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Bidirectional remittance flows: The experience of Romanian students and migrant care workers in the United Kingdom

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THE MAN IN THE ARENA

"It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who neither know victory nor defeat."

Excerpt from the speech "Citizenship In A Republic" delivered at the Sorbonne in Paris, France on 23 April 1910.
Theodore Roosevelt

Migrants all over the world experience various degrees of risks, inequality and uncertainty as well as "emotional exposure that define what it means to be vulnerable" and so they "dare greatly" (Brené Brown, 2013, 34).

Abstract

This thesis examines a new concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance, set within a transnational social fabric encompassing the emotional aspects of family practices that shape an asymmetrical remittance exchange. Through the lens of the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory and transnationalism, as well as the experiences of Romanian students and migrants working in care, we explore the bidirectional and asymmetrical nature of remittances. Historically, the frame of analysis of migrant remittances typically focuses on the remittance exchange between the migrant and the household of origin. The novelty brought by this thesis comes from the fact that most Romanian migrant remittance literature and research focuses on one side of the remittance spectrum, or more recently, on the reverse remittance patterns that do not examine the asymmetrical cyclical nature of bidirectional remittance flows. The thesis also adds a new dimension to the NELM debate by exploring the impact of emotional practices and emotional support, as well as duty, obligation and moral aspects such as shame, guilt, pride or unrelinquished ownership on the need to reciprocate in the form of remittances. In addition, this thesis builds on Carling's (2008) work on the motives and determinants of the migrants' remitting behaviour by developing the concept of a bidirectional asymmetrical remittance exchange and exploring its ties to the emotional support shared within the transnational family.

The data analysis findings support the conceptualisation of a bidirectional asymmetric remittance flows notion, while at the same time challenging the construction of non-migrant social actors as passive receivers of migrants' financial investments. Not only are asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows empirically observable in the Romanian student and migrant care workers' narratives analysed as part of this thesis, but they are also a key element of a more extensive system of overlapping processes: emotional support, complex identity construction, transnational social networks, social capital utility, and subordinate roles especially for women.

Ultimately, a holistic form of remitting behaviour has been identified in the narratives collected in this research, distinguished by bidirectional patterns of exchange between the migrant and the household.

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I would like to express gratitude to my principal supervisor Professor Steve Taylor and all my secondary supervisors over the past seven years: Dr Kathryn Cassidy, Dr Tom Vickers, Dr Darryl Humble, Dr Adél Pásztor and Dr Ishan Ashutosh for their constant support and mentorship while I was undertaking my PhD. I am thankful for their hard work, feedback, advice and guidance.

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Author’s Declaration

I acknowledge that the work presented in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award, except that entitled by the research training, and the work is the result of my individual effort. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

I declare that the total word count of this thesis is 85,060 words

Andreea Madalina Ciurea

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Acronyms

A2 – countries that joined the EU (European Union) in January 2007: Bulgaria and Romania

A8 – countries that joined the EU in May 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia

EU – European Union

NELM – New Economics of Labour Migration

CRQ - central research question

TQs - theory questions

IQs - interview questions

Chapter 1

- **Introduction**
- **The scope of this thesis and research questions**
- **Research background**
- **Thesis structure**
- **Conclusion**

1. Introduction

The thesis aims to develop a new concept for asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange.

The analysis of Romanian students' and migrant care workers' narratives and those of their households reveals the various nuances of the transnational contractual agreement binding the migrant and their family. This mutually beneficial agreement is often bidirectionally steered by dynamic expectations, duty, needs and obligations. The thesis also explores how complex emotions such as vulnerability, guilt, shame and gratitude, as well as intricate identity construction patterns, form part of the fabric of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchanges as they emerge from the narratives of Romanian students' and migrant care workers' cross-border family ties.

Moreover, in this chapter and throughout the thesis, asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows challenge the migrant remittance's frame of analysis that typically focuses on one side of the remittance exchange, mainly that between the migrant and their household. Migration research literature, specifically Romanian migration literature, has largely neglected the household's role as a contributor to the migration process through asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows. It is high time that Romanian migrants' families are "understood as a social resource" not necessarily only a "source of obligation or cost" (Paolo Boccagni, 2015, p.253).

2. The scope of the thesis and research questions

The thesis sets out to develop the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows from country of origin to country of destination and vice versa. Moreover, the thesis investigates how asymmetrical bidirectional remittances become part of the mutually beneficial transnational contractual agreement between the households and their youth, as well as between migrant care workers and their families, set within different welfare state arrangements given by migrant origin and destination (Ciurea, 2018). The thesis also investigates how the flow of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances of Romanian households, students and migrant care workers safeguard the informal social security of all transnational transactors taking part in the exchange (Ciurea, 2018).

In addition, by contributing to the development of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance concept, this thesis challenges the construction of Romanian home communities as passive receivers of migrant support, including financial investments.

The introduction chapter establishes the research parameters and provides a summary of each of the sections to be developed in this thesis. It also grounds the storyline of this thesis in my own lived experience as a Romanian immigrant in the UK.

3. Research background

The increase in migrant remittance flows across the globe also means an increase in the need for research in this field. In order to understand just how much remittances have grown over recent decades both in the UK and Romania as well as globally, we rely on the statistical estimates of several institutions.

According to the World Bank estimates in 2017, remittances “officially recorded to low and middle-income countries reached $466 billion an increase of 8.5 percent over $429 billion in 2016” (World Bank, 2018). While global remittances that “include flows to high-income countries, grew 7 percent to $613 billion in 2017, from $573 billion in 2016” (World Bank, 2018). “Remittances to low and middle-income countries are expected to continue to increase in 2018, by 4.1 percent to reach $485 billion”. So too, “global remittances are expected to grow 4.6 percent to $642 billion in 2018” (World Bank, 2018).

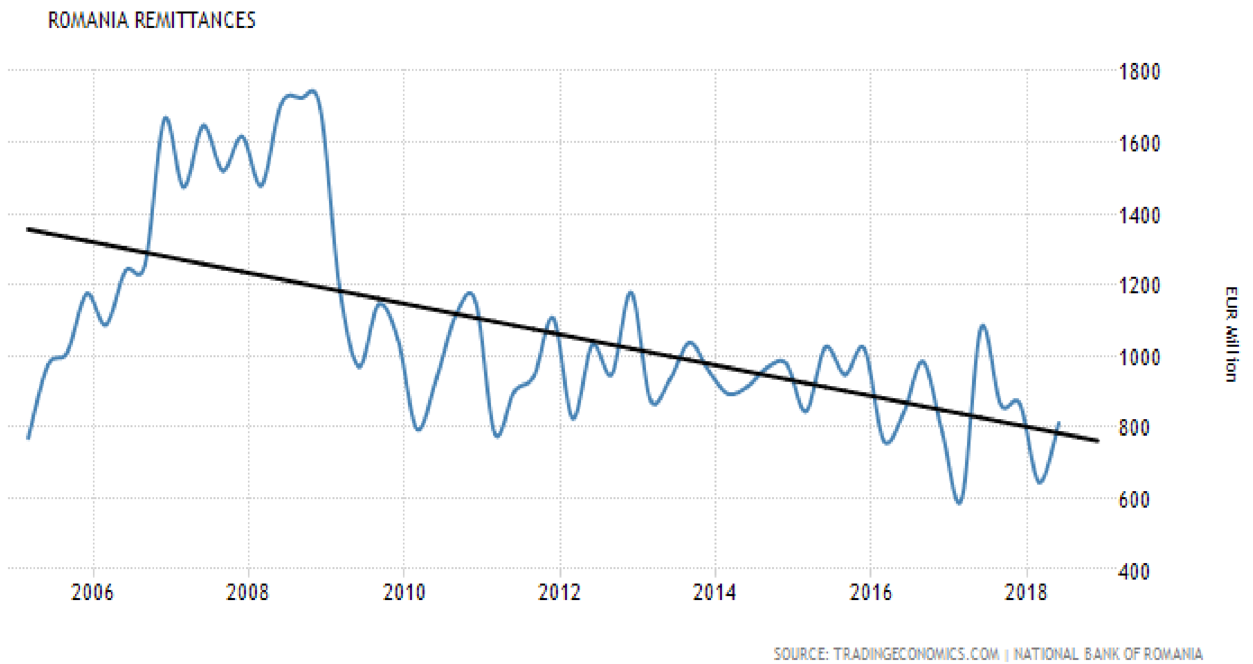
Also, according to the World Bank statistics there were an estimated $4.3 billion of personal remittances received in the UK and $4.2 billion of personal remittances received in Romania in the same year, as shown below in Figure 1 (World Bank staff estimates based on IMF balance of payments data).

Yet, according to estimates produced by a different institution, Trading Economics, "global macro models and analysts' expectations, show that remittances in Romania averaged EUR 1068.94 million from 2005 until 2018, reaching an all-time high of EUR 1724 million in the third quarter of 2008 and a record low of EUR 595 million in the first quarter of 2017," as shown in Figure 2 (Trading Economics 2018). Looking forward, Trading Economics estimate remittances in Romania to stand "at EUR 796.98 million by 2019 end". The same institution also estimates that in the long term, the Romanian remittances are projected to trend at around "710.33 EUR million in 2020," as shown in Figure 3 (Trading Economics, 2018). These considerable differences in the value of remittance estimations might be due to how various institutions define and calculate remittances, as well as potential errors in the collection of remittance data and numerous other difficulties in estimating the value of personal transfers. Just to illustrate some of the complexities related to defining remittances, according to Eurostat (online data code: bop_rem6) "personal remittances comprise of both transfer and income elements. While personal transfers show net outflows in the EU (more outflows than inflows), compensation of employees (i.e. wages earned by employees who work in other countries on short-term work contracts, as seasonal workers or cross-border commuters) show net inflows (more inflows than outflows)."

Figure 1: Personal remittances received – UK and Romania

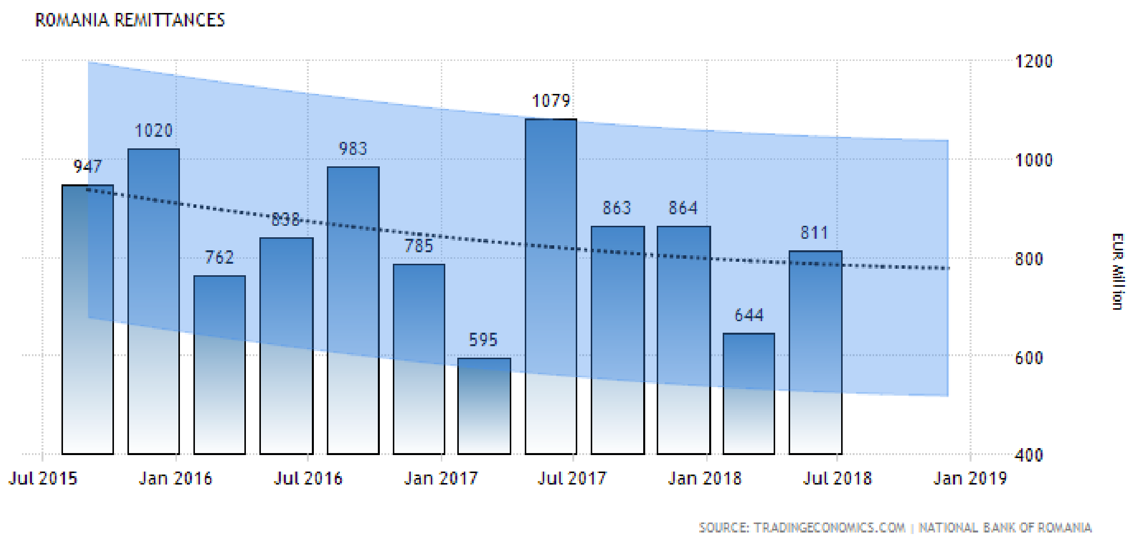
Source: World Bank staff estimates based on IMF balance of payments data. URL: https://data.worldbank.org/share/widget?indicators=BX.TRF.PWKR.CD.DT&locations=GB-RO&name_desc=true

Figure 2: Romania remittances 12-year trend



Source: Trandingeconomics.com 2018| National Bank of Romania

Figure 3: Romania remittances forecast

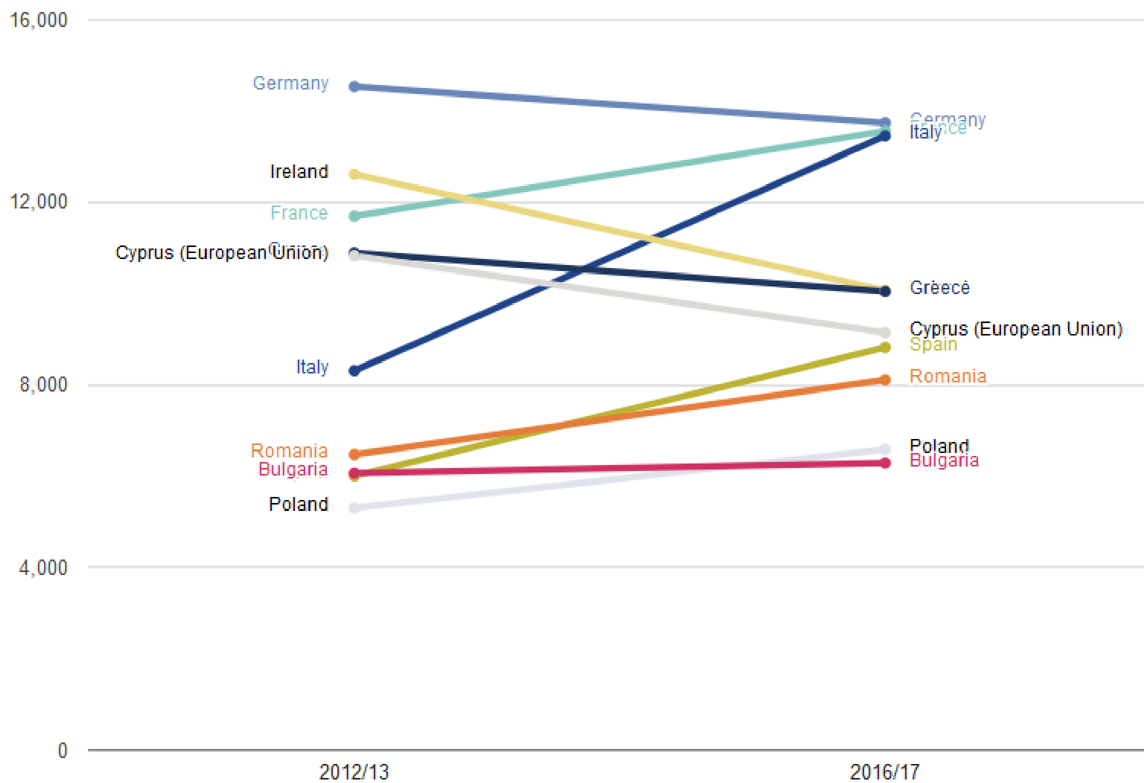


Source: Trandingeconomics.com 2018 | National Bank of Romania

At the same time, the UK Office for National Statistics in an article by Melissa Randall estimated in October 2017 that in 2016 there were 413,000 Romanians and Bulgarians living in the UK out of which 79% were Romanian (Office for National Statistics ONS, 2017, 2).

Similarly, the number of Romanian students studying in the UK has grown from 6,500 in 2012/2013 to 8,100 in 2016/2017, as shown below (Higher Education Student Statistics, 2016/17).

Figure 4: Top ten European Union countries of domicile (excluding the UK) in 2012/13 and 2016/17 for HE student enrolments. Source: Higher Education Student Statistics: UK, 2016/17



While the above data points might offer an introduction to the macroeconomics of migrants' remittances, more focus is needed on the Romanian migration context and how it has developed over the past 30 decades since the collapse of the communist regime. A few questions arise, such as what led to such a high increase in personal remittance transfers towards Romania, and what are the similarities between different Romanian migrant groups such as migrants that work in care and Romanian students studying in the UK? More focus is also needed on how developing the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows fits in the existing body of research on Romanian migrants' remitting patterns and research on other migrant groups.

By contributing to the development of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows concept, this thesis might shed some light on the two-way cyclical nature of the remittance

exchange and the impact it has on the dynamic relationship of the transactors involved in the exchange.

According to Portes and Borocz (1989, p.611), “migration arises out of a series of ‘rational’ economic decisions by individuals to escape their immediate situation, in reality, its fundamental origin lies in the history of past economic and political contact and power asymmetries between sending and receiving nations.”

As such, against a background of over 40 years of communist rule and a political and economic turning point triggered by the violent 1989 popular uprising, the sudden increase in remittances towards Romania after the year 2000 represents an evident change in the migration patterns and remitting behaviour of Romanian migrants. This thesis cross-examines the dynamic nuances and characteristics of the recent lived experiences of Romanian migrants in the UK. The thesis is using a conceptual framework based on Jørgen Carling’s (2008) work on the determinants of migrants’ remittances as well as Lucas and Stark’s (1985) new economics of labour migration (NELM) assumptions and original empirical material drawn from semi-structured interviews with Romanian migrants in the UK and their household members.

A puzzling and intriguing fact about the increase in remittances to and from Romania is that this nation state represents “a ‘least likely’ case for the rapid emergence of economic transnationalism” (2009, p.130). According to Ban (2009, p.130), the Romanian Ceausescu communist regime imposed one of the strictest “emigration systems in the Warsaw Pact”. It’s important to note that not long-ago Romania was one of the eight countries that formed the Warsaw Pact, a rival alliance founded by the Soviet Union in 1955 as a response to the 1949 North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) initiated by 11 European western nations alongside the United States. These alliances split Europe into two opposing camps spread across nearly all the European nations, further exacerbating Europe’s division, which was shaped as part of World War II (1939–45). Soon after the alliances were formed, the Cold War began and, as Winston Churchill famously said in March 1946 part of the sinews of peace speach, an ‘iron curtain’ fell over much of Eastern Europe.

After the 1989 popular revolt that put an end to the Communist Regime in Romania, the initial Romanian immigrants were part of so-called “outflows of ethnic Germans and Hungarians” (Ban, 2009, p.132). There was also the emergence of new labour migration patterns of Romanians migrating towards Turkey, Israel and Germany (Ban, 2009, p.132). This initial flow of Romanian migration started in 1990 and lasted until 1995 according to Sandu et al. (2005). It was characterised by a replication of early post-communist patterns of

migration. Ban (2009, p.132) further explains that the second flow of "Romanian migration abroad raised the percentage of the emigrant population from five percent of the total Romanian population in the 1990–1995 period, to six and then seven percent of the total Romanian population in the 1996-2001 period". The third flow of migration, starting in the year 2002, was marked by the significant shift from the Israeli and Turkish labour market towards Italy and Spain, where almost 60% of Romanian migration was concentrated. Surprisingly, upon joining the EU in 2007, just less than 18 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Romania was one of the largest exporters of labour migration, with official Romanian "government estimates for late 2006 indicating that between 1.2 and 1.3 million Romanian citizens were legally employed in EU member states" (Ban, 2009, p.132). However, not included in this estimate are the so-called 'work tourists' put at roughly one million. These were migrants who could legally work in the Schengen area for no longer than three months, after which they needed to renew their visas. If we add to this the flows of informal migration, the estimated number of Romanian migrants working abroad amounts to a third of the active workforce estimated at around 4.6 million migrants (Sandu et al., 2005). Furthermore, Ban's research on Romanian migrants in Italy and Spain "reveals an opportunity structure specific to the Eastern European countries" comprising of several short distance ground routes with minimal enforced border controls between specific locales such as Northern Romanian and Northern Italy (2009, p.134). Simultaneously, the growing demand for international coach and mini-bus services with routes stretching into Eastern Europe, aided at first by the seemingly "affordable illegal market for forged visas followed by the deregulation of the visa regime between EU applicant states and EU member states", provided the underlying basis for a rapid growth of Romanian transnational migration (Ban 2009, p.134). Against this background, certain Romanian community groups organised in close-knit co-ethnic social networks, such as co-ethnic businesses or ordinary individuals, became specialised in transferring informal remittances to families and households in Romania or vice versa, shipping abroad ethnic Romanian merchandise or packages to friends and family left behind.

As mentioned above, one of the key features of early post-communist Romanian migration was informal transnational financial services such as informal remittance transfers facilitated by the newly established coach and van routes into Western Europe. However, early post-communist informal Romanian migrant remittance transfers developed and increased against a background of instability within the Romanian government that culminated with the Romanian state coming "close to default in 1998, threatened with the imposition of a

currency board, it was forced to consolidate the national hard currency reserve and boost domestic consumption” (Ban, 2009, p.135). Not surprisingly, during the early 1990s most Romanians lacked financial awareness and displayed growing mistrust in modern financial products such as bank transfers, credit unions or savings accounts. This was largely due to several Ponzi schemes that depleted the savings of countless Romanians; good examples include Caritas and the bankruptcy of several banks caused by corruption and money laundering scandals, for instance Bancorex or Banca Albina (Perlez, 1993). In addition, the state’s inability to encourage Romanian migrants to use formal remittance transfers via credit unions or banks in the early 1990s, coupled with widespread poverty and endemic corruption within the Romanian border security agency, provided the underlying basis for a massive influx of informal remittances. It was only by the late 1990s that public state “officials saw remittances as one of the few robust mechanisms to reduce the current account deficit” and took measures to direct the informal flows to more legitimate alternatives (Ban, 2009, p.135). The “strategy paid off; according to the estimates of the Romanian Central Bank, in 2003 Romanian workers abroad transferred remittances worth 1.5 billion Euros using banks and credit union services” (Ban, 2009, p.135).

From a theoretical standpoint, the social impact of migration and remittances can be bracketed according to Taylor (1999) by two extreme theoretical assumptions, each with its own set of arguments regarding migration drivers and the diverse impacts of labour migration and remittances in the sending area. First of these extremes follows a ‘developmentalist’ perspective better known as the NELM, which argues that the decision to migrate is taken as part of a household’s strategy to raise funds that need to be invested in different, new activities but also to insure against any economic risks. Remittances are at the heart of the process that sets in motion a development dynamic, enabling families in emerging countries to invest in local businesses, production, education, healthcare, old age insurance, property and more.

According to Stark (1991), the NELM view households as rational agents that use “migration as a tool to overcome market failures” (Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). “By sending a family member to work abroad, a household makes an investment that is recovered when the migrant’s remittances arrive” (Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). These remittances act as a safety net, compensating for poorly functioning local markets, difficulty in accessing credit, or the lack of various programmes run by the government meant to offer health and social care. Thus, from the NELM perspective, one of the first conditions for labour migration is an unstable market (Massey & Sana, 2005). As such, labour migration is often seen by NELM

theorists as a “livelihood strategy pursued by social groups in reaction to relative deprivation”, to stabilise, secure and diversify income risks; hence, to alleviate local market limitations (De Haas, 2007, p.7). Remittances hold a crucial role in achieving the return on investments, as they have always been “an investment in social security by households and families” (De Haas, 2007, p.27). Furthermore, remittances constitute a productive part of the household’s investment strategy to diminish social risk. The characteristics of remittances, such as type and flow, strongly depend on the “contractual arrangements and bargaining power within the family” (De Haas, 2007, p.9). They also came with a label defining the function of each side of the contribution towards the origin and destination: old age pension, subsistence cost, insurance, housing, health investment, education, etc. Remittances are also part of the wide range of activities developed under the umbrella of transnational migration. Therefore, remittances are found to be related to most labour migration studies. According to Datta (2017), migrant remittances have gained an ideal neoliberal currency status, which can be leveraged as an alternative form of finance designed to respond to the “basic welfare needs of poor families” (p.539). In her work, Datta (2017), also traces “the development of migrant-investor subjectivities disciplined to act in economically rational ways” (p.540). She also argues that migrant remittances have often been represented in research “as ‘alternative’ in relation to the norms shaping these practices; the diverse financial, social, political and cultural forms that they assume and how they correspond to ‘alternative’ visions of development” (p.540).

The other extreme theoretical assumption that Taylor (1999) refers to is sometimes called “migrant syndrome perspective”, according to which labour migration drains migrant-sending areas of their manpower and capital (p.64). As Massey et al. (1998) suggest, within a period of time whole communities, regions and sometimes entire countries become specialised in migration, or in other words they become labour exporters. In some cases, the sending country develops a label for producing a certain type of migrant worker, such as Filipina nurses or nannies, or Romanian builders in Spain and Italy.

However, if these are the extreme theoretical assumptions the ‘truth’ might lie somewhere in between. Following Taylor’s (1999) assumption, there are “three theoretical and methodological problems in the migration and development literature” that add to the complexity of pinpointing accurately where the intersections between transnational “migration, remittances and development” lie (p.64). As such, it can be argued that, in the first instance, migration research needs a more nuanced theoretical and empirical approach to investigate the dynamics of remittance flows as well as their impact on the sending and

receiving community, the expenditure/investment power dynamics of the transnational family, and the emotional practices that might drive needs, obligations and duty to reciprocate and offer support within a transnational setting. Second, migrant-sending economies and communities are sometimes shaped by labour migration and remittances sent through informal channels, something that might be missed by conventional research approaches; hence more research might be needed into informal remittance exchanges among transnational family members. Similarly, some of the most significant effects of migrant remittances might not be found within the sending or receiving household context. These might develop in time due to, for example, a high level of voluntary private household consumption by the family receiving remittance that may, in turn, have a positive result or high return on investment in the sending area if the community's desire for products and services enables investment by other households or businesses (Mallick, 2012). Third, the developmental impact across various regions of migration and asymmetrical bidirectional remittances on development will differ. The same is true for determinants and motives for migration that are influenced to a degree by the local community's structural socio-economic traits such as resources or local market endowments, by the economic policy context in which the decision to migrate is taken and to where remittances subsequently return. For example, if the sending "local economies (e.g., villages) are closely integrated with larger regional markets, the economic impact of remittances tends to be diffuse and difficult to quantify" (Taylor, 1999, p.65). Nevertheless, according to Taylor (1999, p.65) the "fundamental question is not whether remittances trigger economic development, but rather, why international migration is sometimes associated with positive development outcomes in some migrant sending areas but not in others". Portes (2010, as cited in Vlase, 2012, p.23) makes a point of this when he suggests that "migration is both a form of change as well as a cause of social transformation, and implicitly of economic development as an aspect of broader social changes". "Migration is, of course, change and it can lead, in turn, to further transformations in sending and receiving communities" Portes (2010, p.1544, as cited in Vlase, 2012, p.23). Thus, migration-led social change manifests itself differently in different local contexts.

In the context of neoliberalism, remittances become just another part of the everyday practices and social reproductions that shape this ideology. The contemporary neoliberal frame promoting individualism, self-thought innovative disruptors vs communities and society, could be understood as some of the contributing determinants to the increasing global flow of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances. Neoliberalism has become "more than just a political economic project" having deep social and economic implications given "its role in

the remaking of familial spaces, household economic practices and social reproduction in the domestic sphere of these post-socialist settings" (Stenning et al., 2010, as cited in Wong, 2012, p.75).

Building on the above-mentioned theoretical nuances of migrant remittances this thesis aims to contribute to the social research that focuses on Romanian migrants who change remitting behaviour. This thesis research compares the remitting behaviour of two groups of Romanian migrants in England, as well as their motives and determinants for migrating and remitting. On the one hand, the motives and determinants of a new remitting behaviour are linked to a mutually beneficial contractual arrangement binding households and their youth studying abroad. This, in turn, is built on the assumption that the initial investment by households in a student's education abroad can provide a "long-term productive investment" and an "income assurance strategy" for those households and families who first set out the commitment (De Haas, 2007, p.23). On the other hand, the thesis will examine the motives and determinants of a self-enforcing mutually binding reciprocal agreement between migrant care workers and their household, wrapped within a social fabric infused by emotional practices. As such, the thesis not only fills a gap in current remittance related research, but it also develops a new concept: that of asymmetrical 'bidirectional' flows of remittances from country of origin to the country of destination and vice versa. These are steered by emotional practices as part of a mutually beneficial contractual agreement between households and the migrant, set within different welfare state arrangements given by migration origin and destination context (Ciurea, 2018).

With challenges from different sources and profound transformations coming from a supra-national and globalised level, the welfare state's ability to contain and control market forces and respond to market failure becomes limited. At the same time, the greater role of service-sector employment and the rise of knowledge-intensive industries demand a more comprehensive investment in human capital, challenging education and training systems which originally aimed to provide tickets for lifelong careers (Gottschall & Bird, 2003). Against this backdrop, the movement of Eastern European migrants has become highly dynamic. At the same time, the mobility of students and migrant care workers has acquired considerable relevance in the context of New Europe. Not only is contemporary migration in Europe linked to a steady flow of remittances, but it might be a key motive to migrate in the first place (Carling, 2008). This might be a strong argument in favour of an economic utility driven labour migration, but educational mobility does not subscribe to this criterion. Nevertheless, the transnational movement of migrant care workers and student mobility can

be associated with an asymmetrical bidirectional or two-way remittance flow, but more specifically with an asymmetrical bidirectional flow of remittances from country of origin to the country of destination and vice versa, steered by the participant's experience and understanding of family obligations and needs (Ciurea, 2018).
The thesis critically reviews several research papers regarding Romanian remittance patterns such as Ban's (2009) analysis mentioned above. Additionally, Sousa and Duval's (2010, p.81) research on the "role of geographic distance for bilateral remittances" concluded that "remittances increase with distance but in a non-linear way". The thesis also draws upon a micro-level analysis of motives and determinants to remit conducted by several empirical studies by Jørgen Carling (2008), Cox and Ureta (2003) and Brown (1995). In order to link these approaches to the remittance behaviour of students and migrant care workers as a mutually beneficial agreement they have entered with their families, several studies related to Romanian educational mobility were also reviewed. Research related to the matter was carried out by Ferro in 2006 on the migratory aspiration of Romanian IT professionals. Csedo (2008) also looked at Hungarian and Romanian professionals and graduates in London and the extent to which foreign human capital is recognised in the labour market. Furthermore, research by Cangiano et al. (2009) on migrant care workers in the UK referred to A2 migrants (Romanian and Bulgarian) and the labour market restrictions imposed for these nationals until 2014. It also stressed the lack of research on migrant care workers from the above-mentioned countries.

4. Thesis structure

The **theoretical chapters** (chapters 2 and 3) navigate through well-established migration theories, narrowing down the discussion to transnationalism and its manifestations, focusing on locality, labour migration, welfare and remittances. The examination follows research carried out on several migrant groups and communities, comparing the findings and moulding a theoretical framework suitable to investigate the remitting motives and determinants of Romanian migrant care workers and students.
These chapters also review research on the transnational family, especially the sociology of family obligations and duties, and the emotional dynamics of transnational families.

Chapter 4 focuses on the Romanian national context, touching on the communist rule and early transitional politics as well as land reform after the 1989 popular uprising. Also in chapter 4, Romanian migration and remittance patterns following the communist rule are critically discussed.

The **methodological approach** (chapter 5) that guided this thesis is more interpretative, as it adopts methodology that seeks to interpret and understand, taking an inductive approach that does not require a hypothesis that is typical of a deductive research design (Hart, 2005). This chapter also focuses on the ethical aspects of the research that stem from the exploration of personal life stories. As well as reflecting on my position in the research that is often constructed and deconstructed function of time and the perceived distance, both physical and emotional, from the subject studied.

Initially, the **research parameters** (chapter 6) were designed to draw on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to provide a more comprehensive and complete account of the subject matter. Initially, triangulation seemed the most appropriate research design in this case. However, as the thesis grew and the qualitative research advanced, it became clear that understanding the asymmetrical bidirectional remitting experience of Romanian migrant care workers and students, as well as the nuanced contractual agreement they had with their households, would most probably be attained through interviews and observation. Thus, more emphasis was given to qualitative data collection and analysis, as it could provide a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the motives and determinants to remit as part of the mutual beneficial contractual agreement between households and their youth, as well as the migrant care workers and the remittance-receiving family (Ciurea, 2018). The research was carried out responsibly in accordance with accepted ethical codes. In addition, anonymity was offered to all participants who were correctly informed about the purpose of the project and why they were singled out.

Below are the three main phases that initially outlined the research parameters for data collection and analysis. The methodology chapter demonstrates why there was a need for change in the research design. Initially, the thesis plan included analysing existing datasets "on the social care workforce in the UK, with a focus on the migrant workforce" (Canagio et al., 2009, p.180). This approach could have offered insight into the profile of migrants working in the UK in the social care sector. However, the analysis would have focused mainly on the Labour Force Survey (LFS), which is generally used in "research about migrant workers because it contains questions about nationality, country of birth and date of arrival in the UK" (Canagio et al., 2009, p.194). Another part of the initial analysis would

have looked at quantitative data from the Public Opinion Barometer (POB) of the Romanian Soros Foundation for an Open Society, with the purpose of getting a contextual understanding surrounding Romanian students in the UK. The POB gives information on the respondents (educational attainment), the number of Romanian students abroad, their social class and their educational mobility across birth cohorts. In addition, the research would have analysed another major statistical source provided by the Higher Education Information Database for Institution (HEIDI). This database contains potentially key information related to students, staff and finances available by institution, cost centre or Joint Academic Coding System (JACS) code. These elements might have allowed for a comparison between all UK institutions or subgroups of institutions. Notably, HEIDI registers the nationality of the student, their fundability, major sources of tuition fees, their domicile country, and the domicile country of the parent – variables that could have helped counter an initial picture of the Romanian student population in the UK.

As the thesis evolved, the research methodology was adapted to suit the development of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows concept, giving more and more weight to a qualitative research pattern. Thus, in order to explore and analyse the potential asymmetrical bidirectional nature of Romanian migrant care worker and student remittance flows, as well as the social contract they entered with their families, qualitative research can be a reliable tool capable of exploring individual aspects of migration histories embedded in the wider social environment (Torre, 2008). The qualitative method allows for a more in-depth exploration of personal life stories and experiences as opposed to using quantitative research where many important characteristics of individuals or communities (identities, norms, values, attitudes, beliefs) cannot be meaningfully quantified or adequately understood when taken out of the local context where there were constructed. Qualitative research in the form of semi-structured interviews with Romanian students and migrant care workers in the UK plus household representatives became the primary investigative tool. All interviews were subsequently coded and analysed using NVivo 11.

5. Conclusion

This thesis not only has the potential to contribute to the development of the asymmetrical 'bidirectional' remittance flows concept, but it also sheds light on two scarcely researched migrant groups and challenges the construction of migrant-sending communities in Romania as passive receivers of migrants' remittances (Ciurea, 2018). Previous research has been conducted by Massey et al. (1998) around the remitting behaviours in Latin America. Similar research has also been conducted in South East Asia by Hadi (1999) and Pratt (2004), but the Eastern European space, especially the two Romanian groups the thesis focuses on, are scarcely researched. Therefore, using a rigorous research methodology this thesis might prove a valuable contribution to the study of remittance in social studies (Ciurea, 2018).

Chapter 2 Theories and approaches in the study of migration

- **Introduction**
- **Transnationalism and locality**
- **Understanding support, obligations and emotions as part of the dynamics of transnational families**
- **Transnational families, the emotional fabric encompassing family obligations shaping asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows**
- **Family practices, transnationalism and NELM**
- **Transnational labour market, remittances and welfare state**
- **“Brexit means Brexit” the political context in the UK, reflection on belonging of the Romanian community members**
- **Conclusion**

1. Introduction

If the first chapter introduced the arguments that form the basis to developing the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows of Romanian migrants, the second chapter critically assesses theories and approaches in the study of migration, narrowing the focus to specific sets of concepts that could be adapted to the thesis’s theoretical framework.
This second chapter aims to further develop the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows through the lens of transnationalism. The manifestation of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows can be understood as a product of the emotional fabric of the transnational family, spanning diverse and complex needs such as to care and be cared for; obligations; emotions such as shame; and vulnerability. Hence this chapter aims to frame and develop asymmetrical bidirectional remittances as part of the sociology of transnational family obligations and practices. This will be achieved within a critical analysis of the New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM) theory, whilst at the same time connecting asymmetrical bidirectional remittances with the contemporary realities of Brexit.

Migration research has led to the development of numerous theories. As Portes and DeWind, (2004) suggest, there is no "grand theory of migration encompassing all its aspects" (p.829). "Such a theory would have to be pitched at such a high level of abstraction that would make it useless for the explanation and prediction of concrete processes" (Portes & DeWind, 2004, p.829). With this in mind, this chapter will favour the "development of mid-range concepts and theories" that might be more suitable for examining the remitting behaviour, motives and determinants of two under-researched migrant groups such as Romanian care workers and students living in England (Portes & DeWind, 2004, p.829).

To start with, a critique of some of the classic migration theory is needed, as this will enable us to build an understanding of the theoretical building blocks that gradually need to be narrowed down in order to examine the transnational bidirectional remittance exchange shaped by an asymmetric contractual agreement between transactors and steered by emotional practices.

According to Scheer (2012, p.193), emotions can be understood as practices if we consider them as expressions of experiences steaming from "bodily dispositions conditioned by a social context, which always has cultural and historical specificity".

Portes and Borocz (1989, p.607) suggest that the most well-known theory regarding the emergence of international migration is the neoclassical 'push–pull' theory that considers labour migration to be a result of imbalances between the sending and receiving countries, such as poverty and low wages at origin compared to higher wages and improved working conditions at destination. Theorists of this approach compiled lists of push and pull factors. The push factors can be "economic, social and political hardships in the poorest parts of the world – and 'pull factors' – comparative advantages in the more advanced nation – states – as causal variables determining the size and directionality of immigrant flows" (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p.607). Usually, these lists are compiled after the observed movement has taken place. Also, the lists' content is influenced by two underlying assumptions: "first, the expectation that the most disadvantaged sectors" of the more impoverished "societies are most likely to participate in labour migration"; and second, the assumption that "such flows arise spontaneously out of the sheer existence of inequalities on a global scale" (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p.607).

Dorigo and Tobler (1983, p.2) put forward a simple elementary equation to explain migration through "push and pull factors", where the push incentive is the individual's dissatisfaction with their status at origin, and pull elements are represented by certain aspects of life abroad that might seem attractive.

$M_{ij} = (R_i + E_j) / d_{ij}$, i ≠ j

"Where M_{ij} is the magnitude (as a count of people) of the movement from place 'i' to place 'j' (of R places) in some specified time interval, and d_{ij} is the distance between these places, measured in appropriate units (kilometers, road lengths, dollar costs, travel time, social distance, employment opportunities, etc.). They have labelled their primary variables R and E, using R for 'rejecting', 'repelling', 'repulsing' and E for 'enticing' R_i is the 'push' away from place i, and E_j is the 'pull' toward place j" (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983, p.2).

It might seem an oversimplified view of reality. However, Dorigo and Tobler (1983, p.2), suggest that the envisaged push and pull elements are a mix of "local traits or characteristics of the inhabitants". A common push factor might be, for example, "a high unemployment rate" that might be reduced by having to leave behind friends and family (Dorigo & Tobler, 1983, p.2). Zolberg (1999) and Castles (2004) offer an alternative to the push–pull theory. They suggest that the "economic distance between the global North and South has become so vast as to create a virtually inexhaustible supply of potential migrants" (as cited in Portes & DeWind, 2004, p.831). The forces of capitalist globalisation widen this gap as well as make the population of developing countries aware of the "benefits of modern consumption while denying them the means to acquire them" (Portes & DeWind, 2004, p.831). Meanwhile, in the developed world an ever-increasing need for low-paid, often physical, labour usually avoided by the local workers, is a "powerful" incentive for potential migrants from under-developed regions (Portes & DeWind, 2004, p.831). This trend creates, as a result, an immigrant proletariat.

Balibar (2004) makes an insightful statement regarding the crucial need of migration flows towards Europe. He claims that they help "reproduce the old capitalist reserve army" given that a "significant part of the 'national' labour force is still (although less and less effectively) protected by social rights and regulations which have been partly 'constitutionalised' through welfare policies" (Balibar, 2004, p.203). As such, it can be argued that the new proletarian migrant community inherits similar traits to those Marx ascribed to the proletariat "workers without a social 'status' or 'recognition' that must be transformed into subjects and objects of fear, experiencing fear of being rejected and eliminated, and inspiring fear to the 'stable' populations" (Balibar, 2004, p.203). Yet, historically speaking, very often policies of fear and insecurity are not easily kept in place; they eventually give way to certain forms of civil social protection, which we have seen to some extent for migrant workers.

Even though the neoclassical push–pull theory assumptions seem self-evident when it comes to migration flows from Romania to the UK or from Mexico to the United States, the theory cannot provide a valid explanation as to "why similar movements do not arise out of other equally 'poor' nations, or why people tend to emigrate from certain regions and not from others within the same sending countries" (Portes & Borocz 1989, p.608). Another downside of these types of theories is the fact that they are unable to predict two main notable distinctions in the emergence of migration: "1) differences among collectivities" (Portes and Borocz, 1989, p.607) such as differences between nation states in the volume and direction of migrant flows macro-structural determinants; 2) differences among an individual's propensity to migrate, especially when they have the same origin country or region micro-structural causes.

De Haas (2008, p.8) also suggested that "neo-classical and historical-structural theories of migration" often cannot give a valid explanation as to "why people in certain countries or regions migrate and others do not". They also fail to "explain why people tend to migrate between particular places in a spatially clustered, concentrated, typically non-random fashion" (De Haas, 2008, p.8). Economic scarcity in the periphery and changing consumption patterns are the starting point for spontaneous labour migration flows according to Portes and Borocz (1989). They further suggest that developing societies failing to meet the benefits of modern consumption pushes certain groups to explore various means of fulfilling these expectations by migrating abroad.

Historically speaking, gradual transformation of cultural patterns, economic inducement and, to some extent, physical coercion are part of a specific nuance of development guided by the resourcefulness of western states at the centre of the global economy and the shifting interests of its dominant or ruling classes. Hence, we often find migration is linked to historical relationships of domination. The outcome of this progression is a gradual increase in the supply of malleable labour at decreasing costs.

De Haas (2008, p.10), argued that the "push and pull factors" can be compared with "two sides of the same coin: together they provide the perception of the difference between 'here' and 'there', and therefore have limited heuristic value". Thus, depending on the individual's choices, he or she might not decide to migrate from lower to higher income areas as is usually assumed. Their decision is likely to depend on the individual's social status and position in their community, what social networks they are part of, their skills and knowledge, and the characteristics and trends of the economic vertical where they might find employment, both at the origin and destination (De Haas, 2008, p.10). Portes and Borocz (1989, p.612) also

argued that a notable downside of the "standard push-pull theories" are their inability to explain differences in the individuals' patterns of migration. For example, in a context featuring the same expelling push and external pulls why only certain individuals leave while others remain. "According to the economic rationale of the push-pull approach, migration should reflect ups and downs in the 'differential of advantage' which gives rise to the process in the first place" (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p.612). However, once set in motion, migration flows have a tendency to keep their course with relative autonomy despite any fluctuations observed by "differential of advantage" (Portes & Borocz, 1989). Therefore, conventional migration theories fall short of explaining the persistence of migrant flows long after the initial economic incentives have faded or have decreased significantly (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p. 612).

2. Transnationalism and locality

Transnationalism evolved as a concept through a series of studies. Vertovec (2009, p.28) argued a few represent somewhat of a landmark. A notable example is the research on transnationalism conducted by Roberts Keohane and Joseph Nye (1971) in their edited volume *Transnational Relations and World Politics* that re-envisaged international relations and the state-centric role of nations. According to Vertovec (2009, p.28) the volume focused on the impact of "global interactions (defined as movements of information, money, objects and people across borders)" on international politics. Furthermore, Vertovec (2009) suggested that in a similar way the collection of essays by James Rosenau (1980) made a significant contribution to the development of transnationalism. Throughout these essays there are elements related to 'transnationalisation', specifically details on the emergence of a new type of global interaction and relations among different actors, from private individuals and groups, students and tourists through to corporations and Non-Governmental Organisations NGOs.

Migration studies also benefited from the research developments on transnationalism. Transnational migration theory, according to Lazar (2011, p.70), offered a new lens that allowed the reimagining of "identity formations, economic practices, political involvements, shifting cultural representations etc". As the body of research on transnationalism grew, it

also hindered the potential of research on transnational migration to respond to the contemporary conceptual challenges surrounding migration. For instance, the concept of transnationalism might be linked to “both the process and collective outcomes of multiple forms of transnational processes” (Lazar, 2011, p.70). In an effort to respond to this growing ambiguity, Lazar (2011, p.70) argued that there have been different attempts to classify and structure this concept according to “ontological considerations and epistemological/methodological incentives”.

A significant number of research papers and books anticipated the rise of migrant transnationalism. In his book *Transnationalism,* Vertovec (2009) mentioned as pioneers Smith and Guarnizo (1998); Portes et al. (1999); Portes (2001, 2003); Kivisto (2001); Levitt (2001); and Vertovec (2001a; 2001b). However, according to Vertovec (2009, 14) the concept has its roots in certain “key anthropological works especially Georges 1990; Grasmuck and Pessar 1991; Rouse 1991; Glick Schiller *et al.*1992; Basch *et al*. 1993; also Kearney 1995.”

In his study, Vertovec (2009) argued that transnationalism is a manifestation of globalisation. Lazar (2011) suggested that a new paradigm has developed around the concept of transnationalism out of the need to holistically understand both sending and receiving societies all embedded in a social fabric encompassing diverse social networks spanning across diverse types of borders.

Vertovec (2009) made a clear and valuable distinction between ‘international’ and ‘transnational’ practices. He argued that “interactions between national governments (such as formal agreements, conflicts, diplomatic relations), or concerning the to-ing and fro-ing of items from one nation-state context to another (such as people/travel and goods/trade) are ‘inter-national’ practices” (Vertovec, 2009, p.3).

Transnationalism related research sheds light on the impact of interactions among diverse socio, economic and political connections between diverse social actors across nation states. It has been studied from different perspectives using diverse tools, comparisons and levels of abstractions.

Geographers criticise the early work on transnationalism, arguing, according to Collins (2009), that there is a need for research to focus more on what the characteristics of transnational spaces are that “are inhabited materially and symbolically” by migrants or other individuals (p.437).

According to Vertovec (2009, pp.4–6), transnationalism has six conceptual premises. Starting with a) “social morphology” under which the co-ethnic network is referred to as “the

exemplary communities of the transnational moment", which in sociological and anthropological literature surrounding transnationalism became an exciting new "social formation spanning borders". Not surprisingly "central to the analysis of transnational social formations are structures or systems of relationships also known as networks" (Vertovec, 2009, p.4). Social networks are often characterised by various moving parts linked by autonomous nodes and focal points through an intricate system of relationships intensified by new technologies. The meaning of transnationalism also draws from b) different types of consciousness; 'diasporas consciousness', for example, is characterised by "dual or multiple identifications" (Vertovec, 2009, p.4). Communities are often bonded together by common consciousness or experiences. In addition, the desire to connect with others is stimulated by the existence of multi-localities, "both 'here' and 'there' we share the same 'routes' and 'roots'" (Vertovec, 2009, p.4). Furthermore, today's transnational communities have evolved from the old diasporas, which as Vertovec (2009, p.6) argued, are independent of "their form or trajectory, diasporas always leave a trail of collective memory about another place and time and create new maps of desire and attachment".

