Mixed Migrant Ties Social Networks and Social Capital in Migration Research

Laura Morosanu

CARIM
Euro-Mediterranean Consortium
for Applied Research on International Migration

CARIM IV Summer School on
Euro-Mediterranean Migration and Development (2009)
Best Participant Essays Series
AS 2010/43

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Laura Morosanu
European University Institute, Florence, Italy

CARIM

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For more information:
Euro-Mediterranean Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies (EUI)
Convento
Via delle Fontanelle 19
50014 San Domenico di Fiesole
Italy
Tel: +39 055 46 85 878
Fax: + 39 055 46 85 755
Email: carim@eui.eu

Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies
http://www.eui.eu/RSCAS/

Abstract

Social network and social capital theories have gained substantial ground in migration research in recent years. While existing scholarship documents a vast array of resources, and indeed constraints, generated by social networks, it tends to remain narrowly focused on the ethnic group, or at best kin or community-of-origin ties. By showing how social networks enter and shape migration processes, I argue that current research does not adequately capture the complexity of the ties migrants may develop at destination. Given their limited focus on ethnic (or kin- or community-of-origin-based) networks vis-à-vis the host and/or home society, (neo)assimilation studies, transnationalism, as well as combinations of the two, typically fail to discuss the formation and workings of mixed, cross-national networks (linking migrants of different ethno-national origins in the receiving context). In light of this omission, I conclude by making several methodological recommendations for further research, which would allow us to understand how diversity emerges in migrant ties, while not ignoring ethnic or community bonds.

Résumé

Au cours des dernières années, les théories du capital social et des réseaux sociaux sont devenues des outils essentiels de l'étude des migrations. Si les études existantes prennent en compte de nombreuses ressources et contraintes générées par les réseaux sociaux, elles ont néanmoins tendance à ne considérer que les liens rattachant l'individu au groupe ethnique auquel il appartient. Au mieux prennent-elles également en compte les liens familiaux et de la communauté d'origine.

En montrant comment les réseaux sociaux pénètrent et transforment les processus migratoires, je soutiens que la recherche actuelle ne donne pas suffisamment de poids aux liens que les migrants peuvent développer une fois à destination. Etant donné que leur champ d'étude est trop souvent limité aux réseaux ethniques (ou familiaux ou de la communauté d'origine) vis-à-vis de la société d'accueil et/où d'origine, les études (néo)assimilationistes et transnationales ne parviennent pas à rendre compte de la formation et des mécanismes sous-jacents des réseaux mixtes et transnationaux (reliant des migrants d'origines ethno-nationales diverses dans le pays d'accueil). A la lumière de cette omission, je formule pour conclure plusieurs recommandations méthodologiques pour les recherches futures, permettant de saisir comment la diversité émerge des liens mêmes que les migrants entretiennent entre eux, sans pour autant négliger l'importance des liens ethniques ou communautaires.

Introduction

Social network and social capital theories have gained substantial ground in migration research in recent years. As Massey *et al.* (1998) among others famously argue, migration is shaped, facilitated, and maintained in multiple ways by the social ties in which migrants remain or become embedded. Empirical evidence for the positive – or indeed negative – impact of social networks on the lives of migrants and those connected to them is now plentiful across different regions. For instance, Levitt (2001) shows how Dominicans' continuing ties with their home village create a channel not only for the flow of material resources but also for 'social remittances,' transparent in the circulation of values and norms that dramatically change the social organisation of life at home. In the case of El Salvador, Menjívar (2000) reveals how relatives abroad sponsor their kin's migration but then fail to support them at destination because of acute lack of resources. In Britain, Werbner (1999) details the processes by which Pakistanis use their networks to arrange marriages, and how these in turn are much affected by the strength of ties that transcend borders. In Germany and the Netherlands, Turks and Kurds have been shown to use extensive networks to participate in home-country politics (Østergaard-Nielsen 2003, 2001).

