Chapter 9
Bonds of Transnationalism and Freedom of Mobility: Intra-European Onward Migrants Before and After Brexit

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9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, we explore how the phenomena described by transnationalism and mobility theory intersect with onward migration in the context of Brexit. We do so using in-depth interviews collected in two research projects, the first one with citizens of the 27 current EU member states ('EU27 citizens') in the UK and with Britons in Belgium and the second one with Bangladeshis who naturalised in Italy before moving to the UK. We argue that transnationalism and mobility describe distinct, if not diverging, phenomena. These are, respectively, significant links to two or more specific social contexts (transnationalism) and the possibility of migration plans that are open-ended in terms of both possible destinations and duration (mobility). In this sense, transnational links can limit the open-ended nature of onward migration plans by focusing on a smaller number of contexts with which one has stronger links. Further, onward migration can erode the strength of transnational links by putting the links with the country of origin in competition with those of the country of first migration.

Unlike the other chapters in this book, our analysis is not limited to the field of transnationalism, but compares the fields of transnational and mobility studies, while considering the internal variation of both fields. Our study of the relations between transnationalism and onward migration takes also in account that the two phenomena might weaken each other, with transnational links being eroded by

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onward migration and strong transnational links potentially making a return migration – rather than an onward one – more probable.

Favell (2008) suggested that EU freedom of movement introduces significant changes to international mobility in terms of the possibility to enact temporary and open-ended mobility plans. It has been noted how there are limits to this open-endedness, including processes of anchoring linked to life stages (Ryan, 2019; Kilkey & Ryan, 2021). However, EU freedom of movement, while far from absolute (see, e.g., Barbulescu, 2017, Lafleur & Mescoli, 2018), indeed removes two of the main limits to mobility. These are the visa system that regulates and stratifies the possibility of moving to specific destinations (e.g. Neumayer, 2006) and deportability policies (De Genova, 2002) which, combined, limit further mobility by increasing the cost of the initial arrival and reducing the opportunities to leave the context of arrival safe in the knowledge of being able to return (e.g. Massey et al., 2002). Brexit has limited the capacity to move or the *motility* (Kaufmann et al., 2004) of different groups. UK citizens have lost their EU citizenship, EU27 citizens in the UK are no longer protected by EU norms and third-country nationals have limits to their ability to move to the UK by obtaining EU27 citizenship. In such a context the different groups, after having experienced significant motility for a variable number of years (depending on when they became EU citizens), are often motivated either to stabilise their situation by naturalising or to plan onward or return migration as a reaction to the reduction of guarantees in the country of residence (McGhee et al., 2017). However, they need to do so in a context of diminishing motility (Sredanovic, 2021).

In this chapter, we explore how transnationalism and mobility intersect in the experiences and plans of our interviewees. We examine how the obtaining of EU citizenship and completed onward mobility can redefine transnational activities such as periodic returns to the country of origin and remittances. We further explore how transnational links can orient and define potential future mobility plans, while acknowledging that future migration is always very hard to estimate (Carling & Schewel, 2018) and that intra-EU mobility plans, in particular, could have been over-estimated both by researchers and by the interviewees in recent literature (Kilkey & Ryan, 2021).

In the following sections we first engage in a theoretical discussion of transnationalism, mobility and onward migration, together with some background data on the three populations of reference and of their mobility as a consequence of Brexit. We then present the methodology used in the two research projects and discuss in turn the results of our research projects. In the case of Della Puppa's research, we look at how the acquisition of EU citizenship, entrance into the EU freedom of movement system and completed onward migration all influence trasnational activities such as periodic returns and remittances. In the case of Sredanovic's research, we look at how potential onward migrations are influenced by the interplay of transnational links and mobility orientations.

9.2 Transnationalism, Mobility and Onward Migration

Transnationalism and mobility are usually treated if not as synonyms, then as concepts that have overlap and synergy. For example, Faist, one of the main theoreticians of transnationalism, has explicitly presented it as a theory of mobility (2013, 1638), while Hui (2016) has argued that the lesser success of mobility theory in migration studies is due to mobility being perceived as a synonym for transnationalism.

Such a perception is perhaps justified considering that both theoretical approaches have been developed in reaction to a previous consensus on migration. Such a consensus saw migration as an exceptional moment in a person's biography, followed by the weakening of links with the context of origin and either intergenerational assimilation in the context of destination (e.g. Park, 1928) or the formation of distinct ethnic groups (e.g. Glazer & Moynihan, 1963).

However, the core definitions of the two theories indicate different phenomena and it is our argument – to our knowledge not explored before in the literature – that such phenomena might be partially incompatible.

Transnational theory was proposed by Glick Schiller et al. (1992) to underline the continued links which migrants had with the context of origin, without – for this reason – lacking contact with the context of destination or forming segregated ethnic groups. In this sense, transnationalism is a theory of simultaneity (Levitt & Glick Schiller, 2004), reflecting the social co-presence of migrants in (at least) two social contexts.