Transnationalism can also be considered a c) fabric of cultural reproduction, as it is often associated with dynamically "constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices" (Vertovec, 2009, p.10). For example, the "production of hybrid cultural phenomena" among transnational youth who have been socialised within different cultural fields (Vertovec, 2009, p.10). Another meaning of transnationalism is given by d) the avenues of capital that are taken to unprecedented levels and scales by transnational transactions and "transnational corporations seen as the main institutional form of transnational practices and the key to understanding globalization" (Vertovec, 2009, p.10). Transnationalism becomes e) the medium of political engagement. "[T]here is a new dialectic of global and local questions which do not fit into national politics only in a transnational framework can they be properly posed, debated and resolved" (Ulrich Beck, 1999, p.29, as cited in Vertovec, 2009, p.10). Some of the most visible transnational institutions are "international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) like International Red Cross and various United Nations" agencies (Vertovec, 2009, p.10). The fact that, for example, INGOs can distribute resources from national constituencies in developed countries to similar locales in poorer countries shows their transnational dimension. Moreover, they can facilitate lobbying, "cross-cutting support in political campaigns, and provide safe havens abroad for activities of resistance" (Vertovec, 2009, p.10). However, as a criticism, Kriesberg (1997, cited in Vertovec, 2009, p.10)

suggested that many INGOs “simply reflect the status quo of hierarchy and power” in the world today.

A sixth source of meaning of transnationalism is grounded in the ongoing f) “(re)construction of ‘place’ or locality” (Vertovec, 2009, p.10). Meanings and practices derived from various geographical, cultural and “historical points of origin” have always been reinvented, transferred and reground (Vertovec, 2009, p.12). With a growing advancement in human mobility, telecommunications, films, satellite TV and the internet, geographical distance is diminished; more and more destinations are within reach, along with a whole new mindset of transnational understandings (Vertovec, 2009, p.12).

Vertovec’s analysis of transnationalism might benefit from a critical perspective on how migration reshapes localities. According to Lazar (2011, pp.76–77) Glick Schiller and Çaglar’s (2008) research explored how “migration restructures localities” by identifying three key conceptual drawbacks that make it difficult to develop a theory of locality in migration studies. The first being the tradition in migration research to focus on “migrant settlement and incorporation from research about migration in specific paradigmatic cities” (Lazar, 2011, pp.76–77). The second, narrowing the analysis of global patterns and “urban restructuring into a scholarship of global and gateway cities; third the extensive use of the ethnic group as the basic unit of analysis and object of study” (Lazar, 2011, pp.76–77). Expanding on the concept of transnationalism, “empirical studies point to a (re)-emergence of notions of belonging and of ethno-nationalist movements”, which in turn triggered the re-discovery of ‘local’ and its academic importance (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.3). The shift has been visible in many scholars’ research on transnationalism with a tendency to focus on the ‘local-to-local relations’, which zoom in on territorialised notions of transnationalism, highlighting the crystallisation of “global and local dynamics in specific localities such as cities, neighbourhoods, homes and families” (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.3). However, while transnationalism explores the impact and benefits of diverse interactions across the social, economic and political context, the “primary research concern still rests on the transgression of and exchange beyond national borders” (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.3). Drawing on Bourdieu’s concept of habitus, Greiner and Sakdapolrak (2013, p.6) put forward the notion of social fields aiming to “develop an agency-oriented approach to address the agents” “simultaneous situatedness across different locales”, as well as in “translocal social fields”, often distinguished by irregular power relations and “the exchange of various capitals which are valued differently across different scales” (Greiner & Sakdapolrak, 2013, p.6).

For example, as sending states once labelled as “peripheral are promoting the reproduction of transnational subjects”, they are also rearranging “their own role in the new world order” (Glick Schiller et al., 1994, p.10, as cited in Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.11). In the process, they are “officially incorporating their nationals living abroad into their new configured trans-territorial nation-state” (Glick Schiller et al., 1994, p.10, as cited in Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.11). However, this process “raises intriguing questions concerning human agency”, as the sending state contributes to “the constitution of new bifocal subjects with dual citizenships and multiple political identities creating multiple possibilities for novel forms of human agency” (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.11). Transnationals that manage to acquire these legal dual-citizenship statuses would of course enjoy both the opportunities and costs as described by the two-nation states. According to Glick Schiller et al. (1994), transnational migrants in this position “may be doubly empowered or doubly subordinated, depending on historically-specific local circumstances” (p.10, as cited in Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.11).
Furthermore, transnational actions that take place in this context become trans-local according to Smith and Guarnizo (1998), inheriting the duality of opportunities and costs related to the transnational migrant’s status. These contexts or social fields become translocalities, “where transnational practices are vested with particular meanings” (Nazalie, 2006, p.201). The relationships between locals and “the migration established by transmigrants are therefore dynamic, mutable, and dialectical constituted within historically and geographically specific points of origin” (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.12). Smith and Guarnizo (1998) argued further that the “locality of migration provides a particular context of opportunities and constraints (e.g., labour market conditions, popular and official perceptions of the migrant group, the presence or absence of other co-nationals) into which migrants enter” (p.13). Transnational practices cut across several nation-state territories even though they are formed within “specific social, economic, and political relations that are bound together by perceived shared interests and meanings” (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.13). As such, it might be argued that transnationalism represents a social shared fabric or the socio-economic, political and cultural algorithm encompassing memory, “social closure, a basic sense of shared meanings and a sense of predictability of results that bounds together the actors involved (i.e., social control)” (Smith & Guarnizo 1998, p.13).
The concept of ‘territory’ is seen by Balibar (2004) as encompassing not only delimitated spatial units, but dynamic spaces shaped by embedded power structures such as “languages, moralities, symbols, labour distribution and productive activities” (p.4). Furthermore, the territory assigns ‘identities’ to social groups or “collective subjects within structures of

power, therefore, categorizing and individualizing human beings represents in fact territorialisation" (Balibar, 2004, p.4). It could be argued that the process of territorialisation is an ideal type that functions only if we remove other figures of the 'subject' always concerned with the possibility that the other or outsiders would resist territorialisation being the normative 'political space'. In our political tradition, Balibar (2004, p.5) explained that territories are linked to the fictitious concept of border. Territories are also part of the institution of power, as sovereignty forms the 'absolute' sovereignty institution – the border – alongside the government of the territory's population. Borders have always fascinated socio-economic and political elites as well as academics and private individuals, as they represent a cardinal institution in society, providing a "clear distinction between the national (domestic) and the foreigner" (Balibar, 2004, p.4). More importantly, borders convey sovereignty and the power to justify a population's attachment to a territory "in a stable or regulated manner, to 'administrate' the territory through the control of the population and, conversely, to govern the population through the division and the survey of the territory" (Balibar, 2004, p.4). Borders, we might argue, also represent the underlying political project of belonging to that territory. Transnationalist migration research acknowledged how the coexistence of multiple types of borders can change the experience of migrants traversing them as well as bidirectional migration flows to and from different locales. Thus, as Balibar (2004) argued, the symbiotic "relationship between territory, population and sovereignty forms mobile equilibrium between 'internal' and 'external' conflicting forces, substituted by stronger and broader 'global borders', which appear as territorial projections of the political World Order (or disorder)" (p.5). An example of such an institution would be the Iron Curtain that divided the East and West of Europe during and after The Cold War, imprinting a sense of justified division that segmented geographical European space, a region delimitated by fictitious borders. Moreover, such institutions become more complex over time, encompassing conflicting beliefs and ideologies regarding the reflection of the global order on the local way of life, or as Balibar (2004) noted, the potential to represent the 'order' "as a spatial system (a de-territorialized and re-territorialized organization of public power)" (p.5). For example, Europe as an entity is constantly negotiated and redefined so that it can legitimately be called Europe. Balibar (2004) goes even further, referring to the "dissolution of the object itself: Europe", he argued, represents "a phantom of the past", a notion that "is 'history' rather than society, politics, or economics" as the sequences of "capitalization, population, communication and political action, cross its territory, invest its cities and workplaces, but do not elect it as a permanent or specific site" (p.10). Europe, Balibar (2004, p. 10) argued, is at

the same time de-territorialised as well as de-localised, and to a certain extent "out of itself" ultimately deconstructed, unreal and part of the imaginary.

Borders as expressions of power and sovereignty expand local systems of beliefs and practices with the support of transnationalism. At the same time, transnationalist migration and borders might seem at odds, yet they both contribute to reinforcing the power relations that supported their development. Transnational migration is able to change relations among individuals, opening new and diverse opportunities for social action. Hence, migrants' social mobility through transnational networks triggers changes that are reflected in variations of social opportunities related to profession, level of instruction, marital status, income, prestige, etc. Often, migrants have a certain social position in the country of origin generally acquired through educational achievements, occupation and income that might not necessarily translate in the country of destination. Immigrants' change of social position might influence their social status and redefines the collection of hierarchical or egalitarian social relations with other members of the social network they are part of. In other words, while migrants' pattern of social exchange and interaction within a social group at origin may persist over time, being held together by norms of mutual trust and reciprocity, the dynamics of transnational migration give migrants' social networks fluidity to manifest different forms of social capital in diverse destinations (Uphoff, 1999).

Basch et al. (1994) defined "transnational migration" as "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement building social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders" (p.7). Thus, immigrants become transmigrants engaged in developing and maintaining diverse relationships such as those of friendship, familial, corporate, social, economic, and political, along with many others that cut across borders (Glick Schiller et al., 1994, p. 7). Therefore, transnationalism's key features are the multiple diverse interactions migrants engage in both within their homes and host societies (Glick Schiller et al., 1994, p. 7).

Not surprisingly, in an earlier publication, Glick Schiller et al. (1992, p.1) saw transnationalism as a new pane of glass for researching migration.

According to Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004, p. 1004), even though social life is not necessarily contained by borders, nation states are pivotal to our understanding of society from a nationalist methodological point of view. As such, Lazar (2011, p. 75) pointed out that power struggles between nation states might lead to or even orientate and increase migration. Also, like other cross-border processes, transnational migration contributes to an underlying political project, diminishing or enhancing a state's power. Although transnationalism draws

its strength from complex linkages between micro- macro social, political and economic elements, the all-too-optimistic transnational studies, Lazar argued (2011), that "imagine social actors as free, heroic artisans of their own destinies could be easily counterbalanced, by looking not only at the means by which social agents shape their social universes but also at the way in which the world system of emerging and changing structures of opportunities and constraints fosters, shapes or disables local agency" (p.76).

The complex bidirectional exchanges fostered by transmigrants across national borders, dense social ties and intermittent spatial mobility, have reached unprecedented levels. This phenomenon has led to the formulation of the now popular academic assumption of 'neither here nor there' and "metaphors of transnationalism as a boundless process" (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.13). Yet transnational practices are not constructed without constraint and delimitations that contextuality imposes. For example, these constraints could incorporate superficial stereotypical notions as well as deeply embedded self-worth and belonging beliefs. Connecting diverse locales spread across multiple national territories, transnational practices are part of the social fabric encompassing diverse social relations among "specific people situated in unequivocal localities, at historically determined times" (Smith & Guarnizo, 1998, p.9).

In addition, Vertovec (2009, p. 33) linked fundamental concepts such as "social networks, social capital and embeddedness" to what he called transnational social formations. Social networks are basically structures that "provide both opportunities and constraints for social action" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 33). The social network ties function by channelling the flow of material and non-material resources (Vertovec, 2009, p. 33). When used by migrants they become the infrastructure of transnational practices. Lin (1999, p 33) suggested that the notion of social capital as a concept has evolved as part of social networks and social relations; therefore, it should be measured relative to its roots, considering the process of mobilising, accessing and using social resources. Thus, according to Lin (1999), the concept of social capital is characterised by three essential factors: "resources embedded in a social structure (embeddedness), accessibility to such social resources by individuals (accessibility), and (use) or mobilization of such social resources by individuals in purposive actions" (p.36). As a transnational social formation, social capital has its roots in the collective embedded practices and beliefs influencing an individual's behaviour. These include widely "shared values, normative reciprocity and 'enforceable trust' – or the mode by which loyalty and morality is monitored and safeguarded within a social network" (Vertovec, 2009, p.36). "Enforceable trust" is often described by more classical notions in sociology related to social

sanctions and rewards (Vertovec, 2009, p.36). Another transnational social formation is embeddedness, as mentioned above. Granovetter (1985) initially theorised the concept of embeddedness by emphasising how "essentially like all actions, for instance economic action is socially situated and cannot be explained wholly by individual motives" (as cited in Vertovec, 2009, p.11). As such, economic actions are embedded in the co-ethnic network and are not simply a product of an automised behaviour. Portes (1995) argued that there are two types of embeddedness: relational and structural. The first kind refers to the relations actors have "with one another, including norms, sanctions, expectations and reciprocity" (Vertovec, 2009, p.11). The second involves scales of social relationships "in which many others take part beyond those actually involved in an economic transaction" (Vertovec, 2009, p.11). Unsurprisingly, technology today has become so entrenched in our daily lives and further contributes to changes in migrants' social mobility patterns. What is more remarkable is how it fuels, shapes and maintains transnational ties. For example, family and friends make regular contact with overseas migrants sometimes daily, transforming these interactions in routine and necessity. Everyday interactions among the members of a transnational family are extensions of the social practices governing the communities at origin and destination. From a different perspective, Pratt (2004) suggests that transnational migrants travel across materialised discursive formations which are often opposing, offering the opportunity for critique. For example, Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong have understood their experience there as exploited labourers. This led them to rethink the structure of collectively owned businesses that they were starting in the Philippines by rethinking the discourse or system of representation that produces statements such as exploited workers.

Everyday transnational practices such as long distant communication, bidirectional exchanges of ideas and remittances have become the norm in the lives of many families that stretch across migrant sending-and-receiving countries (Vertovec, 2009, p. 13). It is also within transnational families that socially constructed gender stereotypes become challenged. For example, the female migrants that become the sole providers for the families at home develop a new understanding of the position women could have in the household and start questioning old habits and potentially challenge gender stereotypes (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1994, p. 3). Confronting gender stereotypes is important, as Pratt (2004) suggested that stereotypes are misrepresentations and formulaic with a "capacity for creativity and originality" (p.188). More dangerously, stereotypes have proved their effectiveness as "realistic political weapons capable of generating belief, commitment and action" (Pratt, 2004, p.35). Contrary to women's experiences, it could be assumed that through migration men might lose their

dominant position, so they may consider returning to their home community to reinstate their status and social position that migration unbalanced. Once back, in order to support their identity reconstruction, men might purposely reinforce certain norms or values (Itzigsohn & Giorguli-Saucedo, 2005, p.897).

Vlase (2012) suggests that in Romanian rural communities the divisions of domestic work are far from being symmetrical among men and women. However, while living abroad Romanian migrants may come across different gendered divisions of labour which they sometimes internalise as new forms of habitus. Once back in their home communities, if these new values and gender norms are used to challenge the local gendered labour divisions, they might face certain sanctions or criticism (Vlase, 2012, p.29). For example, parents returning to Romania usually revert back to their traditional roles within the family: "women as caretakers and men as breadwinners" (Vlase, 2012, p.29). Vlase (2012, p. 29) also pointed out that Romanian women migrants may choose to "postpone their return", since the social control their household or extended family have abroad is weaker.

Gender norms and family forms are basic features of social institutions that are generated by normative systems including values, social practices and experiences. One concept that is useful for "gaining a better understanding of the form", content and workings of such normative systems and values – and how they might be transformed through transnationalism – is habitus (Vertovec, 2009, p.66).

Migration theorists paid little attention until recently to the shared habitus that migrants occupy (Raghuram et al., 2010). Migrants' shared habitus has the potential to generate social actions, norms and behavioural patterns endowed with the utility to shape embedded practices of a specific social field. Vertovec (2009, p. 66) defines the concept of habitus based on Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1990) who sees it as "a socially and culturally conditioned set of durable dispositions for certain kinds of social action". Individuals internalise these sets of tendencies as part of their life experiences and social position. Social practices are often generated by specific habitus dispositions in the context of specific social fields. Vertovec (2009) argued further that "habitus guides personal goals and social interactions" (p.41). Bourdieu (1990, p. 56) suggested that "most practices can only be understood by relating the social conditions in which the habitus that generated them was constituted, to the social conditions in which it is implemented" (as cited in Vertovec, 2009, p.66). Several researchers incorporate the notion of habitus into transnational migrant research, as it describes the characteristics and implications of transnationalism on the experience of migrants (Vertovec, 2009). According to Vertovec (2009, p. 43), transnational habitus not only encompasses the

contextual part of how transmigration occurs, but it also captures the migrants' social position. Hence the transnational dimension of 'social life' is gradually having a greater role in shaping social habitus.

Social habitus, according to Nedelcu (2012), represents a dynamic system of dispositions capable of generating practices and representations, such as the way that the experiences accumulated by an individual as part of their social background reflect "on his or her 'way of being' in the world through a process of internalisation of exteriority" (p.8). Pierre Bourdieu (1979) pointed out that habitus is "a product of socialization as such it tends to reproduce past behaviour within a familiar context but gives way to innovation when faced with novel situations" (as cited in Nedelcu, 2012, p.7). It is this degree of innovation that forms a key part of transnational lifestyles and the way they fix socialisation processes. For example, international mobility might be seen as a way of enhancing the educational prospects of students through exposure to a global rather than a national experience. Certain households might see international student mobility as a better investment in their youths' education. Bourdieu (1977) further suggested that "the habitus acquired in the family underlies the structuring of the school experience... and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn, underlies the structuring of our subsequent experiences" (pp.86–7). Transnational families resemble a social matrix capable of generating new patterns of socialisation, facilitating a dynamic exchange of values and social habitus between generations that "increasingly tend to take place within de-territorialised contexts" (Nedelcu, 2012, p.7). With the development of multiple collaboration software such as Skype, WhatsApp or Messenger, as well as easier and faster connections to the internet, the exchange of social habitus transnationally as part of migrants' experiences has become the norm.

3. Understanding support, obligations and emotions as part of the dynamics of transnational families

The degree to which duty, obligations and responsibilities form part of the foundations of family support is one of the central points of analysis in Finch's (1989) research on family obligations and social change. One of the first distinctions Finch (1989, p. 5) made in her work was that between specific support given to a family member and the reasons it is offered.

In her pioneering work, Finch offered a comprehensive analysis of the mechanisms of caregiving and support part of kin relationships. While mainly focusing on the British communities pre-1989, with several references to the immigrant Asian, mostly Pakistani, communities in Britain at that time, many of her findings are still relevant to this day and have been reproduced as part of transnational family networks.

The notions of duty, obligations and responsibilities in social life according to Finch (1989, p. 7) are used interchangeably. Whether they are a result of complex emotions or moral values, biological impulses, or part of the 'role of morality in social life' are some of the questions Finch (1989, p. 7) raises. Also important to understand is "who does what for whom", what support is offered between relatives and which relatives offer support (Finch, 1989, p.13). In terms of the kind of support that relatives offer to each other, Finch (1989, p. 14) identifies five main types: economic support; accommodation; personal care; practical support and childcare; and emotional and moral support.

Relationships between family members can be dynamic, with each individual having a different experience of what family means. As such, we should not assume that if assistance is offered between family members that it stems only from feelings of obligation or duty derived as part of the dominant social structure.

According to several studies (Baldock, 1999, 2000; Baldock & Wilding, 2007; Wilding, 2006, as cited in Baldassar, 2007, p.389), transnational families regularly share all types of support that Finch (1989) made reference to in her groundbreaking work on the caregiving and support, obligations and duty part of family relationships.

When it comes to economic support, we can identify two main themes when analysing the transfer of money between relatives according to Finch (1989, p. 15), these being gender and class. As such, the ability to offer financial support depends to a large extent on the giver's

ability to tap into some sort of economic resource (Finch,1989, p. 15). When it comes to gender it is not as clear cut, since the responsibility, obligation and duty of sharing financial support with their kin can differ depending on multiple factors such as the member's social and economic status, cultural expectations and whether any of the family members migrated. As a result, this shifts the decision-making power related to financial matters to individuals that would not otherwise be in this position (Finch, 1989).

Financial support being shared in the form of remittances is common among transnational families. Asymmetrical remittance flowing across the transnational network is also evident in Baldassar's (2007, p. 389) research, where Italian migrants who moved to Australia in the post-war period regularly remitted money to their families in Italy, mostly if they intended to return to their home country. Migrants that moved to Australia in the late 1980s belonged to wealthier Italian families and received remittances from their relatives in Italy, usually their parents, to help with purchasing a new house or car, for example (Baldassar, 2007, p. 389). According to Finch (1989, p. 16), the research done until 1989 in Britain on this matter suggests that when it comes to the support exchanged between the elderly parents and their children and grandchildren both men and women give economic support to the younger generation. However, women tend to give smaller amounts of gifts in kind (Finch, 1989, p. 16). Yet, when women do have the control of financial matters and are in a dominant economic position, they tend to give similar amounts to their children and grandchildren to men (Finch, 1989, p. 16)

In middle-class families the main purpose of the financial exchanges between generations is to improve or maintain a similar lifestyle (Finch, 1989, p. 16). The sharing of economic resources between generations of kin helps reproduce the class structure (Finch, 1989, p.16). Similar financial support patterns were observed in a variety of geographical locations in Britain, suggesting that the locations do not play an important role in exchanging support (Finch, 1989).

While money is often used as a form of support towards other family members, gifts are as important and according to Finch (1989, p. 16), these can be in the shape of goods, services and basic necessities such as caring for a child or the elderly. Finch (1989) pointed out that research by Baldwin (1985, p.142, as cited in Finch, 1989, p.17) and McKee (1987, as cited in Finch 1989, p. 17) suggests that financial support and gifts shared between family members have a two-way nature. Even if the receiver of economic support is experiencing some form of hardship such as being unemployed, the return gifts tend to match the ones received. Another study cited by Finch (1989) is that of Grieco (1987, as cited in Finch, 1989,

p. 21) who argued that if a relative received support, be that financial or assistance related to a job or accommodation, the obligation to reciprocate in kind is so significant that they are willing to put themselves in uncomfortable positions such as sharing their homes with someone they do not particularly like.

The economic support shared among kin has various degrees of significance for each family member. As such, Finch (1989, p. 21) asked who are the main beneficiaries are and what are the support flow patterns? Also, we could add questions around whether these are one directional or bidirectional. Finch reviewed several studies from both Britain and the US, citing Sussman (1965) (as cited in Finch, 1989, p. 21), Cheal (1983) (as cited in Finch 1989, p. 21), Qureshi and Simons (1987) (as cited in Finch, 1989, p. 21) and Wilson (1987) (as cited in Finch, 1989, p. 21), highlighting an asymmetrical pattern of support across generations from older to younger that continues throughout the lifecycle as well as after death in the form of inheritance (Finch, 1989, p. 22). However, this pattern of economic support being passed down from the older to the younger generation is reversed in cases where the young have migrated to a more developed country and send financial support to their family (Finch, 1989, p. 22).

The significance of economic support for family members seems to be its reliability, the fact that the network of kin is often a safe space where a member can legitimately ask for support and one they can fall back on when they encounter hardship (Finch, 1989). At the same time, the composition of households is dynamic, changing over time. This might mean that their reliability as safe spaces where family members are legitimately entitled to ask for economic support can change (Finch, 1989, p. 22).

Within a given social, economic and cultural context, every kinship network observes certain rules. While Finch's (1989) research provides a critically valuable analysis regarding the motives, determinants and effects of the processes governing family living, Morgan (2011, p. 31) argued that we should not lose sight of the fact that everyday family practices are infused with practical needs such as earning a living as part of the given social, economic and cultural context that is often affected by structured inequalities such as class, gender, access to different types of capital and its convergence into resources. As part of the transnational family setting, practical support takes the shape of knowledge sharing on topics such as the duties of orthodox godfathers when having to baptise a newborn or simply regarding child-rearing, while practical support is offered through regular visits, for example a mother coming over to look after her daughter's newborn baby or the daughter visiting a parent that has fallen ill in the country of origin (Baldassar, 2007, p. 390).

Alongside financial support, personal care support given to different family members is significant, especially at different milestones in the life course (Finch, 1989, p. 29). While the household tends to be a safe space where its members feel they have a legitimate right to ask for support, there are certain boundaries and limits regarding what can be asked and the expectations of what the relatives could do (Finch, 1989, p. 29). In her research, Finch (1989) referred to the phrase "intimacy at a distance", put forward by Rosenmayr and Kockeis (1963) (as cited in Finch, 1989, p.29) and Townsend (1957) (as cited in Finch, 1989, p.29). This phrase was used to describe situations, especially between the elderly and their young, where family members form a type of relationship in which they remain on good terms and in regular contact, but they do not invade each other's nuclear family privacy.

The need to share support among family members, accompanied by structural obligations and duty experienced through human action, is reconstructed in a transnational setting. Transnational families continue to share the five types of support Finch (1989) identified in her research: economic support; accommodation; personal care; practical support and childcare; and emotional and moral support. According to Baldassar (2007, p. 406), as continuous technology advancements allow us to connect more easily virtually using voice, images and cheap travel, this increases the frequency of contact resulting in renewed obligations of staying in touch and sharing support through these new communication channels.

Another aspect of the nature of support according to Finch (1989, p. 29) is the possible emergence of a two-way pattern stretching across generations where the potential sharing and receiving of inheritance might be used to balance the support given and received over time. Finch (1989, p. 33) dedicated several sections in her analysis to emotional and moral support viewed as a resource, referring to family members listening, talking and giving advice to each other within the intimacy of the household where they might feel safe to talk about their anxiety and fears as well as dreams and hopes. There are different types and ways of offering emotional and moral support depending on the circumstances family members find themselves in. Finch (1989, p. 33) pointed to instances where support is offered either for routine or in times of crisis, making reference to the research by Young and Willmott in 1957 in Britain that showed how daughters often turn to their mothers for advice regarding their children's health and other aspects of child-rearing. Often the emotional support given by the mothers was delicately balanced so that it will not be seen by the wider kin network as "interference" (Finch, 1989, 34). Routine emotional support is described as an important type of support yet different from the type of emotional support received in distressing situations.

As an example, Finch (1989, p. 34) made reference to a study conducted by Saifullah Khan (1977, as cited in Finch, 1989, p. 34) of women who recently migrated to Britain from Pakistan where their kin offered guidance and emotional support to the newcomers.

As part of Morgan's (2011) work on emotions and family practices, we can identify three types of "economies of family living" (Morgan, 2001; Morgan, 2011, p.121). The first type Morgan (2001) referred to is the "political economy" dealing with the "distribution of resources within the household and wider society" (p.232). This is where the allocation of economic support Finch (1989) referred to is decided, often in line with the social structure infusing that specific family setting as well as the agency exercised by members of the family. The other types of "economies of family living" Morgan (2001, pp.232–3 Morgan, 2011, p.121) identified are "the moral economy" – the analysis and introspective processes family members go through during and after making decisions that affect their day-to-day lives, and "the emotional economy", which is concerned with the role of feelings and emotions in family life (Morgan, 2001, pp.232–3; Morgan, 2011, p.121). The concepts of "moral economy" and "emotional economy" that Morgan (2001; Morgan, 2011, p.139) put forward offer a frame of analysis that challenges the idea that economic activities happen only as part of the market economy. The production, allocation and potential return from channelling resources, the decisions around how these are distributed and with what scope part of a family setting do resemble an economic system (Morgan, 2011, p. 139).

Often, as Finch (1989) also noted in her research, feelings of obligation, duty and other moral concerns are instrumental in shaping intimate family decisions involving the allocation of diverse resources, including financial support needed, for example when having to care for an elderly parent or when supporting a young family.

According to Morgan (2011), emotions have only recently been given a more central role in sociological studies, potentially due to assumptions that leaning too much towards employing an analysis of emotions might be seen as "psychological or biological essentialism" (p.119). Finch's (1989) analysis of social change, duty and obligations within families refers extensively to emotional support but more as a resource looking at how, why and when this is shared among family members. But there is not much focus on emotions as a practice as Morgan (2011) also noticed in other sociological studies.

Emotions are at the heart of family practices, guiding and shaping the relationship between family members; navigating social structures, routines or key life events; orientating actions towards others based on, for example, a desire to fit in or please or feelings of obligation to perform certain tasks such as cooking food for others, being pleasant, mentoring or being part

of a family member's special event such as a wedding (Morgan, 2011, p. 120). While emotions play a key role in family practices, they do not fully dominate them. As such, Morgan (2011, p.120) suggested incorporating emotions as part of the analysis of family practices.

A common pattern regarding how emotional support flows between family members emerges as part of Finch's analysis (1989, p. 34), especially for support offered during crisis situations when emotional support is usually shared by the parents with the children and, more specifically, between the mothers and daughters. However, when the young marry, the expectation is that the main source of emotional support is their spouse. Nevertheless, this expectation changes when dealing with a personal crisis when the source of support is carefully sought out (Finch, 1989, p. 34).

Among the different types of support shared among kin such as emotional, financial, accommodation, personal care and practical support such as childcare, might be the most commonly shared among families. Finch (1989, p. 31) made reference to a study in Bethnal Green by Young and Willmott (1957) that shared evidence of the fact that practical support tends to be more frequently shared where families interact with each other on a regular basis, increasing the opportunity to pressure certain family members into reciprocating or just increasing "their kinship obligations" (p.133, as cited in Finch, 1989, p.31). Another important characteristic of practical support among families is the availability of individuals who can be relied upon in times of crisis with regards to childcare. This role tends to fall to the maternal grandmothers or sisters (Finch, 1989, p.31).

Within transnational families, practical and personal support according to Baldassar (2007, p 390) cannot always be delivered face to face but will occur during visits and is expected in times of crisis such as an elderly parent falling ill or a young family having their first baby.

The flow of support among the family members differs. Evidence put forward by Finch (1989, p. 36) suggests that specific kin relationships, such as those between parents and children, are infused with a prerequisite for mutual aid. The parent and child relationship often forms the core of kinship in many communities, and it is where we might see strong manifestations of obligation and feelings of duty (Finch, 1989, p. 36). Initially, Finch (1989, p. 37) reviewed evidence regarding the support that flows from parents to children, suggesting that parents are often seen as the most appropriate family member to offer support and assistance to their children, favouring them above other relatives – an expectation that has been enshrined in the inheritance law. The expectation that parents will prioritise support for their children is evident in the report by Wilson and Pahl (1988, as cited in Finch, 1989,

p.37), who pointed out how support with finding work is first offered to “direct sons” then “direct daughters”, followed by other members of the extended family. Another reoccurring theme that emerges when reviewing the support that flows from parents to their children is that of not interfering too much in the child’s life and respecting certain boundaries (Finch, 1989, p 38).

Support also flows from children to parents, especially personal care, which tends to be offered mostly by daughters (Finch, 1989, p. 38). More importantly, Finch (1989, p. 38) made reference to a study by Firth, Hubert and Forge (1970, pp.406–7, as cited in Finch, 1989, p.38) where those interviewed point out that parents “have a right” to ask for support from their children, and in most circumstances the children will do their best to meet their parents’ expectations. There is, however, a delicate balance regarding the boundaries of expectations on either side from parents or children, and the obligations and duty to meet these demands. Finch (1989, p. 39) pointed out that if these boundaries are overstepped by the parents or children, resentment might follow on the side of those asked to deliver the support. She shared an example of parents making excessive demands or using emotional manipulation in order to pressure their children into meeting these demands. A pattern emerges when reviewing evidence of support flowing in both directions from parents to children and vice versa, centred around the notions of boundaries, independence and balance (Finch, 1989, p. 39). Regarding balance, Finch (1989) raised questions related to the change of the flow over time, citing several research studies conducted in the US such as Hill (1970), Brody (1981) and Cheal (1983, as cited in Finch, 1989, p.39), which found that the support patterns offered tend to be curvilinear, where the middle generation in three-generation families is the main provider of support. However, the research studies put forward by Finch (1989) as evidence to enforce the idea that support mainly flows from the parents to the children are mainly examples from the British or the American societies pre-1989, without consideration for the transnational family context and the reciprocal and bidirectional nature of the flow of support. Yet Finch (1989) did make reference to research conducted with the Asian communities in Britain, where Brah (1989, as cited in Finch, 1989, p.41) shared evidence of the reverse happening: sons making considerable efforts to support their parents in times of need and the immense pressure they find themselves under, which manifests as a sense of failure when they are unable provide the support needed. As such, Finch (1989, p. 41) concluded that while obligation and duty infuse the parent–child bond, the expressions of these complex emotions depend on different factors such as cultural–ethnic background, gender and personal experiences of both the parents and children. However, Finch (1989,

p.52) asked whether the variations noticed in the experience of kin support could be attributed to personal factors or whether these differences could be related to the position both the giver and receiver of support hold in the socio-economic structure.

Morgan (2011, p. 126) explained that one of the main reasons we should consider a significant connection between family practices and emotions is that family members often share social and physical spaces on a day-to-day basis for long periods of time. In addition, the fact that families share time and space implies a degree of compulsion often applied to women who tend to be entrusted with different responsibilities such as child-rearing or caring for the elderly, which may involve the suppression or denial of certain wishes (Morgan, 2011, p. 126). As a result, Morgan (2011) concluded that the connections or relationships between variables such as time, space, embodiment and family practices have overdetermined consequences. Not only that but they contribute to the production of habitus, which in turn reproduce and “routinise these experiences” (Morgan, 2011, p.126). Yet what is missing from the perceived construction of habitus are emotions, according to Morgan (2011, p. 126), that contribute to feelings of anxiety, frustration, uncertainty and a sense of peace, calm and safety associated with exchanges of support as a resource.

A key role in the reproduction of habitus, as Morgan (2011, p. 126) noted, are memories that preserve family members’ special and routine moments and experiences infused by emotions such as happiness, discomfort and pleasure, which called upon in family gatherings or displayed in different forms of media.

Transnational families not only reproduce accumulated habitus based on their experiences of time, space, embodiment and family practices at origin but enrich it with nuances derived from experiences at destination, locking in collective transnational family memories involving complex emotions such as shame, vulnerability and gratitude. These emotions are also expressed and sometimes reconciled using digital tools such as modern collaboration tools: Skype, Whatsapp, Facebook Messenger and others.

The variations in kin experience when it comes to support sharing do differ significantly based on the giver’s and receiver’s genders.

According to Finch (1989, p. 52), while evidence suggests that gender, the socio-economic context and ethnic background have an important role to play regarding the various experiences of kin support, social class is not one of the key factors that structure our family life experience, except economic support, where being part of a higher social class might signal a greater access to economic assets.

As such, while men and women tend to have different access to resources and general and economic resources in particular, evidence suggests that when women are in control of the financial resources, they share these with family in a similar way to men (Finch, 1989, p. 52). Alongside gender, both age and the generational position tend to signal the direction of the flow of support, mainly from the older generation towards the younger generation (Finch, 1989, p. 53). In addition to gender, we need to consider identity construction among family members and its contribution to the way support is being channelled. The experience of giving or receiving support among family members can often be seen as reliable, yet according to Finch (1989, p. 54), it is not a given or automatic but more of a safety net offered in a manner that does not amount to overstepping any personal boundaries or independence. While kin relationships are infused by the need to respect personal boundaries, there are circumstances where some family members might act out of self-interest. According to Finch (1989, p. 54), this tends to be accepted where there is a mutual gain for both sides. According to Morgan (2011, p. 130), there could be variations within the domestic space of how and to whom certain needs and emotions are expressed in relation to different personal boundaries. Naturally, personal boundaries and the way emotions are expressed and support is given and received between a mother and daughter will differ from those among husband and wife or among siblings within the same domestic setting (Morgan, 2011). In contrast, in the public sphere or within the extended family settings personal boundaries, expressions of emotions such as crying or showing affection, and the nuances of sharing support tend to be more muted and possibly guided by more rational considerations (Morgan, 2011, p. 133). Reciprocating the support received within a family, based on the evidence put forward by Finch (1989, p. 55), tends to flow from the parents to their children and grandchildren without a specific expectation or pressure to return the same amount of support received. Yet the flow of support among siblings or other kin tends to follow the two-way principle, with a lot more pressure to return the support in kind. Overall, Finch (1989, p. 55) suggested that all types of support shared among relatives is subject to negotiations about the timing, the type and amount of support, its duration and its terms.

Often the way we experience feelings of duty, obligation and responsibility within a family setting or how we express them are seen as private matters concerning only the immediate kin. Yet as Finch (1989, p. 55) argued, support given and received among family members is not simply a matter of individual choice or preference but is often governed by the socio-economic, cultural and demographic context existing at that specific point in time. The relationship between human action and social structures is at the heart of Giddens' (1979, as

cited in Finch, 1989, p.87) theory of structuration. Giddens argued that human actions are driven by social structure and that structures are reconstructed, perpetuated and shaped by human agency. While social structures provide the mechanisms and resources individuals need and use when interacting with others in their daily lives, these are not merely assimilated or internalised but consciously and often critically used as part of individual actions (Finch, 1989, p. 87). Often in social sciences, according to Finch (1989, p. 88), social, economic, cultural and demographic structures are seen as constraining individual actions, channelling them towards blindly reconstructing the same structures without allowing degrees of freedom that, according to Giddens, allow human beings the opportunity to create their own versions of reality.

Emotional support drives from both structural social frames as well as the willingness of family members to express duty, love as well as obligations just to name a few complex emotions, towards other family members and is seen according to Baldassar (2007) as the "foundation of family relations including transnational families" (p.391). Family members' experiences of sharing and receiving emotional support will inform the other types of support and vice versa (Baldassar, 2007). Within a transnational setting, family member's must renegotiate the patterns of sharing and reciprocating support. Often emotional support for transnational families means reimagining ways of continuing to offer its members feelings that include safety, being loved, wanted and cared for (Baldassar, 2007). In order to maintain emotional bonds across distances, transnational family members have to navigate tensions arising from feelings of obligation and duty related to sustaining a close emotional bond as well as securing the flow of emotional support. Establishing emotional support channels across transnational families also allows for the structural reconstructions of feelings of shame and vulnerability or expressions of care that could take the shape of bidirectional remittance exchanges. According to Baldassar (2007, p. 392), in order to maintain the emotional bond element of transnational families and, in general, within a nuclear family, its members often invest time and effort into providing different types of support, and in so doing build and maintain a reliable relationship infused by obligations, duty and a sense of security where help can be requested and shared in a reliable manner. Transnational families must often reimagine how they will invest their support, the medium through which this will be shared and ways of delivering the different types of support such as being part of certain cultural rituals including weddings, christenings, celebrations, birthdays or anniversaries or simply being able to mediate in times of crisis or disputes among parents and grandparents or with other relatives from the extended family (Baldassar, 2007). The amount of effort and

ingenuity of transnational family members who invest in maintaining emotional bonds and channelling various forms of support has a bidirectional nature and a return on investment in the shape of reciprocated support (Baldassar, 2007). Baldassar (2007, p. 392) reported that emotional work is underestimated, and the amount of effort and skill required to maintain such bonds often goes unnoticed. Baldassar (2007) made reference to Hochschild's notion and research on emotional labour. Hochschild's (1983) landmark research on emotional work refers to the reconstruction of emotions expression and feelings rules within family settings depending on social class. Baldassar (2007) also pointed to the reciprocal and mutually beneficial nature of emotional work and its role in maintaining emotional bonds among transnational families.

4. Transnational families, the emotional fabric encompassing family obligations shaping asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows.

Both the asymmetrical and bidirectional nuances of remittance that flows as part of the transnational social network can be framed through the lens of the sociology of family practices, encompassing notions of family obligations, reciprocity and 'displaying family' (Finch, 2007). Through Finch and Mason's (1993, as cited in Skinner & Finch, 2006, p. 23) seminal work on family obligations we can identify a focus on the household and family member relationships and the underlying emotional fabric that guides them through negotiating instances involving giving and receiving care. It can be argued that some of the elements guiding certain family members and individuals to engage in caring practices as well as positioning themselves as needing care stem from structural embedded cultural beliefs about how family members need to care for one another, individual experiences and history. Finch and Mason (1993, as cited in Skinner & Finch, 2006) explored the mechanics guiding different family members as part of a household as well as extended family members and acquaintances as part of a transnational social network to navigate care-related obligations and the need to reciprocate. Finch and Mason (1993, as cited in Skinner & Finch, 2006, p. 23) put forward the notions of "balanced reciprocity" and "generalised reciprocity", which highlight the different processes, such as the emotional dynamic lenses, social actors use to navigate the need to care as well as obligations and reciprocity. These two types of

reciprocity differ depending on the expectation of return and perception of value, either intrinsic or extrinsic. While "balanced reciprocity" refers to instances where the return is expected somewhat immediately, having an extrinsic nuanced value, "generalised reciprocity" is reserved for closer kin relationships such as the ones between siblings or parents and children, where the return is not being expected immediately but in the long term, coupled with notions of intrinsic value (Skinner & Finch, 2006, p. 23). Within a transnational setting the asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance flows could be the result of either 'balanced' or 'generalised' reciprocity depending on the kinship relationships. Yet among those interviewed for this thesis we noticed close kin reciprocating within a short time frame after receiving remittances. The transnational dimension might heighten the need to reciprocate to show care and 'display family' (Finch, 2007). The meaning of family, care, obligations and reciprocity within a transnational setting is reconstructed in various forms by each social actor as part of their dynamic process of identity construction, experience and personal history. For example, remittances might be understood as an expression of family obligation, of care and of displaying family (Finch, 2007).

The nature of family obligations according to Finch and Mason's (1993) seminal work cannot be based exclusively on the genealogical relationship (Burgoyne, 1993). However, according to Burgoyne (1993), social actors negotiate the meaning of family responsibilities through a biographical lens provided by specific relationships, including the extended family and other social ties in the transnational network. In addition, the process of negotiating meaning is part of a social actor's identity construction process that is often shaped by the power relationships existing within extended families (Burgoyne, 1993, p. 591). Baldassar's (2007, p. 393) research on transnational families and emotional support suggests that varied combinations of the ability to provide support, a sense of duty and obligation as well as the family member's experience and history of negotiating commitments to expressing family relationships can explain why support is provided, to whom, how and when.

The transnational setting acts as an additional dimension, both reflecting and contributing to the social actors' specific processes of negotiating meanings and identity construction. Remittances, from this perspective, could be understood as an expression of care, obligation and reciprocity in relation to the emotional fabric of kinship relationships, encompassing feelings of shame, vulnerability and love that could shape the asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance flows.

The asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance flows can be understood as a product of the intersection of several dynamic practices such as the social actor's identity construction

and the way they negotiate the meaning of family obligations, care or reciprocity as well as how family power relationships shape the constructions of meaning for that social actor. Bidirectional remittances asymmetry could also be explained by the social actor's perceived value of the kinship relationships over a period of time.
In addition, the asymmetrical return of bidirectional remittances can also be understood through the lens of structural factors determined by an individual's capital conversion. The way a social actor's cultural, social, economic and/or political capital and its utility intersects with perceived values of reciprocity evolve over time as part of a transnational setting could determine the asymmetrical flow of bidirectional remittances.

5. Family practices, transnationalism and New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM)

From a NELM standpoint, the household represents a cohesive unit with a central role in making rational decisions regarding the migration of certain family members as well as the need for remittances and their subsequent use (Mahmud, 2020). Lucas and Stark (1985), the main representatives of the NELM framework, viewed remittances as part of a mutually beneficial contractual agreement between the household and the family members that migrated to a specific destination. At the same time, the motives and determinants to remit from an NELM perspective are seen to be part of a spectrum ranging from altruism to self-interest (Mahmud, 2020). Yet it can be argued, according to the work of Adugna (2019) and the findings of this thesis, that the decision to migrate is not solely based on the rational decisions of the household but is the result of the intersection of both structural constraints and human agency related factors. While the household decision-making mechanism may play a crucial role for a potential migrant, it is intertwined with that same individual migrant's emotional fabric, such as the need to care and be cared for; their past experiences and aspirations, hopes and dreams; their desire to succeed and be unique; their idea of safety; and their response to others' emotions. The decision to migrate and subsequently remit is also shaped by the social actor's structural capital conversion returns, meaning the unique social position inhabited by the potential migrant given their education, personal and/or household

financial wealth, all within the cultural parameters of the transnational community they are part of.

Hence, while NELM focuses on the household's ability to rationally set out the schedule, flow and use of remittances as well as direct the motives and determinants of the remittance exchange of transnational migrants, it misses the complex emotional fabric part of transnational family practices that often influences the asymmetric bidirectional remittance flow between various actors. The shared values and believes as well as how emotions are internalised and experienced by transnational families guide how various social actors cooperate with others, reciprocate, and negotiate the asymmetrical nature of migrants' bidirectional remittance flows.

'The family' as a construct is often shaped and conditioned by the embedded practices and beliefs of a given community. Most of us share an understanding and experience the nuances of what the family is and is not and what being part of a family feels like, what we should do or not do or what to expect or not expect. In the western tradition, the family is often understood as a private space influenced by routine mundane practices as well as shared feelings of belonging that negotiate specific boundaries enforced through a diverse web of obligations (Morgan, 2011, p. 120).

Family practices often display a mosaic of complex emotions arising, for instance, from the need or desire to please, conform, experience love, give care, feel cared for, or feel shame in accordance with a sense of embedded obligations. The intensity of emotions varies and might be determined by family settings that could be either a routine activity or a more formal event such as a wedding, as well as the specific way in which that family has conditioned the expression of emotions (Morgan, 2011, p. 128).

Transnational family practices mirror, to a degree, local family practices. The recent innovations in collaboration technology and the wide availability of increasingly lower prices of internet connectivity have amplified the way migrants, relatives, friends and acquaintances in different locations, including those at origin, continue to 'do family'.

Embracing transnationalism when researching migrant remittances, and in this case asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows, can add to the debate of sociocultural factors that was missed by the NELM approach (Mahmud, 2020, p. 2). Migrant remittances are often shaped by a variety of nuances as part of the origin and destination culture and society circulating through the transnational network (Lindley, 2010; Mazzucato, 2011; Carling, 2008).

The family and its transnational nuances hold a central role both in NELM and transnationalist traditions. Yet ‘home’ and the notion of belonging to a home is also intertwined with the concept of family and identifying with a group (Grzymala-Kazlowska, 2016). The notion of home is constructed in a similar way as the notion of family, deriving from the individual’s personal history and experience as well as structural factors such as public discourse. The meaning of home and family has a cardinal yet dynamic position as part of an individual’s emotional fabric extending into the transnational setting. The sense of belonging to a family and home shapes the construction of the multifaceted identities of both the non-migrant and migrant elements of the transnational family engaged in the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange. Throughout the lifecycle journey across the transactional experience of both the migrant and the household at origin, the meaning of home and the sense of belonging to this home shifts. As the emotional charge associated with the sense of belonging to a home and family amplifies, the value of reciprocating also shifts, resulting in an asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange.

6. Transnational labour market, remittances and welfare state

Social change as well as obligations and duty form part of the structural social fabric that informs how transnational family members share and receive support. This includes the bidirectional flow of remittances and the various forms of support that flow asymmetrically across this cyclical system across multiple types of borders, borders that are often reflections of social constructs shaped by history. These borders, that could take multiple forms, can also shape transnational family members’ identities. Crossing and negotiating borders can often mean family members need to employ different types of support, from emotional comfort to alleviate stress caused by the physical separation from a close relative, to advice on legal paperwork or best transport routes.

In the next section, we will explore the concepts of border construction from a socio-political standpoint, with the aim of understanding the structural constructions of transnationalism. Balibar (2004) argued that Wallerstein’s ‘semi-periphery’ concept that shifts between centre and periphery represents “hot places of fusion of nationalism and class ideologies” (p.15). Moreover, the areas found outside the system are compared to frontiers of civilisations.