These are only some examples to highlight different ways in which social networks shape migration. Much recent literature focuses on networks that are ethnic, kin- or community-of-origin based, often crossing national borders. But what it fails to investigate is mixed, cross-national networks, which link people of different ethno-national backgrounds. However, the social reality of migrants is more complex than the picture conveyed by much migration literature. In this paper, I review the contribution of social networks and social capital theories to migration studies by noting the limited scope of the social networks analysed therein. In particular, I argue that assimilation literature is mainly focused on ethnic networks or social capital (and sometimes kin- and community-of-origin-based ties), while transnational studies are primarily interested in ties to communities of origin (sometimes extended to the home country in general); furthermore, recent studies seeking to bridge these two perspectives do so in a way that perpetuates the limited study scope of social networks in old and new environments. This leaves a gap in current research, as the existence of mixed, cross-national networks (linking migrants with other migrants) is often missing from view. I divide the paper into three parts. First, I briefly introduce social networks and social capital theories. Second, I discuss how social networks enter migration studies, and how they are put to use therein. Third, I show how assimilation, transnational, as well as 'assimilation-cum-transnational' studies fail to address mixed networks that cut across ethno-national boundaries. I conclude by making a few recommendations on how further research might correct this omission.

Social Networks and Social Capital Approaches

Social networks and social capital research have a longstanding tradition, with a variety of applications, in sociology and related fields. While not necessarily the discovery of migration scholars, they have by now become recognised as being indispensable in understanding the complex processes underlying human mobility. In this section, I briefly introduce social network analysis and social capital theory, their main concepts and key features, so as to set the background for the discussion of migrant networks in the following sections.[1]

As Emirbayer and Goodwin (1994: 1414) point out, network analysis is not a 'formal or *unitary* theory that specifies distinctive laws, propositions, or correlations, but rather a broad strategy for investigating social structure,' witnessing considerable 'internal diversity of approaches.' Among the

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[1] Social network literature, as well as that of social capital, is quite vast. For reasons of space, I limit myself to highlighting only some key features of both. For comprehensive reviews, see Mitchell 1969, Scott 1991 etc.

many definitions, a more flexible one considers social networks as 'the actual set of links of all kinds among a set of individuals,' where these links can be of an informative, normative or exchange nature (Mitchell 1973: 26). In general, what network approaches do is to look at concrete social relations to explain human action or behaviour, in contrast to previous structural-functional analyses. Thus, they focus on the characteristics of the relations in which individuals are embedded, rather than their personal attributes, in shaping behaviour (Mitchell 1969, see also Menjívar 2000: 26).

In contrast to previous 'metaphorical' uses (Conway 2001: 87), a more systematic interest in social networks is noticeable in the social anthropological studies dating from the second half of the 20th century. These used social networks for various purposes. Some sought to understand how individuals were able to gain access to different resources through their social relations. For instance, Mayer (1966) examined networks to explain how leaders muster support in elections. Others looked at how social networks served as channels for the flow of norms and communication that impacted on human behaviour (Mitchell 1969). One example is Bott's (1955) study on London families, where she showed how characteristics of family members' networks impact on the allocation of conjugal roles. These different studies reflect two main directions of research, one looking at the social control exercised through networks (like family ties), whereas others concentrate on the manipulation of relations for particular interests, often against various mechanisms of social control (Banck 1973: 40).

Irrespective of their different uses, social network analyses are particularly focused on the characteristics of the links between people. According to Mitchell (1969), these can be of morphological or interactional nature. In the former case, much attention is given, for instance, to the *density* of networks (i.e. whether a large proportion of the people in a network know each other or not) or *reachability* (implying that 'every specified person can be contacted within a stated number of steps from any given starting point' (Mitchell 1969: 15). Among the interactional criteria, the *durability*, *intensity* of relations (i.e. degree of involvement in relations) or *frequency* (of contact) are examples of consequential features of links exploited in network research.

Social network studies also take different starting points. Some examine links between individuals within bounded organisations such as the workplace (e.g. Kapferer 1966), whereas others map personal networks starting with particular individuals (e.g. Bott 1955). The latter studies in particular show a key advantage of social network analyses, namely that they allow researchers to decouple people from bounded places like the village, neighbourhood or city, overcoming what Rogers and Vertovec call 'spatial fetishism' (1995: 18). Network analysis has then the advantage of looking at different 'social fields' within one location or at one social field extending beyond a particular territory (Rogers and Vertovec 1995: 18-20).

Despite its virtues, social network analysis also has its weaknesses. If much attention is devoted to formal aspects of networks (i.e. size, density, frequency etc.), the actual content of ties, i.e. the 'qualitative difference between particular ties,' is often left aside (Pahl and Spencer 2004: 73, see also Faist 2000). The literature on social capital marks a step forward in this direction. Although social capital theory has known a somewhat parallel development, many assumptions or ideas about human action are shared with social network analysis. Faist (2000) seeks to bridge these lines of inquiry, discussing social capital as the content side of ties, opposed to their structure (2000: 15). In what follows, I briefly review important contributions in social capital theory, before moving on to discussing the salience of networks in migration studies in the second section.

