# "Sending so much more than money": Social Remittances, Transnational Mobility and the Re-positioning of the Migrant

Irina Isaakyan and Anna Triandafyllidou

**Abstract**

Nowadays scholarship pays increased attention to migrant transnationalism and social remittances. Based on 324 in-depth interviews with Indian, Moroccan, Ukrainian, Bosnian and Filipino migrants in a number of EU countries (Austria, Italy, Spain and the UK), our paper aims to explore nuances of their social remittances especially in connection with their transnational mobility and social re-positioning. Our findings show that social remittances become part of complex socio-economic scripts and transactions. We recognize the following three types of social remittances: cultural, civic and political social remittances generated for personal and/or communal concerns and invariably related to the migrant's new social status. The most prevailing activities are: running an ethnic shop or restaurant; helping co-nationals abroad to adjust or to return; organizing cross-cultural exchange between the countries of origin and destination; and participating in political protests. Although transnational mobility becomes an essential element in the remittance transaction, social remittances of various kinds allow migrants to make a valid social contribution to their countries of origin while avoiding repatriation.

## 1. Introduction

The way we approach migration and settlement today is rather different from what was in the past. Nowadays, there is a much wider recognition of various forms that migration may take, departing from the classical view that migration involves movement from the country of origin to the country of destination with a perspective of settling down in the latter. Studying migration today is more about an understanding of the migrant's journey and of the transnational space it creates rather than about settlement or return. Increased attention is therefore paid to the wide range of relations that migrants develop with people, organisations, communities, and networks in their country, region, or city of destination, and the ways these webs of relations link in with individuals, organisations, communities and networks in the country or community of origin. Transnational linkages have been increasing in intensity, in scope and in variety (Faist 2000, 2010). Schunck (2012: 260) suggests that the complex phenomena like transnational social spaces, transnational communities and transnational networks presuppose transnational activities – or specific actions that the migrant undertakes and that connect the countries of origin and destination. Physical transnational mobility thus becomes a form of intensive transnational activity that is embedded in a web of transnational activities of different types such as sending money, building a home or starting a business at the place of origin, visiting relatives, engaging in a civic or political project at home or in between places of origin and destination.

An exemplary form of migrant transnationalism is financial remittances (Vertovec 2009). Resource flows across borders are, however, not limited to money flows in the form of remittances but also include immaterial – *social* - remittances in the form of ideas, identities, behaviours and social capital (Levitt 2001a; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011), which are equally important in terms of the impact they may have on the country of origin. As Carling (2014), Thai (2014) and others argue,

all remittances ultimately become social and cultural. In fact, financial remittances are invariably inscribed in specific scripts of social relations that make the money (or other material goods) meaningful to both the giver and the recipient (Carling 2014). People actually send much more than money as the Western Union slogan puts it and as suggests the title of this paper. Recent scholarly research (Boccagni et al. 2015; Thai 2014; Carling 2014; Lacroix 2014) has paid attention to social remittances of different types (cultural, political, civic) that migrants may generate. Social remittances, along with financial remittances, are seen to have an important impact on the country of origin but they are also considered *interactive in nature*, impacting on both the places of origin and destination (Levitt 2001a, 2008).

**This paper focuses on social remittances that are generated by transnationally mobile migrants in Europe.** We define transnationally mobile migrants as migrants who travel frequently between their place of origin and their place of destination because they are involved in economic or civic activities in both places. The paper **aims** to explore nuances and contexts of social remittances of transnationally mobile migrants. The study presented here addresses **two main research questions**. First, we explore the different types of social remittances that transnationally mobile migrants generate aiming at building a typology and expanding the scripts proposed by Carling (2014). Second, we have a special focus on how migrants understand their involvement in between place of origin and place of destination. Whether they perceive it as a self-rewarding activity or as an activity oriented towards others; whether they see this as an activity that affects mostly their social positioning and belonging at the place of origin or at the place of destination or indeed as a bridge, as a transnational space, between the two. We are thus exploring how a sense of transnational belonging develops through their physical mobility and engagement into civic or other projects.

The paper analyses materials from **a large qualitative data set of 324 semi-structured, in-depth interviews** conducted between summer 2014 and spring 2015 by an international team of researchers based in different countries. More specifically the interviews were conducted by the project consortium (information withheld to preserve anonymity) and involved Bosnian, Filipino, Indian and Moroccan transnationally mobile migrants in Austria, the UK, Italy and Spain. The paper starts from the assumption that transnationally mobile migrants are privileged agents for social remittances as they not only send the money or initiate a civic project but also travel to the country to take care of their project and develop their ideas. While this is often the case as for instance described in the paper by Levitt and Lamba-Nieves (2011), most studies do not address the question of physical presence and how it relates to the implementation of social remittances. While our study follows the line of Thai's (2014) investigation of "return visits" (and their relationship with financial remittances) it carries it a step further as it is predominantly focused on the motivations behind these remittances complementing Carling's (2014) recent attempt to provide a typology of remittance scripts.