Most anglophone literature starts the discussion of mobility theory with the work of Urry (2000, 2007). However, many of the elements of mobility theory used in migration studies were proposed in earlier publications within migration studies in France by Tarrius (1992, 2000) and Morokvasic (1992, 1996, 1999). Mobility theory, since the formulations of Tarrius and Morokvasic, is mostly critical of the idea of migration as an exceptional, life-defining event. It argues for the need to conceptualise what is usually defined as migration along with certain kinds of mobility previously excluded from migration studies, including temporary migration, commuting, business trips and tourism. Further, mobility theory sees migration as more temporary and open-ended than the classic approach to migration which sees it as limited to a few life-defining movements.[1] Further theorisations of mobility have insisted on the role of imagination in anticipating (or substituting for) mobility (Salazar, 2011) and on the need to explain stasis rather than leaving it as the unexplored norm (Glick Schiller & Salazar, 2013).

[1] As Hui (2016) underlines, there are other aspects of mobility theory, as defined by Urry (2000, 2007), that have been less incorporated in migration studies, including attention to other-than-human mobilities (objects, information, capital) and to the physical infrastructures (airports, roads) that allow mobility – the attention to the temporariness and open-endedness of human mobility remains, however, the main contribution of the theory to migration studies.

Theoretical reflection about the differences between transnationalism and mobility is relatively rare (for some exceptions, see King, 2012; Hui, 2016). When the two concepts are not simply used as synonyms, the tendency is to describe one as the subset of the other. Transnationalism is defined as a form of human mobility alongside other forms and along with non-human mobility (e.g. Hannam et al., 2006), while mobility is defined as a dimension of transnationalism along with sociocultural and political links (e.g. Portes et al., 1999). By looking at the core dimensions of each theorisation, rather than trying to reduce one to the other, we can highlight the different phenomena described by the two theories.

Even when focusing on the core dimensions, there are certainly overlaps between the two concepts, although they can also help to further underline the differences. Repeated short-term return mobility, such as taking holidays in the context of origin, is a kind of mobility that is important for the creation and maintenance of transnational links. However, this kind of mobility seems to have been undertheorised not only in traditional migration studies but also in transnational theory or even limited to other concepts (return visits – King & Christou, 2011; recreational transnationalism – Carling & Bivand Erdal, 2014; tourism – Klekowski von Koppenfels et al., 2015). Another kind of mobility which is under-explored by traditional migration studies and that has received attention in transnational studies is circular migration (e.g. Sandu, 2005; Triandafyllidou, 2013 – the phenomenon was indeed introduced in mobility studies as 'commuting migration', see Morokvasic, 1992, 1996). However, the different approach of the two theories is revealing. Transnational theory seems more apt to describe ongoing and regular mobility. If circular migration breaks off or redirects to other destinations it becomes of less interest to transnational theory and may even be considered a failure. Mobility theory, on the contrary, insists both on the potential open-endedness and temporariness of all sorts of mobilities and on the social relevance of less-than-permanent mobility. Transnational approaches further tended to focus methodologically on the links between two specific countries, giving less attention to other possible mobilities, something that has created dissatisfaction among the original authors of transnational theory (Glick Schiller, 2007) and has more recently been criticised within multinational/onward migration studies (Paul & Yeoh, 2020).

In a specular way, some mobility theory, often under the labels of fluidity or cosmopolitanism, has absolutised mobility, announcing the end of barriers, states and local societies. Such an approach contrasts with the early attention which transnational theory has given to the continued role of the state (Basch et al., 1994) and was criticised by theorists of transnationality as ignoring the stratification of opportunities for mobility (Faist, 2013).

Generally, in the literature, there are different perspectives and, consequently, definitions that describe multiple mobilities within the same migration trajectory. The concept of 'transit migration' was adopted to analyse the transit of asylum-seekers and irregular migrants directed towards a destination context other than the one in which they find themselves (Mueller, 2004; Collyer, 2007; Collyer & de

Haas, 2010; Düvell, 2012). The expression 'secondary migration' has been used to reflect on the trajectories of citizens from countries of the 'Global South' who have stayed regularly and in a prolonged manner over time but temporarily, in national contexts with advanced economies, before reaching the final destination context (for Europe see Bang Nielsen, 2004; for North America refer to Takenaka, 2007). Such experience of mobility is described through the construct of 'stepwise international migration' which, however, brings it back to a deliberate strategy adopted by migrants to accumulate the economic, social and relational resources necessary to reach the ultimate goal of migration, the 'dream destinations' – usually in Europe and/or North America (Mueller, 2004; King & Newbold, 2007; Paul, 2011, 2015; Tsujimoto, 2016). The term 'multiple migrations' explains the journey of a migrant that first started from the country of origin to a primary destination, intersecting with other spatialities and temporalities of migration (Salamonska, 2017); after a period of residence in the first settlement, the migrant again moves to the second country to fulfil his or her migration goal. In the same way, migrations may happen in several locations in a person's life (Bhachu, 2015; Ciobanu, 2015). It has been argued that, in these cases of 'multiple migration mobilities', migrants have a clear plan for the intermediate and final countries of settlement (Ahrens et al., 2016; Mas Giralt, 2017). Paul and Yeoh (2020, 2021) have recently proposed 'multinational migration' to indicate long-term permanence in two or more countries in addition to the country of origin. Their approach is partly in opposition to the emphasis of transnational studies on only two countries at a time (Paul & Yeoh, 2021) to which we return in the conclusions.

