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Italian-Bangladeshi in London. A community within a community?

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Abstract

Based on a multi-sited ethnography in Italy and the United Kingdom, this contribution focuses on the onward migration of Italian-Bangladeshis to London, that is, Bangladeshi migrants who acquired EU citizenship in Italy and then moved to the British Capital. After the presentation of the reasons for this onward migration, the article will analyse the representation, constructed by the Italian-Bangladeshis interviewed in London, of the relationships between them (coming from different districts of Bangladesh) and the members of the "historical" British Bangladeshi community, in London since generations (originating primarily from the Bangladeshi district of Sylhet). Specifically, it will focus on the on mistrust – sometimes a fully-fledged hostility – between the two communities as it was narrated by the Italian-Bangladeshi respondents, framing it as a dichotomy between British citizens and (Southern) European citizens; as a wider dichotomy between residents of Bangladeshi origin in London, but originating from different regional contexts in Bangladesh; as an effect of the social stratification of the "Bangladeshi Diaspora" in the world.

Keywords: Onward Migration; Italian-Bangladeshis; British-Sylhetis; Bangladeshi Diaspora; London

Introduction

Since before its birth as a unitary nation, Italy has been a country of emigrants, but since the mid-1970s it has become a country of strong immigration. The economic crisis, conventionally traced back to 2008, which, in Europe, hit the countries of the Mediterranean area with particular virulence – and, therefore, also Italy – however, changed the migratory structures of the country: immigration flows have declined, the amount of remittances has fallen and the departures from Italy, both of "native Italians" (Gjergji, 2015; Pugliese, 2018) as well as foreign migrants (Della Puppa, 2018a) and "naturalised Italians" (Della Puppa and King, 2018) have increased.[2]

However, on a closer inspection, these aspects are not new in the country's migration scenario. In fact, from the point of view of international migration, Italy has always represented a peculiar and particularly interesting case: at the same time, there have always been incoming and outgoing migration and the country has always been crossed by internal migration with the main South-North axis – but also with movements of reverse and different direction

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[2] Here, of course, I do not want to reify and naturalize the distinction between "naturalized Italians" and "native Italians", rather underline their different social position, especially in terms of social class and housing condition, as well as family, biographical and migration background, which differentiates these types of subjects. "Naturalised Italians" with a Tcn (Third Country National), often belonged to the educated middle or middle-high classes of their country of origin, but are part of the working class in Italy, have already experienced an intercontinental migration and often suffer discrimination in the Italian society, especially in the labor market. on the other hand, "Native Italians" (who leave Italy) share a more heterogeneous educational and class background, have rarely experienced international migration (often towards Europe) and, unlike their "naturalized" fellow-countrymen, they can often rely on the support of their family of origin. Therefore, it is a matter of socio-material conditions that differently shape their life choices and migration trajectories.

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within the individual regions – and also foreign migrants participate in these mobilities. Therefore, according to some authors (Pugliese, 2002; 2012; 2015; 2018), it is possible to speak of Italy as a migratory crossroads. Alongside other aspects that characterize the migration panorama of the country[3], this confirms Italy's place within the "Mediterranean model *of* migration" (Ambrosini 2018; King 1993; King and Black 1997; King and De Bono 2013; King et al., 1999; Pugliese 2002; 2011), although, in the last decades, the profiles of the persons involved in these kinds of mobilities have little by little been changed (Della Puppa, 2018a).

Departures from the country, including those of foreign immigrants who, over the years, have acquired Italian citizenship, therefore express Italy's vocation (never completely abandoned) as a "transit" country and "migratory crossroads". These departures include, massively, also many Bangladeshis who, once in possession of the Italian passport, turned to other – often considered more prestigious – contexts of the so-called "Bengal Diaspora" (Alexander *et al.*, 2015), primarily the United Kingdom (Della Puppa and King, 2018).

As we will see below, this new migration, defined in terms of "onward migration" (Ahrens *et al.*, 2016; Danaj and Çaro 2016; Della Puppa and King 2018; Giralt-Mas 2016; King and Karamoschou, 2019; Pugliese, 2018; Rezaei and Goli 2011; Ramos 2017; Toma and Castagnone 2015; van Liempt 2011), is fuelled by several factors (Della Puppa and King, 2018), including the aspiration to reach the oldest, largest, most consolidated Bangladeshi community in Europe. However, these expectations – which allow a glimpse on the plot of post-colonial ties and which are nourished by idealized narratives reproduced within the "Bangladeshi Diaspora" – are often unfulfilled and relations with members of the largest Bangladeshi community[4] in Europe imply a certain amount of disillusionment.