It is almost impossible to ask migrants in a straightforward way about how they generate social remittances because those are far not always generated unconsciously. Social remittances result from complex interactions between the migrant and her transnational environment and relate to her identity change and senses of belonging (Carling 2014; Nowicka 2013, 2015). Scholars note that the best way to explore nuances of any complex social process (and particularly, its interplay with senses of belonging) is through narrative inquiry, with attention to the individual life-story (Creswell 2013; Czarniawska 2004; Elliott 2005). In line with these recommendations, our data, collected through 324 narrative interviews, were analysed through the method of narrative analysis in order to see the 'hidden, subtle meanings that people assign to their life experiences' (Czarniawska 2004: 24). The applied analyses of 'turning points' and 'epiphanies' enabled us to see how specific events in emigration and back home – as well as lessons inflicted from them - may

impact upon the migrant's self-perception and foster/bloc her generation of social remittances. The technique of 'narrative segment analysis' (Creswell 2013; Elliott 2005) then helped us elaborate on specific narrative themes in relation to senses of belonging and different types of social remittances.

Since the data contain sensitive biographical material, the informants' names or other identifiable information is not provided in the text. Apart from the complete anonymization of the study participants, the narrative representation of their biographic experience has in some cases been partly altered for the purposes of confidentiality.

The paper starts with a short review of the relevant literature on social remittances and on the contexts within which these take place. It then proceeds with offering a typology of social remittances distinguishing between cultural, civic and political remittances. We elaborate on the meaning of such remittances for the migrant informants and the ways they both trigger and are triggered by a social re-positioning of the migrant. In other words, we discuss how migrants see themselves in relation to their communities and why these cultural, social or political remittances are important to them, why and how they feel the need to engage with these activities and why it is important for them to be personally involved and physically present. Our findings seek to shed light on the different types of social remittances that migrants generate with a special focus on migrants that are intensely transnational.

## 1. The social meaning of remittances and their role in the migrant's social positioning

With the exception of the pioneering work of Peggy Levitt (2001a, 2001b, 2008), social remittances have been a relatively recent focus in the wider migration and transnationalism studies (Faist 2010; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011). The concept suggests that migrants carry with themselves various forms of non-financial capital [e.g.: norms/ideas, practices/identities and social networks] that shape their encounters with and integration into their host societies and also *send back more than money* (Carling 2014; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011; Thai 2014). Social remittances develop at both the individual/family and collective level. With regard to the latter, they may involve change in communal practices and ways of pursuing collective projects (such as improving infrastructure or electoral and political behaviour). With regard to the former they may concern change in gender roles and family ties. With reference to both individual and collective levels, social remittances may generate new business or trade practices, new welfare arrangements supporting fellow nationals both at home and abroad. They may also involve reconsideration of past events and the self-understanding of a community by reference both to its past, its emigration experience and its future, whether at the individual or collective level (Levitt 2001a, 2001b, 2008; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011).

The level and impact of social remittances depend on the boundaries between what is established and what is new in a particular national context (Wong & Levitt 2014). Wong and Levitt explain that such 'boundaries can be quite high when adoption requires a major change, or they can be low when what is travelling has a lot in common with what is already in place' (ibid: 4).

Social remittances are often generated unconsciously. In fact, migrating people primarily think in economic terms. Thinking about the compound nature of remittance transactions, Carling (2014: 251) points to a number of *cultural scenarios* - or **'remittance scripts'** - around us that, while covering the majority of migrants' economic remittances activities, inevitably create appropriate textures for social remittances:

> Remittances are at the core of composite transactions with material, emotional and relational elements. Remittance transfers need to be seen as compound transactions with material,

emotional and relational elements. There is indeed diversity of remittance transactions within a single setting. (Carling 2014: 218-219).

In the opinion of Carling, the most scientifically precise way to describe such composite remittance transactions is to look at them as socio-cultural "scripts". This notion of remittance scripts is based on the idea that transnational money transfers are always multi-faceted transactions that often involve negotiation, contestation and other interactional processes during which social norms are inevitably touched. Carling (2014: 220) defines scripts as 'structures of expectations for specific types of situations which facilitate social interaction'. The notion of the script conveys interplay between the money (material aspect) and the symbol conveyed in this money (its meaning) (Ibid: 220). Tannen (1993) illuminates this interplay with the classic restaurant script or the gastronomic scenario, according to which people may accomplish a variety of socio-cultural activities while consuming food: dating, flirting, talking about movies or business, conducting acts of espionage, etc. On analogy, Billig (1995) shows how such socio-economic scenarios work for the barbershop or pub script, when customers discuss and think over a variety of nation-building issues and thus shape their national identities in barbershop and pubs.

