Romanian Transnational Families Gender, Family Practices and Difference

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Gender, Family Practices and Difference

Viorela Ducu

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Viorela Ducu
Centre for Population Studies
Babeș-Bolyai University
Cluj-Napoca, Romania

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fviorela@yahoo.com

For Lőrinc, my son

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Overview: Studying the Practices of Transnational Families

Abstract In this short introduction, we review the key theoretical concepts on which the book is based: transnationalism, gender in migration, transnational families and family practices. In the book overview contained therein, we explain the concept of temporary transnational suspension, which defines the existence of most of our respondents.

Keywords Transnationalism • Gender in migration • Transnational families • Family practices • Temporary transnational suspension

Theoretical Context

The concept of *transnationalism* (Basch et al. 1994; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Glick Schiller and Fouron 1998; Glick Schiller 1999; Portes et al. 1999) has brought about new ways of understanding persons living outside their national states. Since its introduction in the literature, the concept has been refined and developed (Portes 2001; Levitt and Waters 2002; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Portes et al. 2007; Vertovec 2009), thus making it possible to conceive the notion of living in multiple worlds. The special merit of the new perspectives has been understanding mobility outside borders, not as *departure*, a one-directional movement toward the host country with integration there as a goal, but rather as a permanent relation to both the point of departure and that of destination, with an effect in both directions. Hence, we can speak

of a strong influence of those who have departed on those who have stayed, the latter being involved in transnational existence, even while staying within national borders.

At the macro level, the sociopolitical interconnectedness of countries, geopolitical transnational relations and so on have allowed the development of transnational existence, which can be felt at the level of the individual, whether *a leaver* or *a stayer*. A defining role in the development of transnational existence, wherein a constantly increasing number of persons is involved, is played by the advancement of information and communications technology (ICT), which allows for permanent virtual interaction, as well as the development of transportation infrastructure and services, especially the emergence of the concept of low-cost air transport companies, enabling a growing number of people to be physically interconnected to an increasing degree at an expanding frequency and over greater distances.

Another defining moment of research has been the involvement of *women* as a subject within the study of migration (Petraza-Bailey 1991; Morokvasik 1984; Sassen 2000; Hondagneu-Sotelo 2000; Parreñas 2001; Pessar and Mahler 2003; Morokvasik 2004, 2007; Tolstokorova 2008), as well as the awareness that they are also an active element in the global population movement, not just as a passive constituency, but also in many cases as the main agents of migration, as opposed to simply being the companions of men. This phenomenon has developed alongside the concept of *transnational motherhood* (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila 1997), since these women *on the move* are also very often mothers of children who are left at home. The immediate next step was that of defining *transnational families* (Herrera Lima 2001; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002), that is, those families whose members, although living in different countries, manage to sustain family relations across borders. This was the moment when research on various aspects of transnational families started to proliferate. Although other approaches appeared as well in various countries, studies have been mostly centered on transnational motherhood (Parreñas 2001; Erel 2002; Ryan 2007; Fresnoza-Flot 2009; Madianou and Miller 2011; Ducu 2013), which implies children who are left behind (Parreñas 2005; Dreby 2007), and transnational parenting (Dreby 2006; Moran-Taylor 2008), as well as the relationship between adult children and elderly parents (Baldassar et al. 2007), and, to a lesser degree, the role of fathers within these transnational families (Pribilsky 2004; Tolstokorova 2016; Palenga-Möllenbeck and Lutz 2016) and children who migrate (Orellana et al. 2001; Mazzucato and Schans 2011).

As Sørensen and Vammen have underlined in a meta-analysis of studies on transnational families published in 2014, the general tendency of research was to think in terms of opposing binaries, such as women versus men, adults versus children, stayers versus leavers and staying connected or breaking relations, with a special emphasis on departed adults with an active role, while the elderly and children are viewed as stay-behind dependent persons. The recommendations of this study are to bring the elderly and children to the fore in research on these transnational families, analyzing their role within these families beyond being receivers of transnational support, as well as sometimes being the agents of movement themselves. Moreover, the current tendency is to look upon these families, not in terms of a binary opposition, but as families living in a permanent state of copresence.

We emphasize that most of the research on transnational families have been carried out through the prism of the concept of care (Raijman et al. 2003; Piperno 2007; Bernhard et al. 2009) and the care chain (Hochschild 2000; Basa et al. 2011) by focusing on the chain relations of the transfer of care within the binary logic when those who stay behind take over the responsibility of care from those who depart, with the latter taking over from the beneficiaries in the host country. This leads to the concept of the circulation of care (Baldassar and Merla 2013), which stipulates a corelation of care between leavers and stayers. The main actors of the families described through the dimension of care are women, which explains why using a gendered approach in migration studies is appropriate (Sherif Trask 2010; Fouron and Glick Schiller 2001; Kofman et al. 2011; Schmalzbauer 2011; Geisen and Parreñas 2013; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014; Schneebaum et al. 2015; Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki 2017; Ala-Mantila and Fleischmann 2017; Marchetti and Salih 2017), not only from the perspective of women's empowerment, but also from that of the relations between women and men within these types of family.

Family Practices and Transnational Families

When these families begin to be understood from the perspective of members' copresence, with the distances between them curtailed by permanent transnational relations, the best analytic approach when considering them involves the notion of *doing family*, as developed and refined by David Morgan (2011a, b). The copresence of these family members is permanently enabled in a virtual world through ICT (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016)

and in the real world through mutual visits among family members (Morgan 2011a). The practices that these members employ for the purpose of doing family define what they are; they are not there as simple facts that appear within these families. Transnational families, as with many other types of family that find themselves questioned, such as lone-parent families or lesbian and gay families (Almack 2008), make a greater effort in terms of doing family (Kilkey and Palenga-Möllenbeck 2016), while, at the same time, having a heightened motivation toward displaying family (Finch 2007; Ducu 2014).

Overview of the Book

This book has members of (at least partly) Romanian transnational families as primary subjects, with a special interest in couples as a central component. Within transnational family research generally, couples enjoy a highly rare presence as the focus of analysis, due to the binary logic that we are used to in this field: When we encounter a couple where both partners live in the same country, especially if their children are with them, rather than a couple with the partners living in separate countries, in order to be classifiable as a transnational couple, the tendency is to remove this couple from the transnational framework and start thinking of their integration in the host country. But couples, even if the partners live together in a target country along with their children, are still inscribed in their extended families, with which they often maintain transnational relations; even if they are binational couples (Gaspar 2010, 2012; Sowa-Behtane 2010; Brahic 2013; Ducu and Hossu 2016; Fresnoza-Flot 2017), that is, couples comprising a Romanian citizen and a citizen of another European Union (EU) (in the narrowest sense) country, they live in such transnational relations with their extended families.