The term 'onward migration' (Nekby, 2006; Mas Giralt, 2017; Ramos, 2018; Della Puppa & King, 2019) is part of the framework of the reflections on intra-European mobility (EMN, 2013; Sarpong et al., 2020). This phenomenon can be understood as a form of reactivation of migration mobility, due to an increased 'motility' (Kaufmann et al., 2004; see also Paul, 2015; Moret, 2018). This is the case for third-country nationals who use their new citizenship acquired in an EU country – sometimes an indefinite leave to remain – to move to another EU country (Toma & Castagnone, 2015; Danaj & Çaro, 2016; Della Puppa, 2018; Ramos, 2018; Della Puppa & King, 2019). In this case, these new migration movements interweave internal mobility and international migration (De Genova & Peutz, 2010; King & Skeldon, 2010; Wagner & Hassel, 2016). They continue the process of geographical settlement and social stabilisation in Europe of migrants from the Global South and are frequently directed to the former colonial metropoles of their home countries, which still attract them on the basis of linguistic, cultural, family and social links (Van Liempt, 2011; Ahrens et al., 2016; Della Puppa & King, 2019), as also noted elsewhere in this book (Chap. 3 by de Hoon and van Liempt and Chap. 11 by Formenti).

9.3 Intra-EU Mobile People and Brexit as a Trigger for Further Mobility

In this section we discuss the groups involved in our research, as well as the way in which Brexit redefines and triggers mobility. The 2016 Referendum and the following Brexit process has called significant attention to mobility between the UK and the EU27, although more to EU27 citizens than to Britons in EU27 member states. The latter have been stereotyped in public discourse as white, middle-class retirees concentrated particularly in touristic areas of Spain. Research on the group – which, in 2019, included between 1 and 2.2 million people – has, however, shown its diversity. It has underlined how the majority are of working age (Benson & O'Reilly, 2018) and the specificity of the non-white experiences among the group (Benson & Lewis, 2019). Statbel (the Belgian national statistical service) estimated that Britons in Belgium without Belgian nationality on 1 January 2020 were around 19,000 – a number that is decreasing mainly because of the acquisitions of nationality. The group grew significantly between 1965 and 1980, around the 1973 entry of the UK in the EU (Hermia & Perrin, 2012) and has remained relatively stationary since then. The important number of those working for or in relation to supranational institutions (mainly the EU but also, for example, NATO) means that the group is probably more middle-class than Britons in the rest of Europe.

EU27 citizens in the UK numbered some 3.7 million in 2019 (ONS, 2020). With the exceptions of active recruitment from Poland and Latvia after World War II and of the arrivals of Italians in the 1950s and 1960s, most of the significant arrivals from current EU27 member states started in the 1990s (D'Angelo & Kofman, 2017) following the process of EU enlargement. The group is also highly diverse both in terms of geographic origins (five of the six largest foreign national groups in the UK are from the EU – Poland, Romania, Republic of Ireland, Italy and Portugal)[2] and in terms of positioning within the UK class structure. However, Johnston et al. (2015) have highlighted a tendency among Eastern EU citizens to be both concentrated in less-qualified jobs and overqualified in relation to them. An additional diversity of the group comes from the fact that it includes significant numbers of naturalised onward migrants, among whom Dutch Somalis (e.g. Van Liempt, 2011) and Spanish Latin Americans (e.g. Mas Giralt, 2017) have been the subject of research.[3] Italo-Bangladeshis are another group of naturalised onward migrants studied in one of the research projects presented here.

The Bangladeshi community constitutes the sixth non-EU community in Italy, with over 130,000 individuals. It is a relatively recent migration, which has consolidated since the 1990s (Priori, 2012). Despite this, many Bangladeshis in Italy, now

[2] If we consider place of birth rather than citizenship, the picture is slightly different, as EU citizens have historically naturalised in lower numbers. ONS considers only one citizenship per respondent, which means that third-country nationals who acquired an EU27 citizenship might be underestimated.

[3] See also Chaps. 3 (by de Hoon and van Liempt) and 6 (by Serra Mingot) in this volume.