Specifically in relation to remittance scripts, Carling (2014: 227) notes that both parties (the sender and the receiver) have an active role in the transaction. While accepting the remittances, the recipients have many opportunities to exercise agency (Ibid: 229; Richman 2005). Such transactions 'inter-lock the giver and recipient in a social framework imbued with a range of obligations and meanings' (Cliggett 2003: 543) – what we here understand as social remittances. As Fresnoza-Flot (2009) notes, the money generated during each specific event has its own social meaning – but it is always present. There may be several scripts that are essentially about social remittances which develop around the migrants' economic transfers including the 'investment script', 'charity and donation scripts' and scripts related to professional activities such as the script of global academic work, political activism or tourism industry (Carling 2014: 241-245). The economic activities falling within such scenarios inevitably lead to social remittances. For example, investing in a school or hospital back home, the migrants makes a contribution to the local community development; while charity or religious donations contribute to moral values. Ambrosini (2014: 4) also shows that within the migrant's professional/investment area of *leisure-and-tourism*, transnationalism always has 'a primarily *symbolic* connotation' (Ambrosini 2014: 4). As Carling (2014: 221) further notes, 'remittance scripts are recognized by a social group' [e.g.: diaspora, hometown community in the Country of origin, etc.], whose members – both the senders and the receivers - participate in the scripts 'in flexible ways to make sense of specific and recurring remittance transactions'. Generally speaking, a societal effect is always about *symbolism* – the symbolism conveyed in a particular transaction and embodied in its socio-cultural script. This is what makes the remittance more than just a money donation – the embodied symbolism and its meaning for the community of users.

Wong and Levitt (2014: 4) explain that there are more uncertain contexts or textures of transnationalism, 'such as those plagued by civil unrest or climatic disaster', an element that turned out to be of special interest – although not initially anticipated - in our study too with regard to Bosnian and Ukrainian transnationally mobile migrants and their social remittances. Wong and Levitt (2014: 4) also point that social remittance elements may well 'circulate in the context of failed states and markets' – that is, in traumatizing conditions of war and disaster rather than in booming economies because war and trauma always convey very rich symbolism or preconditions for a societal impact (Ahluwalia 2006; Ignattief 1994). Displaced and globally marginalized people, who are placed in extreme traumatizing conditions, are often more likely to adopt radical

innovations as they are less bound to restricting norms and obligations (Rogers 2003; Strang & Stroule 1998; Wejner 2002).

At the same time highly skilled or specially gifted migrants (e.g. top level scientists but also top level artists) may also generate strong social remittances whether consciously or not. Scholars believe that high-skill professional migrants play the most crucial role in transferring ideas and practices (Holdaway et al. 2015: 268) because they are more 'powerful and respected individuals [who can] put pressure on their peers to change' (Wong & Levitt 2014: 4). Therefore, the transnationalism of educated and affluent migrants who pursue philanthropic homeland projects is usually more 'advanced' and more 'mature' in terms of its effects than the 'basic transnationalism' of low-skill migrants, which is mainly restricted to the family- and household-levels (Ambrosini 2014: 15). Thus there are many scholars who believe that migrants with higher levels of institutionalised capital have better opportunities to generate transnational social remittances (Kivisto 2001; Siar 2012).

Whoever sends them, social remittances are always *interactive* in nature. This means that, through social remittances, both high-skill and low-skill migrants *also change themselves* and remit back home *renovated* ideas and practices (Ambrosini 2012; Holdaway et al 2015; Levitt & Lamba-Nieves 2011). Social remittances thus shape the social positioning of the migrant both at destination and origin. Social positioning is defined here as the role we play and our social status within society or social group (Nowicka 2013, 2015). Such social positioning is inseparable from the migrant remittances as these testify to the migrant's social and economic capital (Bourdieu 2000, 2006). Indeed migration as such and remittances (whether financial or social) as part of the migration process create create asymmetries of power which are not always to the benefit of the sender, as s/he may also feel powerless because of his physical absence from the place of origin (Carling 2008, 2014). S/he may feel not in control of their remittances or find out that they have been cheated (Thai 2014, chapter 9). Nohl and co-authors stress that both social and financial remittances confirm the migrant's social position at the country of origin, within the diaspora and in the hoist society at large (Nohl et al. 2006).

Building on the existing research on social remittances, this paper focuses on the special case of transnationally mobile migrants (i.e. people who travel regularly between origin and destination with a view of pursuing economic and civic projects in both places) and remittances they generate. Our assumption is that bringing a message with a messenger can be more powerful particularly when it comes to social remittances since the migrant becomes directly involved in their project as primary agent of change. We are looking not so much at the objective impact (that could be measured by jobs created, by poor people helped or by women empowered, etc.) as at how the migrant herself conceptualises the importance of her social remittances and how she perceives herself as a transnational agent of change. We particularly question whether and how migrants see their social remittance behaviours as an element that changes their positioning both back home and at destination thus actively creating a transnational social space in between.

2. **Social remittances and the repositioning of the migrant**

Our analysis of the social remittances generated by our 324 informants has been exploratory in nature. The initial interview guide did not include direct questions on the social remittance behaviour of the informants as we did not want to bias their testimonies by introducing ourselves the notion of social remittance – which actually can be quite challenging to explain to a migrant informant and oftentimes in a language other than English. We thus opted for recoding our interviews in terms of remittances, disregarding information on financial investments as such and looking in their open ended answers for cultural activities, civic projects or indeed political

activism. We thus generated a new typology of social remittances that includes cultural, civic, and political types of remittances.