Moreover, a large segment of these couples are living in a state of temporary transnational suspension: they do not have the slightest intention of definitively settling in the host country, but live there for an undetermined period of time (i.e., temporarily), and are therefore transnationally connected to their home countries, not only for the purpose of doing family with members of their extended families, but also to maintain a constant readiness for a probable return. Thus, their way of living in relation to the community in the destination country is as autonomous as possible, in the sense of not cultivating a large number of attachments or roots, while trying to get as much as possible out of the mobility situation

(money and/or pleasure) without getting too deeply involved (hence, suspension). Analyzing transnational families from the perspective of couple relationships as well, the way in which gender relations are articulated in these families becomes more visible. This approach links distinct phenomena, which have been studied in different fields, such as transnational family studies (Schmalzbauer 2004, 2005, 2008; Zontini 2004, 2010; Skrbiš 2008) on the one hand and family migration studies (Kofman 2004; Bailey and Boyle 2004; Kilkey 2017) on the other.

After a very short review of the methodological approaches, the book has a threefold structure. The first part offers a comparison of two living strategies outlined by accommodation type: the strategy of stealthy living among the "low-skilled" population in London, on the one hand, and the strategy of living lavishly among the "high-skilled" population in Mons, on the other. The second part focuses on the transnational relations of these families from both directions, that is, departed and staying, with an emphasis on less-studied aspects: gender roles in transnational communication, recreational visits of the elderly abroad, relationships between family members who are spread out over several countries and the transnational formation of couples. The third part of the book presents various situations that the children of these families encounter, especially since many of them (in contrast with their parents, who can afford to live in a state of temporary transnational suspension) are less autonomous in what concerns the destination country: integration into an educational system imposes upon them an expectation to settle in the destination community, to which they become more attached, even if their parents try to prepare them for their "community of origin" in view of a probable return.

Each part contains a specific theoretical introduction and, although each is centered on the concepts of gender and family practices and involves members from (partly) Romanian transnational families as subjects, it can be read and understood as a distinct chapter, with its own individual unity.

Final Remark

Through the novelty of topics chosen to be presented in this book, we first wish to offer different perspectives on Romanian transnational families, since most studies have thus far focused on the situation of the children left behind. This book brings "new actors" (Telegdi-Csetri and Ducu 2016) from these transnational families to the forefront: high-skilled

family members, and children and the elderly as active agents of these families. At the same time, this book reveals some of the living practices of these families, which have been seldom presented, from certain strategies of displaying families to special aspects of transnational relations (where we must stress the role that ICT plays in forming couples), from the way in which families maintain relations when their members are located in various countries to decisions that concern raising children who are caught up in the temporary transnational suspension of adults.

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Methodological Challenges in Transnational Family Research

Abstract Here we briefly present the research methodology, the results of which are the basis of this book, underlining the challenges of two groups of data collection and recording methods: video and online interviews, on the one hand, and interviews with couples, on the other.

Keywords Multisite research • Video/online recording • Couple interviews

Introduction

In this short methodological chapter, we describe the research methodology for the project, the results of which are the basis of this book. We shall briefly present two special aspects of our research: the intersection between audio and video data in a sociological research and the role that couple interviews can play in a research plan.

Our Multisite Research

For this book, we have analyzed data obtained as part of a larger research project conducted in the period October 2015 to November 2017, with a team of eight members, on the subject of Romanian transnational families. On this project, we have managed to obtain perspectives from rural areas in three different parts of the country, namely Moldavia, Transylvania and

Oltenia (Dorna Arini, Prundul Bârgăului and Jidoștița), which gave us the chance to explore different ways in which transnational families are configured. We have also collected data from cities by conducting interviews in Drobeta Turnu Severin, Brașov, Cluj Napoca and Turda. While not searching for such findings, our experience during the first two research fields abroad suggested a new, important distinction in grasping the possible differences in transnational families living abroad: the research participants from the UK (London) as a group were from the category of low- skilled workers and the ones in Belgium (Mons, a small city with a rural area around it, but within a network that links it with Brussels) were highly skilled. This distinction is particularly useful because it also offers new perspectives in analyzing the relations within transnational families and opens up new lines of research. Through the interviews that we have done in Romania, we have discovered the theme of a double citizenship on ethnic grounds, as well as developed two fields that should allow a deeper understanding of the issue in the Republic of Moldavia (Chisinau and the nearby rural area) and Hungary (Debrecen). The interviews were recorded using audio and (partially) video equipment. The virtual fieldwork, involving interviews via Skype and Facebook video calls, reached various destinations in Europe, North America and even Africa. The audio/video online recordings were made using the Pamela software. We have recorded individual interviews as well as couples' interviews in the field and online. A total of 176 participants answered questions from the team throughout the research period. The analysis of the data has been done using alternative coding by four members of the team; each interview protocol was coded in parallel by two members who negotiated the themes to ensure correct data validation.

Video Recording in Person and Online

On our project, visual (live and online) data of all the interviews were transcribed (Bailey 2008) in accordance with the audio track, followed by coding and thematical analysis together with the pure audio data. This enabled us to select interview segments on relevant themes, before we searched for a video illustration of the themes. Claudia Mitchell (2011) developed the concept of a video composite (a video product, which is the sum of the thematic visual data (film/photo) production), which our team applied in their analysis and their general use of visual data (photos, video recordings in the field and video recordings of online interviews), the

concept being a theoretical and methodological tool which was critical to the visual documentation of our project. The ten video composites made during the project have been presented at different scientific and cultural events to visually illustrate our results. We have chosen this method of thematic illustration with the very aim of responding to challenges raised by the analysis of video recording (Garcez et al. 2011).

Given that previous research had proposed the online unfolding of interviews (through Skype) as an appropriate medium for this type of data collection (Sullivan 2012; Janghorban et al. 2014; Deakin and Wakefield 2014; Lo Iacono et al. 2016), we have also proposed to use this online communication channel with participants in the virtual field research on our project. To our surprise, participants preferred Facebook's video chat tool as an online interviewing platform, instead of Skype, since it was also the video communication tool they used with many of their transnational family members. During the virtual fieldwork, we have suffered a higher number of rescheduled appointments for interviews than in the live fields. Conversely, once begun, online interviews lasted longer than live ones on average. One explanation for this phenomenon may be that online communication means less intrusion into the interlocutor's personal space—both the participant and the researcher were in their comfort zone—and that rescheduling made it possible for both parties to find the ideal moment for interaction. We have noted that this online component in carrying out interviews with transnational family members is highly accessible for them, given that they are used to online communication with members of their extended families.