Italian citizens with a European passport, have undertaken or are planning to undertake a new migration, defined as 'onward migration' (Della Puppa & Sredanovic, 2017; Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2017; Della Puppa, 2018; Della Puppa & King, 2019). These are mostly male migrant workers who, following family reunion with their wives and children in Italy, acquired citizenship after over 10 years of continuous residence in the country. Their new migration would be fuelled by the aspirations of upward social mobility that migrants have for their children (Della Puppa & King, 2019); this especially after the global economic crisis that has hit increasingly hard the working class of the countries of Mediterranean Europe but also in conjunction with the beginning of a new family cycle which sees them as mature fathers, with children facing higher education. Thus, the biographical and family cycle intertwine with the migration cycle and the evolution of their civic status. Moreover, the United Kingdom and, above all, London, is represented as a context in which an 'ethnic' conception of citizenship does not exist and, therefore, it would be possible to move away from the condition of 'foreigner' and 'migrant'. An additional factor is the attraction that the UK exercises by virtue of its welfare system, considered more inclusive than the 'Mediterranean' one (Della Puppa, 2018; Della Puppa & King, 2019).

In a previous article (Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020) we highlighted how the Italo-Bangladeshis, as 'naturalised' EU citizens and 'EU citizens at birth' (that is, those who are citizens since birth of current EU member states) show different attitudes towards further mobility. Sredanovic's EU27 interviewees in the UK (as well as British interviewees in Belgium) showed a much stronger orientation to potential further onward migration within the EU, while the Italo-Bangladeshis were more likely to dismiss further migration plans or to limit them to return migration to Italy. However, since one of the reasons for the onward migration of the Italo-Bangladeshis was the search for a more inclusive welfare state, the possible exclusion from the public benefits system of EU citizens in the UK raises many concerns for this category of interviewees (Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020). We argued that one reason for this was the larger confidence of EU citizens 'by birth' in the use of EU freedom of mobility and the fact that the Italo-Bangladeshis saw their position in the UK as the result of a longer migratory pathway.

As mentioned, Brexit introduces significant reasons for the further migration of all the groups, including the loss of rights linked to EU freedom of movement and, in the UK, fears of xenophobia and economic downturn (Sredanovic, 2021). EU27 citizens in the UK have left in significant numbers and new arrivals have slowed down, especially from Central and Eastern EU member states. The COVID-19 pandemic has, however, been masking the impact of Brexit, and the situation, which is particularly volatile and difficult to predict (cf. Sredanovic, 2021), could change significantly in the near future.

9.4 Method

The two research projects behind this chapter were conducted separately by Della Puppa and Sredanovic but have been the object, for a number of years, of a cooperative comparative analysis (e.g. Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020).

Della Puppa conducted 30 interviews with Italo-Bangladeshis who naturalised in Italy before moving to the UK; the interviews were collected between 2016 (including the period before the Brexit referendum) and 2018 in the UK. Della Puppa started from different points of access to the field and continued collecting interviews via the snowball method. The interviewees were all men, in their 30s to 50s, with at least 15 years of residence in Italy before moving to the UK. The years of residence were not a selection criterion for inclusion in this study but, rather, a characteristic that all interviewees happened to share as, in order to acquire Italian citizenship, there is a requirement of 10 years of continuous residence in the country, plus a few years for the bureaucratic procedures and waiting for the answer. Furthermore, the focus of the project is on men because, in the migration from Bangladesh to Italy, the first migrant is almost always a man (Della Puppa, 2014) and, therefore, the men are those who first acquire Italian citizenship and can carry out (and make it possible for their partners) further intra-European migration. We recognise that adopting this generational and gender perspective has limitations; however, this does not imply gender-blindness. Coming from middle-class families in Bangladesh, they were in working-class jobs both in Italy (mostly in the industrial sector) and the UK (mostly in the service sector). They lived mostly in London, except for a few who were living in Essex. The interviews focused on their migratory experiences and strategies both in Italy and in the UK, as well as the background in Bangladesh, the impact of the Brexit process and the experiences of work, family and interactions with the state (including welfare and the school system) in the UK.

Sredanovic presents here in-depth interviews conducted between 2018 and early 2020 (that is, in the period between the 2016 Brexit referendum and Brexit leaving day on 31 January 2020). These include 26 interviews with EU27 citizens in the UK and 16 interviews with UK citizens in Belgium. The EU27 interviewees lived in different areas of Great Britain, were in the majority women (17, compared to 9 men), were aged between their mid-20s and their 50s and were skewed towards the middle class. The countries of origin included Italy (7), Spain (5), France and Germany (3 each), Greece and Poland (2 each) and Austria, Belgium, Croatia and Hungary (1 each). The UK citizens interviewed also lived in different areas of Belgium. They were balanced in terms of gender, had ages ranging from their mid-20s to their 70s and were also skewed toward the middle class. The interviewees either answered calls on social media or were contacted through the snowball procedure. The interview guide included questions about their memories of the day after the referendum, about their migratory history in the country of residence (particularly in terms of bureaucratic problems) and their fears and expectations linked to the Brexit process. It further explored measures taken (or not) to obtain

permanent residence or nationality and their opinions in relation to the negotiations between the UK government and the EU authorities. The interviews were conducted mostly in English but, in some cases in the UK, were conducted in Italian, French or Bosnian-Croatian-Montenegrin-Serbian.