**Table 1. Typology of Social Remittances (SOREMI Types)**

| SOREMI Type | Incidence (#people) | Prevailing activity | Country comments |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Cultural | 80 | Ethnic restaurant/shop | • *Ukrainian* domestic workers and entrepreneurs<br>• *Indian* entrepreneurs and academics |
| | | Cross-cultural exchange | • *Moroccan* teachers, academics and NGO workers in Italy and Spain |
| 2. Civic | 100 | Poverty fighting projects in the country of origin: funding public education | • *Filipino* domestic female workers and also entrepreneurs<br>• *Moroccan* teachers and NGO workers in Italy and Spain<br>• *Indian* entrepreneurs |
| | | Moral support of co-nationals in emigration | • *Filipino* domestic workers (mostly women)<br>• *Moroccan* teachers and NGO workers |
| 3. Political | 40 | Political protests | • *Bosnian* students and war refugees |
| | | Support of the army | • *Ukrainian* high-skill men (younger generation) |

The qualitative analysis of our interviews has allowed us to explore the three specific types of social remittances in which our transnationally mobile migrants engage (cultural, civic and political) and the ways in which they seek to reposition themselves through these remittances within their communities both at origin and destination. Our aim is to show how social remittances take an active part in the creation of a transnational social space within which the migrant positions themselves. We also pay attention to the importance of the migrant's travelling and physical presence both at destination and back home in personally pursuing their projects.

*Cultural Remittances*

Cultural remittances refer to literary, cultural or artistic activities that have also a clear social dimension as they involve transfers of ideas and the building of transcultural capital (Meinhof and Triandafyllidou 2006). Indeed such activities may start as a scope in themselves, e.g. Nadia, a former schoolteacher from Ukraine (a woman of 52), who is now a domestic worker in Italy and who literally lives between her two homes, is going to publish her own book (both in Italian and Ukrainian) about the life of Ukrainian migrants in Italy. But then acquire a social dimension as the book is promoted as a cultural exchange between the two countries and particularly for Ukrainians at home to find out more about the life of Ukrainians in Italy. The book as such leads to a repositioning of the author, restoring her from her downwards social mobility (from a teacher to a domestic worker) back to her intellectual position as a highly skilled and cultivated person.

Cultural remittances may also relate to consumer behaviour and fashion styles. A former Ukrainian dressmaker, Lyuba, a woman of 60 years, who initially worked as a domestic worker in Italy, has started a clothing business in her country of destination. She has created a network of Italian clients who dress only in her studio. At the moment, she wants to invest the money she has

earned from this business in the creation of a new cultural centre for the promotion of Ukrainian culture in Italy. Thus a financial investment at destination and the capital accumulated gives rise to a social remittance that connects the two countries.

In these two examples it is clear that cultural remittances are directed towards the communities of origin and destination forming for both a new transcultural capital but they are also aimed at countering the downwards socioeconomic mobility that the migrant had experienced through their migration project. Thus, Nadia, our schoolteacher informant, who ended up as a domestic worker in Italy, has redeemed her human capital through writing her own book and thus re-positioning herself both at origin and destination as an author and an intellectual. Lyuba who also experienced downwards professional mobility, regained her socio economic and professional positioning not only by starting her own business but also by further pursuing cultural activities at destination which promote her country of origin. She has thus actually developed a new human and social capital through her migration experience that has generated transnational cultural remittances in both countries.

The case of Latika, a Moroccan woman now aged 50, is slightly different. Trained as a philologist in Arabic Literature but unable to have her Moroccan degrees recognised in Italy, she enrolled at a University course in the country but also found a job as project manager at an Italian NGO that deals with Moroccan migration issues. Through her professional contacts, she generates several cultural remittances such as for instance a partnership between an Italian university and her NGO with the aim of organising cross-cultural exchange trips of Italian and Moroccans University students and professors. At the moment, she is also planning to open a school in her Moroccan hometown with her personal savings. Thus while Latika has managed to find a qualified job in Italy she further develops cultural remittances towards both the place of origin and the country of destination by taking advantage of the transcultural capital that she has accumulated: her good knowledge of both places and her networking in both.

In terms of intentionality of social remittances, Nadia notes on their pragmatic planning as her 'own migrant strategy'. She confesses missing her immediate family back home and living in Italy mostly for economic purposes: 'I am not satisfied with the conditions of moving back and forth because this affects my pension in Ukraine. But my work in Italy is the main possibility to give my daughters education and to make their life better.' In this profit-making transnational milieu, she is carefully planning her return and re-settlement to Ukraine once 'enough money has been accumulated'. Upon return, she would like 'to create a new cultural centre for the promotion of European culture back home'. For this, she needs to 'pave the platform' by regaining her once lost intellectual status. Her 'return platform' – or the cultural 'return-bridge' – also includes a creation, in the very near future, of a cultural centre in Italy for the promotion of Ukrainian culture. Thus her prospective book becomes an important link in the overall chain of the inter-connected social remittances she sends to both her country of origin and destination and also an important link in the chain of her social status passages – from the foreign domestic worker to the expat intellectual and finally to the future returning intellectual.