Wallerstein's concentric circles world-systems theory is enriched by Balibar's deconstruction of the concept of national borders, showing the connectivity and dynamics that reverberated from the 'semi-peripheries' transnational class struggle. Balibar (2004, p.15) also tied Wallerstein's concept of "periphery" to the idea of "border war", taking the example of Europe and its rising statistics of tragic migrant "death cases in some sensitive areas of the 'periphery' such as the Gibraltar strait, the Italian sea shore of Sicily or Lampedusa some passages of the Alps and the Carpathians, the English Channel and Tunnel, etc". This violent security policy enforced "in the name of Europe by the bordering countries, now aggravated by the conjuncture of the global war on terror", as well as the 2010 "Arab spring North African revolutions", reveals in the long run its "actual function: at the same time, it tends to attract and to repel migrants, which means installing them in a condition of permanent insecurity" (Balibar, 2004, p.15). At the same time, the practices used by western nations to control their borders has shifted from reactive to proactive strategies such as risk management and mass data gathering to manage mobility and, to some extent, justify certain political projects. Also, according to Tholen (2010, p. 274), the new form of border control involved multiplications of borders, often making it even more difficult for refugees to travel to the western countries. In the UK, the 2008 economic crisis, the growing popularity of Euro-sceptic views and the increase in the number of migrants from within and outside the European Union (EU) legitimised the adoption of "technologies of de-territorialisation, everyday bordering as means of managing diversity and political discourses on diversity and borders" (Wemyss et al., 2017, p.159).

In many respects in the EU, border security, welfare state and labour market access remain a domestic issue with the EU institutions acting as sideliners. Labour market regulations are decided at the national level, whereas product and capital market regulations are decided at the EU level in the 27-state member block. However, after a referendum in 2016 that resulted in a decision to leave the EU, followed by the UK officially leaving the Union on the 31st of January 2020, multiple forms of borders had to be re-imagined. As such, new treaties and policies were drawn up to operationalise, enforce and legitimise this political decision. When it comes to the welfare state of European nation states, some have gained a highly acclaimed status while others are lagging behind. For example, by "relying on strict employment protection laws at a time of rapid change" the welfare state system of Mediterranean countries has gradually become highly ineffective (Sapir, 2006, p.381). Sapir (2006, p. 381) further suggested that the welfare state models of the European economies should be sufficiently flexible to take advantage of opportunities and withstand threats that could arise

at the supranational level. Otherwise, they become unsustainable "in the face of growing strains of public finances" that arise with globalisation, sustainability constraints, "level of public debts as a share of GDP", technological disruption and population ageing.

From a theoretical point of view, however, the democratic welfare states institution rests on the idea of social contract, where a state authority empowered by the people provides its citizens with basic social rights. Baldwin-Edwards (1998, p.5) identified three high-level features of the modern capitalist welfare state with distinct nuances for different countries These include:

- "Social investment" designed to support the economy through investments in education, healthcare and, to some extent, welfare assistance and pensions (Baldwin-Edwards, 1998, p.5).
- "Income redistribution" introduced as a result of significant unequal wealth or income distribution that might be politically destabilising. It is mostly "focused on the poor, and includes social assistance and healthcare without insurance, sometimes housing and family benefits, sometimes pension rights, etc." (Baldwin-Edwards, 1998, p.5).
- "Horizontal redistribution" refers to a system of "managing lifetime incomes, e.g. by taxing the middle-aged and funding pension schemes which return that money later in life". Under this category we might find unemployment benefits that represent, in Baldwin-Edwards' (1998) view, a "pure form is social insurance without redistributive consequences" (p.5)

The welfare state establishes and maintains social links between classes, sexes and generations. Also, through the welfare state system the legitimacy of political institutions, but more importantly, the political order of a state is strengthened and enhanced (Gottschall & Rothgang, 2009). Depending on the socio-political background of a state there are different approaches to offering protection against markets consequences through passive benefits. Literature on the matter (e.g. Espinig-Andersen, 1990) suggests four European welfare state families: Anglo-Irish, Conservative continental, Scandinavian and Southern European. The Central and Eastern European countries seem to have developed mixed models, blending trends from the four welfare state families mentioned. Therefore, providing citizens with basic social rights such as health, education, unemployment benefits, pensions or social security provisions differs from country to country.

Nevertheless, it is desirable that welfare provision would bring about social inclusion. The contemporary objective of an EU member state should be to achieve a good welfare state

through investment in human capital, labour market flexibility and, of course, competitiveness (Torrisi, 2007). In order to achieve these objectives, there is a need for a creative new mix of policies in the single EU market (Ferrera, 2000, p. 5). Therefore, according to Sapir (2006, p. 384), each member state of the EU should engineer specific tailored reforms of the labour market and social policies according to the nation state's social, political and economic realities.

Kogan's (2007, p. 10) research on immigrants' access and impact on the labour market suggests that the work restrictions in the receiving country, as well as the regulations and structures in place to govern entry into the labour market, also reflect on the development and nature of the welfare regime. The migrant's inclusion in the destination labour market is not only influenced by the work restrictions in place but also by the immigrant's characteristics. In addition, depending on the "institutional characteristics of the host societies" some immigrants might be disadvantaged while others might benefit (Kogan, 2007). For example, the "selection of immigrants with respect to human capital" is, for instance, "an artefact of a country's immigration policy" (Kogan, 2007, p.10).

The current welfare regimes according to Massey and Taylor (2004) have evolved over the past century, always reflecting majority interests, meaning not only citizenship conceptions and other ideologies but also their principles of inclusion and exclusion. However, the relationship that immigrants have with such welfare systems is either accidental (structural toleration), juridical (international treaties and human rights case law), or ideological (active immigrant policies).

Adapting the welfare system to immigrants' needs is complex and costly argue Massey and Taylor (2004). However, according to Baldwin-Edwards (1997), "there is the possibility of incorporating noncitizens in a rational, ordered manner since welfare regimes are now undergoing or are about to undergo radical restructuring" (p.3). Although it is somehow unlikely that European countries will be able to escape their histories of immigration and even racial exclusion and construct inclusive, immigrant conscious welfare systems. Moreover, given the 2015–2016 refugee crisis in Europe as well as climate change challenges, there is little political will to develop welfare provisions for immigrants across the European continent. One of the most common explanations for this is the ethnocentric nature of welfare provisions. However, some progress has been made, with some states opening healthcare provision to immigrants even without previous taxation contributions. Nevertheless, the real issue is that the welfare needs of the immigrant population across Europe are unknown. We might argue this represents another problem that goes beyond

social policy and refers to the increasing phenomenon of illegal immigration and employment. Individual states have to recognise that their labour markets are using unskilled cheap labour and that this labour is cheap, in part because the workers are foreign and willing to work for less than the minimum wage in the destination country, and in part, because they are illegal. Massey and Taylor (2004, p. 11) also argued that while illegal unskilled immigration is needed, this has to come "along with affordable social protection for these workers" (p.11). Yet neither the nation states receiving the migrants nor the European Commission has a precise role in assuring these rights. Mainly because these rights refers in part to migrants' health needs and other social benefits (Massey & Taylor, 2004). Migrants do not have strong pressure groups or lobbyists to plead their cause. However, NGOs seem to play an increasingly significant role in the provision of welfare at a national level. They seem to be well supported by the European Commission and have the ability to engage in lobbying at a community level. Therefore, such institutions might be able to make a difference in promoting an EU standard welfare provision for immigrants in the EU. NGOs are becoming significant actors for reform, developing a socio-political force that could represent and incorporate illegal migrants. One of the push factors in this direction might be the possible electoral force that migrant groups may constitute in a future 'federalized' Europe. According to Massey and Taylor, (2004, pp.13–14) "such political power—along with NGO self-help, albeit with state and EU financial support—constitutes the most likely route for the emancipation of Europe's migrant communities".

The rapid emergence of migration and economic transnationalism from Romania seems unlikely, as the former Romanian communist regime imposed one of the most repressive emigration systems in the Warsaw Pact (Ciurea, 2018). Yet after almost 30 years since a popular uprising put an end to the communist rule in Romania, the amount of remittance inflows according to the World Bank reached over $5.2 million, almost 2.2% of Romania's GDP (World Bank, 2017). Despite the high volume of remittance transfers, little is known about Romanian migrants' remitting behaviour. At the same time, non-migrant family members should be understood as a social resource not necessarily just a source of obligation or cost.

While duty and obligations arise among transnational family members, part of the reconstructed structural cultural, socio-economic and political social fabric that influences support-sharing strategies, it is emotions such as shame, guilt and love that fundamentally guide the decision-making processes, such as whether to migrate or reciprocate.

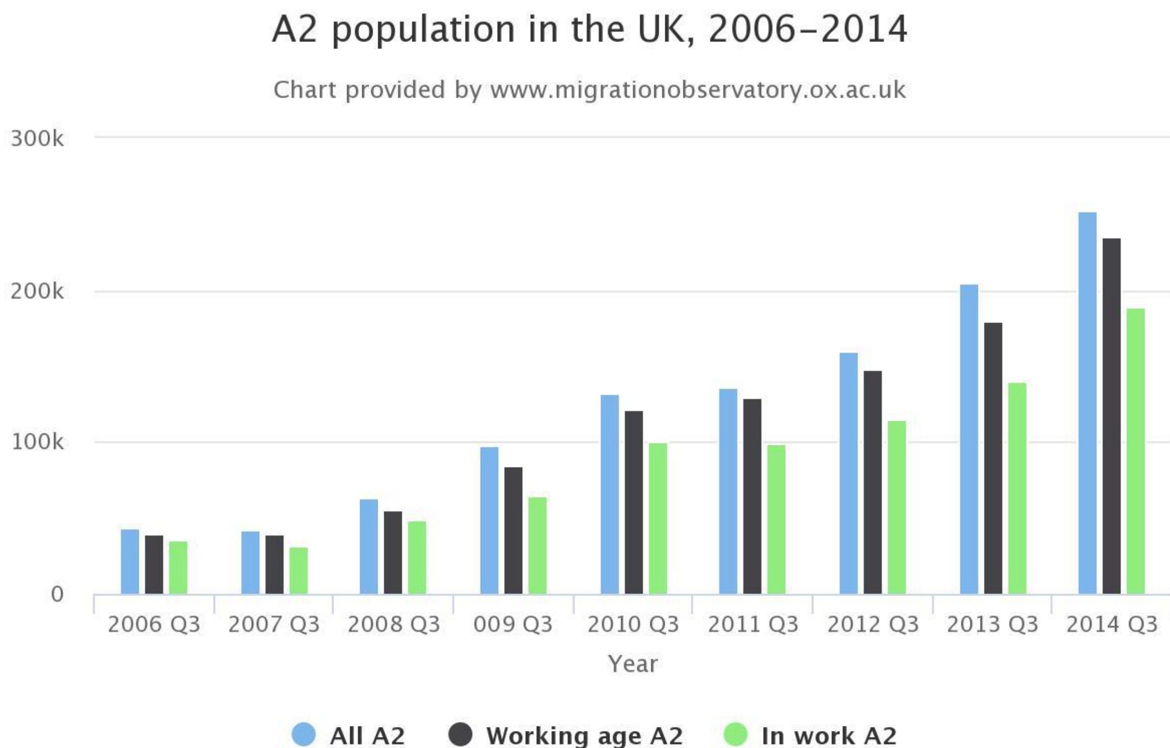
Asymmetrical bidirectional flows of support across transnational family networks represent manifestations of collective and individual agency given their social practice function.
Given that this thesis examines the experience of Romanian students and care workers, the NELM and transnationalism frame of analysis seemed suitable, as NELM endeavours to explain the decision-making process of household and transnational families as opposed to the individual in the neoclassical case. Yet both the NELM and the neoclassical theories focus more on decisions regarding income maximisation and less on the migrant's and household's experienced moral aspects influenced by complex emotions such as shame or sacrifice that might also represent strong determinants of remittances.
As there is no universal theory of migration that holds the key to our understanding of the experience of specific community groups, we need to contextualise and combine several theoretical aspects linked to transnationalism, NELM and emotional practices.

7. "Brexit means Brexit" the political context in the UK, reflection of Romanian community members on belonging.

The size of the Romanian and Bulgarian communities in the UK grew steadily in the years after the 2007 EU enlargement, as shown in Figure 4 below. Some in the British government and public saw this influx of Eastern European migrants as a threat to national interests. Both Romanian and Bulgarians, or the so-called A2 nationals, were able to move freely across the EU member states. However, they had to navigate several work restrictions imposed by certain member states such as the UK. Similar work restrictions imposed for the A2 migrants for accessing the UK labour market were also in place in 2004 and were meant to manage the access to the British labour market of A8 migrant nationals of countries such as Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia. When the work restrictions for Romanians and Bulgarians were finally lifted in 2014, a few British newspapers, such as the Daily Mail, published articles warning of an imminent flood or hordes of A2 migrants descending on the UK borders.
The UK joined the EU in 1973; however, over the following almost three decades there were several attempts to either leave the EU or renegotiate the membership agreement. David

Cameron and the Conservative Party won the election in May 2015 and promised a referendum on exiting the EU in 2016.
The leave campaign used extensively in their discourse messages that aggravated the public migrant phobia, such as 'let's take back control' or 'British jobs for British workers'.
The 2016 Brexit referendum delivered a narrow win for the leave camp with just shy of 50% of votes. What followed after the results of the referendum were complex political negotiations to exit the EU and uncertainty in all aspects of life: social, political, economic and cultural.
Many immigrant families and individuals had to rethink and reconstruct their identities, reflecting on a public narrative dotted with messages of not being wanted, welcomed or entitled to be themselves, not being free to express their traditions or even speak their language for fear of becoming targets of hate crime and discrimination.

Figure 5: A2 population in the UK, 2006–2014



In 2018, Article 50 was triggered and negotiations to exit the EU started. The negotiations were marked by disputes between the UK government and the EU over several issues such as the freedom of movement, trade regulations, fishing quotas and the Northern Ireland agreement.

Tyrrell et al's. (2018) research focused on understanding belonging among European migrant children and reflected on the difficulties caused by Brexit to young migrants that were at an age when they considered "who they are (their beings), who they can be (their becomings), and where and who they do/will feel attached to (their belongings)" (p.2). According to Tyrrell et al. (2018, p. 2), the Brexit referendum and the discourse surrounding the timing of the decisive vote labelled the majority of EU residents living in the UK as part of 'the others' group, the unwanted as well as the voiceless, towards not being able to have a say in the Brexit debate. At the time of the referendum most of the EU, as well as Eastern European residents in the UK, did not have British citizenship so were not able to vote in the referendum that decided their future (Tyrrell et al., 2018, p. 2). Barnard et al's. (2021, p. 6) research on changing the status of EU nationals in the UK after Brexit showed evidence of the experience of immigrants from Bulgaria and Lithuania receiving hostile remarks such as locals asking them not to speak their own language or encouraging them to return to where they came from. Barnard et al. (2021, p. 6) further pointed out that according to British national police data, hate crime towards EU nationals, but in particular Central and Eastern Europeans, has doubled between 2012 and 2018, increasing further to 41% in the 12 months running up to the 2016 Brexit referendum.
Tyrrell et al's. (2018, p. 2) research showed how Brexit interrupted what population geographers call key "life course transitions" as well as "overlapping family life courses", causing yet another rupture in the life course of young European migrants living in the UK. The first being caused by their initial migration to the UK that displaced them from social networks, education and family routine. It can be argued, however, that a similar change of life course happened for Romanian students and migrant care workers, as they had to renegotiate not only their identity and belonging but also their legal residency status and piece together from half-baked government messages what their rights and prospects might be. As these words are written in late 2021, after the Brexit referendum followed years of uncertainty for all aspects of society: political, economic, social and cultural that manifested itself at a personal level in the transnational families as fear of, for example, losing income, of potentially having to start a new life either by moving back home or to a different country, of not knowing if and how loved ones could come and visit or permanently join the family living in the UK, of shame for being the 'other', the unwanted and not being fit for stepping into the labour market, as jobs would only be reserved for British workers. As Tyrrell et al. (2018) concluded, the uncertainty as well as the discourse related to EU migrants surrounding Brexit led young people and, we might argue, also Romanian students and migrant care

workers to call into question their right to belong in the UK, casting uncertainty over their future.

One of the steps taken by the British government Home Office to operationalise the decision to leave the EU after the Brexit referendum was the introduction of the EU Settlement Scheme. The Settlement Scheme was introduced to offer nationals from the European Economic Area (EEA) residing in the UK the option to claim a settled or pre-settled status. According to

Barnard et al. (2021, p. 2), the EU Settlement Scheme was a reflection of the EEA citizens' rights agreed as part of the Withdrawal Agreement Act 2020 signed between the EU and UK and was opened in March 2019 until the 30th June 2021. While the Settlement Scheme was welcomed as a way of formalising the stay of EEA nationals, it also brought uncertainty, such as how do the rights inherited for each type of settlement differ and how does the acquired status translate into day-to-day life in terms of obligations, benefits, and at an identity level how will this be internalised and negotiated. Barnard et al's. (2021, p. 7) analysis of the experience of EEA migrants in the UK applying for the EU Settlement Scheme after the Brexit referendum showed heightened levels of stress and anxiety. Several other research papers, such as the ones reviewed by Markova and King (2021, 59), frame the impact of Brexit as a "rupture", "impasse" and "unsettling event", infused with uncertainty both for the immigrants and their transnational families as well as for British society.

Barnard et al's. (2021, p. 7) analysis regarding the changing status of EU nationals after Brexit concluded that to many EEA migrants Brexit meant a forced rupture and push into "otherness" from the British communities where they had settled. Barnard et al. (2021, p. 7) shared interview excerpts of several EEA migrants' experiences of having to abstain from using their language in public spaces. The migrant-hostile environment created by Brexit often translated into the artificial dislocation of specific nationals from society and was infused with feelings of confusion, disbelief, fear, anxiety, "self-consciousness" and "self-censorship" on the EEA migrant's side.

Markova and King's (2021, p. 63) quantitative analysis of the post-Brexit mobility of Bulgarians in the UK puts forward evidence suggesting that Bulgarians are opting to continue to stay in the UK regardless of the difficulties they face due to Brexit, such as anxiety and uncertainty. If anything, this experience made them more resilient, anchoring their "personal and emotional lives here" (Markova and King's, 2021, p. 63)

The first response of transnational families in times of difficulty has always been to exchange emotional support, such as encouragement and, in some cases, reassurance that 'family' and

‘home’ are safe places to fall back on if needed. Nevertheless, the fear and anxiety some of the EEA migrants, including Romanian care workers and students, experienced due to the confusion and uncertainty caused by Brexit disrupted their remittance exchange patterns. EEA migrants, together with their transnational families, had to rethink and reimagine their identity and position vis a vis the British society. This raised questions such as where will home be, if not here, where; where is it safe; is returning to the country of origin the best choice; and what prospects do we now have? These questions flooded many of the members of EEA transnational families. It can be argued that the disruption caused by Brexit at an identity level, as well as social position and status, might have led to the exacerbation of the asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance flows, meaning that the remittance exchange parameters might be redefined by the disruptive nature of the stress and anxiety-induced emotional rollercoaster that both Romanian care workers and students or young professionals might be experiencing due to the Brexit process.

8. Conclusion

The asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange forms part of today’s neoliberal social, economic and political context, where the migrants become the transactors that are assuming the “initiative and the full costs” of the journey (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p.624). Economists now refer to this outcome as “inexhaustible supplies” of labour (Portes & Borocz, 1989, p.624). It can be argued that labour migration from less-developed countries often represents a viable exit strategy for migrants to overcome immediately perceptible host country economic imbalances. As most migrants are economic migrants, they inevitably have to adapt to a destination labour market in order to be able to respond to their households needs. Moreover, the household at origin also has to adapt their transnational investment, both financial and emotional, to the migrant’s needs, thus shaping the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange. Current western neo-liberal migrant labour controls, such as those that were in place for A2 and A8 EU migrants in the UK, emerged from diverse local centres of power, and knowledge of these in turn shapes the identity constructions of migrants. However, the decision to migrate is often complex and cannot be reduced to a set of rational decisions made to maximise the transnational family’s revenues using a set of motives and

determinants that drive a reliable remittance exchange. Transnational family practices are influenced by shared sociocultural values and beliefs that are internalised and experienced through emotions and the sharing of emotional support. Other forms of support are shared as part of transnational families, such as the ones identified by Finch (1989, p. 14): economic support; accommodation; personal care; practical support and childcare; and emotional and moral support. The obligations and duty related to the need to share support, especially among parents and children, take on nuances of reliability, reciprocity, having a sense of normality, and feeling part of a safe environment, yet still defining boundaries meant to safeguard the family member's intimacy.

Transnational family members' subject positioning is "constructed in relation to specific" spaces, for example, "live-in care" giving is "defined through" the meaning "attributed to the home" (Pratt, 2004, p.66). For example, Romanians might be constructed as low-paid permanent caregivers by a mixed set of social actors and institutions, such as the Romanian national government, British government, care placement agencies, British families and other Romanian immigrants. As Pratt (2004) suggested, in any migrant group case these agents and institutions have different interests and produce Romanians, for example, within different discursive frames. By carefully outlining these various local centres, we get a sense of the interplay between local tactics and overall strategy. While the layering of particularised discursive frames seems to pin Romanians in place as, for example, low-paid caregivers, it also provides some opportunities for resistance. Pratt (2004, p. 66) suggested that immigration, colonialism, domestic space and, we would add, the East–West divide in Europe "are part of the production of borders that define workers as worthy or unworthy, competent or incompetent, skilled or unskilled" (p.66). These groupings are also responsible for the creation of specific categories of workers that "are both allocated to and assume particular occupational niches" (Pratt, 2004, p.66).

Within the transnational family its members, such as Romanian students and migrant care workers, navigate a landscape of structurally defined opportunities and pitfalls. Yet it is the emotional charge of each decision that drives and generates reciprocity, support sharing or, in Morgan (2011, p.139), the "emotional economy".

Chapter 3 Theories and trends in the study of remittances

- **Introduction**
- **Theories and trends in the study of remittance**
- **Pluralist perspective: New Economics of Labour Migration (NELM**
- **Micro-level motives and determinants to remit**
- **Motives to remit in the new economics of labour migration**
- **Micro-level determinants of remittances**
- **Conclusion**

1. Introduction

This chapter navigates through different migration theories, critically assessing the position remittances negotiate as part of these theories. The NELM is extensively referred too and debated, since it integrates motives and determinants that play a role in the household's decision-making process regarding migration rather than just in the individual's income maximisation process. Family obligations, needs and the emotional fabric element of family relationships transnationally also play a key role. A conceptual framework is proposed to show the linkages between different building blocks, contexts and variables that shape the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows concept.
Examining the multiple ways remittances link to transnational migration is a daunting task. To start with, this requires defining transnational migration, attempted in the previous sections, and second, "delimiting the scope of the analysis to certain types" of remittances and not to others (Portes, 2010, p.1534). Hence, this chapter will build on previous sections' analyses and refine existing remittance theory debates with the purpose of narrowing the focus onto motives and determinants driving the bidirectional remittances flow involved in providing informal social protections to both Romanian migrants as well as households who supported the initial investment in migration of certain family members. The greatest obstacles that might be encountered are, on one hand, being overwhelmed by the existing research surrounding transnational migration and, on the other hand, attempting to review as much of the literature on the matter as possible, and in the process "lose sight of the analytic priorities and of major" causal linkages (Portes, 2010, p.1534). In order to avoid these potential stumbling blocks, a theoretical framework was devised. This supporting structure

shows how households and migrants are interconnected by bidirectional remittance flows across transnational locales. The remittance exchanged is subsequently steered by specific motives and determinants wrapped by a social fabric of emotional practices such as gratitude, shame and vulnerability. Moreover, the chapter looks at what might have led to the establishment of a bidirectional remittance flow among Romanian households and their family members abroad.

From a macroeconomic perspective, remittances are often seen as a stable source of development finance for many "labour-exporting countries" (Richard, 2013, p. 1). Moreover, the International Monetary Fund's Balance of Payments Statistical Yearbook (2003) identifies three types of remittances (Pop, 2006):

- "Worker remittances that represent monetary transfers made by migrants towards their home country for a period longer than one year" (Pop, 2006, p.9).
- Compensation for employees, which refers to the money sent home by migrants working abroad for less than a year.
- Permanent migrant's remittances that are classed as migrant transfers.

In addition, the classification of migrants' remittances can also be done according to the reasons of remitting, the method of transfer, the beneficiaries of remittances, the frequency of the transfers and so on.

Remittances can be used in various ways, both at their destination and in the country of origin. After reviewing several research papers, Sander (2003, as cited in Pop, 2006, p.10) referred to the most common remittances usage:

- *"Daily needs and expenses* – often these constitute spendings on everyday basic items such as food, utility bills or basic services.
- *Medical/health care expenses or education* – refers to paying for specific medical services and covering children's education costs.
- *Consumer durables* – these represent purchases of household items such as dishwashers, washing machines, a car, television and so on.
- *Investing in the house and household* – these relate to building refurbishment or the new construction of housing, as well as buying land or livestock.
- *Investments in sociocultural life* – these might refer to spending remittances on holidays or on promoting cultural activities in the home community.
- *Loan repayments* – some households finance their debts from remittances in cases when migrants have loans to repay.
- *Savings* – remittances are used by beneficiary households to ensure safe retirement or reduce risks.
- *Income or employment generating activities* – remittances can also be used as start-up capital for new businesses".

Some researchers, however, add even more nuances to the concept of remittances such as goods received and sent home by migrants (Pop, 2006). The experience accumulated by transnational migrants might also be referred to as a type of remittance, since it becomes a resource that is often transferred or tapped into by household members, other potential migrants in the country of origin or by new migrants at the destination (see migrant social capital studies such as Grip, 2008 or Ryan et al., 2008).

Over the last three decades, the study of remittances has seen a reinvigorating start with new economic tools and approaches being applied or developed along the way. Since the early 1980s the "microeconomics of remittances has focused on the role of information and social interactions in explaining transfer" behaviour (Valetka, 2013, p.20). This meant a shift in the way economists as well as interdisciplinary researchers interpret the potential motives and determinants to remit as well as familial strategies that devise new ways for securing social protection and welfare beyond the nation state. Also, from a macroeconomic perspective the direction of research and new growth theories shifted towards the "long-run considerations, notably the role of remittances in the dynamics of inequality and development" (Valetka, 2013, p.20). Moreover, poorer countries offer a specific context and locality where remittances and transnational exchanges are constantly evolving, challenging "high levels of inequality and income volatility which, in turn, make access to credit and insurance so crucial" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.4). Most migrant-sending developing countries might also display signs of various market imperfections with very few solutions to the credit or insurance needs of the wider population. Not surprisingly, migrant remittance transfer behaviour to developing countries differs "from most private transfers observed in Western countries" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.5). For example, Rapoport and Docquier (2005, p.5) point out that while "in the Western countries" some private transfers take place "anonymously" without knowing "the identity of the beneficiaries (e.g., charity, philanthropy)", remittances in the developing world are part of "informal social arrangements within the extended families and communities". However, it has been argued that the patterns of remittances in less-developed countries, governed at times by a mixture of inheritance procedures used to monitor migrants' behaviour, could also induce the "presence of liquidity constraints that impinge investment in migration, education" or property and household related purchases that can lead, in turn, to increased economic inequality down to the household level (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.5).

Daniel Pop (2006) and, similarly, Murafa's (2011, p. 3) research on the "small Romanian town of Huedin" shows how "one in three households has a family member working abroad"

(Murafa's, 2011, p. 3). The consumer goods spending pattern described above is mirrored by their research with "52 percent of remittances spent on covering daily needs and expenses while only 6 per cent were directed at starting a new business" (Murafa, 2011, p.3). Moreover, due to a heavy investment, "real estate house prices rocketed in the small community, reaching the level of the Romanian capital" (Murafa, 2011, p.3).

Pop's (2006) and Murafa's (2011) findings are in line with Semyonov and Gorodzeisky's (2004, p. 48) argument, according to which as part of the "household theory of labour migration the decisions to migrate is rarely reached by individual actors without consideration of household needs" (p.48). As such, Semyonov and Gorodzeisky (2004, p.48) further argued that labour migration from a theoretical perspective is an "economic strategy exercised by the household to allocate human resources rationally in order to increase the flows of income and to decrease the scope of economic risks" (e.g. Massey, 1990; 1994; Stark, 1984). Furthermore, the family, together with established or returned migrants, could represent a source of support for new migrants. The support can range from information about job opportunities, loans, personal finance and travel arrangements, to offering sessional accommodation or emotional and psychological support. All of these represent informal institutions, as Pop (2006) argues, complemented by official or formal job intermediation.

In recent years, individuals and households acquired political prominence in the neoliberal context with day-to-day socio-economic practices going against the collective or the idea of community (Blazek & Šuška, 2017, p. 50). Furthermore, Blazek and Šuška (2017, p.50) suggest that the "household emerged as a central subject of post-socialist transformations (…) rising to prominence as an economic and cultural unit and bridging the nuclear family tradition of pre-socialism with capitalist individualism, its significance has had impeding effects on the establishment of wider societal links" (Blazek & Šuška, 2017, p.50). For example, the acceptance "pathologies such as domestic violence as private matters" is to be dealt with within the household "outside the scope of the state or community interventions" (Blazek & Šuška, 2017, p.49). Stenning et al's. (2010) research in Poland and Slovakia showed that "neoliberalism and its various" forms "can only be understood in the context of 'domestication', as neoliberalism is made possible through social reproduction and the practices of everyday life" (Stenning et al., 2010, as cited in Wong, 2012, p.75). According to Blazek and Šuška (2017, p.49), "the present individualistic subject of post-socialist societies, has been simultaneously co-produced by the 'domestication' of neoliberalism 'imported' from the West and the sedimented socio-economic relations of the socialist past".

Within this context, remittances are increasingly important on a national level, with substantial evidence showing that they hold a key social insurance role especially while a country goes through a political or economic crisis (De Haas, 2007, p. 8). “Remittances have proved a more reliable source of foreign capital than other capital flows to developing countries such as development aid and foreign direct investment” (De Haas, 2007, p.8). Moreover, the Global Commission of International Migration (2005, De Haas, 2007, p.9) claims “that remittances are three times the value of official (…) developmental assistance in low-income countries”, as well as “the second source of funding for developing countries after foreign direct investment”. Other research studies, such as Blue (2004), indicate that remittance transfers tend to increase if the origin country deals with an economic and currency crisis, therefore supporting the NELM risk-spreading and co-insurance hypotheses. According to a United Nations Economic Commission’s discussion paper from 2008 by Shelburne and Palacin, remittances “may reduce the chances of a financial or currency crisis”, since they “have been found to be less volatile than other sources of foreign exchange” (Shelburne & Palacin, 2008, p.10). In addition, and not surprisingly, remittance flows tend to be larger towards “countries that are considered being a higher investment risk and have relatively poor access to international capital markets (as judged by low or non-existent credit ratings)” (Shelburne & Palacin, 2008, p.10). Thus, a positive aspect of remittances is that they have been known to improve a receiving country’s credit rating and attract other financial inflows that contribute to a better investment climate.

However, the degree to which remittances can provide social protections to those households and families who supported the initial investment for the migrant’s settlement abroad largely depends on local socio-economic state policies that might encourage these flows towards productive activities, at the same time addressing their macroeconomic implications (Shelburne & Palacin, 2008).

From a macroeconomic perspective, conditions such as the socio-political environment, the remittance exchange infrastructure and the “migration institutions” existing in both the host and source countries influence possible direct and indirect multiplier effects of remittance flows (Pop, 2006, p.11). For example, socio-political instabilities either in the source or receiving country could decrease migrant remittance flows by limiting these to daily basic consumption needs, with any remaining amounts being saved in the host country (Pop, 2006, p. 11). Such instabilities might also represent “a push factor to change migration strategy” within the household (Pop, 2006, p.11). Furthermore, the migrants’ willingness to return and

invest could depend on their understanding of the wider potential benefits of returning to their country of origin (Pop, 2006).

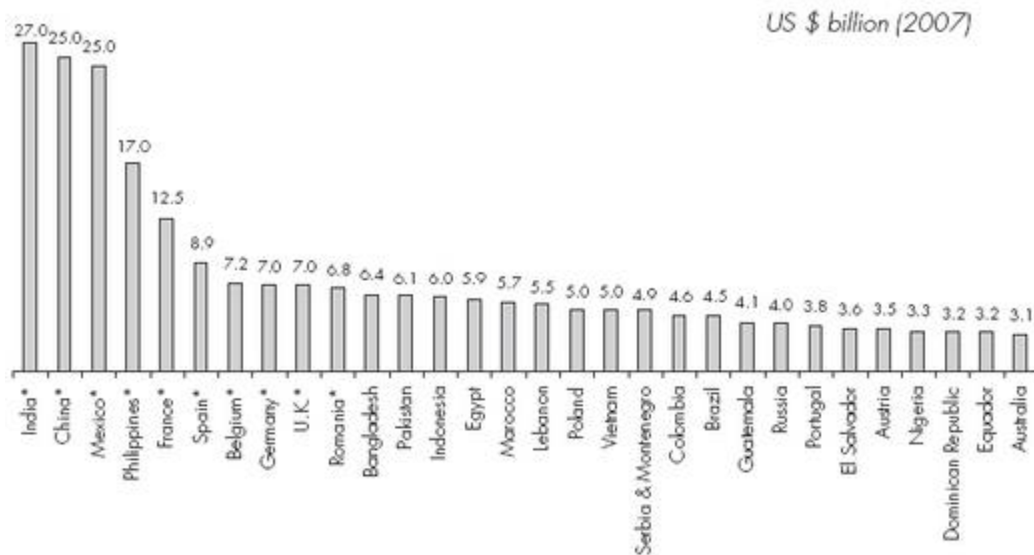
Understanding, in real time, the socio-economic opportunities at the origin and destination has been made possible through a transnational channel designed and established by the global telecommunication boom that now reaches even the most remote villages, with the telephone, for example, becoming one of the most rapidly developing infrastructures of transnational life (Vertovec, 2009). Remittances have also become ever present in the lives of migrants and their families. One can only assume that these technological connections are also used to discuss remittances, helping determine their scope, frequency, amount and value for the households and family members abroad. The relationship the immigrant has "with those left behind can be affected both by the immigrant's motives and by the cultural norms that govern family relationships" (Gentry & Mittelstaedt, 2009, p.24). According to Gentry and Mittelstaedt (2009, p.24) "the nature of these relationships affects the timing, amount, and method of transmission of their remittances, with the process changing as the nature of the relationship between the remitter and the receivers' changes". However, remittances do more than just improve the living standards of those left behind: often homes are refurbished or equipped with new household fixtures and fittings or whole new houses are built, but at the same time these achievements offer a sense of pride and a potential social status uplift for both the migrant and household members (Vlase, 2012, p. 27). Migrants' remittances also enhanced "access to public services" (healthcare, children's education) and "consumer goods" (clothing, footwear, private cars and food items) (Vlase, 2012, p.27). Remittances, therefore, become part of the multiple practices the post-socialist household engage in, such as facilitating informal lending vs formal borrowing, or credit and debt reflecting the old and the new in a transnational community. "These articulations reflect the ways in which households domesticate finance, such that their financial practices are a result of a combination of their agency, assets, knowledge, and geographies; their socio-economic status; and the developing structures of financial institutions and support a conclusion that calls into question singular accounts of neoliberalization in East Central Europe" (Stenning et al., 2015, p.10).

According to Sandu (2005), after the 1989 collapse of the Ceausescu regime there have been structural changes in the "Romanian migration system as in many other Central and Eastern European countries" (p.3). The post-communist transition period saw three stages of international emigration (Sousa & Duval, 2010). However, the first decade after the 1989 collapse of the communist regime can be characterised by critical political, economic and

social instability. The “unemployment rate rose from 3 percent in 1991 to over 10 percent from 1993, 28.9 percent of the Romanian population was still living below the national poverty line in 2002 and 10.2 percent lived in severe poverty (defined as those with insufficient means to purchase a minimum caloric intake each day)” (World Bank, 2003, as cited in Sousa & Duval, 2010, p.83). As a result, for many Romanian households migration represented the route out of poverty and towards a better life.

Vlase (2012) argued that in the early 1990s financial remittances sent to Romania by migrants living abroad were mostly via informal means, gradually increasing the life quality of families left behind. The opening of the borders, so to say, after the 1989 collapse of the Ceausescu regime coincided with the first migration stage (1989–1994). Most Romanian migrants at that time chose countries close to home, such as Hungary, Serbia or Turkey. “The second stage (1995-2001) extends migration to Western European countries (e.g. Germany, Austria or France), and Mediterranean countries (e.g. Israel, Greece, Italy or Spain)” (Sousa & Duval, 2010, p.83). The third stage according to Sousa and Duval (2010, p.86) represented a “normalization of Romanian emigration in Europe”. It extends the period from 2002 to 2007 when, “Romanians were allowed to stay without visa in the Schengen area for a maximum of 90 days” (Sousa & Duval, 2010, p.84). The Schengen area was founded in 1995 with the general feature of removing border controls between Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. In 2007 Romania joined the EU, and its nationals were free to move within its borders. However, until 2014, a few countries maintained labour restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarian workers, among which included the UK. Surprisingly, according to a report release by the World Bank in 2008, Romania is amongst the top 10 countries receiving remittances, increasing from US $96 million in 2000 to $9.3 billion. This represented “5.5 percent of GDP and about 60 percent of foreign direct investment inflows” (see Figure 5) (Sousa & Duval, 2010, p.84). However, as mentioned in the introduction chapter, remittance estimations from a macroeconomic perspective vary significantly and, as such, might not necessarily reflect reality.

Figure 6 - Top remittance-receiving countries



Source: Development Prospects Group, World Bank (2008, as cited in Sousa & Duval, 2010, p.84).

2. Theories and trends in the study of remittances

This section will compare the position remittances negotiate in several migration theories that emerged over the past half a century, in the process refining existing debates regarding remittances and focusing on a more inclusive approach given by NELM theory. This chapter also focuses on the micro-level motives and determinants to remit in connection with the conceptual framework designed to support this thesis and the development of the bidirectional remittance exchange concept.

To start with, developmentalist state-centric theorists in the "1950s and 1960s" suggest that "large-scale capital transfer and industrialization" would route developing countries towards "rapid economic development and modernization" (De Haas, 2007, p.3). At the same time, the "large-scale labour migration from developing" to developed countries became increasingly popular, with many developing countries encouraging emigration, since it was considered one of the main ways of promoting national development (De Haas, 2007, p.3). This was the case for many of the source "countries of 'guest workers' in the Mediterranean" (De Haas, 2007, p.3). Moreover, developmentalist or "migration optimists", according to De Haas (2007, p.3), argued "that migration leads to a North-South transfer of investment capital and accelerates the exposure of traditional communities to liberal, rational and democratic

ideas, modern knowledge and education". Hence returning migrants were often seen by their local community as investors, innovators or agents of change. The expectation being that migrants would acquire multiple skills, practical experience and knowledge as well as start a remittances flow that would greatly help developing countries and their economies towards prosperity. The recent (neo)liberal migration debate has revived some of the developmentalist optimist views towards migration.

Towards the end of the 1960s there was a "paradigm shift in social sciences toward (historical) structuralist views and an increasing number of empirical studies that often did not support optimistic views on migration and development" (De Haas, 2007, p.4). Coupled with the 1973 oil crisis that gripped the world economy, increased unemployment and spiralling industrial restructuring also signalled the end of the great age of international migration (De Hass, 2007).

Under the communist regime in the 1960s and 1970s, migration in Romania was mainly internal from rural to urban communities. However, the mobility of some ethnic minorities, such as the Saxons to West Germany or Hungarians to Hungary, was greatly infringed by the Ceausescu regime through a form of state-sponsored ethnic cleansing. There were, however, some undocumented migrants and political asylum seekers who managed to escape the Romanian Communist Party rule; these stories were only made public after the regime's collapse in 1989.

Similar to the developmentalist state-centric theorists, neoclassical economists also have a positive view about migration, without giving remittances much credit. Thus, their balanced growth theoretical model perceives migration as a process that optimally allocates "production factors for the benefit of all"; a process in which, according to De Haas (2007), "the process of factor price equalization will lead to migration ceasing once wage levels are equal at both the origin and destination. From this perspective the re-allocation of labour from rural, agricultural areas (within and across national boundaries) to urban, industrial sectors is considered as an essential prerequisite for economic growth and, hence, as an integral component of the whole development process" (De Haas, 2007, p.4). Therefore, having a free-market environment as well as an unconstrained labour force will lead to increased scarcity of labour, "higher marginal productivity of labour" and increased wages in the destination market (De Haas, 2007, p.4). In addition, the remittances sent by migrants will represent an important source of capital for the origin country's economy.

According to De Haas (2007, p.4), until recently, neoclassical theorists viewed the "developmental role of migration through the process of factor price equalization", specific to

global financial institutions. For instance, in the World Bank's (2002) *Globalization, Growth, and Poverty* report the section on 'Policies toward migration' focuses on the benefits of migration for receiving communities solely in relation to the "factor price equalization", without discussing about the impact of remittances (De Haas, 2007, p.4). However, one year later, Ratha's (2003) chapter entitled 'Workers' remittances: An important and stable source of external development finance in the World Bank's Global Development Finance' completely shifted the attention towards remittances and hence the sudden interest in this phenomenon (De Haas, 2007).

Contrary to the developmentalist state-centric theorists or neoclassical economists, the "migration pessimists" argue that migration is responsible for the retraction of "human capital and the breakdown of traditional rural communities and their economies" (De Haas, 2007, p.4). According to this view, migration would encourage the evolution of "passive, non-productive and remittance dependent communities" (De Haas, 2007, p.5). These communities would also face "brain drain" and "brawn drain"; the exodus of young, labour active men and women from rural areas (De Haas, 2007, p.5).

Similarly, migration pessimists believe that remittances were rarely invested productively, but instead spent on housing or other consumptive investments. This would ultimately change the taste of rural communities and "increase the demand for foreign goods, thereby reinforcing the cycle of increasing dependency" (De Haas, 2007, p.5). The "dependency school of development saw capital penetration and its concomitant phenomena such as migration as detrimental to the economies of underdeveloped countries as well as the very cause of their underdevelopment" (De Haas, 2007, p.5). Furthermore, it was believed to be part of the cumulative causation process that "increasing prosperity in the Western World was causally linked with the draining of capital and labour from peripheral areas" (De Haas, 2007, p.5).

However, not only do remittances increase the well-being of individuals and transnational communities, they also "raise the national income, contributing to financing imports and shrinking current account deficits" (Daianu et al., 2001, p.18). Nevertheless, there are those (Pastor, 1990; Martin, 1996; Daianu et al., 2001) who argue that remittances act as "discretionary incomes that decrease the likelihood of healthy economic growth, as they create dependency and develop a subsistence ethic" (Daianu et al., 2001, p.19). Itzigsohn (1995) goes even further, stating that remittances reduce recipients' incentive to work, therefore altering their work habits (Daianu et al., 2001). Hence, in contrast to positive views of remittances there are those who believe they increase inequality, stimulate demand for

imported goods, increase inflation and promote continuous migration. Another cost or downside of migrant remittances is their contribution to ‘brain drain’. According to Daianu et al. (2001, p.19),s the National Association of the Software Industry predicted that “2000 out of the 5000 fresh annual graduates from IT faculties in Romania leave the country and choose to work abroad”.

Table 1: Potential benefits and costs of remittances from international worker migration

Benefits	Costs
Ease foreign exchange constraints and improve balance of payments	Are unpredictable
Permit imports of capital goods and raw materials for industrial development	Are spent on consumer goods which increases demand, increases inflation and pushes up wage levels
Are potential sources of savings and investment for capital formation and development	Result in little or no investment in capital generating activities
Net addition to resources	High import content of consumer demand increases dependency on imports and exacerbates BOP problems
Raise the immediate standard of living of recipients	Replace other sources of income, thereby increasing dependency, eroding good work habits and heightening potential negative effects of return migration
Improve income distribution (if poorer/less skilled migrate)	Are spent on ‘unproductive’ or ‘personal’ investment (e.g. real state, housing)
	Create envy and resentment and induce consumption spending among non-migrants

Source: Daianu et al., 2001, p.18

As Daianu et al. (2001) pointed out, migrant remittances can increase the sending community's investment in consumption or imported goods. However, this view does not consider the bidirectional asymmetrical nature of remittance flows, with the receiving communities also potentially investing in imported ethnic merchandise. In addition, this view does not take into account the commoditisation of labour migrants such as care workers or domestic migrant workers in the receiving community. Nevertheless, a migrant household spending money on covering basic needs neglected by an underdeveloped local economy creates dependency on remittance flows. However, the need for spending additional capital on 'personal' investments such as housing is an indicator of a dysfunctional financial system and possible mistrust in the banking sector. At the same time, according to developmentalist state-centric theorists or neoclassical economists, some downsides regarding the usage of remittances at the destination refer to their usage of "consumer goods that increase demand" as well as inflation, and could potentially increase wages (Daianu et al., 2001, p.18). Remittances are also blamed for creating 'unproductive' investments that result "in little or no investment in capital generating activities" (Daianu et al., 2001, p.18). The obvious common denominator would be remittance productivity or lack of it. Such claims become inconsistent if we consider that remittance productivity largely depends on various "micro and macro social" determinants related to "the inter-temporal utility of savings" depending on returns as well as "the usage of remittances at a later time" (Pop, 2006, p.10).

3. Pluralist perspective: New Economics of Labour Migration

The NELM approach comes as a response to the neoclassical and structuralist migration theoretical models that lack the focus on human agency and remittances. Moreover, the NELM model integrates motives and determinants that play a role in the decision-making process regarding migration, rather than just in the individual's income maximisation process.

Jorgen Carling's (2008; 2014) work on understanding remittances as well as the motives and determinants that drive them has influenced this thesis and formed the theoretical base for the development of the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows.

Carling (2008, p. 583) argues that the NELM perspective is not aligned with the more traditional or neoclassical theoretical approaches to labour migration, as it sees the individual making an investment that would be returned in the form of maximised earnings. At the same time NELM theorists suggest that the decision to remit is interconnected with the decision taken at household level regarding migration (Carling, 2008, p. 583).

The pioneers of the NELM approach are Lucas and Stark (1985) with their research article 'Motivations to remit: Evidence from Botswana'. However, according to De Haas (2007, p.6), Stark's (1978, 1991) work emerges mainly in the "American research context as a response to the developmentalist and neoclassical theories (the migration optimists)" and the structuralist's theory (the migration pessimist), which takes a holistic approach by considering the individual migrant as part of a "wider social context" that includes the household rather than the individual as the single "decision-making unit" (De Haas, 2007, p.6). Migration and remittances can form part of the household's income insurance strategy. Theoretically this might explain why migration still occurs even if there are no "substantial income differentials" (De Haas, 2007, p.6).

Moreover, according to NELM theorists, migration is crucial "in providing a source of investment capital" (Aznar, 2013, p.56). This is "especially important in the context of imperfect credit (capital) and risk (insurance)" specific to most developing markets (Aznar, 2013, p.56). In addition, researchers such as Hagen-Zanker (2008, p.13, as cited in Abreu, 2012, p.56) see NELM as a "fundamentally different theory of migration [...which constitutes...] the only migration theory that explicitly links the migration decision to the impacts of migration". Furthermore, according to De Haas (2007, p.6), NELM views migration as a "livelihood strategy to overcome various market constraints, potentially helping households invest in productive activities and improve their livelihoods". As individuals are actively trying to improve their living standards, migration can be considered "one of the main strategies to diversify, secure and improve livelihoods" (De Hass, 2007, p.6). This also "points to the fundamental role of human agency" (De Hass, 2007, p.6). Moreover, from the NELM perspective, migrants' remittances are seen "as a means of diversifying risks as well as providing insurance against bad economic conditions, and securing capital for investment" (Pratikshya, 2010, p.14). As such, according to "Lucas and Stark (1985) remittances are part of a mutually beneficial contractual arrangement" between migrants and their households (as cited in Garcia & Rodriguez-Montemayor, 2010, p.29). Hence, migrants might "remit in return" for certain "services" received "from household members", for example "taking care of migrant's" assets including "land, house, and

livestock or looking after migrant's" dependents such as "children and elderly parents" (Pratikshya, 2010, p.14). This kind of remitting behaviour might reflect a semi-altruist motive to remit as migrants and households engage in a mutually beneficial exchange (Cox et al.,1998; Pratikshya, 2010).