9.5 Reshaping Transnational Practices

In the case of the Italo-Bangladeshis, obtaining EU citizenship brought them access to EU freedom of movement and an onward migration which redefined their transnational practices. Shortly after their arrival in the UK, the Brexit process started endangering their recently obtained EU freedom of movement.

As we have shown elsewhere (Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020), the UK (and London) also represented a particular attraction for the Italo-Bangladeshis by virtue of its welfare system (Della Puppa & King, 2019). Therefore, the prospect of the UK's exit from the EU was actually perceived as a threat, even by the Italo-Bangladeshis who had already relocated: their main fears for the outcome of the referendum were related to their possible exclusion from the system of 'benefits' to which EU citizens could have access in London. In fact, one of the issues on which the electoral campaign for the referendum was played out was exactly that – the use of benefits and so-called 'welfare shopping' (Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020). Despite these fears, the Italo-Bangladeshis interviewed dismissed plans for further migration (or a return migration to Italy) after their relocation to London. On the contrary, their onward migration to the UK is described as a definitive choice (at least until their children reach complete socio-economic independence) which, at present, shapes their transnational practices.

Here, then, we will look at the changes that the new intra-European migration regime has produced in the transnational practices of Italo-Bangladeshis. Specifically, two dimensions will be taken into account which reveal forms of transnationalism observed in the intertwining of the migration cycle and the biographical and family cycle: periodical returns to the country of origin and the sending of remittances.

9.5.1 A Re-oriented Transnationalism

The Bangladeshi migrant respondents stayed in Italy for a long period, to the point that many of them spent more than half of their lives there. The time spent in Italy, of course, also affected their identity perceptions, friendship ties, and emotional horizons, prompting them to frequent returns to the country that constituted their first migratory destination in Europe. In the words of Bintu and Maahnoor, respectively:

> Of course I go back to Italy when I can! I feel more Italian than Bengali and I don't feel English at all. I came away from Bangladesh when I was young and spent more than half of my life in Italy. I have many friends in Italy, I am in contact with them by phone, Skype... So I often go back to Bolzano, I have many Bengali friends there but also Italian friends. When I come back, I never sleep in a hotel, friends always host me.
>
> I don't feel anything for England. I feel that my country is Italy. I don't even feel that my country is Bangladesh. Yes, it is Bangladesh but I grew up in Italy, my son was born in Italy, studied there for two years – my country is Italy. Then I have my younger brother and my older brother who still live in Italy – they have children, my nephews, therefore, I often go to Italy. My relatives are almost all in Italy, two brothers, nephews...

Therefore, onward migration would seem to have reoriented the transnational practices and trajectories of the Italo-Bangladeshis who have relocated to the UK, intensifying periodic trips to Italy and making return to the country of birth more sporadic, as confirmed, for example, by Aanu – who was going to return to Bangladesh after an absence of 7 years, compared to continuous returns to Italy – or by Brion who, similarly, spends a much longer time between trips to Bangladesh, compared to the frequency of visits to relatives resident in Italy:

> I am going to Bangladesh in July, I already bought the ticket. But I've been away for a long time, since 2011... that's a lot. Because then I moved here and... On the other hand I return more often to Italy, since I am here in England I have already gone twice and I will be back in a month. I go to my brother who still lives there, I go on vacation, my daughters are also happy this way.
>
> I returned to Bangladesh the last time in February 2016. [...] In Italy, we go back every three or four months or my wife goes there on her own, because her family is in Italy. We are very homesick [for Italy] but we go there often, so...

These interview extracts highlight the importance of family ties in shaping and reorienting transnational periodic returns. On the one hand, as Aanu and Brion said, the long stay in Italy has allowed the recomposition of an extended family circle, including ascendant and side relatives, in the first country of destination of their migration biography and this, understandably, has reconfigured the orientation of their transnational travels. On the other hand, today, the Italo-Bangladeshi onward migrants are in another phase of their family and migration cycle: no longer single young men with the duty to contribute to the economy of the family of origin in Bangladesh by sending remittances to parents, but mature fathers with children of school age and, often, without close family ties in the country of origin where, in the meantime, the parents have died – or, in turn, have been reunited in Europe – and there are only a few relatives left behind. This is what emerges from the words of many respondents. Below, those of Rintu and Apon, respectively:

> Yes, for me every opportunity is good to return to Italy: as soon as I can, I go, to find friends and have a short holiday... However, in Bangladesh, there is no longer anyone, I return rarely: my mum lives with us here in London, my father is dead, my brothers also live here or in Italy.