Compared with Nadia, Lyuba does not intend to leave Italy. She therefore sees her social remittances to the local Italian society – her dress-making salon - as a voucher for a fuller Italian integration: 'I feel that Italy is the country where I have settled permanently, and I really need this cultural space for myself and my personal growth here.' Resonating with Lyuba, Latika does not want to repatriate to her country of origin either. Yet through her social remittances, she seeks to make an effect wider than that on her own integration. Motivated primarily by her increasing nostalgia, she wants to be a cultural ambassador who can change society back home without leaving the country of destination. This is perhaps another understanding of successful integration:

I am extremely satisfied with my present conditions in Italy: I have a family and a job I really like. This helps me to grow and to develop a broad set of skills. I find it extremely motivating. This is something I want to bring back home. I feel I want to bring something back to Morocco because this is the country where I studied and first learned about the world. I have a particular professional experience now that I really want to bring back and get the best out of it for the country where my roots are.

*Civic Remittances*

Many "diaspora" theories pay a particular stress on the migrants' experience of civic participation (Tololyan 2007; Triandafyllidou 2009). In the light of global changes and liberalisation discourses, the sociological understanding of civic engagement has been recently changed toward the notions of social services and human ecology (Kaifeng & Bergrud 2008: 29). Civic engagement is now associated with a broad range of activities that convey people's "experienced understanding of and emotional meaning to the ideas and spheres of social life" such as community development or environmental protection (Levine 2011: 3). A number of recent studies particularly stress the idea of "*social* civic engagement", which encompasses a variety of non-political activities such as community building or poverty fighting (Binstock & George 2011; Weissberg 2005). Broadly speaking, civic participation is closely linked to human ecology because it aims to improve the human eco-system or the relationships between people and their environments from the angles of public health and hygiene and general wellbeing (ibid).

Such civic remittances thus may include activities that aim at reducing poverty levels and teaching local people new health care or hygiene habits. They are widespread among our Filipino and Indian informants. They may be based on rather generous economic transfers and monetary donations from the country of destination – yet not necessarily in all cases. Often migrant women just engage in voluntary activities of counselling and use their informally accumulated capital. The motivation underpinning such activities is mostly to achieve the social positioning of the hometown community protector (or homeland saviour) and/or restore the lost social positioning within the diasporic community.

Gloria, a Filipino woman of 61, has been actively involved in the Kalungan NGO in the UK, which promotes counselling for abused women and children among migrants, temporary shelter, gender sensitivity training, and training in healthy lifestyle skills and habits [e.g.: eating healthy foods, taking care of one's body, basic anger management skills, etc.]:

As a local coordinator of our network *J4DD/Justice for Domestic Workers*, I have helped other Filipinos – including domestic workers - who are overstressed, not eating properly, getting ill or being abused by their employers to adjust or to return when there is no alternative.

Gloria's co-national Stella (aged 66), who has been living in Madrid since the 1970s, monitors on a voluntary basis several educative and aid projects, teaching poor children back home religion as well as hygiene. She also supervises a school and a clinic for poor people and the purchasing of boats for Filipino fishers affected by typhoons. These activities have been made possible by financial transfers from her expanding enterprise in Spain, which she owns after the death of her husband. Stella is also involved in civic projects in Madrid where she teaches local women dressmaking- and furniture restoration skills – a professional activity that is based on the qualifications she has received both at origin and destination. Her social remittance portfolio is thus multi-faceted yet with a strong focus on civic engagement:

I cooperate with several education and aid projects. First, I teach poor children religion and hygiene. Second, I supervise different projects that I fund – such as school or clinic for poor people back home. I also accompany a German doctor whom I met many years ago to his conferences in Philippines and put him in touch with Filipino patients.

Stella confesses having initiated all her civic remittance projects in the aftermath of her husband's death several years ago – that is, under the influence of a very personal trauma – in order 'to keep [herself] busy and not to think about the loss'.

Other examples include Nodira, an Indian woman who lives in Spain, regularly travels to India and helps her relatives to run a number of community projects through their local temple. She supports the organization of and donates the money on the construction of schools and vaccination. While running a restaurant and a shop in India, she also brings Spanish cultural items to Indian customers, thus sustaining a complex financial and social activity in between the two countries.

Indira, is another Indian woman from the UK (age 52) who is a professional beautician trained both in India and in Britain. She runs her own beauty salon in London and often travels to back home to bring items for her business. During her travels, she propagates the European technique of eyebrow threading among local women, which is becoming more and more popular in her Indian hometown. She says: 'I really want to help my co-villagers back home – these women in the rural area – to become more successful consumers and, consequently, better feeling persons. Who else will help them?'

It is important to note on the *"hometown" effect* of such SOREMI. In migration studies, the "hometown" concept relates to a relatively small and geographically bounded community in the country of origin from which the migrant originates [e.g.: the migrants' village, native town or a particular wider region such as Punjab]. Since the civic social remittances of our informants involve rather complex investments and frequent transnational travels, they are more easily accomplished within the hometown framework: in fact, it is much easier to fight poverty and improve public health on the level of one's native town rather than nation-state. Levitt (2001a, 2001b) observes that many villages and small towns back home have been revitalized and redeveloped through such remittances.