Therefore, the present article will focus on these disillusions and, specifically, will try to analyse and thematize the narratives and representations that the Italian-Bangladeshis relocated in London construct, reproduce and propose in relation to their relationships with what they perceive as the "British Bangladeshi community" (Kibria, 2011).[5]

[3] Progressive globalization of origins of migrants; absence of specific migration governance policies and legislations; frequent use of amnesties to regularize the position of those who are already on the national territory in conditions of administrative irregularity; social marginality of migrants and large presence of "irregular" migrants; strong presence of migrants in seasonal agricultural work; concentration of the migrant workforce in heavy, demeaning, precarious, low-paid, socially penalizing, dirty and dangerous professions and, often, insertion in a hypertrophic informal job market; marked gender asymmetries within the different nationalities of migrants; employment of female migrant workforce in care services for individuals and families; co-presence of native unemployment and presence of migrant workers employed in disadvantaged areas of the country (Ambrosini, 2018; King, 1993; King and Black, 1997; King and De Bono, 2013; King et al., 1999; Pugliese, 2002; 2011)

[4] I am aware of the incomplete correctness of this expression – often referred to an imagined entity – by virtue of the social stratifications, political divisions, cultural gaps as well as different self-attributed identities running through what we have called the "Bangladeshi community" both in Europe, Italy or elsewhere and I do not want to propose a homogeneous, compact and uniform representation (see also Priori, 2012).

[5] Empirical data for this article derive from 30 in-depth interviews with Italian-Bangladeshi relocated to London, following a period of stay in Italy which varied between 15 and 25 years. The interviews were conducted in London in 2015-16.

All interviewees were men engaged in paid employment and aged in their 30s, 40s, or 50s, they were accessed via a variety of initial approaches – through key-informant representatives of ethnic associations, friendship networks, and more casual contacts – and then supplemented by snowballing.

Interviews were conducted in Italian or English, according to the interviewee's preferences, as all participants were fluent in one or both of these languages. Interviews were recorded, subject to the participants' consent, and fully transcribed; those in Italian were translated into English.

The analysis of the relations between "Italian-Bangladeshi" and "British-Bangladeshis" in London, which will be further explored below, recalls, on the one hand, the sociological debate on otherness, the figure of the foreigner and the notion of community.

Simmel (1908), with his "excursus on the foreigner", started a fundamental reflection on cultural diversity – even though, already in Tönnies (1887), the foreigner, as a merchant/entrepreneur and his relationship with the society and the community of arrival were at the centre of sociological reflections. Thus, the foreigner would have contributed to the development of modern capitalism (Sombart, 1916).

According to Simmel, relations between the foreigner and society are characterized primarily by ambivalence: the foreigner is, at the same time, close and far, excluded and included within the society to which he belongs. Similarly, for Schütz (1944), the foreigner who enters into the new group can, at best, be willing to share their present and future, but remains excluded from the past. From the perspective of the group they joined, they are a "storyless" subject. Thus, forgetting that every foreigner-immigrant is and has been a native-emigrant, the immigrant is socially constructed only in the light of the removal of their being (also) emigrated (Sayad, 1999).

The metropolis is the privileged place for international migration; this is also true in this case study. Therefore, the condition of foreigner becomes the metaphor of the postmodern subject, protagonist of a social life characterized by multiple, instrumental and transitory, relationships. This fragmentation of identities tends to blur the border between *in-group* and *out-group*. At the same time, the dichotomy between "outsiders and insiders" emphasizes the objectivity of the foreigner, useful for social understanding (Schütz, 1944; Simmel, 1908), a complementary and non-alternative role, as Merton points out (1972).

The theme of the foreigner and relations with the new community has been extensively investigated within the Sociology of Chicago, through theoretical systematization (Park and Burgess, 1921) and relevant empirical research experiences (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Thomas *et al*., 1921; Elias and Scotson, 1965). For the sake of brevity, here I will recall the dialectic between *Established* and *Outsiders*, empirically observed by Elias and Scotson (1965), which, according to the authors, would be the real cause of the discriminating prejudice, to which it is not difficult to find racial, ethnic, religious, economic or cultural support whenever the power relations between different groups are involved within a single complex system. This perspective could be useful for observing the representations of the dynamics in London, the main destination of the Italian-Bangladeshis' onward migration.

