sector began. This process, as Vali told me, was also mediated by networks of co-nationals. This time, however, the network could include both people that they knew before and new contacts met at work or at other meeting places for co-nationals. This newly shaped network was essential in the second phase of the process when the migrants needed to find another workplace. The length of time spent on one site, in fact, was limited and workers needed to look for another employment in a few weeks' time (if not days). As Ion and Cornel said:

> Work in construction is never certain. You may be working for a week or two and then if that house, or that room, or whatever you were hired to work for, is finished then your work is finished and you need to look around and find something else (Ion, London, 2006).

When you work in construction jobs are never for a very long period because the project starts and then finishes, and then you have to find a new one. That's when you have to keep your eyes and ears open (Cornel, London, 2006).

Ion and Cornel's narratives point out two significant and interrelated aspects of work in construction, and which differentiate it from women's working experience in the domestic sector for instance. The first is the "project-based" or "ephemeral" nature of building work (Chan et al. 2010), the other is the consequent intense level of mobility required of workers and which also implies a network of social relations within which workers can move, and get information, and which employers can rely on.

At this stage, I could identify three different paths that irregular Romanian workers already in London, could take: 1) they could find work again through a close relation in the city, 2) through a co-national "selling the job", or 3) they could be directly hired by an agency or local employer. As far as the last two possibilities are concerned, information about recruitment agencies and contact with the intermediary or with the employer happened mostly in particular places in the city such as specific bus stations or stores, ethnic groceries or Romanian churches. These were well-known places where new social relations were established, and getting to know where they were with the help of other Romanians was part of the learning process for a new arrival. These gathering places functioned either as hubs for information about jobs or as potential hiring places, mainly for very short-term jobs. These jobs were informally negotiated, offered or sold to new migrants based on trust between migrants, intermediaries and employers.

Vasile told me about the Polish recruitment agency he learned about at the Romanian Orthodox Church. He was given the address by another Romanian worker he met there and he went there the very next day.

> The woman there didn't even ask me where I was from. I think they know already that if you're coming to them it's because you are one of those not allowed to work here. She just asked what sort of job I was looking for. I said in construction. Three days later she called me back, gave me the papers I needed and send me to work …. And on a huge building site[109].

In his account Vasile referred to those recruitment agencies which developed in London especially after the 2004 EU enlargement and which were operating within the shadow land of semi-compliance with the new immigration and labour-market rules. As

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[109] A few weeks later, Vasile went back to the same agency asking for a different job. It was again through them that he found employment at the café.

mentioned above, these agencies also relied on the development of an industry of immigration and work-related documentation taking advantage of the geo-political changes.

Vali also received information about his second job in London at the Romanian Orthodox Church. He was reading the few job adverts posted on the information board right at the entrance of the church when he was approached by another Romanian.

> I've met a guy at the church and he offered me a job. It was in construction, we had to repair and restore a house. I accepted it; I would've accepted everything at that time. [...] it was for some people who buy houses, properties, renovate them and then resell them. They were Indians.... British-Indians (London, 2006).

The person who "offered" him the job could have been considered a job-broker as he acted as intermediary, providing Vali with information about a local employer and because later on Vali had to pay an agreed sum for the "offer". Yet at the time in London this kind of business was still very little developed and, as Vali pointed out to me when I suggested that the Romanian at the church was a job-broker, those people mediating a job were mostly "workers like us who got to know about a job and were selling that single information they had in hand". They could therefore be described as improvised precursors of those transnational job-brokers that in places like Rome, instead, were shaping a "transnational migration industry" directing co-national workers towards a developing ethnic niche of the local labour market.

Most of the time, the job they were selling was on the same building site where they were working. As has been observed, to cope with shortages British employers were inclined to "resort to the migratory chain, asking their foreign employees to fill vacancies through relatives or friends" (Fellini et al. 2007: 288). If the employee did not have a relative or friend available the information could be sold to a fellow co-national. However, by being able to bring in a good worker when needed "they could establish themselves as helpful and capable employees" (Vali, London, 2006). Furthermore, the practice was feasible as workers could be employed with what I call (*quasi)regular* contracts in London – these included working contracts obtained using forged documents such as NINo, CIS (Construction Industry Scheme) cards, foreign passports, or working on a self-employed contract but acting as employees. In most cases the authenticity of the documentation was not checked, a practice which reveals the already mentioned characteristic of a labour market in need of foreign labour despite restrictive policy measures.

4.3.2 In Rome

With regard to Romanian migrants in Rome, job-brokers were able to find workers both among their fellow countrymen already living in Italy and among people who were still in Romania[110]. In this second case a transnational connection between demand and supply was put in place and job-brokers were often working for small or medium Romanian companies. Besides procuring jobs, they could also offer some sort of protection and assistance to workers under their control. This practice has become very common in the Italian capital since the number of Romanian businesses contracted by larger Italian companies has increased. As Aurel told me, "it's become not unusual at all to be working for Romanians in Rome".

> Look for instance my boss now, he is Romanian and we are six people, all Romanians, working for him. Big Italian firms now work directly with small Romanian companies because they know that by now it is us Romanians doing the work in construction (Rome, 2007).

The opening and spread of Romanian businesses in the construction industry has therefore become a strong element that supports the transnational character of Romanian migration to Rome. It represents by now a very strong reality which finds its strength in the geo-political changes which occurred in the EU in the last ten years and which have impacted on the ways migration from Romania has developed. In fact, it can be said that the causes and consequences of the spread of Romanian businesses in Italian cities are by now interchangeable, in the sense that migrants have opened enterprises that connect the origin and the destination, and that facilitate transnational migration which in turn makes possible the opening of other new companies which employ Romanian migrant workers.

What can therefore be observed in the case of Romanian migration to Italy is that in a relatively short time Romanian migrants have been able create a strong transnational network which allowed for the integration of Romanian men in a specific area of the Italian labour market. The first access to the labour market could also happen differently if compared to the British case where I was emphasising the **individuality** of the project.

In the Italian case, in fact, transnational job information and recruitment operated through job-brokers also occurred **collectively**. This was possible because of the different opportunity structures in place such as: shorter distances which were easier to cover only by land; a transportation system (usually made up by mini-vans at first and

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[110] See also Ban (2009) who mentions similar practices among Romanian migrants in Italy, although still in their infancy, in 2004.

by larger buses at a later stage) which, because of the geographical position of the two countries and of the weak controls at the borders, developed very quickly; and finally the favourable visa regimes as well as an accessible market for forged visas which flourished in Central and Eastern Europe at different stages of the EU enlargement.

In those cases, brokers operating in Rome secured jobs for groups of people from the same village or region whose travel and accommodation upon arrival was organised together as a group. Job-brokers had started to work within the Romanian collectivities in countries of migration once the number of Romanian migrants increased and work became more difficult to find (Cingolani, 2009). These were Romanian migrants who had transformed their social relations into a source of income by creating contacts between Romanians looking for jobs and potential employers. Usually these mediators worked for some time in the same sector; they therefore knew its characteristics and developed a good network on the territory.

Their practices became transnational when, because of "the high competition for niches in the Italian construction and refurbishing market" (Ban, 2009: 18), they started to operate across the border by arranging traveling and bringing workers directly from Romania. Some of my respondents in Rome, and also other Romanians I was introduced to by my female respondents – Rodica's new partner in Rome as well as some of the relatives she had in the city, some of Cristi's work mates, and two more Romanian workers I was introduced to by Aurel – arrived in Rome travelling together with other co-villagers. Once at their destination they would often start working for the same company and they were also offered basic accommodation on site.

Rodica told me how her partner was living together with his four workmates when she first met him.

> When he and the other four arrived, they were brought to the site where they had to start working. The guy told them that they could use a room on the ground floor if they didn't have another place to go for the night. There were some mattresses there and a stove. Together with another wife I used to go and cook for them on Thursday afternoons when we were free[111]. (Rodica, Rome, 2007)

In those cases, information about the middleman was also commonly given out by a family member or close friend who had already used the network or knew about it from other co-workers. This "first-order contact", which provided an additional inter-link

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[111] Thursday afternoons are commonly free for domestics working on a live-in basis – see next chapter.

between the prospective migrant and the middleman, ensured that initial *trust* which is functional for the transnational transaction to be able to start[112].

> A close relative told me about a guy who came to our town to get some boys for a company in Italy. I didn't know very well if that was his company or if he was just gathering people for some other company, but I thought he was ok as long as he was known to the family (Aurel, Rome, 2007).

> My brother came here with a group of five from our village. Three years ago I told him that someone from the company I was working for was going to come to Neamt to get people to work here. I know about it from my boss. Everything for the trip was organised, money, documents, and once here he stayed with us for a while (Gheorghe, Rome, 2007).

Once in Rome, and when looking for another job, migrant workers, similarly to London, could learn about specific places in the city where Romanian migrant workers, together with other nationalities, gather early in the morning waiting for job offers. Here there are two typologies of places: "*smorzi*" and "*depozite*". The first, an Italian word, indicates warehouses around the city where construction materials are sold wholesale. Similarly to the British case, migrants gather outside warehouses where employers come to buy equipment and to recruit casual labour. The second is a Romanian word and indicates specific places in the city where migrants assemble and employers or gang-masters look for workers able to perform different types of jobs. In this case work in construction is not the only option: migrants gathering in these places may expect to get everything from work in construction, to agriculture, gardening, etc[113]. It was to one of these places that Cristi took me one morning so that I could have a glance at the recruitment process.

> It's about six o'clock am and from time to time a van stops; usually an Italian man is driving it and he asks for workers. When a car stops by, there is confusion; everyone gets closer trying to attract the driver's attention. Drivers look for people able to paint, or to demolish a house, or to work on a building site without specifying any task in particular. The pay is shouted and agreed in few seconds and usually ranges in between 40 and 50 Euros a day (Notes from fieldwork, Rome, June, 2007).

In these places, as has been described for other immigrant collectivities, workers make further contacts often among co-nationals. These contacts, which can be defined as "second order contacts" (Corcoran, 1991), and which may resemble those weak links well discussed within literature on migrants' networks (Granovetter, 1982) may provide

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[112] Similar strategies were put in place by networks of middlemen specialised in the adoption business which developed in Romania in the immediate aftermath of December 1989.

[113] Via Palmiro Togliatti, via Collatina, Arco di Travertino, Porta Furba, Tor di Quinto, Tiburtina, Rebibbia, Ostiense, Tor di Valle, Castel Fusano are some example of *depozite* in Rome.

important channels for the circulation of information about jobs available within the city and beyond.

Having to wait for hours in these places to be taken by an employer was described by Cristi as a distressing and humiliating experience.

> "It looks like a market place" he said. "We gather on the main road in the morning and wait for the boss to come. We wait like prostitutes to be chosen and taken for a day of work. It is sinister and humiliating too. There are moments when you would like to go back home…"

Adopting a gendered perspective when discussing migrants' experiences of work has therefore to take into consideration how, while women are expected to perform their natural abilities of wives/mothers when hired for domestic services, men also need to embody their natural competences required to work in this specific sector and which have to combine physical strength and toughness. Cristi told me that being young and well-built would definitely help as in many cases employers coming here would be looking for general labourers able to do some of the heaviest work on the building site. Other Romanian migrants would refuse to go to those places where you have to wait for hours without even being certain of a positive outcome for the day. Yet not going at all can involve:

> being out of work for many days. It is difficult to find something stable in construction nowadays. Bosses have learned this and they know that they can work with us migrants by the hour. They don't want to have employees, this is how it is. So you have to deal with this situation if you want to work. This is work now in construction (Cristi, Rome, 2007).

There were no Italian workers in these places and migrants gathering here would accept any kind of job. Because of the large number of people and the noise, often migrants only understand what kind of job they are being offered once they are in the car. Sometimes they are not even aware of the money they will get until the working day is finished. Sometimes they do not even get paid at the end of their working day.

4.4. Self-employment and informal co-national subcontracting

Since the beginning of 2007 and the increase in self-employed visas granted to Romanian migrants, small mostly one-person Romanian-owned companies have appeared in London. Romanian migrants, cut off from accessing the local market, managed to adapt and play according to the "rules". As one of my respondents told me, "it can't be otherwise as self-employment seems to be the only available route for us to work in this sector"[114].

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[114] Andreea, London, 2007.

Viorel also works on a self-employed visa. After having been in the UK with a tourist visa, a friend advised him what to do to become self-employed and work regularly. A Croatian solicitor prepared the business plan and applied for the visa on his behalf. Viorel's account sums up well the pro and cons of being self-employed:

> I started my business with a business account and business plan that was done by the solicitor. So I was obliged to work just as self employed, not as employee, to pay my own taxes, my own medical expenses, I didn't have the right to any benefit…..and….ah, I also had to earn a minimum £250 per week to justify my business here. With this status you can't work everywhere. In some situations you are accepted only as employee, and with the self-employed status you are not allowed to work as employee for the first four years. So in construction they are happy to work with self-employed because the relationship is between two companies, not between employer and employee. So you have a contract that can finish at any time, there is no benefit, no medical insurance and so on. The employer doesn't have to give you anything. There is nothing, just a business. There are no rights; everything is based just on a project, a contract and the pay. That's it. They don't have any obligation and you don't have any right. But in a way this status of self-employed is good for us because it gives us the possibility to work legally, and is good for them because they don't have any obligation towards us. And, in the same time, the British state gets its taxes which are an income for it. So it's a sort of mutual relationship (London, 2007).

It can therefore be said that, despite all difficulties related to being a self-employed worker in construction (i.e. no continuous work can be done as the self-employed worker cannot provide her/his services to the same company/individual for longer periods; subcontracted workers are released immediately at the end of a project; lack of benefits etc.), self-employment is also being used also as a reactive strategy to overcome difficulties migrants encounter when trying to access hostile labour markets regularly (Anderson and Ruhs, 2008). Working on a self-employed visa become "a means of self-legalisation", a way to gain the right to reside regularly and to be a regular worker in a deregulated labour market (ibid.).

Similarly in Rome, recent figures published by the Chamber of Commerce indicate 8,758 Romanian businesses (still the most represented foreign collectivity among immigrant enterprises) of which more than 5,000 were in construction at the end of March 2012 (Forti et al. 2009). Most of those businesses, like the Italian ones[115], are medium and small firms and often *sole trade*r[116].

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[115] In 2007, there were only four large companies (more than 100 employees) working in construction in Rome. All the rest were small and medium companies, and the largest number would count only 5 employees (7,143) (Forti et al. 2009).
[116] The self-employed person works on their own account – one-man business.

What this means is that in some cases the decision to become self-employed and start a business is not necessarily related to a migrant driven entrepreneurial plan but rather to the intrinsic dynamics of the labour market where job opportunities are in decline given the increase of (informal) supply. In these cases, Romanians who have worked for some time for Italian firms and who have accumulated the necessary capital, have opened their own businesses and often carry on working for the same Italian firms. When the work they need to do cannot be completed by the same person, other co-nationals, often family members or co-villagers, are informally employed or single tasks are further irregularly subcontracted to them (Ambrosini, 2001; Cingolani, 2009).

The same strategy was also employed by self-employed migrants in London, and the same networked informal form of recruitment was now used at a different level where informal subcontracting of co-national irregular migrants was carried out by regular self-employed workers contracted by national companies or recruitment agencies. A mixed chain of formal, semi-formal and informal employment relations is therefore created together with a niche for marginalised workers within an already marginal sector of the secondary labour market.

The benefits of "employing" co-ethnics are evident as they can base working relations on knowledge of the intra-collectivity dynamics and needs in specific periods, and therefore have greater control over their workers. In this way, I have observed how in both cities, a new hierarchy of older and newer migrants is being created within the so called "new migration" (the post-1989 migration) from Romania.

In London, geopolitical changes at EU level and specific restrictions implemented at national level in the UK are in part responsible for this, as migrants who have entered the country regularly since January 2007 have to face exclusionary regulations and therefore can find themselves in a condition of irregularity if they want to take up a job in construction. Due to current restrictions regarding working in this field in the UK, post-2007 arrivals from Romania are often still working without regular working papers and therefore in the weakest position among their co-nationals. In their country of migration they find themselves facing exclusionary regulations which in some cases may lead to mistreatment on behalf of their co-nationals who instead benefit from longer-term settlement entitlements.

> We employ new migrants who ask for a reasonable pay. Not a very low one because... because if they ask for a very little money that may mean that they are not good workers. You know, there are many so-called "cowboy" on the market, people who ask for very low pay but who also do a very bad work. We employ new arrivals

but we check on them. These are people who need the work; they don't have any alternatives, they are new and don't have a network here as yet. So they have to accept the prices and conditions we tell them. Yet I believe we offer them a reasonable pay (Andreea, London, 2007).

Faced with exclusion from regular employment, Romanian workers who travel to London for work are often directed to such co-national small contractors who are Romanians on a self-employed visa. Being in an irregular position when looking for a job in the virtually closed British labour market, the new arrival has little choice but to accept the terms of "employment" as laid down by the employer. As has been observed elsewhere, once "the labour market tightens, the immigrant finds himself with less and less bargaining power" (Corcoran, 1991: 42) and the effect of the new structural changes has therefore been to further marginalise irregular workers.

In the Italian case, although there were no entrepreneurs among my respondents working in construction in Rome, all of them had worked for a Romanian firm and I found their comments when asked whether they would prefer being business owners rather than employees very insightful. They helped in understanding the development of working practices and the meanings actors attach to those practices in a transnational migratory field.

Interestingly, all my male respondents with working experience in construction told me that they would prefer to have their own business (and some of them were working towards this end by saving the necessary starting capital) even if that was not necessarily bringing more income. When asked why, they offered two different reasons for their preference: one was related to the precarious and difficult working conditions as irregular employees especially when under a Romanian employer, while the other referred to the social status connected to the entrepreneurial condition.

What, I argue, makes their answers of particular interest for this study is that both reasons relate to the transnational social fields in which labour market dynamics are generated and, by comparison, differentiate the condition of the Romanian migrant worker in Rome (and in the Italian context in more general terms) from that in London. As the following fragments of conversations and interviews show,

By now, here in Rome very often you'll end up working for a Romanian boss; not because they are the owners, the big ones are always Italians, but they subcontract, and subcontract, and you have maybe a small Italian company, subcontracting to another Italian, and then he'll subcontract to a Romanian, who will be bringing other Romanians… and there is you, irregularly subcontracted, sometime directly subcontracted from Romania, to come and work for a Romanian so called "company" here in Rome. And that's the nastiest thing! And you know

why? I have been working for Romanians. They need to make money to have their business run, and they need to make it quick. So they squeeze the poor guy, they try to get the most they can and then … no pay! Yes, very often no pay!

Respondents, therefore, were not showing a preference for co-national employers who were often not paying their agreed salaries, were asking for extra working hours - which again would result in not-paid work, and they were also often not implementing the security rules on the building site. Many of them, however, were depending on informal recruitment of co-nationals especially in the first stage of their business; and often these recruitments were arranged transnationally. They would therefore rely mainly on workers at their first experience of both migration or work in construction. These were provided to the company by the above-mentioned job-brokers who would recruit workers often on their first experience straight from Romania[117]. These migrants would therefore be willing to accept lower salaries meaning that the business, especially at the beginning, could accumulate more capital and secure a place within the local market. Furthermore, the chance to obtain a regular contract is very limited, given the large pool of irregular migrants ready to start working. Once again, the supra-national structural change which has offered freedom of movement, and in the Italian case, the opening of the labour market in the particular case of the construction sector, when combined with the presence of an informal economy and labour market has contributed to further marginalise the less powerful sections of the immigrant labour force.

On the other hand, the socio-cultural "spillover" effects of these small entrepreneurial activities generated new intersubjective fields that crisscross transnational contexts at home and in migration. More than one respondent reminded me of the decrease in social recognition the *Italiani*, as Romanian workers who migrated to Italy are called back in Romania, have been enduring recently in their home communities.

> …because coming to work in construction or a house maid here now is become so easy, back home people don't see it as an achievement any more. Italy is considered now the destination for the "small fish", for those who are not able to do much. People who come to do unskilled work, illegal work and then go back with little money. If you have more ambitious plans you go somewhere else, where you can make more money (Cristi, Rome, 2007).

As Cristi's words are emphasising, migration to Italy and working in sectors such as construction or domestic work is not seen as a social achievement any more, now that it has become accessible and the number of Romanians going back and forth or settling in

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[117] See also Corcoran, 1991 for similar experiences among Irish workers in the US.

Italian cities has increased. Unless "you are able to open your own business here with people working for you".

What Cristi pointed to was the hierarchical achievement and distribution of work which places the entrepreneur in a much more powerful and prestigious position as owner of a private business, as opposed to the one who migrates (only) for work. By referring to "people back home" it also emphasises the importance of self-employment at both individual and transnational family level as a reflection of personal aspirations to assert private ownership and therefore of that social mobility attitude that Garapich (2005) has identified among eastern European workers – an economic behaviour that socialism had largely suppressed (A. Datta, 2009).

As Ban has observed, the emergence of these transnational entrepreneurs, who have been able to use their working skills (often acquired at home), as well as their social capital, is often picked up by "an emerging media discourse in Romania about the miraculous building of capitalism from below" (Ban, 2009: 22). What those discourses carefully omit, and which instead my respondents were strongly pointing to, as Cristi's words above highlight, is the unfair means used in this process of co-national class differentiation - and therefore in the creation of a transnational capitalist class from below - via capital accumulation. This brings my discourse to the last related topic which will be discussed in the following section of this chapter, and which brings together the two otherwise often separated fields of work and family.

4.5. The intersection of work and gender: new intersubjective transnational fields

In this last section of this chapter I look at the impact the condition of irregular construction worker can have on being a husband and a father in the transnational context of migration. As mentioned in the introduction to this second part of this dissertation, too often, spheres of migration such as work and family tend to be analysed separately, especially when the subjects of investigation are male migrant workers. Furthermore, those studies focus on workers' efforts to get jobs, their working conditions, their strategies of integration or the role they have in the labour market, as well as their status vis-à-vis the state, As such, the impact of irregular migratory status or of working conditions is read in regard to the final economic result of the migratory project, rather than adopting a more comprehensive approach which brings in the gendered emotional implications and the feelings of those male workers which are instead kept private and known only in the intimacy of their private family life.

Yet, being an irregular migrant, and having to perform low-skilled precarious work, "becomes inscribed in the lives of migrants, gradually permeating their social worlds" (Sigona, 2012: 50). Configurations of "illegality", of which irregular work is just one example, are embodied and experienced by migrants in their everyday lives and profoundly affect personal and family relations as well as decisions and practices of work and consequently the final result of the migratory project.

Having the family as the main unit of analysis, and most of all because respondents' narratives naturally, and inevitably, were drawing in the emotional side of their experiences as migrant workers embedded in transnational family relations, meant that a methodological decision to include this present section in this chapter on working practices and strategies had to be taken. The case illustrated here shows how the intersection of gender norms and irregular employment in a precarious sector such as construction, coupled with the living experience in a transitional social field in which multi-sited family dynamics and socio-cultural norms have significant impacts on migrants' daily lives, can lead to conjugal tensions and fears which ultimately may question the entire migratory project.

Working in construction can become a frustrating experience because of the uncertainty of the job and therefore of the money earned at the end of the month. As already illustrated in this chapter, even when work is consistent for a longer period of time, payment can still be an unknown. This can have repercussions on family life, with men in some cases feeling unable to fulfil their predefined gendered duty of breadwinner, a condition which is accentuated by the migratory project and the embedded economic and social expectations on the part of migrants and family relations back home.

In Cristi's case he had more than one experience of long periods of time without a job, as well as entire weeks in which he was not paid at all for his work. At first, it was Cristina, his wife who told me about Cristi's difficulties. "He would never tell you anything about this, he's too ashamed. He feels like he's done something wrong, like this is his fault" she told me one day when during lunch I asked her how work was going for Cristi.

I tried to talk to him a few times about his work during the very first days of my stay in the same house, but he always cut the conversation short, saying things like "it's ok, it's hard but you get used to it", or he would keep the conversation around practical matters such as the kind of tasks he does, who are his mates, how they get paid and so

on. His frustration was also derived from the fact that Cristina, working as a domestic, was never short of employment.

> In our case[118] the situation is quite the opposite: too much work. I have friends who work for the whole day, from dawn to sunset, every day of the week. There is always someone looking for a *badante*. But with them[119] is different. Sometime they go out in the morning and they don't know if they'll have a job for the day. And this can go on for days. And then he (*Cristi*) comes home and .... yes sometimes he refuses to eat. It's your money he said to me once; we always eat your money, he said! (Cristina, Rome, 2007)

Cristi's behaviour shows his being stressed about his role as economic provider. Indeed, given the socially constructed relation between paid-work and masculine identity, time spent without a job or working without a pay (Herbert, 2008; Boehm, 2004; Datta et al., 2008) undermined his self-esteem as a husband and therefore as expected a provider for his family. Cristina told me that once he even mentioned that maybe it could have been better if she had not joined him in Italy so that he did not have to compare his working situation with that of his wife. Despite Cristina always reassuring him that "things are fine as long as one of us always has a job", Cristi could not accept the idea that his wife was becoming the new breadwinner, and therefore he could not adopt a new role in the household which may put him in a (even if only temporary) weaker/dependant position.

Furthermore, the location of Cristina's work in the private sphere of her clients' home and therefore its connotation as "family work", not much different from "what you already do at home" (Cristina reporting Cristi's words), was also brought up by Cristi during their conversations. Reinforcing a stereotypical image of the work in construction as tough and physical, was for Cristi a way to increase his "own sense of self-worth while also compensating for the threats to his masculinity" (Datta et al., 2008: 25)

> Sometimes he comes and tells me that it is not fair at all that I get paid *just* for house-work, while him, who does the *real* work, work that is *tough* (e greu), may end up with little or no money. Can you believe this? (poti sa-ti dai seama?)

Cristi's behaviour and feelings, in a transnational perspective, could be related back to the rigid prescriptions of appropriate gender roles characteristic of the Romanian semi-rural environment, yet those would resonate with patriarchal roles embedded in the Italian context of migration. His discomfort with the fact that their income is coming from activities performed by his wife and which he does not acknowledge as work,

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[118] Here Cristina refers to women working in the domestic sector.
[119] She refers to men in the construction sector.

conforms once again to the social order and social construction of masculinity and femininity, whereby the work-place and the work itself are evaluated according to gender-specific ascribed meanings.

As a result, Cristi's precarious working and psychological condition permeated the life of the family as a whole, bringing about concerns which went well beyond economic/employment matters.

> This has made him to behave in very strange ways lately, and our life, as a couple as a family is getting difficult. Since we came back from Romania he started to control me and he even told me that he was afraid that I could leave him. I think in some ways he's always felt in an inferior position because since I arrived here, most of time I was the one bringing more money at home.

The situation did not improve once Romania entered the EU. As a result of that structural change Cristi and Cristina, like every other Romanian in Italy, shifted from an irregular immigration status to a regular one, although their working status remained irregular. Moreover, in 2007 they had the possibility to finally travel back to Romania, visit family and bring their child with them to Italy. The event, which was expected to be a happy one given that for so many years the couple was apart from their close relatives, in fact turned out as significantly destabilising for the family equilibrium in the transnational space inhabited in migration.

In particular the meeting with Cristi's older sister made Cristi rethink the whole migratory project. She had never left Romania but had managed to achieve a relatively wealthy economic position there thanks to a commercial activity in which both she and her husband were involved. On their return from Romania, it was Cristi who talked to me about the difficulty of his job combined with disappointment at the meagre results and gratification in relation to his work and migratory project.

> I was almost to the point of not coming back here [to Rome] anymore. What have I achieved here working as a dog on building sites? My sister was right, she has a beautiful house now in Romania and I? I didn't even manage to buy an apartment. I'm a total failure, if it wasn't for Cristina who always brings money home, sometime maybe we were not even able to pay the rent for this room. This work is… sometime I feel like I can't do it anymore. It's hard work, and this would be fine if it wasn't for the fact that you are an irregular worker even now (2007) and it's too many of us, too many.

Before going back to Romania Cristi felt that he was able to display some kind of success to the rest of his family at home. As illustrated in other research (K. Datta et al., 2008: 29) "part of the strategies to cope with this suffering and emasculation is to prioritise 'delayed gratification': whereby male migrants are able to put up with the restricted employment opportunities and ethnic and racial discrimination that they face

in their host country, by drawing upon the validation that will come on their return home as successful migrants – valued over and above other family and community members". Migrant men, therefore, have been described as activating a "double masculine consciousness subordinated in one gender regime but hegemonic, indeed exhibiting hyper masculine characteristics, in another" (McKay, 2007: 630).