The definition of social capital is still a matter of debate. Nevertheless, there is a general consensus among scholars about 'the ability to secure *benefits* by virtue of *membership* in *social networks*' (Portes 1998: 6, my emphasis). Similarly, norms of *trust* and *reciprocity* have also been frequently invoked in relation to social capital (Coffé and Geys 2005: 485). First introduced by Bourdieu, the concept of social capital was defined as 'the aggregate of the actual and potential resources which are linked to possessions of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition or – in other words, to membership in a group' (1997: 51). Regarding

measurement, not only the *size* of networks is important, but also the *volume* of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed by each contact. Furthermore, a key point Bourdieu makes is the link between social and other types of capital, his interest lying mainly with the 'convertibility' of social capital into economic (or sometimes cultural) resources (Portes 1998: 4).

Building on Bourdieu's work, Coleman (1997) discusses social capital more systematically. Compared to human or physical capital, social capital is less tangible, residing in the 'relations among persons' (Coleman 1997: 83). However, unlike Bourdieu, Coleman does not equate social capital with resources drawn from relations but distinguishes between the resources themselves and the 'ability' to gain them via membership in various networks (Portes 1998: 5); for Coleman, social capital is defined by its *function*, 'facilitating certain actions of individuals who are within the structure' (Coleman 1997: 80). Hence, he discusses three aspects of social capital, *obligations and expectations,* depending on the trust exercised in the networks, *the capacity of information to flow* through the network so as to generate action, and *norms and sanctions* that regulate relations.

Whereas Coleman, among others, lays emphasis on *strong ties* as potential sources of social capital (Portes 1998: 6), Granovetter (1983) makes a critical contribution, showing the advantage of *weak ties* in such key situations as entering the labour market. Speaking against the growth of alienation generated by weak ties, as suggested by the Chicago School, Granovetter argues that while individuals without weak ties easily become trapped in redundancy and isolation because of their closed networks, weak ties are vital to an individual's integration in society, acting as 'bridges' to other networks: 'individuals with few weak ties will be deprived of information from distant parts of the social system and will be confined to the provincial news and views of their close friends' (Granovetter 1983: 202).

If so far the emphasis has been on the individual,, in political science, the concept of social capital has been applied to larger structures as well, such as communities, nations or societies. This shift is evident in Putman's seminal work, where social capital becomes a 'property of communities' (Coffé and Geys 1995: 486), defining 'features of social organisations such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit' (Putnam 1995: 2). For Putnam, social capital has both a 'private' and a 'public face': it does not solely benefit particular individuals, but society at large, reducing crime rates, enhancing economic prosperity, facilitating collective action, ensuring better education, and 'more effective government' (Putnam 1995: 2). Conversely, its decline has serious consequences on social and political life. In *Bowling Alone,* Putnam laments the decline of social capital in American society, measured by participation in politics, vote turnout, trade unions or membership in civic groups or associations, and locates the causes of this phenomenon in the use of television, new work patterns and reduced spare time, commuting and mobility, and changes in attitudes toward civic involvement (Putnam 2000). Furthermore, Putnam distinguishes between *bonding* and *bridging* social capital, where the former occurs within bounded groups, while the latter across groups. Though acknowledging the positive aspects of bonding networks, Putnam favours bridging networks, which appear more beneficial for 'getting ahead' and encourage the development of 'broader identities' and reciprocity on a larger – societal – scale (2000: 22-23).

In contrast with previous research on social capital, which also emphasised the constraints created by social networks, Putnam focuses on the positive side of social capital. While acknowledging potential negative consequences, his main interest lies in the benefits drawn from associational life, especially in the form of institutionalised networks and activities occurring in the public space. Apart from this, Putnam also hints at the rich resources inherent in informal networks, going beyond the instrumental view on social capital predominant in the work of Bourdieu and his followers.

In the case of migration, social capital works at both the informal and formal (associational) level, becoming critical in the unfolding of adaptation as well as transnational processes. In what follows, I show how social networks and social capital enter migration research, and how they shape migration processes.

Migrant Networks and the Social Dimension of Migration

Social networks and social capital approaches are now recognised as key to understanding migration. An interest in the social dimension of human mobility has developed strongly beginning in the 1960s and 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, when neo-classical economic theories of migration, as well as structural-historical approaches proved unable to fully capture the dynamics of migration (Boyd 1989, Gold 2005, Massey *et al.* 1993).[2] I discuss these in turn.