Bangladeshis in Italy and onward. A community on the move

Bangladeshi migration to Italy is relatively recent. The first migrants arrived in the 1980s, due to the closure of the borders of other European countries (Della Puppa, 2014; Priori, 2012); Italy's frontiers were more porous, so this was an "opportunistic" migration (King and Knights, 1994). Hence the "nomadic" nature of Bangladesh migration is confirmed since not only did "new" migrants arrive from Bangladesh, but also Bangladeshis already living in other European countries, notably France and Germany, hot-footed to Italy, pulled by the attraction of the periodic amnesties for irregular migrants to legalize their status.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Bangladeshi migrants to Italy were heavily concentrated in Rome, where they found working opportunities within the city's extensive informal economy

– as street-hawkers, or in catering and other tourism-related services (King and Knights, 1994; Knights, 1996).

The first generation of Bangladeshis in Italy was composed almost entirely of men: young bachelors from the urban middle class or from well-off rural families. Subsequently, having obtained legal residence through one of the amnesties (Della Puppa 2014), many migrants dispersed to other parts of Italy, especially the prosperous North-East, where they readily found factory work and affordable housing, creating their own "Bangla-towns" (Della Puppa and Gelati, 2015). By 2016, the community had grown to 122,400 (Centro Studi e Ricerche IDOS, 2017).

Thanks to their employment as factory workers in the then-thriving industrial districts of North-Eastern Italy, combined with relatively spacious housing available for rent or mortgage (granted by banks on the basis of stable employment), Bangladeshi men met the criteria for family reunification or marriage migration.

Given the male-led nature of Bangladeshi migration to Italy, family reunifications in the first phase of the Bangladeshi Diaspora in Italy are configured exclusively as "male" reunifications. Usually, the first migrant, after setting up the necessary conditions, returned to their country of origin to marry – usually via an arranged marriage – a woman who, soon after the wedding, was reunited with her husband in Italy (Della Puppa, 2018b).

Again, due to the already described socio-cultural constructions relating to gender that characterize this phase of migration from Bangladesh to Italy, men were the first to become eligible, after ten years of continuous residence, for Italian citizenship which could then also be claimed by their wives and children (Della Puppa and Sredanovic 2017). For some Bangladeshis, possession of the Italian passport represents the last stage in their attempt to stabilize themselves in Italy. For others, it was a strategic step to further mobility since, as European citizens, they could relocate anywhere within the European Union.[6] The vast majority onward-migrated to the UK and London (Della Puppa and King, 2018).[7]

[6] It should be also underlined that, for these *probashi*, the access to citizenship was a means to reach an end and not the end in itself. In fact, after huge investments in migration, being sent back to the *Desh* through deportation would imply, in many cases, family economic ruin and disgrace (Mapril, 2011). Highlighting this, I want to avoid the reification of some political imaginaries to which an excessive emphasis on instrumental access to documents and citizenship could lead.

[7] According to estimates of the Bangladeshi Embassy in Italy, about 6000 Italian-Bangladeshi families have moved to London (Della Puppa and King 2018). Counting each family as four members, this number (24,000) represents a significant share of all Bangladeshis enumerated in Italy. Similarly, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat, 2017) reports that, just in 2016, out of the 29,000 Italians of non-European origin who left Italy (an increase by 19% compared to the previous year) over 2,500 were of Bangladeshi origin. The destination of this new migration can be deduced from the data indicating that 92% of Italians of Asian origin emigrate to the United Kingdom.

Onward migration to London started at the end of the 2000s due to a dense interweaving of different motives for the onward migration: a set of mutually reinforcing economic and cultural thrusts. This interweaving is the product of a combination of individual factors, collective histories and more or less idealized representations of the British context, produced and reproduced within the Bangladeshi communities in Italy and the Italian-Bangladeshi community in London. For a deeper analysis of these factors see Della Puppa and King 2018; Della Puppa, 2018b. Here, I underline just ha an important element that contributes to the new migration was the desire to reach and belong to the largest community of country fellowmen in Europe, historically created by the British colonial past.

A community within a community?