4. Micro-level motives and determinants to remit

It becomes evident that for the purpose of this research an operationalisation of the central research question (CRQ) is needed. Hence, how do bidirectional flows of remittances by Romanian students and migrant care workers contribute to a stable investment climate and provide informal social protections to migrants and the households and families who supported the initial investment? (Ciurea, 2018) For the operationalisation purpose, a conceptual framework has been constructed based on Carling's (2008, p. 586) research on the determinants of migrant remittances in order to show the linkages between theoretical approaches and the primary data collected. The conceptual framework aims to describe the bidirectional nature of the remittance exchange as well as the emotional practices shaping the remittance exchange, such as gratitude, shame and vulnerability.
The motives and determinants that facilitate the bidirectional remittance flows are discussed in specific sub-headings below, building on Carling's 2008 research on the matter.
Across transnational locales, bidirectional flows of remittances might inherit different nuances and intensities depending on the dynamic relations between the migrant and the household. The conceptual framework below draws on Carling's 2008 well-established research on the determinants of migrant remittances, adding the bidirectional aspect as well as the emotional practices shaping the remittance exchange such as gratitude, shame and vulnerability.

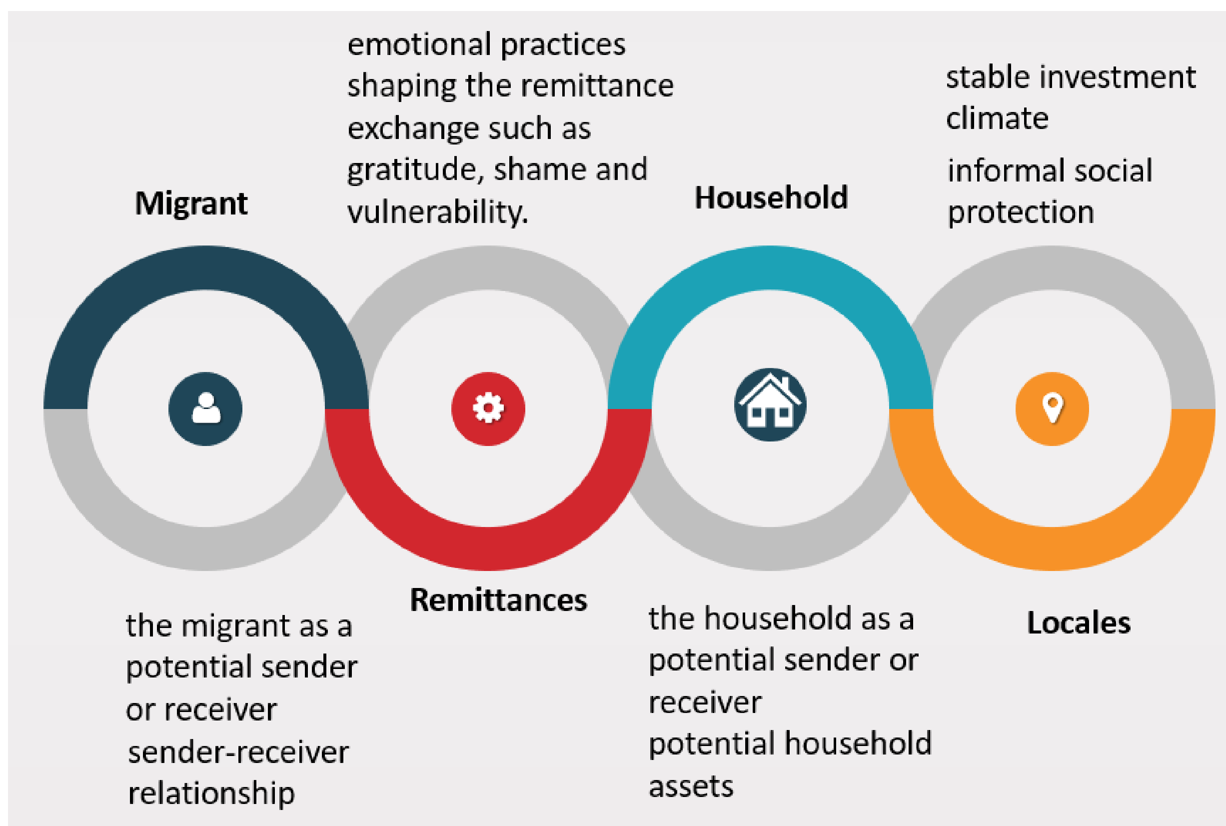


Figure 7: Bidirectional remittances flow conceptual framework adapted from Carling (2008, p.586)

5. Motives to remit in the new economics of labour migration

According to Rapoport and Docquier (2005, p.9) one of the "most common" reasons migrant remit is mainly due to the fact that they care about "those left behind: spouses, children, parents, and members of larger kinship and social circles". However, the "altruistic inclination to remit" has mostly been assumed rather than "tested by competing theories" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.9). The literature on migrant remittances often does not cover the motives behind the remittance flow from the household to the migrant. The motives behind this side of the bidirectional remittance flow, it can be argued, also range from pure altruism to an investment that is expected to be returned later by the migrant. According to NELM theories "alongside altruism, and self-rewarding emotions" usually connected with remitting behaviour, the fact that senders and receivers of "remittances are spatially" differentiated "creates room" for the expression of "additional motives" (Rapoport &

Docquier, 2005, p.9). Therefore, remittances could potentially just ‘buy’ a “variety of services such as taking care” of relatives and of the migrant’s assets at home, while “the likelihood and size of remittances depends on whether and when migrants intend to return” (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.9). However, when it comes to migrant care workers, we can argue that, while “the influx of caring labour subsidizes the rich countries” it simultaneously produces a care deficit “in poor places that are most in need of private and public care” where remittances might not be able to respond (Lawson, 2010, p.357). According to Lawson (2010, p.357) post-socialist “programs of privatization, layoffs, and reduced public expenditures have prompted massive displacements of people mainly from the agriculture sector, declines in living standards, and widespread scarcity of living wage jobs”. The “burden of these policies falls disproportionately on women as they adjust household budgets at their own expense and take on additional care burdens in their communities” (Lawson, 2010, p.357). Moreover, Lawson (2010, p.356) argued that the “human capital” of “labour migrants” is “produced through collective labour within households and communities through social transfers of care”. Yet, the “individual economic migrant” concept “devalues these caring exchanges and continues to marginalize care as essentially irrelevant to inclusive development” (Lawson, 2010, p.357).

At the same time, Pratikshya (2010, p.15) identified two major motives for remitting: “pure altruism and contractual agreements”, arguing that “the latter combines semi-altruistic motives and pure self-interest motives”. Moreover, the “semi-altruistic motives”, in Pratikshya’s (2010, p.15) view, “include co-insurance and co-investing (suggested by Lucas & Stark, 1985); exchanges (proposed by Cox et al., 1998); and implicit loans (Poirine, 1997) – all driven by a mild form of altruism and self-interest, where the pure self-interest motive includes the desire to inherit and the wish of returning home”.

In contrast, the “pure altruism” type according to Lillard and Willis (1997, as cited in Pratikshya, 2010, p.15) is practised by “migrants who remit to improve the welfare of their households”. Hence, these migrants would drive “utility from the increased utility of household members” according to Pratikshya (2010, p.15) and VanWey (2004). Similar to Pratikshya (2010), De Hass (2007, p.7) generally distinguished “two main motives for remitting money: altruism and self-interest to secure investment in home assets in the expectation of return”. Research results are often “conflicting with some studies supporting altruism and others self-interest” (Agunias, 2006, p.21, as cited in De Hass, 2007, p.7). Lucas and Stark’s (1985, p.904) research argued that one should not oppose motives of self-interest

or altruism, since it can prove difficult to "probe whether the true motive is one of caring, or of more selfishly wishing to enhance prestige by being perceived as caring".

A more comprehensive model was developed of "tempered altruism and enlightened self-interest in which remittances are one element in the self-enforcing arrangement between migrants and home" (Lucas & Stark 1985, p.901, as cited in De Hass, 2007, p.7). According to this model, remittances inherit a double role: that of returning the household's investment in "migration as part of the household's risk diversification strategy (co-insurance through risk spreading, securing inheritance claims) and as a source of investment capital that can be used for entrepreneurial activities, education", home building, community projects and also for the "migration of other household members" (De Hass, 2007, p.8). Rapoport and Docquier (2005, p.9) suggest that migration is primarily "driven by wage differentials" and, as a result, potential migrants are often willing to make significant investments so that they can access "the international labour market" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.9). The costs necessary for migration are in most cases "beyond the possibilities of many potential migrants, given capital market imperfections" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.9). In order for these prospective migrants to make the journey abroad they must secure the financial support of their household only to return this support as an informal loan later on the through remittances.

At the same time, "remittances can be seen as part of a system of reciprocal exchange wherein remittances from migrants are part and parcel of the same system of reciprocity in which social relationships are embedded" (Mazzucato, 2011, p.455). According to Mazzucato (2011, p.455) Mauss' theory of gift giving (1923–1924) suggests "that gifts are part of reciprocal exchange in which the giver, receiver, and the object given are part of a reciprocal exchange system in which the act of giving a gift creates the obligation to reciprocate. Giving, thus, is an act of creating and establishing social relations". As such, remittances cannot be fully understood without their counterpart reverse remittances within the bidirectional context.

As part of the "semi-altruistic implicit lending-repayment motivation", remittances represent a return instalment for "loans made by family members who initially financed a migrant's education, the cost of the migrant's trip, or other activities" (Poirine, 1997; Cox et al., 1998; Pratikshya, 2010, p.15). In addition, the desire to keep in line for inheriting the family property might trigger remittances as part of a "purely self-interested motive" (Pratikshya, 2010, p.15). Also, as part of a self-interest motive, migrants might want to "maintain a good relationship with household members" through sending remittances in order to persuade them

to invest in land, property or livestock and therefore increase their prestige or political influence at home (see Lucas & Stark, 1985; Pratikshya, 2010, p.15). Ahlburg's (1995) research on migrants from Tonga and Samoa to Australia shows that remittances behaviour "is motivated by self-interest as those who intend to return home remit significantly more than those who do not intend to return home" (as cited in Pratikshya, 2010, p.15). Not surprisingly, migrants from more developed neighbourhoods were "more likely to remit because they ultimately plan to return home to seize opportunities in their place of origin" (Pratikshya, 2010, p.15).

Lucas and Stark (1985) as well as Pratikshya (2010) support the contractual agreement theory and the pure self-interest remittance motive. In contrast, "Agarwal and Horowitz (2002) support the altruistic motive versus self-interest and contractual motive" (Pratikshya, 2010, p.15). Nevertheless, according to Pratikshya (2010), evidence in the literature regarding remittances, although supporting different views, generally weighs towards the contractual agreement theory. In addition, migration has been recognised by academic researchers (see Lucas & Stark, 1985; Cox et al., 1998; Pratikshya, 2010) as belonging to the NELM as an informal familial arrangement meant to diversify household risk as well as "consumption smoothing, and intergenerational financing of investments, with remittances being a central element of such implicit contracts" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10). However, the small number of household members able to migrate "limits the size of the insurance pool and the degree of risk diversification that can be attained" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10). As a contractual clause, if the interfamilial "altruism might be insufficient to make the contract self-enforcing, families may sanction opportunistic behaviour through inheritance procedures and social sanctions" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10). Thus, the complex mixture of motives that might trigger remittances vary from altruistic, a repayment of loans, an insurance, an inheritance component, and an exchange of a variety of services. This diverse system of motives could be "best described using fuzzy concepts such as 'impure altruism' (Andreoni, 1989) or 'enlightened selfishness' (Lucas & Stark, 1985)" (as cited in Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10). Research has shown that it is almost impossible to empirically distinguish "between these different motives" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10). Several research "studies regress remittances against a set of variables (which typically includes pre-transfer incomes of both senders and recipients), but any sign of these relations may be interpreted in a number of ways, and the additional information needed to implement more discriminative tests (e.g., longitudinal data on the timing of remittances, information on the

migrant's education, the recipient household's assets and number of heirs, etc.) is rarely available in a sufficiently detailed manner" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10).
Motives such as altruism and insurances share similar outcomes regarding the impact "of pre-transfer income levels on the amounts remitted" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.23). However, Rapoport and Docquier (2005, p.23), argue that these two motives "differ with respect to the predicted timing of remittances and, to a lesser extent, the predicted effect of familial wealth on the size of remittances". At the same time, "the insurance model" suggests that both migration and the remittance exchange "are more likely where income at origin is more volatile, and that remittances would be sent on a relatively irregular basis" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.23). Regarding time variables, "the altruistic model should imply a gradual decrease of remittances over time while the insurance motive should imply no decrease for the period" agreed in the familial arrangement followed by a sharp decline (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.23). Furthermore, another difference between the two hypotheses is that while altruism-driven migrants send higher remittances to lower-income households, insurance-driven ones could represent the opposite, since on the one hand migration is more likely for larger families holding relatively risky assets and, on the other hand, larger familial wealth often means an increase in the family's bargaining power. As such, the amount and value of "remittances should decrease with recipients' incomes for a given household" holding an insurance type social contract with the migrant member abroad (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.24).
According to Agarwal and Horowitz (2002, as cited in Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.24) the number of migrants in a given house might reduce altruistic transfers, "as all sources of transfers (whether public or private) are perfect substitutes under the pure altruistic hypothesis". However, Agarwal and Horowitz (2002, as cited in Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.24 argued further that if each individual migrant from the household subscribes to "an insurance contract, no such negative effect is expected". Nevertheless, the exogeneity of the number of migrants and the recipients' income should not be neglected. As such, if the household encounters financial difficulties or if a more volatile environment arises, they might decide "to send more migrants out and further diversify their portfolio of income sources" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.24). Sometimes this might prove a challenge, as poor households might not be able to send more members abroad due to liquidity constraints. Also, the "recipients' income may be questioned; as agents become insured against risks, they may reduce their level of effort (moral hazard)" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.24).

6. Micro-level determinants of remittances

In an effort to conceptualise the notion of bidirectional remittance exchanges, the various elements that support this flow are discussed below. Building on Carling's (2008) research on the determinants of migrant remittances, this section explores the micro-level variation that supports the bidirectional remittance flows.

To start with, the **a) potential remittance senders** differ depending on the specific social characteristics of the transnational community they are part of at origin or destination, as well as the individual characteristics such as their ethnic background, social status, income, education and gender (Carling, 2008, p. 586). We would also need to consider the emotional practices guiding the expression of support and reciprocity in transnational families. When it comes to migrant income this could have either a positive effect or no effect at all on the frequency and volume of the remittance exchange, as migrants usually see the need to return remittances as crucial for their family's well-being (Carling, 2008, p. 586). At the same time, the level of education held by the migrants as well as household members does not appear to have a significant impact on remittance flows (Carling, 2008, p. 586). Migrant legal status might also have an inconsistent effect on remittance-sending, argues Carling (2008). According to Lucas and Stark (1985), migrants often remit in order to repay the cost their families incurred from their initial migration or education. In the case of Romanian students embarking on their tertiary education, the household often makes an investment towards the payment of school fees and living costs. As such, the international student and their household enter an informal social contractual agreement that might require the student to repay the initial investment in education once they finish their studies and find suitable employment. The strategies adopted by households to insure their informal social protection might change in time, and while in certain communities the family member seen as more productive is tasked with going abroad, in other communities the least productive member of the household is sent (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005, p. 48). In addition, while some communities might send mostly male migrants, others would prefer to "send more females than males overseas" (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2005, p.48).

A family is experienced in different ways and might inherit the structural sociocultural norms of the community it belongs to. Transnational families reflect a mixture of structural norms given by the translocal space they inhabit. Its members can negotiate the meaning of duty, responsibility and obligations to reciprocate the support received.

The decisions of mothers, daughters, fathers or siblings to migrate to further, for example, their education or simply earn a better living is infused with emotions such as stress and anxiety as well as love and care for the physically separated family members. Sharing support, be that emotional such as comforting words or encouragement or other forms of support such as accommodation; personal care; practical support and childcare as identified by Finch (1989, p.14), is carried out by family members that often hold overlapping, blurred sender vs receiver statuses. Remittances in their multiple forms are shared bidirectionally and asymmetrically, having a cyclical nature as transnational families experience and embrace support and reciprocity through emotional practices that do not have an on and off switch. Seeing transnational family members as either senders or receivers of remittances might make sense from a theoretical standpoint; however, individuals capable of human actions, positioning the migrants as senders and the family at origin as receivers, strips them of their agency as well as their hopes and dreams, and caring or uncaring nature, which is shaped by the structural socio-economic and cultural frames of the communities they traverse.

Outside the context of family migration history, other specific characteristics of potential migrants, such as demographics, can be difficult to interpret (Carling, 2008, p. 587). For example, marital status might be unimportant; however, married couples that migrate together might remit less than those that have a partner in the country of origin (Carling, 2008, p. 587). Moreover, according to Carling (2008), ethnicity or national group could make a significant difference to the translocal migrants remittance-sending patterns. Clark and Drinkwater's (2007) research shows that "inter-ethnic differences in the raw data not only persisted when a variety of socio-economic controls were introduced, but even increased" (as cited in Carling, 2008, p.587).

Remittance behaviour changed with the evolution of transnational migration, which, according to Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011, p.190), surpassed traditional emigration, that at some point meant the indefinite settlement at one specific place of destination. The growing number of "migrating groups of various origins contribute to the sociocultural diversity of immigration countries" (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.190).

Simultaneously, due to transnational migration, the social ties and linkages between origin and destination as well as "other places of reference" have become ever more "flexible and

multidirectional" (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.190). As an example, Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011) pointed to working migrants in Central Europe, such as Poles living in Poland but working in Germany, who have a flexible lifestyle inspired by globalisation. Similarly, the well-established migrant minorities 'guestworker-turned-immigrant model' "seem to have gained flexibility and fluidity" (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.190). Intersectionality needs to be considered when discussing the remitting behaviour of the sender or receiver. According to Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011, p.188), intersectionality might shed light on how the migrant's structural and cultural embeddedness are linked to social inequality that can ultimately be traced back "to the specific dynamics of interplay between structure and agency". Moreover, intersectionality shifts the perspective from focusing on the migrant's adaptation to the host society to more nuanced, dynamic "context-dependent coping strategies within shifting fields of action and changing structural frameworks of reference" (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.188). Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011) suggests that several migration studies attempted to explain the position of women as part of transnational migrant communities, their family roles and the factors that triggered discrimination or why they were denied access to certain resources. Yet most of these attempts to understand women's social positioning were stalled "by the enormous difficulties of handling heterogeneous factors of discrimination" (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.189). In most of the research studies reviewed by Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011, p.189), the factors of discrimination were oversimplified and narrowed "to ethnicity, cultural traditionalism, or religious fundamentalism without regarding the embeddedness created by a specific social context and its structural implications". For example, the focus on ethnicity completely diminished other crucial elements that might lead to exclusion. According to Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011, p.189), one such example is illustrated by the experience of "young Turkish women in Germany" who have to negotiate the "traditional patriarchal family structures" that would rather see girls as wifes and mothers and not in a professional job or education, as well as other difficulties raised by language barriers, belonging to a social class and living in a deprived area that signal a lower social standing.

However, Hans-Joachim Bürkner (2011, p.189) argued that the experience of young Turkish women in Germany could portray just "one context-specific variant". As soon as the certain contextual variables change, the experience might take on a completely different meaning. "As soon as the neighbourhood itself develops into the governing factor of exclusion from the social world of the majority as well as from other 'ethnic' worlds and the supplements of traditionalism, gender-specific familial roles, formal exclusion from German institutions, and

so forth, become secondary, a ‘different’ experience is likely to be made – including new obstacles and opportunities for action” (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.189).
Similarly, for example, a single mother from a rural Romanian agricultural community might face possible exclusion and discrimination for pursuing a job or career. The community in which she lives might use various overlays governed by traditional patriarchal family structures to construct her identity (her extended family might not approve of vocational training, as her immediate responsibility is raising her children). She might also be expected to find a well-paid job, potentially by emigrating and remitting, and fulfil her caring responsibilities for her children and other family members simultaneously as well as potentially not seeking another life partner.

The, **b) potential remittance receiver** and the potential sender are dynamic roles that overlap across time and transnational locales. As such, the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange will be influenced by the individual’s structural and cultural embeddedness; the nature of the social contractual agreement binding the transnational family members; other socio-economic variables, such as household income or the transactor’s need for informal social protection; and the emotional practices.
Carling (2008, p.587) suggested that several migrant remittance research studies have focused on the link between the household income and remittance receipts, as this might be a potential indicator for “the senders’ level of altruism”. However, empirical findings differ regarding altruism even when the methodology and data are consistent. For example, Itzigsohn’s (1995) comparative research in Guatemala, Dominican Republic, Haiti and Jamaica shows “that household income had a positive effect on remittance receipts in Guatemala, a negative effect in the Dominican Republic, and no significant effect in Haiti and Jamaica” (as cited in Carling, 2008, p.588).
In addition, variations in findings might highlight potential methodological differences among the research studies. The frequency and amount of remittance received might be impacted by the receiver’s perception of their financial status as well as the household’s income (Carling, 2008, p. 588). “Hendrik van Dalen and his colleagues (2005) found that Egyptian and Turkish households were more likely to receive remittances if the sender perceived the household resources to be insufficient or barely sufficient” (as cited in Carling, 2008, p.588). The same might be true if the household perceived the migrant’s resources as insufficient at a certain point in time and they, therefore, reverse the flow of remittances. However, when “remittances are part of a co-insurance arrangement” it might be possible that

fluctuations in income become “more important than the income level” (Carling, 2008, p.588). Rafael Pleitez-Chavez (2004) “combined data from several surveys in El Salvador and found that negative income shocks significantly increased remittances from relatives abroad” (as cited in Carling, 2008, p.588). Moreover, some remittance determinants studies suggest that migrants might remit so that they maintain a good relationship with the household as well as out of a concern for the family’s assets and being kept in line for inheritance (Carling, 2008, p. 588). Lucas and Stark (1985) found evidence in “support of this hypothesis as migrant sons”, the potential “heirs, remitted” considerably “larger amounts to households with greater assets” (as cited in Carling, 2008, p.588). However, as Osili (2007) argued, household assets might be a “result of past remittances and hence a partially endogenous variable” (as cited in Carling, 2008, p.588). We also need to consider the emotional practices that guide the remittance exchange between the members of the transnational family, especially among parents and children. Are sons remitting mainly to be kept in line for inheritance, or are there a more complex reasons that include feelings of obligation and duty derived from the dominant sociocultural structure about caring for the elderly and providing for the family? Do daughters remit less because they might not be in line for inheritance if there is a male sibling in the family, or could it be argued that when it comes to gender it is not always clear what the responsibilities, obligations and duties of sharing support are? These might depend on socio-economic status, cultural expectations or whether or not the daughters are in a decision-making position.

c) Sender–receiver relationship – including any family migration history

The characteristics of the guest worker era in Europe, according to Carling (2008, p. 588), illustrates to a large extent how the family migration experience shapes the remitting behaviour of both senders and receivers. As an example, Carling (2008, 588) shared the experience of migrant men who moved from Turkey to Germany in the 1960s, having left behind a family including wife and children to whom they remitted regular amounts. Yet once the wife and children joined them in Germany the volume of remittances going to Turkey would have declined. The smaller volume of remittances would have probably gone to the migrants’ parents and extended family in Turkey, yet once they passed away remittances would have ceased completely (Carling, 2008, p. 588). Not surprisingly, many of the variables and demographics highlighted by several migrant remittance research studies showcase the experience of the family migration history (Carling, 2008, p. 588). Many of

these trends, such as the fact that migrants are "more likely to remit if they have a spouse, children, or parents in the country of origin", are consistent across numerous studies (Carling, 2008, p.588). Some studies also share examples of internal remittance-sharing patterns, where rural households support students studying in urban areas (Mobrand, 2012).
Moreover, there are studies showing households reciprocate through gifts or services for the remittances sent by family members abroad (Mazzucato, 2011). Carling (2008, p. 588) also argued that remittances are positively correlated with the size of the household at origin and negatively correlated with the destination household size. These correlations might highlight the various steps in the migration process of a specific family (Carling, 2008, p. 588). Also, when it comes to individual migration, kinship ties with those at origin are likely to trigger an exchange of remittance (Carling, 2008, p. 589). Carling (2008,) suggested that when households are run by a woman, the likelihood of receiving remittances increases compared to households headed by men, since "female headship reflects the separation by migration" (p.589).

The nuclear family inhabiting a transnational space, similar to the family in a local community, is the place where we encounter the strongest feelings of duty and obligation, especially among parents and children. According to Finch (1989, p. 37), support that flows from parents to children is often seen as the most appropriate, with parents being the family member to offer support and assistance to their children, favouring them above other relatives – an expectation that has been enshrined in the inheritance law. Children do support their parents most often with personal care which, according to Finch (1989, p. 38), tends to be offered mostly by daughters.

While members of the transnational family might be physically inhabiting different locations, their everyday lives continue to be infused with routine practical needs. These include the sharing and receiving of emotional support in accordance with structural expressions of obligation and duty, and signs of affection, such as a daughter sending a text message to her mother or father asking how their day has been.

In this context, asymmetrical bidirectional remittances can be seen as a product of reciprocity, of the need to share support among the transnational family members who often inhabit both sender and receiver roles.

The asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance flows can be expressed by the different intensity and volume remittances will take depending on the transnational member's circumstances.

Several studies have shown that "migrants intending to return are more likely to remit, and remit larger amounts" (Merkle & Zimmermann, 1992; Brown, 1997; Cai, 2003, as cited in Carling, 2008, p.589). Some studies, such as Brown (1997) and Merkle and Zimmermann (1992, as cited in Carling, 2008, p.589), found "that this effect is stronger when the migrant return is likely to be in the near future".

Carling (2008, p.589) argued further that "migrants who visit or receive visitors from their community of origin are more likely to remit". Such mobility might give "migrants a self-interested incentive" to maintain "social relations" with the "community of origin" (Carling, 2008, p.589). However, the "casual remittance mechanisms" in this case "are complex" (Carling, 2008, p.589), as migrants able to "afford return visits may also send large sums of remittances" (Carling, 2008, p.589). On the contrary, if for whatever reason the migrant has not remitted, then a returning visit facing the would-be recipients might be delayed or postponed until the circumstances would permit remitting. We might argue that this behaviour is triggered by a social control mechanism, part of an informal social contractual agreement between the transactors. Hence, even though there is not much support for this in the literature, it could be argued that past remittance exchange history might lead to the construction of various meanings for the sender–receiver bidirectional relationship that creates habituated expectations and obligations.

In the case of undocumented migrants that need to use human-smuggling services, they might incur enormous debts that need to be repaid within a certain timescale or in instalments. However, migrants that choose this way into North America or Europe usually join family or friends who act as sponsors or creditors, offering some form of informal social protection until the migrant passes the critical period of accommodation in the receiving country. According to Carling (2008, p. 589), a point often missed by migrant remittance research studies is that the exchange behaviour between different family members exists prior to migration, as household member relationships are often built upon a reciprocal exchange of resources including financial support. Remittances sent by an adult migrant might be part of a natural "continuation, possibly in higher amounts, of a pre-existing, less visible transfer" (Carling 2008, p.589).

d) Environment of the migrant as a potential sender/receiver

The asymmetric bidirectional remittance flow is tied to the experiences of the migrants as well as the other members of the transnational family, both of which are shaped by structural

aspects and their agency. It could be argued that a potential remittance sender could have specific tendencies to remit even if individual factors are controlled. Hence, for example, migrants that are part of a close-knit co-ethnic network at destination might be inclined to remit more, since better transfers could be available (both formally, through bank transfers or money transfer institutions, or informally through a trusted person who makes the journey home and delivers the remittances). At the same time, the social pressure to send and receive remittances might be intensified via the transnational ties part of the origin community who travelled abroad (Carling, 2008, p. 591). Carling (2008, p. 591) argued that Clark and Drinkwater's (2007) research on remittances from the UK used the percentage of co-ethnics in the area as an independent variable. This led to an unexpected result which pointed to a significant negative effect. Carling (2008, p.591) suggested that Clark and Drinkwater's (2007) research on remittances from the UK concluded "that any positive social interaction effects are offset or outweighed by self-selection or unmeasured wealth differences, since the most ethnically concentrated wards also tend to be relatively deprived".

e) Environment of the household as a potential sender/receiver

The geographical location of receivers might offer a partial explanation for the variations in remittance patterns not explained by household and individual characteristics (Carling, 2008, p. 591). Several studies found clear differences per region in the likelihood that certain households receive remittances (Massey & Basem, 1992; Funkhouser, 1995, as cited in Carling, 2008, 591). The receiving community's developmental level might affect the remittance amount. Carling (2008, p.591) argued that often families living in rural areas are more likely to be the recipients of remittances "than similar households in urban communities".

Apart from the geographical location inhabited by the sender or receiver, other aspects that might impact the flow of asymmetrical remittances include the socio-economic status and class structure inhabited by the sender/receiver and their subsequent ability to access and share different types of resources.

f) Individual and household characteristics

The dynamic relationships between the transactors taking part in the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange are often shaped by an individual's subjective sense of

agency as well as structural expectations, obligations and needs that vary across time and locales, coupled with complex emotions such as shame, guilt, gratitude or vulnerability. Various other factors will shape the characteristics of the migrant and household relationship, such as geographical position, residing in rural or urban cultural settings and the economic development level of the translocal communities.

g) Potential household assets

There might be several reasons why assets owned by the migrants in the community of origin positively relate to remittances. First, as Carling (2008, p. 590) argued, there is an endogenous mechanism whereby the assets owned at present by the household form part of remittances received in the past and might be "driven by the same variables as the present remittances" (p.590). Second, origin assets such as houses, agricultural land and other goods "could require maintenance that is funded by the migrant through remittances" (Carling, 2008, p.591). However, the family members at origin could have supported the migrant moving abroad either at the start or even during their stay. The support offered by the family members at origin can be either financial or in the shape of care, including emotional and moral support as well as practical support in the shape of childcare, elderly care or asset maintenance.

"Third, ownership of assets could also support a sustained emotional attachment to the place of origin", which is strongly associated with remittances (Carling, 2008, p.591). According to Carling (2008, p.591), migrants' "assets in the community of origin can also represent a form of self-insurance that might differ from any co-insurance arrangements migrants may have with their families". Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo (2006, as cited in Carling, 2008, p.591) "found that remittances from Mexican migrants in the US rise with the level of income risk they experience". As such, migrants are likely to choose "family-provided insurance – based on remittances for consumption versus self-insurance (based on remittances for asset accumulation)" (Carling, 2008, p.591). Hence "migrants' assets in the community of origin", rather than a determinant in their own right, might be the result of "remittances driven by determinants such as risk to income" or informal social protection (Carling, 2008, p.591).

h) Two-way remittance flows as part of an informal social contractual agreement – asymmetrical bidirectional remittances

Until recently, “micro-level studies of remittances” have been delivered from two main perspectives (Carling, 2008, p.585). Either at destination where migrants might be surveyed or interviewed with regards to their remittance exchange behaviour, or at origin where households or specific family members can be surveyed or interviewed about the remittance inflows (Carling, 2008, p. 585). In both situations, according to Carling (2008), there can be several patterns distinguishing between the research participants who might send or receive remittances. Often, however, it is difficult to establish the exact value remitted.

As such, it can be argued that migrant remittances research has generally focused on the “one-way” transfer “from migrants to families in their communities of origin”, examining the one-sided impact of the remittances exchange, regardless of the estimated value transacted (Mobrand, 2012, p.389).

However, contrary to most migration studies, remittances can also flow in a reverse way if we consider the household as a source and the migrant as a recipient (see Mobrand, 2012; Mazzucato, 2011).

Thus, an asymmetrical bidirectional or two-way remittance flow emerges from country of origin to the country of destination and vice versa. This pattern evolves out of a mutually beneficial, often asymmetrical, contractual agreement between various transactors such as households and their youth as well as between migrant care workers and their families, set within different welfare state arrangements given by migrant origin and destination (Ciurea, 2018).

This thesis focuses on understanding the Romanian migrant care workers and students’ bidirectional remittance exchange experience, as well as challenging the construction of households at origin as passive receivers of migrants’ financial investments. Therefore, Romanian students and migrant care workers were interviewed, focusing more on the motives and determinants to remit as part of the contractual arrangement binding the two parts.

Mobrand’s (2012, p.389) research on internal rural to urban “migration in South Korea” suggests that significant amounts of “reverse remittances”, consisting of money as well as goods, are sent by households to their migrant members who are settled or studying in urban areas. The possibility of large flows of reverse remittances is mostly discounted in the research literature, which treats migrant remittances as a one-way flow from migrants

towards their families in the country of origin. Stark (1978, p.35) observed that "the urban-to-rural net flow does not deviate greatly from the gross flow and thus, for all practical purposes, the distinction between the two can be safely ignored".

However, Mobrand's (2012) South Korean research invites reconsideration of this conclusion. His research shows that migrants to South Korean cities were net recipients of financial and material transfers, even though villages were poor and city jobs paid better. Mobrand (2012, p.393) explained that according to a survey done by Yi Ŭn-u (1993), "61% of transfers from rural areas were from parents or parents-in-law". Similarly, rural households reported that "72% of transfers to urban areas were to unmarried children and another 11% were to married children" (Mobrand, 2012, p.393). While "transfers to cities went primarily to unmarried offspring, married children accounted for 40% of senders of transfers received in the countryside and unmarried children for 31%" (Yi Ŭn-u 1993, p.155, p.157, as cited in Mobrand, 2012, p.393). Mobrand (2012, p.393) concluded that the "more-established migrants sent more resources home". Mobrand (2012) explored several dual-sample survey-based studies from both rural and urban communities, which showed similar patterns where rural families were supporting the daily living expenses of urban people. Nevertheless, the survey data used is more than two decades old. Moreover, the study refers to internal migration and not transnational. Hence, the potential for generalisation based on this research might be questionable.

Mazzucato's (2011, p. 454) research looked at reverse remittances between Ghana and the Netherlands and argues that often the remittances offered by the households at origin to the migrants consist of domestic services such as child or elderly care, or supervision of housing construction while migrants are overseas or simply "maintenance of" migrants' "assets in the country of origin" (p.454). However, reverse remittances could also mean "food, medicines, videos, and tailored clothes sent to migrants by their household members" (Mazzucato, 2011, p.457). Reverse remittances, according to Mazzucato (2011), represent a missing element in migrant remittances research studies and the wider "migration–development nexus" (p.455). The remitting behaviour of transnational communities is far more complex than previously thought; it goes beyond the one-sided migrant to household transfer. It incorporates not only reverse flows but an asymmetrical bidirectional exchange between migrants, the household and other social actors across different transnational locales against a background of social practices often generated by specific habitus dispositions in the context of specific social fields.

Furthermore, Mazzucato (2011, p.454) analysed "remittances as part of a reciprocal social relation where the act of giving a gift can create the obligation to reciprocate". Hence, it's important to place "reverse remittances in the context of social networks", as "the resources these networks can mobilise through reciprocal exchanges" can be key in providing informal social protection to both migrants and households (Mazzucato, 2011, p.463).
According to Mazzucato (2011, p.455), reverse "remittances are part of a reciprocal social relationship and flow from home communities to migrants". However, while Mazzucato's reverse remittance conceptualisation sheds light on a type of remittances overlooked in the literature, it neglects the bidirectional aspect of the remittance exchange, as remittances flow in both ways asymmetrically from migrants to home communities and vice versa.

i) Informal Social protection

Edward et al. (1996), Durand et al. (1996), and Keely and Tran (1989), argue that remittances have first, and most importantly, the task of improving the recipients' living standards by providing a social safety net against unemployment and other socio-economic disparities (Daianu et al., 2001, p. 18). Brown et al. (2014, p.434) argued, based on household-level quantitative research "in two Pacific Island states, Fiji and Tonga where formal social protection systems are largely absent, that migration and remittances can perform a similar function informally, contributing significantly to development objectives". Moreover, their research shows that remittances sent to the two Pacific Island countries were generally driven by altruism, highlighting that when the perceived household's income fell below a certain threshold of 'poverty', migrants would send home an increased amount of remittances (Brown et al., 2014, p.448). Hence, Brown et al. (2014, p.448) viewed remittances as a crucial element for designing "an effective informal family based system of social protection for migrants' families in times of financial hardship". Boccagni (2011, p.319), argued that "social protection is" largely "synonymous to social welfare, being the range of public, private, formal and informal measures in place for the wellbeing of individuals, households and communities, as well as presumably their reproduction". Moreover, Boccagni (2011, p.319) sees "social protection as a product of the interaction between migrants' practices and support systems (the bottom-up), and the lack of protective policies of their country of origin (the top-down)". Hence, he argues further that this "constitutes transnational social welfare – or social protection both 'here' and 'there'" (Boccagni, 2011, p.319).

j) **Stable investment climate**

In order to meet their welfare security needs, individuals and households turn to their community, family relationships and the nation state and markets, often designing a bespoke “informal security regime” consisting of family support, an institutional arrangement and some public social programmes (Gough & Abu Sharkh, 2011, p.17). For migrants and households that are part of transnational communities linked by complex relationships that can have hierarchical or asymmetrical characteristics, there might be instances “resulting in problematic inclusion or ‘adverse incorporation’, whereby poorer people acquire some short-term assistance at the expense of longer-term vulnerability and dependence” (Gough & Abu Sharkh, 2011, p.17).

NELM theorists agree that “despite variations in household strategies and different migration patterns, all household members act collectively in order to maximise household earnings and to decrease economic risks” (Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2004, p.48). In other words, collectively the household acts as a unit rationally concerned with increasing the availability of diverse resources “for the benefit of all members of the household” (Stark, 1984; Massey et al., 1993; Massey, 1990, 1994; Semyonov & Gorodzeisky, 2004, p.48)

According to “the new economics of labour migration (NELM) households see migration as a tool to overcome market failures” (Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). “By sending a family member to work abroad, a household makes an investment that is recovered when the migrant’s remittances arrive” (Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). These remittances act as a safety net, compensating for “poorly functioning local markets and the lack of access to credit or government programs that offer various kinds of insurance” (Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). Thus, from the NELM perspective, “poorly functioning markets are the first necessary condition for the migration of labour” (Massey & Sana, 2005, p.510). As such, it could be argued that migrants’ access to labour in the destination market is crucial to the survival of such an informal security regime often established between the migrant and the sending household. Yet when the purpose of migration is not necessarily to access the destination labour market but to attend the courses of an educational institution or simply make a lifestyle change, the sending household might provide, through a remittance investment, a form of informal social protection such as access to housing or by meeting certain healthcare needs.

While a migrant worker is sending remittances “concerned with the welfare of his or her family at home, the sending country government might see this as a reliable source of foreign

exchange or use it as collateral for the solicitation of international loans" (Portes, 2003, p.878). National governments and international financial institutions gradually started to understand the macroeconomic value of transnational remittances. Increasingly, several countries rely on sustained flows of remittances as a "criterion for rating the credit-worthiness of the nation-state and its eligibility for new investments" (Portes, 2003, p.878). As a result, many "sending country governments have taken such a keen interest in their expatriates in recent years, passing dual nationality and dual citizenship legislation" (Portes, 2003, p.878).

7. Conclusion

This section attempted to critically navigate and refine existing migrant remittance theory debates with the purpose of narrowing the focus onto motives and determinants driving the asymmetrical bidirectional remittances flow involved in the exchange of support. Furthermore, this chapter attempted to compare and contrast the position remittances negotiate in several migration theories that emerged over the past half a century, in the process refining existing debates regarding remittances and focusing on a more inclusive approach given by NELM theory.

The NELM approach comes as a response to the neoclassical and structuralist migration theoretical models that lack the focus on human agency and remittances. Moreover, the NELM model integrates motives and determinants that play a role in the decision-making processes regarding migration rather than just in the individual's income maximisation process.

Notably, Mazzucato's (2011) research conceptualises reverse remittances as part of a reciprocal social relationship and sheds light on a type of remittance overlooked in the literature. Yet it neglects the bidirectional aspect of the remittance exchange, as remittances flow in both ways asymmetrically from migrants to home communities and vice versa. Also, the reviewed migrant's remittance literature does not provide a comprehensive explanation for the role complex social practices and emotions negotiate as part of the remittance exchange process or as part of the informal social contractual arrangement between several transnational actors.

This chapter proposes a conceptual framework building on Carling's (2008) research regarding the determinants of migrant remittances, incorporating the bidirectional exchange element as well as highlighting the presence and role of emotional practices such as gratitude, shame and vulnerability in shaping the informal social contractual agreement between the transnational actors involved in the remittance exchange. This framework aims to operationalise the main research question: how do 'bidirectional' flows of remittances by Romanian students and migrant care workers contribute to a stable investment climate as well as provide social protection to both migrants and households who supported the initial investment? Moreover, the chapter sets out to develop the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional flows of remittances from the country of origin to the country of destination and vice versa as part of a "mutually beneficial contractual agreement" between households and their youth as well as that between migrant care workers and their families, set within different welfare state arrangements given by the migrants' origin and destination (Ciurea, 2018).

Chapter 4 The Romanian national context – transitional politics, land reform, migration and remittances

- **Introduction**
- **The Romanian national context**
- **Conclusion**

1. Introduction

Chapter 4 navigates through the events of Romania's recent history since the 1986 popular uprising that put an end to the communist regime. It will focus on several key events and policies that shaped, and are continuing to influence, the migration routes and remittance behaviour of Romanians. Asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows among the Romanian translocal communities are, to a degree, the product of the disruptive socio-economical events that followed the 1989 community regime collapse and the ingenuity of transnational family members to negotiate a path towards potentially a better future, navigating obligations, duty and needs infused by an emotional fabric reflecting both structural and individual determination to change.

The 1989 Ceausescu regime collapse and the transition period towards democracy that began soon after, represented a sudden social change for millions of Romanians. The economic, political and social uncertainty that accompanied Romania's transition period to a market economy disrupted the everyday lives of ordinary Romanians. In order to cope with the unprecedented changes, such as unpaid redundancy from jobs that were meant to provide a lifelong career to the sharp devaluation of goods such as the family car or a television, most Romanians used the same social networks and applied the same tried and tested strategies used successfully during communism. One such strategy was making informal payments or giving gifts in the form of produces that were difficult to find under communism, such as coffee or western-branded cigarettes packs, in return for different favours, such as help with passing an exam, being seen quicker by a doctor or getting a new job. Overnight, these

strategies that were seen as normal and accepted and became associated with corruption. Thus, seen as a 'macro group' journey, the transition period to a market economy confronted the Romanian society as a whole with a discontinuous blend of images, themes and perspectives. Old thinking patterns had to be reshaped to allow the development of new habits, ideas and strategies fit for a new democratic society. As such, in the early stages of the transition towards democracy, the interpretation of sudden socio-economic and political changes often delivered confusing results, as they were unable to provide answers to the new state of things. Due to the sudden regime shift, even if old practices would be denied, they would still be used, involuntarily, in the formation of new habits and structures. Not surprisingly, it has been argued that the transition towards democracy as a collective phenomenon represented a rupture of the natural order of things, a 'social trauma' in Pitor Sztompkas' (2000) words, where the past became abnormal and a new reality needed to be constructed.

2. The Romanian national context

According to Stan (2012, p. 1), the Romanian transition period that followed the collapse of the communist regime in 1989 brought with it the need to reckon with the "recent dictatorial past", often employing "methods tested in other corners of the world (such as court trials, reforms of the state security system, the rewriting of history books including most of the textbooks used in schools, and the construction of new public symbols including statues and memorials)" (p.1). The communist period, Stan (2012), argued, was marked by discontinuity, oppression and various forms of authoritarianism. Communism in Romania was imposed after the Second World War and was led in its early decades (1945–1964) by Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. During this period the Communist Party and the secret police, the Securitate, were responsible for numerous examples of human rights violations, such as murders, terror and deportations (Stan, 2012, p. 7). In 1965, the Communist Party-state elected a new leader: Nicolae Ceausescu. Under his dynastic "socialism in one family" regime a mass surveillance programme replaced the blunt terror of the Dej regime (Stan, 2012, p.7). Ceausescu's "subtle repression targeted dissenters, opponents, and apolitical citizens alike" (Stan, 2012, p.7). The number of people under continuous surveillance increased, while the number of people detained decreased. At the same time, the Communist Party incorporated more and more

‘comrades’ from the civilian population, resulting in a large social segment becoming “dependent on the regime for their livelihood and social advancement” (Stan, 2012, p.7). The 1980s saw several geo-political shifts in the Central Eastern European communist’s block. As a response, Nicolae Ceausescu tried to move slightly outside the USSR sphere of influence. One of his main tactics was trying to pay off the Romanian national debt. As a result, during the 1980s, Romania went through an extremely difficult economic situation that saw the living standards of many Romanians plummet. Most ordinary Romanians suffered not only food insecurity due to rationing but falling living standards, for example the state being unable to respond to the population’s healthcare needs. “The country’s increased autarchy and isolation on the international stage the insidious secret informers, and the ever depleted reserve of interpersonal trust and social capital meant that Romania had a very weak civil society” (Stan, 2012, p.7). Ordinary Romanians survived by keeping silent, using informal payments and gifts to buy small favours, such as receiving an extra kilogram of sugar, fruit, a few lemons or coffee, and paying for what they believed would be a service at a healthcare centre, accepting manifold compromises, “turning a blind eye to injustice inflicted on relatives, neighbours and friends, downgrading their life expectations” (Stan, 2012, p.7). After the collapse of the communist regime, Romanian migration started in the 1990s. However, as Romana Careja (2013) argued, a significant increase in migration has been registered only after 2000, as a result of the decision taken by several western countries to lift visa restrictions and other restrictions related to the migrant’s ability to prove financial self-sufficiency for the duration of travel. Some of the main reasons for the migration of Romanians after the communist’s regime collapse were linked to the instability that came with the transition to a market economy, such as high unemployment, limited access to credit, inadequate or non-existent healthcare or inconsistent social protection, such as social benefits or pensions. “Confronted with dim prospects of finding work and having limited possibilities for obtaining investment loans from banks, which themselves were facing a transformation crisis during the 1990s and well into the 2000s, many Romanians had little choice but to migrate” (Careja, 2013, p.78). Moreover, Careja (2013, p.78) stated that “in spite of rather incomplete data, some reliable estimates place the number of Romanian migrants in EU member states in 2000 at slightly more than 2 million (Eurostat, 2011), suggesting that 20 percent of the active Romanian population are working abroad”. Several estimates suggest that out of the 2 million, two-thirds are temporary migrants returning after relatively shorter periods of time, while the permanent migrants make up one-third of the Romanian migrant population abroad (Careja, 2013, p. 78). Also, according to Careja (2013, p.78), during

“2005, about 36 percent of Romanian migrants worked in construction, 28 percent in agriculture, 15 percent as household employees and 12 percent in the hospitality sector”. Most of these migrants had a basic education, mainly because after 2002 there was a high outflow of migrants from among the Romanian rural population. (Careja, 2013, p. 78). There were also migrants with a higher education, such as professionals from the healthcare, education, IT, engineering and research sectors, that in turn produced a shortage of these skills, or brain drain, on the Romanian labour market (Careja, 2013, p.78). Furthermore, according to a report by Alexe et al. (2012), emigration and internal migration in Romania took place in the context of pre-existing major developments and inequalities between regions in the country and between rural and urban areas. Romanian regions with high internal migration loss are usually regions of origin for external migration too. The three highest net migration loss regions are the north east, south-east and south of Romania. These are predominantly rural regions characterised by high rates of employment in agriculture and working poor, an accelerated ageing population, a low level of infrastructure and a GDP per capita that makes up only 50–60% of the national average. Migration is one of the main factors that contributes to “accelerated ageing” as well as “depopulation of rural areas”, and the “lack of (qualified) human capital and labour market shortages in specific sectors of those regions” Alexe et al. (2012, p.2). The high outflows of physicians, nurses and teachers contribute to the deteriorating quality of education and healthcare services, in particular in rural areas. However, these rural regions as receivers and contributors of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances, facilitate the exchange of support not only among transnational actors but within the geographical location benefiting the local economy through investment in new housing, rural tourism, farming and local shops.