Along with various amounts of money and gifts for family members but especially for their child, Cristi and Cristina were also sending pictures or videos of themselves in their new apartment, with their new furniture, their TV, or walking in the shiny shopping-mall across the street from their apartment block and showing the newly purchased goods. Those transnational practices based on the migrants' absence from their place of origin, and on the display of their "wealth" from afar, could give the appearance of an instant and solid success story even when confined within the space of irregularity and hard work. As Pribilsky (2012: 336) has also observed, for "undocumented migrants largely unable to find outlets for status in their transplanted communities, the act of remitting gifts [...] allowed men to look towards their home communities and produce a coherent identity of themselves as successful migrants, committed husbands and attentive fathers".

Yet the above argument, emphasised by McKay's (2007) work, which was valid as long as *transnational relations remained at a distance*, could not stand once the actual return (even if only for visiting purposes) was enacted. Cristi's sense of failure as an irregular migrant worker was accentuated within the space of the transnational social relations which made him think about the worthiness of working on the building site. Those transnational social relationships and responsibilities became a source of psychological burden and the entire migratory project was reassessed.

4.6. Conclusions

In this chapter I looked at practices and constraints experienced by my respondents throughout their experience of labour market incorporation in the two cities. After briefly overviewing the construction sectors in the two locations, providing a sketch of the two working contexts in which my respondents have been involved, I illustrated how the transnational redistribution of manual labour from the countries where migration originates, Romania in this case, to the labour markets of receiving countries in Europe, Italy and Britain, is not entirely the prerogative of these states.

The construction industry relies greatly on a variety of private informal actors making up a complex "transnational governance structure of labour flows" (Ban, 2009:

15) within Europe. As these current flows of labour migration emerged in the shadow of EU construction, migrant workers developed networks able to avoid imposed restrictions and to reach those contexts where their work/services were in actual fact welcomed by some economic actors in spite of or because of their irregular status. Respondents' accounts in this chapter presented the social foundation of these informal organisations and highlighted ways in which their internal functioning fits with the requirements of the global European market.

Yet national and supranational regimes do play a role in those developments. Romania's accession to the EU and the new legal structure of opportunities that has emerged has in fact further accentuated the role of informal recruiters/brokers in a labour context where employers have a constantly growing number from which to select employees. Looking at differences in between the two settings, I highlight the development in the Italian case of networks of Romanian migrants who have occupied, and almost monopolised, this niche of the secondary labour markets.

Finally, the history of migration studies demonstrates that, even if men have been overwhelmingly the focus of research, their gendered lives have been largely excluded (Willis and Yeoh, 2000). In this chapter I have approached this topic in relation to working practices of daily life that constitute another meaningful area of their migratory experience, in which migrants confront their identities "as men in their role as men, including roles as husbands and fathers" (Gutmann 1997: 385, quoted in Pribilsky, 2012: 4). The two case studies exemplified showed how "the construction of masculine identities in the global space emerges as an ambiguous and conflicting process" (Gallo, 2006: 169).

As a matter of fact work in construction is well accepted by migrant workers despite all the inconveniences related to low pay, hardship, and uncertainty, as far as it gives them the possibility to fulfil their role as breadwinners. Yet their status as head of the household may be challenged if their economic or social achievements do not meet the transnational family's or their own expectations. This is a condition that develops at the intersection of precarious irregular working conditions and family lives and has to be dealt with in the transnational space of the "personal community"/family.

The last section of this chapter, therefore, approached challenges posed by the migration employment experience to gendered roles governing traditional relations within the family. It therefore connects this chapter to the Third Part of the dissertation where developments of relations within the sphere of transnational family life and

issues of identity formation and belonging are looked at in more detail. In the next chapter my empirical analysis of Romanians' labour market incorporation situates in context women's working experiences and explores factors that have encouraged the growth of domestic employment of migrant women in Britain and Italy.

Chapter 5 Working in the domestic sector

5. 1. Introduction: migrant labour in the domestic/care sector

One of the areas of the secondary segment of the labour market, the domestic sector, has been defined by Nancy L. Green (cited in Schrover et al., 2007) as the "classic immigrant women's niche", implying the importance of this labour sector for migrant women. Although migrant women have not always been predominant in this area of the labour market, the sector offers growing working opportunities to migrant women (Ryan et al., 2008). Why this is happening is briefly explained below.

Explanation for the growth of paid domestic work in many parts of the world has focused on women's increasing participation in paid employment and thus their growing inability to carry out reproductive work that was traditionally constructed as their full-time role within the household (Cox, 2006). Long and demanding working hours create a demand for domestic help and/or flexible childcare which is often not provided by public or private childcare services. Au-pairs or other forms of informal domiciliary paid domestic help are instead increasingly the answer.

Meanwhile, the status of employment in the domestic and care sectors has fallen as have average wages for these jobs. Cox (2006) starts her book on domestic employment in a global economy with a short overview of the history of paid domestic work, and emphasises the change in status of the service from a respectable occupation of choice favoured for daughters during the Victorian period, to a job of last resort by the end of the nineteenth century. As she notices, "both childcare and domestic care for elderly are among the lowest paid occupations in the UK" (ibid.: 53) for they are labelled as unskilled work.

Furthermore, the equation of domestic/care work with women/mothers' activities performed for free within the household has resulted in the importance of the work being rarely acknowledged. The traditional separation between home and work, which replicates the distinction between private/women's and public/men's space, has strengthened assumptions that activities and tasks performed within the home are not "real work" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003).

Yet, this process of downgrading of domestic/care work has taken place simultaneously with other phenomena characterising the global socio-economic context

in recent times: first of all, the already mentioned changes in women's aspirations and therefore rearrangement of internal families' dynamics; secondly, the growing ageing of the population in many European countries and therefore the rise in the number of people in need of care; and finally, the since the 1980s, the "expanding neo-liberalism and economic philosophy that supports private enterprise, reduces state spending and encourages global competition" (Cox, 2006: 18).

As a result, there has been a severe labour shortage in domestic help and domiciliary care while female migrant labour has increasingly become the answer. Migrant women, often informally "employed", provide a low-priced form of reproductive labour for private households. They are often the ones accepting high levels of flexibility in terms of working hours and other job arrangements as well as being more willing to perform those tasks that were previously part of women's unpaid daily "family" labour (Anderson, 2001b).

A quick look at research on migration shows the centrality of domestic work as far as employment of migrant women in the EU is concerned (Maas et al., 2001; Narula, 1999; Lutz, 2008; Cox, 2006; Bridget Anderson 2000). Within Europe there has been a general pattern of movement of women from areas in the South and East to the wealthier areas in the North and West. If traditionally women from Ireland (until the 1950s) and the Caribbean worked in Britain, Algerians in France, and Surinamese women worked in the Netherlands for instance, more recently migrants from within Europe have become more important and Portuguese women have made up a large part of the domestic force in Britain, while Polish women have been important in Germany and central and later eastern European women in Italy. Colonial history and language commonalities, as well as specific immigration policies, have had significant impacts on patterns of movement. Paid domestic work, increasingly performed by migrant women, has therefore become an instrument which both overcomes the conflicts of interest inherent in the gendered division of labour in the "nuclear family" and, as following sections will show, is becoming central to the functioning of national welfare systems of many European countries. In fact, this situation, which has generally been perceived as typical of the Southern European countries, is increasingly characterising Northern European countries also (Anderson, 2000; Williams, 2008)

In this present chapter I use interviews and ethnographic material to illustrate and combine general trends with individual experience, and I concentrate on the experiences of domestic workers performing jobs as cleaners, au-pairs, and carers for children and

the elderly. Sections of the chapter give details about strategies to access the labour market in the two cities, about the type of work done, about the complexities behind a type of job which is difficult to define and often requires a highly emotional involvement, and about working arrangements and how transnational mobility patterns impact women's working conditions and workplace relationships in the two contexts.

5.2. The demand for domestic help

5.2.1 In the British context

Since the mid-1970s London has consistently been getting wealthier than other cities in Britain, with average incomes of individuals and households higher than in the rest of the UK. The importance of the city as a global centre, where financial, legal and business services are concentrated, has increased the number of people with high wages (Sassen, 1991) who can easily afford to pay for other people to provide services for them. This has allowed for a culture of consumption of household work to appear (Cox, 2006: 50). The part-time cleaner, the live-in au-pair, and the mother's help or nanny, have become the most common forms of paid domestic work. Although for most of the twentieth century Britain had lower levels of paid domestic employment than other European countries (Anderson et al., 1993), the demand for these types of services, and in particular for child-minding, has significantly increased since the beginning of the 1990s (Cox, 1999).

This "consumption culture" with regard to the provision of household services has also been stimulated, in specific fields, by Britain's welfare system. The childcare system in particular, has felt the effects of the Thatcher administration which "saw child care provision as a 'private matter' to be left to parents themselves to organise" (Gregson and Lowe, 1994): 91). As a result there have been low levels of government investment in childcare provision, especially for infants (Cox, 2006: 61) and private day-care became the most widespread solution in families where both parents were in full-time employment. In more recent years, a tax credit (the childcare component of the Working Tax Credit) has been implemented to allow parents to pay for privately provided childcare. What this means is that welfare policies, by encouraging the development of a particular form of family help which is accessed privately through the market, are actually legitimising the "commodification of care" and of domestic work more generally (Williams, 2008). Furthermore, because of the low-pay/low-status character of domestic and care jobs, migrants are more likely to be among the few willing to do these jobs (Williams, 2008: 3). Therefore, the growing use of nannies or

child-minders can be partly interpreted as a consequence of the lack of widely available public sector day-care facilities.

5.2.2 In the Italian context

In Italy, the family has traditionally been constructed as the main actor responsible for the care and well-being of dependent (financially or physically) family members (i.e. elderly, children, disabled) (Saraceno, 1998). Public care of the elderly has normally only been an option of last resort when there were no other possible options of care in the family – i.e. children, siblings, sons and daughters-in-law (Naldini, 2003: 122). The growing need for care services has therefore generally not been met by public provision. The only benefit for dependent elderly, which is provided at national level, is an attendance allowance (*indennità di accompagnamento*) and is mainly used by families to buy private domiciliary help (von Hooren, 2008).

As the population is ageing, more and more elderly are in need of short or long-term care and the Italian family-care model is in many cases no longer a viable option[120], a significant part of domestic social and care services, such as childcare, invalid and especially elderly care, is delivered privately, mainly informally, and involves migrant domestic workers, one of the most significant components of Italy's immigration (Schierup et al., 2006, King and Zontini, 2000). However, unlike the British situation, in Italy, the practice of employing, often irregularly, migrant workers to respond to care needs within the family has become very common. According to some observers, this has brought about a shift in the traditional Italian welfare "model" from a "family" model to a "migrant-in-the-family" model of care (Bettio et al. 2006). The market for household services is "a major pillar of the Italian welfare regime and the role of foreign domestic work in its maintenance is duly acknowledged in Italian political debate" (Sciortino, 2004: 120).

Migrant women working for Italian families are not an entirely new phenomenon. Already in 1978 there were "between 70,000 and 100,000 migrant women were working as 'colf' (collaboratrice familiare = literally family helper)" in Italy (van Hooren, 2008: 6). Since the mid-1970s, the demand for domestic labour in Italy became a strong pull factor for the arrival of foreign workers willing to be employed as domestics. What however makes migrant domestic work different nowadays from the

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[120] Reasons such as gender shifts within the nuclear family, women's working aspirations and career have already been discussed in the previous chapter.

beginning of the 1980s is on one hand the size of the phenomenon and on the other the typology of activities migrant workers are involved in when employed in this sector. Figures of the Italian social security institute show that, in 2006, 72% of the 469,522 registered domestic and care workers were foreigners[121]. Although often employed to care for an elderly member of the family, they are in fact involved in a wide range of household chores. Furthermore, what has also changed is the typology of employer. Nowadays domestic workers, or *badanti* as they are commonly called in Italy, can be employed by a much wider variety of families, ranging from higher class families to middle class ones[122].

Finally, a shift in provenience of these foreign domestic workers has also taken place since the early 1990s. While before that year domestic workers were coming mainly from Asian, South American and African countries (i.e. Philippines, Peru, Eritrea, and Cape Verde), since the collapse of the "iron curtain" the sector has witnessed a significant inflow of Eastern European migrant workers, mainly from countries such as Romania and Ukraine.

5.2.3 Features differentiating the two contexts

Despite similarities related to global changes concerning transformations in women's position within the family and in relation to work and career, and in the ways welfare states are also being shaped by the economic neo-liberal turn, there are some features which differentiate the two contexts analysed in this research and which have a significant impact on access and presence of Romanian migrant women in the domestic sectors of the two cities. These variations concern firstly the social meaning which paid domestic help performed by migrant women has acquired in the Italian household, and secondly the field of immigration policy and its implementation in relation to domestic help provision by migrant workers.

I have previously mentioned how in the early stages the demand for domestic workers in Italy mainly came from wealthy households able to afford the luxury of having domestic help. More recently, however, migrant domestic workers are increasingly being employed by Italian lower-middle-earning households (i.e. dual-career couples, the elderly living on a fixed income and single mothers). Together with

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[121] http://servizi.inps.it/banchedatistatistiche/domestici/index.jsp

[122] "A survey of Italian families (*Indagine multiscopo sulle famiglie*) suggests that already in 2000 7.4% of all families with at least one elderly member (>75) employed a full time private care worker" (Sarti, 2004: 4). "In a survey of recipients of the earlier mentioned national attendance allowance carried out in 2006, Ranci and Pavolini found that 26.8% of the allowance recipients living at home – i.e. not in residential care – lived with a paid carer" (Ranci and Pavolini, 2008: 12).

globalisation and women's migration, the low status attributed to work in this sector, and the informal character of most of the work in the domestic sector have contributed to lowering the pay received by migrant women (Lutz, 2008).

For those not so wealthy families the migrant worker has now become both a means of acquiring social prestige and a way to display an acceptable social behaviour. In a highly *familistic* society, in fact, migrant women employed to care for elderly or disabled members of the family, "fits nicely with the Italian ideal of family care: taking place at home and without much intervention from outside" (van Hooren, 2008a: 4; see also Lamura, 2007). It implies that the family is not abandoning its vulnerable members to the mercy of public institutions, and therefore is not failing in its duty to provide financial and especially physical care for the elderly in the bosom of the family itself, perpetuating that social order at the base of a Christian society (Andall, 2000).

A number of recent immigration policies have enabled or even encouraged the employment of migrants in private households in Italy, almost resulting in a form of "institutionalisation" of migrant domestic work (van Hooren, 2008). From 2002 onwards, in line with the regulation of the Bossi-Fini law, quotas for foreign workers have been designed precisely for domestic and care workers. Quotas for care and domestic workers are in fact much higher than for any other single occupation – yet they are still far from meeting the actual needs of the Italian families[123]. Moreover, since 2007, the domestic sector has been one of the few areas of the Italian labour market open[124] to Romanian and Bulgarian citizens.

This is different from the situation in Britain where the quota for resident domestic workers set since 1975 was phased out at the end of 1979. However, as the government was aware of the demand for live-in domestic workers in private households, it devised a concession for wealthy employers that would enable them to continue bringing their domestic workers to the UK (Anderson, 2000). I am not going to go into more details about this specific regulation for work in the domestic sector here as none of my respondents used this route to enter the sector. What appears instead more relevant here is another procedure, an often overlooked one, through which migrant domestic workers have been recruited in Britain: the au-pair scheme.

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[123] In 2007, for instance, "some 343,000 applications for domestic and care workers were filed, while only 65,000 permits were available specifically for the category" (van Hooren, 2008a: 8).

[124] Romanian and Bulgarian migrants wishing to work in this sector do not need to apply for a work permit.

As Cox observes (2006: 99), au-pairs have been one of the fastest growing groups of domestic workers and the lowest paid in the UK, earning less than £2 an hour on average. Although this immigration category did not officially acknowledge work in the domestic sector it constituted a significant entry route for Romanian women wishing to access the labour market in the UK (Drew and Sriskandarajah, 2006). Officially, the au-pair scheme was an agreement between some European states intended to allow and facilitate cultural exchange for young people and provide some domestic help for families with young children. There was a list of EEA member states and other European countries from which travel under the au-pair scheme was allowed. Before 2002 this list excluded many of the Eastern European countries[125].

Since December 2002, seven central and eastern European countries have been included, Romania being one. The reason behind this opening was related to the imminent EU enlargement which would have reduced the number of au-pairs available to families in the UK at a moment when a greater need for family help was surfacing. What in fact was happening was that this immigration category became more a way to import cheap domestic help, and a solution to the already mentioned need for affordable childcare, rather than a cultural or educational exchange programme. Families hosting/employing an au-pair did not pay taxes nor National Insurance for them – which also meant that au-pairs did not have any other entitlement[126] apart from their pay – while the pay, meaningfully called "pocket money", was about £50 per week in the London area or even less outside the capital[127].

With regard to the sample for this research, differences in the kind of work women performed under the label of domestic work would reflect the demand in the two countries as described above. More or less informal domestic help in private households was performed by my London respondents in the area of care for children and in all those cases the families employing them were middle-class dual earner families. None of the respondents in London were employed as carers for the elderly in private households. Elderly care provision in the UK is characterised by a higher presence of

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[125] Countries included under the au-pair scheme were all the European Economic Area and Andorra, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Faeroes, Greenland, Hungary, Liechtenstein, Macedonia, Malta, Monaco, San-Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland and Turkey. In December 2002 Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Bulgaria and Romania were included.

[126] I.e. any benefits if sick or unemployed; holidays or leave at a time of their choice.

[127] However, this immigration category closed on 26 November 2008 and was replaced with the Youth Mobility Scheme under tier 5 of the points-based system. Yet this new arrangement concern only citizens of Australia, Canada, Japan, and New Zealand who would like to experience life in the United Kingdom, therefore excluding all the European countries.

public or private care homes (Williams, 2008), a strong element of difference between the two immigration contexts.

This, together with other socio-cultural factors, contributes to differentiating domestic work sub-sectors in which migrants are employed in the two countries, in particular as far as informal employment is concerned. Turning now to the sample in Rome, all the Romanian women I have met in the Italian capital have provided domiciliary care for the elderly ("badante") at least once since their first arrival in the country. Only one was employed as a baby-sitter, and all of them also had to provide domestic help such as cleaning, cooking, ironing and so on.

5. 3. Entering the sector

Since 2002, following the already mentioned regularisation and the opening of the Schengen area to Romanian citizens, the female component of the Romanian flow in Italy registered significant growth, reaching more than 50% of the total[128]. At present, Romanian women are the second largest group working in the domestic sector after Ukrainians (Torre, 2008). All the Romanian women I met in Rome have experienced work in this sector at least once since their arrival in Italy.

As for Romanian women I interviewed in London, although work in the domestic sector had not been experienced by all of them (Ana and Maria did not work in this sector), it still represented the most significant area of employment. Unlike Rome, however, women in London worked on a live-in basis only if on an au-pair visa; alternatively they worked in private households on hourly-based arrangements.

Similarly to other migrant collectivities, there is more than one reason behind the concentration of Romanian women in this specific area of the labour market. My respondents' accounts provide evidence of the use of migrant social networks, especially family networks, by both employers and employees to access a pool of workers who, on one hand respond to specific demands, and on the other become actively involved in the creation of migratory channels assuring specific jobs to specific national and gendered migrant groups. A key starting point therefore is that labour demand and supply are not generated independently of one another; there is instead a mutually conditioning relation between the two sides (McGovern, 2007; Anderson and Ruhs, 2008). Multiple factors overlap and interconnect when employers develop

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[128] It must be mentioned here that the increase was not due only to new arrivals, as many of the migrant women who received the residence permit were already present in Italy and informally employed in care or domestic activities in Italian families.

preferences for specific groups, or migrants end up working in particular sectors. Some of these factors will be analysed in the following sections by looking closely at the fieldwork material concerning Romanian women's access to the domestic sector gathered in the two cities.

5.3.1. Transnational networks

Relevance of transnational family networks in both cities

As mentioned in Chapter Three, migration is a process that is rarely undertaken in isolation but rather includes the involvement of families, friends, or acquaintances at different stages of the journey. Decisions made by migrants are inextricably linked to their own social networks which need to be differentiated, as "varying types of support may be provided by diverse people in varied ways and at different times, and for migrants these forms of support may cross national boundaries" (Ryan et al., 2008: 674).

Employment arrangements made through work-placement agency or other formal institutions were rare among Romanian migrant workers with the exception of au-pairs in London. Networks used by Romanian women to access the labour market in their contexts of migration tended to be of the strong type and mostly at family level[129]. In both cities, again with the exception of au-pairs in London, not only migrant workers but also employers relied on migrants' transnational social networks to find jobs and to hire new employees, and direct recruitment based on informal procedures was the norm in the domestic sector.

As Bridget Anderson (2001a) observes, transnational networks used to facilitate employment are not uncommon among other migrant groups either, particularly within this specific sector. She notes how of the 2,800 migrant domestic workers registered with Kalayaan, a London advocacy organisation for migrant domestic workers, only 2% used an agency to find a job. Informal recommendations through friends or relatives to employers or friends of employers were instead more common. Employers would prefer special personal recommendations and such requirements would therefore be better met through accessing the worker's social and family networks (ibid.).

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[129] According to a recent national survey conducted in Romania among people who migrated for work between 2002 and 2006, relatives comprised the most significant source for help in this process (23% received help from relatives), followed by close friends (16%) and acquaintances (5%). In most cases relatives were already in the country of destination and their crucial help involved mostly providing accommodation and finding employment (Sandu et al., 2006).

One reason for the use of close, family related, transnational networks lies in the nature of the job itself which implies direct everyday (close) interaction and often cohabitation; the issue of *trust*, an important aspect in hiring someone (Hart, 2000), and the importance of a direct/personal relationship with the employer, are vital in this process. As the following extracts from two interviews conducted in Rome and London emphasise, employers would show preference for someone introduced by their previous employee and similarly would ask their maid or carer for a Romanian woman whom they know of and can recommend if a relative or friend needed a domestic worker.

> I have been working for three old ladies since I'm here and when I was pregnant I was working for an old lady not very far from where we are now. My sister in law took my place because the old lady asked me about someone else to come in my place.
>
> Me: so your relative came from Romania on purpose, for this job I mean?
>
> Yes, because she said, I want someone I can be sure about. So she asked me to bring someone when I will have to leave. (Jana, Rome, 2007)
>
> I and my husband got this job through my sister, she's been working for this woman for four years but seven months ago she got pregnant. She couldn't go anymore. The woman then asked her if she knew someone who could come to work for her. It was then when we came from Romania (Anda, London, 2006).

By using this strategy, employers feel less in danger of employing an unsuitable or untrustworthy person since a chain of trust, and in the meantime control, within the migrant transnational social network is activated. The woman who would recommend a relative or a friend to her employer, or to relatives and friends of her employer, has to be sure of the reliability of that person otherwise her own reputation in the eyes of her employer would be lost. Jana further explained this to me.

> Andreea: So the old lady was happy to hear that you will bring one of your relatives in your place?
>
> Jana: Yes, because I was sure that my sister in law was going to be good, I knew she was hard working. When she came, the first couple of days I would also come to the house and show her things that I used to do and that she will have to do. So it was fine. (Jana, Rome, 2007)

Yet a second reason relates to supra-national geo-political changes which impacted on patterns and flows of international migration from Romania. The increase in opportunities for migration within the Schengen area since 2002 and the consequent increase of Romanians abroad produced what, as mentioned in Chapter 1, has been defined as "negative network externalities" (de Haas, 2008). In other words, the very well established transnational networks which were facilitating Romanians' migration and access to labour markets, especially in countries such as Italy and Spain, felt under

pressure due to growing demand. These same networks started to be more selective and therefore more difficult to access for most of the new migrants (Bleahu, 2004).

One consequence of this closure of the existing transnational networks was a relative decrease in the attractiveness of destinations such as the Italian labour market and may explain the increasing importance of the UK as a destination for secondary migration of Romanian workers. A second consequence was the restriction of existing networks to close ties. The need for stronger and more reliable connections made strong ties, mostly family ties, essential to guarantee access to good and reliable jobs.

If employers therefore find significant value in hiring through their migrant employees' social networks (for this would appear more secure and would lower the recruitment efforts and costs), it has been observed how migrant workers themselves also find "considerable value" in hiring through social networks (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). The method helps in securing specific jobs to members of their own group, and has been considered instrumental in the concentration of particular gendered or national groups within particular segments of employment (Cox, 1999). In the specific case, and as respondents' accounts illustrate, the use of strong transnational networks allowed jobs to be kept within the family. In other words, these structural changes and their inevitable impact on strategies and practices of migration have made the family the most relevant setting for the development of current transnational networks for work.

Furthermore, in the particular case of domestic work, access through transnational gendered family migrant networks also meant that Romanian woman were able to exercise some control over the kind of job they obtain. More than once I have been told that in order to succeed in getting "a good job these days", one needs to have acquaintances or "even better relatives in the city you're going". Katia, whom I met in the house of one of the Romanian families I spent time with in Rome, mentioned the importance of networks of trust, especially when migrating for the first time.

> So, Cristina [Katia's sister in law] asked me if I wanted to come. I said yes, because I wanted to do it since some time but I was afraid. You never know where you may end up working ... by now we heard so many nasty things in Romania about women coming to work in Italy or in other countries. The best thing is to have someone from your family, someone you can really trust. Maybe not even friends, family is different I think (Katia, Rome, 2007).

Katia here refers to the risks inherent in this particular type of migration for work in the domestic sector. The job in fact often implies informal employment in the private sphere of the house where any form of control becomes difficult and the employer may

become a source of risk (Kindler, 2008). Similarly to the employer's needs, thus, the woman starting to work in a private household also needs some reassurance about the safety of the work place and the trustworthiness of the employer. The possibility of relying on close networks with an already acquired "risk knowledge" helps in guaranteeing secure employment. The use of migrants' networks therefore becomes the main means to hire and to be hired in the domestic sector.

5.3.2. Other factors influencing access: nationality, religion and immigration status

5.3.2.1 In Rome

The specific issue of nationality combined with gender, "being a Romanian woman", and its impact on the type of work Romanian women do in their country of immigration, arose more than once, especially during fieldwork in Rome, when I was trying to understand how my respondents started to work as domestic workers. In fact, although transnational social networks appeared to be the principal factor influencing women's access to this labour sector[130], other aspects related to the demand side, in particular to employers' preferences for specific nationalities, also appeared to be playing an important role. Cristina and Rodica's accounts illustrated how being a Romanian woman often meant that the type of job they could find in Rome was almost predetermined.

> You should know how we Romanians are considered in this place. I know, for you it was different, you arrived here very young and you became one of them, but you should know how the majority of us is considered. When you say that you are Romanian they already think that you are a *badante* [carer], actually this in the best picture [smiling] .... but yes, it seems almost impossible for us to do some other type of jobs. It's like we were born '*badanti*', they want us to be *badanti* I think. So yes, this is my job and many other Romanians coming here… they do the same (Cristina, Rome, 2007).

Similarly Rodica told me that:

> For the Italian people, when you say Romanian woman you say *badante*, as simple as this! You may be coming with the idea, or hope of doing something else here but you are very likely to end up doing this job, because of your contacts but I think mostly because this is what **they** think you came here to do (Rome, 2007).

Anderson and Ruhs' (2008) analysis of employers' recruitment decisions as often derived from stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, class or gender of people employed for specific jobs may help in understanding Cristina and Rodica's words. In particular they observe how nationality also comes to be a major decisive factor for workers' employment in low waged sectors. Perceived or preconceived cultural characteristics

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[130] These networks channel particular migrants towards specific areas of the international labour market where contacts are already settled and knowledge of the specific milieu has been acquired.

derived from workers' nationality are factors on which employers base their decisions on who to hire for specific jobs. Some migrant groups are for instance considered more suitable to perform work in the domestic and care sector than others because perceived as culturally close, or more polite, or more intelligent, or more docile and gentle (Messini et al. 2006; Parreñas, 2001; Anderson and Ruhs, 2008). Therefore nationality may be perceived, in specific contexts and at a specific moment in time, as the best guide to personality and skills level of a domestic worker (Cox, 1999).

Migrant women coming from Eastern Europe, for instance, have by now replaced domestic workers from Cape Verde and even the Philippines, once the largest group of migrant women employed by private households in Rome. In fact, at the end of the 1990s, when Rhacel Parreñas was conducting research among Filipina domestic workers in the city, she observed how they were distinguished from and preferred to other migrant groups because perceived by their employers as "hardworking, honest, clean and educated" (2001: 176). Less than a decade later, patterns of ethnic/national differentiation in the realm of domestic work had changed. Women from Eastern European countries and Romanians in particular, are thus perceived by Italian families as more suitable for work within the household mainly because of an alleged cultural closeness.

This perceived cultural proximity, which makes them less of a "stranger", therefore less "dangerous" because more similar to their employer, is certainly related to their ability to learn the Italian language very quickly. This is mainly because of the similarities between Italian and Romanian, as both of them have Latin origins, but also due to the broadcasting of Italian TV and radio programmes which became very common in Romania from the mid-1990s[131]. Both processes resulted in Romanian citizens developing some familiarity with the Italian language.