> My mum and dad are dead. We were a big family as we are five brothers and two sisters... my two older brothers are here and another one who I go to visit often is in Italy. On the other hand, since my parents died, I don't go to Bangladesh that often.

It should be underlined that this frequent travel to Italy is a practice that the arrival of Brexit has partially made more complicated from a bureaucratic and, perhaps, economic point of view but which, at the time of the interviews, did not seem to be abandoned.

In addition to the reconfiguration of the onward migrants' family priorities, the greater economic and organisational accessibility of an intra-European journey compared to an inter-continental movement also played an important role in redesigning their transnational trajectories. In fact, in addition to being able to have numerous friends and family, who can offer them comfortable hospitality, the flight connections between the UK and Italy are much more affordable than those between any European country – including the UK – and Bangladesh, as Tanu and Magan, respectively, explain:

> I go to Italy quite often. Every year, especially in summer, I stay a couple of weeks, I go on vacation, to eat some ice cream, drink coffee... Because it costs little now, with EasyJet or Ryanair, it costs very little.
>
> Do you know how many times I go to Italy? At least three times a year but even more, sometimes even four or five times. When it's cheap, I get tickets: I leave on Friday and I go back on Sunday with the last flight. I am always hosted by Bengali or Italian friends.

Therefore, onward migration does not affect transnationalism (in its dimension of periodic returns to the country of origin), by stopping it, but changes its direction by making it converge towards Italy. From another perspective, it could be said that transnational activities became more complex, combining frequent trips to Italy with the more sporadic returns to Bangladesh.

At the basis of this phenomenon, there seems to be a multiplicity of identity, emotional, family, economic and social factors. First of all, Italy is the country where intense friendships and even family ties have been woven and strengthened, while the 'migration seniority' and the alternation of generations and family cycles has attenuated or weakened significant parental relationships in Bangladesh. Secondly, for the Italo-Bangladeshis in London, many of whom have spent more than half of their life away from Bangladesh, their country of origin becomes Italy, the first country of destination of their migration experience, where they spent the years of their youth and of important biographical experiences and towards which there is an intense nostalgia. Finally, the organisational ease and economic accessibility that characterise travel to Italy compared to returns to Bangladesh should not be overlooked. It remains to be seen whether and how Brexit will modify this organisational and economic accessibility.

9.5.2 *Changes in Remittance Practices in the Intertwining of the Migration and the Family Cycle*

Remittances have been analysed by some authors as a thermometer of the intensity of migrants' transnational ties (e.g. Boccagni, 2013, 2017). For this reason, it might be useful to observe what the impact is on this practice of the onward migration of European citizens of third-country-national origin.[4]

Once again, the interviews highlighted the weight of the years spent in Italy as well as the change in economic and material conditions of the Italo-Bangladeshi families, once relocated in the UK and, specifically in London: a city characterised by a high cost of living and where respondents managed to find work almost exclusively in the hypertrophic low-skilled tertiary sector (Della Puppa & King, 2019), through a process of contractual deregulation already described in terms of a 'new migrant division of labor' (May et al., 2007; see also Della Puppa & King, 2019; King & Della Puppa, 2021).

In fact, some interviewees explained how remittances sent in the years spent in Italy have helped family members at home with their economic needs. Others stressed the impossibility of sending a regular economic contribution to Bangladesh in the face of the increase in expenses and the reduction of wages suffered after the relocation to London. This is an aspect that, probably, with Brexit and the consequent risk of exclusion from the benefits system, will further increase. Here are the words of, first, Shafiur and, second, Bayazeed:

> I don't send money to Bangladesh anymore because, working in Italy and sending the money there, I built a five-story building there and now my mum lives in one of these and takes the rent from the others, so now I can think only about my family here in London.
>
> I don't send money to my family back in Bangladesh anymore. Here it is still not possible because I have no surplus, my salary is too low and the life here is too expensive, even though I get benefits...

In addition to the impact on the transnational travel of Italo-Bangladeshi onward migrants, the succession of the migration and family cycle and, therefore, the disappearance of the closest family members in the country of origin, also have a similar impact on their transnational economic transactions. In fact, the event that the most influences the sending of remittances is the death of the parents left behind. When this happens, the biographical passage of migrants who, from the condition of unmarried children 'move' towards that of men with a family of their own, is now complete: now they are *exclusively* husbands and fathers (Della Puppa, 2014). With this, therefore, the moral obligations, the debt of gratitude and the 'family duty' also end. Now, the migrants may be rationally and emotionally focused only on their nuclear family in Europe, as Abul says:

> I used to send money but now my parents are gone. My brothers are there [Bangladesh], but they don't need money. Before, my heart and head were in Bangladesh. Now that my dad is

[4] As opposed to the reverse line of causation – the impact of onward mobility on remittances – analysed by Flikweert et al. in Chap. 4.