The long migratory tradition that has linked the Indian subcontinent to the colonial homeland since the 17th century and which allowed for the creation of the oldest and largest Bangladeshi community outside of Bangladesh (Adams, 1987). It means that London, in the words of the respondents, is perceived as "a small Bangladesh" in Europe. That is, London is seen as a context in which it is possible to "feel at home" and to live in accordance with what the respondents define as "the Bengali culture and lifestyle". In the two interview extracts below, London – and especially the East part of the City – is seen as "almost Bangladesh" and "like Bangladesh" but "better than Bangladesh":

> There is no difference from Bangladesh... If you go to Whitechapel, you find everything. If you don't want to speak in English, it doesn't matter – 99% talks Bangla. Here there are music, arts programmes, so many things... Every week you get some minister, artist, politician or great man from Bangladesh. They come here. Here is almost Bangladesh. I feel at home, here you find everything. (Rashid)[8]

> There you can find... the best foods from Bangladesh, fruit, fish ... the best of everything... In East London there's our community everywhere. But here it's better than Bangladesh. In my country, for example, there is a lot of corruption, there is much more mess. Here, people respect the rules and you can walk down the street without anyone who "breaks your balls"; it is clean, there is no chaotic traffic like in Bangladesh, houses are better. (Rintu)

Thus, joining the largest "diasporic community" of fellow-countrymen constitutes a push to the onward migration from Italy to London. However, these expectations about the "historical" British-Bengali community will often be disregarded and this reason, that has partly justified the relocation to London of Italian-Bangladeshis, will show its "dark sides" (Della Puppa and King, 2018). Among these, the mistrust – sometimes a fully-fledged hostility – between the "newcomers" from Italy and the Bengali community established in London since generations as told by the respondents:

> Here, 92% of our countrymen is from Sylhet. They don't welcome us, they don't want people from outside the Sylhet, they don't like us, they ask you... they asked me: "Why did you come here? You are Italian, well, good ... why did you come here? Go back to Italy "Their mentality is like this. (Bitu)

> This is a problem, because they, Sylheti people, think only for their own interests. But we, who arrived from Italy, but also from Spain, from Portugal – because everyone comes to England – [they] look at us badly, they don't like us. [...] The Sylheti who have been here for many years and generations are closed to us. (Rahaman)

Before putting forward some interpretations on the dynamics that underlie and characterize this fracture, it is necessary, here, to premise a brief reconstruction of the historical and social genesis of the Bengali community in London.

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[8] The names of the interviewees are fictitious.

The Bangladeshi community in London is of long-standing as indicated by Caroline Adams (1987) and Katy Gardner (2002). It expanded rapidly in the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Bengali seamen recruited by the East India Company, especially from the region of Sylhet, then in British India, began settling in the dockyard areas of East London. A second phase of expansion occurred in the early post-war decades, stimulated by the 1948 Nationality Act, which permitted free entry to the UK for citizens of the (former) colonies. At this stage, most migrants were single men. A new phase started in the 1960s when laws were passed to control new immigration – notably the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 and the Immigration Act of 1971. As a result of this legislative shift, most Bangladeshis in the UK opted to stay and, as British citizens, pursued a strategy of marriage migration or, if already married, of family reunification migration (Priori, 2012). By the 2011 British census, the Bangladeshi-origin community numbered 447,200, with half of this number resident in London (Zeitlyn 2016).

As mentioned above, since the 17th century, due to the recruitment on British ships for the experience of sailors in the large rivers of eastern India accumulated by its inhabitants and for issues related to the colonial administrative division of the subcontinent (Gardner, 1995; 2010; Kibria, 2011; Van Schendel, 2009), the UK created and consolidated a social, economic and migration link with the current district of Sylhet (Gardner, 1993; 1995; 2010). Thus, if the Italian "newcomers" come from different Bangladesh districts – mainly in the central part of the country – historically characterized by an intense transnational bond with Italy, such as Shariatpur, Dhaka, Comilla, Madaripur, Chandpur, Faridpur and Noakhali (Della Puppa, 2014; Knights and King, 1998; Priori, 2012), over 90 percent of British-Bangladeshis trace their origins to the Sylhet district of North-Eastern Bangladesh (Zeitlyn 2016).