In order to understand the context that triggered the massive emigration among the rural population 10 years after the Ceausescu regime collapse, we must look briefly at Romania’s land collectivisation. The Romanian transition period post 1989 from the communist regime to a market economy also meant reorganising and rethinking the communist industrialisation processes as well as the agricultural collectivisation. At times, under the communist regime the administration of farmland and property resembled a siege for the rural population, as they had to accept collectivisation under heavy Soviet pressure. It was particularly difficult because many Romanian peasants associate private landowning “with personal status, being ‘someone’, being ‘persons’, a term that Kligman and Verdery (2011) differentiate from ‘subjects’ or ‘individuals’” (Kamp, 2012, p.51) This “close identification between personhood (male implicitly) and landowning meant that the Communist Party faced steep

obstacles in convincing peasants to ‘donate’ their land to collectives during the 40s’ and 50s’” (Kamp, 2012, p.51).
After the Iron Curtain fell in 1989 and Romania entered the transition period towards democracy and a market economy, the need for reform in the agriculture sector became more and more acute. The urgently needed agricultural reform meant starting a land restitution process that proved lengthy and chaotic. Most of the parcels the peasants or farmers received were either too small and/or badly shaped and fragmented. If we couple this with the subdivisions of inheritance, the land fragmentation level becomes even higher (Rusu & Pamfil, 2003). The causes of excessive fragmentation of agricultural land were due to the lack of legal provision as well as the unclear or non-existent policies caused by the absence of a well-structured agricultural reform in the early years of the transition. Moreover, the inheritance laws were not necessarily able to support farmers, since the initial legal ownership documents for the land belonged to a previous generation, thus were often handwritten agreements certified by the local authorities in the 1930s or late 1940s. As such, any land ownership document dubbed unclear or inconclusive could easily be considered invalid by the authorities in the 1990s. Unfortunately, in such circumstances, farmers had no legal way to prove that certain parcels of land belonged to them.
Consdiering that, to this day, land ownership represents the most important part of socio-economical activities in the rural communities (Rusu & Pamfil, 2003), the fragmentation of land and restitutions proceedings plunged numerous rural areas into poverty. Those who managed to retrieve some of their land were often unable to farm it, as they could not afford heavy industrial agricultural machinery which until the 1989 communist collapse was used collectively as part of the rural county cooperative. Hence, during the transition period, many Romanian farmers had no choice but to return to ploughing the land using somewhat medieval methods such as ox-pulled plough and spades.
Petrescu (2013) also suggested that a key contributor to the socio-economic difficulties faced by the rural communities in Romania is the vital role played by land ownership. Several official studies, according to Petrescu (2013), indicate a much lower rural development in Romania compared to other former communist countries in Europe. It can be argued that the sudden shift from a state-owned collective agriculture system to an agriculture system of fragmented land parcels with farmers using rudimentary tools, meant that the Romanian agriculture during this transition period was one of subsistence.
If we couple the above-mentioned aspects with the fact that around 40% of Romania’s population was living in rural areas, the result is poverty and economic hardship for a

considerable number of rural communities. According to Eurostat (2011, 2012) and EC-DGARD (2012), Romania’s agricultural sector is significantly underdeveloped in comparison with the other Central and Eastern European states. All other former communist states that have now joined the EU have shares of the total population engaged in agricultural labour under the 10% threshold, except Romania with 28.6% and Poland with 12.7%. However, Romania (5.2%), Poland (10.6%), and Slovenia (11.1%) have the lowest shares of the total active population actually receiving an income from agricultural labour, compared with the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Estonia or Hungary where more than two-thirds of the people working in this field receive an income. Therefore, we might argue that the complex overlay of factors mentioned above could trigger the decision to migrate for many Romanians living in the rural communities after the 1989 communist regime collapse.

In addition, there are various other determinants that contributed to “the growth of emigration from Romania” (Piperna, 2012, pp.189–290, as cited in Abraham & Marcovici, 2017, p.63). Western labour markets, but more specifically in Southern Europe, have seen an increase in the demand for domestic help and personal care. This trend reflects the decision of the Italian (2002) and Spanish (2005) governments to legalise immigration in certain sectors for Romanian nationals such as domestic and personal care. As a result, Romanian citizens in Italy and Spain represented often the largest migrant groups in those countries. Another factor that might have contributed to the increase of emigration from Romania was the change in visa entry requirements.

> “Before 2002, all Romanian citizens who intended travelling to the Schengen area were required to present a valid visa. The difficulty of obtaining this documentation had given rise to a lucrative black market in visas that could be purchased even at considerably high prices (up to 2000 euro). From 1st of January 2002, in view of Romania’s anticipated entry into the EU, the visa requirement was abolished, but only in relation to travel for tourism or business purposes and for visits of up to 90 days” (Piperna, 2012, pp.189–290, as cited in Abraham & Marcovici, 2017, p.63).

Marcu (2015, p.509) suggested that the initial Romanian emigration to Spain was diffused, with most migrants choosing to go abroad for economic reasons. However, various “changes in the configuration of migration came about simultaneously with other phenomena specific to the Romania’s transition to democracy, a free market economy, and integration into the European Union” (Marcu, 2015, p.509). These changes represent, to some extent, the main determinants for migrations, such as the increase in poverty due to the closure of several heavy industry plants, coupled with severe fragmentation of farmland ownership caused by

the inadequate agricultural reform, unemployment and changes in the border controls (Marcu, 2015, p. 509).

According to Careja (2013, 85), contemporary Romania has a significant transnational community with strong ties between its members. These transnational migrant communities might be risk-averse and critical of the institutional and structural conditions, yet they remit large amounts, with some showing a keen interest in becoming entrepreneurs (Careja, 2013, p. 85). As emigration towards the EU countries increased, so did the amount of remittances. During the 1990s, migrant remittance flows were modest followed by a peak in the mid-2000s and decreasing in the late 2000s. From a macroeconomic perspective the significant size of the Romanian workforce abroad resulted in several positive effects in Romania, “such as a low level of registered unemployment and improved balance of payments” (Daianu et al., 2001, as cited in Careja, 2013, p.78). From a micro-economic perspective, according to Careja (2013, p. 78), several research studies show that remittances are most often used for the purchase of consumer goods such as home improvement or refurbishment items, with smaller amounts being invested in education, old age provision, savings accounts or starting up a business. The remittance receiver’s predisposition to invest in consumer goods has been linked with the individual’s tendency or desire to swiftly improve their own, as well as the household’s, living conditions to make up for past periods of economic hardship or to assert their status in the transnational community. Consistently, most migration research studies agree that remittance amounts are mostly used for consumption, with small amounts going towards productive investments. Pop’s (2006) research study found that “only 6 percent of households use remittances for investments (in addition to other uses)” (as cited in Careja, 2013, p.78). Remittances are sometimes invested in small or medium-sized businesses, often family run, focusing on providing services in construction, transportation or services. It has been argued that some of the reasons remittances are invested in small or medium-sized businessed are related to mistrust in local financial institutions, the Romanian state’s bureaucratic system and Romanians’ “dissatisfaction with the legislation regulating private property and entrepreneurship” (Careja, 2013, p.78).

The low level of entrepreneurship following the 1989 regime collapse might have been linked to the existence of various informal channels for exchanging remittances that could have contributed to difficulties with legally declaring and investing money or goods. Ban (2009, p. 137) explained how coach companies play a crucial role in the informal remittance transfer services pursued by formal businesses. “The Romanian-German coach operator, Atlassib, based in Sibiu Transylvania, North Romania is by far the biggest actor on this market” (Ban,

2009, p.137). The company transfers “half a million passengers a year across the Romanian borders” (Ban, 2009, p.137). Atlassib established itself by the early 2000s “as a rival for the giant European consortium coach operator Eurolines” (Ban, 2009, p.137). It had “established coach stations in over eight major Italian cities” as well as Spain and England (Ban, 2009, p.137). It was common that in “exchange for a competitive fee, bus security would take cash from Romanian immigrants in Italy and hand it to specific recipients in Romania upon arrival at their destinations. The operation was mostly kept off the record under the umbrella of ‘parcel and envelopes delivery’” (Ban, 2009, p.137). Ban (2009) pointed out that unlike similar “cases of economic transnationalism” such as the flows of “remittances between US and Mexico”, where transaction costs for remittance transfers “were lower than those of banks and credit unions, in early 2000s, the Atlassib fee”, for money transfers, was higher than official money transfer rates by approximately 10% (Ban, 2009, p.137). The operators’ niche market was that of undocumented immigrants and those who overstayed the tourist visa as well as those “who did not feel comfortable using formal methods of transfer or simply did not know how to use them” (Ban, 2009, p.137). Ban (2009, p.137) further explained that 91% of the “survey respondents acknowledged having received money from extended family to finance their departure”. Once in Italy, “relatives back home extend them ‘reverse remittances” if the migrants became unemployed, suffered an injury or illness or had legal problems (Ban, 2009, p.137).

Ban (2009, p.139) explained further that bribery was widely used by private actors “to institutionalize patronage networks” around border crossings and customs police “in order to avoid custom taxes and restrictive-regulations on border crossing of people and goods”. More specifically, the “coach drivers or coach security made sure that bus passengers who overstayed their ‘work tourist’ visa, were able to cross the border by supplying custom police with informal payments” (Ban, 2009, p.139). Once such a trust network was established, “coach drivers attempted to cross the border checkpoints only when their border police contacts were on duty” (Ban, 2009, p.139). The same strategy was used by immigrants when crossing with merchandise in larger amounts than legally allowed, such as cigarettes, alcohol or Romanian food staples. The traders often hid the merchandise coach in the baggage compartment of the coache, as instructed by the coach driver.

Despite their somewhat illegal aspect in the late 1990s and early 2000, Ban (2009, p.138) suggested that the circulation of remittances contributes to the reduction of “social distance between immigrants and their families”, reproducing perceptions of ‘home’ and helping “maintain basic interactions with the institutions in the home community”. According to

Ban's (2009) survey results, immigrants sent money to their extended family but also donated to local churches and monasteries as well as local schools or towards communal reparation of their village.

As suggested above, remittances are part of a diverse transnational social network that includes diverse experiences and strategies. Several social actors take part in the remittance exchange, which happens bidirectionally and often asymmetrically due to the characteristics of the sender–receiver relationship and is influenced by emotional practices shaping the transactor's multi-layered identity.

Cassady's (2017) ethnographic research in the Ukrainian-Romanian borderlands examines the dynamics of shame and transtemporality in shaping representations of cross-border small trade (CBST). Cassidy's (2017, p. 28) research shows how shame emerges from attempts to elicit sexual interest from Romanian officials by both male and female traders, even though the interest on the part of the traders is feigned and does not reflect real attraction to their interlocutors. However, in both cases, narratives emerge from the borders, which seek not to reflect on the shame of such activities, but to place them in broader political and economic contexts, which transfers the shame to body politics. Moreover, Cassidy's work explains how the use of existing comedic narrative forms of storytelling, particularly anecdotes, assist in alleviating the shame of admitting the activities within the context of local community, where such performances would usually lead the traders to be the subject of stigmatisation, as they go well beyond the boundaries of what are considered to be appropriate interlocutions between men and women.

3. Conclusion

The Romanian transition towards democracy and a market economy as a collective phenomenon represented a rupture from the existing socio-economic and cultural structural frames built under the communist rule, a social trauma, in Pitor Sztompkas' (2000) words, where the past became abnormal and a new reality needed to be constructed.

After the 1989 communist regime collapsed, the urgently needed agricultural reform meant starting a land restitution process that proved lengthy and chaotic. Romanian farmers often received parcels of land that were either too small and/or badly shaped or fragmented. If we couple this with the subdivisions of inheritance, the real number of parcels and the land

fragmentation level becomes even higher (Rusu & Pamfil, 2003). The causes of excessive agricultural land fragmentation in the early years of the transition were due to the lack of legal provision as well as the imperfections or absence of agricultural reform policies. According to Careja (2013, p. 78), during 1999 and 2000, Romanians living in rural communities saw the possibility to migrate as a way to improve their own and their communities' livelihoods. Asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows observed as part of the experiences of Romanian students and care workers in the UK have a transnational linkage to the socio-economical events that followed the 1989 communist regime collapse. Family obligations, needs, duties and complex emotions like shame and vulnerability – that are intertwined with the Romanian, UK and Europe's socio-economic and political context – shaped the structural and individual determination to express agency through remittances.

Chapter 5. Methodology

- **Introduction**
- **The thesis methodology evolution**
- **Research plan – positioning and aims**
- **The co-national researcher personal narrative, locating the**
- **researcher in the research**
- **Choice of site and access to the field**
- **Samples and sampling strategies**
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- **Collecting and analysing data**
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- **Qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) programs – NVivo**
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1. Introduction

Chapter 5 describes how the research methodology was fine-tuned as the thesis evolved, and it reflects on the data collection journey and the position of the co-national research part of this journey. Through the methodological lens of observation and semi-structured interviews emerge personal life stories of Romanian students and care workers in the UK, with detailed accounts of the emotional strain inflicted by the transnational migration experience.
Reflecting on the stories collected and analysed, the asymmetrical nature of bidirectional exchanges was visible in the need to reciprocate, guided by internalised family obligations to display care.
This chapter evolved with the thesis and the field work, and it offered a space to prepare, reflect and frame dynamic and powerful interactions and shared narratives. A few of those interviewed shared intimate accounts of hardship and dealing with loneliness, such as crying on the phone to parents on a weekly basis or the emotional stress of having to leave behind a single parent in poor health. Also notable were the difficulties of those interviewed, such as Romanian students, in reconstructing patterns of reciprocating when parents separated.
Chapter 3 put forward a theoretical framework with the purpose of narrowing the focus down to specific motives and determinants that drive asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows.

The theoretical framework also aimed to underpin the conceptual mechanism involved in providing informal social protection to both migrants and Romanian households that supported the initial investment in the migration (Ciurea, 2018). This supporting structure shows how households and migrants are interconnected by a two-way asymmetrical remittance flow or, better said, ‘bidirectional’ remittance flow, subsequently steered by specific motives and determinants.

The primary focus of this chapter is to fine-tune a data analysis strategy best suited for investigating the bidirectional remittance flow concept and the dynamic transnational social relationships of Romanian emigrants’ remitting behaviour. The methodological approach that guides this thesis is more inductive, as it adopts a design that attempts to understand and interpret the social context and experience of Romanian migrants and does not require a hypothesis as would generally be required for a deductive research design (Hart, 2005).

As individuals assign meanings to phenomena emerging in their social context, interpretative research seeks to understand the interpretations or meanings people attach to their experience of social facts. Therefore, according to (Biscaya, 2012, p.78), not only does “interpretative research assume that access to reality” is possible only via “social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings”, but it also “studies the meaning of actions that occur both in face-to-face interactions and in the wider society surrounding the immediate scene of action” (Erickson, 1985, p.1). Moreover, interpretative research focuses on the complexity of human experiences as the social context changes and evolves. Hence, the interpretative approach does not establish in advance either the independent or dependent variables but highlights the dynamics of human interpretations of social facts.

Furthermore, Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991, p.5) argued that individuals “create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them”. Thus, “interpretive studies attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them” (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991, p.5). Rosen (1991, as cited in Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991, p14) went on to argue that “social process are not captured in hypothetical deductions, covariance and degrees of freedom instead, understanding the social process involves getting inside the world of those generating it”.

Using an inductive approach, several themes and concepts emerged naturally while conducting the research, through observation as well as during the analysis of the raw data and reflections on the observations from the field. Themes emerged by studying the semi-structured interview audio files several times and capturing possible meanings that were then

fitted within the developing web of themes. The theoretical framework was used as a backbone to link the emerging concepts and themes. As Elliott and Gillie, (1998, p.311, as cited in Thomas, 2006, p.239) suggested, parts of the interview audio files “were coded enabling an analysis of interview segments on a particular theme, the documentation of relationships between themes and the identification of themes important to participants”. “Similarities and differences across sub-groups” (e.g. students vs care workers, recent vs long-term migrants, family members in Romania vs migrants) were also explored, as suggested by Elliott and Gillie, (1998, p.311, as cited in Thomas, 2006, p.239).

This chapter also reflects on my position within the research, as a Romanian emigrant, a researcher, a young professional as well as varied other nuances of my social position that are often constructed and deconstructed, depending on time and the perceived distance (both physical and emotional) from the subject studied. As the research takes an interpretative stance, my dynamic position as a Romanian transnational economic migrant, part-time PhD student, 10-year UK resident, daughter from a Romanian working class family and a remittance sender and receiver cuts across the subject matter of this thesis and allowed me to connect on different levels with the individuals and within the social context studied. Hence, while conducting this research one “can never assume a value-neutral stance”, since, as Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) argued, “there is no direct access to reality unmediated by language and preconception” (p.15).

This chapter also reflects on the ethical aspects of the research that stem from the exploration of personal life stories. Reflecting on migrant’s social positioning, Plüss (2013, p. 5) argued that this is often manifested via their experience, their relations with people, collectives, and local, translocal and transnational communities that provide access to various needed resources. Caroline Plüss (2013, pp. 6-7) explained further how cultural capital consists of the accumulated pre-defined cultural characteristics such as certain educational achievements, certificates or cosmopolitan competencies that specific institutions and individuals facilitating access to resources require to be signalled “before granting membership of their networks and sharing their resources” (pp.6–7). Social capital is generated through membership of social networks.

If the credentials reflecting cultural capital is accepted, this is followed by a capital conversion “from cultural into social and/or economic capital” (Plüss, 2013, pp.6–7).

Social capital can be defined as the “access to resources that the members of a network are entitled to, such as information, friendship or manpower, and economic capital refers to money, i.e. loans, or resources that are directly convertible into money” (Plüss, 2013, pp.6–

7). Bourdieu’s (1986) idea that cultural, social and economic capital can be converted into each other in “multiple ways to facilitate the access of resources, allows, for instance, for the reproduction of the migrants’ transnational social positioning contributing to the creation of socio-economic equalities and/or inequalities” (Plüss, 2013, pp.6–7). The complex expressions of the three types of capital conversion taking place across transnational locales generate the power relations between households, migrants and various other social actors and institutions prescribing the access to resources, “and can mutually and simultaneously reinforce each other to create inequalities” (Plüss, 2013, pp.6–7).

As a middle-class, female student and young professional, researcher and Romanian migrant reflecting on my own social positioning that developed at the intersection of my personal accumulation of different types of capital (such as cultural, social, economic, and/or political capital as well as the structural characteristics of the trans-local communities I inhabit), my potential to access and develop my identity resulted in “manifestations of multiple belongings of one’s social positioning as well as disidentifications from a location and/or transnational context in this positioning” (Plüss, 2013, p.5). In other words, according to Muñoz (1999), through disidentification we recycle and rethink encrypted meanings seeded in our identity.

“The process of disidentification scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both exposes the encoded message’s universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and identifications. Thus, disidentification is a step further than cracking open the code of the majority; it proceeds to use this code as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by the dominant culture” (Muñoz, 1999, p.31).

The intersections of various manifestations of Bourdieu’s (1986) notions of cultural, social, and economic capital, apply to the researcher, and this thesis is a reflection of multiple discourses intersections regulating power relations and access to resources. While conducting the interviews with migrant co-nationals, the entrenched capital conversions they conveyed often reflected in their personal stories various degrees of shame and expressions of vulnerability. The sharing of a whole array of human emotions along with a sense of vulnerability was felt, at the time, as an expression of trust between our social positions. Both the researcher’s and interviewees unique intersections of “race, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality, religion, class, disability, personality” determined a ‘unique’ organic outcome of the fieldwork, a specific window into the lived experiences of both my co-national migrant interviewees and me (Gawlewicz, 2016, p.30). “Being simultaneously” entrenched “in

multiple localities and contexts of interaction", as well as experiencing unique manifestations of capital conversions, both myself as the researcher and the migrant co-nationals interviewed experienced a shared reciprocity that allowed, unintentionally, for the expression and reproduction of inequalities (Plüss, 2013, p.6). Moreover, as a migrant researcher studying migrants' "co-nationals in a language different from the language", the findings reported raise the need for consideration regarding how language is experienced, interpreted and translated (Gawlewicz, 2016, p.27). Various challenges can arise from the "assumed shared relationship with language between migrant researchers and their migrant informants" (Gawlewicz, 2016, p.27). According to Gawlewicz (2016, p.31), translating is a socially driven process; a translator undergoes a complex "socialization that" influences "the way they interpret concepts and meanings" as well as how they shape the primary data. The complex positionality determined by how a migrant researcher researches his or her own migrant populations "has been so far underexplored and discussed largely with reference to the researcher's insider/outsider status" (Gawlewicz, 2016, p.30). Moreover, ethical problems can emerge from how we represent others through translation. For instance, some research participants identify themselves and the co-national researcher as part of the 'us' group, comparing it to 'them' – mostly the host society. A lot of the co-nationals interviewed explained how it was easier to make friends with other foreigners since arriving in the UK, but they found it hard to make English friends. Experiencing a similar situation and sharing it with the interviewee involved empathy on both sides, resulting in a liberating acceptance of vulnerability. However, engaging with the co-nationals interviewed in criticism of how 'cold' the British might be towards foreigners could be a result of our social positions and power relation interactions, creating a false sense of safety or comfort as part of the 'us' community as opposed to 'them'. Gawlewicz (2016, p.34) argued that these verbal expressions – us and them – represent imagined communities created by "migrants who share a language and a nationality". However, sharing personal narratives through a dialogic and interactive process helped build a relationship with the participants based on mutual trust. It also balanced the inevitable power relations between the researcher and interviewees. It is only natural that methodology used to analyse the personal narratives data, collected via a series of semi-structured interviews, observation and immersion in the field and studied over six years, evolved with the thesis. The evolutionary journey of the thesis data analysis meant gradually making sense of the diverse meanings enclosed within the interview data as well as understand my shifting position within the research.

2. The thesis methodology evolution

The thesis aims to critically examine the asymmetrical bidirectional remitting behaviour of two groups of Romanian migrants in England as well as their motives and determinants to remit. On the one hand, it explores the motives and determinants of a bidirectional remitting behaviour linked to a mutually beneficial contractual arrangement binding households and their youth studying abroad (Ciurea, 2018). Based on the assumption that the initial investment made by households in the student's education abroad can provide a "long-term productive investment", we well as an "income assurance strategy" for those households and family members who first set out the commitment (De Haas, 2007, p.23). On the other hand, the thesis examines the motives and determinants of a self-enforcing bidirectional remittance exchange arrangement between the migrant care workers and their households by employing observation and the analysis of primary qualitative data.

The bidirectional asymmetrical nature of remittance flows has largely been neglected in the migration literature. Most of the migrant remittance research studies focus on one side of the exchange, often not taking a holistic approach to understanding the transnational remitting behaviour. Bidirectional remittances form part of an asymmetrical social contract that reflects the resource allocation between sending and receiving transactors taking part in the exchange. Across different locales wrapped within a social fabric that displays social practices, accumulated and converted nuances of cultural, economic and social capital bidirectional remittances is an expression of embedded cultural structures and agency. At the same time, the asymmetrical nature of the bidirectional exchange reflects the informal structure of the mutually beneficial contractual agreement between transactors as well as the embedded cultural habitus somewhat uprooted between transnational locales.

The thesis endeavours not only to cover a gap in current remittance related research, but it also explores a scarcely researched concept, that of bidirectional flows of remittances from the country of origin to the country of destination as part of a mutually beneficial contractual agreement between households and the migrant, set within different welfare state arrangements determined by migration origin and destination context (Ciurea, 2018).

In the first chapter, the data collection and analysis design were proposed following three main phases as presented below. However, as the research evolved it became clear that a qualitative approach was better suited to explore the bidirectional remittance behaviour of

Romanian students and care workers in the UK. Nevertheless, understanding how the methodological approach evolved can be a crucial underpinning of the validity of results produced by this research thesis. Hence, below we will briefly explore how the research plan transitioned from a three-phase model to a qualitative orientated methodological approach. First, an analysis of existing datasets of the social care workforce in the UK was to be conducted, with a focus on the migrant workforce. This would have mainly been based on the LFS, which is generally used in research about "migrant workers because it contains questions about nationality, country of birth and date of arrival in the UK" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.194). As such, the LFS offers different possibilities to estimate the evolution over time of the employment of foreign-born workers (Cangiano et al., 2009, p 194). Secondly, the analysis of quantitative data from the POB of the Romanian Soros Foundation for an Open Society was meant to set the background of the project, giving information on the respondents (educational attainment), the number of Romanian students abroad, their social class and their educational mobility across birth cohorts. The analysis would have been based on examining social mobility tables, which were intended to draw attention to substantial differences of educational opportunities with regards to class of origin across birth cohorts in Romania. The analysis would have looked at variables such as the birth cohort, the respondents' educational attainment, the parents' level of education (the class of origin) and their decision to migrate for the purpose of education. Moreover, the research would have drawn on another major statistical source provided by the Higher Education Information Database for Institution (HEIDI), because it contains details related to students, staff and finances available by institution, cost, centre or JACS code. In addition, a range of other sources are cumulated in this database. More importantly, it registers the nationality of the student, fundability, major sources of tuition fees, as well as the domicile country and the domicile country of the parent – a variable that might have offered an initial picture of Romanian students in the UK. Finally, a micro-level analysis would have been used to corroborate the findings from the educational mobility tables and migrant care workers' datasets. Thus, primary qualitative data would have been collected. Semi-structured in-depth interviews would have been used with 50 Romanian students and care workers living and studying in England, combined with 10 household interviews in Romania. The initial research plan included 25 interviews with representatives of each group in the UK plus 10 interviews with household representatives in Romania, where 5 interviews would have been designated to each group.

Initially, the research parameters were meant to be drawn on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to provide a more comprehensive and complete account of the subject matter. Even though this approach would offset the weaknesses within each design and draw on their strengths, more emphasis was given to qualitative data collection and analysis. The narratives collected via the semi-structured interviews provided a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the motives and determinants to remit as part of the mutual beneficial contractual agreement between households and their youth, as well as between the migrant care worker and the remittance-receiving family (Ciurea, 2018). However, the number of interviews completed was much lower than the number initially planned. Mainly because after 20 interviews quite a lot of themes continuously repeated. Also, given the time constraint it simply became unfeasible to conduct 60 interviews; as a result, only 30 were completed.

Even though analysing the datasets of the LFS and POB of the Romanian Soros Foundation for an Open Society might have benefited this project, it would not have allowed the examination of subtle differences in the experiences of Romanian students and migrant care workers, as explained below. The LFS is carried out by The UK Office for National Statistics, and it represents a major household survey providing estimations, once a quarter, "of the UK resident population and workforce" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.194). The survey is well known and reputable, as "it uses internationally agreed concepts and definitions" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.194).

While the LFS collects data on an individual's characteristics through a specific set of variables over time, such as "nationality, country of birth and date of arrival in the UK", it does not offer specific insights into the individual's job category (type of care work, primary or secondary employment), the interviewee's immigration status at the time of the data collection or "on arrival in the UK such as, whether migrant respondents entered on a work permit or dependent visa, or have refugee status, and so on" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.194). Also, the categories on which data is collected offer a significant limitation, as it cannot be determined who is working exclusively with older people and who are general medical staff. Taking into account "all these reasons[,] the estimates provided by the LFS" regarding migrant care workers "are likely to have a high level of inaccuracy" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.196). As such, for the purpose of this research, a qualitative analysis was deemed more suitable.

In a similar study regarding non-medical migrant workers, Timonen and Doyle (2010, p. 29) argued that due to the subject matter qualitative methods were adopted, as researching

“interpersonal relationships are not easily quantifiable; also there were no sampling frames from which to draw respondents probabilistically” (p.29).

The Public Opinion Barometer (POB) of the Romanian Soros Foundation for an Open Society was initiated in 1994. The study analysed the “evolution of Romanians’ perceptions on the direction the country is heading; satisfaction with their own life under the current Government” (Apateanu, 2015, p.18); Romanian values and the electoral reform. Conducted between 1998 and 2007, this study spanned over 10 years, interviewing over thirty-eight thousand Romanian adults “based on a series of surveys, representative for the adult, non-institutionalized Romanian population, conducted twice a year (in May, respectively October), on a large sample (1800 – 2200 persons)” (Apateanu, 2015, p.18). Although the study registers data on the respondents educational attainment, the number of Romanian students abroad, their social class, as well as their educational mobility across birth cohorts, it only provides a snapshot of Romanian students abroad from ten years ago since 2007. Romania joined the EU in 2007, which meant easier access to higher education abroad and a likely increase in the number of students deciding to study in a EU member state. Hence, the POB of the Romanian Soros Foundation for an Open Society would not be able to set the background for this research, as its data is limited and outdated.

The quantitative data analysis approach outlined above could have added a key general understanding of the migration behaviour of Romanian students and care workers, but it would not have been able to help with the exploration of the bidirectional remittance exchange concept. To further emphasise this point, several quantitative studies focusing on migrant remittances and the Romanian context have been reviewed. Migrants’ remittances have been measured through various methods, from macro perspectives employing mostly quantitative methods, to mixed approaches to qualitative analysis according to the needs and style of the research carried out. For example, according to Rapoport and Docquier (2005, p. 5), one of the pain points in the “study of remittances is data collection and analysis”; when it comes to the macroeconomic aspect, “it is not always possible to test appropriately the impact of remittances because of poor data quality”. At the same time, at a micro level it is challenging to juggle with multiple “competing theories of remittances”, which although “share similar predictions as to the impact of remittances”, also bring into the equation additional nuances that are not always backed up by actual data (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.5). Nevertheless, existing research and analysis of data on remittances has proved very useful in understanding more about the phenomenon.

In their research regarding the “balance of payments financing Romania” and “the role of remittances”, Daianu et al. (2001, p.3) argue, as do Rapoport and Docquier (2005), that the data on the matter is “either too scarce and unreliable or too aggregated”. For example, “the number of Romanian migrants, legal and illegal, working abroad for less than one year is simply an estimate” (Daianu et al., 2001, p.3). Moreover, Daianu et al. (2001, p.3) suggested that “the way The National Bank of Romania collects statistical information makes no distinction between different types of current private transfers (cash remittances, gifts, inheritances, etc.), while in-kind remittances are entirely not accounted for”. Furthermore, Daianu et al. (2001, p.3) argued that “by the very nature of the subject studied the analysis on errors and omission”, as well as estimated data, cannot provide the accurate, relevant explanation we would have from precise figures that are, however, somehow impossible to gather.

Nevertheless, according to Daianu et al’s. (2001, p. 15) research, remittances should be analysed by placing them “in the context of other foreign currency flows” (p.15). For example, “compared to exports, remittances prove their relevance as a source of foreign currency for the local economy” (Daianu et al., 2001, p.15). “When compared to imports, remittances prove their importance as a potential source of payment for inputs in the local economy. Of course, high shares of remittances in the trade flows show distortions, inability of local economy to develop through other means, and reliance on what can be seen as random financing” (Daianu et al., 2001, p.15).

In 2000, “for the first time, foreign remittances exceeded 1 bn USD” in Romania (Daianu et al. , 2001, p.7). Daianu et al. (2001, p.7) argued this represented the “most important single source of financing after external borrowing, excluding exports” that are often “mirrored” by imported inputs. Moreover, foreign remittances represented “a major source of financing the current account deficit, especially since 1995 up to 2000” (Daianu et al., 2001, p.17). Daianu et al. (2001, p. 17) further explained that “annual inflows of remittances have a magnitude of over 10% of exports and about 9% of imports, representing 3.3% of GDP (data for comparison: the international aid received by Romania does not exceed 1% of GDP19)” (p.17). “In the year 2000, the inflows of remittances exceeded the foreign direct investments (1074 mil.USD, against 1065 mil.USD), and amounted to almost half of foreign exchange reserves” (Daianu et al., 2001, p.17). Moreover, “the stock of remittances in the past eleven years of transition (4964 mil.USD) equals two-thirds of FDIs’ stock in Romania over the same period, while covering more than one half of the total foreign debt accumulated” (Daianu et al., 2001, p.17). In 2008, remittances already represented over “5,5% of the GDP”

(Sousa & Duval, 2010, p.84). Furthermore, according to a World Bank report in 2010, about 2.9 million Romanians or 13% of the population emigrated abroad, mostly to Spain and Italy. Remittances not only contribute to the economy on a macro level but cross down into society and right down to the household level, often improving its welfare as well as creating vital transnational flow routes that sustain a dynamic cycle, which not only benefits the receiving country but, in the same way, contributes to the sending end.

Pop (2006, p.11) emphasised the "potential impact of remittances on inflation under conditions of rigid supply". Amuedo-Dorantes and Pozo's research also showed that remittances might "lead to the appreciation of the real exchange rate, resulting in decreases in the international competitiveness of domestic products" (2004, as cited in Pop, 2006, p.11). However, El-Sakka and McMabb's research shows that without strong economic policies that could boost interest and exchange rates, remittances are often directed into savings accounts "abroad or diverted into the black market", which implies a "low multiplier effect" (1999, as cited in Pop, 2006, 11). In addition, Pop (2006) argued that policies seeking to retain remittances on the destination market can also have reverse effects on developing the informal economy that in the long run could affect the macroeconomic performance of that specific country. Furthermore, research shows that "fluctuation in remittance flows can be procyclical for the country of origin's GDP, and at the same time acyclical for the host country" (Pop, 2006, p.11). Remittances could also "play a macroeconomic stabilizing role in situations of crises" (Pop, 2006, p.11). In addition, most empirical research cases regarding migrant workers in the destination countries do not focus on their contributions through remittances invested in education or taxation to the countries' welfare states, thus ignoring the relationship between immigrants and education and healthcare or to the welfare system of the receiving country as a whole. Instead, a considerable amount of empirical research examines how immigrants often become a burden to "social assistance, unemployment benefits, family benefits and pensions" at the receiving end (Baldwin-Edwards, 2002, p.5).

3. Research plan – positioning and aims

As shown above, although the thesis might have benefited from a secondary analysis of the LFS and POB of the Romanian Soros Foundation for an Open Society, complex personal narratives are not easily quantifiable. Analysing the datasets these surveys produce would not

have helped produce the rich and holistic picture of the remitting behaviour of Romanian students and migrant care works needed for this thesis.

As a researcher, observing and interviewing migrant co-nationals could imply the research benefited from an advantageous insider position. Undeniably, being an insider researcher means less effort is needed for knowing the people, history and language, and for understanding the idiomatic expressions of day-to-day life (Turgo, 2012, p. 666). However, the insider researcher role also has its challenges when dealing with individuals "that ascribes a particular salience to a specific identity", like 'plecat afara' – a Romanian phrase used for a native who has moved abroad; it actually means 'gone outside' (Turgo, 2012, p.666). My status as a Romanian researcher 'plecat afara' who has lived abroad in England since 2008 plays a part in "the production of my multiple identities in the field" (Turgo, 2012, p.667). Often locales can be shaped by interconnected levels of scales. Where scales are the actual places of "engagement in the field between the researcher and the researched" (Turgo, 2012, p.667). The locale's characteristics also "shape the micro politics of doing research in a familiar environment abroad, and the production and reproduction of identities of researchers doing insider research" (Turgo, 2012, p.667).

4. The co-national researcher's personal narrative: locating the researcher in the research

In the section below, the shift from the passive to the active voice is meant to place ownership in the doer, the co-national researcher, in order to ground the thesis and disclose any biases. Even though, in qualitative research, each text generally includes the author's subjectivity. However, as the research evolved gradually over several years, drawing on personal experience as well as incorporating ethnographic methods such as participant observation, it is only natural that the researcher-textual presence as a narrator is included.

I often met my interviewees in the Newcastle city centre, from where we would walk to a place of my choosing, usually a coffee shop I would visit frequently with friends. Using a familiar place to conduct the interviews was meant to create a safe, friendly space where the researcher and researched would feel at ease. Although this seems an ideal situation, hinting at a ready-made membership in the field as an ethnic insider researcher using a familiar place to interview, this position is infused with vulnerability. I usually chose to record the interview

with my phone, which I would casually place face down on our table. I would not hold the printed interview schedule in my hand or have it on the table. In this way I believe I created a casual 'just friends having coffee' atmosphere. Although, I did not really know the interviewee at all. Informing the person being interviewed about the purpose of the research, how the recorded interview data would be used and getting their consent was the only formal part of the discussion. Yet the researcher vulnerability played out part of the locale's context (Turgo, 2012, p.667). I was always asked what I do for a living, where I work, how I came to work there, whether it is difficult to get a job with that company. Some made suggestive jokes related to whether the company needed more Romanian speakers. I always responded casually, explaining what I do, the jobs available at the company I worked for, how they could apply.

There were also instances when my interviewees shared stories about how the change of a friend's attitude towards them had upset them and how they coped with the rejection. My interviewees also often shared stories of the troubled relationships they had with their partners or partners living in Romania, and the way they dealt with emotions caused by being away from their family and children. By sharing these personal stories, infused with layers of separation anxiety, rejection, emotional distress as well as joy and happiness, the relationship between researcher and interviewee evolved rapidly. These fast-paced growing friendships bound, and somehow weaved, by my interviewees came with shared responsibilities, meanings and values. There were often pauses in my interviewee's story, sometimes marked by a long sigh where I felt compelled to offer some level of support. I did so by sharing my own story. This level of engagement changed the power relationship of the discussion and added vulnerability to my position as well as infusing it with a growing degree of trustworthiness. By being vulnerable together the discussion crystalised, inspired by a growing degree of honesty and the ability to confide in one another. These complex narratives offered detailed insights into the dynamic Romanian migrant–household relationship shaped by transnational migration and remittances, and they added a personal, intimate level to my interviewee's story.

This multi-layered sharing of experiences is part of a platform whereby opening up and being vulnerable allowed me, as a researcher, to explore positionality, my personal need to do research and ultimately the assumptions that would shape the entire structure of the research. In the process, my interviewees constructed my identity with overlapping nuances and associations to the ethnic researcher, embodying distinctions such as gender, race, class,

ethnicity or belonging to transnational localities, such as cities and places in Romania, Bucharest and Newcastle (or other cities and places in the UK).

The interviews conducted after moving to Hampshire from Newcastle upon Tyne where, of course, different involving various other dynamics and power relations. After relocating to Hampshire with my new job, potential interviewees were approached using Facebook groups. For example, e-mails were sent to members of Romanian Society groups created by Romanian students at various universities in the South of England, and I usually met face to face with the students that replied. While living in Newcastle my interviewees were recommended by various contacts I had with older or current students at Newcastle or Northumbria universities, whom I previously met at social events organised by other Romanians (e.g. BBQs, Romania's National Day, group meetings in a pub organised on Romanian bank holidays such as Women's Day) or at institutions such as the orthodox church Sunday service organised once a month in Newcastle. In a similar fashion, I met Romanians working in care. I also met some care workers at a birthday party of a Romanian friend.

Nevertheless, as mentioned above, places and scale greatly influence the researcher's identity creation and vulnerability in the field. After moving down south I went to meet a Romanian student who accepted an interview in Brighton, where they came to study and had been living for about three years. After we met at the train station, I was asked where it would be best to go for the interview, and I said, 'Well, wherever you think it's best, you know this city better than I do'. Given we didn't know each other at all, I deliberately wanted to go somewhere of their own choosing, hoping this would make them feel at ease. So, I was taken to this fabulous quirky café, and we sat on the first floor. I paid for the drinks and ordered just one slice of cake, taking two spoons, as I normally did if cake was available. I did this most of the times with my interviewees because I believe sharing food is an intimate act performed by people who usually share friendship or family ties. Hence, my aim was to create a safe environment for sharing personal narratives and, in the process, offering my interviewees control over which aspects of their stories they would share, even though I was an unfamiliar face. However, in this particular instance the boundaries between researcher and interviewee rapidly became blurred, greatly influenced by my vulnerable friendly position. During the interview I was asked if I could kindly help her boyfriend, a Pakistani student in social science who was struggling with his final year thesis. I tried to back out, saying that it might not be the same area of social science I specialised in and that I might miss my train back. All my objections were easily overcome by my interviewee who strongly believed I had to help,

as there was no one else who could offer such specialised support. So, after we finished the interview, we took a bus and were on our way to my interviewee's home in Brighton. I was introduced to all the housemates and after a few minutes the boyfriend appeared with his laptop. We sat in the living room close to the kitchen. I first explained I might not be the best person to give advice on his thesis and that he should try to speak to his supervisor. He explained that his supervisor was away for a few months, and they would not respond to e-mails. So, I did my best to understand the requirements of his thesis and offered advice on how to structure the report and its sections. After about an hour and a half, when I felt I had exhausted all possible recommendations I could safely give, I announced my departure by saying I should catch the train so I would not get home too late. I was asked if I wanted to stay for dinner, which I politely declined. This particular experience clearly shows how place and scale play a role in the dynamics of ethnic insider research, as well as the identity construction of the researcher and interviewee. The local need for various levels of support from work recommendations to tutoring was seemingly "satiated by my presence as an individual who moved in two national spaces" and various social positions in the English context (Turgo, 2012, p.679). Simultaneously being 'plecat afara' and a Romanian working and studying abroad with a friendly aura, "though it opened doors, also highlighted my shifting" identity (Turgo, 2012, p.669). This experience "revealed that while I was insistently going 'friendly and local' my interviewees constructed my identity which sometimes went beyond my desired scale of living" (Turgo, 2012, p.669). They were "rescaling" my position "in relation to their wants and needs" (Turgo, 2012, p.670). As such, it can be argued that for some of my interviewees, "I had the power to jump scales" (Turgo, 2012, p.670).

My interest in understanding how individuals come to construct and understand their motives and determinants to remit as well as their migration experience is informed by my own lived experience as an immigrant in England. As such, I am aware that my "interpretations are a construction of a construction made by the actors studied" (Thomas & Davies 2005, p.688). Moreover, my own experience as a migrant comes as a continuous negotiation of meanings, models and concepts that have been informed by the social, economic, political and cultural contexts through which I have moved over the years.

As such, one of the important aims of my thesis research process is to understand a set of truths that are co-created by those I met throughout the research and by myself. This is one of the main reasons I feel it necessary to narrate my story and my own struggles as a Romanian migrant in an attempt to better understand my motives to pursue this research on remittance motives and determinants, as well as how my identity as an ethnic researcher is constructed

and how, in turn, I constructed my interviewees' identities based on my experiences and vulnerability.

In 2007, before finishing my BA in Sociology at the University of Bucharest, I went along to an international university fair held in Bucharest, where universities from all over Europe, including Britain, were presenting their undergraduate and postgraduate programme offers. At the fair there were two British universities offering spot admissions. I registered for an interview slot. The meeting with the British University representative lasted for about 20–30 minutes, during which I presented myself, explained why I wanted to study in the UK and showed my credentials. Both universities offered me a place on one of their master's programmes provided that I finish my BA above a certain mark and I pass the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic test with a score of seven or above. I was quite excited to have been offered a place but at the same time a bit suspicious, thinking to myself if I was offered a position so quickly, they must give everyone a place, which to me meant they were not particularly good universities.

After doing a bit of research online I concluded that, indeed, they did not rank among the best universities in the UK. I found a website that listed the top 20 in the UK, so I decided to apply online to three of them and see what happened. Surprisingly, the three universities I applied to online sent me an acceptance offer conditioned by the same criteria raised by the universities at the fair. Thrilled with the prospect of studying abroad and fuelled by curiosity, I completed some more in-depth research about the universities that had accepted my online application. I looked at what the cost of living, activities and trips I could plan around the university, read reviews about living there, the housing market, the economy of the area. I read reviews about the universities and the department at which I was potentially going to study, the universities' resources such as library, sport centre and so on. The lower cost of living in Newcastle was what, in the end, made me decide to go there. The master's degree I choose was a new interdisciplinary programme in politics, which to me sounded like the gateway to a career in international relations or diplomacy. The more I was discovering about studying abroad the bigger my dreams. A beautiful future that I thought could all become reality if only I could convince my family and my then boyfriend that moving abroad for a master's degree was key. I wasted no time and pitched my dream to my mother with passion and enthusiasm. I thought I had a flawless plan to secure a great future, which she immediately embraced. My father was also easily persuaded. I remember he said that 'there is no real future for you here' (in Romania). At that point in time, I had no intention of staying in Britain beyond my master's degree. I told my parents I would return after finishing my

studies. Returning after one year was linked to another convincing argument in my case for leaving, as master's degrees in Romania usually last two years, while a Master of Arts in the UK lasts only one. Hence, part of my plan was to save a year, get a great master's education and land a great job straight after. The fact that I was planning to stay for just one year was also 'acceptable' for my then boyfriend.

I remember I kept on saying to myself this is going to be just for a year; I will finish my master's and then I will go back home. Years after my arrival in the UK I realised that I was still clinging on to the idea that I was there temporarily, when in fact three or four years went by. Without wanting to admit this to myself, I was reconfiguring the notion of time spent abroad, suspending myself in an in-between-home-and-away reality. I might have been doing this because admitting to myself that I was not going back was a rupture that I was not yet ready to a cope with. I also did not want to admit to myself I was going back because some nuances of 'home' came to represent a restrictive structure, and my departure and stay abroad came to signify an exhilarating sense of freedom. Reflecting on my relationship with Romania, what scares me the most is that there is less and less connecting me with my parents. Our values, our ways of life, the meanings we attach to certain actions belong to completely different structures that seem to almost always clash with my new identity. I understood years after my departure that I was somehow running away from my father's stereotypical view of women, from family and my mum's idea of doing the right thing for your family, from obeying your husband and father, from my friends' beliefs who feared change from moving abroad, from the 'Romanian way' of gaining small favours with everyone from friends to doctors, teachers and politicians via informal payments or gifts. And so, to a small extent I would like to think about my departure to study abroad and my subsequent immigration to the UK as a personal rebellion directed at the power structure of Romanian society as well as its "socially and culturally conditioned set of durable dispositions" with its specific kinds of social actions (Vertovec, 2009, p.66).