However, I would also call attention to religion as another criterion to be added to Anderson and Ruhs' list of factors influencing employers' recruitment procedures, and therefore Romanian women's access to this sector in the Italian context. Cultural closeness is in fact also very much defined by the religious background which plays an important role and makes Romanian migrants almost the "perfect domestic worker" in this western and pronouncedly Christian country. Dana told me how often Italian

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[131] There were two intertwined motivations for this phenomenon: one was the progressive relocation of small and medium Italian companies to some of the main Romanian cities; the other was the increased circular migration of Romanian workers to Italy and back.

families at their first employment would ask their priest to help them in finding a domestic.

> I'm Orthodox but still we are all the same, we are all Christian. Some of these ladies, they ask the priest when they need somebody to come and work for them. And the priest will always find someone (Dana, Rome, 2007).

The employers' church therefore also becomes a place where news about work is acquired and disseminated through transnational gendered family networks. In Italy in the 1970s and the 1980s active recruitment for domestic and care work was "managed mostly by the Catholic Church through its mission network" (Sciortino, 2204: 118). Yet, soon after, "workers already active in the local household service market acted as triggers for the establishment of further migratory chains" (ibid.). In those cases the church becomes merely the provider of news about new jobs, while migrant women themselves organised the labour supply. Their Christian identity was an assurance for their reliability as good workers, and for the trustworthiness of new arrivals introduced by them.

For Italian employers therefore, the Christian belonging of their domestics was significant for it ensured honesty, but there was more to it than that. As far as live-in domestic/care workers are concerned, they are integrated within the family's daily activities. Going to church is one of those activities and being able to take part in prayers is also a skill very much appreciated by employers, particularly if they are elderly. Again Dana stressed this preference for Romanian workers, as opposed to Ukrainians for instance, precisely because of the combination of religious proximity and greater command of Italian.

> We pray together every Friday in my lady's local church. And there are also other Romanians coming with their ladies, and I saw also some Ukrainians once, but not as many. The priest once asked if we wanted to say the "Our Father" prayer in Romanian but we said that we could say it in Italian, it is almost the same, I mean it is the same for us. But, I remember that my lady was so happy when I told her that we also say "Our Father", and that I could say it in Italian. She said that we were the same, she was happy.

5.3.2.2 In London

Religion did not seem to play a significant role as far as domestic workers in London were concerned. None of my respondents had in fact mentioned it as a factor that they felt impinged on their recruitment or interaction with their employer. What instead was mentioned by two of my respondents was ethnic belonging and, in one case, racial connotations.

Gabi had a very good relationship with her employer, a successful and rich lawyer living in one of the leafy neighbourhoods of London. Because of this she was able to bring me along twice to her workplace where I could also meet her employer and her three kids. Yet, their relationship was not as good when she first arrived. It took a while until Gabi understood well how to deal with her employer's requests and more than once she thought that she would lose the job. Telling me about the difficult times she had when she first started working in that house, Gabi mentioned one of the reasons why her employer decided to keep her, which certainly, at that stage, was not related to her working abilities.

> Look Andreea, I can tell you. One day, at the beginning of my work here, she told me that I was good for her because I was white, yes because my skin is white. I was shocked. Then she mentioned something about being European, and that we understand each other because of this. But the whole point I think for her was the colour of my skin. This never happened again after that occasion but it made me think about how we are considered here. You see, a friend of mine works in a restaurant and once she told me that all the people working in the kitchen were either Indians or black, but the waitresses were all Polish. I never thought about that. But now it makes me think, everyone serving at the tables was white.

Gabi's reflection on one factor that had impacted on her employment as a domestic/baby-sitter and her further correlation with her friend's experience, although in a different sector, allows for some speculation concerning the enduring hierarchy of low-waged migrant workers in the domestic sector, though not only there. "This is not limited to a judgment of them as good or bad workers, but is a result of their racial origin, where lighter-skinned women are seen to be good workers and darker-skinned ones are not" (Narula, 1999: 159). Similarly to Spanish and Portuguese domestic workers in Paris who, at the end of the 1990s, were ranked as the best domestic workers while women from the Maghreb and French speaking Africa were relegated to the "last" positions (ibid.), Eastern Europeans, mainly Polish but also increasingly Romanians, are starting to be preferred in London for jobs within the private environment of the household or in the *front stage* where direct contact with the public is needed.

5.3.2.3 Status: being an (irregular) migrant

As migrant women in both London and Rome mentioned during our conversations, being channelled towards a specific labour market niche may not depend only on nationality, religious creed or ethnicity. It may in fact depend on the very fact of being a migrant, and even more an irregular one.

Women I met during fieldwork in Rome had at least one experience of live-in domestic work. Those working arrangements used to be very common before January

2007, especially for Romanian women with an irregular immigration status and who often migrated alone. In those cases live-in jobs, besides giving access to a salary, basic accommodation and board, would also grant some sort of protection within the private sphere of the house where immigration checks are rarely carried out by local authorities or police (Kindler, 2008).

In Rome live-in domestic workers are typically hired to provide care for elderly people (*badanti*) as their principal occupation and they receive a monthly salary besides board and lodging. The contract between the family and the migrant woman provides that the worker has one free day and one free afternoon par week. In London, live-in arrangements were not common and were encountered only as far as au-pairs were concerned. They were recruited principally as babysitters but, similarly to live-in domestics in Rome, they were often required to perform other domestic tasks.

What characterises both au-pair and domestic work arrangements is the absence of appropriate regulations to set parameters between work time and workers' own time-out hours. Arrangements are in fact made on an informal basis and the everyday working routine lacks precise rules. As a result, domestic workers cannot fully deter employers from imposing more and different tasks than the ones informally agreed at the beginning of their contract.

While those working conditions may apply to domestic workers in more general terms, when the domestic worker is a migrant arrangements can be even more casual. Because of their different frame of reference and therefore their greater keenness to keep a job, migrants would be more willing to work on the employers' terms than local workers (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003). Romanian workers I interviewed for this research in both cities, similar to other Eastern Europeans employed in low-wage jobs in London for instance (Anderson et al. 2006), have taken up work that was low paid, under harsh conditions and unsatisfying. Yet it is precisely their status of immigrants and some of the conditions attached to it that makes them attractive for local employers.

I recall here Fabiana's experience as a live-in au-pair in London. Fabiana arrived in London in 2002 with an au-pair visa knowing that as part of this programme she would have to babysit for the family hosting her. The au-pair scheme ruled that an au-pair had to be involved in no more than 25 hours of domestic help or child care, plus two evenings of babysitting a week. In actual fact, because of the nature of the au-pair programme which tied permanence in the UK to a British family, the work an au-pair, and Fabiana in this particular case, ends up doing may actually turn out to be full-time,

almost unpaid, live-in domestic labour. Payment and working hours are decided by the family/employer while the au-pair/domestic worker has to "be available whenever needed for whatever house chores the family needed" (Fabiana, London, 2006).

> Of course I couldn't ask for more money either. What could I do? That was my only opportunity to be in London, and I would have done anything to keep that job. Losing it would have meant two things: either be sent back to Romania or become an illegal in London.

As McGovern (2007) observes, employers are aware of the migrant workers' expectations about wages and employment conditions, and about the economic or social trade-offs that migrants are ready to make. These compromises that these workers are ready to accept are embedded in their very condition of (irregular) migrant workers and employers are often ready to take advantage of them. These considerations also surfaced in field discussions I had with Gabi, a live-out domestic worker in London, and with Dana, a live-in domestic worker in Rome, and may connect Romanians' labour market experiences to those of other migrants confined to the low-paid, often irregular, jobs of the global cities.

> The fact is that it is very difficult when you arrive here to do the job you were doing at home. And then, if you don't have documents...well, as you can understand, it is even worse. But as a domestic, employers are actually looking for immigrants, and even better if you don't have proper documents. They know that in this way you will do any kind of job and they can pay you as much less than a regular worker. (Gabi, London, 2006).

> Look at my employer for instance, my employer will never look for let's say an Italian to do the work that I do. And, do you think there would be an Italian happy to work as a *badante*? They look for us, immigrants because they know that we are ready to stay overtime if needed, they know that we would work more if needed because this means more money, they know that they can ask everything from us and we are not going to complain (Dana, Rome, 2007).

Nevertheless, my respondents' experiences illustrate the continuous adjustment and renegotiation strategies which migrants have to adopt in order to gain access and settle into the local labour market. And the following sections of this chapter will look into some of the strategies these women put in place in order to face the dislocations embedded in the condition of being a migrant domestic worker.

5. 4. Work in the domestic sector: between inequalities and power balance in the workplace

"Now I tell you what I do, and you give it a name!" – Defining domestic work

Domestic work, as I realised during fieldwork, may be very difficult to define. The following extracts of conversations I had with some of my respondents brilliantly captured this complexity. In one of our first conversations in the apartment we were

sharing in Rome, I asked Cristina what her job was. She was about to start replying to my question when she suddenly looked at me with a confused and at the same time amused expression on her face and said: "*Now I tell you what I do, and you give it a name!*" Her answer took me by surprise; I was in fact expecting her to say: I work as cleaner, or *badante*, or as a maid, but then, listening further I understood what she meant.

> I work for these two old men, two brothers, they are both retired and they live together. I go there every morning at eight. I prepare breakfast for them, then while they have their breakfast I make their beds and clean the bathroom. Then I go to the nearby grocery, get the bread and some other stuff for the day, then, in case they need it, I go to the post-office and pay their bills. Then I go back home, cook lunch, prepare the table and while they eat sometimes I do the laundry, other times I iron or do other chores in the house. Then I get some food ready for their dinner and by four o'clock I'm usually out. After four, sometimes I do two-three hours of cleaning for two houses, but this is not every day. Three evenings every week I also babysit a little boy. When there, I usually do some cooking and ironing, besides playing with him. So, this is what I do for work, you name it now …. How can you call it, a bit of this, a bit of that… you can say that I do what a woman usually does in the house (Cristina, Rome, 2007).

A few days later another of my respondents, Dana, who works on a live-in basis for an Italian family in Rome, described her daily work routine. In a similar vein her account mixes a wide variety of tasks and activities which taken singly could define very different jobs.

> You start working from seven in the morning, until nine in the evening. It is always the same: they hire you as a carer, but you don't just work as a carer. You have to do the chores in the house after preparing breakfast in the morning for the old lady but also for the rest of the family. Then I see that the old lady is all ok in her armchair with the TV on and take the kid to school. Then I came back and prepare lunch with the instructions that the mother has left for me. Once that's done pick up the kid from school and in the afternoon I do laundry or ironing, and then I get things ready for dinner. Thank God the lady prepares dinner herself, I only have to take care of the grandmother's dinner and that everything is set on the table and that the kid is sitting properly with his hands clean. After dinner I help the old lady in the bathroom and get her ready for the night. Then I can go to sleep. (Dana, Rome, 2007)

Cristina's and Dana's words were very telling and made me understand the complexity behind a job involving numberless tasks and therefore the near impossibility of defining or categorising it under specific labels such as cleaner, carer or baby-sitter. Their accounts are not very different from what women in London were also telling me when asked about their job. Gabi's words, already cited above, emphasised precisely the same aspect. Similarly, Fabiana, an au-pair in London, also, once in the city, understood

that child-minding was not the only task the British family was expecting her to carry out and that there were a number of other domestic activities she had to do every day.

> … because together with the babysitting I had to also help the woman in the kitchen, to do cleaning in the afternoons and so on. Plus on Saturdays, after breakfast they will go out and I … I had to do cleaning in the entire house. So in this case I really felt like I was a servant, you know like servants in the past, always there, always available for whatever the mother wanted to do in the house (London, 2006).

Based on my respondents' accounts I have decided to use the terms *domestic work* and *domestic services* – rather than cleaner, babysitter, or carer – as they appear to be the best way to describe the variety of activities a woman migrant worker is asked to perform when employed by a family, especially when the worker is under a "live-in" agreement. The above extracts perfectly describe the whole variety of tasks these women have to accomplish and I believe it would be reductive to talk about *carers*, for instance when a migrant worker is employed to take care of an elderly person, although this may be the "official" definition used by her employer. In some cases, as was the case with Rodica, a full-time live-in domestic worker employed by a seventy year old widower in Rome, the work may even include everyday dog-sitting or major works, such as housepainting, in her employer's summer house.

In analytical terms, domestic service appears as an array of traditional domestic chores and "new duties" (Colombo and Sciortino, 2005). The traditional domestic tasks involve housekeeping, washing up and laundry, ironing, cooking, and so on. The "new duties" are instead related to the babysitting type of job and, especially in the Italian case, to the elderly care-work area, but also dog sitting and other peculiar requests that normally may be associated with other jobs. What therefore characterises domestic services provided by migrant workers seems to be the actual absence of clear boundaries between tasks, and thus the difficulty in defining the job.

Furthermore, according to some analysts, this difficulty stems from a number of intrinsic factors related to the work itself and which make the organisation of domestic work "vulnerable to arbitrary working conditions" (Parreñas, 2001: 164). Among those, Hondagneu-Sotelo (2003) mentions the private character of the place in which domestic work is performed – the family/the household; the nature of the work itself which tends to be classified as a woman/mother's "natural" household activity rather than "real work"; and the work's "highly relational" character, for it often implies very personal relationships and intimate knowledge of the parts involved. All these elements thus also produce employer–employee relationships "that fall between family and employment

yet are often regarded as neither" (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003: 67) and which make it difficult for the domestic worker to control working arrangements.

In particular, as Kindler observes, "internalising the live-in 'into the family' removes her from the legalistic protective sphere that governs employment relationship" (2008: 156), a situation that hourly paid live-out domestic workers, given their greater autonomy, are more able to avoid, but which job sharing practices, as will be emphasised in the following sections, may also be able to alleviate.

5.5. Questioning the asymmetrical balance of power in the workplace: soft skills and transnational mobility practices

Sociologists of work and employment commonly view the distribution of power in the work place as unevenly spread among parts and consistently implying a lack of authority for employees (McGovern et al. 2007). Based on issues discussed above and which concern the nature of domestic work in private households – the absence of roles, the informality of employment, as well as the migrant status of domestic workers – this seems to be even more the case when employment relationships in the private sphere of home are under discussion (Cox, 1999; Anderson, 2000). In her insightful work on the position of Filipina workers in the international division of reproductive labour, Rhacel Parreñas (2001) looks at the social organisation of domestic work and at the employer–employee relationship in the work place. Drawing on studies in the field of domestic work and on her own empirical research, she establishes that the organisation of paid domestic work in private homes creates unequal relations of power between domestics and their employers. This incongruent distribution of power in the workplace, together with the persistent stigma of servitude felt by migrant Filipina domestic workers, and the absence of regulation concerning working tasks and conditions, increases migrant workers' vulnerability and intensifies their experience of exclusion and downward mobility.

Women experiencing the "dislocation of contradictory class mobility" are described by Parreñas as also negotiating and reacting to their situation of decline in labour market status. They do this by emphasising the gains brought by this dislocation in relation to greater material rewards and to higher social status in the Philippines, by distinguishing themselves racially from their Latin and African counterparts in their countries of immigration, or by using the myth of "being like one of the family" so as to resist the unfairness that the use of this notion enables and maintains in the workplace (ibid.). Still, despite this agency of domestic workers, and regardless of the process of

manipulation of the very same mechanisms of control used by employers, Filipina domestic workers in Parreñas' study are pictured as in the last instance consenting to and perpetuating the structural inequalities inherent in the relations with their employers. The author in fact argues that what happens is that "the central means by which they ease their pain do not question but instead maintain the relation of inequality established by employers in the organisation of domestic work" (ibid.: 174).

Romanian domestic workers, especially those employed on a live-in basis, often experience similar situations and undoubtedly their experiences in the everyday work routine exemplify the condition of underemployment resulting from migration and work abroad – deskilling, isolation, humiliation may be frequent conditions they have to face in their employers' homes. Still, building on Parreñas' study and developing further the analysis concerning power relations and power distribution between employer and employee, I argue that specific domestic workers' skills and most of all particular transnational mobility and working strategies adopted by Romanian women may trigger questions about the asymmetrical balance of power in the workplace.

5.5.1 "Soft skills"

I turn again to Rodica's story here. As previously mentioned, she has been working as a live-in domestic worker since her arrival in Rome. Despite her initial short-term intentions to stay, Rodica's permanence in the Italian capital prolonged indefinitely, and the way relationships in the workplace developed impacted on her decision to extend her stay and keep on working in the same house. Rodica in fact, became almost indispensable to her employer not only for the everyday jobs she performs in the house, but also, and foremost, for the way some of her qualities are perceived by her employer: a very "discreet and trustable person", to use his words, "who I hope I would not need to replace"[132]. Dana's story also shows a similar situation.

> Last summer I went back to Romania for two months and I brought her one of my cousins. She would do all the work I used to do but my lady was not happy. When I was calling she would say things like "she doesn't do things well, she doesn't do things as you do, and she is an incompetent… I don't like her" and things like this. She was always complaining, she was complaining so much that even myself I started to think that I was the best domestic ever! [laughing] (Dana, Rome, 2007).

This firm preference employers may develop for specific domestic workers has been explained by some researchers within the analytical framework of the already discussed notion of being "like one of the family". It has therefore been emphasised how,

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[132] From a conversation with Mr Martinelli, Rome, 2007.

although this pseudo-familial practice generally has been seen to worsen and to perpetuate an unequal distribution of power in the workplace, employers may also feel particularly attached to their domestic workers. The highly intimate relationship born out of sharing an everyday routine in the private sphere of the house generates an emotional and personal bond and employers may find it difficult to accept replacing their domestic with another worker (Constable, 1997, Parreñas, 2001).

Although this analysis can be useful in understanding these particular developments of employer–employee relationships, I argue that there is scope for the examination to be brought further introducing the concept of "asset specificity" and Anderson and Ruhs' (2008) notion of "soft skills". I believe that observing Rodica and Dana's cases within this different analytical framework may prove useful in better understanding the multiplicity of factors involved in the development of dynamics of power in the workplace. In fact, Rodica and Dana never felt part of the families they were working for, and they have never been told so by their employers. More than once I happened to be in Mr. Martinelli's house, where Rodica works and lives, and I could see that at lunch time she would set up the table in the living room for her employer but she, although eating the same things she cooked for him, would have lunch in her room. Despite being on familiar terms with her employer, she was never invited to join family gatherings, at Christmas for instance, or to freely use the rest of the house when other members of the family were around. Rodica was always there but she was visible only when and if needed. And this was precisely what her employer appreciated most: her ability to be discreet, imperceptible, almost unnoticeable once she finished her chores in the house, and in the meantime with a very docile and kind character[133].

What these cases show is that the demand as far as domestic work is concerned is often not just about work related tasks to be performed in the house – Rodica's employer for instance is not particularly concerned or specific about the way she does cleaning, or cooking, or other domestic chores – but for "a particular type of person" (Anderson et al., 2006: 82). Skills such as discretion or kindness, which are particularly requested especially when employed as a live-in domestic worker, become particularly valuable competences giving the worker the possibility to negotiate power in the work place. Often, even though they may have a wide choice of different possible options to choose from when looking for a domestic worker, employers may prefer to maintain the same worker (Escriva and Skinner, 2008). For this reason they may be willing to accept

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[133] Adjectives used by Mr. Martinelli when I was asking him about Rodica (from my fieldnotes, Rome, 2007).

their employees' changing circumstances and to seek alternatives to satisfy both their needs and requirements.

> When I said that I wanted to change live-in arrangement to live-out and come fewer hours every day she got scared. She thought that I was not happy with her and the job and that I wanted to leave and find another house, another family to work for. Even if I tried to reassure her that I was happy with the job but I just thought that living out I would be able to do more work and earn something more … I needed a lot in that period …. she talked to her three children and they said that I could come to do some work in their houses, maybe three or four days per week. So I continued to stay with her but on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays go for three hours in their houses and do cleaning and cooking. I do this usually after lunch time, when my lady usually sleeps for a few hours or watches TV. When I come back I do usual things for her in the house (Dana, Rome, 2007).

If in Dana's case her employer found additional jobs for her in order to be sure she will keep working and staying with her, in Rodica's case her employer allowed for her young son to visit her from Romania for one month during the summer. When her daughter, who was living and working in Rome, was diagnosed with a difficult illness and had to spend few weeks in hospital, Rodica's employer agreed with her a totally new working schedule that would respond to her needs; and once her daughter was released from hospital she moved in with Rodica in her employer's house. Employers thus may enable members of the domestic worker's family to move in with them, may change working arrangements from live-in to live-out, find her additional jobs if requested, or may agree for temporary substitutions of their domestic with a relative or friend from the same country. This would not happen just as a result of "familial" attachment they may develop towards their domestics but because of specific employee's skills, or to use Anderson and Ruhs's (2008) definition, "soft skills" perceived by employers as essential and difficult to replace.

These skills, or characteristics of the employees which "by definition, can't be bought on the external market", and which are perceived by the employer as indispensable, create "the scope for individual bargaining to improve wages and conditions" (Mills, 2007): 16). In other words, as McGovern and colleagues claim, "when employees possess a high degree of specialised competences (often referred to as 'asset specificity'), the cost to the employer of losing these assets is sufficiently high that a balance of power may make sense" (McGovern et al., 2007: 18). "Soft skills" in this case become the equivalent of "specialised competences", giving the domestic worker the power to negotiate working relations and conditions in the informal and private sphere of their working place.

5.5.2 Transnational mobility practices and job-sharing strategies

In the case of some of the Romanian women I met during fieldwork, repeated temporary migration for work appeared convenient for various reasons, in line with Lutz's (2008) argument about the advantages women may find in a self-organised rotational model. As Lutz observes, women using this strategy may remain in the lowest social and economic position and eventually rather be similar to Piore's "birds of passage" (1979), but in the meantime this kind of arrangement is considered by many women rather an asset than a cause of marginalisation. In fact, it allowed them to return home on a more or less regular basis and to some extent reconcile family back home and other employment duties. I continue here the story of Katia to exemplify this process of temporary transnational migration.

> My family is back in Romania, I have my son there and my husband and my old parents. I don't think I could stay away from them for long periods of time. This is a good for us. Now I may need to stay a bit longer maybe, this is true, I told you, we are building another room … we are doing some works to improve the house, so I may need to stay longer but I think this is good. You can come, do some work but then go back to your family (Katia, Rome, 2007).

Being able to use strong, reliable transnational networks, and to move for short periods of time from one European country to another (three months period), had relevant advantages. What Morokvasic (1999) suggests for Polish migrant women in Germany applies to Romanian migrant women in Italy as well: that is, women engaged in "self-managed rotation", or job exchange. In other words, after few months spent working in Italy, a woman may go back home, leaving in her place another Romanian woman, in most cases a relative or a close friend. This would allow for the work place to be kept in case the woman wanted to return to Italy after a while. Furthermore, not only the job is preserved, but what the strategy would also allow to avoid is the trouble of finding a job and accommodation upon arrival in a very short period of time. Inactive time and feelings of insecurity are therefore also reduced (Culic, 2008: 160; Kindler, 2008). "This strategy of circular migration, thus, constitutes a means to diversify income and reduce risk, as the persons sharing a job do not intend to work for longer periods or settle abroad" (ibid) - at least at a specific period in time.

The system has been largely used since 2002 when Romanians acquired the right to travel as a tourist for three months in the Schengen space (Castagnone et al. 2007), and it is still in place after Romania's accession to the EU given the acquired possibility of free movement within the Union. Women who have already settled in Italy with their families may use the job-sharing strategy during their regular returns, mainly during

summer, to visit their relatives in Romania. In these cases, relatives or friends, mainly women who have a job in Romania and who can take a few weeks/months' leave, would come for a short-term replacement. Unlike countries like Sri Lanka[134], the Romanian government has not institutionalised this type of arrangement, but women's short term migration for work as domestics is well acknowledged also by employers who may be willing to allow for short-term leave arrangements. Katia's words help again in visualising a situation common to other Romanian women,

> The first time when I came here was last year. My sister in law called for me to replace her best friend who was going for few weeks back to Romania. This summer then, when Cristi and Cristina will go to visit family in Romania I'll come again to work where Cristina works. The first time, when she told her employer that she was going to go to Romania for the summer, she asked her to send another person, but another good one, somebody she knew. So Cristina asked me if I want to come.

Katia, therefore, used her holidays to come to Italy for what she thought would be a one-off try in the first instance. When I met her it was already the second time she was coming to Italy and the story was likely to repeat again. But Katia was not the only one with an uncertain and open-ended plan which seems to be related to the existence of strong, reliable, family networks in Rome which, by assuring access to work, allow for migration to be set up gradually and often differently from the initial intentions. Rodica, whom I have introduced before, also arrived in Italy with an initial plan to work for about two months and then go back home. She was called by her brother who was already working and living in Rome with his family. His wife was working for an Italian family and at some point she was asked if she knew of another Romanian interested in working as a maid.

> This is how I came. Mrs Francesca [the sister of Rodica's employer] asked Valentina [Rodica's sister in law] if she knew somebody who could work for Mr Esposito, he needed help with the house after his wife passed away. So when I came, I came for a month or two. I had a job in Romania and I could get a one month holiday then I thought that I could get some more sickness leave. Well, what happened was that in the meantime there were some problems with my husband back home and we eventually divorced, and then my daughter also came, she now works for another lady. So I decided to stay, for now (Rodica, Rome, 2007).

Although before 2007 immigration policy in the UK did not allow for visa-free entry of Romanian citizens, cases of job sharing could also be encountered in London. The case of Anda may provide a good example. She arrived from Romania when her

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[134] The system recalls a well-established practice adopted by women from Sri Lanka, where labour migration was actively embraced by the government as a solution to the country's economic difficulties. Skilled and unskilled migration was facilitated by subsidising airfares, or by granting the right to two years' leave for work abroad to government employees (Anderson et al., 1993).

sister, Gabriela, already settled in London, got pregnant and could not go to work any more. Gabriela did not want to lose her workplace and decided to tell her sister about the opportunity to come.

> I first talked to my husband, you see, my sister won't come alone, she was coming with her husband and this meant that we had to have two more people living in our house where, at the time, there was already another cousin of my husband. However we decided that it was worth doing this for both us and my sister. How to explain this, the woman I was working for was not always that nice but still, she will always need help with the kids, in the kitchen, with cleaning and so on. Plus very often she will ask also for help with driving the care, do all sorts of fixing in the house …. She knew my husband was able to do it. You know this sort of very busy English families who need other people around to help. So we knew that we should keep this work for us, this is why once I was pregnant and couldn't go any more, we thought that having my sister coming here was a perfect way to keep the job in the family (Gabi, London, 2006).

What makes the practice of job-sharing in London different from experiences encountered in Rome is the migrant workers' spatial mobility. If in Italy people coming from urban or rural areas of Romania would leave their jobs for few months and migrate to earn more money working for short periods, not only in the domestic sector but also in construction or hospitality sectors, such arrangements were almost impossible to put in practice in London. Geographical distance did not allow for easy back and forth between the two countries at a time when cheap flight companies were not yet connecting Romania and London. Moreover, the Schengen regulation which would allow travel for tourism for three months in Italy did not apply to the UK. Transnational circulation was thus not involved in the process with the same intensity. Entering the country would be much more difficult and in most cases, once in London, Romanians would decide to stay, even if irregularly, even if in difficult working situations, even if this would mean that they were not going to see their family back home for years. Therefore mobility within the city and between jobs would have been more likely to happen, but it would not necessarily imply transnational back and forth movements.

However, in both contexts, transnational practices and job-sharing strategies rely on migrants' transnational social networks and in practice on their decision when to leave, and who to be replaced with (Kindler, 2008). The strategy, therefore, besides proving advantageous on return, helped Romanian migrant women to face and solve problems concerning working conditions and employer–employee relations in specific work places in their country of immigration. Moreover, it allowed for the creation of a relational space where power could be redistributed and, as respondents' accounts show, the employer was not necessarily the one deciding on the employment terms.

My discussion does not aim to naively define domestic workers' action from below as inherently subversive, and automatically producing changes concerning women's working conditions in the domestic sector. What I instead wish to emphasise through respondents' experiences is that transnational practices, enacted according to geo-political changes at the European level, may be one viable option for reducing power asymmetries in the workplace. Migrants may move among different migratory and working strategies by their own design as much as by default. Therefore, as Guarnizo and Smith point out in their theorisation of "transnationalism from below", when doing our analysis we should avoid "confusing intentionality with consequences" but still acknowledge that "their practices produce some social change, even when it was not one they intended, fought for, or socially organized" (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998: 29). Adopting this perspective, my analysis of Romanian women's transnational practices in the work place, differently from Parreñas' conclusions, looks at spontaneous transnational practices as strategies which enable women to challenge precarious working situations and unbalanced power relations which otherwise would turn them into passive victims. Migrant agency in fact operates through the construction of social, economic, or political practices of everyday life, and my respondents' accounts, which show how these women are managing to reach their goals by means of cross border, temporary or open-ended, movements, and distribution of jobs within their own migrant network, can be seen as evidence of autonomy of migration strategies and actors' subjectivities.