Couple Interviews

Taken from the field of population health research, couple interviews have recently been conceptualized as a valid method of data collection (Hertz 1995; Seale et al. 2008; Taylor and de Vocht 2011; Mellor et al. 2013; Morgan et al. 2013; Bjørnholt and Farstad 2014; Polak and Green 2015; Norlyk et al. 2016). By using this method of data collection, we managed to foreground the men's presence more in our research; it also made it significantly richer than it would have been if using simple interviews with one member of the family. Furthermore, there were situations when the interviews developed in an unexpected way: members of the couples asked each other questions that were revealing and new, even for the researcher; or, that, during a couple interview, a partner found out about different

aspects of the other partner's life, which were previously unknown to them, thus the researcher received a new impression of the couple (for a more detailed discussion on couple interviews, see Ducu 2017). The purpose of using this method was to move away from the individual as a subject of research to couples as a research unity and to understand the role of couples in extended transnational families, since, until not long ago, research on transnational families was limited to the transnationalism of the nuclear family (mother/father or both departed, with their children left at home) or on the relationship between the departed adult and the stay-behind elderly, again in the context of the nuclear family (i.e., adult child, elderly parents).

Besides the fact that it has brought us additional data compared with individual interviews, using this way of interviewing has also given us results that we probably could not have had access to through individual interviews: one example could be the gender roles in transnational communication (see Chap. 4). Questioning couples, whether abroad or at home, on how they communicate with members of their extended transnational family, we noticed that there were patterns in communication depending on gender, which we went on to elaborate during the later stages of research.

Final Remark

In this book, data obtained from 62 participants (35 women and 27 men) have been used. We stated that using couple interviews resulted in a greater presence of male voices (which are underrepresented in transnational family research). Moreover, through the diversity of research fields, we have managed to obtain multiple versions in this book, thereby enriching our data. Thus, it became possible to perform a parallel analysis of two lodging types correlated with professional activity levels (low-skilled vs. high-skilled) in two foreign locations (in the UK and Belgium) (Chap. 3). Transnational relationships between the members of these families are presented both from the perspective of those departed and of those at home (Chap. 4). Broadening data collection methods (i.e., through the additional online interviewing method), we have managed to surpass the physical boundaries of testimonies offered by those living abroad in the locations where our research has unfolded, as well as obtain additional data. This import has been especially clear in the testimonies of parents on children, which addressed various aspects of the respective issue (within the EU, outside the EU and in Romania) (Chap. 5).

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Two Perspectives on Family Life Through the Lens of Lodging Type

Abstract This is a comparative study of two types of lodging in the transnational suspension of couples with a Romanian partner, pertaining to two distinct job categories: "low-skilled" (London, UK) and "high-skilled" (Mons, Belgium). In the course of the chapter, the difference between two strategies of living is construed, namely stealthy living and living lavishly, which underlines the impact of these strategies on transnational family members.

Keywords Low-skilled • High-skilled • Stealthy living • Living lavishly

Introduction

This chapter will analyze the *ways of living* involving Romanian "migrants," starting from the perspective of the worker category they belong to: "high-skilled" or "low-skilled." Without having these exact categories in mind, we nonetheless encountered them as such in the course of our field research in 2016, when our team members were conducting interviews with "low-skilled" migrants in London, UK, and "high-skilled" migrants in the Mons municipality of Belgium. These migrant worker categories have coalesced around our network, starting with the contact persons from the two locations. The two key migrants, both women, whom we met through our London participants, were a receptionist at a beauty salon and a housekeeper. Our hosts in Mons, who were our network heads

as well, were working as civilian employees at the Mons North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) base; hence, the network around them was made up of employees and contractors from this base.

For the sake of this analysis, we have selected five couples living in two houses in London and six couples living in high-end lodgings/luxury residences in Mons. All the selected participants were renting their lodgings at the time of the interview. The chapter is structured thus: after the introduction of the theoretical framework, we present the two lodging types (London and Mons), followed by conclusions.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

When researching people from Romania who choose to live in Western Europe, the best analytic filter to use seems to be that of labor migrants—"high-skilled" or "low-skilled." This is because we consider the goal of these migrants to be that of working in the target country for a set amount of time in order to save up money and then to return to Romania, or eventually choosing to settle in the target country and entering the category of emigrants. The main element in *initial migration* is the workplace.

However, in order to understand the mobility of people from Romania toward Western Europe and the rest of the world, we need to surpass these categories, even if, for a large segment of the population located abroad at a certain moment, they retain their explanatory capacity and seek further theoretical concepts. In order to analyze the participants in this study, we needed to try other interpretive filters as well, ones that could encompass the way of living in which these persons lived in a *temporarily* suspended state in a transnational space without permanent anchorage in any one country: officially, they are Romanian citizens, who do not intend to definitively integrate in the host country, nor do they nurture return projects; thus, they are always juggling between being citizens of one country and living in another or several countries, mixing social and judicial rights and obligations between these countries.

Our subjects are couples who either left Romania together or came together while one or both partners was/were abroad.

If, for some of members of these couples, at a certain moment the motive to migrate was to work abroad—except the partners in one particular couple (Sanda and Ovidiu)—this decision did not come about as a result of not finding work at home, which met their qualification level, but rather as a result of wanting a "better life" (Benson 2011). We can hardly

view Sanda and Ovidiu through the prism of temporary migration for work, since their wish, in the future, when they decide that they have had enough of the UK, is "to move to some country where the climate is better" (Sanda). Rather, in order to understand them, we need to refer to the concept of *lifestyle mobility*, which means "to move on, rather than move back" (Cohen et al. 2015). The other three couples in London—with the exception of the aforementioned Sanda and Ovidiu, as well as Rodica and Levi, who had a professional and material life in Romania in direct proportion to their qualification level, but wanted more, both in financial terms and in terms of living—had not even started their professional life project in Romania, but moved abroad when they were very young. Besides this, out of the participating five couples in London, Rodica and Levi were the only ones who would eventually consider coming home to Romania. Concerning their occupation, except for the women (Maria, Rodica and Sanda), who had jobs inferior to their professional status or what they used to do in Romania previously, the other migrants in London, although low-skilled—meaning they had jobs that did not require specific professional training—were not below their level of qualification or below what they could have had as a job in their country of origin.

Concerning our participants in Mons, although up to a point we could use the category of high-skilled migrants, we were limited by the specificity in terms of conceptual content, as in the case of low-skilled migrants. True, a large majority of the participants in Mons transferred skills across national borders (Ryan and Mulholland 2014), but we could better analyze them through the prism of the "capability approach," which surpasses the "standard" economic view of highly skilled migration (Cencei 2015), given that all participants in Mons (including those who do not work abroad at present) had enjoyed a professional and social life of a high standard. The women also belonged to these privileged categories in Romania (Laura, Dana and Atena) and proved to be worthy of high positions abroad, highlighting the results of other studies that show the rise in the numbers of high-skilled women in the context of migration (Docquier et al. 2009). The three women who either did not work at all (Mariana and Elena) or did so at the level they used to work in Romania (Krisztina) had not decided to do this out of a lack of opportunity, but in order to pay more attention to raising their children; hence, they "regard themselves as active players in family migratory strategies" (Ryan and Mulholland 2014, p. 597). Their decision to move was only partly connected to financial opportunity, while they regarded the time spent in Mons "as a prolonged

vacation" (Mariana), especially since the majority of jobs or contracts with the NATO base were for a set period and extended periodically, just as in the case of other high-skilled migrants (Ryan and Mulholland 2014). Besides, the opportunity to make trips and simply live in the West—as a new life experience—had been the leitmotif concerning decisions to move to Mons among our participants.