In fact, the diasporic communities to which these women are affiliated are closely linked to their smaller communities back home. Therefore, there social status in their new places are directly dependent on their connections with their places of origin, producing the 'transnational village effect' or the situation when the migrant is surrounded by people who know people in her place of origin (Levitt 2001b). Through such charity activities directed back home, these women maintain both their statuses within diaspora and back home. For example, Gloria has worked as a domestic worker for many years in separation from her three children, who were shocked by the reality of her emigration after they had reunited with her:

> After many years of separation, my kids did not recognize me upon our reunification
> in the UK. They were also shocked that the mum lives in the employer's house. They
> had got the wrong idea in the Philippines that my life had been wonderful in the UK.

Thus in order to rehabilitate in the eyes of her own children and regain their respect, Gloria had to show that she was a meaningful person within her diasporic community – a person such as the 'community healer'. Another reason is a possibility of her eventual return to the country of origin for retirement. And for this, she would need to show how much she has achieved in emigration – she must show that she has been more than just a domestic worker: 'Filipino workers often don't feel like going back home because they feel they did not make it. They feel as if they had failed the

test. So now they want to give something back home before they return.' Gloria's story actually develops the idea of the 'return platform' – a situation when the migrant has to generate social remittances as part of her home-return plan. 'You cannot just come home "clean"', says Gloria: you must show that you are returning as a carrier of some specific professional skills or success image.

Gloria notes on helping diasporic co-nationals in-need as a widespread practice among Filipino domestic workers worldwide and particularly a key element of the London diasporic cultures: 'Identity-wise, I feel I am a Londoner – I have been Londonized I would say (without being really exposed to the British culture)'. Such civic social remittances have thus become an inseparable part of the diasporic Londoner identity.

There are herein interesting similarities and differences in these women's patterns of civic remittances. While in all cases accumulation of financial capital and a transnational business precedes and actually supports the civic transnational involvement, the remittances and the visits, three out of the four selected informants, Gloria, Stella and Nodira, engage into civic projects that are not necessarily related to their business. In other words, their philanthropic activity develops as a community obligation and as a personal ambition oriented towards others and themselves. They make the most of their transcultural human capital, the different habits and modes that they have learnt at destination and origin to promote what they see as good practices and to improve well being both materially but also through teaching of skills and improved habits for hygiene and health.

By contrast, Indira's civic activities have more to do with her professional skills and end up in the development of new consumer habits and in this sense of new business opportunities for her in both the origin and destination places Another example is Jenny (age 39), a professional dancer from India who now teaches dance in Austria. The circle of her students is becoming more and more international and she now disseminates her social remittances mostly for the global community.

While having his own hotel business in India for many years, her same-age co-national John came to Austria ten years ago as an entrepreneur. He transferred his Indian capital to open a shop in Austria specializing in Ayurveda products. He had chosen this business because of its potential for generating social remittances: John always wanted to do something for the European community. Through this business, he now generates social remittances to the host – European – society and aims to educate European people on the issues of their health and hygiene – 'to give them knowledge about their own health', as he himself says:

> My shop is now expanding as more and more Europeans from different countries are buying my products. I want not only to supply the Ayurveda products to my European customers but also to educate them on the appropriate consumption mode.

The social remittances of these highly skilled transnational migrants from India directly interact with their careers and economic investments into their careers. Their professional activities such as dance teaching or hotel business presuppose, from the very beginning, complex socio-cultural scripts with many opportunities for the social impact.

Another important form of civic remittances is solidarity towards newcomers and effective assistance whether for socio-economic integration at destination (finding a better job, finding accommodation, dealing with bureaucracy) or repatriation at home (finding contacts at home, preparing their return). In many cases, provided assistance to co-nationals comes in the form of 'moral support', accompanied with networking in view of either settlement at destination or return at origin. Adelardo, a 50 year old Filipino who lives in the UK notes:

I help others to return or to engage in similar back-and-forth [transnational work] activities. There are many people who came to the UK at the age of twenty-two on student visas. They were promised work security but instead had to do manual jobs. They are constantly abused by their employers and recruitment agencies. Some of them have lived in the UK for years and reached the age 54. They may now want to go home. I help them through my NGO. I am involved in activism for fighting for migrants' rights.

Adelardo perceives this activity as his duty to his co-national community. He is enabled to help them because of his good level of social and economic integration in the UK. He puts to the service of fellow nationals his human and social capital and thus generates inter-personal civic remittances. The social remittances sent by Adelardo are more inter-subjective in nature because they are disseminated within his immigrant ethos and the recipients are people who share his transnational social space. He is actually living among those to whom he gives his social remittances while, although collective, the civic remittances by Stella, Indira and Nodira are mostly for people outside of their everyday social space.