5. 6. Conclusions

Given the significant social differences between the two contexts, different welfare states, as well as the different policy approach to immigration, I was expecting to find major dissimilarities between working experiences of Romanian women in the two cities. Still, by looking at the factors influencing Romanian women's access to the domestic sector, and specificities of paid domestic work, I have realised that migrant women have to some extent similar experiences. The reason rests largely in the specific characteristics of a particular sector of the labour market: migrant domestic work.

Scholars in the field have argued that the "migratory systems involved in this market maintain a distinct dynamic" (Sciortino, 2004: 120) and that there are a number of special characteristics marking this particular work relation (Colombo and Sciortino, 2005). Migrant domestic work differentiates itself from other transnational services because of the social construction of this work as a female gendered area – it is not by

accident that the majority of the workers in this area are women as they are considered to display a number of characteristics, socially assigned to the "weaker sex", like submissiveness, docility, care, responsibility etc. – because of the intimate and highly emotional character of the social sphere where the work is performed, and because this work cannot be outsourced to those countries where the workforce is cheap. The requirement for specific characteristics which are perceived by employers as embodied by particular groups of migrants, is among the factors responsible for the creation of gendered and, particularly in the Italian case, national labour niches in which Romanian migrant women are integrated.

The cases presented above show how labour was not mediated by institutions for any of those migrants, with the exception of au-pairs in London, and how employers' reliance on migrant networks was very important for accessing pools of potential new employees. In the meantime, the same strategy also served women's need to be reassured about the kind of workplace they were going to find once in their country of immigration. Women could also protect and keep a good workplace as well – when they left a job they brought some other relative to replace them – and the use of strong networks, where family and relatives represent the core of those relations, became the most important channel of recruitment and labour market access since changes in the Schengen and later EU regulation allowed for the arrival of many more Romanians in both Italy and the UK. A mechanism of kinship obligations and enforceable trust therefore allows both parts to balance the risk involved in direct hiring in the private space of the home.

Differences have resulted from the actual possibility of taking advantage of transnational mobility and strategies of "job-sharing" in the two contexts, as diverse geographical positioning and immigration policies at both national and supra-national level applied to Romanian citizens willing to migrate and work in the two cities. In fact, although strong transnational networks have been in place in both cities and assured secure jobs for Romanian women upon their arrival, frequent transnational mobility and practices of job-sharing within the framework of transnational circulation have strongly characterised the Italian reality while being very rare in the UK. However, although moving back and forth was not a common strategy adopted by Romanian women in London, transnationalism, and its explanatory power in terms of networks and practices, is still relevant here for it helps to make clearer different aspects of the working experience of the Romanian migrants considered. Migrants' decisions and practices

were in fact still intrinsically linked to their social networks in both sending and receiving countries.

Some differences were also related to the different tasks women were involved in when employed as domestic workers in the two cities. Those differences are directly related to the structural differences of the two contexts. In fact, in southern European cities such as Rome where the public provision of long term care services has been more limited, immigrant workers are increasingly employed in the household to care for elderly members of the family. Socio-cultural factors discussed in this chapter have also contributed to the consolidation of those practices. By contrast, in contexts such as the British, where the provision of long-term care is more developed, migrant workers employed to care for the elderly are to be found more within the public or private market of providers of residential and home care services (Shutes, 2013: 125). Babysitting together with house chores was therefore among the activities in which Romanian migrant workers were involved in London households.

By highlighting a combination of strategies used by migrant women to find jobs in their country of immigration and those used by employers to find domestic help, I have tried not only to show how these processes are important in drawing particular groups into specific labour niches, but also, and most of all, to advance the theoretical debate on labour migration and transnationalism. I have therefore argued that Romanian domestics, on account of perceived characteristics and/or skills, and by tactically using the means of mobility and migration offered by geographical proximity and by immigration policies of the immigration countries and above all at the EU level, not only have managed to negotiate and alleviate their experience of downward mobility, but personifying the image of *global players from below* they have succeeded in reaching their goals and bringing into sight aspects of autonomy of migration strategies and actors' subjectivities which question the relations of inequality established by employers in the organisation of domestic work.

PART 3 FAMILY AND BELONGING

Chapter 6 Transnationalism and the family

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters of this thesis I have already emphasised the relevance of family relations in shaping migratory processes by lowering the risks of migration (Kindler, 2008), and facilitating settlement (Boyd, 1989). Furthermore, family relations may also influence decisions about work, can facilitate access to specific jobs and help to preserve a workplace, and influence feelings/perspectives of success or failure concerning the migratory project. There is no wonder then that many migrants frame their migration in a "family relations rhetoric" (Zontini, 2010: 33) and family relations appear as a significant meso-level unit to be looked at when theorising transnational migratory performances (Goulbourne et al., 2010: 11).

Yet, the role of family relations in the migration process has been understudied especially in the framework of European research (Root and De Jong, 1991; Zlotnik, 1995; Kofman, 2004). According to Kofman (2004: 243) family has been overlooked in accounts of migration in Europe "because of the emphasis in migration studies on the individual, a heavily economic focus, and an association with female migration based on the dichotomy of male producer and female reproducer". In recent times, however, through the emergent literature on transnational migration and transnational families, a renewed focus of attention on the family has developed (Kindler, 2008; Chamberlain, 2001; Goulbourne and Chamberlain, 2001; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Haidinger, 2008; Lutz, 2008; Escriva and Skinner, 2008; Parreñas, 2001, 2005; Zontini, 2010); Goulbourne et al. 2010).

Many of these pioneer studies on transnational families have developed within North-American and South-Pacific research (Kofman, 2004). European research has only recently incorporated this perspective and applied it to the European context of immigration (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002, Sørensen Niberg, 2005; Goulbourne et al. 2010) while very little has been done with regard to transnational processes of mobility from Eastern Europe. This chapter aims at bringing some contribution to research on Eastern European transnational families and at enriching the existing discussion on transnational families through its comparative focus.

Within this framework I explore gendered transnational practices at family level and I also try to identify the potential and limits of family relations at a distance. Those practices have rarely been a focus in debates on transnationalism, which have instead concentrated more on transnational practices of community associations or on other types of highly organised economic or political activities across the border (Portes, 2003; for more recent accounts see Zontini, 2010; Goulbourne et al. 2010). Yet those practices often represent everyday routines through which migrants simultaneously engage with both origin and destination countries, and therefore are crucial in keeping a sense of family alive transnationally, as well as for their power of structuring dynamics of migration which involve both sides of the process. These transnational family practices, some of them relatively transformed in frequency and intensity due to developments in travel and communication means, the same as economic or social and symbolic remittances (Levitt, 2001a), assume crucial relevance with regard to the continuation of family links in the context of geographically dispersed families.

Furthermore, thanks to the longitudinal observation spanning the period before and after Romania's accession to the EU, my analysis in this chapter also considers the transformations these geo-political changes have brought to this institution of migration and to migrants' corresponding practices. In other words, how transnational families have reorganised (i.e. new weddings, new-borns, the arrival of grandparents), how their plans have changed, and how the arrival of children from Romania brought with it a new engagement with (and use of) the state.

The chapter begins with an attempt to define the notion of family relations. It does so by focusing on respondents' perceptions of "who is family". Based on their understanding of "who counts for them as family", rather than considering the family as the nuclear unit or the household, I focus here on a notion of transnational family relations which is continuously enacted and renegotiated in different contexts and throughout different stages of migration. This definition may include the nuclear unit (spouse and children), members of the family of origin (parents and relatives), friends as well as newly *acquired-through-migration* relations perceived as family at a specific moment in time.

The notion of family had occurred several times during our conversations and often responses to what I thought was a simple question – "Can you describe your family" – were both unexpected to me and different from each other. Furthermore, fieldwork observation of respondents' housing arrangements, and social relations within the

private spheres of both home and workplaces (especially with regard to women domestic workers) further nuanced that conceptualisation of family reshuffled by everyday life in migration. What follows, therefore, is an attempt to interrogate and therefore to define the notion of family relations and its development in the context of migration.

6.2. Who is family in migration?

Legal and socio-economic criteria equate the notion of family with *the nuclear unit*, which is composed of two married adults and their children. However, from a sociological and anthropological point of view, the notion of family is a contested one. The nuclear family was defined as a unit of residence made up of a heterosexual couple and its offspring (Murdock, 1949). This definition was then developed further by functionalist scholars who introduced the gender dimension in relation to the "differentiation of functions" within the household. Parsons and Bales highlight the "instrumental" versus "expressive" differentiation of roles, with the men-father-provider taking the "predominantly instrumental role" and the woman-wife-mother experiencing the "the predominance of expressive motivational elements in her total mother and familial role" (Parsons and Bales, 1956: 153).

Scholars have therefore moved beyond the *nuclear family* definition as a static and clear-cut entity (Morgan, 1996) and an interest in the complexity and variety of family relationships and practices has become the focus of epistemological discussions in the last three decades (Scanzoni and Marsiglio, 1993; Widmer, 2010). Anthropologists, departing from studies of kinship, have in particular focused on the cross-cultural validity of the notion, given that family relations may take different forms and behave differently in different contexts. As Bjeren argues, "who is thought to be *family* and what that implies varies between groups, individuals and contexts" (1997: 236). Studies in the United States and Britain have identified the contribution of larger family contexts to nuclear families, while reasons have arisen for casting doubt on the distinction between friendship and family ties, as for instance in the Italian practice of *comparaggio* "whereby friends are made honorary family members" (Fortier, 2000: 60).

The "configurational perspective on families", in particular, acknowledges this diversity and "traces complex patterns of emotional, cognitive and practical interdependencies among large numbers of family members beyond the nuclear family" (Widmer, 2010: 5). In other words, rather than using institutionalised roles to define families, it focuses on interdependencies between partners, children and other

individuals such as relatives, friends or neighbours, and even care professionals considered as family members.

This approach proved very useful when I was trying to understand and define family relations for my respondents. As Zontini (2006) has also noticed with regard to Italian families in the UK, often family is conceptualised by migrants as both the newly formed one and the one of origin. Her respondents were "often confused about what she meant when she asked about their family because to them 'family' meant both. They also often included other kin members with whom they had special contact or relationship" (2006: 328). The fact that people may include different people in their notion of family, points to the "shifting and context-related nature of these units" (ibid.: 330).

I recall here Gabriela's family in London:

Gabriela and Ion have been married for a few years now and they migrated together to London. In London they already had some relatives who helped them with settlement practices and with some of those they were in daily contact. Yet those relatives were never included when she was talking about her family. For Gabi, "my family" meant at first just her husband and this notion of a nuclear unit included their daughter once she was born in early 2007. Yet, later on during fieldwork it emerged clearly that she was also particularly close to some members of her family of origin. She felt very close to her mother, who was living in Romania when I first met Gabriela. A picture of her was standing on the TV in Gabriela's and Ion's bedroom. The birth of her daughter contributed to strengthen that bond even more and physically include the grandmother within the family/household. She was in fact invited to join the family in London and help them with the newborn. The same event contributed to further enlarge the family with the arrival of Gabriela's sister, and her husband, also to help in better managing the house and work during Gabriela's pregnancy and after. Now they share the same house and their inclusion in the family was reinforced when they were asked to become godparents of the newborn. I visited them during Christmas time in December 2007 when Gabriela invited me "for a Romanian dinner. You should try to come, all the family is here and mum made the *cozonac*[135]", she said. When I went there both her mother and her sister and brother in law were there together with her husband and daughter.

The emerging literature on transnational families has already challenged the "static and normative views on the family" by recognizing "the diversity in family forms" (Evergeti and Zontini, 2006) and showing how closeness does not determine the intensity of the relationship between family members. It has therefore been emphasised how the transnational character of families is given by the fact that they are not limited by national borders (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997; Parreñas, 2005; Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Evergenti and Zontini, 2006: 1032).

But together with the spatial nature of family relations emphasised by the

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[135] Traditional Romanian Christmas cake.

scholarship on transnationalism, I argue that a temporal dimension is of equal significance when applied to family relations in the context of migration and when transnational families are theorised. To this end I recall here Maria's and Liliana's situational and temporal shifting family narratives of inclusion/exclusion in different locations and times of their migration.

Maria left Romania to join her mother in Rome, at the time "my mother was my family". Shortly after, she migrated to London where her future husband was waiting for her. "We've met through internet and I only met him in person when I arrived in London. However, since then we've lived together, he became everything for me, He did everything for me, I have abandoned everything for him. All the rest are relatives, but he is my family". Those were Maria's words when I asked her who was "family" for her. Once she joined her fiancée in London she excluded her mother from her definition of the family and this was certainly because of the particularly strong attachment Maria developed for Cornel. Yet during several visits and conversations, and especially the very same day of their wedding in London, when Dana, Maria's mother, came to London for the first time, I could notice some tension between Cornel and Maria's mother. Dana, in fact, was feeling excluded from their life. Since Maria moved to London she tried several times to move in with them too on the grounds that there were better work opportunities in the British capital, but Cornel had always opposed that. As Maria was saying "we are a family now and we don't think it's a good idea to have mum moving in with us". Things changed in 2008 when their daughter, Aura, was born. On that occasion Dana was asked to come to London and help them as Maria had to go back to work soon after the birth. Dana became part of the family again and has been living with them ever since.

Liliana and Cristina have been friends since high school in Romania. When Liliana migrated to Italy they lost touch for several years and, just by chance, they met in Rome one day in 2005. Together with their husbands and Liliana's child, Gigi, they decided to rent a two bedroom flat. "We have been a family for the last two years. We share everything, we cook together, we laugh together, we share difficult moments, we do everything together. Cristina and Cristi are our family here in Rome" (Liliana, Rome, 2007). In 2007 Liliana and her husband and son moved to London, joining her brother in law and his family. I visited them in January 2008 and they were all living in a two bedroom apartment. It was a temporary solution as Doru and his brother were renovating a terraced house which was meant to become the new house for two families. Talking to Liliana and asking her if she thought that moving to London was the right decision she told me: "We all feel good here. We are living with our family now".

The two stories presented above reveal how my respondents, similarly to Zontini's respondents, have pointed to the processual and experiential character of family relations (Zontini, 2006) enacted and renegotiated in the situation of migration (Bailey and Boyle, 2004; Kofman, 2004). In their accounts family emerges as a relational space characterised by a constant renegotiation of its boundaries and that can therefore be differently enacted and redefined over time with temporary inclusion/exclusion of new/old members. Furthermore, as Cristina and Liliana's story emphasises, there could

be other people, not necessarily related through formal family ties, who are present in their context of migration and who may also be perceived as family in specific moments-in-time because of the very close and practical or emotionally relevant relationship created in migration. Liliana considers her friend Cristina and her husband as part of her family during her stay in Rome. An intimate relationship resulted from cohabitation, and from the fact that the two families spent most of their free time together. Liliana helped Cristina more than once when her husband was without a job and her income was not enough for them to get by, while Cristina was always available when Liliana needed somebody to look after her child when at work. Their relationship echoes a notion of "family" which includes in its structure what Alexander (1996) calls "fictive kin", friends who "are considered an integral part of the family group" because always present "at time of celebration and crisis" (ibid.: 68).

Most strikingly, the notion of "family" for some of my respondents included individuals with whom they did not share a house or create a particular friendship relation, but who contributed to a great extent to alleviating the pain of migration.

> When I asked Cristina who she considers her family she first indicated her husband and their son who lives in Romania. But then she opened her wardrobe and on the left door I could see two large photographs: one of her son and another one of two other boys. I asked her about them. "They are my boys. I take care of them every day, they see me more than they see their mother and I see them more than my son who is in Romania. Sometime I like to think that I am with my son when I am with them. I even talk to them in Romanian and they are starting to learn some words. They are my children here; because of them I don't forget how it is to be a mother. I'm sure my son would love them when he will come here too" (Rome, 2007).

Cristina therefore considered the two boys she was babysitting as her own children precisely because through them she could still feel a mother. The two boys were filling a gap, the gap of motherhood, for the time Cristina had to stay apart from her own child.

Of course, as Alexander (1996) observes when discussing how notions of family are created and enacted by her informants, each creation of family carries a different weighting, and also for my informants "the primacy and uniqueness of the 'nuclear family' was undisputed" (ibid: 68), yet, based on the above considerations, rather than considering the notion of family as the nuclear unit or the household, I will be adopting a broader definition which acknowledges its dynamism. To further illustrate this dynamism and variety embedded in the notion of family in migration I include here one last example, the already mentioned situation of Rodica in Rome. Rodica introduced the subject of family in our very first interview when I asked her whether she felt it difficult

being away from home. I report here her answer to that question, as I believe it also illustrates her understanding of who is family in a transnational context.

> I have lots of family in Rome. Almost all my family is here and we all work for the same family. My daughter is here, we live together in the same house where I work. But my son is in Romania, he lives with my husband.... well, my ex-husband. Since I arrived in Rome we have divorced and I have a new partner. He likes my son and he is trying to convince me to bring him here and live all three of us as a family. My brother is in Rome too and my sister in law and her sister too. They work for two of my employer's sisters. I never feel alone here because all my family is here apart from my son and my parents. But we feel close too (Rome, 2007).

The notion of family in the transnational context of migration should therefore be intended as a group of kin encompassing members of the family of origin, living in the same place, in the country of origin or in different contexts of migration, newly formed formal family (i.e. spouse and children) and also *newly acquired-through-migration relations*. I have found this last group very relevant as it shows similarities between the two case studies when it comes to defining family relations shaped by migration, and also because it helps to better grasp the concept of transnational family as defined by both its spatial and temporal nature. It emphasises how the transnational condition does not always translate into lasting, and sociologically quantifiable, activities, actions and relations (Cingolani, 2009), and how the very process of migration is responsible for this continuous repositioning of the individual and renegotiation of her choices.

The transnational character of the families I have met for this research is therefore related to two factors:

1. contiguity does not necessarily determine the intensity of the relation among family members. Practices of "transnational social life" can be part of the daily lived experiences of members of the same family who live separated in more than one location but despite this manage to keep family links alive. For instance, the use of new communications media (a subject I will be discussing in more detail later in this chapter) allows family back in Romania to take part in a an active manner – almost on a daily basis – in migrants' social and economic life despite geographical distance, while migrants abroad maintain a continuous engagement with the homeland.

2. the very process of migration, at different moments in time, reshapes but also creates new interpersonal relations resembling, and temporarily perceived as, family relations by the individuals involved in this process.

6.3. Transnational family networks

The first cohort of Romanian migrants left Romania in the immediate aftermath of the 1989 Revolution. They could in many ways be described as pioneers, leaving without much information or previous contacts in the country of destination. From 1995 onwards migration increasingly built on family relations, distant relatives or close friendships. According to a study conducted in different areas of Romania among people who migrated for work between 2002 and 2006, relatives comprised the most significant source for help in the process of migration (23% received help from relatives), followed by close friends (16%) and acquaintances (5%) (OSI, 2006).

As already mentioned in Chapter Three, strong ties became even more central to Romanian migration after the turning point of 2002 which marked the beginning of free circulation of Romanians in the Schengen area (Bleahu, 2004). For many, the geopolitical change also meant that extended family relations moved to cities like Rome, joining relatives already there, and therefore support relations increased. Rodica, whose family situation I mentioned before, was just one of the respondents describing a similar experience since the arrival of many of her relatives in 2002.

> This big migration changed the situation a lot. I have my brother now in Rome, one of my sisters in law and her sons, and they live near me. We are more numerous though, and happier (Rome, 2007).

Yet after that year, the increase in international migration as well as the emergence of new forms of temporary migration paved the way for a major change in the networks' characteristics. Relations among Romanians started to change since competition for jobs also increased and as Cristi mentioned, "there were too many coming and envy spread fast among us". Networks therefore became more selective and even more kin oriented (Bleahu, 2004) – particularly in relation to low-waged labour – in response to the needs of both long-term and new short-term migration strategies. The envisaged short time frame of the migration cycle (which in actual fact often transformed into a much longer migratory project) and the rapid turnover of people increased the need for the creation of a strong and reliable transnational social field in which connections such as family or close relatives and friends became even more important.

This indicates that the main reason for Romanians choosing a specific EU country as a destination is the presence of family, relatives or friends in that country. And this appears to be increasingly the case, not only when a Southern European country like Italy is chosen for migration. In fact, although the few existing studies on Romanian and

Eastern European migration to London describe this process as based on individual strategies and "weak" ties, rather than "strong" family or social networks (Ciobanu, 2005; Csedo, 2009), migrants interviewed for this research have described family relations – close family, extended family, or very close friends perceived as family relations – as essential. Similarly to migrants in Rome, they migrated to join siblings or other members of their families already living in London, often with their spouse and children.

Family was therefore again presented as the unique transnational social space where migrants interviewed showed high levels of mutual cooperation by engaging in transnational migration, exchange of information and resources through their dense networks of family/close friends. These have been described by my respondents as crucial relations in both locations, as they provided not only help with accommodation and employment, but also, and maybe most importantly, they provided a sense of "home".

A major difference between the two locations was given by the peculiar reality of overlapping locals' and migrants' family relations. To better explain this situation I report here Rodica's family experience, or what I called the Martinescu-Martinelli family. In the previous chapter I mentioned how Rodica came to Italy when her sister in law told her about the possibility to work for an Italian family during her summer holidays. At the time, both Rodica's sister in law, Valentina[136], and her sister were working for the Martinelli family, in particular for two sisters in their 60s: Mrs Francesca and Mrs Antonia[137] Martinelli. Valentina's husband was also occasionally called by Francesca to do small jobs around the house, while Antonia would ask him for help in her vacation house, not far from Rome, usually during summer. In those cases he would bring over either a cousin or his godson also living in Rome to help. When the Martinellis' elderly mother stopped being independent because of a serious illness, the family decided that she needed a live-in person to take care of her needs. Initially Valentina was asked to take care of the old lady while still helping Francesca at home, but that was not enough. Valentina was asked if she knew someone who could work full time. It was then that Valentina told her sister in law to come. Not long after Rodica's arrival the old lady passed away but Rodica did not lose the job as she started to work for Mr Martinelli, brother of the two ladies. When his wife also passed away Rodica

[136] Valentina started to work for the Martinelli family in 2000.
[137] I use here the title Mrs when talking about the two Italian sisters as it was always used by my respondents when addressing or talking about them.

was asked to work as a live in maid. Since then, her daughter Alexandra, who was in her 20s, also came from Romania and Mr Martinelli and his two sisters looked around for a job for her. One of their relatives needed a cleaner a few times per week and she was happy to employ Alexandra. Over the long term I could identify six employers from the Martinelli family employing (or intermittently asking for small jobs to be done) eight members of the Martinescu family. But their interaction was not limited to work related activities. As mentioned before, Mr Martinelli hosted Rodica's daughter as well as her son when he visited for holidays. Again he never opposed Alexandra's daughter, Viola, staying in the house once she also joined from Romania. Their presence in the house was becoming part of daily life to the point that Mr Martinelli's three year old granddaughter living abroad thought of Viola as one of her cousins.

Observing the above relations between the two families it can be said that migrants and locals were in a strong form of interaction based on a reciprocal use of each other's family network. Yet that enacted condition was ensuring the provision of their daily family needs for the Italian side while the Romanian side was securing the necessary income for their migratory project.

The resulting collaboration could resemble a "quasi-family" type of relationship as it was enacted within the private sphere of the house and was often based not only on strictly work related interactions but also ambivalent relationships. From migrants' accounts, conversations with the Martinelli family and direct observations in the field I could gather how those relations embraced both cohabitation and intolerance, close proximity or even genuine affection and care and mere acceptance or even indifference, as well as the interpenetration of gendered interactions in response to the needs of the enlarged "family unit".

Reading it in the structural context in which Romanian migration was taking place, it can be said that the enacted dynamic perfectly embraced and responded to the symbolic and functional family structures embedded in the previously mentioned "familistic" socio-cultural traits of Italian society. Yet what I maintain is of central interest is that this form of dependency, or mutual cooperation, between the two networks was possible because of the overlapping transnational and local family links. Family ties within the two social units were the vector which enabled interpenetration and allowed for its long-term development[138].

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[138] At the time of the writing up this dissertation (2012), members of the Martinescu family, Rodica included, are still working for the Martinelli family.

6.4. Between separation and keeping the family together

Existing research has been looking at transnational families and the issue of separation, especially in the context of the international division of labour and migration from countries such as Mexico (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997; Dreby, 2006), Philippines (Parreñas, 2001, 2005), the Caribbean (Olwig and Sørensen, 2002, Chamberlain, 2001), but also other areas such as the Middle East (Gamburd, 2000) and countries of the Far East (Yeoh et al., 2003). Within this framework research concerns processes of transnational intergenerational and conjugal relationships. The focus here is for instance on "transnational motherhood" and on the influence exerted by migration on the representations and practices of motherhood; that is, how mother–child relationships modify and readapt once they can no longer rely (for a shorter or longer time) on physical proximity (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997).

Alternatively, researchers have looked at "transnational childhood" (Parreñas, 2005) and therefore at the impact of mothers' migration on "children left behind": as to their upbringing, their affective needs, their inclusion in education and in peer groups, their future life expectations. Goulbourne and colleagues (2010) observe how children left behind by their parents who migrate from the Caribbean are left in care of their grandparents or other senior family members. Mothers who migrated from this area were often from low-income socio-economic groups and they lacked the means to take their children with them. Moreover, their intent was to return within a relatively short time (Reynolds, 2005). In Ecuador as well, as a result of the massive *new emigration*, the practice of leaving infant children behind – whatever the underlying reasons or constraints – is quite widespread, though officially criticised or even stigmatised (Pedone, 2006).

Research on women's migration from Ukraine also shows how children are raised by grandmothers, sisters, daughters in law and – albeit more rarely – by neighbours or paid carers. In fewer cases, the father is the only or principal carer for his children (Banfi and Boccagni, 2007). Interestingly, in Ukrainian families, a "shared caring for children" does not seem a novelty introduced by migration. As a matter of fact in socialist countries, under the "working mother" model (Cespi, 2007), women used to go to university, work and raise children at the same time. Grandmothers and other (female) relatives, therefore, used already to play a relevant role in looking after the children. This tradition has somehow structured a normative grounding for caring at distance well before large scale migration began.

Similarly, in the Romanian case, this phenomenon, while appearing as very much related to increasing migration of both parents and the development of the transnational family, can also be traced back to pre-existing practices of the Romanian family. Although changes in family structure have occurred following processes of heavy industrialisation and urbanisation during the Communist regime, and a transition from an extended, multigenerational family pattern to a nuclear one has been observed (Cingolani, 2009), significantly strong relationships with the family of origin, often living in rural areas, have been maintained and family solidarity continues to play an important role in family life in Romania.

Verdery (1996) observed how in the Romanian socialist state household tasks were reorganised and redistributed to some extent among members of the extended family. "Relatively youthful retirement served to make unpaid labour increasingly the responsibility of pensioners who stood in food lines, cared for grandchildren, cooked for their working offspring, and so on" (ibid.: 65). Family life signified a refuge and a safe place in the years immediately after the fall of the regime also, when it represented the primary arena for formulating strategies to cope with the crisis (Cingolani, 2009). Family members combined their non-monetary income deriving from agriculture with salaries and various other sources of income from the informal economy to allow migration of one of their members but in the meantime, relatives, mostly grandparents but also sisters or sisters-in-law, also provided more practical and emotional help by directly getting involved in raising the children of those who migrated.

With regard to Romanian migrant parents interviewed for this research, their migratory status, and therefore the condition of irregularity, impacted greatly on how the mother–child or father–child relationship developed and adapted in the context of temporary physical separation, and also constituted a major element of differentiation between the two case studies.

In London, families with children still in Romania were finding separation particularly difficult as they did not have the possibility to see them for many years. Families who arrived in London with a tourist visa and then overstayed, or those who arrived by means of a different nationality passport, did not return to Romania until 2007. In those cases, as respondents emphasised, the prolonged separation represented the most painful aspect of transnational migration and has left a permanent wound, as they were unable to take part in important moments such as birthdays and first

Communions. Vali and Corina, for instance, who arrived in London in 2003 leaving their four year old daughter in Romania, saw her again after almost four years. Shortly after their return they decided to remigrate but this time they took their daughter with them. As Corina told me on the phone in December 2007, she was still feeling guilty for the years she spent apart and could not tolerate the pain of another separation. What her words revealed was that, however "close" one may feel, physical distance remains an objective constraint, much more so when it cannot be bridged by frequent circular migration.