Neoclassical theories explained migration in economic terms. The *microeconomic perspective* looked at individual, rational decisions to migrate based on the economic gap between sending and receiving areas, and an individual's own desire to increase their returns. On the other hand, the *macroeconomic perspective* saw migration as a response to labour demand in more developed regions, coupled with scarce resources in less developed areas that determined migration (Massey *et al.* 1993). In both approaches, migration was seen as a mechanism to restore equilibrium between sending and receiving contexts (Menjívar 2000).

One critique of the neoclassical *micro*economic approach came from the *new economics of migration*, revealing the importance of household or family influence on migration decision-making. Thus, migration became a collective, rather than an individual strategy to maximise benefits and reduce market-related risks (Menjívar 2000). On the other hand, *structural-historical approaches* (among them world systems theory) spoke against the neoclassical *macro*economic approach, emphasising the multiple – cultural, historical, political – links between sending and receiving areas that went beyond economic relations. Furthermore, migration was depicted as the result of the penetration of capitalism into peripheral societies, determining in various ways individuals' decisions to move. Hence, the structural-historical approaches were able to explain why migration was more intense between certain destinations and sending contexts under similar conditions, and rejected the idea of an economic equilibrium achieved through migrations. However, despite their virtues, these theories neglected human agency, treating migrants indiscriminately as guided by structural forces (Gold 2005, Menjívar 2000).

Human agency has regained prominence in migration studies particularly since the early 1980s, when researchers refocused their attention on the social organisation of migration, and more precisely, social networks and smaller units such as the household or community of origin. There were anthropological antecedents to this in the 1960s and 1970s, illustrated, for instance, in the work of Mayer (1961) who showed how rural migrants in a South African town maintained close ties, and remained oriented to their communities of origin. But since the 1980s, the role of social networks has become entrenched in migration scholarship as indispensable in understanding migration decisions, routes as well as adaptation trajectories and transnational processes.

As already indicated above, social network analyses did not necessarily emerge in migration contexts. The first to actually introduce the concept of 'migrant networks' were Massey and his colleagues, who defined them as 'sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through ties of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin' (1993: 448). These ties are reinforced by immigrant associations in the host society (Massey *et al.* 1987: 169).

As Boyd (1989) shows, networks are crucial at various stages in the migration process, i.e. departure, arrival, circulation or return. The benefits drawn from social networks could be divided into instrumental and affective ones. In the former case, networks become channels of information related to daily practicalities and survival. For example, in their study on Polish migrants in London, Elrick and Lewandowska (2008) emphasise the role of 'agents' who make a living out of providing crucial

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[2] For a comprehensive review of theories of international migration, see Massey *et al.* 1993, Massey *et al.* 1998, Faist 2000. For reasons of space, I will only highlight some major directions taken by migration theories so as to show how social network approaches have achieved prominence in this field.

job information to newly-arrived migrants. On the other hand, non-migrants may also benefit from remittances sent home by those who work abroad (e.g. Grasmuck and Pessar 1991, Smith 2006) or from being sponsored by migrants already arrived at destination (e.g. Menjívar 2000). Apart from their instrumental side, social networks also constitute rich sources of emotional support and companionship, facilitating migrants' adaptation in the receiving context (e.g. Appadurai 1997, Papastergiadis 2000, cited in Edgar *et al.* 2004: 48, Gold 2005).

However, apart from providing various tangible and intangible gains, social networks serve other functions as well. They importantly shape – and sometimes constrain – human behaviour or action. For example, Levitt (2001) shows the importance of 'social remittances' in the place of origin, i.e. the norms and values brought from abroad that shape gender roles and division of labour at home. On the other hand, migrants who resort to social networks may have a negative experience, as in the case of underpaid and exploited coethnics/kin in the 'ethnic/family economy' (Wimmer 2004).

All these examples capture the multiple ways in which social networks shape migration processes within broader legal, political and economic contexts. In contrast to previous accounts of migration, network approaches, offer, according to Boyd, a midway between individualist accounts of migration and the larger structural forces that determine people's decision to move:

> Studying networks, particularly those linked to family and household, permits understanding of migration as a social product – not as the sole result of individual decisions made by individual actors, not as the sole result of the economic and political parameters, but rather as an outcome of all these factors in interaction (1989: 642, see also Gold 2005).

Moreover, they are able to solve two puzzles, according to Faist (2000): first, that of the general lack of mobility[3] coupled with the existence of chain migration on certain routes, and second, the apparent incompatibility between adaptation in the host country and the development of transnational ties.