While in most cases, these cultural and civic projects could have been implemented by proxy (Ambrosini 2012; Bagwell 2014), notably by relatives (the importance of whom Nodira points out) or community associations back home, our informants care to travel and be personally involved in the projects by their own activities of supervision or networking or indeed personal transfer of the money necessary for these activities (Baldassar 2001; Carling 2008; Sagmo 2015). This may be important in order to gain control over the process of social remittances reception and distribution, especially when it involves donations and their negotiation with stakeholders in the country of origin:

> *Latika:* I need to go to Morocco in order to assess the territory for donations [e.g.: the qualification level, exchange of practices, etc.] and the flow of the money. I also go there in order to meet new people for sending donations. In other words, I have to move a lot around the country. Through my NGO, I send many public good to Morocco – for example, public buses, which are now used to transport students who live in the desert to schools. I also send books and computers to Moroccan public schools. I send these items to NGOs, schools and people I come to know during my trips to Morocco.

Apart from that, travels back home may become an inseparable part of the remitting act itself – for example, when it involves the cross-cultural exchange/trip script and the migrant's role as the conduit/translator of local culture:

> *Latika:* In 2012, I went to Morocco with a group of Italian schoolteachers. I organized a trip around Morocco to show them some parts of the country that you would not normally see as a tourist. I showed them my family house and many other private places. Who else could do that better than me?

However, the transnational travel of the migrant back home can be disrupted by the traumatic nature of his/her hometown ethos. This can lead to the disruption of the social remittance itself if its transcript presupposes the physical presence of the sender such as in the case of tutoring in new skills. The case of herein *broken social remittances* becomes especially acute for Bosnians of the older generation who settled in Austria as the 1990's refugees. For example, Ismar (age 58) – a trained geo-mining engineer who now lives in Austria - admits that he has recently denied a

prestigious job offer to work as director of mines back in his hometown of Prijedor [which would enable him to disseminate social remittances such as new entrepreneurial and managerial skills] only because his family members were executed there during the war. An unfinished politics of reconciliation may, in fact, disrupt a social remittance script because the migrant himself may be faced with an extremely difficult moral choice. He may find it very challenging to regularly visit the place of his origin that bears traces and provokes memories of war atrocities; or just imagine local people (half of whom were the perpetrators) as the beneficiaries of his/her remittances. Ismar confesses:

> The most tragic for me is to see the perpetrators walking in the street and drinking coffee in the same shops. When going back to my native town, it is the worst experience to realise that the International Criminal Court was just a fake and that those who killed thousands of innocent people got only fifteen years of prison.

### *Political remittances*

Searching for empowerment, migrants often engage in **political transnationalism**, which creates rich remittance scripts. Immigrant political transnationalism covers any political activity undertaken by migrants and relates to such dimensions of citizenship as being a public activist and being a good citizen (Martiniello & Lafleur 2008: 655). Political transnationalism and related political remittances are especially important for migrants who come from countries affected by reconciliation politics (such as Bosnia)[1] or currently at war (such as Ukraine).[2]

Political remittances generated by our informants involve such activities and scripts of political transnationalism as protests to recognize the Bosnian genocide, military propaganda of the Maidan army in Ukraine, development of certain projects to protect co-nationals' rights. These activities may have different degrees of intensity and may actually intersect with civic remittances. For example, Drago, a Bosnian man in his late twenties, lives in Austria and attends a lot of protests regarding the rights of gay people and genocide memory. Contributing to the public understanding of these two themes (rights of gay people and genocide recognition) is important for Drago in both personal and professional terms. Participation in such protests and related public debates back home reconnects him with his "lost" Bosnian homeland and shapes his social re-positioning as the 'public intellectual who is always at the bend of the river' (Said 1996: 94) – *the public Bosnian intellectual in Vienna*. This is how he sees himself through such remittances. He does not identify himself as an exile intellectual but as a Bosnian intellectual based in Vienna. He explains that Vienna has become an anchorage for many former Yugoslav people: 'For us, Vienna sort of became the 8th Yugoslav city or the 8th Yugoslav republic. We come here to spend out whole lives and to die'. To legitimize the affiliation with the 'complex spatial architecture' of his new home of Vienna, Drago keeps participating in political activism and disseminating social remittances.

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[1] The fall of the Berlin Wall had led to tensions between Federalist (Serbs) and Separatist branches in the government of the former Yugoslavia. As a result, a civil war took place in Bosnia (1992-1995) between the pro-devolution Bosnian-Croat alliance and the Serbs. The Serb armed forces carried on a number of genocidal activities- abusing, massacring and displacing thousands of Bosnians and Croats. According to the International Criminal Tribunal, by 1999 1 million Bosnians had been displaced from their homes. The atrocities were especially severe in the city of Prijedor (part of Serbia), where most people were displaced and only 40% returned. For more information, see Kahanec and Yuksel (2010) and Kelly (2003).

[2] For the ontology and dynamics of the 2014 Russian-Ukrainian conflict, see: http://www.summer.harvard.edu/blog-news-events/conflict-ukraine-historical-perspective.