This kind of temporary habitation, which hardly, if at all, emphasizes the economic aspect, is rather a life project, which up to a point resembles other categories: Eurostars or free movers (Favell 2013) and lifestyle migrants (Benson and O'Reilly 2009; Benson 2010; Casado-Diaz 2010). That said, these concepts have somehow only been associated with Western citizens, who move to another country; hence, they are difficult to associate with Romanians. These concepts are difficult to delineate and operationalize in such a way as to provide them with a consistent explanatory power, while demarcation lines between categories are sometimes hard to draw, as in the case of lifestyle migration versus labor migration, when talking about the impact of the economic crisis upon one or another category (Huete et al. 2013). If the first category, that of free movers, is somehow associated with the desire to excel professionally, the second, lifestyle migration, is rather associated with a break from professional life, although none is so strictly delineated, while, in numerous studies on lifestyle migration, it has been shown how they supplement their income through locally developed businesses. Another concept grasping this temporality—the one that is closest to the experience of our participants—is that of liquid migrants (Engbersen 2012; Engbersen and Snel 2013); however, we shall notice that although we encounter postponement of childbearing in two situations in London (the couples of Rodica and Levi as well as Sanda and Ovidiu), children are still present in many cases, and the responsibility to the extended family is maintained—as research on other migrants has also shown (Bygnes and Bivand Erdal 2017). Indeed, with the exception of Sanda and Ovidiu, whose future plans include open options, the plans of all the others remain suspended between returning to Romania and staying in the destination country.

A much more explicative approach for understanding the various life strategies that people employ under the influence of migration is the analysis of its impact upon the type of lodging. From staying in the house of the person one is attending to, as in the case of many migrant domestic care providers, or from residing with several other persons in a single room, as in the case of many workers engaged in temporary low-skilled

labor migration, to spending long periods in luxury hotels, as in the case of many people from the high-skilled category, represent life situations that provide additional explanatory information to life narratives. Belonging to a transnational family even influences the way of lodging in the country of origin, along with an impact on the way in which families are organized. We are dealing with an example of the reorganization of gender roles through increased involvement from women at home (Pauli 2008) or from those involved in migration (Iacob Larionescu 2016) in both the design of a home and the construction process.

In this chapter, we shall present two life strategies directly linked to the way in which couples, who are in a certain sequence in their mobile transnational life, are lodged. Lodging strategies contain a set of concentrated family practices (Morgan 2011), such as investing money and time in lodging space and interior design, to be shown to guests from the community or to relatives, in order to demonstrate being together, or, in other words, a set of practices linked to lodging, such that these couples can present themselves as couples in front of an audience formed from the community and their families (Finch 2007, 2011). The first set builds the strategy of stealthy living for the couples in London, who, through the decisions linked to their mode of lodging, minimize their exposure as a family toward the community they live in, but also toward the members of their extended transnational family. On the other hand, we find the strategy of living lavishly among the couples in Mons, who, through their expansive and somewhat opulent mode of lodging, are situated in a position of superiority compared to the community they live in, and involve members of their transnational family in their way of life to a very high degree.

A Strategy of Stealthy Living

London

At the very beginning of the arrangements for the London fieldwork, when trying to create a network, we were surprised by the following phrase coming from our local Romanian contact: "It is a ghetto and Romanians live there. We live somewhere else." This was in reference to the neighborhood of a friend's home, where the research team had just declared they would stay. Actually, the friend was Irish, highly skilled and living in an expensive and especially central area. We continued receiving this type of localization from other Romanians in ghettos through our

fieldwork there. It is very interesting that the snowball method did not work out in London. Each time we found a thread involving Romanians who shared lodging, the thread would break. Our Romanians were friends with all kinds of other migrants, with an openness to postnational relationships (Kennedy 2010), but declared that they did not know other Romanians, since they were "living elsewhere, in a ghetto." To be frank, the interviews that were conducted in the houses in London where Romanians lived took place on the peripheries, far away from the center. Another series of interviews took place in public places, under the pretext that we should meet halfway, although we felt that the participants did not want to show us their places. Even the two houses mentioned so far were in two peripheral areas. None of the five couples had personal cars; rather, they were mainly using the famous red London buses, which are cheaper than the Underground.

House 1—three bedrooms, two bathrooms, one kitchen and one small living room. The third bedroom has been split from a former large living area. A small courtyard.

Inhabitants—three childless couples:

Sanda, a receptionist at a beauty salon, and **Ovidiu**, a hired laborer at a small manufacturing workshop. They are about 35 years of age and do not want to have children, since they are unsure about their future following the upcoming (at the time of the fieldwork, potential) Brexit. They could stay in England or move to another country; returning home to Romania was not an option. They used to live in a large city back in Romania.

Rodica, a nanny at a kindergarten, who used to be a kindergarten teacher back home, and **Levi**, a construction worker. They are both about 40 and without children. They are minded that, if they return home in the next few years, they will perhaps have children. Back in Romania, they used to live in a middle-sized town.

Maria, a salesperson, and **András**, an electrician; they are aged 23 and 25, respectively. They married two years ago and are going to move into a house outside London by themselves, which they bought with help from András' parents since they want children. They used to live in a large city in Romania and were schoolmates. András moved to London aged 14 with his parents.

The house in which the three couples live was rented and managed by András before marrying Maria. He modified the living room and subrented it to the other two couples. Now that he is moving out, Levi is taking over its management. He needs to find a tenant for the free room, establish new house rules and maintain contact with the owner. The present house rules are (1) the landline is to be used by András and Maria only; (2) only András and Maria may have pets (namely, a dog); and (3) no one may have overnight guests. If someone wants to be visited by family members for a few days, they need to rent another place for them for that amount of time.

House 2—two bedrooms, two bathrooms, one large living room, one kitchen and a small courtyard.

The official inhabitants were two lone mothers, who were staying there with their children (they were not married to the respective fathers, who remained their partners). Unofficially though, their partners were staying there. The men had their personal belongings hidden in case of an unforeseen inspection by the welfare authorities, so that the support given to the mothers was not affected. The decision to hide the fathers was made on the basis that single mothers receive much more substantial welfare support than married mothers. Moreover, while Katerina and Adi had a rather unplanned parenthood, Geta and Cornel had planned to have their child in order to receive this very money. The two couples were very proud that, through this arrangement, they could afford to live in a spacious home.

Adi and Katarina (from Romania and Latvia, respectively), aged 23 and 22, with one seven-month-old daughter. Adi, until two years ago, when he met Katerina, was a shell game player, which, although officially a focus game, is really a way to deceive passers-by and take their money. He is now a qualified construction worker. Before giving birth, Katerina was a waitress in a bar. They both come from small towns in their respective countries.