The two puzzles identified by Faist illustrate the utility of social networks in two main spheres: the initiation and perpetuation of migration, on the one hand, and the adaptation and transnational processes on the other. In this way, social networks crosscut two main directions in migration research that have long developed in isolation: the neo-assimilation paradigm (e.g. Alba and Nee 1997) that studies migrants' uneven, multifaceted process of integration into mainstream structures at destination, and transnationalism studies (e.g. Glick Schiller *et al.* 1999, Levitt 2001), that focus on migrants' continuing ties with the sending context. In what follows, I discuss each in turn so as to show that mixed networks, reaching outside the ethnic community, have received little attention in contrast to ethnic, kin or community-of-origin ties.

Ethnic Ties, Transnational Relations, and Mixed Migrant Networks

In general, studies of migrant integration, transnationalism, or both emphasise the role of *ethnic* networks and communities, or at best family or community-of-origin ties. This obscures the development and workings of mixed social relations in both instrumental and non-instrumental dimensions of adaptation or transnationalisation.

In assimilation scholarship, focused on the destination context, researchers are more concerned with particular ethnic groups' integration into – and/or segregation from – various sectors of the mainstream society (e.g. Alba and Nee 1997, Nee and Sanders 2001). For instance, many studies document how migrants with scarce resources not only use their connections at destination to find jobs and other practical information, but often secure employment in what are known as the 'ethnic economy,' i.e. businesses owned by and run with the help of coethnics (Morales 2008: 2), whereas others, with more financial and human capital have better chances to enter mainstream occupations

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[3] Over 90% of the world population stays put.

(Nee and Sanders 2001). In such studies, ethnic groups are typically contrasted with the mainstream population. Hidden from view is the fact that 'ethnic' institutions are often cross-cultural spaces of interaction. In his article on 'Social Capital and Migration,' Nederveen Pieterse strongly criticises the focus on the '*ethnic* character of [immigrant] enterprise' prevailing in most research done in this area, as reinforcing the tendency to take ethnic boundaries as fixed and conflictual, while this is hardly always the case (2003: 30-36). Examples of Vietnamese businesses in Latino shopping malls, Korean personnel in Japanese restaurants or Asian firms with almost equal shares of Asian and Mexican staff come to support this claim. On the non-instrumental side, there is a vast literature documenting the role of the 'ethnic community' in offering social support, companionship and other services to co-ethnics at destination, again neglecting the role of migrants of different origins in social adaptation (e.g. Fennema 1994, Gold 1994, Kibria 1993).

These examples show how studies concentrated on the receiving context perpetuate a bi-focal interest in a particular ethnic group (and its institutions) *vis-à-vis* the majority population. In this context, migrant networks often become 'ethnic networks' facilitating or constraining migrants' actions (Vasta 2004). Indeed, authors may refer to kin or community-of-origin networks operating at destination (e.g. Boyd 1989, Gold 2005, Smith 2006). But the same scholars usually make easy shifts from kith and kin to co-ethnics and *vice versa*, so that mixed networks never achieve prominence or are altogether ignored.

Transnationalist studies do not overcome this gap either. Mainly speaking against the assimilation paradigm, with a focus on the receiving context, scholars of transnationalism shift their attention to the sending area, illuminating migrants' continuing ties with 'home.' In these studies, 'home' is often the community (or village) of origin. For example, Smith (2006) documents Ticuanense migrants' and their children's ongoing involvement in the social and political life of Mexican Ticuani, once they moved to New York. In her book on Dominican migrants in New York, Levitt (2001) shows how inhabitants of village Miraflores continue to travel 'back and forth' and bring with them material and immaterial resources in the form of values and norms that significantly change the organisation of village life. Other studies emphasise ties with the home country as a whole, looking for instance at sending state policies towards nationals living abroad or migrants' involvement in home country politics. A relevant example is the work of Østergaard Nielsen (2003, 2001) on Turkish and Kurdish political transnationalism in Germany and the Netherlands.

Transnational studies of migration have enriched our understanding of migrant lives by bringing in a much neglected side of this reality, namely the ties migrants maintain with the home country or community. More recent work in this domain incorporates the receiving context showing that integration and transnationalism are not incompatible (e.g. Morawska 2004, Levitt forthcoming). However, still missing from view are the mixed, cross-national networks linking migrants of different origins at destination.