"I come from Europe" *vs* "I come from the United Kingdom"

The already mentioned feelings of mistrust and hostility could be interpreted as the partial result of the persistent anti-migrant media campaign that, at the dawn of Brexit, characterizes the public debate and the British political arena and which represents the new arrivals as parasites on the British welfare. Indeed, one of the issues supported by the Leave campaign was exactly the use of benefits by EU migrants and the so-called "welfare shopping" phenomena. Cameron himself, for example, had tried to enter into an agreement – later skipped – with the EU which sanctioned, in the event of the victory of the "Remain", the possibility of excluding European citizens from access to welfare resources for first four years of residence in the UK. In the words of the interviewees:

> The generations that have been here since many years think that, as the families who arrived today from Italy, with 3 or 4 children, take the benefits from the council – for example, I pay 1,100 pounds of rent, but I take 500 or 600 pounds of benefits per month... They don't like this. They always tell us: "Go back to Italy!" or "Go back to Spain..." [...] The council pays you half rent, gives you money for the children, give you money if you don't have a job and they, who are British, besides Sylheti... they are jealous if the Europeans arrive and ask for the benefits. But they take them too! (Ziaur)

> They are not happy that the Italian people are coming, they are jealous of the Italians. Yes, of the Italians… Sylhetis are jealous… They say and think: "Why they are

> coming and taking our benefits?". We don't have good relationship with them, they don't like us for these reasons… (Ramon)

Therefore, this rhetoric would have also conquered British citizens belonging to the so-called "ethnic minorities". Thus, from this perspective, the gap between the Bangladesh components of the population of London can be read as a dichotomy between citizens from southern Europe – or from a European Union member state – and British citizens who, according to the representations of the respondents, would support the hypothesis of Brexit:

> In their opinion we are foreigners... Because they are British and we disturb them, they are a bit racist against us [...] Many Sylhetis are in favour of Brexit, because our arrivals annoy them (Zaeed)

> Their attitudes are very negative. They recognized us as migrant or refugees. The attitude is as if we create a lot of trouble for them. I think they are jealous. They don't like that we are coming here. That's the reason why they are supporter of Brexit. They think this is their country, they are British, and we are strangers. (Romesh)

In the words of Zaeed and Romesh, we may see the fear of a possible retreat, in the eyes of many British-Sylheti and because of the threat of the Brexit, to the "civic subaltern" condition (Lockwood, 1996) of "foreigners" and "migrants", from which the respondents thought they would be emancipated through the acquisition of the Italian citizenship, the European passport and the subsequent onward migration into "multicultural London":

> They arrived here when there were still the British colonists [in Bengal]. They say they all come here from Italy because there is the crisis in Italy. And they are not happy. Oh well... not everyone is like that, however, in general, they consider us "migrants", you understand? (Ashek)

> Here, Bangladeshis are all from the same area: Sylhet. They don't like us and don't have good relationships with us; maybe because I'm from Dhaka and because I'm European. For both: because I'm from Dhaka and because I'm European. (Munir)

The interviews also bring out practices, trajectories, plans and expectations that outline a factually European concept of citizenship. At the same time, Munir's words broaden the reasons for the relational distance between British-Sylheti and Italian-Bangladeshi, tracing them back to dynamics that have their roots in the country of origin, as will be shown below.

"I come from Bangladesh" vs "I come from Sylhet"

The segmentation of the Bangladeshi communities in London, as narrated by the interviewees, can highlight (the perception of) the potential chauvinistic disposition of the Sylheti components. By virtue of a different political and fiscal regime that the British colonial administration has granted to the historic Sylhet region and the privileged ties which have, thus, been established between the colonial motherland and the district and which have fuelled emigration and oriented the sending remittances, in fact, this area of the country has enjoyed accelerated development compared to other districts of Bangladesh (Gardner, 1995; 2010; Kibria, 2011; Van Schendel, 2009). This has fuelled independentist and secessionist pressures between the Sylheti in the homeland and the "Diaspora" or, in any case, a supposed political-

cultural distance from the Bangladeshi from other districts, as in the representations of some interviewees:

> Often, those who come from Italy are not from Sylhet. Me and a person from Sylhet are both Bangladeshis, but they don't say: "I come from Bangladesh" rather than "I come from Sylhet". Do you understand the difference in the way they speak and think? I mean, they feel they are from Bangladesh, but first they feel they are from Sylhet and just after this, perhaps, Bangladeshis. While those like me, who come from other districts, say: "First of all we are Bangladeshis". This creates distance... (Shafiur)