My current 'in-between', 'suspended' transnational state was largely fed by my relationship with my parents. In the years following my departure, a schedule of calls, face-to-face meetings and other exchanges emerged among me and my family, at first unbinding but quickly turned quite restrictive, complete with a punishment system for missing Skype calls or not sending agreed amounts of money when requested. The 'punishments' for disrupting the remittance flow often came in the form of obligation, responsibility, guilt and shame. For example, if I could not send money home for various reasons, my mum, during our Skype conversations, would exacerbate the need for remittances saying, 'we don't have anyone else

to ask, you are our only child … if there was another way I would not ask you for money.' She would go so far as to portray me as an ungrateful child or accuse me of becoming 'too English', which to my parents was a cold person incapable of expressing their feelings. Over the years, after my departure from Romania, the relationship with my parents developed into an informal social contract with binding rules and responsibilities. Every time I sent money for various home improvement projects, I was reminded that everything would all be mine one day, so it was my duty to help with the maintenance of the place. Another reason often used by my parents to coerce me into sending money home was a reminder of my duty to repay the initial investment they made for my master's degree and subsistence during my first year in the UK. At this point it is easy to see how my own lived experience as a student, Romanian immigrant in the UK and remittance sender is deeply entrenched in the main research question and ultimate aim of this thesis.

As a transnational migrant I see the constant reproduction of structure and habitus of my origin society as a constant reminder of my 'in-between' state. This adds to an intriguing identity struggle that makes me feel like a permanent outsider. In addition, I believe my experience as a migrant can challenge the common idea that most Eastern Europeans leave their country for economic reasons. For me, leaving home was more about taking up a challenge, being free and proving my worth to myself and my family.

As mentioned above, I came to Newcastle upon Tyne in September 2008 to start a master's degree. Before leaving home, I briefly met another Romanian girl in Bucharest for a coffee after chatting on a Yahoo group. She was starting a master's degree in Business at Newcastle University at the same time as me. We even bought the plane tickets for Newcastle together from the same travel agent and at the same time to make sure we were travelling together. On the same online Yahoo group 'Romanian students abroad' I found, via the group's directory, another Romanian girl, Athena, who had already been studying at Newcastle University since 2007. The interaction with the Yahoo online group of Romanian students studying abroad was done via e-mail exchange. There was also a directory available where you could see where students or members were based. This nuanced multi-layered dimension of virtual and actual places and scale characterised the relationship between various locales in Bucharest and Newcastle. This relationship included the continuous student migration and cementing of ties, the sense of obligation to assist fellow young migrants 'plecati afara' to migrate and find safe living conditions, potential employment and, to a degree, to support their social and economic mobility (Velayutham &Wise, 2005). The fact that the loose friendship ties were

initiated on an online Yahoo group shows a crucial upward change in the gradient of building ties and social capital in a globalised, translocal migrant context.

Before finishing my master's degree in late 2009, already the economic crisis was biting hard all over Europe as well as in England. I was a self-funded student, and after less than a year my funds were running low. My parents made it clear that they could not support me financially anymore, so I was either going back home or finding a job. Going home for me was not an option; I knew and felt that I wanted to stay. Partly because I still believed that after finishing my master's degree it would be relatively easy to build a career in international relations. Hence, in the background of an economic crisis, my dreams to succeed clashed with the reality of having to find an ordinary job just to be able to stay in the UK. At that point in time I was oriented towards the future, functioning as I mentioned above in a suspended state. I perceived my stay in Newcastle as temporary, not anchored in the present or past but somehow well established in the future. This temporary state I was suspended in could only be ended by achieving a successful career, itself an ever-changing notion with variable nuanced dimensions. As a student in 2009 I was entitled to work for only 20 hours if I had a 'yellow card' (work permit), which I did not have at that time. I asked other Romanian friends I made in Newcastle about the procedure to obtain one and got a few versions of what I had to do, what application to submit and the documents to go with it. I read and reread the instructions for obtaining a work permit on the Home Office website, where there was a lot of information to easily get lost in. On the HMRC website there were six different application forms, and on each form there were around three different paths that would qualify you for a work permit. Each of these options led to completely different sections of the overall application form. It became confusing because it was not particularly clear which of the sections must and must not be completed. In the end, I made a judgement call and applied, filling in what I thought should be filled in.

In the meantime, I had no choice: I had to take whatever employment I could find, and that was a black-market waitress job paid below the minimum wage, and just money in hand. I worked in a few restaurants like that. This meant that my working hours were going up and down daily or weekly, according to the owner's choice, so I had to find a second job. A friend of mine, also Romanian, introduced me to a company who needed weekend cleaning on a two-floor office building for £25 per day, money in hand. It was an easy fix to my financial problems so I accepted. As an illegal worker I became part of this flexible and abundant source of labour. I referred back to research I conducted previously for my master's dissertation and found that many of the interviewees were willing to risk working illegally

because, despite the downsides of poor working conditions, long working hours, no pre-warning dismissal and other unfair treatments from employers or contractors, the earnings are not taxed and reached, at the time (2009), £4–5 pounds per hour, paid daily or weekly. Some of the interviewees I talked to as part of my master's research were working illegally in the catering business, doing 5 to 7 day shifts per week at 10 or 12 hours a day and were looking at a monthly return of up to £1,500. This, compared to a minimum wage in Romania of €160 per month according to a Eurostat calculation from July 2011, makes the potential earning in the UK very attractive for any Romanian migrant, even as an undocumented worker. As De Haas (2008, p. 10) suggested, the potential migrant's social, economic and cultural capital as well as the opportunities offered by the host economy determine whether or not migration occurs. About six months after I applied for the yellow card I received the work permit document; however, finding a legal part time job was not easy, and the restaurant I worked for kept delaying the process of making my work contract legal. After I graduated, a year and a half later, I applied for a blue card which allowed me to work without restrictions in the UK.

However, if we draw a parallel, while I was fortunate to get the work permit, my other work colleagues from countries outside the EU had no choice but to continue to work long shifts for below minimum wage, often in difficult conditions (small spaces, heat, humidity) because it was often challenging to get a legal work status. Also, these immigrants were simply unable to contribute through taxation or receive any benefits from the British government.

Since 2008, I have worked in several restaurants in Newcastle. In one particular restaurant I worked from December 2009 for almost two years and had about eight Romanian colleagues that worked there for different periods of time. Quite often we discussed the difficulties faced by Romanian migrants in the UK. As a trained sociologist, as well as curious by nature, I wanted to find out more about their experiences as immigrants in the UK. At the same time in early 2009, I was also involved in a work placement with Newcastle City Council that focused on the Romanian community in North East England. This piece of research for the city council was the first time I had the chance to research migration as part of social science. So, I could say this was the beginning of several attempts to study the experience of Romanian migrants in North East England.

During the many discussions I had with my Romanian work colleagues, several recurring themes were surfacing, such as strategies and tactics required to adapt to their new life abroad or to find employment, and insights into their "external reality (e.g. facts, events) and internal experience (e.g. meanings, mixed feelings, emotions)" (Smith, 2014, p.101). Another

recurring theme noticed in my discussion with my Romanian work colleagues and other Romanians I met in the Newcastle region was about remittance: their frequency, the motives for sending and receiving money and goods as well as their determinants and flow. Understanding the multi-layered experiences of Romanian migrants and their responses to social inequality, exclusion or economic hardship became my research focus and, to a certain extent, my passion.

5. Choice of site and access to the field

The choice of research site is probably key to any study. However, the personal narratives that are gathered around qualitative research become the backbone that enacts an epistemological position, at the same time reflecting the fact that no research is neutral. Similar to how Birch (1998) described how she experienced the creation of the self through researching and analysing in the same way, I saw my personal journey shape the construction of the multi-layered self.

> "The more I progressed into the analysis and the writing up, and so into my personal, private space, the more I became aware of the emergence of my own sociological identity. I was the author who was choosing to make certain arguments and explanations. Hence it is the recognition of the mirror image that was my own inner journey of self-discovery. The more I told my sociological story the more my sense of self as a sociologist was discovered" (Birch, 1998, p.183, as cited in Hughes, 2014, p.11)

I started interviewing in Newcastle; it seemed a natural choice to start interviewing there, as I lived there from 2008 to 2015. I knew the city well. Newcastle, for me, meant an extensive network of friends and acquaintances from different backgrounds and nationalities. It was also in Newcastle that I got involved with the Romanian community, helping the Romanian honorific councillor in the North East to organise different events for our national day, Christmas dinners or Women's Day get-togethers. At this kind of event and other smaller, more private ones such as birthday parties, I met most of the Romanians I now know in Newcastle. Among them, there were two bigger groups that stood out, those of students and Romanians working in care homes. During our discussions, remittances were part of a recurring theme, touching on returns and responsibility towards the household in Romania, a

theme that resonated with my own personal experience as a migrant and student in Newcastle. The second group, that of care workers is particularly interesting because it does not necessarily refer to trained nurses or other medical staff, rather Romanian migrants that were drawn to this alternative workplace by a secure pseudo self-employed status, good wages as well as a high demand for care workers. Most Romanian care workers I met had no previous medical training, yet they were recruited by a specialist care home recruitment agency that delivered, somewhat basic, care and nursing training before offering a permanent self-employed contract.

After more than five years living in Newcastle, I relocated with work to Basingstoke, Hampshire. The move highlighted a change in my status and choice of occupation that evolved from an ordinary job meant to provide enough income for basic needs to a potentially promising career. Moreover, this new position allowed me to sustain a steady flow of remittances as well as trips to and from Romania for both myself and my family. It also meant being able to interact more often with friends and extended family in Romania and attend weddings or other events that allowed me to keep a strong transnational tie with a small community in Bucharest.

Usually, social research commences with obtaining access to the field, followed by identifying the potential interview candidates (Düvell, 2012, p. 8). It could be argued that a good research plan might be to initially "conduct several interviews with experts" (Düvell, 2012, p.8). Not only will they "be able to introduce the research to the field but they will also map all or some relevant actors" (Düvell, 2012, p.8). "Gate-openers can be identified or chosen" from the target community (Düvell, 2012, p.9). These key individuals "could introduce the researcher to the field and thus facilitate access to interviewees" (Düvell, 2012, p.9). According to Düvell (2012, p.9), in "migration studies such gate-openers will often be representatives of international organisations, notably UNHCR, or representatives of NGOs, either migrant support agencies or migrant and refugee community organisations or otherwise outstanding figures of the respective social group". The gate-openers might refer the researcher to certain clients who might be willing to share their experiences once the interviewer has gained their support and trust, a difficult endeavour in most cases. As such, the credibility of the researcher in the eyes of the gate-opener is key, especially "in the more sensitive fields such as illegal migration research, armed forces or child related research" (Düvell, 2012, p.9).

The research for this thesis evolved naturally based on years of personal observations and an insider access to the field, often intersected with my experience as a Romanian migrant in the

UK and more precisely Newcastle upon Tyne. “As an insider researcher I shared in some degrees a similar cultural, linguistic, ethnic, national and religious heritage” with the people I interacted with in Newcastle (Ganga & Scott, 2006, p.2, as cited in Turgo, 2012, p.672). “Insider researchers are generally believed to have a better and easier access to informants in the field” (Turgo, 2012, p.672). However, it also raises “a number of methodological challenges concerning identity construction made” notable with me “being a social researcher”, a woman, a student, a working migrant and ‘plecat afara’ (meaning gone outside) (Turgo, 2012, p.672). Also notable is that the interviews with Romanian students and migrant care workers were carried out in Newcastle and other cities and towns in the UK, not in Romania. This adds a nuanced translocal dimension to the research that implies multiple challenges for sampling, as my gatekeepers led to increasingly fewer potential interviewees after I moved out of Newcastle. Moreover, due to the various locations, places and scale of this research, my identity as an insider ethnic researcher suffered multiple constructions. As the “people being studied actively construct my researcher identity in the field and, in the process, contributed to the shaping of the thrusts and objectives of the research project” (Turgo, 2012, p.672). Under these circumstances the researcher is “always under scrutiny and endless speculation by the people she is studying” (Turgo, 2012, p.672).

As I navigated through the various identities in the field, I carried this sense of being in a fragile, questionable position because of the “power participants possess in defining their access and participation in their communities” and ultimately in their private lives (Turgo, 2012, p.672). This also shows that the researched “are not passive recipients of a researcher’s claim of authority and intellectual agenda but are active agents who can redefine the contours of the research, outline and restrict the researcher’s role, or even steer the project in a different direction” (Guevarra, 2006, p.527, as cited in Turgo, 2012, p.672). Moreover, Turgo (2012) argued that the researcher’s various identities at the same time support and, at times, constrain the research. Similarly, both the researchers and researched’s positionality emerged “from threads of culturally entangled identity”, each social actor might embody various “strands of identification available, strands that may be tugged into the open or stuffed out of sight” (Turgo, 2012, p.672).

In addition, there was an added layer of complexity given by the fact that the few interviews that I had with household representatives in Romania were via Skype. This was mainly due to practical reasons, as the households that I reached out to were scattered all over Romania, so going to interview them face to face was practically impossible given that I worked full time. Hence, having Skype calls proved a convenient solution. Most of my interviewees used

Skype to talk regularly to their family in Romania, something that I also did on a regular basis with my family. So not only was Skype a practical way of interviewing, it was also a safe, friendly environment to meet and connect to the researched household. The "computer enables not only sound but also real-time visual images to be transmitted across space and time" (Longhurst, 2013, p.667). Mothers, fathers and other members of the household have been using the phone to transmit voices and 'stay close' to their transnational families for several decades now. However, Skype and other similar software collaboration applications allow for both voice and visual images to be shared using an internet connection (Longhurst, 2013, p. 667). "These images, it seems, may have the potential to prompt different feelings of proximity (distance and closeness) between mothers and their children" (Longhurst, 2013, p.667).

The research focused on Romanian migrant care workers and migrant students. As I mentioned elsewhere, I am particularly interested in these two groups of Romanian migrants in the UK, not only due to the novelty of the phenomenon as well as my direct ties to these nationals but also because of the small amount of migration literature looking at their remitting behaviour.

The term Romanian migrant 'care worker' refers to "staff who directly provide care, including senior care workers and care assistants working in residential and nursing homes; home care workers employed by home care agencies; other agency workers; live-in and domestic care workers employed directly by older people or their families" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.6). Also included within the 'care worker' category are "professional staff such as nurses, social workers and occupational therapists" (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.6). Hence, the thesis will refer to those Romanian "care workers providing direct care not only to older people" and also to those Romanian migrants providing care, for instance, to disabled adults or children (Cangiano et al., 2009, p.6).

Notwithstanding the growing number of international student transnational migration flows, there have not been many research studies investigating this group as a mobile population (Findlay et al., 2006, p.291). The term 'students' refers, in the context of this research, to Romanian nationals coming to the UK pursuing a BA or higher educational degree.

6. Samples and sampling strategies

Sampling represents a "systematic process of selecting units of people, events or documents to be interviewed, observed or analysed" (Düvell, 2012, p.11). Qualitative sampling is different, of course, from sampling for quantitative purposes. The main reason being that the "aim of the sample is not a numerically representative sample but a comprehensive sample" (Düvell, 2012, p.11). In qualitative research, a purposive, quota or theoretical sampling is applied. The sampling strategies in qualitative research aim to produce the needed data with a good level of variation, at the same time avoiding repetition as well as incomplete, biased or inconsistent samples (Düvell, 2012, p. 11).

Moreover, to strengthen this argument, qualitative research does not employ a specific sampling frame or single out potential interviewees using probabilistic methods (Timonen & Doyle, 2010, p. 29). Initially, for the purpose of this research it was decided to use employers (care centre managers or care home placing agencies) as gatekeepers. However, "using them might introduce bias into the sample (employers are more likely to refer compliant workers)" (Timonen & Doyle, 2010, p.29). Using a snowball technique, the sample for this research evolved gradually including various Romanian migrant organisations, such as those found on social media, in university student societies and Romanian accountancies, as gatekeepers working in social care in Newcastle and Basingstoke as well as through networking. As such, in an effort to combat overdependence, a diverse mix of 'entry points' were used to access both the Romanian migrant care workers group as well as the Romanian student's community (Timonen & Doyle, 2010, p.29).

Of course, different types of sampling can be applied when conducting qualitative research, such as purposeful/selective or theoretical sampling. The sample for a qualitative study is often meant to suit the purpose of the study, including individuals that feature the specific characteristics, experiences or views under investigation (Düvell, 2012, p. 11). Also, a sample can be "designed for the generation of theory" which, therefore, is "in constant close reflection of the need for what type of data is required" (Düvell, 2012, p.11). In all instances the chosen sample should reflect the assumed characteristics of the community or group. Hence, according to Düvell (2012, p.6) the sample "should be stratified with the view to cover the various characteristics that are considered relevant, age (different age cohorts), gender (50% men and 50% women), skill level, duration in country (six months, twelve months, three years, etc.), immigration status (workers, students, family members, irregular

immigrants) etc". A sampling technique in line with the above is known as snowball sampling. This means that, for instance, "from an entry point, notably a key person in the group to be studied, further interviewees are identified through referral" (Düvell, 2012, p.11). Düvell (2012) suggested that this type of sampling is particularly "useful if the target group is small or hard to reach, as with some types of migration or migrants, or where standard sampling is considered ineffective, as in case of migration network research" (p.11). In addition, according to Düvell (2012, p.11) snowball samples can be either "network samples or rare population samples". Nevertheless, it is advisable to use several entry points in order to avoid snowball sample bias; ideally there should be three (Düvell, 2012, p.11). This is because if just one entry point is used, the interviewees identified in that snowball might be part of the same network and, as such, they might have similar characteristics; hence, having multiple entry points might help the avoidance of repetition (Düvell, 2012, p. 11).

The research for this thesis is leaning more towards an exploratory and illustrative investigation of the remitting behaviour of two Romanian immigrant groups. Yet even though the data collected might not necessarily be representative of the whole Romanian student and care worker immigrant population in the UK, it is important to understand how bias can be avoided in qualitative research. In order to avoid bias, quotas can be applied to 'snowballs', for example, as Düvell (2012) suggested, interviewing only two or three further recruits per chain. The risk here is, of course, to under-sample those that are part of small or no social networks (Düvell, 2012, p. 11). In addition, repetition might still emerge in the sample. In order to avoid too much repetition, the researcher may first select the potential interviewees according to the sampling strategy (Düvell, 2012, p. 11). However, at some point during the data collection they should "reflect on their sample so far, identify repetition and gaps, and in response change their sampling strategy to identify individuals with backgrounds, experiences or views not already covered" (Düvell, 2012, p.11). Hence, it is not surprising that qualitative research requires some flexibility and innovation in sampling.

According to Düvell (2012, p. 12), the size of the quantitative and qualitative sample differs significantly. For example, while a quantitative representative sample "is in the order of N=1000", the qualitative sample size specifically in ethnographic research might be "as small as N=1" (Düvell, 2012, p.12). Nevertheless, samples used in qualitative research should show evidence of "maximum variation" while at the same time be of a manageable size that permits a "qualitative and narrative analysis" (Düvell, 2012, p.12). Düvell (2012, p.12) suggested further that most migration research studies usually use purposefully designed stratified samples "of a size of N=20-25 in any one site of one category of people of the same

immigration or other status". This strategy allows for data with sufficient variation to be generated; "larger sample sizes will often only generate duplications of already found varieties" (Düvell, 2012, p.12). When studying more than one social group or site, a larger sample would be required (N=X x Y). This might be needed in order to "identify quantitative trends or even facilitate quantitative analysis as in ethno-surveys" (Düvell, 2012, p.12). Nevertheless, as surprising as it sounds, Düvell (2012,p. 12) argued that "even a sample size of N=1, notably if based on multiple interviews with one and the same interviewee conducted over a longer period of time can prove sufficient to identify the relevant issues (see, for instance, Sayad 2000)".

Benson (2016) suggested that most sampling in qualitative research entails purposive sampling of some kind. "Purposive sampling, a non-probability form of sampling", generally refers to finding participants that are best suited for the research questions (Benson, 2016, p.101). The sample that was used for the purpose of this research was adjusted as the research progressed and combined a convenience type of sampling or availability sample with a snowball type of sampling where, as Bryman (2012) suggested, the number of new interviewees was determined by the characteristics and experiences of those that were interviewed already (Bryman, 2012, p.418, as cited in Benson, 2016, p.101).

7. Reflexive account and ethical considerations

Qualitative methodologies were developed as part of the social anthropological tradition of the Chicago School in the interwar period. However, in 1984 Burgess developed the 'confessional accounts' theme where the sociologists gave a realistic account of their social research experiences as part of their research methodology. The merit of Brugess's (1984) method was to explore "off the beaten classic methodological path" realities of the social research experiences. Later, studies that built upon Brugess's (1984) theme illustrated how various factors such as the researcher's past research experience or the social structural views the researchers might be harbouring would add a particular nuance to what their study would accomplish and hence constitute an integral part of the academic research work. The same applies during the data collection. When conducting interviews, for example, as Hughes (2014) pointed out, the role that the researcher adopts is critical, yet the choice or roles might be shaped by the characteristics of the interviewer, "such as gender, age, social status, race

and ethnicity" (p.10). Incorporating the various ways the researcher participates to the production of knowledge is crucial to understanding the "social world more effectively" (Hughes, 2014, p.10). According to (Hughes, 2014, p.10), most of the postmodernist critique of realist ideas is based on the premise "that as social beings we are inscribed by aspects of the social world to the extent that much of this is invisible to us". As such, "what we 'take-for-granted' or view as normal is simply the result of these social inscriptions" (Hughes, 2014, p.10).

Within social science research, the importance of being reflexive about one's work has been recognised as the actual exercise of interpreting data in order to produce meanings rather than findings. Reflexivity, however, is part of the modernist tradition and has at its core the idea of human agency, "to act with 'free will', with a goal that we will know ourselves, and the social world, better" (Hughes, 2014, p.10). Postmodernists suggests that we cannot choose to simply remove these social inscriptions, as they are very much embedded and part of who we are, and subsequently we are 'also part of them', and as Hughes (2014, p. 10) concluded, reflexivity might generate new questions rather than answers. However, we should not assume that reflexivity critique implies that objectivity should be abandoned.

Punch (1998, p.281) went further and reflected on the nature of social science research that "involves ethical considerations by involving data from people and about people". Before collecting any primary data, ethical approval for the research was sought through the University Ethics Committee at Northumbria University School of Arts and Social Science. The methodological approach was designed to be sensitive to the nature of the settings, also recognising my position as a researcher, a Romanian national and a female student of relatively young age with no restriction on the UK labour market, entering at times formal places of work, informal family settings or public places. It also considered the often inquisitive nature of my interview questions. Abiding by the accepted ethical codes, research was carried out responsibly. The interviewees were correctly informed about the purpose of the research and why they were singled out. Anonymity was offered to all participants. It was explained on each occasion that the interviews were going to be recorded so that they could be transcribed and analysed. The interviewees were also made aware that some individual characteristics might be mentioned in the data analysis, but that more specific identifiers would not be required. It is unlikely that the participants suffered any psychological harm as a result of the research.

As, Hughes (2014, p.11) argued, "we might invert the idea that the researcher influences the research by exploring how research constitutes the researcher". Hence, the researcher "should

be aware of how fieldwork research and ethnographic writing construct, reproduce and implicate selves, relationships and personal identities" (Hughes, 2014, p.11). Becoming a researcher, according to Hughes (2014, p.11), "means that one takes up a self-concept of oneself as such a person". "Fieldwork experiences, similarly, may contribute to one's sense of self or selves" (Hughes, 2014, p.11). Hence, the data analysis methods chosen are not unbiased, as they are infused with several assumptions about the theory behind the thesis as well as the researcher's ontological and epistemological understandings of the subject studied (Jamieson et al., 2011). As such, the thesis itself, but more probably the findings, may be infused with different assumptions derived from the actual social construction of the researcher. Hence my position within the study, as a whole, needs reflecting upon, as it is impacted on one side by "epistemological, ontological" assumptions and on the other side by the theoretical advancements, but also by my belief system negotiated through different spheres such as the personal or private and the "interpersonal, emotional, institutional and pragmatic", as Jamieson et al. (2011, p.7) point out. Moreover, interrelated within these spheres is my position as a social researcher that has been constructed and deconstructed as a function of time and my perceived distance, both physical and emotional, from the subject studied. Probably one of the characteristics that had a considerable impact on the interviews was my nationality (the same as my participants) and the obvious cultural ties shared with the interviewees. All interviews with co-national students and care workers were conducted in the Romanian language, as it was believed that this allowed the participants full access to the pallet of expression of their native tongue. On the downside, conducting the interviews in Romanian may bring out certain meanings that do not exactly convert into English. For example, when analysing the data and translating interview excerpts into English, a dysfunctionality of discourse might appear that may come across as false beliefs or a naïve realism.

Reflexivity also relates to data collection and data analysis by drawing on power relations present in the chosen social context, space and time between the interviewee and the interviewer. As a part time PhD student, often younger than my research participants, working full time with a well-established international company might have prompted my co-national interviewees to construct my social position as deeming respect, authoritarian, threatening or even snobbish. This, coupled with my student researcher position coming from a well-known university, might have been intimidating at times, since, in contrast, some interviewees were struggling to gain their first job or a full-time care work contract. Nevertheless, these credentials might also have helped me gain access and trust among the

members of the Romanian groups interviewed. It is not always clear if and how we become aware of our own position within the study or "how far we can know and understand what shapes our research at the time of conducting it, given that these influences may only become apparent once we have left the research behind" (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003, as cited in Jamieson et al., 2011, p.7). According to Hudson et al. (2020, p. 89), social science research must consider the complex social relations between family members.

Reflecting back on the interviews that were collected over several years, the memories that are most vivid are those moments when, as a researcher, I felt overwhelmed and humbled by the experiences that were being shared. Moments that encapsulated complex emotional bursts surrounding specific difficult experiences, such as the daughter crying over the phone to her mother for hours on a weekly basis, the father leaving his child with his former partner, the young care worker that was punched in the face by one of the elderly care home residents, the daughter that wanted to become an architect as soon as possible so that she would be able to bring her father over as gratitude for having raised her while her mother was away working in Spain.

Having been entrusted by the Romanian care workers and students living, at that time, in the UK with narratives that evoked deep expressions of emotional and physical struggles, emotional hardship as well as hope and commitment to reciprocate the support received, it felt almost like a breach of that trust to probe further and ask to speak to some of the family members.

Among those interviewed there was only one household representative: the sister of one of the Romanian students interviewed. Although I asked at the end of each interview if it would be possible to speak to a member of the family, it did not feel natural or comfortable to insist further in order to gain access to other members of the transnational family if, after asking initially, no contact of a household member was offered. I took this as a polite sign from the interviewee to suggest that they might not be willing for me to reach out to a member of the family that supported them through the transnational journey.

Furthermore, the interviewees came from different cities both in Romania and the UK. Some of the interviews were conducted face to face and others online via applications such as Skype. While the interviews followed a semi-structured pattern meant to explore certain themes, each interview was unique in how the story shared related to what I was exploring and also regarding the interviewer–interviewee dynamic. This meant that I only captured glimpses of the stories and experiences of thirty people, using narrow lenses offered, for example, by either the online or face-to-face medium. It also meant that the interviewee's

journey traversed, at different points, the lifecycle of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows.
As such, this might have induced limitations to the construction of the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances proposed in this thesis, since it was draft based on the experiences that my interviewees shared.
Nevertheless, the social positioning of both myself and those interviewed implied that while sharing their experiences that showcased in many cases shame, vulnerability, happiness and hope, it created a humbling experience that required special care and acknowledgement of the sensitive nature of those interviewed and of the stories I was entrusted with.
As mentioned above, some of the experiences and stories that my interviewees shared were often very personal. Trespassing their comfort zone by insisting on speaking to a family member seemed unethical. Of course, as a result the household member's experience and the part they played, sharing support via the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flow might not have received a nuanced representation in this research. To further develop the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances, more research is needed that would include the experience of different members of the transnational family. Also, a longitudinal approach could add more nuance, potentially revealing the lifecycle evolution of asymmetrical remittances.

8. Collecting and analysing data

We could argue that generalising most research findings could be dangerous if not ineffective in many fields. Hence, the research and analysis for this thesis is meant as an interpretation of a new nuance of Eastern EU migration – asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows between several transnational social actors, such as the migrant and household, a new social relation that developed along with the evolution of transnationalism in contemporary Europe and the EU in the new globalised world.
Collecting and analysing "qualitative data using manual methods can be messy and time consuming" (Düvell, 2012, p.14). Moreover, as Düvell (2012, p.14) suggested, when "faced with volumes of materials, finding themes and extracting meaning can be overwhelming". In order to shape, manage and make sense of such data, qualitative research software like NVivo can be particularly helpful. It provides an environment that allows the researcher to manage

the workload of analysing the data. Of course, it does not do the thinking, but it aids in the analysis process (Düvell, 2012, p. 14). Qualitative research software has built in tools that can aid the researcher to make sense of the data collected by ordering the information by specific themes; applying tags, nodes and subthemes; giving a visual representation of the data; and sorting and classifying information to develop meaningful conclusions. In order to analyse the interview data collected as part of this research, interviews were audio coded using NVivo 11. Relevant excerpts were translated into English and linked to the main research question and the conceptual framework. The emerging themes were connected in a pattern according to the operationalisation of the conceptual framework performed in chapter 3, the main research question, the interview schedule and emerging themes of the interview.

The focus of the interview's interpretation was mostly on the told story as it emerged from the analysis of the interviewee's responses to the interviewer question structure and by the analysis of different parts of the interview transcripts. However, according to Wengraf (2004, p.15), the "perspective at the time of the interview might change subtly or grossly at variance with other perspectives that were or could be taken by the self or other subjects on the same event". Hence, the methodology should be tailored to identify clues that suggest different perspectives. Further narrowing the focus, Wengraf (2004, p.18) noted that "despite its usefulness, the term 'perspective' is unfortunately biased towards the cognitive or the 'seen' that can be identified in words. It fails to indicate the 'tacit' (pre-verbal and emotional) component of the 'mode of experiencing' to be identified". Wengraf (2004) referred mostly to a methodological analysis focused on the experience-interpreting subjectivity. Not surprisingly, the task and struggle of the researcher is to "identify, or get a better sense of, how that subjectivity did and does and might in the future 'interpret' (experience) its experiences" (Wengraf, 2004, p.18). According to Wengraf (2004, p.19), the way we understand "experience involves a notion of the 'the semi-defended self' operating in a 'semi-repressive society', in which neither the individual's 'inner world' nor the 'outer world' is transparent".

The preliminary theoretical mapping of migrants' asymmetrical bidirectional remittance behaviours has led to a theoretical conceptual framework. The subsequent operationalisation of this framework supports the research process by establishing relationships between identified and emerging themes as they become apparent in the lived experiences of Romanian students and care workers in England (Ciurea, 2018).

The theoretical framework proposed is different to other formalisations of remittance behaviour (see Carling 2009; Lucas & Stark, 1985) by the simple modelling of translocal

social actors interacting as part of an asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flow steered by an informal social contract and influenced by various motives and determinants to remit, all wrapped in a social fabric that reflects complex emotional practices such as shame, vulnerability, joy and happiness.

Drawing on the conceptual framework, a CRQ was developed: how do '*bidirectional' flows of remittances* of Romanian students and migrant care workers contribute to a *stable investment climate* as well as provide *informal social protections* to migrants as well as those households and families who supported the initial investment? Several theory questions (TQs) or research questions were derived from the CRQ, encompassing different aspects of the CRQ that needed to be answered by the interviewees. Hence, from each TQ a number of interview questions (IQs) were developed (Wengraf, 2001). The theory questions overarched broad themes derived from the conceptual framework regarding bidirectional remittances behaviour. Each TQ had several interview questions attached to it designed to explore the Romanian migrants' experience and their remitting behaviours. The semi-structured interview questions were prepared in advance to allow comparability of the responses, yet during the interviews a certain degree of freedom was allowed in order to be able to explore different avenues that may arise in the conversation. However, efforts were made to make sure that the conversation remained on track and that all the questions were answered regardless of the order. The questions used during the interview can be found in the interview schedule attached to this paper.

9. Analysing interview audio files and participant-observation experiences

Data analysis is often thought of "as the process bringing order, meaning and structure to the research data collected" (Marshall & Rossman ,1999, p.150, as cited in Vosloo, 2014, p.355). It can be described as time-consuming, messy and complex, but at the same time rewarding and captivating (Vosloo, 2014, p. 355). Although the data analysis process does not follow a linear pattern, it develops a clear structure via interpreting categories of data using a specific analytical framework with the purpose of unlocking key interpretations that facilitate a more uniform understanding of the social issue studied (Vosloo, 2014, 355).

Another way of looking at the qualitative data analysis process can be process of transforming data into findings, making sense of the interviewee's experience, opinions of situations, meanings of particular events, emerging patterns, themes and relationships among categories of data (Vosloo, 2014, p. 358). Nieuwenhuis (2007, pp.99–100, as cited in Vosloo, 2014, p.358) "captures the essence of qualitative data analysis well, when he provides the following definition: qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing and iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not necessarily a successive process". It can also be argued that qualitative analysis represents the process of synthesising the qualitative data collected through an analytical procedure into specific, comprehensible, trustworthy, meaningful and even original analysis (Vosloo, 2014, p. 358).

While the methodology chapter aimed to fine-tune a methodological approach best suited to capturing the various nuances of Romanian migrants' bidirectional remittance flow behaviours, the following analysis chapter aims to interpret the data from the field as well as participant-observations notes using chapter three's operationalised analytical framework and the analysis method described in the previous chapter.

Data needed for this thesis was gathered in a systematic, recorded and organised way to allow for a correct interpretation of the information. Gathering qualitative data also involved "an inseparable relationship between data collection and data interpretation" (Vosloo, 2014, p.355). Also, an ongoing process of discovery accompanied the research. During the data analysis process, concepts, theory and themes were used to construct a pattern for "communicating the essence of what the data revealed" (Vosloo, 2014, p.356). Through blending specific empirical themes, symbols, abstract concepts and a bespoke analytical framework, the thesis's qualitative analysis also supports the development of the 'bidirectional' remittances flow concept, central to the research process.

The interview data was analysed, interpreted, described and presented in a comprehensible form in order to distinguish patterns, relations and trends in accordance with the design laid out by the analytical framework and methodology chapter. With the help of content, inductive and descriptive analysis techniques, the assumption was that the identified patterns, relations and trends would provide an intelligible explanation to the Romanian students and migrant care workers' bidirectional remittances flow behaviours.

Throughout the data analysis process, one of the main objectives was to understand the interviewee's experience and avoid using theoretical definitions made before relating to how people think and react. Also, during the data analysis it was important to make use of

descriptive research that used the context and search for a deeper understanding of the participants' experiences (Kutlu & Korkmazi, 2013).

In order to remain much closer to the lived experiences of my interviewees than to the complexities of qualitative analysis of data, a more personal literary style was used, including using a participant's own language (Vosloo, 2014, p.358). As such, it can be argued that interpreting qualitative data is "based on assumptions, and the use of interpretive analytical frameworks" to produce a final written report "that includes the voice of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, a complex description and interpretation of the phenomenon studied and its contribution to the literature" (Vosloo, 2014, p.358).

One of the first steps in analysing the data was listening several times to the interview audio-recordings. Second, using the NVivo 11 audio coding feature, the common answers were identified. The analytical framework's pre-determined themes were used to prepare the code list. Finally, the common categories and themes were constituted, interpreted and assigned codes. Example responses of Romanian students and migrant care workers supported the themes, codes and subthemes. The process of coding facilitates "identifying aspects of the data that relate to the research" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp.202–203, as cited in Chtereva, 2016, p.221). The two main approaches to coding in qualitative analysis according to (Chtereva, 2016) are selected and complete coding. Selective coding refers to the process of identifying and pragmatically selecting key words and phrases from the data that the researcher immediately links with the researched phenomenon (Chtereva, 2016). Complete coding involves a more comprehensive approach of signalling out anything of interest or relevance to answering the research assumption (Chtereva, 2016), such as specific chunks of data that potentially address the understanding of Romanian migrants' remitting behaviours. At the same time, inductive research analysis involves coding the data to reveal the relationships between the concepts, by categorising and identifying the significant conceptual groupings.

However, before coding and identifying reccurring themes, one of the first steps in analysing the interviews involved organising the data. Once the data had been organised, the next stage followed, namely description. Qualitative analysis relies heavily on description, while "descriptive statistical analysis limits generalization to one particular group of individuals"; observed descriptive qualitative analysis "provides valuable information about the nature of a particular group of individuals" (Kutlu & Korkmazi, 2013, p.20). It is crucial to be able to clearly synthesise the information obtained from various sources in data analysis, such as observations, interviews, field notes and document analysis, into a coherent description of

what was observed and discovered. During the second stage of data analysis, specific aspects of the study were described, such as the purpose of probing specific described situations, the meaning participants associated with certain behaviours, how participants experienced temporality and the effects of any activities. The third and final stage of the data analysis, namely interpretation, involved an explanation of findings aimed at interpreting the remitting behaviours and experiences of Romanian students and migrant care workers (Ciurea, 2018).

10.Qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) programs – NVivo

The first generation of qualitative data analysis software was developed in the 1980s, with the purpose of advancing qualitative research in several ways (Woods et al., 2015, p. 598). The first was by improving the manual "paper-based" coding techniques by "enabling more complex, adaptable, extensive, and exhaustive coding schemes" (Woods et al., 2015, p.598). The second, the advancements QDAS brought were seen as "supporting forms" of analysis "that would be impossible to carry out manually", for example linking text material to pictures, sounds or videos (Woods et al., 2015, p.598). According to Woods et al. (2015, p.610), researchers may use QDAS program "outputs to illustrate their coding processes and research outputs", which makes their analytical processes more transparent. The third, and probably most important, was that QDAS could enable trustworthiness, "validity and rigor to be more readily demonstrated" (Woods et al., 2015, p.598). Also, through QDAS, an understanding of the limitations, practical applications and usefulness of the analysis was developed. The evolution of QDAS also prompted concerns that an automated tool could influence the research in undesirable ways. For instance, that QDAS technological parameters might "compromise the researchers' ability to design and execute research tailored to the needs of their projects" (Woods et al., 2015, p.598). This might happen if the software is not designed to adapt to the researcher's analysis needs. There is also the danger that the researcher might design their study according to the software's capabilities or adopt a technique just because the programme allows it (Woods et al., 2015).

NVivo was used to analyse the data gathered for this research, as it has a range of features that support the qualitative data analysis process, such as the ability to "compare and fine tune coding, find items created or last modified, or query and interrogate the analysis of the researcher" (Wiltshier, 2011, p.2). All interview recordings were imported directly into

NVivo from my phone after making sure the audio files were converted to a format accepted by “NVivo —there was no need to produce transcripts”, as the coding was done directly on the audio files (Wiltshier, 2011, p.2).

To explore the remitting experiences of Romanian students and migrant care workers, open coding was used to elicit the themes talked about in chapter three’s analytical framework, some of which were then investigated in more depth by repeatedly listening to the audio files and field notes. Models were also used “to visualize the data which helped to uncover themes and links” (Wiltshier, 2011, p.3). Coding began “inductively, developing initial codes to reflect ‘categories’ of data observed, and creating a ‘node’ in NVivo to represent these” (Wiltshier, 2011, p.3). “Initial coding identified some general” motives and determinants to remit and “a number of factors that appeared to emerge as both cause and consequence” (Wiltshier, 2011, p.3). As the coding continued to a second stage involving constant data comparison, “new nodes were added where required by the data encountered” (Wiltshier, 2011, p.3). In some instances, nodes developed into “hierarchical structures to reflect the inter-relationship of categories”, while “in other cases merging nodes were distinct categories” (Wiltshier, 2011, p.3). Models were also used in the analysis, as they can lead to different ways of grouping nodes together. Critical to the analysis process, however, were coding stripes, which can be used alongside node sources, making the ongoing comparison process much easier.

The NVivo software with the audio coding functionality made it possible to analyse data in a way that “wouldn’t have been possible manually in the time available” (Wiltshier, 2011, p.6). It facilitated an efficient review of coded material and made it easier to search for words and phrases. The audio coding functionality made it easier to spot differences in the data between different interviewees and compare the assigned codes.

11. Conclusion

The methodology chapter put forward a data analysis strategy best suited for investigating the concept of bidirectional remittance flows and the dynamic transnational social relationships of Romanian student and care worker remitting behaviours. While the methodological approach that guides this thesis is more inductive, as it adopts a design that seeks to interpret and understand – not requiring a hypothesis typical of a deductive research design, it does

focus on complex individual experiences and transactor relationships as part of a social context that changes and evolves, aided by a conceptual framework and a central research question (Hart, 2005).

As the research evolved gradually over several years, drawing on personal experience as well as incorporating ethnographic methods such as participant observation, it is only natural that the researcher's textual presence as a narrator is included, allowing the researcher to tell their own story and connect to the research.

When the research and researched embraced each other's vulnerable position the discussion crystalised, inspired by a growing degree of honesty and an ability to confide in one another. As a result, the complex narratives collected offered detailed insights into the dynamic Romanian migrant–household relationship shaped by transnational migration and remittances, and they added a personal, intimate level to my interviewee story.

The interviews collected personal life stories with detailed accounts of the emotional strain inflicted by the transnational migration experience. The asymmetrical nature of bidirectional exchange was also visible in the need to reciprocate, guided by internalised family obligations to display care.

Notable in the research was that there was only one household representative interviewed. The main reason for this is related to my, the researcher, internalised notions of care about not crossing certain social conduct boundaries, for fear of being seen as pushy or even rude.

The data analysis process focused on harmonising the research data by identifying meaning and structure. It aimed to transform data into findings, making sense of the interviewee's experiences, opinions of different situations, meanings of particular events, emerging patterns, themes and relationships among categories of data.

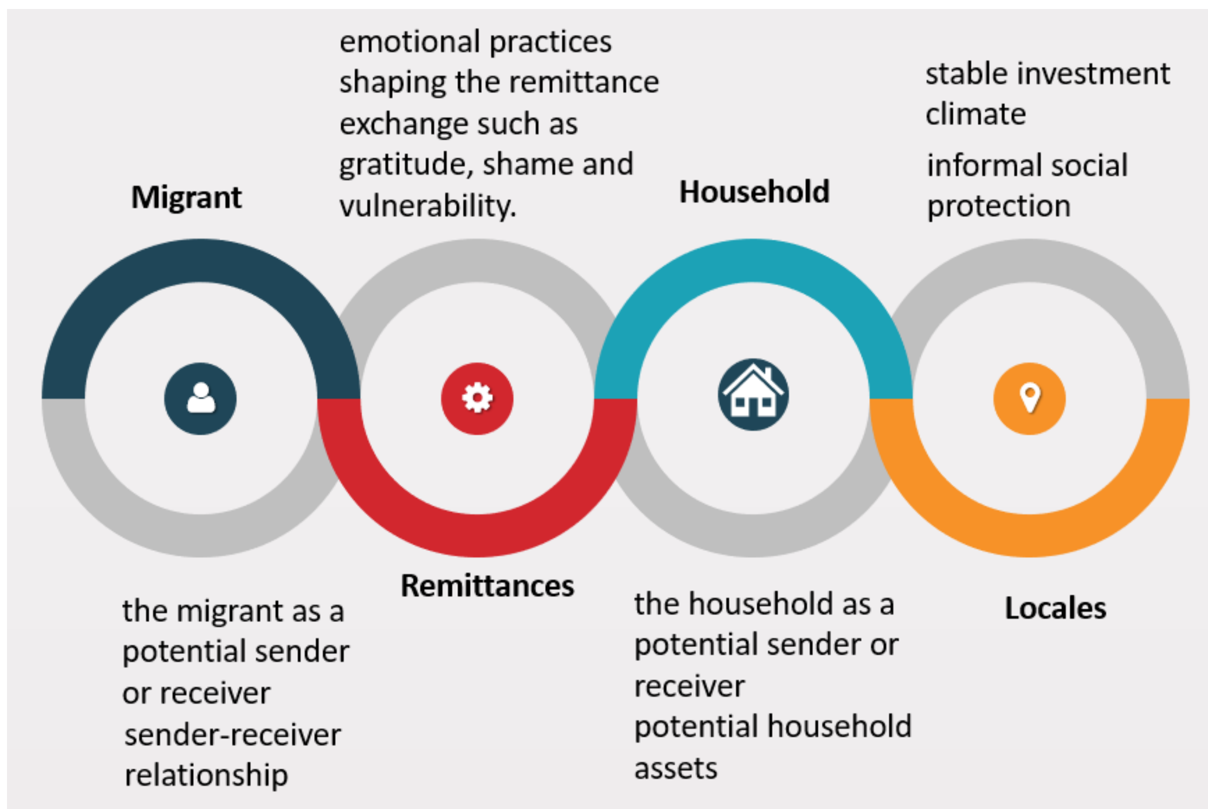

Figure 7: Conceptual framework, presented in Chapter 3
The above conceptual framework structure links theoretical assumptions of a bidirectional remitting pattern with the motives and determinants to remit encountered in the experiences of Romanian students and migrant care workers.

Chapter 6 Data Analysis and interpretation

- **Introduction**
- **Romanian students and migrant care workers' characteristics**
- **Gratitude, shame and vulnerability: emotional practices shaping the**
- **bidirectional remittance exchange**
- **Transnational social ties and strategies into work**
- **Bidirectional remittance flows: motives and determinants, contractual**
- **agreement between households and the migrant care workers and students**
- **Stable investment climate**
- **Informal social protection**
- **Conclusion**

1. Introduction

Chapter 6 amplifies the meanings of the narratives collected with the aim of understanding how the emotional charge part of transnational families' obligations and needs guides expressions of human agency, such as asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows. Reflecting on and analysing the stories that were collected pointed to shortcomings of theories, such as the NELM theory, that to a degree missed key roles of the emotional fabric part of transnational families and the catalytic effect emotional practices have on how family members express obligations and needs as well as deal with shame, joy, vulnerability and love, to name a few.

Migrants' remittance sending patterns reflect the dynamic social relationships as well as sense of obligation and duty of transnational families. From an NELM perspective, the circulation of welfare-relevant resources bidirectionally, part of a mutually beneficial

agreement and often following an asymmetrical pattern, is set out to rationally maximise resources. Unsurprisingly, the mutually beneficial transnational contractual arrangement binding households and their youth studying abroad is built on the assumption that the initial investment by households in a student's education abroad can provide a "long-term productive investment" and also an "income assurance strategy" for the household members who first set out the commitment (de Hass, 2007, p.23). Similarly, migrant care workers are expected transnationally to "share the benefits" of their "better life" abroad as "part of a self-enforcing arrangement" between themselves and their household (Paolo Boccagni, 2015, p.250).

From an NELM perspective, the transnational family members are focused on specific strategies to maximise their resources that will include an exchange of remittances. It does not, however, account for the emotional practices and emotional support shared among family members that often infuses the asymmetric bidirectional remittance flows between various actors.

Throughout the narratives collected we see how both the household and the migrant care workers, or students, are expected to contribute to each other's well-being via bidirectional remittances linked to an obligation to reciprocate "emotional support and the provision of a locus for cultivating nostalgia, attachment and social status", often negotiated through complex emotions such as gratitude, vulnerability and shame (Boccagni, 2015, p.250). The transnational exchange of remittances', emotional and practical, "resources are generally understood as a two-way, negotiated and implicitly asymmetrical process – one embedded in family regimes of solidarity and mutuality, themselves open to change over time" are enforced by varying motives and determinants (Boccagni, 2015, p.251).

Not surprisingly, the analysis of Romanian migrant care workers' and students' narratives shows their experiences in the UK are the product of a continuous bidirectional negotiation of expectations and obligations between the household and migrant. Starting with the student's or migrant care worker's decision to move to the UK, generally based on ideal, almost naïve, presumption that their life would fundamentally change for the better after finishing university or getting a job abroad. Crucially, during the initial migration stage, the household needs and wants as well as their ability to provide and guarantee act as a counterweight, ensuring the migrant there is always a safe place to return to if their expectations of a "better life" are not met abroad (Boccagni, 2015, p.250).