Cornel and Geta, 20 and 19 years old, respectively, with one boy of five months. Cornel is a construction worker and Adi's colleague, while Geta is only a mother. They both come from the same small town in Romania.

Lack of Openness Toward Family and Community

No grandparent has come to visit the two newborns in the UK. The parents had been planning to travel home with the children to submit their papers for Romanian citizenship. For the moment though, because they did not have any citizenship, they would have been unable to come back to the UK if they left.

These families in London visit their family members in Romania rarely—once a year on average—for financial reasons; they are also rarely visited in the extreme by family in London, especially since they usually cannot provide them with housing there. On the rare occasions when some of them have family visitors, as in the case when Sanda's brother came to London for a few days with his fiancée, in order to provide accommodation for their relatives, Sanda and Ovidiu rented another apartment for a week, where they stayed with the relatives.

Financial support for those at home is provided only when needed and to a limited extent (in the case of illness or unforeseen expenses). The little money they manage to save is for the future. The three women who work out of the five perform jobs that are well below their qualification level: Sanda has a PhD in anthropology but works as a receptionist; Rodica is a qualified kindergarten teacher and did work as one in Romania, but is now nannying in a crèche in the UK; and Maria is a qualified accountant, but is working as a saleswoman. Moreover, Sanda and Rodica especially feel that any kind of professional success is extremely difficult for them as Romanians during this pre-Brexit period.

In terms of community, our London participants had, as we have mentioned, no relationship to any other Romanian migrant. The only friendships they mentioned involved other, non-Romanian migrants, but their interaction went no further than work (there were no mutual visits to their homes). Their attitude toward English Londoners is one of inferiority, and one of dissociation toward other Romanians, a feeling informed by the campaigns of criticism against Romanian migrants in the context of Brexit. Many have internalized these feelings, as if the English, seen as superior to them, were implicitly right, while other Romanians from the same low-skilled category, who were targeted by this criticism (except themselves), could only be as the critics say: uncivilized and unfit for the UK.

You don't quite see them (English Londoners), they don't walk on the street nor ride the buses. They travel by car. Buses are full of migrants, and above, on the front seats, you will always hear loud Romanian talk. That is the way Romanians are, they jab up front and are noisy. When I see them I always pretend not to speak Romanian. (Rodica)

Hiding from the community they live in can be observed, especially in the houses with "lone mothers," where men live undercover. Of course, this kind of accommodation of couples who are not couples in the eyes of the authorities, for the sake of receiving the status of being a lone mother, is not specific to Romanians, but comes from British society. That said, it is becoming increasingly popular with a category of young Romanians who decide to live in the UK for a while in the context of this type of couple management.

It is especially hard to imagine a family future, given the situation of the inhabitants of this house. How long will they hide in the UK? How long will legislation encourage this kind of lodging, especially in the context of Brexit? Will they return to their countries of origin? What will happen in the case of the binational unofficial couple? These are questions that couples have refused to answer, as they are optimistic that this temporary situation will last for decades, by which time they will have raised their children.

The future of the couples in the first house is differentiated. Maria and András seem to be inclined to removing themselves from transnational suspension through integration. András has been raised there and has family in the area; he plans to move into his own apartment. To be sure, this couple will maintain a transnational relationship with members of Maria's extended family, who are still in Romania, and the direction their life is headed is assimilation into the community they live in. Their temporary transnational life together has been a kind of test for the couple, since their relationship before getting married was conducted through the internet and by phone. András, who initially lived with his parents, rented this house and managed this type of lodging once Maria came to London. Levi and Rodica, who also shared lodging space with other couples before moving to this house, are to take over the management of the house after András' departure and look for a couple to fill the vacant room. In the near future, they are to maintain this type of existence, while, in the more distant future, they imagine returning home, especially given that they have their own apartment waiting for them in Romania.

Ovidiu and Sanda, even if they see their future in the UK in the short term, are worried by the threat of Brexit and are considering moving to another country before retirement—anywhere but Romania.

This type of lodging underlines how temporary and transnationally suspended the lives of these couples are, as they do not fully belong to any of the two societies. It is as if, during these years, running into decades of camouflaged living, these families *held their breaths and were somehow put on hold in terms of family existence* toward the audience: a kind of nondisplaying family, contrary to what Finch (2007) defined as a displaying family. For me, this result is especially interesting, since during my research on the transnational motherhood of Romanian women, I found that it is precisely the wish to display that the transnational family, of which they are a part, is functioning well—just as in the case of other questionable families under pressure from heavy discrimination in Romania—which forces these families to make additional efforts in order to fulfill the transnational mother-child relationship (Ducu 2013, 2014). A possible explanation could be that displaying questionable families becomes amplified under the impact of discrimination (Fox et al. 2015) if the members of these families deem it unfair. It seems that in the case of internalizing external discrimination, the effect upon families undergoing this discrimination is to camouflage themselves as perfectly as possible. We encountered the most powerful impact of internalized discrimination in the UK in the case of Sandu (who is not part of the couples presented in this chapter), who, having stayed for 12 years in London, has managed to rise to a good social position and was deeply concerned by the recent wave of Romanian migrants, sharing the views articulated in the press concerning Romanians as inferior to others and wishing that the UK exits the EU in order for Romanians not to be able to come over as easily, so that he will no longer be confronted by discrimination. Like Sandu, almost all respondents in the London fieldwork, including the couples presented in this chapter, considered discrimination against Romanian migrants in London to be justified. Camouflaging these families is, hence, not a life objective, but a life strategy.

A Strategy of Living Lavishly

Mons

The couples who were childless or with young children were living in duplexes or high-end apartments in Mons, all of about 100 m² in size. Where the children were older, the parents chose to live in one of the satellite villages of Mons in order to be able to rent larger houses, with more generous courtyards and at shorter driving times from their schools. The most interesting aspect is that the Mons recommendation network worked perfectly, with all respondents in this fieldwork connected in one way or another. Hence, all six couples presented here are, in a way, part of the same network of acquaintances. Moreover, while in Belgium, we also took part in two celebrations at the houses presented below, with the participation of part of the respondent network. Each couple possessed two cars.

Mons: City

House 1—a duplex with a large living room, one kitchen, two bathrooms, three bedrooms, a large attic, used as a painting workshop by Codrin, and a small courtyard.

Laura and Codrin. Laura was a contractor for the NATO base and Codrin was a painter. Both came from a small town in Romania. Laura was the first to settle in Mons. She met Codrin in Brasov, Romania, after she moved to Belgium, and after a transnational relationship, he would move in with Laura there—only one year before the interview. She was using the extra space in the house in order to organize periodic reunions of her spread-out family: only her parents remained in Romania. Her sister had moved to Canada with her husband and two children. She not only offered accommodation, but always paid for her parents' trips from Romania—low-cost airlines have made these sponsorships possible— and sometimes helped her sister with her expenses to fly her family from Canada to Belgium. When Laura's mother needed a surgical intervention, she immediately flew home. She took her to a private hospital in the capital and paid for the best possible treatment. The housekeeping was provided by a Filipino lady.