While Romanian migrants in London did not see their children and families for several years, Romanian women in Rome, especially after 2002, were able to visit their families by commuting. Freedom of movement within the Schengen area, as well as a degree of geographical closeness, impacted on the feasibility of visits back home. Cristina and Cristi have been in Rome for about four years. During this time Cristina has been back to Romania several times, spending between one and two weeks with their son each time. Cristi, her husband, on the other hand, has never returned. "Work doesn't allow me to leave", he told me, "and most importantly I have an old interdiction on my passport and because of this I am afraid they won't let me come back to Italy again" (Cristi, Rome, 2007). During this conversation Cristi's face was expressive of sadness and later on, once he left the house, Cristina would tell me how much he suffered from not being able to visit and spend time with his son.

> He often wakes up crying in the middle of the night and I hear him calling our son. He feels so guilty and scared especially since our son, I don't know why, has asked him if he was really our son or we adopted him. I don't know who has told him this...but who knows what goes on in children's heads (Cristina, Rome, 2007).

All too often literature on transnational families details the subjective experiences of "transnational motherhood" and for instance the pain and discomfort endured by transnational mothers. Beyond some recent work which has drawn on male migrants' experiences recalling their involvement in keeping the transnational family together (Parrenas, 2008; Pribilsky, 2004, 2012), it has been mainly practices enacted by migrant women that have been taken into consideration and analysed in great detail.

This is maybe because "fathering from a distance does not reconstitute 'normative gender behaviour' in the family but instead abides by gender-ideological norms such as male breadwinning" (Parreñas, 2008: 1057). The few existing studies have emphasised fathers' tendency to preserve "normative views of parenting" and on their inability to

"accordingly adjust their performance of fathering to accommodate the needs created by distance" (ibid.).

Transnational migration of fathers is still predominantly seen as a fulfilment of the provider role, and described as relying on female spouses back home to care for their children and to assist in the cultivation of father/child bonds (Avila, 2008). While sending financial remittances is therefore considered as the principal way for male migrants to conform to social expectations of fathers and husbands as breadwinners, there are also occasions when migrant fathers can "bring into alignment their identities as husbands and fathers" as well as their emotional positionalities too often confined within the women/mothers' realm of transnational *kin and care work* (di Leonardo, 1992;).

Pribilsky (2012: 336) has mentioned in particular "moments when migrants sent special gifts to their families, gifts sent with specific recipients in mind and often shipped at key times of the year (holidays, birthdays, confirmation parties, etc.)". But most of all, the act of remitting gifts is accompanied by the "tasks of shopping, packaging gifts up with letters and receiving family members' reactions to the purchase" (ibid.), all practices which imply a highly emotional involvement on the part of transnational fathers who are able to reconcile the social and more intimate positioning through those micro-transnational practices.

Yet Cristi's experience shows powerful similarities to transnational mothers' pain and efforts to adjust to the different needs of children in transnational families, and illustrates how transnational fathers can also be straggling in providing both emotional and material care at a distance. He spent almost all of his savings buying a very fashionable mobile phone that could be used to take and send photographs. He understood the need on both sides for greater communication with his son and did his best to accommodate this need.

> We send him a parcel, as we usually do every two or three months. Once he gets it he never opens it. He calls us first and then he opens it while we talk on the phone. So he was already so happy because he saw that we sent him his favourite jeans but Cristi told him to look into their pockets and it was then that he found the mobile phone. You can imagine the happiness on both sides of the phone. Cristi was in tears (Cristina, Rome, 2007).

Still, social structures dictating both the role that migrant fathers *must* play in terms of economic provision for their family, as well as the emotional image they are "allowed" to show publicly, were preventing Cristi from personally recalling the above story. He was in the same room with us and actually participating in the general

conversation I was having with Cristina, yet it was Cristina telling me this story while he preferred to listen while nodding his head from time to time.

It appeared to me that Cristi was not entirely at ease with the idea of being the direct promoter of those practices which often have been described as more "feminine" (Di Leonardo, 1992; Alicea, 1997). His behaviour revealed a sense of insecurity related to the process of disclosing the emotional side of the act of remitting and therefore an attempt to readjust socially consolidated gender roles which ascribe the male migrant to the sphere of financial remittances. Everyday transnational migratory practices can be the site for renegotiation of gendered roles within the family but also for men's "in-part-emergent identities as transnational fathers" (Pribilsky, 2012: 339).

Referring in particular to migrant women's activities managing and reproducing, over time, familial ties at a distance, Di Leonardo's (1992) work emphasises the significance of what she calls "kin work" in nourishing the very existence of transnational families. She defines kin work as "the conception, maintenance, and ritual celebration of cross household kin ties, including visits, letters, telephone calls, presents and cards to kin; the organisation of holiday gatherings; the creation and maintenance of quasi kin relations; decisions to neglect or intensify particular ties; the mental work of reflection about all these activities; and the creation and communication of altering images of family and kin vis-à-vis the images of others, both folk and mass media" (ibid.: 248).

For a more refined theorisation of the process of maintaining and expanding, over time and at a distance, social ties in "small-scale social systems, such as the family" (Noy, 2007: 9), Bryceson and Vuorela (2002) have suggested two concepts, "frontiering", and "relativising". *Frontiering* refers to "the ways and means transnational family members use to create family space and network ties in terrain where affinal connections are relatively sparse" (ibid.: 11), while *relativising* denotes "the variety of ways individuals establish, maintain or curtail relational ties with specific family members" and it responds to the need of split and dispersed families to selectively create "familial emotional and material attachments on the basis of temporal, spatial and need-related considerations" (ibid.: 14). Despite the very subtle differentiation in between the two definitions, what they clearly appear to emphasise is the dynamism and evolving contours of transnational family life. Family arrangements are redefined spanning more than one place, not necessarily ending up in family disruption, nor set to "vanish" soon, once a family reunion is enacted.

In a similar vein, Diminescu (2008) has argued that today's migrants maintain a "culture of bonds" with families back home and with other migrants, even as they move about. This "culture of bonds" is enacted through the of modern information and communication technologies on a large scale and with an increasing dynamism. As the next section of this Chapter will show, migrants are increasingly maintaining "remote relations typical of relations of proximity and they are able to activate them on a daily basis: the uprooted migrant is yielding to another figure: the connected migrant" (ibid.: 567).

6.4.1. The use of new information and communication technologies

Diminescu's reflection on the figure of the "connected migrant" is very useful when looking at how family members living physically apart manage to overcome the distance and to preserve a sense of togetherness. With the help of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), migrants are able to activate a routine of familial relations while those who stayed behind benefit from a stronger participation in, and understanding of, the migration process. Yet, scholars have only recently been increasingly acknowledging how developments in ICTs together with a significant reduction in the cost of international communication are substantially altering and reshaping the quotidianity of life migration in its different spheres of family, social relations, identity (Vertovec, 2004; Horst, 2010; Parreñas, 2005; Madianou and Miller, 2011).

Madianou and Miller (2011) have called this rising environment of flourishing communicative opportunities "polymedia". This "virtual bond" powerfully promotes intimate and strong participation and understanding of migration on both sides of the process; maybe most importantly, provides "the means through which migrants attempt to deal with and reconcile the ambivalence as to whether or not to stay or return" to their country of origin (Madianou and Miller, 2011).

As Vertovec (2004) and Madianou and Miller (2011) have observed, both mobile phones and international calling cards have contributed to the increase opportunities for instantaneous, direct and more regular communication. In Romania mobile phones have become a leading instrument of communication, not only in the urban areas but also and possibly even more in the rural areas. Before 1989 most of the families living in rural areas did not have a landline and often an entire village would rely upon the only telephone located inside the village hall (*primarie*). The years following 1989 have seen the dominance of mobile phones and scarcity of land lines in these rural areas, mainly

because of the proliferation of private mobile phone networks which made it possible for everyone to afford a contract at a very convenient price.

I briefly recall here again Cristi's story in Rome. By sending a mobile phone to his son, Cristi wanted to overcome his immobility, as he was not able to visit his son, but also to enable both father and son to share significant moments almost instantaneously. Before sending the phone Cristi had already uploaded a number of significant pictures of him and Cristina in their apartment, together with their friends, next to their favourite local pizzeria. The phone became the medium for a quick sharing of those important places and moments even before being able to talk or use instant photo-messaging.

Rodica would instead call her ex-husband every two days to keep informed of her son's school progress and she would ask him to put her in touch with David's teacher when meetings with parents were organised at school.

> This way I can get to know what he really does and how school is going. Sometimes his father doesn't tell me everything; maybe he doesn't want me to be worried. But when I talk to the teacher I feel that I'm definitely on top of everything and I can intervene if necessary.

Migrants may adopt different strategies to facilitate interactions of families which are split between two countries. The telephone, for instance, becomes an instrument for nurturing familial closeness. Similarly to Brickell's respondents, Cristi's and Rodica's experiences point to migrants' "attempts to deal with the spatial splintering of households in the contemporary period" (Brickell, 2011: 31).

The use of the internet and visual communication via Skype, used by Romanian migrants in London, appear even more successful in achieving this end and illustrate how the communications media play a distinct role in the construction of the transnational family and the keeping alive of domestic imaginaries and intimacies across virtual as well as geographic space. For Maria and Cornel, the internet and the use of Skype technology have become vital in cultivating and maintaining their relationship with family and friends in Romania. They married in January 2007, and their wedding aptly illustrates the social significance of new communications technology.

> It was a small but carefully prepared party in their newly bought house in North-east London. Amongst the guests there were Romanian friends, as well as the bride's mother and the groom's brother who were the only people able to come from Romania. However, as the guests gathered in the living room, the bride gave a glass to everyone and asked, "Is everybody ready for a toast with my family?" At that point, guests could see a computer with an attached camera overlooking the room. The screen displayed a group of people, all close to each other, smiling to the guests

in Andreea's and Marin's house and raising their glasses. As we moved closer to the camera, with the bride and the groom at the front, family in Romania and us on this other side of the screen toasted the bride and groom together as if in the same room[139].

Certainly, in some cases distance may undermine parental authority when one or both parents are away and children are left behind with grandparents or other relatives, or when a child migrates with only one of its parents. But, at the same time, many of these families manage to hold together despite geographical distance through dedication and the development of mass communication. Andreea has used communication technology with family in Romania to raise her son. Even though Andreea lives in London and her husband is still in Romania, she insisted that they are a very united family and that family relations are not weakened by the distance. While Parreñas in her analysis highlights the role played by mobile phones in sustaining predefined gender roles within the transnational family – as mother were expected to accomplish their reproductive work and therefore provide emotional support from afar (Parreñas, 2005) through the use of modern communication technologies - Maria's account on the contrary illustrates again the involvement of fathers in transnational reproductive tasks.

> Both I and my husband are always present. We both take care of our son; we both help him with homework. When he does something we consider wrong, we both explain to him how we think things should be done. Even if my husband is far away, we feel he is close to us and part of our everyday life. Every day, when we come home and he comes from work, Skype is on in both houses, here, and in my in-laws house where my husband lives. Our son sees his father every day and when he needs to ask him something he knows that he is always there (Maria, London, 2006).

Communication technology has therefore the potential to combine formats and to go beyond time zones and spatial boundaries and therefore to redefine the notion of place and of togetherness which does not imply the presence in the same place anymore. The new technology-enabled togetherness responds in novel ways to migrants' desires to preserve relationships and a feeling of home despite geographical distance. This experiential sense of closeness and shared lives together is enacted in a newly constructed *transnational place* created by the migrants themselves through different forms of communication.

I conclude this section with the words of Tudorica, Gabriela's mother whom I met in Romania before her relocation to London. When her granddaughter was born, Tudorica was still in Romania but thanks to the use of Skype, she managed to "be

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[139] Notes from fieldwork in London, 2007.

present in the same place" and "participate" in the everyday life of her family in London.

> I see my granddaughter every day. This didn't happen with my own daughter even. She was raised by my mother since she was a couple of months old. I couldn't leave my job and I saw her only during weekends. But I now see my granddaughter every day. We spend a lot of time together, I teach her words in Romanian, I am with her when she eats, when she gets changed, when she sleeps. Sometime I babysit her while my daughter is doing things in another room. It works very well, she interacts with me and if I see her doing something wrong I shout very loud so that Gabriela can hear me and come, or I give her a ring on her mobile, this is our signal. It is almost like living in the same house (Bucharest, 2007).

6.5. New family configurations

6.5.1. Children in migration and transnational grannies

The arrival of 2007 and changes in mobility rights within Europe for Romanian migrants brought with it a number of changes which, in most cases, had been carefully planned in advance. While in the case of Romanian families in Rome, Romania's accession to the EU did not have a significant impact on their capability to move between Italy and Romania, in the London case this change had been expected with much enthusiasm by all of my respondents. In fact, all of them saw this change as the only way for them to get out of their condition of irregularity and "finally have a free life in this country" as Gabriela was telling me. Various plans were carefully put together during the months preceding the accession. All my respondents went back to Romania in the early months of 2007 and had all their paperwork done so that they could come back to the UK with a regular status. This was the case of Maria and Cornel. Once back, they finally had the possibility to make their dream come true: they married in 2007 and purchased a house in North-East London. A year later they had a baby and Maria's mother joined them to help with the newborn.

Gabriela and Ion meanwhile had been waiting for the right moment to have a baby for years. They had carefully planned this pregnancy and one afternoon in January 2007 I received a phone call from Ion. He was telling me to come as they were on their way to the hospital. Gabi gave birth to her daughter in a London hospital; this was her first contact ever with the British NHS. Later that month their family would grow even more as Gabriela's mother also came from Romania to help her with the baby.

The birth of a child represents an additional expense and a commitment that migrants may handle in different ways: in Rome it was very common among my respondents to leave the baby in Romania with a mother or sister to take care of, but in other cases, especially in London, the grandmothers are coming to London to look after

the baby. Similarly to Polish migrants (Ryan et al. 2007), Romanian migrants in London were also drawing on transnational networks for practical support such as childcare for instance. I have already mentioned in Chapter Five of this dissertation how Anda, Gabriela's sister, came from Romania to replace her at work during pregnancy. By using that strategy the job could be preserved within the family and Gabriela could also count on some much needed domestic help during a delicate stage of her, and her husband's, life abroad. Later on, once their daughter was born, they could further draw on their transnational family network, this time by asking Gabriela's mother to come.

Female family members have already been described within the recent literature on transnational families as fully involved in the migratory process even when their activity does not involve physical mobility. Grandmothers, sisters, older daughters are in fact often part of a chain in which responsibilities of care are redistributed and they provide both emotional and economic advantages. They are key figures in the process of management and support from afar of the transnational family (Zontini, 2004). With the structural changes affecting the status of Romanian migrants within Europe, those transnational actors became mobile and in the specific case illustrated here, the new grandmother came with the idea of a longer visit during which she could assist Gabriela's gradual return to work by looking after her granddaughter. In this way she could both provide help for her migrant daughter and therefore contribute to the migratory project, but also satisfy her need of both receiving and providing emotional care to her granddaughter. At a later stage, when Anda's and her husband's plans also shifted towards a more permanent settlement in London and potential enlargement of their family too, the whole family opted for a permanent stay of the grandmother.

Maria and Cornel had also considering a similar option and Maria's mother had in fact come first from Italy for a "period of trial". Yet, because of some disagreements that I have mentioned earlier in this chapter, that option appeared unviable for some time and the grandmother had to return to Rome. However, economic considerations based mainly on the high costs of childcare in London, made them reconsider the option of childcare within the transnational family. A few months later Maria again asked her mother to come to help. At the time of revising this chapter (2012), Marias's mother is still living in London.

The phenomenon of older women migrating to act as "transnational grannies" is therefore not uncommon among Eastern European transnational families as they have to handle fulltime jobs and parenthood. Specific geo-political developments in the EU, and

therefore of the single national member states must be taken into consideration for their impact in configuring a particular dynamism specific to transnational migration in the European context. Furthermore, what those experiences illustrate is how "transnational care is [indeed] a highly gendered activity" (Ryan et al. 2007: 12) as it appears to be generally women who are called upon to take primary responsibility for caring especially when children are born in migration. Yet, many of these women live in segregated conditions, entirely within the domestic arena: they have no need, and no time, to make acquaintances in this new country because their children act as intermediaries with local society and supply all the services they require. As Gabriela's mother told me: "I don't think I will ever learn a single word of English because I am in the house all day looking after the baby. But this is not a problem for me, I came here to help my daughter not to go around and be a tourist in London" (London, 2008).

6.5.2. Children in migration and long-term plans

The birth of a new baby also meant that Romanian families started to have their first encounters with British institutions and with aspects of British society they never felt the need to deal with before. Getting married and giving birth in London meant that for the first time they had contacts with specific public institutions. Moreover, they started to think about issues related to schooling and language and therefore about a closer interaction with local society and more long-term/permanent plans.

At the time of our interviews most of the families I met in London did not have plans for return to Romania in the short run. Only one family left London in 2007, only to return to their daughter in Romania and then leave again all together this time, for Spain. Decisions regarding the family's strategies in relation to job situation and immigration status, as well as short or long-term permanence, were taken within the family realm and interviews highlighted the "variety and dynamism of those family migration strategies and women's active agency in family decision-making" (Ryan et al. 2007: 10). In Gabriela's case they decided that she would go back to Romania first in 2007 and update all the documentation regarding her qualification as a nurse. She then returned to London and, after having her qualification recognised, started to work. Her husband therefore obtained a dependent visa which allowed him to work legally in the UK.

In Maria's case, she and her partner decided that he would be the one returning first to Romania and regularising his status in 2007. He applied for a self-employed visa and on his return they married in London. Later on Maria could find regular employment

where her language and secretarial skills were an asset and in 2011 she eventually gained British citizenship. Their plans of settlement in London at the moment are permanent.

What those stories tell us is that being able to regularize immigration and working status greatly impacts decisions on longer term/permanent settlement. Yet for those families who had children in London, this was another key reason for them to stay. "Certainly we are not planning to return at the moment. We see better prospects here for us and most of all for the future of our daughter", Maria told me (London, 2008). More permanent plans related to the future of her daughter are also revealed by Gabriela's words when she talks about closer contacts with local community and institutions and about a renewed interest in improving her English proficiency.

> I want my child to go to school here, I want her to get to know this language better than me, get to know this place better than me. I think I will also get to know this place better through her (London, 2007).

Before 2007, Gabriela and her family would only watch Romanian television; "I don't think our TV is even set up for local channels", she told me one of the first times I was visiting their house in 2006. Yet, once her child was born they decided to set up their television for British channels so that "my daughter would hear some English in the house too. I think this is important for her and for us. We need to improve too because, you see, we will have to meet other parents, maybe English or foreigners" (Gabriela, London, 2008).

Andreea also explained me the difficulty in returning to Romania now that her son has "become English":

> My son never asks me about our country because he was very young when we left. Last year I took him back during vacation time. We stayed with my parents but when we left he was happy. There he found it difficult to interact with other kids because of the language. Even if I always talk to him in Romanian in the house, he finds it difficult to speak. He was not as enthusiastic about being there as I was.

Motivations, as well as individual or collective decisions, are not predetermined or permanent, and may change over time. In his discussion about the use of the expression "migratory *process*," Castles (2000) points out that migration is not a single event or a one-off act, but a process which is affected by and affects all aspects of the lived reality of migrants. Staying or leaving, for instance, "is not a once and for all decision but simply one step in an ongoing pattern of migration" (Spencer et al., 2007: 86). Decisions regarding the time-period of migration, therefore, cannot be easily delimited.

People may set out for a particular destination, but then spend time – often prolonged periods – in other countries en route.

When Gabriela and Ion had their daughter, she became their primary reason to stay in London, "at least until she finishes school". Yet, despite their decision, they repeatedly spoke nostalgically about their town and its beauty, the beauty of the mountains close to their house, about their old friends and family still in Romania. Their words were the manifestation of a long-term intention (or maybe just a wish) to go back at some point, although they acknowledged themselves that going back would not be simple. Living abroad for many years changes your way of thinking, of seeing things, of doing things:

> That is our place, and at some point we will definitely go back there...you should see the grass, the stream ... we would stay there all summer. It wasn't anything rich or extraordinary. It's a very simple landscape, but ... I know that it will be difficult because we've got used to the way people live here. There are things which here are done better than in Romania ... but there are also things ... in a way I'm sad that I'll not be able to bring up my daughter in our town.

These parents therefore, both expressed the desire to bring up their children with Romanian culture and language and admitted how migration complicated this desire. They were torn between offering their children more opportunities afforded by living in Britain, and their own aspiration to return home some day.

6.5.3. Children in migration and the controversial side of remittances

Romania is currently in the top 10 recipients of remittances among developing countries. Its recorded inward remittance flows reached US $4.7 billion in 2006 and 6.8 billion in 2007 (World Bank, 2008), and a peak of 9.4 billion in 2008 (World Bank, 2011). In the following two years the amount of remittances halved and this is been said to be related to the economic crisis and slow recovery (Goskin and Roman, 2012), yet there is another interesting finding which may offer a different perspective not only on patterns of remittance but also on developments in migratory projects and related transnational practices of current migrants in a shifting geo-political context.

A recent study exploring savings and remittance behaviour of long-term Romanian migrants and transnational households in the regional context of the EU (SOROS/IASCI, 2011), shows that the estimated savings of Romanian migrants working abroad amounted to about 12 billion Euros between September 2009 and 2010. Looking at single households, annual savings for the same period of time were about 9 billion Euros. Yet despite these significant savings, only 3 billion Euros was sent back to Romania, accounting for an annual 2,157 Euros in remittances per household.

Moreover, the study also found that 40% of the Romanian migrant households surveyed did not remit at all.

The study related those results to two interrelated reasons: the low return intentions of Romanian migrants, and factors concerning the country's membership of the EU. Cases illustrated in this chapter also support the idea that examples of family reunion within the two cities have principally been carried out by respondents since Romania's accession to the EU. However, these reunions, with children left in grandparents' custody in Romania, or with other members of the family such as grandmothers, are not free of emotional tensions within the transnational space of family relations. And such dynamics involve primarily the transformation of the flow of remittances once reunion is envisaged.

I give here three examples: Gabriela in London and her family in Romania; Cristi and Cristina in Rome and their child and maternal grandparents in Romania; and Vali and Corina whose daughter was also in Romania. In the first case, since their arrival in London Gabriela and Ion have been saving and sent money back home for a house to be built for them in their home town. Given that Gabriela's family, her parents and sister were mainly in charge of the project, her father has been the one managing this money. Moreover, Gabriela would regularly send extra money and parcels with gifts to her family as a form of gratitude for their care and work.

Yet, once the prospect of Romania's accession to the EU became certain, Gabriela's and Ion's plans changed. Their plan to return to Romania was put on hold, while the decision to have a child while still in London became reality. As a result, work on the house in Romania was also put on hold as they now needed to save money for pregnancy and the baby; furthermore, Gabriela's sister joined them in London, as did her mother once the baby was born. As a consequence, the flow of remittances to her parents' household was reduced to a minimum. While Gabriela's mother was happy to deploy her qualities of grandmother by joining them in London, her father did not accept the changed situation with the same ethos. Money that Gabriela was sending home and the house that he was building for them had become a way of showing some sort of status enhancement beside giving him a sense of worth, especially once he had to retire from his job.

> He used to go to bar in the evening and talk to his mates about the progress of the house and he would often show off by buying drinks with the money that "my daughter is sending me from London!" Once we changed our plans and he couldn't do this any more I think he felt in some sort of depression. He keeps calling mum

over here and goes from shouting to her to crying and imploring her to return (Gabriela, London, 2007).

In the case of Cristi and Cristina in Rome and Vali and Corina in London, their children were left for a number of years with their grandparents. Indeed, the literature on transnational migration acknowledges the fact that the extended family, usually grandparents or female relatives, provide vital support to transnational families especially by taking care of children left behind (Parreñas, 2001). In both cases, while in migration both couples were sending monthly remittances to the grandparents to be used for the children's needs as well as material gifts; those remittances would provide the entire household with, besides economic security, those material comforts otherwise inaccessible in the insecure economy and labour market of Romania.

The decision to be reunited with their children, therefore, proved very painful as it provoked an intergenerational conflict, on both an emotional and economic basis, within the transnational household. While Corina was emphasising mostly the emotional impact, "my mother has been like a mum for my daughter, she actually calls her Mum Jana", Cristina also put forward the economic argument when saying that "they know that parcels will not arrive every month any longer". In Corina's case, the decision to go back to Romania and then leave again with her daughter was even delayed precisely because of the difficulty in solving the conflictual situation.

What those cases emphasised are the problems arising within the transnational family with managing decision-making and power sharing between parents and grandparents (Levitt, 2001a), and the problems that occur if the configuration achieved with migration is reshaped again. Because family remittances are a resource that, although directed towards one end, may have more than one direct beneficiary, it becomes a reason for tension. In those situations, parental authority as well as shouldering family care responsibilities are all arguments put forward by both sides.

Going back to the longitudinal observation of the migratory process, we can say that the family in migration therefore becomes a site for both cooperation and conflict over the distribution of remittances and reproductive work. Remittances, therefore, "may create new power dynamics as family members position themselves to compete for resources" (Petrozziello, 2011: 63) and the changing nature of the migratory plan constantly challenges those dynamics.

6.6. Conclusions

In all of my interviews it emerged how vital family relations were at various stages in migration: on departure, because they provided resources for the journey, on arrival because they offered initial support, and also at later stages, when they offered a point of reference and support in making important decisions (Brettell, 2000). By looking at transnational social lives in the two locations, I have found that transnational families may be constituted in manifold ways. Both potentialities and the actual channels for keeping relationships alive within a displaced family are contingent on many a factor. Following this perspective, transnational family life should be understood less in a normative or theoretical framework and more on the level of interconnected socio-cultural, geo-political and economic processes affecting it.

In this respect interaction with structural factors such as the legal frameworks in the receiving countries, their evolving labour demand, let alone the differential impact of geographical distance and the related costs (whether allowing for circular migration patterns or not) seemed vital elements to be taken into consideration when looking at how transnational families cope with migration. Adopting a transnational approach in the study of family in migration allowed for instance for the analysis of practices of childrearing to be explained within a wider historical framework which also includes socio-cultural practices well developed in the context of origin.

Easy movement between the two countries (even without a regular migratory status), which obviously has to do with the far easier mobility rights even before the 2007 enlargement, is perceived as a way to maintain family unity over time – somehow contrasting with a conventional view of the family based on proximity and everyday interactions. Far more difficult is the situation of Romanian families in London as they felt trapped in their condition of irregularity.

Yet during migration families did not remain unchanged, but often acquired new configurations: what has been observed is the selective formation of family ties from both the emotional and material points of view. Different changes in the two case studies are again the result of both the migratory experience itself and conditions in the destination country (entry requirements and legal status, labour market opportunities, etc.).

Expectations about the role of migration in the life plans of migrants interviewed in both countries have taken a different route since 2007. Whereas initial plans seemed to be more oriented towards making money and returning home to build a house or open a

business, in light of the geopolitical changes migrants appeared to be more open to alternatives.

Finally my findings in both London and Rome confirm Madianou and Miller's (2011) observation that having the possibility to engage in constant communication with family back home, even performing "parenting from a distance", has provided migrants with more confidece about their migratory plans and to alleviate the difficulties of being apart. The notion of space and togetherness has been re-configured and this also impacts on the decision whether to stay or return.

In the next chapter I will develop further the understanding as to how exploring migratory processes within a transnational framework offers the possibility to reconfigure our understanding of migratory social lives in the specific context of Europe, and I will look in particular at issues of "community" and belonging.

Chapter 7 Identity, belonging and "community"

7.1. Introduction

Two months after starting my fieldwork in London I decided to go, together with Roxana, a Romanian friend, to the Romanian Party (*Petrecerea Românesca*) organised by the Romanian Cultural Centre (RCC) every last Friday of the month. The venue for the party was the main salon of the HMS President boat at Victoria Embankment. A few tables and chairs were scattered at one end of the spacious room while a long table was set at the other end of it. Later on, a buffet of traditional Romanian food was to be served on that table. The space in the middle was intended for people standing and chatting, or dancing, while drinking and nibbling. The music played in the background was a mix of Romanian pop and folk music.

Although the location for the party was in central London, and therefore quite far from the neighbourhoods where most Romanian migrants lived, everyone I talked to during my fieldwork knew about the Party and most of them had attended at least once. This would apply to recent migrants working in low-paid jobs, long-term migrants who were part of the so-called *Romanian élite*, and recent highly-skilled and student migrants. So my initial assumption was that I had found a place where Romanian migrants from different backgrounds and involved in different social and working fields, "the Romanian community", met and spent time together.

I sat with Roxana at one of the tables and observed people arriving and quickly filling the room. Soon we were joined by a young couple and a single man, who sat down at our table and introduced themselves. We did the same and started a general conversation. The man had just arrived in London and the Romanian party was one of the first gathering places he heard about from other Romanians working with him. The couple had arrived in London about a year ago and came to the party on a regular basis.