> To be frank and free we don't have good relationships with Sylheti because they think they are different, there are less relationships with them, because they are Sylheti not because they are British… (Amin)

> Those who have lived here for years come from a city called Sylhet. They claim here that Sylhet is a country, not Bangladesh, but Sylhet. Sure, they have a Bangladeshi passport, but if you ask them: "Where are you from?" They say: "I'm from Sylhet". Sometimes I joke: "What is Sylhet?" "It's a country" they say. "No, Bangladesh is a country, Sylhet is a city or a district!" I joke, but then we seriously have a row. (Shumon)

To these aspects, other cultural ones would be added, such as the diffusion and, according to the interviewees, the ostentation of a specific dialect, the Sylheti one, widely spoken in London and different from the Bangla language. Obviously, for the citizens and descendants of a country whose birth as an independent nation is also closely linked to linguistic autonomy, which thus constitutes a founding element of national identity – to the point of incorporating in the name a close connection to the official language of the state –, the question of language is a fundamental element for the individual and collective definition of self. In the words of the respondents:

> Sylheti people here cannot speak Bangla properly, because they have always spoken Sylheti and English. The new generations have never had to learn Bangla and previous generations never taught them Bangla. Language is important. (Manif)

> They think and say that their language is Sylheti, but Bangla is the language, Sylheti is a dialect... they think that is their language. (Razzak)

Therefore, taking into consideration this political and cultural framework, the "community segmentation" presented above can be read as a broader dichotomy between Sylhetis, whose migration has historically been oriented towards the UK, and Bangladeshis, whose migration was rather directed towards Southern European countries (Mapril, 2012; Zeitlyn, 2006).

Middle-class well-educated risk takers *vs* privileged descendants of rural areas?

The stiffening between these segments of the community can be read as an effect of the social stratification of the diaspora. In fact, as described at the beginning, the first generation of *probashi* in Italy – to which belong those who, twenty years later, moved to London using the acquired citizenship – was made up of young people belonging to the middle and middle-

upper class of Bangladeshi society, with a high level of education and a good knowledge of both Bangla and English.

According to the interviewees, these characteristics would mark a deep furrow between them and the descendants of Sylheti origin in London, who would have a relatively low cultural capital and a poor knowledge of Bangla:

> Sylheti have been in London for hundreds of years. But they have a different mentality from ours because they don't come from educated families, while Bangladeshi from Italy are educated and middle class. And they feel this gap. (Sherif)

> Bengalis who are here and come from Italy have attended university, have had many experiences in Italy and Europe, have studied, our fathers worked as officers, in the Ministries, middle class... in short, good jobs. Many Sylhetis have not studied or come from a lower class and therefore are a little more… (Azad)

In fact, according to the representations of the interviewees, many Sylheti "newcomers", would have managed to make entry directly to the UK by taking advantage of the role of sponsor covered by a relative of the extended family circle already present or through family reunification. That is, the migration of a sizeable component of the Sylheti community to the UK would not have been a socially selective process – or would have been only partially so – due to the privileged channel between London and the district, historically created because of the colonial administrative choices and reinforced thanks to the migration networks between the pioneers and the subsequent *probashi*, which would have made possible the arrival overseas of subjects with low cultural capitals and social position.

Otherwise, the interviewees continue, the Bangladeshis who arrived in Italy in the 90s and 2000s belonged to educated middle classes and, among these, those who arrived in the UK are those who had the greatest personal, symbolic and social resources, having gone through a "double social selection" connected to a "double migration". Therefore, in London the gap between the two components would clearly emerge:

> Sylheti came here, they brought their relatives... both those who had studied and those who hadn't. That's how their family members came. Instead other districts, well educated people could not come here directly. And for this, in my opinion, today, people from other districts are more educated than Sylheti. Why did I come to Italy? Because if I had someone in the UK, a relative, I would also come directly here. So, I or other Italians, we have high educational qualifications and, moreover, we have had many experiences in Italy, in Europe. When we chat with them, this difference can be seen immediately, and it annoys them. (Tahim)

Finally, the respondents describe themselves as exponents of the urban population, more progressive and secularized than the British-Sylheti, who would come from rural areas of a tendentially conservative district. The interviews would re-propose the dichotomy between the country's political Capital and an economically developed district that tends to be centrifugal as well as that between city and countryside:

> They come from the rural part of the country. While many of us come from the city, many have also lived in the Capital. They come from small villages and they don't like people from Dhaka… (Apon)