2. Romanian students and migrant care workers' characteristics

As we unpack the narratives of the Romanian students and migrant care workers collected to support this thesis, we should share a short introduction describing some of the distinctive characteristics of this group.

Initially, the intention was to collect 100 interviews from Romanian students, migrants working in care and their households. However, as the research progressed it became clear that reaching such a high number of interviews was not needed. In total, there were 30 interviews collected and analysed. Out of the 30 interviewees, 10 were male and 20 were female. There were eight male students, two male care workers, eight female students, one female household member from Romania and eleven female care workers. In terms of age, the students were in their early twenties with the exception of two postgraduates who were in their late twenties. The males and females that worked in care were older, with ages between late thirties and mid-forties. The interviews lasted from around 20 minutes to one-and-a-half hours. All the 30 interviews were conducted in various locations in the UK, often in public places such as coffee shops, restaurants or pubs. The first 19 interviews were completed in Newcastle face to face, from 2013 until 2015. The remaining 11 were conducted from 2015 to 2018 in various locations across Hampshire, Surrey, West Sussex and Oxfordshire as well as virtually using a collaboration tool such as Skype. Some of the early interviews were used to refine the question areas to explore during the discussion.

In addition to the above biographical characteristics, those interviewed also shared similar experiences. Often, the period after the student or migrant care worker arrived in the UK tended to be very difficult emotionally, so the household support tended to be crucial. This period was often seen by the student or migrant care worker as a challenge or trial that, once passed, crystallised the transnational relationship with the household and redefined the migrant's opportunities and needs as well as the commitments and obligations on both sides. The critical initial period was followed by an extent of time where the student or migrant care worker often tried to devise and perfect several strategies to improve his/her social status abroad. These status improvements might include obtaining legal status, advances in their professional career, making new friends, joining Romanian Sunday church services, and so on. At the same time, the student or migrant care worker continued to draw strength from the emotional support and social status confirmation of the household. This period was also

characterised by the migrant's tendency to compare their initial expectation with the perceived reality of their experience abroad so far, often resulting in more conservative future plans. As such, throughout the initial period abroad and beyond, both the students and migrant care workers, as well as the household, sustained different degrees of financial, social, psychological or emotional investment. Hence, the dynamics of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows depended on the circumstances and needs of both sides of the exchange. However, while the strong transnational social ties existing between the migrant and their household contribute to the bidirectional transnational exchange embedded in the families' solidarity and mutuality agreement, the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows exchanged between the migrant and the household may contribute on both sides to unequal access of opportunities as an indirect result of how remittances affect capital conversion.

3. Gratitude, shame and vulnerability: emotional practices shaping the bidirectional remittance exchange

Among the personal narratives of the Romanian students and migrant care workers interviewed, an intriguing aspect surfaced related to how asymmetrical bidirectional remittances often carry different meanings compared to any other reciprocated support, such as various types of financial support or even goods received from other relatives or friends at origin. When Diana sent her parents a quarter of her first salary it was not regarded as an initial repayment contribution for the investment her family had made in her education abroad but as an expression of gratitude towards her parents, who believed in her and supported her through this journey.

> "My parents never asked me for money, in my family we don't really talk much about money unless it's necessary. I gave them money just once, after I started working that year when I went home for Christmas, I saved money specially for them and gave £100 each. This was money saved from my first salary and I wanted to give them back something. I gave them the amount in pounds, and it was something special, more of a symbolic one off". (Diana, PGR student)

Asymmetrical bidirectional remittances carry diverse meanings. These meanings are shaped by the various actors involved in the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange

attributing them several nuances. As a result, they are valued differently by those involved in the exchange, often due to several factors such as age and gender, the length of time the migrant has been living in the destination country, the family's sources of revenue, as well as complex emotions such as expressions of gratitude, pride, shame, trust or love. As such, it might be argued that the financial aspect of bidirectional remittances is merely the backbone of the bidirectional remittance exchange. Around it we notice a social and psychological fabric made up of various nuances given by diverse values, meanings, expressions of complex emotions, motives and determinants as well as an underlining social practice function.

Moreover, given their social practice function, bidirectional remittances also represent manifestations of collective as well as individual agency, expressions of gratitude, sources of shame or vulnerability, acts of engagement and exchange of habits, norms, meanings, social ties, goods and money that collectively shape the identity of migrants and other social actors involved in the bidirectional remittances exchange.

Furthermore, asymmetrical bidirectional remittances are far from being an individual's choice; they embody expectations, meanings and practices. According to Akesson (2011, p.329, as cited in Carling, 2014, p. S227), individual actions are "shaped by the identities of the transactors as moral persons and not just by the stimuli and opportunities they are exposed to". Of course, emotions play a crucial role in shaping an individual's actions as a form of practice. Hence, as Monique Scheer (2012) argued, emotions transform habits, social practices and identities "over time not only because norms, expectations, words, and concepts that shape experience are modified, but also because the practices in which they are embodied, and bodies themselves, undergo transformation" (p.220).

> "So, when I first came here, I met lots of Romanians but the Romanians I met called me a prostitute because I wasn't sleeping in the room I rented, I was staying with my boyfriend. They were asking, how can I have so much money? How can I afford certain things working as a care worker? How can I afford to go to London and see my family, friends? This is what these "so called" Romanian friends were asking. From that point on I moved away and never lived with Romanians". (Anca, care worker)

The complex emotions such as gratitude, shame and vulnerability observed among the collected narratives of the students and migrant care workers are often habituated, learned, culturally specific practices. As such, it might be argued that the underlying relationship between the actors on either side of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange is

shaped by emotional practice. For Anca, the use of shaming as a form of informal social sanctions by her Romanian friends with whom she shared a house in the UK, is a form of social control that she used to encounter in her home town in Romania. Anca's houseshare experience with other Romanians in the UK resembles a translocalised small scale Romanian village reproducing some of the characteristics of her home town community. Escaping similar social control practices is one of the motives Anca decided to remain in the UK after her initial visit as a tourist. Hence, Anca decided to move away from the houseshare, a move that destabilised her financially. We learn later in her narrative that while she was experiencing these financial difficulties her mother asked her to come back home. Anca refused to do so, mentioning, "I'm very stubborn and didn't want to give her this satisfaction". Hence, it can be argued that shame, as an emotional practice can have a significant influence on both the expressor and receiver behaviour, state of mind and the dynamics of the bidirectional remittance exchange they are part of.

> "I wish to remain in the UK, to have a good job, finish university and become a qualified architect, and I hope, really from the bottom of my heart to be able to bring my dad over because I think life in Romania is so hard, the government doesn't really offer you much. My father currently earns a very low wage and barely can afford to pay for the house where he lives". (Karina, student)

Karina's relationship with her father is shaped by habituated emotional practices that affect the bidirectional remittance exchange, creating a temporal locus where transactors' expectations would be met.

According to (Brown, 2006, p.45), "shame is a psycho-social-cultural construct". She explains further that the "psychological component relates to the participants' emphasis on the emotions, thoughts, and behaviours of self" (Brown, 2006, p.45). The "social component relates to the way individuals experience shame in an interpersonal context that is inextricably tied to relationships and connection" (Brown, 2006, p.45), while the cultural aspects relate to the structural expectations and feeling ashamed for not meeting specific cultural expectations (Brown, 2006).

> "His mother lives in Snagov where they build a house a few years ago, now she wants to move back to Bucharest because it's too far away, she changed her mind she doesn't want to live in the suburbs in a house she wants to move back to the city and sell the house. She also bought a car that is way too expensive, now she wants to sell the car. You see, his parents are separated, and he is closer to his mum so he always felt that he needs to look after his mum, to give her advice, they have a very close relationship at the same time they fight all the time they are so much alike that they

> can't stay together for long they just clash … So, Razvan my partner, told her not to sell the car and he will help her with the monthly leasing payments". (Diana, PGR student).

From Diana's perspective, her partner Razvan, also a postgraduate student, is always there to support his vulnerable mother who still lives in Romania and is currently going through a difficult period financially and emotionally. We might argue that Razvan's support for his mother is motivated by pure altruism. However, we can also distinguish an element of shame and social control in his partner's narrative. Romania has a largely patriarchal culture where men are regarded as providers for their families. Since Razvan's parents are separated and his mother has raised him on her own, she is also supporting him through his postgraduate studies. It can be argued that the expectations of a patriarchal role were socially attributed to Razvan as he reached maturity. Given these circumstances that Diana mentions, after his parents' separation, Razvan and his mother became very close; he was always there for her. Not being there for his mother when she was experiencing difficulties would have meant not conforming to the Romanian patriarchal expectations, resulting in potential expressions of guilt and shame both for Razvan's mother and himself. Shame is often related to feelings of being trapped, powerless and isolated. Moreover, as Brené Brown (2006) argued, shame has various nuances given by the intersection of these concepts. Not surprisingly, what makes shame such a complex and powerful emotion are the intricate combinations of different feelings such as powerlessness and isolation as well as fear of being rejected and doubt. While trying to secure his first care home job in the UK, Damian often felt trapped and powerless. Damian explained that while waiting for the recruitment agency to arrange an interview with a care home, he was helping out the English tutor, teaching other Romanians and Bulgarians that were housed in the same hotel by a recruitment agency specialising in hiring only Eastern Europeans care workers. At the same time, he was increasingly anxious because he had not received any care home job offers even though he had a very good level of English and had passed all the necessary tests.

> "Already 2 weeks have passed, and they didn't offer me anything, not even an interview via phone, you can imagine I started to get very annoyed. How come there are others that speak English well and in 2 or 3 days they pass all the tests and immediately they have an interview and a job right after, but you are not giving me anything not even a phone interview? After asking around, I found the answer, it turns out that because you are a male it's a bit more difficult for them to find you a care home, for women they find something straight away but for men it's just problematic. This was because in the care home you will have both senior ladies and gentlemen

> and a lady is ok with being looked after by another women and a gentleman has no issue with whether he is looked after by a woman or a man but you know how older ladies are" … (Damian, care worker)

Being a Romanian male trying to find a job on a restrictive British labour market for A2 migrants (UK labour restrictions for Romanians and Bulgarians ended in January 2014) often meant relying on recruitment agencies that were stretching the legality of the self-employed status in order to make a profit out of employing only Romanians and Bulgarians who had very few other legal work choices. Damian, a former English and French teacher in Romania, was feeling trapped and powerless but had no other choice but to adapt and wait for the agency to find him a job in a care home. Feeling trapped meant combining "limited and punitive options with layers of competing expectations to form a complex web" that restricts the agency of migrants (Brené Brown, 2006, p.46). Similar to some of the other Romanian students and migrant care workers, Damian refused to return to Romania even though he faced difficulties: feeling trapped, experiencing shame and guilt, questioning whether he was good enough to work in a care home.

The refusal to return to Romania has to be understood in the context of the relationships between remittance transactors and the dynamic expectations linked to the bidirectional transnational exchange stretching out in time. Damian mentions further in his narrative that he had to send regular payments to his former wife who was looking after their child, as well as send a monthly payment to his parents to pay off some long-term bank loans. Yet, the financial obligations Damian had towards his family in Romania were not the only motives for not returning when faced with difficulties in the UK. "Remittance transactions always have other intended or unintended effects than the transfer of purchasing power" (Carling, 2014, p. S219). For Damian, remittance transactions were a way of confirming his "continued social membership, challenge hierarchical relations between the transactors", indirectly the relationship with his estranged wife and father-in-law (Carling, 2014, p. S228). At the same time, by vowing to not return no matter how hard it gets and his commitment to repaying his debt and support his child, this introduced feelings of gratification and generated social debt.

> "I sold my car, I had a VW Golf, so I had about £2000 when I came over to the UK. I still had some loans that I needed to pay off in Romania and, how can I say, my story has always had ups and downs so when I divorced, the father of my former wife was a top official in the Romanian Secret Service so when I got the divorce, well you see the flat was in my name I bought it before I got married so he didn't have any claim on the flat but he made several investments in refurbishing the flat before the wedding. So of course, he wanted to get his money back after the divorce, but he

> wanted a lot more than he actually invested at the time in the region of tens of thousands of euros. I told him nicely that he could ask for a return of tens of millions of euros, but he didn't invest that much. Anyway, we finally agreed on an amount that I had to pay back. So, because I had to pay him back I went and made some credits with a bank. This meant that I had a £300 to £350 per month to pay the bank for these loans. Anyway, this wasn't such a pressing matter, when I left, I made a few monthly payments in advance. The thing is, when I left, I left saying to myself I'm leaving Romania and I will never come back. Whatever happens I will not return, no matter how hard it gets". (Damian, care worker)

The relationship between migrants and household members as part of the bidirectional remittance exchange is not only dynamic but asymmetric. Carling (2014) argued that the relationships between the transactors, at the psychological level, are inherently unequal, as one party is left behind and the other goes abroad. In addition, the transnational migration context introduces additional inequalities given by how the various forms of capital accumulated by both the migrant and household members convert (Bourdieu, 1986). As such, the bidirectional remittance exchange might translate into a privileged situation for the migrants' household members and an additional burden for the migrant or, quite the opposite, the migrant might be the privileged party while those who remain at origin might struggle to access different opportunities.

> "There were quite a few Romanians and Bulgarians living at the hotel where I've mentioned we used to be housed before being deemed ready to apply for a job with a care home by the recruitment agency, that had savings of £60 with them, nothing more, and mounting debt at home. So basically, they were effectively completely dependent on the recruitment agency". (Damian, care worker)

We can argue that shame is often difficult to identify, as it develops based on feelings such as fear, powerlessness, judgement and the need to hide. In the case of Romanian care workers recruited before 2014 by Eastern European specialised labour force agencies, complex emotions such as shame became the norm, the structure and agency that shaped the asymmetric, unequal bidirectional remittance relationship that they were part of. According to Damian, several Romanians and Bulgarians, housed in the same hotel by the recruitment agency specialised in recruiting Eastern Europeans for care home jobs, were not only trapped by a quasi-legal self-employed care home worker status but had mounting debts to pay in Romania. Hence, they had little choice but to conform with the agency's regulations. Furthermore, we could argue that when a migrant receives from their household a substantial financial investment to help them get settled abroad, the transaction is infused with the power to establish or cement social hierarchy.

According to Carling (2014, p. S247), even though the "debtors settle their obligations and thereby" escape an "inferior position", often the repayment "takes the form of an open-ended process", locking the receiver of the initial investment in a repayment loop. In addition, most of the ethnographic research and policy development literature "do not question" the pivotal role of "remitting in a socially" contracted "norm for what it means to be a migrant, but tends to take remitting itself for granted" (Carling, 2014, p. S251). As such, "transnational communities, corporate marketing strategies, and the dominant policy discourse thus underwrite the same message: Good migrants remit!" (Carling, 2014, p. S251).
However, remittances are part of an asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange between several transactors, including the migrant and their household as well as extended family members and friends. All of those involved in the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange abide, to an extent, to the socially constructed rules of reciprocating support. The remitting behaviour of transnational families incorporates not only reverse flows that, as Finch (1989) argued, flow from the parents to the young, but an asymmetrical bidirectional exchange between different family members and other social actors across the transnational locales they inhabit, against a background of social practices often generated by specific habitus dispositions in the context of specific social fields.

> "My father never approved of the degree I wanted to study at university, he thought I'll never be able to get a decent job. He wanted me to go to the medical school in Iasi like he did also like my two younger cousins. So I remember speaking to him and he wasn't happy to pay the fees for the Bachelor degree I wanted to attend in the UK but in the end, after speaking to my mum as well, he agreed to pay the fees for 3 years and some money that I would need for food and rent" (Alexa, PGR student).

Alexa's parents had been separated for more than 15 years; her father was not very close to Alexa or her mother after the separation. After taking the decision to study in the UK, we can argue that Alexa, as a recipient of remittances of her estranged father's investment in her education, exercises agency by tapping into overwhelming and complex feelings such as guilt, powerlessness, judgement and vulnerability that contribute to the development of shame for both transactors involved in the exchange. After the initial conversations with her father, Alexa explained that she perceived the remittances or investment he was prepared to make in her education as falling short of his moral obligations, almost judging her father in "moral terms as selfish or aloof" (Carling, 2014, p. S240). In addition, taking into account that "remittances are often" transacted via "transnational social fields, such judgement matters" to the remittance sender "regardless of the recipients plans to return" (Carling, 2014,

p. S240). In addition, as Carling (2014, p. S229) argued, "whether and how gratitude is expressed affects the longer-term hierarchical relationship and social obligations between the transactors".

The relationship with her father was a difficult one; the way both her and her father interpret duty and obligations towards one another will be shaped by their experiences and determination to 'do the right thing' in accordance with the cultural structural expectations of the translocal community they inhabit. More often, remittances represent not only rational repayments of loans negotiated through informal contracts but also expressions of duty of meeting expectations as well as a form of showing support, including care and potentially love.

> "I remember my mum saying I would rather starve than have you return here. You have to imagine that during the winter months my parents regularly were left with less money at home compared with what they sent me. On top of that, after their business went bankrupt my father was looking for a job and it was very hard because he is a salesman and over 40 and most of the times company want young enthusiastic sales guys. So, he was unemployed for a long period of time. My mother works in an insurance company and earns about 400 pounds per month. Both my grandmothers help us, I don't know how they manage to save money, but they do. So, they send me some money but also help my parents. You see that's the good thing about being the only child in the family". (Ioana, student)

According to Carling (2014), there are substantial differences regarding the way that ethnographic and economics-oriented literatures discuss remittances from children to parents. Yet, "in the ethnographic literature", the main message is that of an "unquestionable obligation to repay parents for the gift of life and care in childhood, regardless of the subsequent migration" (Carling, 2014, p. S233).

In a similar way, Ioana's experience shows how her parents are willing to risk financial hardship to continue to invest in her education abroad. As Ioana is the only child, the emotional aspect of "obligation and entitlement are central to the role of remittances" in the implicit education investment arrangements (Carling, 2014, p. S237). As part of the transnational relationship inherent in the bidirectional remittance exchange, we can identify various vehicles of recognition such as gift remittances or phone calls. However, according to Carling (2014, p. S236), the transfer of information or money is often considered significant but the "difference between remitting or calling, and not doing it, is enormous". The repayment aspect was never raised by her family according to Ioana, yet she does mention that she talks to her parents everyday, also that when she does get a job she will go home

more often and bring gifts. Fulfilling the family duty to their daughter, their obligation to support her to gain a higher education at a prestigious UK university can be argued. Ioana's family commitment to support her no matter the cost introduces feelings of gratification and generates social debt on both sides. Ioana's family's investment in her education abroad and her promise to repay the investment once she is fully employed clearly shows the asymmetrical bidirectional nature of the remittance exchange. In addition, the investment in the multi-layered relationship between the transnational social actors involved in the exchange, coupled with a complex emotional fabric, form the basis of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows.

> "I can't remember exactly the amount, but when my grandfather died, he left in my name a flat, my mum sold it but practically it was my inheritance but from her father, so the money was somehow belonging to both of us. I remember my mum saying this is your money, you can use it to finish university and maybe do a master's degree as well. But, as she came here and it didn't go well with her first job and she then changed a few other jobs she's been unemployed for various periods of time and most of that inheritance money had to be spent and nothing was left for me to use for a master's degree for example so I had to take a loan to pay for my Master studies. Because the money was already spent as she changed jobs several times, but was the family's money not necessarily mine so it's understandable". (Alexa, PGR student)

Throughout the narratives collected we come across the notion of sacrifice referring to everything that the transactors on either side of the bidirectional remittance exchange endure in order to accumulate the knowledge or earn the money or other specific resources in the first place that they eventually share as remittances. It can be argued that the notion of sacrifice encompasses the very nature of family and home, where its members not only feel safe and entitled to ask for support but also the obligation and duty to provide the needed support. Moreover, the relationship between parents and children, according to Finch (1989), is the foundation of kinship relationships in many communities. These traits are reflected as part of the translocal communities that both parents and children inhabit. Sacrifice, and subordinated roles especially in the Romanian patriarchal society, are often designated through structural sociocultural patterns to women who are supposed to conform, and at the same time negotiate, innovative exit strategies that would allow them to be seen as hard-working and successful contributors to the family.

> "When I'm at home now, I can't find my place, it just feels strange. I come home I stay for 2 months and I can't find anything to do. For me home, I told them, I'm sorry I just come home for you nothing else. So, my mum explained to my father that I'm not going to return home after university. After a while, unfortunately the two shops my dad used to manage were not doing so well and had to be closed. So, my dad said, yeah you are right there is nothing for you here in Romania. At the moment, what I'm really annoyed about is that I can't get a job so they still have to send me money. I really want to move on from this and be able to earn my own money because I know how difficult it is for them at the moment and how big the costs are to keep me here. They told me not to worry, just look for a job, do your thing will keep sending you money for now". (Tavi, student)

It is often assumed that transnational migration, in certain contexts, involves various degrees of hardship and that the sender–receiver relationship and subsequent informal social contract formed between them demands sharing sacrifices that ultimately facilitate the exchange. (Carling, 2014, p. S239). The financial hardship faced by Tavi's family and his inability to find a job, to be independent and support himself, ignited feelings of powerlessness and shame. His parents made numerous sacrifices in order to continue investing in his education abroad. As such, remittances as part of the asymmetrical bidirectional exchange could also be understood as sacrificial for the household as well as for the recipient. Both transactors involved in the exchange are likely to experience complex emotions such as shame, vulnerability or guilt as well as gratification that ultimately impact their agency. It can be argued further that Tavi's behaviour might be triggered by the fact that "remittance transfers" generally "take place in contexts of material inequality, and reciprocity is consequently asymmetrical" (Carling, 2014, p. S245). For instance, similar to Tavi's experience, the potential return of his parents' investment is motivated by the family's efforts in raising their son, now a student and future professional, as well as investing in his education. Tavi's efforts to gain his financial independence can be interpreted as a way of validating his gratitude (Carling, 2014, p. S245). Neutralising the need for remittances from his parents represents a form of return on investment, creating a buffer until the potential repayment flow begins. In addition, as the expectation of Tavi's family changed from being adamant that he needed to return home after finishing his studies to do not return as there is nothing left for you at home, shows the dynamic of the student and household relationship as well as the various ways remittances are constructed as either sacrifice, recognition, a gesture of goodwill or gratification.

Part of several of the narratives collected we can distinguish an ongoing moral claim, over the remittances that have already been transferred. These claims are manifested as continued

requests or needs for investment or repayment on both sides of the bidirectional remittance exchange, not necessarily under financial form. The transactor's perpetual ownership and repayment of remittances is often incited by complex emotions such as shame, guilt and gratitude. In addition, considering that at any point in time multiple individuals can feel moral claims or ownership to the remittances sent, it is unclear when and on whose terms migrants, households or any other transactor involved in the bidirectional remittance exchange "relinquish ownership" of the remittances they share (Carling, 2014, p. S244). In some instances, remittances' effects on relationships relate to the creation of distance due to "tensions that often accompany remittance transactions" (Carling, 2014, p.S246). "Conflicts" might arise between the transactors "over the use of remittances" (Carling, 2014, p.S246). Tavi's experience also shows how his desire to gain his financial independence represented a form of rebellion or remittance-free-backed superiority that would allow him to fully justify to his family his unwillingness to return to Romania after finishing his studies in the UK. Finding a job would give Tavi the power to challenge the patriarchal structure of his household. It can be argued that the "remittance-backed superiority of migrants is particularly sensitive because the migrants are typically younger than the people receiving remittances" (Carling, 2014, p.S246).
Micro-level decisions, similar to the one Tavi made to find a job as soon as possible and stop receiving financial remittances from his family, shape the growing global flow of remittances of billions of euros. Hence, understanding these micro-level decisions allows us to appreciate the dynamics of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange – "to whom remittances are sent, what determines remittance amounts, why transfers stop, and so on" (Carling, 2014, p. S251).

> "When I came to the UK, my parents paid everything they sent me money to pay the rent for food everything. They had some land in the countryside they sold it, about 2 hectares. Also, my grandmother died just before I came here and they sold her flat as well. Just my luck (laughing) it's very sad but this is the truth. Anyway, this is how I had money for my first year and half of my second year. Yeah, it was difficult at the beginning. I couldn't really afford to buy that much from the money they used to send me per month. Not much was left for food most of the food we could afford was frozen, we used to just stick it in the oven and that's it. We used to have to eat a whole week using around £5". (Minas, student)

Minas' experience shows how vital the family's investment is for continuing to study abroad as well as for providing minimum subsistence funds. Moreover, it shows how difficult it can be for the family to put together the funds that had to be invested in Minas' education. In

addition, in part of Minas' narrative we notice notions of sacrifice, shame and vulnerability that shape the transactor's agency as well as the diverse meanings remittances can take. The complex emotions that form part of Minas' narrative also play a vital role in shaping the family's motivations to remit as well as constructing remittances as an investment in development and education abroad. Furthermore, it can also be argued that the transnational relationship with Minas' household was strengthened by their sacrifice for Minas' well-being. It crystallises the needs as well as the commitments and obligations on both sides.
The bidirectional remittance exchange formed around multidimensional practices that have to be understood holistically. To emphasise the interconnectivity of remittance flows, Carling (2014) explained how ethnography brought together the analyses of different research material as well as emotional and relational aspects of remittance transactions.

4. Transnational social ties and strategies into work

Drawing on several original semi-structured interviews collected in the UK, this thesis analyses the asymmetrical informal contractual agreement between several transnational family members such as the sender and receiver, bidirectionally steered by dynamic remittances flows, expectations, needs and obligations as they emerge from the narratives of Romanian students' and migrant care workers' cross-border family ties.
As mentioned above, the initial period after the student's or migrant care worker's arrival in the UK tends to be the hardest. Diana's parents started saving for her education two years before she finished high school, even though they were not sure the decision to study abroad was a good one. Just to be on the safe side they asked her to apply to university in Romania as well. The main reason for their request was that they were not sure Diana was going to be offered a place at a British university. Even after Diana was accepted at university in the UK her parents were still not convinced; they were not sure if that was a good thing and if they should be happy or sad. After all, their daughter was going away to study in a foreign country. Diana's parents' reaction to their daughter's decision to study abroad, a decision far from the norm in a small Romanian town, shows the "embeddedness created by a specific social context and its structural implications" (Hans-Joachim Bürkner, 2011, p.189).

Diana's first few months in the UK at Portsmouth University went by very quickly. She remembers that:

> "every day was an adventure, everything was so new. I used to Skype with my parents every day to tell them what happened". (Diana, PGR student)

The migration process, Boccagni (2015) argued, can be understood as an intergenerational transfer of family resources. With emotional support as a shared resource that extends the transnational practices of households. Transnational family ties and informal social protection, in the form of financial or emotional support circulating via the ethic network, are good stabilisers, yet these types of remittances might do little to support the migrant with adapting and integrating in the new local community abroad.

> "Imagine I was on a flight for so many hours, I was so confused, then so many hours on a bus where I slept for a bit, then the landlord picked me up from the bus station and took me to the house where I was going to live. He introduced me to my new house mates two guys a Nigeria and a Greek and an Indian girl. He gave me a map and showed me where the shops are. Then he tells me come with me in the garden I'll introduce you to someone and I was thinking who can he introduce me to?! I follow him into the garden and I see this lady (*who she never met before*) who starts talking to me in Romanian and says hi how are you, my heart melted, I went and hugged her over the little fence that separated the two gardens. She asked me again If I was ok and I said yes I'm just confused she asked me if I wanted to go to bed and rest for a bit and I said no I'm too excited now. She then suggested we go to the shops so I can get some food". (Diana, PGR student)

The initial reliance on a co-ethnic's practical support and guidance might also be due to a newcomer's lack of familiarity with their new environment or an initial language barrier. Furthermore, relying on other co-ethnics for information about employment opportunities, for example, or initial emotional support is different from trusting them or developing certain expectations and obligations (Ryan et al., 2008). In Diana's case her new neighbours, who happened to be Romanian, offered a piece of home on her doorstep. Even though she never met her new neighbour before, just the fact that they were Romanian helped Diana reconstruct her identity by associating them with something familiar from home that was an instant reminder that she was safe and not alone.

A migrant deciding to be trustful or not, or to devote resources as a means of keeping trust, depends on the perceived "costs and benefits he will experience" (Coleman, 1988, p. S117). The fact that his or her "trustworthiness will facilitate" or inhibit "others' actions" has nothing to do with his decision to reciprocate (Coleman, 1988, p. S117). In addition, a migrant who represents "a source of information for another" migrant "because he is well

informed" usually "acquires that information for his own benefit", not for others who might make use of it (Coleman, 1988, p. S117). Furthermore, it can be argued that individuals might gain and share information as a strategy to "maintain their position as opinion leaders" (Coleman, 1988, p. S117). In this respect, Diana's role as the founder of the Romanian student society at the UK university where she studies and her continuous involvement shows her commitment to support other Romanian students, grow her social co-ethnic network and maintain an opinion leader position within the growing Romanian student community. Having access to a diverse social network means having access to an abundant source of social capital. Social capital's conversion to economic or cultural capital, for example, can lead to various levels of access to opportunities.

Razvan's narrative shows that he felt it was much easier to make international friends. He had some English friends, yet he did not see them as 'real' English, as they had a minority background. Several students and migrant care workers interviewed explained that they had not been able to make British friends since their arrival in the UK because the British seem 'cold' or 'distant'. Gawlewicz (2016, p. 34) argued that these verbal expressions such as "cold" or "distant" or "us" and "them" represent imagined communities created by "migrants who share a language and a nationality" (p.34). It could also be argued that the creation of the 'us' and 'them' in the co-national discourse could be a result of their social positions and power relation interactions creating a false sense of safety or comfort as part of the 'us' community as opposed to 'them'.

> "It's much easier for me to make international friends. Well, I think it's kind of similar to how it would be if an international student would come to study in Romania. I mean, I would definitely make friends with them. Others have told me they believe the English have 3 or 4 friends they make when they are young and they stick to them and don't get close to anyone else, at work they would only have acquaintances. I don't know if this is why, maybe is the language barrier. It's not about not understanding what is being said it's about the emotional charge that every word can have. When you live in Romania for 18 years, you know the meaning of every word and how it changes meaning when you use it in a different context. When you come here, you understand English but you learned English from a Cambridge course which is at a formal level so when you come here people are using slang and you almost don't understand anything. So, it might be the language barrier or they are a bit cold. I met nice English people, they seemed ok, but it's always a formal relation". (Razvan, BA student)

In order to make sense of cultural differences, individuals will sometimes compare themselves to the other ethnic groups using an internalised set of summarised characteristics. In doing so, both social actors make use of embedded social habitus nuances or 'tags', that

are a reflection of collective social fiction that comes with a descriptive, explanatory and moral relevance that allows social actors to make social classifications. ‘Ethnic tags’ might seem relevant to both immigrants and locals, since they can give a false sense of understanding the other group’s characteristics. In addition, ethnic tags come with an explanatory and descriptive function that helps build self-esteem. This is crucial as well as dangerous, since it could create distortions of the truth and constructed reality for some individuals.

Diana’s narrative, a postgraduate student, is quite telling in that it shows how some migrant students build a reflection of self outside the community they are living in to cope with their fear and shame of not being accepted. Portraying ‘the other’ as fake and shallow shows how she justifies vulnerability. The way in which Diana reconstructs her identity is reflected in how she builds her social network, a mix of co-national and other nationalities with a migrant background. By constructing an “identity of the foreigner”, Anna Bagnoli (2006, p.23) argued that as part of the self-identity construction of younger migrants there are several emotional hurdles that need to be negotiated, such as “suffering, oscillates between two different ways of positioning the self”. Migrating allows them to explore social positions different to the one dominated by the outcast feelings they might have inhabited at home (Bagnoli, 2006). Migration allows young migrants to experience and re-invent their identities (Bagnoli, 2006).

> “We are not very happy here because of how society is and the English … we just didn’t bond with them at all we just don’t like them … I just think they are very fake and shallow that’s why I think I don’t have any English friends. I have a very good Romanian friend, a very good Greek friend and a girl from Holland”. (Diana, PGR student)

Diana’s best friend hierarchy shows how she reconstructs her identity in relation to the cultural closeness she feels towards certain nationalities. It can be argued that the social network Diana is part of is heavily dependent on how she constructs and reconstruct her and other’s identities. In turn, this affects capital conversion, hence access to certain resources that can lead to inequality among migrant groups.

Ioana’s narrative also shows how daily interactions with the locals have the potential to “turn the self into a foreigner”, to construct an outsider relationship and ultimately create boundaries (Bagnoli, 2006, p.24). Bagnoli’s (2006, p. 25) research is built on the assumption that identities are constructed “in a dialogue with the other”; we define “who we are through the relationship to what we believe we are not” (p.25).

> "I don't get along with the English, I don't have any English friends. I think they can't stand me, honestly, our characters just don't match I don't know. Well … Also because they don't like me I also don't like them". (Ioana, Student)

Students studying abroad, or migrant care workers who build their identity as outsiders, often perceive the surrounding society with various degrees of detachment. Unwilling or unable to immerse themselves into a new, different social structure.

In a similar way, Anca's experience shows how the decision to move abroad is partially taken as a result of the complex process of identity reconstruction. Anca (care worker) decided to come to London to a family friend after she suffered a car accident in Romania. The unpleasant experience Anca had with her manager after she suffered the car accident was seen as one of the main drivers for her decision to move to the UK. However, it can be argued that Anca made the decision to move abroad in order to challenge her current position in the social structure and to be able to construct a new identity, an identity that was at first lived temporarily and involved experimenting with different lifestyles, assuming that she could return to the identity she previously had.

> "I was 24, working in sales and just before Christmas my manager sent me to a client meeting. However, on route to the client my company car skidded off the road and crashed into a light pole due to icy conditions. I wasn't hurt luckily, emergency and police were called to the site and someone from the company where I worked came and picked me up and took me back to the office. My manager wasn't happy with the situation and that the car was damaged and I haven't done the sale so he told me I had 30 minutes to recover after which I should go and finish my job". (Anca, care worker)

After her unfortunate work experience and car accident, Anca decided she had to 'escape' somewhere, so moving to the UK seemed a good idea. Once she was abroad, she hoped she would work out what she was going to do further in her life.

There was a similar pattern noticed in the narratives of other migrant care workers and students. It seems that the decision to migrate was triggered not necessarily by economic reasons but by a deep sense of dissatisfaction with the traditional Romanian patriarchal structure as well as the ongoing Romanian political instability, or it was related to the quality of higher education or a combination of reasons, in essence various degrees of social inequality. Hence, as part of the complex social change process of migration, individuals, alone or accompanied by others, leave and settle in another geographical state, potentially transitionally, hoping to start over and build a new life that is 'better' than the 'other life' they left behind. As such, it can be argued that certain social, economic or political events or beliefs create a sense of vulnerability and social status imbalance that are overcome by the

potential migrant via the creation of a new imagined identity that might provide a sense of safety or comfort, envisioned to be accomplished through the process of migration.

> "Through a friend I found my first job at a coffee shop in Soho square London, where I worked for 3 weeks. I used to start at 7 AM in the morning and finish at 5 PM with 20 min break, which is completely illegal, I wasn't allowed to sit down, so I was working in a kitchen making sandwiches and salads and that sort of stuff. The manager was an Egyptian guy, who treated me like I was a slave. Can you imagine, from being Miss sales agent or Miss teaching assistant (Anca was a qualified math's teaching assistant in Romania) wearing makeup and nice shoes to working in a kitchen where I wasn't even allowed to lean on the table for five min and rest. I used to clean that kitchen three times a day just so I had something to do so I didn't sit down. For 6 days a week he used to pay me £150 for 10 hours a day". (Anca, care worker)

Similar to other interviewees, Anca's first work experience in the UK was followed by a difficult period infused with vulnerability and shame. Her social status was being renegotiated and reconstructed not only by herself but also by the social actors that formed part of her new transnational social network. The initial phase is a period where the student's or migrant care worker's social reality construction of 'us' and 'them' of 'here' and 'there' overlap and reconstruct a new self and reality designed to respond to the new social context. As mentioned before, this critical period after the migrant's arrival abroad often acts as a catalyst that further exacerbates the need to succeed or do better and reconstruct a social status transnationally.

Stefania's experience was infused with vulnerability and shame that she balanced with the transnational emotional support offered by her family.

> "It was hard at the beginning, a year and a half, it was very, very hard, I remember I had a sim card and used to call my mum every Saturday and cry, I was a wreck! Imagine I wasn't speaking Romanian at all for the whole week, no one would say anything nice to me … and all the terms in the contract were basically not respected besides of the salary that was the exact amount but I was entitled to breaks every day and days off. If I wanted to take a day off on Sunday to go to church, they were not happy … anyway it passed but I used to think I'm lost but it passed. You see the thing is my mum helped me very much she used to encourage me always. What I mean she didn't say to me you have to stay there no matter what and endure, she used to say to try to communicate with her and the little girl try to make small compromises if it doesn't work out you can always come home it's no problem. Somehow what my mum said gave a lot of strength and ambition. I used to think of course I can, things will change and you see they did everything is good now". (Stefania, student, she worked as an au pair in her first year and half in the UK)

As Stefania's narrative and the above excerpt suggests transnational family ties and the communication that flows through this network works as a source of emotional and practical support (Boccagni, 2015, p. 261). Emotional support represents the foundation of kinship relationships (Finch, 1989). Furthermore, the relationship between mother and daughter is infused with an tremendous emotional charge that is reflected transnationally through emotional, moral and practical support. Boccagni (2015, p.261), argued that "feeling cared about from afar is a transnational asset that should not go unnoticed – whatever the channels and ways of displaying it – against the background of social isolation which is often associated with immigrant domestic work". Moreover, asymmetrical bidirectional transnational emotional support contributes to informal social protections for both the migrant and household.

> "I liked the fact that no one in England really cares what you do, how you dress, people won't even look at you if you wearing horns. This was completely different for me. I grew up in a small town in Maramures where everyone knew everyone. The whole town knew who my parents were. Also, I was a very good student, I had the highest grade at Baccalaureate in the whole town in my year. Anyway, everyone knew things about me, things I didn't even realised I did or said, the whole town knew. My mum would know before I got home that I met some in the town centre that's how bad it was. For example, at home my front door was opened from 6am to 12pm, my neighbour came everyday saying she is there for coffee, she came in never knocked, it didn't matter if I was in bed in my pyjamas' or whatever. So, you didn't have any privacy at all". (Anca, care worker)

As mentioned before, the decision to migrate is part of a complex social change process determined by diverse motivations and needs, yet at the same time, as suggested by the narratives of Romanian students or migrant care workers, it is often triggered by a desire to escape the dominant Romanian patriarchal structure. Women's narratives provide evidence of different emancipation strategies that allowed them to reconstruct oneself and empowered them to express themselves freely. Both migrant care workers and students adjust to their new transnational environment through gaining paid employment, developing their social networks and achieving different levels of personal and social prosperity seen as an accomplishment of the goal they set up to achieve before migrating.

Damian, currently a care worker and a former French teacher in Romania, was hoping to go abroad and work as a translator in London. Prior to coming over, Damian did some research online and concluded he could earn up to £30 per hour as a translator. "I was so naïve; I remember, before I came over, I used to think what I'm going to do with all that money".

> “When I came over to London, I stayed with an English friend who I met while on a trip with the school a few years back. First, I tried to find a job in London, I had a few promises for a job in sale from a company but in the end it turned they were just empty promises. A couple of days before going back I went on this website, don’t know the name anymore, something about Romanians in the UK or something like that. I saw this ad about a recruitment agency who was looking for care assistants. It said they had a hotel in Leeds where you were housed, they would provide English classes for free, then they would find you a place to work, you would have a phone interview with the employer and if they were ok with you, they would offer you a job. The recruitment agency would fund your trip to the new employer, they would also give you a sort of contract and would schedule an appointment with the job centre for the National Insurance No. The agency used to work only with Romanians and Bulgarians because they knew we couldn’t leave for another job, we were serious, we were open to work extra hours. You see, most care homes are very badly managed, they always had a shortage of staff this meant you always had more than enough shifts. It got to a point where I had six shifts a week in the beginning when I had no other choice, no were else to go, I couldn’t afford to say something against it. There were months where I had just 3 days off”. (Damian, care worker)

Given the work restrictions on Romanian and Bulgarians in the UK labour market in place until 2014, certain recruitment agencies re-branded themselves as Romanian and Bulgarian-exclusive care assistance specialists, taking advantage of the niche opened by the British Government labour restriction policy. Most of the care assistants were working full time for a care home on a quasi-self-employed contract with limited opportunity to apply for national insurance number or a full-time work permit or blue card. Often the job centre refused to grant Romanian migrant care workers the national insurance number because they didn’t qualify as a self-employed individual having just one ‘client’. The vulnerable position migrant care workers were put in by the recruitment agencies was often amplified by the difficult working conditions found in care homes. This meant the migrant care workers very often felt trapped, insecure and alone. However, as mentioned above, this initial difficult period represented a catalyst in the migrants’ lives, often,overcome through asymmetrical bidirectionally shared emotional support as well as financial remittances sustained by the transnational social network. It can be argued that the bidirectional transnational exchange of various degrees of support shape a dynamic asymmetrical negotiation of power relations between the migrant and the household members left behind. As such, a migrant’s reconstruction of self is supported by the social status confirmation of the transnational family and the bidirectional negotiations of obligations, expectations and needs of both the migrant and household.

In order to gain legal working status, Damian got in touch with a college in London who, for a fee, enlisted him in an NVQ in Social Care. He never attended the course but was able to get the work permit needed.

Similarly, Iulia's experience shows how in order to respond to a series of overlapping needs, various into-work strategies were designed using knowledge circulated through the social co-ethnic network either from weak 'virtual' ties offered by social media forums or strong ties such as family and friends.

> "I worked as self-employed for a short period of time, because I found out that if you enrol with a college or university you can earn the right to work as a student also if you study in the field you are working in you can work full time. So I enrolled with a college in London who was only dealing with Romanians and Bulgarians. Practically, how can I say, this wasn't a normal college like Newcastle College it was a college where you could study for an NVQ in health and social care or hospitality. Basically, they were helping you by giving you the necessary paperwork needed to apply for a work permit. I wasn't attending these courses in London, I paid the £1000 fee and they were helping me with the papers. So they were a legal college, accredited and recognised by the border agency. I found out about them online on a forum dedicated to Romanian migrants. After I got my work permit, I recommended them to a lot of other Romanians. Anyway, if you were living in London or around London you could go to the classes and they would help you find a placement. But I told them from the start, I won't be able to attend because I'm living in Newcastle I sent them my diplomas from Romania and told them I just need the papers to apply for the work permit are you going to help me or not?" (Iulia, care worker)

Both within enclaves and migrant work niches, mobility opportunity depends entirely on the co-ethnic network. Members can help others find jobs, teach them useful skills and supervise their performance. Thus, co-ethnic networks can build a powerful chain where "entry level openings are frequently filled by contacting friends" or family members "in remote locations" in the origin country, bypassing the local labour force (Portes, 1998, p.13).

The process of network building involves social interactions and relationships with migrants and the members of the community at origin across a transnational space. Social network resources and support circulating among different social actors can determine other potential migrants to make the move as well as provide the means to move to a destination country. After migration it further facilitates the social exchange of resources, such as information about jobs, work permits or visas needed to access employment. These resources can be channelled into diverse forms of utility depending on the migrants' needs and interests (Ryan, 2008). Romanian students interviewed benefited greatly from the resources and support circulated through the transnational co-ethnic network. Robert made friends via the

university's Romanian students society. Razvan got his first job in the UK with the support of a Romanian friend.

> "I applied at KFC and MC and similar kind of restaurant online and I couldn't get in they just never contacted me. But I manage to make friends with a Romanian guy who worked at KFC and he managed to get me a job there". (Razvan, student)

Grip (2008) suggested that the experience migrants have of employment opportunities, for example, in the place of destination becomes useful to potential migrants if current migrants maintain contact with their home community and if newcomers develop the ability to maintain the strength of ties with their close network or bridge new ties to other sources of migration experience. Moreover, the value of resources depends not on how much experience current migrants have but on how much more experience they have compared with other potential migrants or newcomers.

Anthias (2007, p. 788-9) takes from Bourdieu's idea that social capital should be linked to utility, extending capital to those social relations that can be utilised as resources for future generations. As such, the concept of social capital becomes meaningful as the utility function of social resources. Only those ethnic networks and ties that can be effectively mobilised constitute social capital. Transnational co-ethnic networks similar to the one Razvan relied on for support not only facilitate the circulation of various types of resources, they also contribute to the reproduction of the 'us' and 'them' imagined communities, offering its co-national members a false sense of security. Moreover, transnational co-ethnic networks also contribute to the re-confirmation of status and social position among its members.

Similarly, Anca's experience shows how information received from a loose tie in her social network was utilised to find better employment. In addition, the excerpt from Anca's narrative below shows how she struggled to balance overlapping identities in a dysfunctional workplace. Anca devised a tailored survival strategy that she felt suited her belief system and expectations of what, ideally, a care worker's position should entail, regardless of the existing subjective workplace power relations. Temporality is also expressed in her narrative to further emphasise the incompatibility of her identity within the initial care home she worked for. Not surprisingly, the prospect of moving on and working at an idyllically described '5-star' care home and potentially a more rewarding workspace was a decision that Anca made instantly. It can also be argued that she immediately accepted the new job offer because she perceived the individual offering his support as someone who understood her position at the time and was able to empathise with her experience.

> "I stayed at my first care home for a month and a half because there was so much abuse. I was going to the manager and explain what the issues were, and she was saying to me you're causing me problems. Anyway! During the time I worked there I met this guy, he was coming there to visit. This gentleman was recruiting staff for the company that I'm currently working for now. He asked me if I don't want to move somewhere where I'm going to think I'm working in a 5-star hotel. He said this to me because he saw me run on the corridor sweating because no one cared there, and I couldn't leave them like that, I mean we were there to help them not to treat them like trash. So, I accepted straight away, I didn't even have to think. So, I accepted and moved to the city where the new care home was". (Anca, care worker)

Coleman's (1988) and Uphoff's (1999) observations regarding social capital are in line with Bourdieu's (1986) idea that cultural, social and economic capital forms "can be converted into each other" (Svendsen & Svendsen, 2003, p.617). However, Bourdieu's development of the notion of capital convertibility crystalises the concept's utility. Capital's ability to convert in multiple forms facilitates the access and creation of resources, enabling, for instance, the deconstruction of migrant transnational social positioning, access to resources or reproductions of norms and sanctions, ultimately contributing to the reproduction of embedded patterns of inequality production.

Observing Anca's story via the theoretical lens described above, we noticed how her accumulated social, cultural and human capital converts into utility and intersects with the value allocated to the need to reciprocate by sending significant amounts of remittances to her family. The value and emotional charge we see associated with the need to show care towards her close kin and 'display family' even at the cost of her freedom, working 300 hours a month, physical and emotional stress amplify the asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittances (Finch, 2007).