They were explaining the dynamics going on in the room to us by pointing to the different little groups which had by then formed. Most of the people sitting at the tables, we were told, were young, most probably recently arrived Romanian workers chatting amongst each other "almost certainly about jobs and pay", the young girl said. The girl recalled how she started one of her first jobs as a cleaner after talking to another Romanian at the party, about a month after her arrival in London. Then she pointed towards another group of people standing close to the entrance and said that most of them were from the RCC, the organiser of the party. She also told me that most of them

have been in London for many years. Some of them belong to rich aristocratic Romanian families who fled the country during the Socialist era. They hold British citizenship, married British citizens and their children were born in Britain. Then she indicated some other people standing and drinking in the middle of the room saying that most of them were Romanians with good and probably very well paid jobs, some of them were from the embassy, others were most probably university students.

As the evening went on I could observe the movement of people around the room. Only once, when the buffet started, did people from the three groups gather together and mix along the long table. Yet, once the food had been served the three main groups reformed in separate areas of the room. From time to time, some mixing happened between the last two groups described by our table-mates, with people moving from one group to the other, chatting. Yet, there was very little contact between members of those two and people from the first group.

This episode confirmed my expectations, based also on a previous interview with the coordinator of the RCC, about the *Romanian party* as one of the few places in London, if not the only one, where Romanian nationals go regardless of their social and economic background or occupation and location in the city. A meeting place where the presence of a significant and growing number of Romanians was demonstrating its central importance to those who attend. Yet the way protagonists of the three groups described above positioned themselves in the room in relation to the others, as well as their interactions, revealed significant stances within "the Romanian community".

Those stances were not related to a reified and cohesive representation of "migrant communities" as imagined by outsiders and constructed in the context of local public policies and discourses. Members of each of the three groups would in fact situate and define themselves in relation to, and by differentiating themselves from, other Romanians in the room. By doing this they activated a process of construction/invention of "community" and belonging which, in this particular case, very openly held a "class" element to it; a feature which mingled processes developed through individuals' transnational experience of migration.

As Ion's words will also show later in this chapter, the kind of work individuals were doing in their context of migration (London in this case) represented a demarcation line within the collectivity itself. As a result, low-paid, and often irregular, Romanian workers were situated in a lower and negatively connotated position within the collectivity of new migrants, perpetuating discriminatory policies and media

constructions about low-wage or irregular migrant workers. Yet the identification of the RCC with members of Romanian society descended from old aristocratic families emphasised the transposition of local hierarchies in a transnational space of current migration where existing forms of marginalisation were reproduced.

I therefore find this episode appropriate as an introduction to this final empirical chapter, for it clearly speaks to the different levels and fields in which migrants' self-positioning occurs. It unveils the potential of transnational migration as a trigger of multiple and complex processes of identification and relationship ("community") construction as migrants move across the new spaces of their lives (Yeoh et al. 2003; Song, 2005) and have to accommodate and adjust to new contexts.

The transnational comparative approach brings to the fore the importance of place and local context – both the places of home, in terms of both memory and ongoing material links, and the social and political particularities of the contexts of migration (intended here as both countries of settlement and the wider European context in which these specific migratory processes are situated) in the construction of migrants' new interactions/"communities" and identities (Fortier, 2000).

By examining and untangling some of these processes of identification and positioning of Romanian migrants within multifaceted transnational social fields, this chapter reconnects and brings back into the discussion issues of public representation, explored at the very beginning of this dissertation, networks of relationships, such as transnational networks of family and immediate friends discussed in the previous chapter, as well as structural dimensions which inevitably impact on migrants' transnational construction of belonging at different stages of their migratory process. They provide "moments of community" and belonging that "both build imagined boundaries and create or renew social relationships, allowing integration and adaptation to be negotiated through contestation of 'here' and 'there'" (H. Lewis, 2010: 571).

I looked at these narratives in the different sections of this chapter with the intent to disclose different meanings which belonging and "community" (intended as both collective identity and social interactions) have for Romanian migrants in the two cities of London and Rome. The structure of the chapter therefore moves from a bigger picture around nation and migration, through institutional community to personal community/family.

Migration poses a challenge to identity-making, in that migrants need to renegotiate their identities after they have moved to places with different social and power structures (Chambers, 1994; Fortier, 2000). It triggers the need to understand and define who "we" are in relation to "others", in relation to the majority but also to other migrant groups within the same country of migration. This process happens by seeking both similarities and differences, by reshaping a picture of the "self" which can be coupled or contrasted with that of the "other" (Hall, 2000). What migrants in this case are enacting is a process of selection of various strategies aimed at facilitating the adjustment to the new environment on both levels of the discourse and practice. The result is an evolving process of production, of positional articulation of the subjectivity (ibid.).

As some of the episodes in this chapter will illustrate, migrants select and combine different images based on internal definitions (Alexander, 1996) of self-identification and identifications as a group/"community", and on strategies of differentiation enacted to situate themselves within a transnational European space of migration. Those actions reveal manifestations of belonging, or of "community", to employ a much used and contested term. Yet, far from offering a metonymic unifying image of an "ethnic community", they suggest instead a process shaped by individuals' subjective location within power hierarchies, by their attachment to situationally shifting "imagined communities", as well as by their social and cultural capital daily mobilised within specific national and supranational contexts of migration and under the specific circumstances of their interactions.

In their study of the experiences of migrants who need interpreters, Alexander and colleagues (2004) explore the different meanings "community" has for members of different migrant groups and draw a distinction between the role of, and migrants' approach to, institutional forms of "community" and more "personal communities" which "may bear only tangential reference to the institutional dimensions of 'community'" (Alexander et al., 2004: 36). In light of my respondents' accounts, Alexander and colleagues' distinction appears very useful as it relates to the ways in which my respondents approached the notion of "community" and the meanings they gave to the concept.

In-depth conversations, participation in family events, as well as direct observation of "manifestations of belonging" described in this chapter proved inspirational for my analysis in that they brought to light issues related to migration plans and work, but also

issues of class and legal status as causes for the reduced interaction and lack of formal contacts and even mistrust towards some of the more institutional manifestations of "community". What instead my respondents had developed was a situational and more personal notion of "community" and belonging grounded in social relations of strong personal significance such as networks of family and immediate friends perceived as family at a specific moment in time.

These situational and more personal notions of "community" and belonging grounded in complex negotiations of social interactions, often of strong personal significance, as well as narratives of history, nationality, and language mobilized by these transnational migrants as part of their discursive social positioning, strongly contrast with, and sharply challenge the predetermined and static images presented by the media and strategically used by politicians or cherished by policy makers in their search for quick and simple answers to otherwise multifaceted human interactions. It is to these more informal spaces of belonging and "community" formation that the next sections of this chapter will turn, as being those my respondents were referring to when the notion of "community" was introduced in our discussion.

7.2.1. Institutional forms of community and reduced participation

Social networks do not develop in the same way among all immigrant groups (Levitt, 2001a); they do not necessarily always grow more extensive, as was the case with the transnational migrants from Miraflores studied by Levitt (ibid.), and therefore their institutionalisation and that of transnational practices does not always occur in the same way (ibid: 10.). In some cases, migrants embedded within transnational social fields may engage in multiple and regular transnational practices which, however, do not translate into local or transnational communal activities. Guarnizo and colleagues (1999), for instance, analysed the case of Colombian emigrants in New York who have created a complex and developed network of multidirectional relationships. Nevertheless, their mistrust and fragmentation impeded more institutional forms of transnational community organisation.

The case of Romanian migrants I met in London and Rome did not differ greatly[140]. Despite the existence of relatively developed institutional manifestations of "community" (i.e. ethnic organisations, churches, and political parties) these were never mentioned in the first instance by my respondents when I was enquiring about the

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[140] Although because of the relatively short length of their presence, and because of the circular nature of a large part of Romanian migration especially in Italy, the structure of the migratory flow in the two cities may be said not to be ripe enough for the formation of a "community" public sphere.

existence of a Romanian "community" in the two cities and whether they felt part of it. These findings echo those of another very recent study conducted among long-term Romanian migrants in different European and non-European countries. According to this research, family and friends are the most trusted source of information while migrant and diaspora organisations are not considered as important by migrants and their families – "less than 0.5% of migrants see such associations as 'a trusted source of information'" (IASCI/SOROS, 2011: 3).

Since the announcement about Romania's joining the EU and even more after its actual accession, existing Romanian institutions in both London and Rome have strengthened and enriched their agendas, while a number of new Romanian centres, NGOs, and "community organisations" have been born.

In London, besides churches, grocery stores and restaurants, I could count nine Romanian organisations by the end of 2009[141]. They were mainly concentrating on cultural aspects, while the provision of services related to migrant settlement in the city was still scarce. The Romanian Cultural Centre (RCC) in London was the oldest and most well-known Romanian "community" institution in the British capital. It was set up in 1994 by a group of Romanians based in London, who migrated to the UK before the collapse of the Communist regime. Their intent was to testify to the existence of a "Romanian community" in the city and to objectify, fix, and communicate what were considered by the founders as some of the most significant features of Romania and its people.

Cultural manifestations had been its priority, yet in 2004 the Centre started a telephone line where information was given about practical issues for immigration and settlement in the city. Because of the popularity of the Centre's name among Romanians who were arriving in London, people also started to come to the Centre itself asking for information. When numbers started to grow the Centre decided to stop the service because as one of the members told me: "we don't have the capacity for offering the service. The guy giving information on the phone was doing it on a voluntary basis and was not here every day. Moreover that was not the mandate of our centre. That's not how our centre was set up to work for the community". As the website of the RCC reads, the Centre aims to "bridge a gap in the way Romania and Romanians are perceived in Britain" by "making Romania and Romanian culture better

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[141] See Appendix 1 for a list of Romanian organisations I came accross in London and Rome.

known", by showing "how widely and how significantly Romanians have contributed to the cultural life of Europe and the rest of the world".

The position of the centre within the geography of the city was also mentioned by my respondents as very telling of its actual material and symbolic distance from most Romanian migrants now living in London. "We rarely go there, I don't even know it very well, their address I mean. Somewhere in Piccadilly Circus, isn't it?" Corina told me when I asked her if she attends events at the RCC in London. Ion said that he didn't even know that they had a place, "I thought that the party [the monthly Romanian Party described above] was it...I didn't know they do other things for us...do they?"

The organisation of cultural events therefore, and the temporary organisation of the monthly Romanian Party, remained as their focus. One public meeting discussing immigration policy changes taking place in the aftermath of January 2007 was also co-hosted by them as well as a number of seminar-type events discussing the Romanian diaspora's issues.

As for other, more recent Romanian organisations created in the city, most of the Romanian migrant workers I interviewed in London did not have any knowledge of them. From my investigation and interviews with other members of the formal community (i.e. priests, journalists and some associations) there was evidence of the development of some new organisations which, at least in their intent, aimed to respond to the needs of the new migrants[142]. Yet, the RCC represented for many the only institutional feature of the "community" despite the fact that its strong affiliation with old/long-term Romanian migration was emphasised by everyone.

In Rome, given the larger Romanian population settled in the city, the number of independent organisations was higher and it increased considerably in the aftermath of 2007. I counted twenty-one Romanian independent organisations by the end of 2008. Some of them had a predominantly cultural agenda but others, especially in view of Romania's accession to the EU and the consequent change in status of Romanian citizens, were slightly shifting their programmes towards initiatives related to migrants' working and social lives, offering language and work training, as well as information about the new policy and Romanian migrants' rights after the accession.

The dynamism of the formal Romanian community was also mirrored in the creation of an umbrella organisation, League of Romanians in Italy (*LRI*) set up in

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[142] Romanians in the Third Millennium was organising language courses and offered information about work related issues to Romanian migrants.

2005, of the Romanian Identity Party founded in 2006 and one year later of another umbrella association, The Federation of Romanian Associations in Italy – FARI. Those organisations had a similar mandate, to create a space for discussion for the Romanian associations in Italy, and most of all to become an interface between Italian authorities and other organisations or representatives of Romanians settled in the country. Yet that dynamism of the formal Romanian community did not seem to correspond to a similar participation on the part of the Romanians interviewed.

In fact, despite the increase in number of those organisations, respondents in the two locations did not see them as their main interlocutors. When the notion of community was introduced in our discussions, they rarely mentioned formal "community" services or resources. Namely, Romanian NGOs or cultural centres were never mentioned as places where they would go for help first of all, they were rarely referred to as locations where they would spend their time out of work, and most of all they were never referred to as spaces of belonging which the Romanian migrants interviewed for this research would identify with.

Long working hours and limited leisure time were the primary reasons presented by my respondents for their reduced involvement in the creation and furtherance of a Romanian "community" in their cities. Maria for example told me that she and her husband never attended meetings or events of the RCC Romanian organisations in the city because: "I work from 8 to 7 every day except Sundays and the same goes for my husband. So when do you want me to go?" Sorina, who was self-employed, described a similar situation. In order for her to be able to earn enough money to realise her business plan, she would work as a cleaner in five houses every day, starting at nine o'clock every morning and ending at eight o'clock in the evening. In her account she refers also to the similar situation of other Romanians she met in London and who because of their intention to work as much as they could, and save the money gained, were reticent in making contacts with other Romanians migrants in the city.

> I've met a Romanian couple, shortly after my arrival here in London. They were of my age and also from the same region where I'm from in Romania. So we became friends but we would never get together, like, you know, for going out. They were not interested in going out, relaxing or having fun here. They won't go out because they didn't want to spend here the money they have earned.

Also for Corina and her husband, for instance, migration was an activity aimed at capital-raising and their interest in building "community" relations in London was purely temporal and situational.

> We spend very little time going out with other Romanians here. If there is a birthday party.... but we don't have many friends here. We know my cousin, the one who helped us coming here and her friends. That's it....all the rest... well... we don't see them really. But that's fine; we didn't come here to enjoy ourselves. Our daughter is in Romania. We came here for her, to get together enough money to make a better life for her. So this is just fine for us.

But others would lament the lack of stronger bonds within the collectivity. These were mainly migrants who despite emphasising their wish to go back to Romania have been living in London for longer and do not have any defined plan to return. Vasile was happy with his and his wife's working arrangements in catering but during one of our conversations at the Café where he was working he complained about the scarcity of contacts with other co-nationals.

> Most Sundays, which is the only day I don't work, we stay at home. We are too tired most of the time and also, we don't know many other Romanians here. But in those days when we go out, when we meet some other people, oh, it feels much better! On Monday, then, you start the week differently, it feels differently. [...].... when they say that Romanians don't stick together, I think that is because you have to work very hard here, you have to work a lot, this is why we are here, to work.

Interestingly, Vasile made a comparison with working conditions in Italy in order to better explain the hard working life in London and therefore the very limited time Romanian migrant workers, in his view, have for socialising and being involved in community activities. He talked about his brother, whom he helped to come and work in London a few months before our first meeting. Like many other Romanians, Vasile's brother was working in Italy before deciding to move to the UK. Yet he heard that earnings in the building industry in London were considerably higher so he wanted to come to London.

> ... I told him, here it's hard work, but he still wanted to come. I told him, here is not like Italy, many of them, they came and they couldn't bear the hard work. But he still wanted to come, so I made the arrangements for him to come. After a few weeks he went to the police and said that he got lost at the border with France and asked to be taken back to Romania. From there, he went again to work in Italy. And I know other Romanians, they too, after a short working experience here, they went back to Italy.

Narratives provided by respondents who had a transnational experience of migration in both Italy and Britain were relevant in that they offered migrants' direct point of view on the two realities, often emphasising what they considered "a closer working and life culture" (from a conversation with Liliana in 2007, upon her arrival in London from Rome) between Romania and Italy. Liliana and Maria, for instance, who had both lived and worked in Rome before coming to London, found it easier to build social relations in Rome rather than in London, although issues of trust, which I will discuss later in this

section, were still given as a reason for the limited relations established with other Romanians outside the family.

Hansi also recalled his time spent in Rome:

> At the end of the working day, we would go back home, have a quick shower and then out. You'd get a beer and slice of pizza and wander around with friends. In the summer there were always people on the street till late. Here, no, here is different, no one is on the street where I live, and in the pub ... well pubs are not for us. So we come back for work, look some tv and go to sleep.

Yet, in their narratives respondents in Rome suggested a similar picture and offered similar reasons for their low level of social participation. The working nature of the migration initiative was identified as a major factor and, in fact, for many, at least at some point in their migration trajectory, time spent in Italy was seen as a way to work hard and accumulate savings. Understanding the process of construction of migrants' collective belonging in the context of time appeared therefore fundamental for my analysis, as the discourse of motivation on migration is different at different stages of the process. Migrants' relatively recent, open-ended and, in many cases, transient stay had in fact deeply influenced their collective participation and somehow justified their socio-economically motivated projects of migration. Despite their open plans, and in fact a migratory experience which for many turned into a long-term (if not permanent) experience, the view of returning home was still persistent, although in an ambivalent way, in my respondents' narratives (see the "myth of return", Zetter, 1999).

The geographical proximity between Italy and Romania had also played a significant role. Greater possibilities to travel back and forth between Italy and Romania even for irregular migrants, would more easily allow for a coming back "in case things don't work the way you think" (Rodica, Rome, 2007). From this point of view time spent on social activities was seen as a "waste of time" and money that should have instead been saved for the purpose of return. This aspect was accentuated among those who opted for a circulatory model, in which the time spent in Italy was almost exclusively dedicated to earning and did not allow for forms of social life outside the workplace.

Moreover, when employment was on a live-in basis, as was the case of domestic/care workers, time outside the workplace was even more limited and therefore spent on activities again oriented towards the back-home sphere.

> I only have a day and half for myself every week", Viorica said. "I go out on Thursday afternoon and then on Sunday. But in these days I do some shopping and I try to arrange for parcels to be sent to Romania, to the family there. Sometime I go

to mass and meet some people from my town there. That's it most of the time. I don't have time to get involved in these things you're asking. I don't know about Romanian associations here, I know about this church where Romanians meet but this is it. Sometime we also meet at the market, the small one at *Piazza del Popolo* where you met me once. We go there to buy things that we send back to Romania. You can meet many Romanian women there on Sunday morning. (Rome, 2007)

When working arrangements had changed, however, and they moved from live-in to hourly-based jobs, similarly to migrant workers in London, they were working for more than ten hours six days per week. This also left them with very limited time to dedicate to "community" activities. In some cases they had reduced their working hours once their family situation had changed and their children joined them. But in those cases time out of work would be spent within the family.

> Once my boy had arrived from Romania in August, I moved from four to three families so that I can have three free afternoons and on Saturday I work only two hours in the morning. Of course now I have more time out of work but this means that I can spend this time with my son. I can help him with his homework; I can be a mother for him (Cristina, Rome, 2007).

Time dedicated to family relations started to be progressively introduced in our discussions by respondents who also started to identify family as the space for belonging, as their form of "personal community". When interviews went into more depth on this subject, *trust* appeared as an essential feature of their social relationing in migration. Romanian migrants would mention family relations as the only ones they could *trust* and therefore the most relevant contacts they maintain locally and transnationally.

7.2.2. ".... community means people you can trust"

Despite all the practical and emotional support that my respondents received from their Romanian family relations and friends, there was a common perception that Romanians do not cooperate, that they do not help each other. Previous research (Kelly and Lusis, 2006) has already emphasised that migrants have ambivalent and complex relationships with their "ethnic community" when it comes to members outside their own network of close relations. In line with those findings, respondents in the two cities would express a strong preference to enter relationships only with other Romanians they said they could "trust", and those were the connections they would turn to in case of need. These were mostly family members or individuals perceived as such. Other relationships within the national group were instead characterised by scepticism.

They expressed caution about associating with co-nationals fearing they may be involved in practices they did not want, such as being asked for a loan, for

accommodation, for a workplace and so on. Most social life therefore appeared to be with kin rather than in associational contexts or meeting places where people identify themselves as Romanians, and this would prevent them from taking advantage of services offered by the existing Romanian institutions, and from participating in gatherings or activities organised by them. One of my respondents in London talked about convenience as the reason why Romanians would approach their co-nationals: "You can meet many people at the church, at the Romanian party, but who are they? Why are they coming to you? Are they really interested in your friendship or is it just for convenience. They maybe ask you about your job, how you found it, if you can help them find a job. Then if they understand that you can't help, they are gone. You meet so many people like this here" (Cornel, London, 2006).

> This is why we stopped going to the Romanian church and now we go to this other one, where migrants from different nationalities come. I see this one as more genuine, we go there for a common interest and not to see if we can find someone to ask for work, or for money, or.... Romanians will always ask you for something! (Maria, London, 2006).

Several reasons have been put forward in order to explain the lack of mutual trust among Romanians abroad identified also by my respondents. According to some scholars, these reasons should not be viewed as purely linked to migration. The Communist legacy, for instance, is still believed to have an impact on people's social interactions even now, more than 20 years after the collapse of the dictatorship. By taking over all public spaces and behaviours, the regime replaced public commitments and goals with private ones. A form of mistrust of the public space, and public involvement, has therefore arisen (Matei, 2004), providing fertile grounds for a more "individualistic mentality" (Cingolani, 2009). Such a mentality, despite the socialist state's campaign against the household and for the creation of a socialist identity, characterised social relations in Romania under Communism (Kideckel, 1993: 94) and also in the years after the fall of the regime when the need to survive in a period of economic change speeded up the process of social disaggregation, familism and social atomisation (ibid.).

Moreover as many of the migrants were moving from rural or semi-rural areas of Romania, their behaviour has also been explained in relation to specific forms of social relations to which they may have been accustomed. Lăzăroiu (1999: 42) for instance observes how "in rural Romania kinship is at the centre of social relationship networks and they certainly influence future dynamics established in the transnational space of migration". By taking part in several of their activities outside their working routine, I

can say that in many ways, Romanian migrants I encountered were reproducing such relations in their cities of migration and often emphasised their distrust and suspiciousness of other Romanians who were not directly related to their close network.

When I asked Viorel whether it was easy to find people who would help in the Romanian community, he answered firstly referring to his own experience and to the help he received from family relations already living in London at the time of his arrival. Secondly he pointed to the fact that Romanians would rather abstain from offering help given the unreliability of many of his co-nationals.

> It was normal for them to help us, they are part of the family, and they knew they could trust us… But otherwise ... you see, we heard about people helping with jobs but then what happened ... you tell them that there is such and such job, they would say they come and then ... when the time comes they disappear! Maybe because they find something better, or because they just changed their mind. So who is the one who has to pay for this? It is you, you because you've talked with the employer, you vouched for that person's honesty and so on ... so, no, I think now people have learned (London, 2006).

Viorel's reasoning therefore pointed to the way he believed people of his national group may behave in certain situations. Trust as far as "community" relations were concerned was implicit in his account and for him it was safer to trust family and close friends than acquaintances who also happen to be Romanians. But later on during our conversation Viorel introduced the notion of trust in a more straightforward manner by turning the question back to me and asking what do I think a community is because "for me community means people you can trust" he said, "and these people are very often the ones who are very close to you". His notion of trust was therefore based on the relational status as family members or close friends and on the familiarity and (potential) continuity of the relationship (Alexander et al. 2004). Membership of the same national group would not therefore imply a relationship of trust.

Levitt defines these relations as based on "mistrustful solidarity" (2001a: 118), and looking at migrants' narratives in both locations, I argue that this concept helps to illustrate Romanian co-nationals' relations in the two contexts. Despite often emphasising their belonging and attachment to Romania and Romanians[143] as opposed to the local population, and despite in actual fact maintaining (in some cases almost exclusively) strong relationships with other Romanians locally and transnationally,

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[143] To the question: "Would you be comfortable in a relationship with a British person?" only three of my interviewees answered yes. All the rest said that they prefer a Romanian national. In Rome, all my interviewees had Romanian partners and although they seemed more open towards the possibility of having a relationship with an Italian national, they said that they would prefer a Romanian for partner.

respondents expressed worries about many of their fellow nationals[144]. Similarly to findings about Polish migrants in London, the discursive hostility towards co-nationals displayed in my respondents' narratives was communicating "warnings against treating ethnicity as the sole basis of trust and cooperation" (Eade et al. 2007: 38).

Gabriela's reply to my question about relations with co-nationals also emphasised an idea of "community" based on "personal trust" (Alexander et al. 2004). She told me how "not everyone, because of course you can find also people outside the family who can offer you true help and you can trust them, but often people abuse your goodwill…. Maybe it's better to stick to your family to your real friends, or better alone than with people you don't know properly". While Corina, when asked about attendance at activities organised by the Romanian community organisations, told me that she used to go to mass from time to time.

> But even in that case, I started to prefer staying home on Sundays or meeting family that I have here. When you go there you only see other Romanians very well dressed who come there just because they want to show off. Yes, this is the Romanian community if is this that you are asking about! As for me, I prefer to stick to my people, they make me feel a bit more at home.

The recurring theme of family and close friends was reiterated by Andreea too, and a tone of anger could be heard in her voice when discussing the Romanian migrants in London:

> Look at the streets of London. If you move around you can see the Chinese area, the Indian area, the Turkish area, even the Polish area, but can you see any Romanian area? No, there is no such place! We are spread around the city; it looks like we don't want to stay close to each other, like we want to hide from each other (London, 2006).

The story that I was therefore told by most of my respondents in London was one of self-reliance or, if necessarily, dependence on family, relatives or, to a lesser degree, friends or networks. And the pattern was much the same for Romanian migrants in Rome with some of them emphasizing the egoism of some Romanians who "only talk to you because they want to know how much you earn and not because they are actually interested in friendship" (Cristina, Rome, 2007). Rodica's words in fact clearly resembled those already heard in London:

> Here [in Rome but she was also in a more general way intending the migratory context] people just want to trick you, or however to find the way to make some use of your friendship. They want to see if you can be of any use, that's it. If you're not,

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[144] See also ethnographic research conducted by Anghel in Milan (2010) and Cingolani in Turin (2009).

then they are gone, you're not going to see them again the next day… like friends, I mean. This is how I think it is.

And she also emphasised the difference between family relations, "which in most of the cases are the ones that you can trust" and other co-nationals. I have already quoted Rodica saying that she had "lots of family in Rome". "Almost all my family is here [...] I never feel alone here", she once told me. And similar cases where large extended families have arrived and settled in Rome (and other Italian cities) were not uncommon (Ciobanu, 2005; Cingolani, 2008). This migratory pattern, which was certainly more developed in the case of Rome, for reasons already discussed in the previous chapters, facilitated even more the development of strong family relations in the context of settlement. In those cases time out of work tended to be spent with family relations and the same family relations would be the ones providing information and help. Those family relations were therefore identified as the "community" to which one would mostly refer in case of need.

Trust in those cases was based on an in-depth knowledge of each other, a process which developed and was maintained transnationally. Cristina for instance said that:

> I only trust Liliana here. We've known each other since we were children. We are from the same village, I know her family and she knows mine. When we met again here in Rome for me it was like having a part of my family here with me.

In fact apart from living in the same apartment, their relationship of trust was based on a friendship which started in Romania and which was maintained transnationally through constant relations between their relatives in Romania. Parcels sent to one family would contain goods for the other too, and visits to the village would also involve visiting both families.

> Now that both Liliana and Doru have a regular status, they can visit family back in our village more often. When they go, they always visit our family too, and bring them our gifts. This takes us closer to our family too (Cristina, Rome, 2007).

Social relationships were therefore spanning two (or more) settings and by doing this they were creating those fictive family relations already discussed in Chapter Six, as well as being an assurance of loyalty and trust. Those staying behind were actively involved in the process of strengthening those ties and consequent feelings of trust. Moreover, transnational linkages are not limited to the connections between country of origin and country of destination. The case of Romanian migrants in London is an exemplary one as they often are "secondary migrants"[145], arriving in London via other European countries. Being part of a group of people in more than two countries allows

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[145] Bhachu (1985) calls them "twice migrants."

for the creation of a transnational network that transcends the boundaries of different nation-states, and allows for migrants' positioning based on a multiple opportunity structure. Transnational networks thus facilitate the movement and settlement of migrants, acting almost as informal reception programmes for the newly arrived.

Liliana's and her husband's story typified such *personal transnational communities*, showing their essential role in the process of transnational home-making. In 2007 Liliana arrived in London from Rome with her ten year old son in order to be with her husband who was already there, working with his brother:

> My husband came here from Italy before me. He decided to come because his brother is here. This was actually the second time, we have already tried once to stay here in London but then we went back to Rome. So, then he called my husband again, saying that there was work for him and that it was better paid than in Italy. So he came and after few months, when our son finished school, we came too. [...] We all live together here and our two kids go together to school. We are going to stay here for a while this time…. I think. I'll look for a job. But who knows. For the moment, we are keeping the house we were renting in Rome.

Maria, along with Liliana and her family, also represented an example of a secondary migration strategy, and therefore the development of a personal transnational community to rely on. As illustrated at the beginning of this dissertation, Maria was living with her mother in Rome, their first destination after migrating from Romania. Initially, she was planning to stay there for at least a few years, but not long after her plans changed and she decided to join her then boyfriend in London.

> I didn't have documents and you know how difficult it is to enter the UK. But still, we thought that this was the best thing to do. Of course he could come to Italy instead ... but we thought that London was better.