In their everyday lives, at work, in study or residence places, migrants are likely to interact with other migrants, and not just co-ethnics, members of the same community of origin, or natives. Evidence of the existence of mixed networks emerges in various aspects of social life. For example, in Switzerland, second generation Italians formed youth associations that also included people of Spanish and Portuguese origin, developing a 'Latino' identity in contrast with the native population (Wimmer 2004). In their work on feminist politics, Landolt and Goldring (2008) also explore Latin American women's cross-national coalitions. In the case of religious organisations, Glick Schiller *et al.* (2006) examine Christian networks that bring together non-migrants and migrants of different origins in Manchester and Halle. Then, migrants often work in jobs where other migrants are concentrated, or come into contact with customers, clients or superiors of different backgrounds (Gold 2005). As shown earlier in this section, even 'ethnic economies' are populated only by co-ethnics.

These examples demonstrate the diversity of the social ties migrants are likely to develop at destination which are often marginally mentioned or entirely neglected in mainstream migration

literature. Further research is then needed to understand the complex nature, development, and workings of migrants' social relations that not only extend across territorial borders, but also across 'communal' boundaries. There are emergent critiques of an 'ethnic bias' in migration literature, proposing a shift from ethnic groups as units of analysis to *non-ethnic* modes of incorporation (Glick Schiller *et al.* 2006). However, this is likely to obscure *ethnically*-salient facets of migrants' experience. To be able to grasp both the diversity of migrants' social interaction, *and* the role of ethnic or community ties, a few recommendations can be made.

One strategy concerns sampling. If the most common entry points to study a particular migrant population are ethnic institutions, personal contacts of the researchers, and snowballing, researching migrant networks through these well-trodden paths may reinforce the 'ethnic bias'. Hence more care needs to be taken in including non-ethnically-biased recruitment routes as well. Finding 'non-ethnic' routes of recruiting migrants in large-scale cities can be a challenging and time-consuming task. Yet the importance of reaching migrants not easily visible through the 'ethnic' infra-structure is crucial for understanding the nature of migrants' social ties. Strategies to locate such participants may include general websites (e.g. university websites, renting or job websites) and mixed professional associations, contacts in the home country; recruitment agencies in the home country for work placements abroad, and service providers at destination. Similarly, random searches on social network sites such as Facebook may facilitate locating migrants of various backgrounds. Finding participants in these ways does not mean that they will be entirely ignorant about ethnic issues. But this is not the point. The point is not to limit studies to already formed 'ethnic' circles.

Second, comparing different subgroups of migrants, such as those in high- and low-skilled occupations, may provide further insight into different networking patterns. Bringing in the 'high-skilled' case constitutes an important corrective to a literature focused overwhelmingly on migrants in low-skilled jobs and often from rural backgrounds (see Smith and Favell 2006, Wimmer 2004); engagement with ethnicity – or diversity – may well differ between high-and low-skilled migrants. The comparative dimension is then likely to reveal the heterogeneity characterising migrants as a 'group'.

Last but not least, research methods should approach ethnicity 'obliquely' (Brubaker *et al.* 2006: 168). In other words, rather than asking openly 'ethnic' questions, framing questions in non-ethnic ways allows ethnicity – or diversity – to emerge according to respondents' own experiences (see Brubaker *et al.* 2006, Fox and Miller-Idriss 2008). In the case of social networks, general questions rather than ethnically-focused ones – are likely to elicit a more varied picture of migrants' social interaction, to incorporate mixed ties, while not excluding ethnic or communal bonds. This does not cause relinquishing ethnicity, as Glick Schiller *et al.* (2006) would suggest, but puts it in parentheses and follow-up questions, so that diversity can emerge more vividly where it is salient in the lives of those involved.

Concluding Remarks

In this paper, I have critically reviewed the contribution of social network and social capital theory in migration research. By showing how social networks enter and shape migration processes, I have argued that current research does not adequately capture the complexity of ties migrants develop at destination. Given their limited focus on ethnic (or kin- or community-of-origin-based) networks *vis-à-vis* the host and/or home society, (neo)assimilation studies, transnationalism, as well as combinations of the two, typically fail to discuss the formation and workings of mixed, cross-national networks (linking migrants of different ethnonational origins in the receiving context). To correct this omission, I concluded with several methodological recommendations for further research which would allow us to understand how diversity emerges in migrant ties, while not ignoring ethnic or community bonds. Understanding migrant networks and social interaction in their full complexity is crucial for conceptualising integration in today's multi-diverse societies.

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