> dead, my heart and head are here [in Italy and Europe]. I always sent money there to help my dad but now my family is only here [in Italy and Europe].

The residual practice of sending goods to relatives at home takes on more symbolic and celebratory features. This aspect is also confirmed by Rahaman:

> I was sending [remittances] but, as my father died last year, actually I don't need to send money anymore, so now I just send something, sometimes, some gifts to my brothers and sisters: in our religion, there are two big ceremonies: Eid – you know, at the end and after Ramadan. In these times, I send something to them as a gift.

If the 'fronds' of the onward migrants and their families are turned to the future and the realisation of the children's lives, especially through investment in their education outside Italy (Della Puppa & King, 2019), the 'roots' of the family of origin are fed by remittances of a non-strictly financial nature, such as gifts.

9.6 Potential Onward Migrants: EU27 Citizens in the UK and Britons in Belgium

Among the UK and EU27 citizens interviewed by Sredanovic, remittances were not a common practice, both because of the higher incomes in the countries of origin and because the composition of the interviewees was somewhat biased towards the middle class. Periodic returns to the country of origin were usually taken for granted given the lesser distance and associated costs and migration controls (although, for some interviewees, ensuring their continuation was a reason to naturalise – Sredanovic, 2020). On the other hand, Brexit entailed a rather widespread orientation towards open-ended plans for potential future mobility, be it onward or return. However, some of the interviewees, those with the strongest transnational links, were less likely to have open-ended plans and focused more on return migration to countries in which they had previously lived. In this sense exploring their plans for the future can also help to understand how transnational links influence (and in some cases might discourage) onward migration.

Some of the interviewees from the research presented in this section showed limited interest in further migration as a result of Brexit and were strongly determined to remain in the current country of residence, be that the UK or Belgium, despite the changes brought about by Brexit. For most of them the country of residence was the first country of migration, although some had previous migratory history and, in a few cases, an extensive experience which included several countries of residence.

Among the majority who had given some thought to either onward or return migration, many had an appreciation of open-ended, mobile potential migration plans. One explanation for this was that all the interviewees participating in the research (except one of the EU27 citizens interviewed in the UK) were against Brexit. In addition to claiming the right to remain in the country of residence, another way to express resistance to Brexit was to appreciate the motility

guaranteed by the EU freedom of movement. This was particularly the case among the Britons in Belgium who were able or who aimed to maintain their EU citizenship rights by obtaining the citizenship of an EU27 member state. In these cases the potential onward migration was described in particularly open-ended ways by Ilaria (an Italian in the UK) and Sarah (a Briton in Belgium) respectively:

> It is clear that I have been here for several years. I would like to remain… I mean, I do not need to leave tomorrow and so on but, in the long term, I see more issues for England than for the rest of Europe. In any case I say 'Well folks, I have the rest of Europe I can go to'. I can go to work anywhere, I can decide to go back to Italy.
>
> … once she [her daughter] is settled in life, then I can do what I like. And I could always go back to the UK. Now I can go to Ireland and, thanks to my Irish passport, I am still welcome and I use that word because I will still have the right to go and move to wherever I want, be it a Greek island, be it, you know, Scandinavia somewhere, you know, be it the former Eastern Europe.

Ralf, a German interviewee who moved from the UK to Norway, had completed his onward migration as a consequence of Brexit and now had open-ended migration plans:

> I'm originally German, so Germany was one of the options we [he and his wife] were thinking about and then, in an academic setting, it's always hard to find something for two people. So we both started applying to places or talking to contacts and then Norway is just what happened to come out first.

In this case the onward migration was accelerated by an episode of racial harassment which Ralf's Indian wife experienced and the interview extract shows how the couple was ready to move to the first country in which they found a work opportunity.

For those – in particular spouses – who had stronger transnational links to another EU member state, the onward migration plans were more clear-cut and, in some cases, focused on a single country. Trevor, a Briton living in Belgium, for example, had plans to potentially move to France – the country of birth of his wife – and had obtained French citizenship by marriage for that very reason. Beverley, another Briton living in Belgium, had also considered moving to Spain, the country of origin of her husband but, having school-age children and not being able to obtain Spanish citizenship without first establishing residence there, was stopping her. Transnational links and substantial previous migratory experience can also focus potential future mobility plans. Matteo, an Italian who worked for several years in Spain before moving to the UK, felt 'too old' (despite only being in his 40s) for temporary mobility and had return migration to Barcelona as the main plan if he had to leave the UK because of Brexit.