7.3. "Community" and social and legal status

Other relevant issues related to respondents' social and legal immigration status came to light as significant reasons for the paucity of contacts and mistrust towards other co-nationals and towards some of the more institutional manifestations of "community". When I asked him about the Romanian community in London, Ion introduced a relevant aspect to be taken into consideration when reading relationships within the Romanian collectivity. By mentioning an institutional form of "community", the RCC in London, he referred also to the make-up of the social/national group in question. He emphasised the difference between old and new Romanian migration and the class element intrinsic within this difference.

> Romanian community ... do you mean the cultural centre? Yes, but that is for the old migrants, those Romanians who arrived here when there was still communism in

Romania; and they are different; they don't want to mix with us. When you meet one of them, they look at you as you are ... well they look down on you. You see, I have a university degree as well, but I was not lucky enough to find a job in my field. For them, for those [settled] Romanians, if your hands look like this (he shows me his hands which were marked by his hard work in construction) ... well, you are a builder, you are just one of those illegal migrants who is spoiling the image Romanians have in London! This is how it is, this is the Romanian community! (London, 2006)

The RCC was in fact for my respondents synonymous with a different set of Romanians. Those Romanians, as Ion highlights above and as Gabriela also mentioned, were "not migrants. They were born in Romania but they are not migrants anymore for the Brits. This is the difference between us and them. We are migrants here" (London, 2006). As a matter of fact, the RCC was located in the very centre of London. Similarly to the Polish Centre of Art and Culture described by A. Datta (2009) in her study of Polish construction workers in London, despite wanting to present itself as a place of "Romanian culture", the RCC was positioned in areas where very few of the post 1989 Romanian migrants lived or spent their time. A division within the nationality group between the new and the earlier Romanian migrants was therefore surfacing and was primarily centred around class issues[146].

Later on during my fieldwork, the prominence of class appeared obvious again in the discussion I had with the representative of the RCC about the kind of services the organisation was willing to provide for the collectivity and in relation to the attendance of different migrants at the party organised by them.

We had set up the centre because we wanted to celebrate and to make the West aware of the Romanian high culture.... those parties, we started doing them just by chance and then we realised that many people would turn up, so we decided to keep organising them, they are for those Romanians who work the whole week in pretty tough jobs and then they just want to relax and dance at the party (Ramona M., 2006, London).

Once again, by looking at the case of the RCC, it was evident that "ethnic solidarity" did not happen automatically just because of the common nationality which links different waves of migrants in the same location (Menjívar, 2000). This time, the case of new Romanian migrants in London, like the case of Salvadoran migrants studied by Cecilia Menjívar in San Francisco (ibid.), showed how common ancestry, culture and even frequent interaction did not overcome the socio-economic differences between middle-class migrants who arrived earlier and the migrant workers who arrived later and who were directed into mainly unskilled and low-paid jobs.

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[146] See K. Datta et al. 2008 and McIlwaine, 2005 for similar discussion regarding other migrant collectivities in London.

In this process more recent Romanian migrants were marginalised within the Romanian collectivity in London first of all because of the kind of work they did. The RCC was therefore an interesting case as it was holding an ambiguous position within the Romanian migrant collectivity in London, since it was both a point of reference when the notion of Romanian community was mentioned, but also a symbol of class division strongly emphasised by both old and recent migrants. 2008 was the last year when the RCC held a "Romanian Party". Since then, however, several disco-clubs have opened in neighbourhoods in North London.

Unlike the London context, Romanian respondents in Rome did not make direct reference to the social differences between "old" (pre-1990 migration) and "new" Romanian migration to the city. Pre-1990 migration was almost never mentioned by respondents who, when referring to "older" migrants were instead making a distinction between migrants who arrived before 2002 and migrants who arrived after that year. In other words my respondents were directly referring to that turning point which allowed for the arrival of "massive numbers of Romanians in the city when all of a sudden moving out of the country became easy for many of us" as Cristi told me. In this way they were making an additional distinction within that wave of migration from Romania which is commonly termed in the literature "new migration".

The milieu of the Romanian migrants in Rome therefore still looked segmented. Respondents were positioning themselves and other Romanian migrants based on contextual national and supranational policy changes which affected Romanian migration to Italy and had an impact on how the notion of "community" was structured in personal accounts.

The EU accession agreement between EU and Romania, and the consequent visa exemption, allowed for Romanian migration to Italy to increase steadily in the following years. Similarly to the case of Spain (Bleahu, 2004), also in Italy the informal housing market inflated because of the significant increase in migration. Railroads, parks, deserted houses and even isolated archaeological sites around Rome were overcrowded with migrants with no sleeping arrangements. Respondents still remembered very vividly the first months of 2002:

> The majority of migrants arrived because it was easier to get here. We didn't need visas any longer, and the economic situation in Romania… [was bad]. There was a big inflow was in 2002. There were many who were saying things like 'I don't know what I will do. I take the bus from Romania and I go to Italy'. Many of us came, but had no information [about Italy]. No the language, nothing. This was only an opportunity for making money, many thought (Liliana, Rome, 2007).

But in the same year another immigration policy measure affected the structure of the Romanian collectivity in Rome and redefined relations among Romanian migrants. As I have already illustrated in Chapter Three of this dissertation, periodical amnesties have enabled irregular migrants already living and working in the country to regularise their status. Following the amnesty of autumn 2002, 647,000 migrants were regularised in Italy. Of those, 141,000 were Romanian migrants. Besides, the 2002 regularisation created further migration of family members of the newly legalised migrants. What that meant was that numbers of regular Romanian migrants increased but also that the use of kinship was redefined.

This time the main differences arising from my respondents' narratives were therefore pointing more towards migrant workers' legal status rather than to their socio-economic one.

> Because from that year on, people could come and go, or they could just stay if they wanted to. They were regular for three months, and then they were staying without any papers and wait for the next sanatoria (amnesty). They were often helped by the older immigrants, by the regulars, the ones who have been in Italy for longer and who became regular after the 2002 amnesty (Cristi, Rome, 2007).

In other words, a significant differentiation has occurred between regularised and irregular Romanian migrants within the post-1990s immigration cohort. Legalisation led to the changing of the relationships between Romanian migrants in Italy, and a functioning division between legal and irregular Romanian migrants took place. Furthermore, such distinction inevitably had implications for identity constructions. As illustrated in the context of migration to the US, legal migrants are perceived within their collectivities as being at the top of the migrant hierarchy, as they have the possibility to support new arrivals from their own families and engage in transnational visits back home (Boehm, 2004).

After regularisation, migrants were able to own bank accounts, to have medical assistance, to access jobs on the market through private agencies, to rent or buy flats, to open their own enterprises. Regular migrants could open companies and work independently. Consequently the number of Romanian companies and of self-employed Romanians grew, providing more opportunities for work for irregular migrants. Some of the regular migrants started to open small companies and among these some, as mentioned in Chapter Four, work with and speculate occasionally on other irregular Romanian migrants. Ambiguous "community" relations appeared fuelled by the legal status. As Aura told me, the former were vital in terms of mediating with the Italian

society (employers, social/health services, accommodation) and to minimise the risks that await new arrivals.

> Because so many of us arrived here after 2002, Romanians who were here and who were regular by then were very important for us. They were the ones telling us how things here work for everything, a house, a job, where to get food, how to get from one place to another. When you arrive here, and especially once you are without papers, things are very difficult and you need a lot of help. Because we could come here, it was fine, but after three months, if you didn't want to go back to Romania you were just an illegal immigrant here (Rome, 2007).

But then she continued and wanted to emphasise how:

> Not everyone was here to help you. Those Romanians with regular papers were helping if they were getting something in exchange, or they were helping their close ones. Don't think about this community where you arrive here and other Romanians will just help you. Sometimes, these who are regular don't want to have anything to do with the illegals. Sometimes they will help, like they will give you a job in their company, but this is because they also use you and they pay you very little. But in many cases when they become regular they just stop having contacts with the illegals, they meet only with other regulars, they start having a different life. And if they have contacts with illegal Romanians those are family, relatives who arrived here and who need help (ibid.)

The transition to regularity can therefore occasion the weakening of relations among co-nationals and create almost parallel collectivities within the national group. More than once during my fieldwork in Rome I was told by Romanians with a regular immigration status that I should avoid for instance the area of the Anagnina Tube Station because "Romanians you shouldn't be meeting gather daily around there"[147]. The irregular immigration status of Romanian migrants was thus often equated with unlawful behaviour by some of their co-nationals who were instead eager to capitalise on their regular status, especially once Romanian migration started to be stigmatised within Italian society. In another ethnographic study on Romanian migrants in Milan, Anghel (2006) has also underlined how regularisation weakens community ties, leading to a greater degree of individualisation of the migration experience. From this perspective the social pact between irregular and regular immigrants appears to be based on weak links, which are constantly being broken and renewed.

Because of hostile immigration policies which confine many migrants into irregular immigration statuses, in-group relations tend therefore to build upon precarious and continuously changing solidarities. Ties between regulars and irregulars end up being in some cases utilized in a functional way[148] and translating into closer forms of

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[147] Notes from a conversation with the owner of a Romanian shop in the neighbourhood of Tiburtina.
[148] Some of my interviewees' narratives in Chapter Five about employment in building companies set up by Romanian regular migrants emphasise this situation.

collaboration may become very difficult. "Community" therefore becomes an arena with mutable confines that one enters and leaves as one's legal status changes.

More than once respondents mentioned their legal status as one of the reasons for the lack of participation in events organised by institutions within the Romanian collectivity. Cristina for instance remembers how

> Especially in the beginning, because I was illegal I was afraid of even going to the mass on Sundays. Romanian friends were telling me about this church in the city centre, and even one of the ladies I was working for told me about it. But I was afraid, I was afraid to go. When I was coming back from work I was just happy that I got home and I wasn't stopped by the police on the street that day. I mean, I've never been stopped, but you are just so afraid, you know that you are illegal and you're not meant to be here.

Also Rodica mentioned her legal status saying that:

> You don't really want to get exposed. You don't want to risk. You don't know if you can trust people unless you know them very well. When you're in that condition (irregular) you better trust people that you know, you better stay with you relatives, your family if you have any here.

Their immigration status was therefore a factor in the fragmented relations that form within the collectivity between regular and irregular migrants, but also a barrier as regards participation in local activities outside the labour market.

7.4. Belonging and roots: Romanian migrants vs. European citizens

> I was born European, this year I've gained the rights of a European citizen (Vasile, London, 2007).

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation I illustrated a paradox that concerns migration from Eastern Europe in more general terms and from Romania in particular since the collapse of the Socialist regime and after Romania's accession to the EU.

Referring to Benedict Anderson's notion of "community", Alexander (1996) remarks how it implies imagining a fixed and enclosed entity with its own boundaries and consequently the enacting of inclusion and most of all exclusion processes. These remarks are relevant when discussing belonging, and, most of all, exclusion at different stages of Romania's relationship to Europe, and how these processes have impacted on the way Romanian people understand and define themselves.

My respondents have often referred to the ways in which they have felt prejudice at various stages of their migration. The particular moment in time in which my fieldwork was conducted has been particularly relevant in this respect. It in fact captured both the contradictions embedded within Western States' approach to migration from Eastern Europe, Romania in particular, and the contradictions between Romanians' expectations

of finally being accepted as rightful members of the "EU club", and the old EU member states' reaction which, after January 2007, was characterised by even greater intolerance and discrimination towards the new "European brothers".

As mentioned in the introduction to this study, in the 1990s there appeared some degree of social acceptance of intra-European migrants in western European countries. Sciortino (2008: 8) for instance observes how policy makers in Italy welcomed the entrance of the new EU citizens on the Italian labour market in the first instance, because they would represent a European – therefore white, as against North African, and Christian, as against Muslim – source of foreign labour. I would add here that what also impacted on the "warmth of the welcome" (Reitz, 1998) was not only the phenotypical and cultural traits perceived in policy realms as closer and therefore more "acceptable", but also a perceived "invisibility" of those new migrants as far as the "layered ethnic geographies of cities" were concerned (K. Knowles, 2010: 32).

Yet later on, Eastern Europeans also received differentiated treatment becoming targets of racism (Schuster, 2010: 341), showing how perceptions around who is, or who is not, "one of us" can change because of their contextually constructed and therefore historically variable nature (Barth, 1969; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Cerulo, 1997; Eriksen, 2004). Furthermore, Romanians' and other Eastern Europeans' condition can also be read as an example of how, within the process of global circulation, "white ethnicities carry differential value accumulated through citizenship" (Knowles and Harper, 2009: 228). In a few years those migrants moved from being perceived as the poor brother needing help, to the "acceptable" guest/servant, to the unwanted immigrant – all "entitlements" related to their passport (ibid. 2009; K. Knowles, 2010) and following uneven patterns of racialisation.

As a reaction, various strategies were put in place to avoid being identified as "Balkans" and therefore to escape those negative connotations associated with this label. As far as Romania and Romanians are concerned, their "return" to Europe after December 1989 and later on their official accession to the EU, were accompanied by the construction of a narrative aiming at (re)emphasising their "Europeanness".

7.4.1. Being Romanian, being Latin in Rome

The Latin roots of the Romanian language and culture have been strongly claimed by Romanian elites. Their aim was to depict the country as an "island of civilization" surrounded by "barbarian Slavs" (Todorova, 1997). The Latin background has therefore become a symbol, a powerful tool to be used in the post-communist process of nation

building as well as in the process of accession to the EU. As Robertson (2002: 4) suggests, "symbols confer status and legitimacy on the specifically referenced groups [...] creating state insignia […] involves searching among available symbols or inventing new ones to publicly – and quite literally – stamp ownership" (Robertson, 2002: 4).

On a Sunday morning shortly after my arrival in Rome for the second part of my fieldwork, I decided to go for a walk in the city centre. It was the first time I was venturing out of Anagnina, the neighbourhood in the south-eastern periphery of Rome where most of my Romanian respondents lived. I took the Metro A, which in about half an hour had catapulted me from the newly constructed neighbourhood made mainly of gray tall concrete buildings and web-like highways to the well-known monumental city of Rome.

I did not expect to meet many Romanians in the city centre. As Cristina once told me, "we don't really have time for visiting around. The Rome that we know is not the one you study in the history books". But there I was, standing in front of the magnificent *Fori Imperiali* and thinking that that was a day off from my fieldwork, a day in which I would concentrate instead on reminiscences of my scholastic knowledge of the Roman Empire.

Not very far from the Quirinal Hill I could see Trajan's Column, well-known for the bas relief commemorating Emperor Trajan's victory in the Dacian Wars. In Romania children learn about it in primary school. I remember being told that it symbolises the very "birth certificate" of the Romanian people born from the intermingling of the local population, the Daci, and the Romans. The latter conquered the territory of present-day Romania but also brought the "great Latin civilisation" to a mostly rural people. Decebal, chief of the Daci, and Trajan, the Roman Emperor, were depicted in the history books as the fathers of the Romanian people.

I found myself standing in front of the Column and trying to identify among its spiral bas relief some of the scenes I learned about in those books. It was then that I realised that I wasn't the only one involved in that exercise. On my left I could see a group of four talking and pointing towards the column. They were concentrating on a specific area of the column with scenes of ordinary life where men and women in peasant-like clothing were involved in everyday housework. Some other scenes were meanwhile showing similarly dressed men, this time fighting Roman soldiers. The four people were Romanian and one of them was telling the others that they should look at

the Column and see it as an old style documentary showing "how we were living when the Romans arrived... we were part of the Empire".

From that day on I came close to the Column a few more times and generally met Romanian people looking at it and taking photos of themselves in front of it. Sometimes they were accompanied by Italians and were showing the same scenes to their Italian friends, and talking about a common past and belonging. Interestingly enough, their Italian friends did not have any knowledge of the significance the Column held, and still holds today, in building strong commonalities between the Romanian and Italian people. As a matter of fact none of my Italian friends had looked at the Column from that perspective either. Most of all, having studied Roman artistic production during high school in Italy, a compulsory class for every student, I could perfectly remember that this matter had never been brought to our attention when studying Trajan's Column[149].

When I returned home, in the evening of that day, I told my Romanian housemates about my visit to the Column. To my surprise Cristina and Cristi, who I knew had visited the city centre only a couple of times since their arrival in Rome, had also been taken by friends to see the Column on their first visit and they too had made similar comments regarding the images engraved on the column.

> And when our son will be here, we'll take him to see it too. He studied about the column and he has asked us to send him, together with the Italian dictionary, a book about Rome. He's curious, he wants to know about the city where we will be living together and there (at the column site) he can see that we are not very different from the Italians, so maybe he will feel more at home here.

The ritual I entered by chance, therefore, seemed to be a very common and significant one among newly arrived Romanians who would find it important to pay a visit and see those images showing what for them, as for many other Romanians, were testimonies of a relationship between the Romanian and Italian people which started at a very remote time in history. Furthermore, the very conquest and subsequent inclusion of the territory of Dacia into the Roman Empire was also looked at as tangible evidence of Romanian people belonging to the Latin, and by extension European, geo-cultural space and, most of all, "community". Identity became situational and respondents were now emphasising their belonging not to a "personal" form of "community" anymore, but to a wider imagined national community sharing a specific historical past. A form of

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[149] The Roman Empire and its art production is part of the Art History programme which is compulsory at High School (Lyceum) level in Italy. Trajan's Column is one of the most famous monuments of that era and is studied during Art History classes.

collective identity was forged on the school benches and still strongly felt by those adult migrants now standing in front of the Roman column.

This narrative of identification has been adopted also by Romanian cultural elites and politicians both within Romania and abroad. For instance, later on during my fieldwork in Rome I came to know that on December 1st, Romanian cultural organisations from Rome and other cities invite their members and families to gather around the column to celebrate the Romanian National Day. The president of a newly founded Romanian organisation, "Identitatea Romaneasca" (The Romanian Identity), told me about the significance of these meetings in this evocative location.

> You see, this is not just a place in Rome, this, as maybe you know already, is a very important place for Romanians here. This place tells everybody that the Romanian people belong here, in this city and in Europe. We are not just foreigners for the Italians. There are things in common, we are Latin people, and we are European people. So this is why it is very important to meet every year in this place, to remind us and everybody else about this historic truth.

Rituals are powerful and efficient practices in the process of "making community" as they enhance members' receptivity and make them aware of its presence (Lewis, 2010). As such, the above mentioned ritual certainly plays an important role in creating and perpetuating an image and an identity of Romanian migrants as a group. These issues may be embraced in the much broader framework of the role of ritual in creating and perpetuating old and new "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm, 1983) in a place like Rome, one of the most significant cities for Romanian migration. An imagined past, a past of myth and tradition, is in this setting valuable and significant for its power to create a connection between the local population and Romanian migrants.

The speeches given by members of cultural organisations during these gatherings are a way of remembering the "long and remarkable common history"[150] of the two people; their discourses become a tool for creating and reinvigorating a sense of common belonging in the participants and strengthening the identity of the Romanian people, similarly to the Italians, as one of the oldest in Europe and thus one of the most prestigious. It also reveals how the former and the latter are closely intermingled and ineluctably linked one to another.

This past is therefore kept alive through the actuation of rituals which also become a means for the creation of "distinction" (Bourdieu, 1984 [1979]) between Romanians and other migrant populations living in the city. An essentialised group identity is

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[150] From the interview with the president of "Identitatea Romaneasca", February, 2007.

created/invented by positioning the Romanians as different/superior to neighbouring populations (Slavic populations) and closer instead to the peoples and cultures of Western Europe. Moreover, there is a strong relation between the ritual and the places where it is set. The formality and splendour of the setting of the magnificent "Fori Imperiali" is in a necessary connection with the actors' behaviour; it gives them a sense of superiority and of legitimacy in relation to other nationalities, for their presence and belonging to the city is carved in stone by history.

Furthermore, in the process of Romania's accession to the EU, those discourses emphasising a shared cultural sisterhood between Romania and Italy, between Romania and the Latin core of the old Europe, were further accentuated with the intent of supporting the argument that Romania was *naturally* European. In their words, the negative picture of the country was "the result of mistaken identity" – the reference here is to Romanian citizens of Romani origins, often blamed by Romanian politicians, media and public opinion for Romania's segregation from the abstract EUropean homeland (Woodcock, 2007).

7.4.2. Being Romanian, being European in London

> I came to London four years ago. At the time, when people would ask me where I was from and I was replying that I was from Romania, they would stare at me and ask: "Where is Romania?". They didn't even know where Romania was. When I was telling them that Romania was an Eastern European country, and then they would say something like: ...oh, you had communism there. What's more, some of the people I used to work for, at Christmas, would ask me: Aren't you going home to Poland for Christmas? It almost seemed to me that I couldn't be a citizen of my own country and in the same time I was not a European citizen either, I was just a generic Eastern European. Now, instead, everyone talks about the Romanians. Everyone seems to perfectly know Romania and its inhabitants, and how dangerous we are for them. Newspapers talk about us every second day (Maria, London, 2006).

In December 2006, a few days before Romania's accession to the EU, I decided to meet and talk to most of my respondents in order to get a sense of their feelings and expectations for the new year and therefore for their new position as EU citizens. The above quotation is from the conversation I had with Maria and somehow it encapsulates the feeling of anger almost everyone had towards local public opinion which moved from an almost total ignorance of Romania to a violent stigmatisation of its citizens working in Britain.

The position Britain adopted towards Romania and Bulgaria in 2007 came in fact as a surprise for those countries' citizens. Whereas at first glance the arguments for exclusion seemed to be based on matters of economic justice, with the intent to protect the British labour market from the "invasion" of cheap labour, the vocabulary used in

both political and media discourse recalled more fears of "security" not only in the economic but also in the public and social arenas. Apart from the "flooding" or "swamping" metaphors used for Eastern European recent migrants, and Romanians in particular[151], the terminology used also carried negative connotations referring directly to their origins. Romanian migrants were in fact presented as having a "barbarian" nature which was deemed to jeopardise the "civilised" British order because of their "natural" inclination to crime and because of their consequent reluctance to integrate[152].

Assumptions about the unreliability of potential Romanian migrant workers spread in the press and public discourses. As happened already with refugees, "proving genuineness" was a often part of the discourse when referring to Romanian migrants working as self-employed. "While there is the possibility for people to come and work as self-employed, there is the potential for abuse," the Immigration minister declared a few days before Romania's accession to the EU[153]. Migrants who were accessing the labour market through this route were therefore assumed to be in fact working as employees[154].

The criminalising and racialising representation of both Romania and its people migrants created a significant level of distress among elites, in Romania and in the UK, as well as among the ordinary working migrants. They have expressed their doubts about the extent to which Romanian citizens will be treated like "real Europeans". As a reaction, more than one strategy was put in place by members of the "formal Romanian community". One, similarly to the Italian case but on less strong grounds, was to once again emphasise the Latin background of the Romanian people. Yet in this case, the aim was to reclaim one's "European" status compared to other Eastern European migrants entering the UK, rather than underlining any direct relationship with the British people. In this regard, the principal Romanian institutional representatives held a campaign titled "Get to know the real Romania" at the end of 2006. The bilingual pamphlet produced and distributed in the UK as part of the campaign stressed, among other positive features of Romania and its people, the Latin origins of the language which makes it "closer to French and Italian [therefore European] than to neighbouring [Slavic] languages".

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[151] The accession to the EU of both Romania and Bulgaria, and the consequent possibility of free travel for their nationals was met with high scepticism in the UK. Yet, Bulgaria has been perceived as less of a threat because of its smaller size and smaller population.

[152] *Daily Mail*, "45,000 criminals bound for Britain", 27.07.2006.

[153] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/6216942.stm

[154] http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2006/oct/24/eu.immigrationandpublicservices

Another strategy, and maybe a stronger one in London, was to refer to prominent Romanian immigrants in the past (as for instance the sculptor Brancusi, the playwright Ionesco, and the gymnast Nadia Comenaci) and present (such as Angela Ghiorghiu, the opera singer who regularly performs at Covent Garden, and Alina Cojocaru, the principal female dancer at the Royal Ballet) as well as to the more recent, "numerous, yet invisible", highly skilled Romanian migrants working in London. As the RCC's website stated, their endeavour was to "show how widely and how significantly Romanians have contributed to the cultural life of Europe and the rest of the world"[155].

Moreover, in a highly multicultural society where, especially in the aftermath of the London bombings on 7 July 2005, an emphasis on national belonging and race assumes different grades of membership within the population, by emphasising their position as white, Europeans and Christian, Romanian migrants, similarly to Polish migrant workers, were distancing themselves from other minorities and situating themselves in a different (better) position within the hierarchy of groups (Eade et al. 2007). But in some other cases Romanian migrants would decide to deny their nationality altogether, even at a time when immigration policy was expected to change in their favour. This was the case of Pelin whom I introduced earlier and who arrived in London via Italy using a forged passport.

> With that passport I was new person. I was an Italian citizen with an Italian name and a British surname, and I was born in Liverpool. I liked it and on the train to Paris I started to think at the story of that name, at my story so to speak. So I decided that I was born to a British and Italian couple. It worked very well also because I am blond and I have blue eyes. My father was British and my mother Italian. My name on the passport was Alessandro and I decided that I will call myself Alex. The story was that at some point during my childhood, my parents got divorced and I had to leave Britain and move with my mum to Italy. In this way I could justify the fact that I couldn't speak proper English (London, 2006).

Officially, therefore, Pelin was an irregular Romanian migrant working in London. Yet, using his forged passport he built a new identity for himself. This new identity enabled him to avoid the stigma attached to being an Eastern European worker and therefore allowed him to move from being considered an immigrant to being instead seen as a regular foreign worker belonging to an "acceptable" country.

During a conversation we had in December 2006, a few days before Romania's accession to the EU, I asked him if he was looking forward to being able to use his real name and a Romanian passport from the following month.

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[155] www.romanianculturalcentre.org.uk/

To be honest I don't think I will. I have told this story so many times that sometimes I think that even myself I believe it. I always introduce myself as Alex, everyone calls me Alex. If someone calls me Pelin I don't think I would respond just because I almost forgot that name. And then, what for? Do you really think things are going to change for us? Have you seen the newspapers, have you seen the first pages of the newspapers. They all talk about Romanians and not very nicely. So what for? My passport is valid for another 8 years. (Alex, London, 2006)

I met Alex again in November 2007. He was still using his Italian passport and identity and working "regularly" for a building company in the city centre of London.

7.5. Conclusions

This chapter looked at the different ways Romanian migrants construct their identities, sense of belonging and social relationships by choosing among different images and by activating a process of differentiation from other Romanians, the local population, and/or other migrants. The intersection between "community" and the above mentioned family/friends networks seemed to be of greater significance in the way my respondents constructed their notion of collective belonging in both contexts of migration. These networks of alliances, which, given the nature of the migratory process itself, "may be situational and temporary in form" (Alexander et al. 2004: 36), were at the centre of my respondents' personal construction of the notion of "community". What that meant was that this concept, even though imagined within the mind of each of them, did not *always* match an expected definition based on the relationship of community and culture and/or community and nation (Ramírez Cabrera, 2011).

As the interview excerpts have shown, rather than take a point of departure in presumed and reified categories of ethnic, diasporic or transnational communities, the intersection between "community" and networks of family and friends, as well as issues of class, legal status, and culture difference, were addressed by my respondents when we discussed the topic of "community" and what that meant for them.

However, a European belonging was also discursively drawn on in both the British and Italian context, although with slightly differentiated nuances. In those cases being a Romanian national and therefore belonging to a "Romanian community" acquired some significance in light of it belonging to a larger *imagined European/Latin family*. Emphasising their European/white/Christian belonging appeared strategically useful in the UK, especially when, despite a general discourse of inclusion, Romanian migrants started to experience informal exclusion in their countries of migration. In the Italian context instead, given the common origin of the Romanian and Italian language, and the above mentioned historical events allegedly bringing together the Romanian and Italian past, a more specific emphasis on the Latin identity, which would make Romanians

"real Europeans", was a common practice of positioning the self among members of the Romanian migrant collectivity.

Their identity and sense of belonging is therefore developed by pulling together identity constructs and cultural repertoires drawn from both the sending and the receiving societies as well as from the European transnational space (see Lamont et al., 2002). Romanian élites, both locally and transnationally, as well as migrants in their daily routines have emphasised a cultural and historical closeness to the European geo-cultural space with the intent to forge communality and therefore a right to belong, a process constructed and legitimated by means of signifying and naturalising difference in relation to other populations (Thränhardt and Miles, 1995).

Yet, episodes investigated in this chapter stress how the "imagined" and symbolic nature of collective belonging ("community") is also grounded in migrants' daily performances (Herzfeld, 1997) and therefore has a relational character (Amit, 2002). Differentiations between these groups and Romanian migrants were therefore part of a renegotiation of the self within a hierarchy of citizenship where recent migrants from Eastern Europe, and Romanians in particular, despite their newly acquired status of EU citizens, were still among those occupying some of the lowest paid working positions and were still often entrapped in conditions of irregularity and discrimination.