House 2—a high-end apartment: a large living room, a kitchen, two bathrooms and two bedrooms.

Dana and Ottho. They are both civilian employees on the base. Dana comes from a middle-sized town in Romania, while Ottho comes from a middle-sized town in Germany. They met at work in Belgium. His parents very rarely come to visit. On the other hand, Dana's mother visits frequently and stays at their place. Dana helps her with the travel expenses. Being Dana's only close relative, she likes her to be as close as possible. Ottho has learned Romanian and can communicate with his mother-in-law. The mother's visits in Belgium are good opportunities for the three to travel around Belgium. It is easy to get to the North Sea, Paris and so on from Mons.

House 3—a duplex, an office, two bathrooms, two bedrooms, a large living room, a kitchen and a small courtyard.

Atena and Radu. They have one daughter, aged one. They are both civilian employees on the base. Radu was the first to be employed, after which he met Atena on his visits to Romania. Atena followed him. She did not work for one year, but then managed to find employment and now she also works at the base. They both come from a middle-sized town in Romania. Their little girl was born in Belgium and goes to the American crèche on the base. Their relatives from Romania visit them periodically, but they also go home very frequently. They have a low-cost airline route to their native town. They go especially on weekends. They always travel without luggage, since they have everything in Romania, from clothes to toys. Since they spend so much time in the country, they decided to buy an apartment there, which is managed by their relatives in Romania. The office, with its own bathroom, is used as a guestroom during weekends or during the week, if needed, for relatives or various members of the network who choose to spend the night at their place. Moreover, among the frequent guests are a couple, comprising an ex-neighbor from Romania and her present partner, who live in Louvain, but do not belong to the elite category of those working for the NATO base: she is a simple kindergarten teacher and he is a plumber. However, they have a special relationship with the daughter and are considered as a kind of aunt and uncle. Such a relationship would probably not have had developed if they had only been neighbors from Romania. An Italian housekeeper cleans the house.

Mons: Rural Zone

House 4—a large house with five rooms, a kitchen and a very large courtyard. The way it was furnished and arranged shows Krisztina's passion for interior design.

Krisztina and Gabriel. They have a 12-year-old son and a 5-year-old daughter, who were born in Belgium. Gabriel is a contractor on the base. Krisztina now works part-time as an insurance consultant, but although in Romania she had a career on the rise when she came to Belgium eight years ago, she stopped working and did not take it up again for many years. She chose not to work or to work very little in order to have time for their first child, and then both children. Beyond schooling, there are many possibilities in Belgium for extra activities so that a full-time job would not have allowed her to organize their children's extracurricular time. Of course, the free time she enjoyed allowed her to take care of the house as well. The two have bought a plot of land in the area and have started to build their own house in order to stop renting.

House 5—a huge living room, two bathrooms, a kitchen, three bedrooms and a very large courtyard.

Mariana and Vlad. They have a son aged eight, who was born in Romania; they have been living in Belgium for five years. Vlad is a base contactor, while Mariana, who used to be a bank manager in Romania, is not working in Belgium. They both come from a middle-sized town in Romania. For Mariana, the time in Belgium (she is uncertain as to its duration) is like a long vacation. She spends much time with the child. They make many trips around Belgium, as well as go home quite often for the sake of the child's relationship with their parents. At home, they have a large house, which stays uninhabited and is managed by the boy's nanny from the time they used to stay there. Although they have left, they are still paying the nanny to take care of the house. This is so that they have a clean home and food when they return to visit Romania—since they frequently fly there on low-cost airlines—as well as to take care of their child when they are in Romania. The big house in Belgium allows them to entertain their child's friends (the children of Krisztina and Gabriel) very often, and even host them overnight if the parents

need this kind of help or the children would like it. At the precise moment of the interview, Mariana had learned that her mother was to undergo surgery. She decided that she would probably leave for Romania immediately after she agreed with Krisztina about how to take on her son's supervision, given that her husband cannot afford to stay alone with him due to his full-time job.

House 6—one large living room, two bathrooms, one kitchen, four bedrooms and a large courtyard.

Elena and Dorin. They have a five-year-old son, who was born in Romania, and a daughter, aged 18 months, who was born in Belgium. They both come from a small town in Romania. Dorin is a contractor on the base. Elena used to be a specialized engineer for a private company in Romania, but has not worked since she came to Belgium in order to take care of the children. She regrets this decision, since she liked her profession very much. She knows that she could not manage the children if she worked: the boy goes to a school in the village they live in, but the girl attends an international kindergarten in Mons. The boy also goes for various extracurricular activities. She is making plans to go back to work once the children are older. She has identified a large factory outside Mons with the same profile that she is trained in, and hopes that someday she can start working again. The extra room they have is a guestroom. All the members of the network who live somewhat farther away, or do not feel like going home, can stay with them overnight. It seems that this is very welcome, since the guestroom is always busy during weekends. Elena is very happy about this because it allows her to maintain stronger relationships with other adults, given that she spends a lot of time with the children, although she has an adult to help her out during weekends. Thus, they fill in for the lack of the relatives' help (grandparents and aunts), which they would have received at home. Of course, the guestroom is also given over to these relatives who do visit them from time to time, but, since all four grandparents have full-time jobs in Romania, the visits are not as frequent as they would wish.

Openness Toward Family and Community

The participants from Mons whom we have presented have a great deal of freedom in maintaining physical contact with their extended families: they have the money to travel and pay for other family members' trips, as well as have the space to host them. Monthly visits between Mons and Romania have been mentioned, alongside vacations organized for family members in Mons. They can afford to offer quite a strong support to their families at home.

They manage to maintain consolidated relationships with fellow Romanians. The community of Romanians collaborating with the NATO base is extended and intersects with that of Romanians collaborating with the European Parliament in Brussels. The specific types of interactions are very diverse: from supervising each other's children, through getting involved in changing or redecorating each other's lodging, to weekly parties.

Concerning interaction with the extended community in Mons, our participants belong to a community of expats from around the Mons NATO base whose incomes are substantially different from other locals. They rent the best lodging and make use of community services, such as house-cleaning firms and private kindergartens. Up to a point, we could say that, on a symbolic social scale this community is situated at a higher level than that of locals, as in the case of lifestyle migrants (Benson 2010), and "they remain in many ways outsiders, positioned from the outside as elite (in terms of material and economic privilege)" (Torkington 2012, p. 88).

The community of expats around the NATO base in Mons is very large and continuously changing—many of the collaboration contracts are changing, too. Hence, as I said, there is a steady circulation of people in the short term. The real estate market in Mons takes advantage of this permanent flux, especially in terms of rents and interior design. Ikea has opened a store in the area, and our participants were among its frequent customers. Among the members of the network studied in Mons, which encompasses participants who are not presented in this chapter, it's only twice that we encountered a wish to buy property in Mons. The couple Krisztina and Gabriel bought land upon which they were building a house. Tudor, another participant in our research, already had three real estate investments in the area. This reluctance to buy property is closely correlated with their suspension in temporary transnationalism. On the one

hand, they were only collaborators for a set time frame; hence, they were Romanian citizens with no intention to move to Belgium. On the other, their contracts are quite often repeatedly renewed; hence, the set amount of time keeps extending over the years. The decision to buy properties is not correlated with a wish to integrate, but rather with a real estate investment.