Involvement with gay issues in Bosnia is a key element of his career of the social anthropologist. Trained as a psychologist and anthropologist back home in Bosnia, Drago eventually came to Austria as a PhD fellow in social anthropology: 'My family still lives in Bosnia and the focus of my PhD work is Bosnia and its civil society. I do this longitudinal anthropological fieldwork there and keep returning to various Bosnian locations in order to see what is happening with my study subjects [gay people and victims of genocide] and how their lives change over time.' Apart from his professionalism, this interest in improving the rights of gay people has been contributed by Drago's acute sensitivity to the genocide memory and the politics of reconciliation because his hometown and parents became victims of the genocide in the 1990s:

> I attend a lot of protests in relation to genocide issues in Bosnia and war crimes. In this sense, I am very politically active. I do this mainly for personal reasons and invest a lot in this - both time and empathy. The last time I drove six hours to get to a protest in a small town in Bosnia, which was much more important for me than voting. It was about genocide in a town that was next to my hometown, and it was important for me to be there and to talk to people about our past.

Our Ukrainian informants also have developed important political remittances as the war in Ukraine with Russia has erupted. Andrei worked for a US company in Ukraine and decided to study for an MBA in the UK. While he entered the UK as a student he put together his father's savings and a student loan to start a legal consultancy and stay on after graduation. Since the beginning of the Russian-Ukrainian war, he and his friends set up a civic group in London, fundraising money for Maidan (for the Ukrainian army). He also sends most of his earnings to Ukraine to support the army.

In a similar vein, Ivan, aged 28, used to work for an agricultural firm in Ukraine and came to develop their business in London. He settled in the UK as a transnational company employee. He got involved in activism since the break out of the war in Ukraine. He also sends his own savings as well as funds raised through other co nationals to Ukraine for the purchase of weapons and medical equipment for the Ukrainian army. Both Ivan and Andrei (as well many other Ukrainian informants) admit through their political activism, they socially re-position themselves as Ukrainian expat patriots – as Ukrainian patriots who want to add value to their homeland without physically returning, however. Their political social remittances have become a key philanthropic instrument of donating from the distance:

> Ivan: I am Ukrainian and will always be (although I do not want to return). I have very strong patriotic feelings, especially now during the war. I want to add something valuable to my homeland – something that it needs right now (without returning physically because I am not fit to live there).

> Andrei: My sense of belonging has increased over the last year. That is why after the war had started, we set up an activity group, collecting money and financing the medical help for the Maidan fighters.

In fact, this has become a new pattern of political remittances triggered by the war in Ukraine: young highly skilled people who were previously not particularly involved with their country of origin have discovered in themselves a new sense of nationalism and patriotic duty. They have thus mobilised politically both to send money and goods for the army but also to raise awareness at

destination about what is happening at home and also support the patriotic movement in Ukraine itself without, however, being physically present there.

## 3. Concluding Remarks

Scholarship has been recently marked by an epistemological shift of attention away from push and pull factors taking as separate and independent from one another, to a networked understanding of migration as a flow of people, motivated by a multiplicity of factors and embedded in a network of social relations and institutions (civil society, international organizations, alongside state authorities are important actors) (Faist 2000, 2010; Snel et al. 2006). Migration cannot be understood by simply looking at the country of origin or at the country of destination and at the differences between them. Attention must be attributed to the context and the liminal spaces between the "origin" and "destination". We consider this type of transnational mobility as a *multiplier* of the effect of financial and social remittances as well as a special type of intensive transnationalism, signalling a person that lives in this transnational space created by both the place of origin and the place of settlement. Within this transnational space, migrants continuously generate social remittance – ideas, practices and norms – to both their countries of origin and destination.

Our research recognises social remittances of three basic types: cultural social remittances, civic social remittance and political social remittances. These social remittances may be triggered by personal and social factors, including: an inner need for social repositioning making it up for downwards mobility through migration, a feeling of obligation towards the community, a newly discovered patriotism or solidarity triggered by traumatic events such as natural disasters or war. Although sometimes generated unconsciously, social remittances inevitably impact on the migrant's positioning both at destination and origin. Through their social remittance, the migrant may regain her lost status of the high-skill professional, restore her communal prestige or enrich her professionalism.

Locally textured social remittances are often generated through global channels and involve complex flows of cultural and financial capital. The migrant has to leave her country of origin in order to produce social remittances. This is the case with the under-scaled domestic workers from Ukraine or Philippines as well as economically well integrated transnational academics and businessmen from India, who were very inactive social remitters while based in their countries of origin. Only after they had established themselves professionally or socially in the country of destination (through its formal or hidden economy), they started to generate social remittances, which is perhaps another manifestation of how globalization works through transnationalism.

Transnational mobility is important for migrants in order to appropriately generate their social remittances. Transnational travels allow migrants to have a better control over the distribution of their social remittances back home and to expand a network of recipients. For certain kinds of cultural remittances, such travels may even become the main element of the overall remittance scenario. In this connection, it is important to note that in spite of globalization, social remittances often depend on the hometown ethos in the country of origin, which may be either supportive or disruptive of the remittance script. This is illuminated by the Bosnian case and this is perhaps where globalization fails.

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