Conclusions

Increasingly, in the last ten years, migration within Europe has undergone a process of Europeanisation, with significant flows of migrant workers moving west. Among those migrants, Romanians have been the most mobile and quickly became the largest group of non-nationals, after Turks, living in another EU Member State. Their presence became visible, not only because of the considerable numbers of workers who entered those economies but also because of the negative attention they received in both media and political debates, especially in connection with Romania's accession to the EU.

To better understand Romanian migrants' paradoxical condition of exclusion and struggle as both EU citizens and unwanted (irregular) migrants, I have framed their experiences in the context of growing economic changes generated by globalisation in Europe, like the "shift of employment from industrialised to industrialising economies and simultaneously the shift of employees from industrialising countries to the industrialised economies" (Düvell 2004: 4), as well as the transition towards an increasingly service-based economy and therefore labour market restructuring. This shift has generated the need for low-paid elementary occupations in the wealthy North/West, largely filled by migrants who are often trapped in imposed conditions of irregularity.

The present study, therefore, has explored the lived worlds of Eastern European migrants by looking at the transnational migratory experience of low-waged (irregular) Romanian migrant workers and their families in Rome and London. It has developed a cross-national comparative analysis which focused on the dynamics of mobility they were embedded in and enacted within the transnational geo-political space of the enlarged EU, as well as on the mechanisms and processes which impacted their transnational migration and settlement. As such, I aimed at answering questions in relation to structural and individual factors influencing the construction of a transnational space of action and belonging, and on the ways those factors intersect in various institutional sites of migration.

The comparative analysis presented here has looked at the intersecting experiences of work, family and belonging of transnational intra-European migrant workers and their families in Rome and London. In particular, the study has been empirically focused on a close in-depth examination of how respondents live their circumstances

and conditions in relation to, on one side, two (not so) contrasting "models" of social and labour market integration, and on the other, their participation in a day to day transnational routine which involves family members on both sides of migration as well as a network of relations across Europe. By focusing on both women and men I could consider the overlapping variables that informed their experiences and in the process shed light on those intersections between gender, citizenship/ethnicity, class, and religion.

Transnationalism and the relevance of the context: resistance within irregularity

At the start, I assumed that migrants' experiences in the two cities would reveal profound differences. Despite their similar pre-migration experiences which certainly informed their migratory decisions and settlement strategies, I still expected to find considerable differences, precisely because of monolithic assumptions of diverse "models" of reception and settlement in the two settings. Different histories of migration, disparate policies of migration, diverse labour-market characteristics of the "global city" on one side and the "Mediterranean model" on the other, set the ground for an expected diverse experience of settlement.

At the end of this journey in which I observed their activities and settlement routines and interacted with some of those Romanians who decided to experience life in migration, what this present study has revealed most strongly are yet again those "dislocations" (Parreñas, 2001) and "discomfort" (Willis and Yeoh, 2000) migrant workers are faced with across the border within the transnational space of the EU, and which inform their strategies and practices of migration and settlement in each context. As far as differences are concerned, they have sprung up from those commonalities which draw together migrants' experiences in the two national contexts and globally (see Parreñas, 2001; A. Datta et al. 2007; Willis et al. 2010) in a configuration of socio-economic inequalities produced throughout the migratory process (Knowles and Harper, 2009).

By looking at the transnational experiences of Romanian migrants in their two contexts of migration, it can be said that migration laws, reception policies, work permit systems, as well as economic strategies of employers, can be effective in keeping migrants in a condition of instability and disadvantage; they can be main instruments of control and definition (Liégeois 1980; Foucault 1998; Sigona, 2003). The "national" therefore still matters as it creates the all-important regular and "irregular" categories, and this was very well captured within the particular time-frame of this research. The

transition in fact of Romanian citizens to the EU citizenship, yet their inability to enjoy at national level their right to work established at supranational level, is a clear example of this.

Furthermore, respondents' experiences of irregular work as well as of discrimination and stereotyping in recruitment involved a complex process in which issues of immigration status, nationality, and gender, but also of perceived cultural and identity features all come together and interrelate in a process which directs specific migrants to (and entraps them within) specific labour sectors which have become typical immigrant labour niches within the wider process of labour market restructuration. They appear to feel their position as migrant workers in those specific sectors as forced upon them and inescapable. In the Italian case, for instance, the stigma attached to their nationality and which equates Romanian women with domestic workers prevents them from (even thinking about) looking for work in a different field.

Dynamics of socio-economic exclusion and discomfort are also pursued within the very same national networks, socio-cultural norms, and transnational family relations in which those migrant workers are embedded. Forms of transnational brokerage illustrated in Chapter Four, embodied representations of employment position and therefore class (Chapter Seven), or of transnational gendered socio-cultural paradigms impacting migrants' daily lives through family relations (Chapter Six), can lead to questioning of the migratory project and eventually to "a sense of social exclusion and isolation" (A. Datta et al. 2007: 422). This also shows how "gender and class matter in these life productions" (Knowles and Harper, 2009: 232) in migration and how transnational migrants still remain embedded in relationships, "cultural norms, and personal or family life projects" (Yeoh, 2005: 410).

This process of definition and configuration of inequalities, therefore, is not uni-directional; it is instead configured through two "key macrocircumstances" which entangle "social conditions in migrants' countries of origin or citizenship" and "entry conditions [legislations] in receiving countries" (Knowles and Harper, 2009: 228–229). Developing further the emerging discourse in relation to migrants' socio-economic limitations and barriers encountered in the two contexts, the comparative framework adopted in this study also made clear the selective feature of national programmes and legislations (Morris 2004; Anthias et al. 2006) or of supranational ones which are implemented nationally. What cases presented in this study pointed to is that those

policies are discriminatory, they do not affect everyone in the same way, and that immigration policy is not "gender-neutral" (Kofman et al. 2005).

The case of the specific immigration quotas in Italy which since 2002 (and in 2009 in particular) have been targeted specifically at the group of domestic and care workers clearly emphasises that that control is not just about numbers but also about managing "the composition of populations" (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005: 517). The policy was clearly discriminating against male migrants for functional reasons, given the needs of the local population for alternative provisions of elderly care in particular, as well as for political reasons, given that the aforementioned campaign of criminalisation of Romanian citizens was directly targeting male migrants – a clear example of neo-liberal forms of governance and criminalisation of migration.

In the British case, the right of establishment which allows Romanian nationals to be self-employed under EU law, which has been widely used by EU2 migrant workers to legally enter an otherwise closed labour market, was instead clearly labelled as gender discriminatory by my female respondents. They were emphasising the long-term nature of domestic work, as opposed to the project-based jobs in construction, and therefore the difficulty in obtaining a self-employed visa which requires only short term transactions with different counterparts. The intersection here between the supranational and the specific national legislation concerning access to the labour market has gendered implications and outcomes which hinder the economic integration of a specific group of migrant workers, and which once again point towards the relevance of the national setting in the context of transnational migration (even in the presence of a supposedly regulatory supra-national framework).

Yet in the meantime, although within the parameters of the structural conditions of global and local labour markets and government policies, migrants appear strongly determined, by means of different strategies, to succeed. These very same regimes of power, therefore, not only control but also create spaces for resistance (Foucault, 1991; 1998). Migrants can challenge those national or supra-national structures of governance and impact upon and reshape economic and socio-cultural institutions in which migration processes are embedded.

Migrant workers interviewed for this research, for instance, have all experienced some kind of "irregular" status while working in construction or the domestic sector, and their experiences are emblematic of the barriers they face in their contexts of migration, be it a "Global City" or a city from the "Mediterranean region". But their

agency and capacity to adapt and react to the subaltern conditions into which Western societies and economies are forcing this much needed labour force, and also to challenge states' coercive power concerning inclusion and access to rights, is testified in their interconnected experiences of work, family and belonging.

It is by looking at those three institutions of migration or interrelated spheres of practice that migrants' experiences can be best understood with respect to different structural contexts in which their migration is embedded. My analysis, thus, is premised on a conception of (irregular) migrants as social actors negotiating and mediating space within and between the boundaries of complex social and economic categories and different employment and immigration statuses, as well as at the intersection of work–family–"community" (Levitt, 2001a; Datta et al., 2007).

Yet the analysis also recognised that migrants' acting is not always inherently subversive or counter-hegemonic. Respondents' accounts emphasise the way in which individual active agency, on the one hand, and just adaptation, or reaction to occurring situations, on the other hand, were woven and intertwined throughout the narratives of migration. Migrants may move in and out of official statuses by their own design as much as by default. As Guarnizo and Smith point out in their theorisation of "transnationalism from below", when looking at migrants' practices what needs to be avoided is "confusing intentionality with consequences, as when actors are designated 'resistant' or 'oppositional' because their practices produce some social change, even when it was not one they intended, fought for, or socially organised" (Guarnizo and Smith, 1998: 29). What respondents' experiences show is that these transnational trajectories are quotidian low profile strategies of resistance at a time when states, instead of offering protection, make migrants' lives even more difficult.

Precarious working lives

As Bridget Anderson has emphasised, "through the creation of categories of entrant, the imposition of employment relations and the construction of institutionalised uncertainty, immigration controls […] combine with less formalised migratory processes to help produce 'precarious workers' that cluster in particular jobs and segments of the labour market" (Anderson, 2010: 301). Certainly narratives of respondents' experiences of work in both London and Rome mirror this condition in which national regimes, but also supra-national policies and transnational (informal) recruitment networks, contribute to that condition of precariousness in which these new European citizens find themselves.

Yet, as highlighted above, employment decisions and discrimination and stereotyping in recruitment also involve a complex process in which issues of immigration status, ethnicity/nationality, gender and class intersect. Therefore, it can be said that "it is impossible to assess employment positions and decision making from the perspective of the labour market alone" (A. Datta et al. 2007: 416). In the case of women's employment in the domestic sector, as Chapter Five illustrated, different welfare states in the two contexts, as well as a particular socio-cultural understanding of the role of the family in the Italian context, also accounted for the different tasks migrant women perform within this specific niche. In addition, perceived cultural and identity features also need to be accounted for, and ethnic belonging and religion in particular have played a central role, although with different nuances in the two contexts and at different stages. The fact of belonging to Europe was welcomed in earlier stages of Romanian migration and perceived cultural commonalities have accounted for a particular "warmth of welcome" of Eastern European builders in more general terms, while a shared religious belief, combined with an ease in learning the language, made Romanian domestic workers become the favourite for the Italian families.

Those factors interrelated with another significant factor: the existence of transnational migrant networks. Migrants' social networks, through the provision and distribution of job opportunities according to mostly family networks in the case of women and to a diversified system in the case of men, also impact the creation of gendered and national sub-niches within those sectors. Differences between the two countries here are to be found in the strategies of transnational "job sharing" in Rome versus a more localised version of the same strategy in the British context.

Looking in particular at the recruitment strategies in the two locations as far as men's work in construction is concerned, subcontracting is central to both Italian and British contexts and differentiates this sector from women's work in the domestic sector. Again, the transnational character of the brokerage system in Italy differentiates it from the British context and turns the light on the development in Rome of networks of Romanian migrants who have occupied, and almost monopolised, this niche of the secondary labour markets. Similarly self-employment, because of the already mentioned differences in the nature of jobs in the construction industry versus the domestic sector (i.e. project based vs. longer term/trust based nature), is also an element of differentiation between working strategies employed by men and women in those different sectors.

Based on observation facilitated by the methodology adopted for this research which located migrants' experiences of work at the intersection of labour markets, family and belonging, which triggers an "acknowledgment that interactions might be shaped by events and relationships in both home and destination countries" (A. Datta et al., 2007: 426), the study has also emphasised the challenges posed by the migration employment experience to gendered rules governing traditional relations within the family. Once again the condition of irregularity is central here as it differentiates the psychological struggle irregular migrant men have to face in a labour market where supply is greater than demand, and where their legal status limits their capacity of counteraction. On the other side, women in the irregular market of domestic work are very rarely faced with periods of unemployment and this strictly work-related precarious condition translates into frictions within the family sphere.

Precarious lives: a transnational personal space of belonging and practices

Bridget Anderson (2010: 303) also observes how "the notion of 'precarity' captures both atypical and insecure employment and has implications beyond employment pointing to an associated weakening of social relations". By forcing migrants into precarious lives, through immigration controls which "produce [irregular] status" (ibid.: 306), through the implementation of policies which hinder their labour-market and social integration, and through social processes of criminalisation and marginalisation promoted by the very same policies and by short-sighted populist politics, those nation states contribute to the development of a personal sphere of connections and practices. Those Romanians I met during my fieldwork feel a strong identification with their families, in the wider sense of the concept as I have explained in this thesis, but there is no identification with wider institutions such as institutionalised forms of community or the state. The "temporal aspect" (ibid.: 2010) of the precarious work which manifests in decision making concerning time spent outside work, also dictates relational practices and therefore time spent on "making community" as well as deciding on "who is community".

Yet, respondents' accounts in both locations also reveal strategies "engineered to make 'their' precarious life more sustainable" (Fantone, 2007: 5). While their connection to their homeland is important, links with family dispersed in other countries are of equal significance and in fact uncover a space of resistance and coping practice within the interstitial spaces of multilayered regimes of governmentality. What the multi-sited and longitudinal character of the fieldwork has captured, and which

contributes to the empirical advancement of literature on transnationalism, is that respondents' experiences of transnational personal communities based on interconnected cross-border ties are not limited to bilateral links to their country of origin, but encompass other significant locations and therefore relations within the Romanian migration. The migration of "family" members to multiple destinations within Europe, as well as the considerable number of Romanian secondary migrants, have contributed to those complex transnational morphologies of migration. Taking advantage of the opportunity structure within the European transnational space, those links, often created or strengthened through migration, are for instance used to understand where better chances are located. Migrants were therefore able to experience and compare more than one location for their migration, and change plans as opportunities presented themselves. These limited but strong family relations which helped Romanians to migrate and then settle, were therefore also contributing to their sense of "home" by bridging two or more realities where family was located.

Exploring migratory processes within a transnational framework has offered the possibility to reconfigure "the way we think about key concepts underpinning contemporary social life" (Yeoh, et al. 2003: 208) such as "community" and family. Performing a routine synchronised with family back home, even performing parenting from a distance, is a central part of those "reconstituted versions of family in migration" (Knowles and Harper, 2009: 172) yet they are certainly not free of emotional costs (Chapter Six). What the use of a transnational comparative framework has also particularly brought out through the longitudinal multi-sited observation, and therefore through a reconfiguration of the notion of space and togetherness, is the situational and temporal shifting of family narratives of inclusion/exclusion in different locations and times of migration (i.e. the cases of Liliana, Cristina and Maria). Analysing migratory lives within a transnational framework therefore reveals the evolving pattern of the migration process, of both practices and relations involved. And it does so by remaining anchored to the contexts – personal, local, national, and supra-national – within which the process unfolds.

The two groups compared in this research have shown different patterns of transnational (im)mobility and therefore practices related to work and family, yet the present analysis does not wish to fall into a celebratory discourse of "hyper-transnationalism". The high level of mobility among Romanian respondents in Rome was facilitated not only by the geographical position of the countries of immigration and

origin but also by the mobility rights granted to Romanian citizens vis-à-vis countries of the Schengen area from 2002, and therefore by the immigration regimes implemented at national level in Italy. In contrast to the UK, this allowed for the development of different working strategies (Chapter Four) among women, the development of different brokerage networks in the realm of construction jobs, but also for the development of a route of secondary migration towards further destinations such as the UK. What however did not differ, despite those discrepancies in geographical and policy-related opportunities, and therefore despite the presence in Rome of a much larger collectivity, was the extent to which more institutional forms of "community" became part of migrants' routine. Once again, in fact, for Romanians in the two selected locations, intra-European migration transnationalism was revealed to be less about public articulations of identity and more about those that emerged in more private, intimate spheres, being encountered and indeed empirically detected at the family level.

The still young history of Romanian migration in the two contexts only allows for speculation regarding the reasons behind this process, which can relate to issues of trust (Chapter Seven) developed in relation to socio-economic conditions in the country of origin (Morawska, 1999) or to the fact that, despite the existence of a small and exclusive stratum of early Romanian migrants who mainly fled Romania during the Socialist regime, Romanian citizens in both contexts are in fact "new migrants" who did not join long-term ethnic networks or community organisations, as may be the case for other established ethnic communities, especially in London. What I have instead perceived as impacting most on respondents' tendency to avoid involvement in a more collective participation was the "social weight" of institutional discrimination that confines people to conditions of insecurity and "corrode[s] the quality of our social interactions" (Back et al. 2012: 151).

Furthermore, their *internal strategy of making "community"* on a more personal level appears to follow a *strategy of invisibility* which can be traced back to the early examples of "community" of the Romanian Cultural Centre or the Romanian Orthodox Church in London for instance, both located within the very centre of London (Piccadilly Circus and Fleet St.) yet invisible because housed by existing buildings without any visible "ethnic" connotation (see C. Knowles, 2012). In those times "invisibility" was functional to the practice of hiding from a cruel regime which was believed to be able to catch its "internal enemies" even far away from home. More recent forms of invisibility were instead functional to a strategy of invisibility within

"irregularity": "we have to be uncoloured", Ion once told me. Irregularity forced them into "invisibility" because of yet another dimension of their precarious condition: the "institutionalised uncertainty" which is "the more mundane reality for many of those working illegally" (Bridget Anderson, 2010: 312). And now, when change in status as EU citizens potentially would have allowed them to emerge from their invisible condition, the same strategy needs to be pursued again and this time with even more strength. Politicisation of the immigration discourse is making them, potentially the "perfect migrant" because economic migrants, because white, Christian, and Europeans and therefore close to "us", "visible", therefore "problematic". And by making them "visible" the state is making their lives precarious[156] because it is subjecting them to forms of scrutiny and of limitation of their rights (the right to regular employment and welfare) as well as to racist campaigns of denigration in the media which depict them as the "cause" of the (economic) "crisis", the cause of "insecurities such as job and resource shortages". Their condition, therefore, similarly to earlier Irish migrants in Britain or Albanians in Italy I may say, "further complicates the picture" of "racism's shifting modes" (Back et al. 2012: 142) as well as of visible vs. invisible, deserving vs. undeserving migrant (Yuval-Davis et al. 2005) ingrained within states' attitudes towards migration. Furthermore it highlights "precarity" as condition and instrument of control of mobile transnational citizens in a time of globalisation and neo-liberalism, and therefore calls for further theorisation of the notion of "precarious lives" in relation to current transnational intra-European mobilities for work .

Developing transnationalism further: a theoretical and empirical contribution

As mentioned at the very start of this dissertation, a body of empirically based comparative research which frames migrants' and their families' experiences across borders within states' policies, supra-national regulations as well as labour markets and employment dynamics without losing its focus on the migrant him/herself is still in its infancy. M.P. Smith's theorisation of "transnational urbanism" (2005) represented a first call for the need to emplace mobile subjects, in other words to look (comparatively) at the "dissimilar political and economic constraints and what migrants do with them" (2005: 243)[157]. In a similar vein, Schuster (2010: 336) has more recently highlighted the urgent need for comparative empirical data on the extent to which government policy and its implementation "shape and impact on the lives of migrants".

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[156] For a discussion of the notion of precarity which inspired the final considerations for this thesis see Butler (2009); Bridget Anderson (2010), Fantone (2007).

[157] See Parreñas (2001) for an example; Anghel (2010) for intra-European migration.

This study attends to those pleas and pushes the analysis further: the comparative framework I used in this study has allowed me to observe impacts of different national contexts as much as the ways in which migrants internalise knowledge of the economic, legal, and social systems into their everyday life practices in order to elaborate alternative practices of resistance or potential counter-reaction to embedded social inequalities. Respondents' experiences suggest "mobility" *and* "emplacement" (M. P. Smith, 2001). Narratives presented in this study are narratives of mobility yet strongly anchored to those localities where respondents' lived experiences are developing. As such my work aims to add to the existing studies on transnationalism by acknowledging the "emplaced corporalities" (ibid.) and by providing a comparative approach which combines an analysis of social and immigration policies and labour markets with the "everyday texture" of the globalised world inhabited by those migrants (Conradson and Latham, 2005a: 228).

From this point of view, in particular, the decision to choose institutions of migration as the principal locus for the analysis has been beneficial in two ways: firstly it contributed to advancing research on transnationalism, by answering recent calls within transnational migration studies for a shift from "transnational studies restricting themselves to migrant practices and migrant agency" towards a more complex analysis which asks how political, economic, and socio-cultural institutions are also challenged/transformed by migrants' transnational activities (Faist and Reisenauer, 2010: 9).

Secondly it provided a way out of the "methodological nationalism" and "cultural essentialism" which represent potential risks when focusing on the experience of a fixed territorial and social unit. A transnational perspective which starts with institutions such as the labour market, family, community, which are "cross-cutting and perforating nation states" (ibid.: 9), allows in fact for the interactions between local, national, and regional/EU levels to be analysed. Furthermore, it has also provided empirically grounded insights into the existence of variables such as nationality, gender, historical experiences and long term individual or collective/family goals, which, together with social and immigration policies, labour market demands, work permit systems, and new openings[158], are involved in and effectively influence migratory and settlement decisions and practices (Portes and Böröcz, 1989).

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[158] I.e. the evolving transnational space of the EU.

My specific focus on migration of a single national group to two different European destinations has allowed for a more nuanced examination of similarities and differences between migrants coming from similar backgrounds but which are not structured by singular, but rather, composite and intersecting identities which shape experiences of transnational migration. For instance, I sought to emphasise aspects of male identities which have often been left unexplored in research on labour migration, and therefore to highlight how migrant men also move through a variety of gendered positions which affect their experiences of migrant workers embedded within the complex relations of a family in migration. This was possible within a framework of analysis which brings together experiences of work and family and therefore shows vital intersections between two spheres of migrants' social lives which often are explored separately in the literature on migration.

Alternatively I could also observe how different subjectivities were called into play when they had to affirm their belonging to either a European ancestry or a Latin background in order to justify their right to mobility and labour market integration within two different contexts which equally discriminate against them and pursue a policy of differentiation.

Furthermore, given the intention in this study to stay close to the everyday lived experiences and interpretations of Romanian migrants and therefore to explore and understand them in the contest of transnational migration and settlement in the two cities, my analysis has required a certain degree of "mobility" on geographical, institutional, and temporal scales. I have therefore adopted a longitudinal perspective grounded in a research method which allowed me to preserve a long-term relationship with respondents, and provided for migratory trajectories, transnational practices, as well as changes in status and therefore subject formation to be documented empirically. This perspective contributes both to research on transnational migration and to the more classical comparative work on "models" of immigrant reception in the European context, by grasping and emphasising the dynamism and therefore evolution of both structures and migrant agency, as the next section will further illustrate.

To conclude, one last theoretical/political contribution and call for further research

This dissertation can add another theoretical but also political potential to research on transnational migration if analysed within the European context. As Pfaff Czarnecka remarks, "transnational studies have so far neglected the necessity to make a close examination of the ruptures, inequalities, power differentials and conflicts entailed in

transborder social relations" (2008: 315). By contrast, this aspect is of particular concern here, and the focus on Romanians' transnational experience can be very revealing of current dynamics of inequality and fractured citizenship ingrained within the evolving transnational space of the EU.

As I have emphasised in this study, what makes Romanians' experience different, and revealing of the current "societal shifts and changes", is their formal belonging to the same "privileged European club" as their countries of settlement. Despite their nominally advantaged status of citizens of the EU and their great expectations, many migrants coming from the new EU member-states have realised that nothing has changed once their country joined the EU: many of them continued to be employed irregularly, with no rights and benefits and below their qualifications – and this was the case, although to a different extent, in both Italy and Britain. Despite official discourses highlighting that EU states accord "post-national" membership to migrant workers through the provision of rights and protection grounded in the principles of the EU, the official restrictive policies, in the UK case, and the (openly) racist and discriminatory ones, in the case of Italy, have in actual fact denied full membership to these EU citizens.

Therefore the empirical observation of the geo-political changes in their space of mobility, which implied changes in their position as irregular/regular migrants/EU citizens, has allowed for further analysis of the situational nature of the migrant condition as well as for the differential access to forms of negotiation of their location within power structures of the transnational migratory space. The timing of this research, for which fieldwork was conducted before and after the last EU enlargement, has been in this respect particularly relevant as it gave the possibility to look at the impact on migrants' decisions and reactions in different European contexts with regard to the above mentioned geo-political transformations.

The intra-European transnational migratory pattern appears therefore distinctive in its own way, and certainly different in comparison to its North-American counterpart, especially due to the presence of a supra-national institution such as the EU (Rogers, 2003). The EU in fact pursues the creation of a sustaining governance of boundaries, circulation, migration, traffic, irregularity, welfare and bilateral cooperation. It aims to be the architect, together with member states, of what could be labelled *the spatial order of a European social order*. Yet this remarkably institutionalised social phenomenon allows space for individual agency, a space that is often created at the

intersection/friction between national and supranational governmentalities, as Romanians' condition of shifting legal status has shown. Such status changes are quite exceptional today and call for further comparative discussions, which may challenge traditional notions and definitions of migrants' legal (and related social) statuses and their developments and impacts on migrant workers' experiences in a transnational social space.

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Appendix 1: Romanian organisations

London Resources Ltd (Romanian Community Business Growth Link)
185 Grange Road
London
E13 0HA
Email: s@londonresources.co.uk
http://aizaz123.wix.com/test

Romanian Cultural Centre
54-62 Regent Street
London W1B 5RE
Email: mail@romanianculturalcentre.org.uk
Web: www.romanianculturalcentre.org.uk
www.ratiufamilyfoundation.com/RCC/index.html

Romanian Cultural Institute
1 Belgrave Square
London SW1X8PH
Web: www.icr-london.co.uk

Pro Patrimonio
PO Box 2297
London W1A 5GG
Email: mail@propatrimonio.com
Web: www.propatrimonio.org

Romanians in the Third Millennium
Email: r3m@romania3millennium.org.uk
Web: www.romania3millennium.org.uk

Romanian Association: "Românca"
1 Marshall House
2 Dorncliffe Road
London SW6 5 LF
Email: ionela@talktalk.net

Români Online Ltd
Email: admin@romani-online.co.uk
Web: www.Romani-Online.co.uk

Romanian LSE SU Society
Email: Su.Soc.Romanian@lse.ac.uk

Români in UK
110 Britannia House
11 Glenthorne Road
London W6 0LH
Email:ziar@romani.co.uk
Web: www.romani.co.uk

Ziarul Românesc Weekly
www.ziarulromanesc.net
Email: ziarul@myownmedia.co.uk
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF:
Sorin Cehan

Actualitatea Romaneasca
http://www.actualitatea-romaneasca.ro

Accademia di Romania a Roma
http://www.accadromania.it

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Via B.Cairoli10,
04100 Latina (LT)
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Partidul Identitatea Româneasca (Giancarlo Germani),
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giancarlo.gemani@identitatearomaneasca.it

Asociatia românilor în Italia (Eugen TERTELEAC),
Via del Fringuello, 50A – 00169,
http://www.associazionedeiromeni.it,
info@associazionedeiromeni.it

Spirit Românesc (Dana Ioana MIHALACHE),
Via T.B. Valvassura, 90, 00139,
dana.mihalache@spirit-romanesc.net,
www.spirit-romanesc.net

Italia-Romania per l'integrazione e lo Sviluppo (Mihaela GIURGEA GERMANI),
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Tel: 06.715446412

Diaspora Româna în Italia, (Constantin CILTEA),
Tel/Fax.: 0773.690.893
diasporaromena@yahoo.it

Forum degli Intelletuali Romeni d'Italia- FIRI, (Horia Corneliu CICORTAS),
Piazza Campitelli 9, 00186,
info.firi@yahoo.it , http://firiweb.wordpress.com

Vocea Românilor (Iulian MANTA: union construction workers),
www.vocearomanilor.it

Daco-romana, (Paulina MURGULET),
Via Cavour, 108, Roma,
paulinamurgulet@yahoo.com

Asociatia Socio Culturala Banat (Geta BREHUI),
Via Piemonte 12,
Fonte Nuova,
bregeta@virgiliu.it

Dacia Felix (Laura VASII),
Via Giorgio Scalia 22, 00136,
lauracuciroma@alice.it
Immigrati Romeni in Italia (Elena STUPARU)
elenastuparu@yahoo.com

Europea Italia-Romania Universo 2000, (Cornel OLTEI),
Via Cecilia Metella, 3,
00010- Guidonia,
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Gruppo Associativo Lavoratori G.A.L. (Iosif Ovidiu GAL)
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Italia-Romania viitorul împreuna (IRFI) (Simona FARCAS),
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Mereu Împreuna (Cristina PAVIA),
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Noi Suntem Români (Silviu CIUBOTARU),
Viale Spartaco, 54, 00100,
noisuntemromani@gmail.com,
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Romania Special Termini (Simona Cristina FODOR),
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