> "The gentleman that brought me to this company where I work now also offered me to stop working for the person I was working until then as self-employed. So, after I left my first care home job, this guy owed me about £1500 because I was working 300 hours a month, I used to have 18 hours, 24 hours shifts, as much as I could because I needed the money and at £4 remember that at that point the minimum wage was £5.25. On top of that I had to pay my taxes. So, after I started working for the care home directly and getting paid much better I had to enrol as a student for an NVQ 2 or 3 course can't remember. After I got my work permit, I was still working 250–300 hours per month, I was keeping money just for food and the rest I was sending home". (Anca, care worker)

The following excerpt from Anca's narrative, currently a senior manager at the care home, shows how the group of Romanian friends she was initially introduced to, and later became

part of, exerted a similar controlling patriarchal role as her family in Romania. Transnational social ties are often used by social actors in co-ethnic networks of patriarchal societies, such as Romania, to further subordinate women. While one of the main drivers for Anca's emigration was distancing herself from the patriarchal inequality reproduced by the social structures represented within her household and community in Romania, the transnational co-ethnic network she was part of in the UK did not offer a medium to circumvent these subordination practices. Anca's 'battle' over the social reproduction and reconstruction of her subordinated status and identity often took place in private (within her household and close-knit co-ethnic network). However, once abroad Anca continued this battle in public (looser ties and extended transnational network).

> "Sincerely, I can tell you that when I told a couple of my Romanian friends that I was going to buy a house, that I made an offer for a house. They were shocked thinking how can you buy a house alone, how can you afford that? Most of the Romanians I know are former work colleagues. Even today they still work in the same place and do the same thing, you know, and that's where the problem is. Romanians are jealous and I really don't like this. If I can help you, I will help you, but how I had to work and still work really hard so can you, that's just how I see things. No one ever came to ask me Anca are you ok? Do you have enough money for food? Do you have somewhere to stay. I rented once a room and I had bed bug bites all over my body luckily a doctor figured out what it was and I moved. Yet during this time no one asked me are you ok? No, they don't really care, they only care about talking behind your back and asking you ooh but how can you afford this?" (Anca, care worker)

Often co-ethnic transnational networks that have strong ties to a local origin community network where most members know each other will also have little or no social privacy, similar to the social network Anca is part of. This type of social network can be easily accessed by co-nationals, benefiting from a high degree of trust among its members as well as an abundant flow of knowledge that might not necessarily be of good quality. In addition, this type of close-knit co-ethnic transnational network also comes with a mechanism that facilitates the enforcement of sanctions on its members. Often reproducing sanction structures as part of the origin community social network.

5. Asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows: motives and determinants, contractual agreement between households and the migrant care workers and students

Migrant transnational experiences tend to be shaped by an asymmetric social exchange process that encompasses household demands, needs and expectations as well as what they can provide and guarantee to the migrant, all wrapped within an intricate emotional fabric. The decision to send remittances either way is interconnected with decisions about migration, decisions that needs to be understood at the household level. Reverse remittances represent the flow of support from the household to the migrant and are part of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows shaping the cyclical asymmetrical nature of the exchange. Reverse financial remittances, coming from the family to the migrant abroad, should be appreciated “as an unequal and socially stratified asset”, as not all migrant households can afford to send them (Boccagni, 2015, p.260). However, remittances coming from the family, often parents of the migrant that are still living in the origin country, take the shape of emotional, moral and practical support, such as advice on how to look after children as well as the actual care of the migrants’ children, either though regular visits abroad if the child is with the migrant or at origin if the child was left in their care.

These resources as well as their volume and reoccurrence depend “on the cohesion of family networks and on the distribution of several forms of ‘capital’ among” household members, also the specific quality of the “relationship between the migrant and household”, and this relationship evolves over time (Boccagni, 2015, p.260). Often invisible to the receiving societies, as there is no real macroeconomic indicator that would allow us to assess their socio-economic benefit on a country’s GDP, reverse remittances are an invaluable resource to the migrant part of an asymmetrical bidirectional cycle that balances obligations, expectations and needs, such as providing informal social security or a safety net type of support.

Remittances flowing from the migrant to the household as well as reverse remittances are empirically observable as transnational cyclical transfers that are part of an asymmetric contractual agreement between several transnational social actors such as the migrant and the household. All Romanian students and migrant care workers interviewed received from their family various levels of reverse remittances every month for different periods of time ranging from several months to several years. In addition, to reverse financial remittance flows from

the household members to the Romanian migrant care workers or student studying abroad, other type of remittances, such as goods in the form of food, clothing or medicine, were sent on a regular basis.

Based on the Romanian migrant care workers' and students' narratives analysed for this thesis, we can argue that households make an informed decision based on the migrant's needs and expectations as well as in response to a socially constructed obligation whereby the household needs to ensure the well-being of its members more, so their young also reflected in an investment in education. In addition, both reverse and migrant remittances forming asymmetrical bidirectional remittances are part of a system of reciprocity infused by social relationships. Given that remittances are a key element of a social reciprocal exchange system, so too the giver and receiver form part of the same reciprocal exchange system that is ultimately governed by motives and determinants structured on obligations and expectations to reciprocate guided by emotional practices.

> "I used to get about £400 to £500 monthly from my parents. The amount went down every year because there was always something good happening to me. In the second year I got a resident assistant position, which meant that I was looking after the dorms so my rent was almost free." (Dinu, student)

Dinu's narrative shows how his family supported him financially by sending a monthly cash allowance as well as parcels with goods and clothing. However, the fabric of the transnational social exchange between the household members and Dinu is emotional support. Dinu explained that his family was happy and proud that he was studying at a British university. These positively rewarding emotions support the household motives for reverse remittances. Of course, it can be argued that the true motive behind his family's remittances was to maintain a decent quality of life abroad for Dinu, which can be interpreted as a "pure altruism" motive according to Lillard and Willis (1997, as cited in Pratikshya, 2010, p.15). Nevertheless, Dinu's parents agreed to his departure to study abroad on the condition that he finish the university degree that he had already started in Bucharest. The household decision to set these conditions for his departure abroad shows the structural fabric of the contractual agreement. In addition, this condition set by the household shows the family's ability to sanction behaviour deviating from the mutually beneficial agreement. Furthermore, it proved difficult to probe and understand "whether the true motive is one of caring or of more selfishly wishing to enhance prestige by being perceived as caring" (Lucas & Stark 1985, p.904, as cited in De Haas, 2007, p.7). Lucas and Stark (1985) developed a far richer model

to explain reverse remittances' "tempered altruism and enlightened self-interest in which remittances are one element in the self-enforcing arrangement between migrants and home" (Lucas & Stark 1985, p.901, as cited in De Haas, 2007, p.7).

> "I had a university scholarship of £1000 per year. When I first received it I sent the full amount to my father. But the money came back to me anyway. Basically, I received and sent back money, and when I needed money, they sent it back." (Dinu, student)

Dinu's experience clearly shows the cyclical asymmetrical nature of remittances and their role as an almost immediate reciprocal response to household members' transnational expectations, obligations and needs. Therefore, it can be argued that asymmetrical bidirectional remittances inherit multiple roles as part of a complex social exchange process involving self-interest and interdependence, infused by emotions, expectations or needs: as an obligation to return the household's investment in "migration as part of the household's risk diversification strategy, as a source of investment capital that can be used for entrepreneurial activities" or education, in this case (De Haas, 2007, p.8).

> "My father came back into my life when I was 18, trying to convince me to stay in Romania. He owned an IT company and knowing about my passion for computers, he supported me in my final year of high school paying for extra tuition I needed to take before the final Baccalaureate exam. Then when he heard I wanted to study sound engineering and music abroad, he paid for my deposit and first month of rent after that he was gone, I haven't spoken to him since. Anyway, the point is he helped me go abroad, he helped me make a start." (Robert, student)

Robert's experience reflects how reverse remittances are often shaped and infused by complex emotions such as vulnerability, shame, gratification or guilt. These emotions also act as sanctions when not adhering to certain household expectations, revealing the reciprocal nature of reverse remittances.

Diana's narrative, a Romanian student who easily accessed and developed part of a co-national transnational social network after arriving in the UK, indicates how she initially benefited from her family's investment in education as part of a contractual agreement.

> "My parents were ok with the fact that I didn't have to pay for the university fees upfront. This was something that we weren't able to afford so the student loan helped a lot. So, we had to cover food and rent. We made some calculations to understand how much they would need to send me per month. I know the rent was going to be £300 bills included and on top of that I had to cover food. But to be honest I don't

> remember exactly how much they used to send me between £500 to £600 per month. It was ok for the beginning, anyway my parent had started saving for a few years for my education because it was obvious I wasn't going to stay in the town where I grew up because there is nothing happening there. However, they also know that they can't support me for the full 3 years and I wanted to find a job, so it was ok." (Diana, student)

Diana's return on her family's investment in her educational development was part of a "mutually beneficial contractual" agreement embedded in the structure of this close-knit family (Carling, 2014, p. S224). Diana's ability to secure a job represented a clear milestone of the household contractual agreement, signalling a decrease in reverse remittances from her parents and the start of the repayment.

The amount and frequency of reverse remittances have as determinants several underlying social and economic stratifications, while the motives could vary depending "on the cohesion" of the "family networks" and the conversion of different types of capital among its members (Boccagni, 2015, p.260). However, the capacity of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances, as well as the migrant and household remitting behaviour, to affect migration should not be idealised. Instead, these should be understood under the constraints of an asymmetrical structure of opportunities as well as the dynamic social relationship between the migrant and household, more specifically the changing nature of the needs and expectations to reciprocate between social actors.

> "I send money back home when there is a need. My mum has had problems with her eyes for a few years now and recently she explained that she can't even see with the prescription glasses she had. I said ok, please give me your account details and I'll send you £100 pounds so you can go and see a specialist. She gave me her account details, and I sent her £450 because if I would have told her from the start she wouldn't give me her account details. In the meantime, she decided that she could use the funds for more pressing health issues with her teeth. She also used some of the funds I sent to come and visit me in the UK." (Robert, student)

In part of Robert's narrative his mother is represented as his "best friend and confidant", being the main caregiver figure throughout his life in Romania. Robert's mother continues to offer crucial emotional and practical support to Robert through various transnational communication means that maintain Robert's personal well-being. Robert's decision to reciprocate and support his mother financially in times of need is a clear return on investment as part of a mutually beneficial agreement embedded within this close-knit family unit. It can be argued, based on Robert's experience, that the motive driving his decision to reciprocate and support his mother is one of 'pure altruism'.

Alexa had a similar experience to Robert; her parents are divorced and her father re-married. Alexa's father was also mostly absent from her life until she reached the age of 18. At this point he wanted to play a distinct role in supporting his daughter to choose a career path. Alexa decided to come to the UK and study psychology. Although her father did not see this as a potentially rewarding career path, he funded her BA studies in the UK and part of her subsistence costs.

> "I had so many long discussions with my dad, he wasn't convinced that psychology was good for my future. He wanted me to go to medical school in Iasi, two of my cousins were studying there already. I remember, I talked to him and he didn't want to help with the fees. But, I don't remember exactly, I think my mum talked to him and in the end he said ok I'll pay the fee for 3 years and then that's it you need to figure it out yourself. So, he paid the fees and sent me some extra money for my rent and so on, my mum also sent me some money, I worked as well and that was it. Then for the master's degree I got a loan (laughing)." (Alexa, student)

As the above quotes suggests, Romanian students receive reverse financial remittances as a result of negotiations, often with a patriarchal household figure. The negotiations shape the conditions of the investment in education; however, the expected return terms are not clearly discussed at this stage. The negotiation of sharing support from father to daughter is underlined by duty and obligations stemming from the structural cultural expectations as well as moral and emotional support expressed through the action of giving the financial support to his estranged daughter.

> "Initially, my parents couldn't believe that I wanted to go study in England, it was difficult for them to accept the idea that I will leave. But seeing that I was very serious about it, I learned English mostly online alone, they changed their minds and started helping me. Mostly my mum helped, she lives in Spain for more than 10 years' now, my father couldn't afford to support me financially because he has a very low salary in Romania. When I came here to the UK to study my mum helped me for a few months than I had to find a part time job." (Karina, student)

Karina's parents are also separated; however, in her case her mother was the household figure that could financially support her as a student in the UK. Karina's narrative reveals how her mother's migration to Spain several years previous meant a change in their household dynamic. We can assume that as an immigrant in Spain, Karina's mother became the household breadwinner. Along with this new role, she inherited a social status change exerted transnationally. Based on Karina's experience we can argue that financial remittances not only follow bidirectionally and asymmetrically but can be diverted in subsequent remittance flows based on specific overlapping nuances of motives and determinants such as self-interest

and interdependence infused by emotions, expectations, obligations or needs in a transnational context. Moreover, further into her narrative Karina revealed her plans to bring her father over to the UK and offer him a better life once she finished university and was able to start her career in architecture. Karina's plans to support her father once she started a promising career shows her commitment to a mutually beneficial agreement whereby her mother and father invested financial, emotional, moral and practical support in her development. As a result, Karina is expected to return their investment through a guarantee of informal social security.

Stefania's experience is even more telling, showing how the investment in her departure or loan agreement were carefully agreed as part of a mutually acceptable contract between herself and patriarchal figures of her household.

> "To come to the UK, you can imagine I didn't have any money, I didn't work because I was a student in Romania, so I had to take some money as a loan from my brother and my grandad." (Stefania, student)

Stefania decided to come to the UK as an au pair when she was in her final year at a university in Romania. In her case, the family's investment in her departure was not conditioned by finishing her degree. It could be argued that this is due to the fact that the reverse remittance exchange happened under a more clearly defined contractual agreement whereby she would return the invested amount as soon as she could. Stefania reciprocated; after a few months working as au pair she managed to raise the sum of money borrowed, as she did not pay for food or accommodation, and returned it to her brother and grandfather. In addition, Stefania mentioned she always left money at home each time she visited Romania. We can argue that the mutually beneficial agreement reached between Stefania and her household members has two rational elements: investment and risk as well as emotionally charged expectations and obligations. However, the household's decision to support Stefania could also be understood under the "tempered altruism and enlightened self-interest" motive in the context of an asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flow (Lucas & Stark 1985, p.901, as cited in De Haas, 2007, p.7). The asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance exchange as part of Stefania's family was the result of the negotiation of sharing support among the family members. It encapsulated the reciprocation strategy of each member, which included sharing support filtered through their social position, resulting in support shared at different times, of variable financial value and for different intended uses and occasions. This

type of remittance exchange contrasts with the NELM theory, which portrays households and their transnational migrants as using remittances to rationally maximise income.

> "We didn't have a bad financial situation at home, we never lived from one salary to another. We decided that I will go to the UK first with a sum of money and see what happens. After that my husband came, also with a sum of money plus we left some cash at home so that my mother could look after my daughter and herself. Then I was sending my mum regular amounts so she could look after our daughter. When my husband first came in December my mum and daughter also came and stayed for 2 weeks, then my daughter came during Easter and in July they both came and remained in the UK. … Just before we came to the UK my husband's grandmother passed away and his father inherited the home, which they sold. His parents sent us part of the revenue from the sale" (Dana, care worker).

The narrative of Dana, a senior nurse in Romania, suggests that the decision to migrate to England was also part of a carefully planned "mutually beneficial contractual agreement" between all household members (Carling, 2014, p.S224). Asymmetrical bidirectional remittances are part of Dana's experience, and they are dynamically flowing across the transnational family social network. Moreover, several determinants shaped the context and nuance of Dana's asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flow exchange, including household assets, securing informal social protection for her mother and daughter, the household's financial stability before and after departure and the unstable and corrupt political Romanian landscape which Dana sees as a main driver for the decision to move to the UK. Also important was how Dana's positioning in the Romanian social structure determined her to imagine a new identity and subsequently reconstruct it through migration. Remittances appear to be "part and parcel of the same system of reciprocity in which social relationships are embedded" (Mazzucato, 2011, p.455). As a contractual clause, for instance, if the interfamilial "altruism be insufficient to make the contract self-enforcing, families may sanction opportunistic behaviour through inheritance procedures and social sanctions" (Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10). It can be argued that in Dana's case, "remittances combine an altruistic component", not necessarily a "repayment-of loans component", yet several significant reverse remittance amounts from her in-laws were later repaid through gifts and surprise holidays; "an insurance component, an inheritance component", as well as the "exchange of a variety of services, make up this complex mixture of motives being best described using fuzzy concepts such as 'impure altruism'" (Andreoni, 1989, as cited in Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10) or "enlightened selfishness" (Lucas & Stark, 1985, as cited in Rapoport & Docquier, 2005, p.10).

It can be argued that transnational asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows as well as the motives and determinants of the households and migrants' remitting behaviours are interconnected with identity construction. Minas' narrative, a final year student in Newcastle upon Tyne, shows how several socio-economic determinants as well as the creation of overlapping identities reflected both on his household members and on himself can impact the remitting behaviour of all social actors within the transnational co-ethnic network. In addition, Minas' re-grounding, through transnationalism, of certain meanings and practices allowed him to reconstruct the identity and value of his family's business.

> "In my first year at university, my parents paid for my rent and food, pocket money I can't say I ever had. In the second year they were still helping me because I was in between part time jobs and in my third year they didn't help me much they just sent me some money to buy shoes and clothing. My parents have a small convenience store in the central part of the city but it's not going so well anymore because of bigger supermarkets that moved in. They also have some property that they rent out as well as manage courts. However, now things are not going so great for them, they don't have that much money so I don't want to ask them anymore. … things have changed in Romania but my parents haven't for example the store went really well when they opened it back in 1991 than it started going from bad to worse yet they didn't make any changes you know so that was the biggest problem." (Minas, student).

Minas explained that his family owned several assets that had not been managed as they should, potentially in line with the socio-economic changes happening in Romania over the recent decades. It could be argued that some remittance determinants driving Minas' decision to reciprocate and return his family's investment are assets of receiving households. The existence of these assets might "motivate migrants to remit in order to maintain favour in line of inheritance" (Carling, 2008, p. S588).

> "I told my parents that when I will have money, I will send it back. I will give you the money back, I'll buy you a house, car. If I'll have lots of money, I'll buy you a villa, a castle. My parents always said don't worry we don't need any of that. Anyway, I feel somehow an obligation to return the money because they are the only people in the world that did something for me without having any specific expectations so I don't know, I feel bad when someone like that does something for me and I don't return the favour." (Minas, student)

As suggested by the above quote, transnational ties could carry certain obligations and expectations regarding the migrant's livelihood arrangements. It could be argued that moral and emotional obligations exchanged via the transnational network could be turned into claims both from the household and the migrant. In addition, especially in the case of

students that migrated and studied abroad and were supported by their families by financial and non-financial remittances (such as goods or emotional support), the contractual agreement binds them, and the household might have loose clauses regarding the financial return of their family investment. Nevertheless, if these young migrants choose not to reciprocate or to withhold their support towards the household, ties might be weakened or lost. Hence, choosing not to reciprocate is not without cost, especially for some young migrants who continue to construct their identity. To a certain degree the strength of transnational ties derived in particular from transnational family obligations and expectations might contribute to the migrant's vulnerability and shame as well as the asymmetrical nature of bidirectional remittance exchanges.

> "I never asked any of the housemates I have or friends for money but I do borrow certain ingredients from one or the other and make something to eat. What I normally do after is give who ever I borrowed from some food on a different day. You feed him on another day." (Minas, student)

Minas explained how he shared food with his housemates, an experience that helped him bridge new ties. However, it might also show the support limit of his social network. We could argue that financial reverse remittances are only received from the household. As such, the obligations to reciprocate and return the investment and thus create an asymmetrical bidirectional flow might be greater towards the household.

6. Stable investment climate significance for households and migrants

Migrant workers' remittances represent a significant element of transnational flows towards the household. Similarly, reverse remittances play a crucial role in a bidirectional transnational socio-economic and cultural capital flow.
It can be argued that both household and migrants have welfare security needs. These needs are often fulfilled through family relationships and with the help of the community. Welfare and well-being needs are arguably secured through a "mutually beneficial arrangement between" the household and the migrant along with formal social programs (Carling, 2014, p. S224).

According to Gough and Therborn (2010), a welfare regime is an institutional matrix that might include diverse elements such as the family, market economy or the nation state, all components that can generate welfare outcomes. Bidirectional remittance flows generate private benefits for the household and migrants participating in the exchange. Remittances are often invested in various consumption goodsm especially by the household. Also, remittances used by the household members for consumption purposes in the local community might result in some "short-term assistance at the expense of longer-term vulnerability and dependence" (Gough & Abu Sharkh, 2011, p.17). In addition, the transnational asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows are heavily depended on the relationships of the social actors taking part in the exchange.
Karina would never consider moving back to Romania due to several socio-economic risks. However, she would be willing to work and invest in restoring old buildings and monuments. Karina's investment plans depend on various factors such as how successful her architectural career might be, any future changes in her personal development plans and potentially many other factors that also introduce risk to a potential investment plan. This shows how both the household and migrant as well as the transnational community might be benefiting from a stable investment climate whilst being impacted by various degrees of risk.

> "No, I wouldn't want to return. I'm so disappointed of everything that is going on in Romania. Most of the students that finish a university in Romania, don't even have a job so no. The salaries are also very low, you work like a slave for nothing, no … When I chose architecture somehow I was influenced by the beauty of very old buildings that can be found in the area where I grew up, such as Peles Castle. I think I would like to save some of these very old buildings if possible, I would like to invest money, time and effort to save certain old ruins or buildings in Romania." (Karina, student)

According to the NELM theorists, most households devise a strategy and different migration patterns that might include asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows in order to maximise earnings for both households and migrants abroad and reduce economic risk. Hence, it can be argued that both household and migrants act collectively to assess their risks and potential returns on investment, deciding how to manage their various resources in such a way that it benefits all members of the transnational household.

> "My brother came and lived with me here in the UK for a couple of months. My "X" thought him how to cut hair then my brother went back to Romanian and opened a

barber's shop and it's going really well, he earns more or less the same as I earn here. I helped him also with quite a bit of money when he got married a few years ago. … I used to send £500 to £700 per month home, not because they asked me but because I knew they needed it. My brother was at a university in Romania so he needed the money." (Anca, care worker)

Anca's narrative shows how various degrees of support she offered her brother have been productively invested in a local business that generates good profits.

> "I don't really send my parents any goods back because I tend to go quite often back home. Because my boyfriend is from Bucharest and you know that the Ryan Air tickets are very cheap. Recently we both had dental braces installed and we go back to Romania every 2 months because it's so much cheaper." (Diana, student)

Diana and her boyfriend chose to have reccurring medical treatments in Romania as well as visit their families. Diana's narrative shows a clear attachment to Romania and her family. In addition, as discussed in one of the previous sections, her dependency and attachment to her household resulted in her 'outsider' identity creation. Nevertheless, Diana's frequent returns benefit her household by meeting their emotional and financial needs as well as supporting the local dental practice that she visits regularly for treatment.

> "I don't send them money, but when I go home, I always take money with me and give it separately to my mum and brother also to my grandad so they can all have something in case anything happened. My mum always used these funds to make some improvements around the house, she replaced the roof, she changed the main gate, she re-built the fence stuff like that. For day-to-day expenses they are ok, but yeah, I mean now will see because my mum is about to retire, my brothers' salary is very low so I will probably have to send them money regularly or give them a bigger amount in advance." (Stefania, student)

Stefania was able to move to the UK with the support of her brother's and grandad's reverse financial remittances. Although their investment was returned after a few months, Stefania continued to reciprocate and give each of her family members considerable amounts of cash intended to be used as a safety net. Stark (1991) argued that households see "migration as a tool to overcome market failures" (Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). Stefania's family made an investment that was returned when her remittances arrived. Often, migrants' remittances act as a safety net, compensating for poorly functioning local "markets and the lack of access to credit" or "government programs that offer various kinds of insurance" (Stark, 1991, as cited in Sana & Massey, 2005, p.510). Moreover, poorly functioning local markets as well as

socio-political imbalances, such as high levels of corruption or the increasing gap between the rich and poor, are some of the drivers behind labour migrations. However, it is the migrant's ability to access labour on the destination market that becomes crucial for the survival of an 'informal security regime' often established between the migrant and the sending household.
Stefania would invest in or manage property in Romania. Dinu has seriously considered setting up his own programming business.

> "I'd really like to buy a flat or a chalet in Brasov or Sibiu, we could use it as a holiday home for ourselves and my brother can manage it." (Stefania, student)

> "I have a few ideas, there is always the academic option, I would return if I could get funding from the European Union to start a research lab in Romania. I would also return to build a partnership with a businessman to start up a software or programming company in Romania but with links in the UK." (Dinu, student)

Not only do migrants return remittances concerned with the welfare of their household members but they also consider investing in the local community. Hence, in addition to the business investment opportunities they create, potential migrant returnees might offer the remittance-receiving governments a reliable "source of foreign exchange" that might be used "as collateral for the solicitation of international loans" (Portes, 2003, p.878). Several research studies (Guarnizo et al., 1999; AI-Ali et al., 2001; Ostergaard-Nielsen, 2001, 2003; Fitzgerald, 2000; Smith, 1998, as cited in Portes, 2003, p.878) show how national governments and international financial institutions rely on sustained flows of remittances "as a criterion for rating the credit-worthiness of the nation-state and its eligibility for new investments". As a result, many remittance-receiving "country governments have taken such a keen interest in their expatriates in recent years, passing dual nationality and dual citizenship legislation" (Portes, 2003, p.878). However, according to Stanculescu et al (2011), research shows that financial remittances in Romania are used mostly for consumption, such as covering day-to-day costs or home improvements rather than investments. Also, in Romania less than a quarter of these funds are invested in other household members' education, according to the same research.

7. Informal social protection

Several research studies (Brown et al., 2014; Edward et al., 1996; Keely & Tran, 1989) argue that migrant remittances have a clear “impact on increasing recipients’ standard of living by providing” a social safety net against unemployment and other socio-economic disparities (Daianu et al., 2001, p.18). Similarly, it can be argued that reverse remittances from household to migrants have an almost identical function.

Diana’s (a student in Portsmouth) narrative briefly describes her boyfriend’s transnational relationship with his mother. This asymmetrical mutually beneficial transnational social relationship involves bidirectional remittance exchanges, emotional support and a dynamic identity reconstruction on both sides meant to potentially reconcile the shifting social position of both the mother and son within a transnational social structure. In addition, the support that both the mother and son exchange via the transnational social kinship network represents a practical informal household-based social protection system with a mutually beneficial bidirectional character for both migrants and families in times of financial hardship.

> You know how some families are. If they need something they will tell you - can you send me some money. That’s how the family of my boyfriend is, he sends a lot of money at home, he helps his mum with paying the leasing on her car. His grandmother was ill, she needed to have something replaced in one of her legs, a pretty difficult surgery so he sent a lot of money back home a few thousand pounds so his mum didn’t have to take a loan so yeah at this level he helps them. … His parents are separated and he is much closer to his mother … His mother invested a lot in his education. She paid for this master’s degree abroad, he also went to a private high school in Bucharest as well as a private university in Bucharest. After he finished his maters here in the UK and started working, well he doesn’t send money regularly but when there is something he sends a lot. (Diana, student)

Boccagni (2011, p.319), argued that “social protection” is largely “synonymous to social welfare, being the range of public, private, formal and informal measures in place for the wellbeing of individuals, households and communities”, as well as presumably their reproduction. Moreover, Boccagni (2011, p.319) saw “social protection” as a “product of the interaction between migrants’ practices and support systems (the bottom-up), and the lack of protective policies of their country of origin (the top-down)”. Hence, he argues further that

this “constitutes transnational social welfare – or social protection both ‘here’ and ‘there’” (Boccagni, 2011, p.319). Yeates (2009) suggested that a migrants’ ways of life are often marked by an “enormous self-sacrifice in order to provide greater social protection for their households” (Boccagni, 2011, p.321). However, asymmetrical bidirectional remittances are not evenly distributed across the transnational communities that receive them. As such, they contribute differently to local development. Hence, although bidirectional remittance flows are a major source of informal social protection for both migrants and household members, they have a limited transformative potential, as they are part of an asymmetrical pattern resulting in an uneven distribution that cannot easily be scaled up in a community. Nevertheless, both migrants’ and households’ caring practices represent transnational social protection from below a process that has bidirectional remittance exchange at its centre against a background of limited socio-economic and political infrastructure.

8. Conclusion

A large part of the migrant remittance literature and research focuses on one side of the remittance behaviour spectrum or, more recently, on the reserve remittance patterns, neglecting the asymmetrical cyclical nature of bidirectional remittance flows (Ciurea, 2018). This thesis contributes to the conceptualisation of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchanges, challenging the construction of home societies as passive receivers of migrants’ remittances.

The analysis of Romanian migrant and student narratives shows that the underlying relationship between transactors on either side of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange is shaped by emotional practices. The complex emotions such as gratitude, shame and vulnerability observed among the collected narratives of the students and migrant care workers are often habituated, learned, culturally specific practices.

As such, it can be argued that the financial aspect of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances is merely the backbone of the bidirectional remittance exchange. Around it we notice a social and psychological fabric made up of various nuances given by diverse values, meanings, expressions of complex emotions, motives and determinants as well as an underlining social practice function. Moreover, given their social practice function, asymmetrical bidirectional remittances also represent manifestations of collective as well as individual agency,

expressions of gratitude, sources of shame or vulnerability, acts of engagement and an exchange of habits, norms, meanings, social ties, goods and money that collectively shape the identity of migrants and other social actors involved in the bidirectional remittances exchange.

"Even though the recipients' actions seem to follow from those of the senders – as reactions to receiving remittances – the typical pattern of multiple transfers over time implies that the recipients' agency is not causally inferior" (Carling, 2014, p.S229). "Reacting to one transfer also means anticipating the next", hence developing a cyclical asymmetric bidirectional pattern (Carling, 2014, p.S229). As such, it can be argued that the "nature of remittance transactions can be strongly influenced by the type of underlying relationship" between the participants and the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange (Carling, 2014, p.S251). In part of several of the narratives collected we notice a continued moral claim over remittances after they have been transferred (Carling, 2014). These claims are manifested as continued requests or needs for investments or repayment on both sides of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange and are not necessarily financial in nature. The transactor's perpetual ownership and repayment of remittances is often incited by complex emotions such as shame, guilt and gratitude. In addition, considering that at any point in time multiple individuals can feel moral claims or ownership of the remittances sent, it is unclear when and on whose terms migrants or households or any other transactor involved in the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange relinquish ownership of the remittances they send.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

- **Introduction**
- **Conceptualising bidirectional remittance exchange**
- **Final comments and future research**

1. Introduction

Migration is a complex phenomenon that develops within a dynamic socio-economic and political context shaped by a structural fabric and a perpetual construction of multifaceted identities thriving across transnational localities centred around bidirectional remittances flows steered by complex emotions part of a mutually beneficial, often asymmetrical, reciprocal exchange between the migrant and household.

Romanian migrant remittance literature and research is focused on one side of the remittance spectrum or recently on the reverse remittance patterns; they do not examine the asymmetrical cyclical nature of bidirectional remittance flows. Moreover, the household was often seen as a source of obligation and cost and not a direct contributor to transnational asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows. As a response, this thesis proposed and developed a new concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows, drawing on transnationalism and migration theories such as the NELM as well as the analysis of narratives of several Romanian students and migrant care workers. A conceptual framework was proposed to show the linkages between different building blocks, contexts and variables that shape the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows concept.

The thesis also contributed to the NELM debate that focuses more on the revenue maximisation strategy of the household, by exploring the impact of emotional practices and emotional support as well as duty, obligation and moral aspects such as shame, guilt, pride or unrelinquished ownership of the need to reciprocate in the form of remittances. It could be argued that manifestation of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows can be understood as a product of the emotional fabric encompassing diverse and complex needs such as those of giving and receiving different types of support, obligations, needs and emotions such as shame and vulnerability as part of the transnational family.

2. Conceptualising bidirectional remittance exchange

Migration research literature on the remitting behaviour of Romanian transnational communities neglects the asymmetrical bidirectional aspect of the remittance exchange as well as the emotional social practices shaping the informal social contract existing between the various social transnational actors taking part in the exchange.

Asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows refer to the cyclical two-way remittance exchange between the migrant and the household as part of a reciprocal, often asymmetrical, relationship. The dynamic power and knowledge relations that develop among translocal communities, such as those of Romanian migrants and their households, adds the asymmetrical aspect to the bidirectional remittance exchange practice.

Moreover, transnational family practices, such as 'displaying family' (Finch, 2007), encompassing obligations, duty and sharing and receiving support, are underpinned by emotions both as drivers of actions and as a resource, which also adds the asymmetrical and bidirectional nuances of remittance. At the same time, depending on structural factors shaping the capital conversion of a transnational family member, the asymmetrical return of bidirectional remittances can differ.

Asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchanges form part of today's neoliberal context, where the transactors, transnational migrants and their families, are assuming the initiative and the full costs of the journey to becoming an inexhaustible supply of labour at destination (Portes & Borocz, 1989). Moreover, as part of the neoliberal context we notice how the reproduction of particularised discursive frames seem to pin Romanians in place as low-paid builders, caregivers or Roma travellers. Pratt (1999, p.234) suggested that immigration, colonialism, domestic space as well as the East–West divide in Europe "are part of the production of borders that define workers as worthy or unworthy, competent or incompetent, skilled or unskilled". These types of social practices have the ability to lock Romanian migrants within several discursive frames that shape the identity constructions of the members of this community, pushing some, for example, to seek the comfort of a close-knit co-ethnic transnational network that in turn affects the bidirectional remittance exchange.

The thesis critically navigates through and refines existing remittance theory debates with the purpose of narrowing the focus down to the motives and determinants driving the bidirectional remittance flows involved in providing informal social protection to both Romanian migrants as well as to the households who supported the initial migration

investment. Furthermore, the thesis compares the position remittances negotiate in several migration theories that have emerged over the past half a century, in the process refining existing debates regarding remittances and focusing the approach given by the NELM theory. While NELM focuses on the household's ability to rationally develop a revenue-return strategy that includes the regular exchange of remittances as well as a way to direct the transnational migrant's motives and determinants to remit, it misses the complex emotional fabric part of transnational family practices that often infuse the asymmetric bidirectional remittance flow between various actors.

Sharing emotional support as a resource and practice across transnational families requires effort and ingenuity. According to Baldassar (2007, p. 392), maintaining and reconstructing emotional bonds, and their reciprocal and mutually beneficial nature, requires emotional work.

The thesis proposes a theoretical or conceptual framework with the purpose of narrowing the focus down to specific motives and determinants that drive asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows. The theoretical framework also aimed to underpin the mechanism involved in providing informal social protection to Romanian households who supported the initial investment in the migration of certain family members (Ciurea, 2018). This supporting structure shows how households and migrants are interconnected by a cyclical asymmetrical bidirectional remittanc flow, subsequently steered by specific motives and determinants.

While the methodological approach that guides this thesis is more inductive, as it adopts a design that seeks to interpret and understand and does not requiring a hypothesis that is mostly representative of a deductive research design, it does focus on complex individual experiences and transactor relationships as part of a social context (Hart, 2005).

Initially, the research parameters were meant to be drawn on a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods in order to provide a more comprehensive and complete account of the subject matter. Even though this approach would offset the weaknesses within each design and draw on their strengths, more emphasis was given to qualitative data collection and analysis, as it could provide a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the motives and determinants for sharing support as part of the mutually beneficial contractual agreement between households and their youth, as well as between the migrant care workers and their families. While collecting the narratives, the researcher and interviewee often indirectly encouraged each other to embrace their vulnerable positions and that led to a crystalised discussion inspired by a growing degree of honesty and an ability to confide in one another. As a result, the complex narratives collected offered detailed insights into the dynamics of

Romanian students' and care workers' transnational family relationships and their asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchanges.

Based on a set of 30 interviews, this thesis analysed the asymmetrical transnational contractual agreement between the migrant and the household that was bidirectionally steered by dynamic expectations, needs and obligations as they emerged from the narratives of Romanian students and migrant care workers'' cross-border family ties. The data analysis process focused on operationally organising the research data collected to identify meaning and structure. Transforming data into findings by recognising recurring patterns while making sense of the interviewee's experience, opinions of situations, meanings of particular events, emerging patterns, themes and relationships among categories of data.

Not only are asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows empirically observable in the Romanian student and migrant care worker narratives analysed but they are also part of a more extensive system of overlapping structures: emotional support complexities, identity construction, transnational social networks, subordinate roles (especially for women) and social capital utility.

The narratives of Romanian students and migrant care workers show how bidirectional remittance flows form part of diverse embedded structures. They are shaped by various motives and determinants to reciprocate, wrapped by a social fabric of emotional practices that asymmetrically influence the transnational social actor's agency. The potential migrants often rely on an investment consisting of goods, money and emotional support, usually from their families and friends. The narratives collected show that Romanian students and migrant care workers in the UK become the net recipients of remittances sent by their household, rather than the other way around (Ciurea, 2018) At the same time, we see a complex asymmetrical reciprocal exchange in which emotions play a central role.

As part of the narratives of Romanian students and migrant care workers, there was a deep-rooted mixture of emotions such as shame or pride related to returning home, most of the time seen as a second option but mostly as a step backwards. As such, the safety net prospect of 'home' pushed some migrants into a perpetual state of adjustability as well as experiencing ongoing uncertainty about their settled status.

In addition, the experience of Romanian students and migrant care workers shows how creating the 'other' vs 'us' identity leads to a different level of access to various transnational social networks that, in turn, lead to different capital conversions and inequality.

Nevertheless, the dynamic relationship of transnational families facilitates the “circulation of welfare-relevant resources from both sides”, part of a household embedded “mutually beneficial” asymmetric process (Boccagni, 2015, p.250).
The Romanian migrant care workers’ and students’ narratives analyses also show that the underlying relationship between transactors on either side of the bidirectional remittance exchange is shaped by emotional practices. As such, it can be argued that the financial aspect of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances is merely the tip of the iceberg of remittance exchanges; around it we notice a structural fabric made up of various nuances given by diverse values, meanings, expressions of complex emotions, motives and determinants as well as an underlining social practice function. Moreover, given their social practice function, asymmetrical bidirectional remittances also represent manifestations of collective as well as individual agency, expressions of gratitude, sources of shame or vulnerability, acts of engagement and exchange of habits, norms, meanings, social ties, goods and money that collectively shape the identity of migrants and other social actors involved in the bidirectional remittance exchange.
As such, as Carling (2014, p.S229) explained, the diverse multiple exchanges that evolve with time “implies that the recipients’ agency is not causally inferior”. As part of transnational family relationships, a bidirectional exchange of reciprocal support emerges with an asymmetrical response to the structural expectations, obligations and duties linked to a transnational family. The purpose of the remittance exchange evolves along with the dynamic nature of the transnational social actors’ relationships (Carling, 2014,). At the same time, power relations waived within translocal communities, and the emotional ties developed between different senders and receivers, also contribute to the asymmetrical pattern of bidirectional remittance exchanges.
Migrant care workers are expected transnationally “to share the benefits of their ‘better life’ abroad as part of a self-enforcing” arrangement between themselves and their household (Boccagni, 2015, p.250). Hence, it can be argued that both the household and the migrant care workers or students contribute to each other’s well-being via asymmetrical bidirectional remittances linked to social exchange, obligation to reciprocate and emotional support.
Not surprisingly, the analysis of Romanian migrant care workers’ and students’ narratives shows their experiences in the UK are the product of a continuous asymmetrical bidirectional negotiation of expectations and obligations between the household and migrant. This starts with the student’s or migrant care worker’s decision to move to the UK, generally based on ideal, almost naïve, presumption that their life would fundamentally change for the better

after finishing university or getting a job abroad. Crucially, at this stage the household's needs and wants as well as (the potential) ability to provide and guarantee support act as counterweights, ensuring the migrant that there is always a safe place to return to in case their expectations of a 'better life' are not met abroad.

Across the narratives of Romanian students and migrant care workers analysed for this thesis, 'home' often remains a fixed deeply meaningful location generally synonymous with family or emotional support. 'Home' represents the second option for most migrants interviewed a disadvantageous, almost inferior option in practical terms, seen as a step backward.

Often, the period immediately after the student or migrant care worker arrives in the UK tends to be very difficult emotionally, so the household support tends to be crucial. The student or migrant care worker often see this period as a challenge or trial, that, once passed, crystallises the transnational relationship with the household and redefines the migrant's opportunities and needs as well as the commitments and obligations on both sides. The critical initial period is followed by an extent of time where the student or migrant care worker devises and perfects several strategies so that their new status abroad may improve. This includes obtaining legal status and working on their professional career, drawing strength from the emotional support and social status confirmation of the household. This period is also characterised by the migrant's tendency to compare their initial expectations with reality and use their gained experience abroad to plan future events. As such, both the students and migrant care workers, as well as the household, sustain different degrees of financial, emotional and moral investment. However, the return of that investment depends on the circumstances and needs of both sides. The strong transnational social ties existing between the migrant and their household contribute to the bidirectional transnational exchange embedded in the family's solidarity and mutuality agreement.

Without doubt, the bidirectional remitting behaviour of transnational social actors represents an asymmetrical social exchange structure of support, opportunities and power relations. Where social support across transnational communities can only be holistically understood as part of a bidirectional asymmetric process where the emotions, social fabric and the moral and affective interdependence between the family and migrant is vital (Boccagni, 2015, p. 253). Yet both household's and migrant's capacity to influence the other's decision-making patterns should not be idealised. Bearing in mind that the nature of the "mutually beneficial contractual agreement" can be constrained by the changing perception of the asymmetrical bidirectional remittances' 'relevance' for the transnational family members as well as their kinship relationship over time (Carling, 2014, p. S224).

3. Final comments and future research

The concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittances observed as part of the narratives of Romanian students and care workers interviewed for this thesis supports the argument that households at origin are not passive sources of obligation and cost but active transnational family members contributing to an asymmetrical cyclical exchange of support. More research is needed, however, with representatives of households in order to better understand the lifecycle of remittances, their asymmetrical and bidirectional nature and how emotions both as a resource and practice shape the nature of remittances.

The asymmetrical bidirectional nature of remittances can be traced as part of transnational family members' experiences captured in this research. However, more research is needed to highlight some of the potential patterns of the remittance lifecycle and how these reflect the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange. An initial potential classification of the remittance lifecycle is put forward below:

Type A – for example, the younger member of the family moves abroad to complete their studies, and remittances are sent by the parents to the youngster. During their studies the youngster will remit casually, but once they finish their studies and become a young professional, the parents will have aged and the remittance volume might increase towards the parents; if the parents pass away the remittances would stop.

Type B – for example, the highly or low-skilled professional moves abroad for work while the spouse, children and parents are still at origin. Parents would support the move abroad financially as well as via other forms of support towards the spouse and children. The professional will remit to support their extended family. If the spouse and children join the professional, remittances to the parents will continue until the parents either join the rest of the family abroad or pass way.

Type C - for example, a highly or low-skilled professional couple move abroad for work while their children are left in the care of elderly parents. Financial support for the couple could be offered by the parents so that they make the move abroad. The parents will also support the children, and the couple working abroad will send substantial amounts of financial remittances as well as other types of support to their parents and children. The remittances will stop when the couple move back.

The narratives collected and analysed in this research have identified a holistic form of remitting behaviour, distinguished by asymmetrical bidirectional patterns of remittance exchanges between the Romanian students and migrant care workers and their households. Based on the experiences shared by those interviewed for this thesis, we can identify a bidirectional remittance behaviour. Not only do transnational social networks facilitate the migrant's movement to and from a destination country, but they also facilitate the social exchange of resources, as well as channel various forms of remittances: money, goods and emotional support. These resources can be channelled into diverse forms of utility depending on the migrant's and household's needs, obligations and expectations. Multiple identity constructions are also empirically observable among the students' and migrant care workers' narratives. Often, a response to the sudden dynamic shift of structural embeddedness between the destination and home societies, identity constructions, allowing the migrant to create imagined 'us' and 'them' communities offered a false sense of safety while at the same time creating boundaries and isolation. Emotional support as a shared social resource, and complex emotions such as vulnerability, shame and gratification, underpin transnational social exchange practices of Romanian migrant care workers and students.

Also, notably, the Romanian household members, the students and migrant care workers share the need to feel cared for. Asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows facilitate the negotiation of this need, and at the same time provide informal social protection. Ultimately, the provision of informal social security scales up and translates into a stable investment climate for both the migrant, household and local communities.

Emotional practices form the neural network of transnational families, electrifying and charging the transitional social network with meanings that are internalised and experienced by the transnational family members. Emotions ultimately guide how various social actors cooperate with others, reciprocate and negotiate different strategies, some that involve the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance flows.

However, more research is needed to understand the role of emotional practices in the transnational setting, reflecting on migrants and their households disposition to drive certain behaviours such as remitting different types of support. In order to further develop the concept of asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchanges and the emotional charge that accompanies them, Scheer's (2012) analysis could be reviewed, as it puts forward a comprehensive framework to understand emotions using practice theory.

More research is needed to develop the asymmetrical bidirectional remittance exchange that takes into consideration the experiences of household representatives among the Romanian

care workers and students. Additional research is also required to explore the experiences of other Romanian migrant communities in the UK, their remitting patterns and the emotional practices attached to these exchange patterns.

Appendix 1

Interview schedule

TQ c): Sender–receiver relationship (including any family migration) history

IQ: Could you please describe in detail the circumstances leading to your arrival in the UK?

IQ: Did any of your family members work abroad in the past or currently?

Probing Q: IQ: What are your reasons for seeking work/studying abroad from Romania?

IQ: How was the decision to study/work abroad taken?

TQ d): Environment of the migrant as a potential sender/receiver

IQ: How did you finance your trip abroad for study or work?

IQ: Could you please describe your family's involvement in your departure?

Probing Q: IQ: How often do you talk to your family?

IQ: How often do you visit them?

IQ: How often do they visit you?

IQ: Can you describe an instance when you sent home money or goods?

IQ: Can you describe an instance when you received goods or money from home?

IQ: Are there other instances when this happened? Please describe them.

IQ: For what purposes were the money and goods sent/received used?

TQ e): Environment of the household as a potential sender–receiver. Only households that the migrant interviewee 'x' allowed us to visit/discuss with will be included in the research

IQ: Please describe how the decision to migrate/study abroad of 'X' was reached in your family?

IQ: Has anyone else in your family migrated/studied abroad?

IQ: Please describe in detail the implications of 'X' migration/studies abroad for your family?

Probing Q: IQ: How often do you talk to 'X'?

IQ: How often do you visit 'X'?

IQ: How often does 'X' visit you?

IQ: Can you describe an instance when you sent 'X' money or goods?

IQ: Can you describe an instance when you received goods or money from 'X'?

IQ: Are there other instances when this happened? Please describe them.

IQ: For what purpose were the money and goods sent/received used?

TQ f): Individual and household characteristics

Probing Q about the household head's education and current job position.

IQ: to the household: How would you describe 'X' from an economical point of view?

IQ to the migrant/student: Where are you from in Romania?

IQ to the migrant/student: How would you describe this area?

IQ to the migrant/student: Imagine you would not have migrated what do you think your current job/studies would have been like?

TQ g): Potential household assets

IQ to the migrant/student: How would you describe your family from an economical point of view?

IQ: Have you considered returning to this area?

IQ: Have you considered investing in the area your family is from?

IQ: How about in the household?

TQ h): Two-way remittance flows as part of a contractual agreement – bidirectional remittances

IQ: Could you please describe the level of exchange in money and goods between yourself and the household/migrant/student?

IQ: What do you think is the reason for this exchange?

TQ i): Informal social protection

IQ: Could you describe a period where a member of the family was sick and you were abroad? How did you support your family?

IQ: Could you describe a period where your family has gone through economic hardship just before you were leaving or after you left abroad?

IQ: How did you support them?

TQ j): Stable investment climate

IQ: Do you know other migrants/students/households that had members going abroad for work or study?

IQ: How did they support their families left home/migrants/students going abroad?

IQ: Can you describe an instance where migrants have invested in the local origin community?

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