> Dhaka is a little bit more advanced from other areas. In Dhaka usually go and live those who studied, while the mentality of the people in Sylhet is still a bit old. They perceive us that came here from Europe in a bad manner because our way of speaking, walking, wearing and many other things are different... (Shantu)

Obviously, these representations risk to propose stereotypes that do not take into account the generational succession as well as the social, cultural and political transformation that have occurred in the UK, Sylhet and Bangladesh. Despite this, the intra-community frictions may partially reveal the reflection of different class belonging and, consequently, different internalized habitus, connected to the stratification dynamics and the trajectories taken by the different components of the Bangladeshi diaspora in Europe.

Conclusions

This article aims to contribute to the literature on migration studies, and especially to that on the Bangladeshi diaspora in Europe as well as that on the "ethnic" relations within European "global cities" by presenting in-depth qualitative research on the migrants' intra-European mobility and the experiences of naturalized European citizens in the UK (Della Puppa and Sredanovic, 2017; Sredanovic and Della Puppa, 2020). Specifically, it focuses on the onward migration of Italian-Bangladeshis to the UK and London and their perceptions and representations about the new society of destination.

This migration mobility within the border of the EU has been fuelled by different reasons, modelled by the representations of the new country of destination: an investment in the future of the new generations, their socialization in an English-speaking country, the search for a more "meritocratic society", a more inclusive welfare system, the disappointment of many reunited women for their social condition in Italy, the British governance of multiculturalism and the historical role of London as the capital of the British Empire that also created the largest and oldest Bangladeshi community in Europe (Della Puppa and King, 2018).

The thrust that feeds the progress of Italian-Bangladeshis is therefore constituted by their "capacity to aspire" (Appadurai, 2004), that is the ability to imagine a chosen and self-determined future for themselves and, above all, for their children. The ability to aspire thus marks a "route to follow", contributes to creating a horizon in which both individual agencies as well as collective, family and community intentions take substance, configuring the "new Italians" as true global citizens (Beck, 1996; Benhabib, 2006). However, some of the aspirations, placed in the new migration investment, will be disregarded by the comparison with the British reality (Della Puppa and King, 2018), first of all, that related to entry into the widest community of country fellowmen in Europe and their presumed warm and friendly welcome, which, on the contrary, in accordance with the perceptions and representations of the interviewees, would have immediately shown a diffident and hostile attitude.

The representations of the interviewees trace, stereotypically, these frictions to three sets of reasons: the gap that, especially in the context of Brexit, would oppose British citizens to EU citizens; the chauvinism that would oppose the Bangladeshi from the Sylhet district, the main district of origin of citizens of Bangladeshi origin in the UK, to those originating from other districts, heterogeneously represented in Bangladeshi migration in Italy; the class gap as well as the different social and family habitus that would oppose the descendants of rural families to the educated middle classes of urban origin, in Bangladesh, partially revealing some of the

historical and social dynamics, shapes, trends, and trajectories of the Bangladeshi diaspora in Europe.

An interpretation of these representations of frictions and of these latent conflicts, between the members of the two "communities" – in the light of some classic categories of sociology which dealt with the figure of the foreigner (Schütz, 1944; Simmel, 1908) and the relationships between insiders and outsiders (Elias and Scotson; 1965; Merton, 1972) – help to bring out, on the one hand, the objectivity of the detached gaze of the "outsiders" interviewed on the "insiders" and, on the other hand, the social, racial, ethnic and national support for the distance and the discriminating prejudice within a system of power relations between groups involved within a single complex system.

Furthermore, taking up some constructs developed by Abdelmalek Sayad (1999), it is possible to describe the experience of the interviewees in terms of "triple absence" and "double betrayal". Absent in the country in which they were born and socialized and which, at times, they feel they have betrayed, leaving Bangladesh with their migration. Absent in the country where they often spent most of their life and acquired citizenship, but which they have now left again, feeling that they have consumed a second betrayal, Italy. Finally, and especially, absent because they are not totally present in the country in which they are physically present – the UK – due to the exclusion described.

During the writing of this contribution, the UK has opted to confirm and proceed to Brexit. In what forms this condition will develop, how the relationships between the Italian-Bangladeshis and the British-Sylhetis will change and, with them, the perceptions as well as the representations of the protagonists, in the "post-Brexit" scenario, has yet to be written.

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