> No, that [leaving the UK for a year and two and then going back] is not so much something I'd do. In part because I am a certain age, let's say […]. I would already find it difficult to go to a new place and start again. Because, let's say, I instinctively would think of going back to Spain, even if the Spanish political climate dissuades me. […] I spent exactly eight years in Barcelona. So, let's say, on the one hand that's the default hypothesis that I would consider because, obviously, other than speaking Italian, Spanish and English… that would be the easiest thing.

Perhaps a clearer example of how transnationalism can limit open-ended migration plans can be given by comparing two young Spanish couples living in the UK. Fernando and Guacimara and Verónica and Sebastian are two couples in which the partners come from different regions of Spain. Both the couples were interested in remaining in the UK and were open to further migration only in the case of the worsening of Brexit. Comparing their plans shows significant differences in how open-ended these were. First, Fernando says:

> Moving to Barcelona would be like starting over again, with no support from family or friends, or whatever. […] We have considered, for example, since our [his company's] head offices are in the south of France […] yeah, we don't speak French at all. […] There's also a bit of industry in my speciality in Lisbon but, again, we don't speak Portuguese.

Sebastian: I was thinking of Ireland.
Verónica: Yeah, we're thinking of Ireland.
Sebastian: I mean, it's just over there, we can swim over.
Verónica: A ferry.
Sebastian: And they speak English, so we don't have to learn another language. But it wouldn't be even a problem, because she [Verónica] speaks German. I am not sure how your French is? My French is terrible, I mean, I understand French, but…
Verónica: It's not super good, but I think I could cope with working in French if I spent some time brushing it up…

Fernando and Guacimara have two small children – who have been recognised as 'anchoring' elements (Ryan, 2019), while Verónica and Sebastian do not have children. However, the main difference is that Fernando and Guacimara felt that they could find resources by moving to Madrid, including a house they would be able to use. Verónica and Sebastian on the other hand, while having links with family and friends in Spain, felt that there was no single place in Spain in which they could live together and have resources to fall back on. From the extracts, we can see how Fernando and Guacimara tend to exclude mobility destinations other than Madrid, including another destination within Spain. Verónica and Sebastian tend to be more optimistic about other destinations, not having a single destination to which they feel particularly linked.

9.7 Conclusions

Comparing the interviews from the two research projects shines a light on the interactions between mobility and transnationalism. Transnationalism was originally formulated (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Basch et al., 1994) to explain the intensity and durability of the strong links of migrants in the US with a single other country, that of origin. Mobility theory in migration studies, on the other hand, has always focused on open-endedness and on the plurality of possible future destinations.

For our Italo-Bangladeshi interviewees, the acquisition of EU citizenship increased their motility and brought about onward migration. As a consequence,

some transnational practices were completely redefined. Periodic returns were partly refocused away from Bangladesh and towards Italy, while remittances were reduced. Again, this is also linked to other factors, including the reduction of family ties with Bangladesh (the death of parents and/or other relatives moving to Italy or the UK) and, for remittances, the decrease in available income in the UK. The Brexit process threatened to take away a significant part of their newfound motility but they were unlikely to respond to this loss of right by planning further post-Brexit onward mobility (Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020).

EU27 citizens 'by birth' and UK citizens in Belgium have, in most cases, spent a much longer time taking for granted the motility that the Italo-Bangladeshis obtained only after a long migratory experience. Some transnational practices, such as remittances, were unusual among the groups, while others such as periodic returns were taken for granted. Brexit resulted in them having a generally positive attitude to intra-European mobility (Sredanovic, 2021; Sredanovic & Della Puppa, 2020) and, in this case, our research shows indications that transnational links can actually contain and delimit mobility plans. Some interviewees with stronger transnational links to the country of origin or with previous experience of onward migration were more likely to consider only return migration in answer to Brexit. On the other hand, some interviewees going through their first migration experience and/or having weaker links with the country of origin were more likely to see different options in front of them as a counter-measure to the risk of losing their rights and opportunities in the context of Brexit. This is obviously not a general rule – other interviewees considered only return migration without apparent transnational links to explain the orientation or did not consider any further mobility at all. The comparison of the two cases also shows how, pre-Brexit, access to the EU freedom of movement and consequent onward migration has weakened certain transnational links, while the post-Brexit context of (partial) loss of EU freedom of movement led to some interviewees planning return or onward migration, in which the existing transnational links delimited the open-endedness of possible destinations.

Paul and Yeoh (2021) have recently suggested the need to shift from a trans- to a multi-national approach to migration. We welcome their methodological approach but our findings further suggest that some of the phenomena made visible by the transnational approach, including regular returns and remittances, might be weaker in the context of onward migration. From this point of view, combining different approaches rather than redefining transnational theory to cover all dimensions of migration might be more fruitful. More generally, our results suggest that it would be fruitful not to consider transnationalism and mobility as synonyms but, rather, as capturing different aspects of the experiences of geographically mobile people. More specifically, they show how further mobility tends to redefine transnational activities and how transnational links can not only facilitate specific mobilities, but also make others less likely.

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