The fact that they collaborate with the NATO base represents their main source of income, which can best be observed in the relationships in which the women do not collaborate with the base. In these cases, they prefer not to work at all, since their partner's income suffices for a decent living. However, given that these women used to have a good professional life in Romania, this experience of not committing to their profession anymore, even if only stated by Elena, is still a shortcoming alongside the many advantages of belonging to a high-skilled family. Krisztina told us how, in her first year in Belgium, with her son not yet in school and not knowing that more years of living there would follow, she quite literally felt as if she was on vacation: they made daily trips together to the surroundings, and longer ones with her husband. But then her husband's contracts kept getting extended. The child went to school. Then his little sister appeared, who then reached kindergarten age. Each contract comes with a new set time frame, on which they base their short-term plans. Mariana also refers to the years spent in Mons as a vacation. There is a trip almost every weekend, except those weekends that are spent in Romania. The children go to school there, but each year could be their last in Belgium. Elena, Mariana and Krisztina, who work part-time, spend most of their time with the children—kindergarten or school, as well as other activities—or with interior design. For example, Krisztina's home is very beautifully furnished with antiques she has made an effort to collect from various places.

Let us note that the future of the above participants is completely unsure. They do not make long-term plans. In spite of the comparatively happy life they lead, I have felt that the recurrence of a "set time frame" throws a shadow of bitterness over the community. The topic kept turning up among our participants, especially since they were all in different phases of their contracts. For example, Laura had been without a contract for several months when our team arrived to Mons, which is why she was assigned to be our guide—she collected us each morning and drove us to the locations where we recorded our interviews. She was among our first respondents and declared in an interview that she had extended her rent

by six months; but, if her contract were not to be extended, she would move back to Romania. Overnight, she eventually learned that her contract had been extended. The next day Atena became our guide, taking leave from work to do so. Maria's husband Vlad's contract was expiring in a few months, and they were undecided as whether to extend their rent in Mons while waiting for an extension or to move back to Romania and then return, if needed. Gabriel's contract had just been extended a few months earlier, after a very short pause; hence, they decided to buy the plot of land and build a house immediately after getting their collaboration with the base extended.

This period of temporary transnationalism, as lived by these couples, may be understood as a pair of parentheses around their lives, a bubble containing something else that gets extended for an undetermined period. Given that they belong to a community of expats, for these couples, it is an occasion of pride to feel part of a special community, which stands above the local one. Of course, they belong to rather high class at home too; but, being superior to Westerners is a real reason for content among these Eastern Europeans. All these accommodation practices—big houses, constantly redesigned; a cleaning service; childcare; hosting other Romanians in Mons, especially their extended families—allow them active interaction with the audience (Finch 2007, 2011) and take shape in what is called displaying the family. This is a way of saying: this is us, we made it at home, and we made it in the West too.

Conclusions

We are becoming increasingly conscious of the fact that the "asymmetrical skilled migrations within the EU touch on problematic aspects of EU integration" (Cencei 2017), but we are much less conscious about the way this asymmetry is reflected in the lives of those living in a state of temporary transnational suspension within the EU.

Drawing upon what has been described as "a mobile life-strategy for creating a sense of feeling 'at home' in order to compensate for having no real sense of physical, cultural or ancestral ties with the place in which they have chosen to live" (Torkington 2012, p. 89), in this chapter, we have presented two strategies of living, both temporarily suspended in the transnational: a strategy of stealthy living and a strategy of living lavishly. In the delimitation of these strategies, I have drawn upon the model comprising "a three-part typology of Euro-commuters – 'survivors', 'thrivers'

and 'strivers' – based on their principal motivation for undertaking this mobility" (Ralph 2015, p. 37), but I have centered on the differentiation between the two ways of living in terms of lodging type. Ralph (2015) has shown how a partner's mobility type has an effect on the entire couple, as well as reflects on the perspective of the partner at home. In my approach, I chose couples as a direct object of analysis and emphasized, together with Ralph (2015), how belonging to one category or another impacts the gender roles in the couple, which is an issue we shall return to in this concluding subchapter.

I have illustrated the strategy of stealthy living by presenting the mode of lodging in London among five couples in two houses on the outskirts. These couples also have in common the fact that they are performing unskilled work. Given the location of their lodging outside the city center, as well as having to travel by bus and the physical restraint of their lodging space (each couple literally has a single room for personal use), these couples radically limit their relations with the community they live in, including their extended transnational family, which is a way of non-displaying the family, probably under the influence of their discrimination within the UK.

I have developed the idea of living lavishly in relation to six couples belonging to a community of expats around the NATO base in Mons, who live in six luxury residences, initially in the town center in apartments or duplexes, then, as the family extends, moving toward the more rural area of Mons, accessing larger houses with more generous courtyards. The expansion of these couples' lives, in terms of a larger living space, two cars per couple and the use of cleaning and childcare services, gives them a clear profile within the community, as well as the physical involvement of their extended family in their way of life; in other words, the intense displaying of these families may also be associated with the pride taken in their way of existence.

Through the present comparison between the two temporary transnational lifestyles, I was able to capture the way gender relations are reflected differently, depending on the category that the couples are a part of, and answer to the appeal that Brettell (2012) has made toward researchers in the field to apply such comparisons when researching gender relations within transnational families.

The most visible impact of the mode of lodging and gender relations for the couples can be reflected in the role that children play within the existence of these families. In London, due to the limitations of lodging

space, we may witness, on the one hand, the phenomenon of indefinitely postponing the decision to have children (inhabitants of the first house) or, on the other, a mode of lodging that is structured around the children, as in the case of the "single mothers" (in the second house). In Mons, we have noticed that the childless couples or those with young children live in urban areas in smaller homes with a small courtyard (in apartment buildings or duplexes); but, when the children grow and more children appear, they move to the rural area with larger homes, especially those with courtyards where the children can play. The lack of children is associated with women's active involvement in work at both sites, with the presence of children clearly meaning women's withdrawal from the labor market. Katerina used to work in London before having a little girl, but then she gave up work and contented herself with the status of a "lone mother." Meanwhile, in Mons, Elena and Mariana do not work, and Krisztina, who now has a part-time job, used not to work for a long time after moving to Mons, although all three previously held prestigious professional positions in Romania, even while each of them was raising a young child.

Regarding active women, we observe a clear difference in maintaining their initial professional position between the two categories of women from the two sites. Sanda, Rodica and Maria (first house) in London have, as we have pointed out, undergone a process of de-skilling through moving from Romania to the UK, occupying positions that are professionally inferior to their training and to those previously held roles in Romania. In contrast, women in Mons maintain their professional positions at similar levels to those in Romania, and being professionally equal to their partners, as in the case of Dana and Ottho or Atena and Radu, or even superior, as in the case of Laura and Codrin.

Before going further, I would like to underline again that the two temporary transnational living strategies, stealth and lavishness, are not typical for all the Romanians living at the two sites. We did not have any high-skilled Romanians as respondents in the London research, even though they are numerous; hence, we were unable to address their way of living. There are also many low-skilled Romanians in Mons (we even engaged with them at a Romanian store), whom our respondents said were working in construction, but we did not involve this group as respondents in order to understand their lodging habits. Moreover, in London we have respondents who live in the same house, whereas in Mons, respondents who don't just live in the same area, but are connected through the workplace of some of the partners (the NATO base), as well. This comparison

between two different categories of people in two different locations represents a limit to the approach. One question that could be raised is whether their contextual surroundings or their different job categories determine the differences between their transnational practices. The answer is both, given that workplace category determines the type of lodging, implicitly determining the type of the couple's practices.

I consider that more research on the relationship between lodging and life strategies, especially of those who live in a state of temporary transnational suspension, could provide us with useful information through which to understand the effects that temporary mobility has on the existence of families in this situation.

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"Staying in Touch": Views from Abroad and from Home

Abstract In this chapter, through the voices of those who departed and those still at home, some novel aspects of transnational relationships of these families are presented: gender roles in transnational communication, recreational visits, multinational relationships of families and the role of polymedia in the forming of couples.

Keywords Recreational visits • Multinational • ICT

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we explore the way in which transnational family members manage to keep their lives connected while transcending the geographical limits of national borders. We shall look at various ways of "staying in touch" therein, through the experiences of 24 participants from Romania and abroad (the UK, Belgium, the USA and Italy). The testimonies in this chapter have been collected through individual and couple interviews conducted either onsite or online. Mixing data collection methods, as we have done, has allowed us to grasp various aspects of the same phenomena, proving the latter to be independent of the target country. Studies addressing transnational relationships usually focus on the perspective of leavers or on that of stayers. By presenting both perspectives, we have tried to emphasize aspects that have been less visible until now in the constantly proliferating array of studies, which have these relationships for a subject.

The chapter proceeds as follows: after a short survey of the theoretical context, we present the main results of our research, in order: gender roles in transnational communication, recreational visits, multinational relationships of families and the role of polymedia in the forming of couples.

Theoretical Context

Transnational communication, mutual visits and the transfer of care between transnational family members are the most common practices that make the family whole between the virtual and the real, and have accordingly been extensively researched (Baldassar et al. 2007; Baldassar and Merla 2013; Nedelcu and Wyss 2016; Horn 2017).

Departing from "a premise, which is that communication technologies and relationships are mutually constitutive" (Madianou and Miller 2012, p. 150), the transnational "practices of 'polymedia'" become "the daily, constant, and increasingly taken-for-granted mediated everyday communication" (Madianou 2016a, p. 90). Hence, we may affirm that "linked to the freedom to move is the freedom to be in touch" (Baldassar 2016, p. 34).

The accelerated development of "communication technologies [is] transforming ways of 'being together' and forms of 'co-presence' in families and communities separated by distance and over time" (Baldassar et al. 2016, p. 134). Families with members who have "mobile lives" (Elliott and Urry 2010) manage to maintain a "mediated intimacy at a distance" (Wilding 2006, p. 133). Lately, departing from the concept of "doing family" (Morgan 2011a, b), research has shown how, through "ICT-mediated 'family practices'" (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016) and transnational communication, families manage to obtain a copresence among nuclear transnational family members, such as the mother-child dyad (Parreñas 2005; Ducu 2014; Madianou 2016a), or within the extended transnational family, such as transnational relationships between grandchildren and grandparents (Nedelcu 2017).

But family is "connection: how families not just communicate with each other, but how they share their lives and routines, how they engage in social touch, and how they negotiate being together, or being apart" (Neustaedter et al. 2013, p. 2). In-depth studies of transnational relations offer new information on the formation and functioning of transnational families. If, about ten years ago, an increasing amount of research "proved" this copresence between migrants and stayers, researchers at present are

becoming increasingly interested in the subtler aspects of this transnational interaction. This chapter is intended to be positioned among these novel concerns to reflect on less-researched elements of this field.

One of the main aspects within this kind of "doing family" is represented by the gender dimension, in which—over and above just listening to men's and women's voices (Few-Demo et al. 2014)—it is relevant to understand how the roles assumed by the parties in this transnational relationship redefine family relations. We have seen how transnational communication enforces gender stereotypes, according to which the mother is the main care provider for children at home in the case of transnational motherhood (Parreñas 2005); but, we propose to see how gender roles are configured in the case of communication with the extended transnational family. Visits (Baldassar et al. 2007; Horn 2017) play a decisive role in "doing transnational family"; however, since most research on transnational families have been set up through the prism of care between transnational family members, too little emphasis has fallen on recreational visits (Ducu 2016; Hărăguș and Telegdi-Csetri 2018). That said, these are special occasions of doing family (Morgan 2011a), and we will show in this chapter how they are configured. One understudied issue is that of multinational relationships in the case of families with members in multiple countries, which is fairly interesting, especially since, in the example given for the very definition of transnational families (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002), a multinational transnational family was presented. Still, transnational family research has mostly focused on the leavers-stayers dyad (Sørensen and Vammen 2014). We shall exemplify, in this chapter, two of the multinational relationship practices: multinational communication and family reunions. Within discussions on global families, it has been recommended that researchers focus on the effects of migration in terms of the "formation of new households" (Kofman 2012, p. 154). This research has, however, unfolded in parallel fashion with the field of transnational families, since emphasis has fallen on understanding transnational couples through the rupture between partners only. In recent years, by analyzing through the lens of mobility, we have understood that a large number of couples lives in a state of transnational suspension (see Chaps. 1, 2 and 3). In this chapter, by focusing on transnational relationships, we shall present the role played by polymedia (Madianou and Miller 2012) in forming couples from partners living in different countries.

Gender Roles in Transnational Communication

The role played by transnational communication in "doing transnational family" (Morgan 2011a, b) has increasingly been emphasized by extensive research.

> ICT-mediated 'family practices' reflect a double dynamic. On the one hand, they are subject to continual renewal in the transnational context, whereas on the other hand they reproduce the main features of the family as a process. In other words, they are active and they possess a sense of the everyday, a sense of the regular and a sense of fluidity. (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016, p. 205)

For researchers in the field of transnational families, this copresence is presumed from the outset, while research on transnational relationships within families, which does not focus on this type of communication, is inconceivable. In our research, by having couple interviews as well as individual ones, we have observed that some family members are more responsible for communication than others (Khvorostianov 2016), including members of the extended family.

A less-usual practice, as we noticed during the analysis of data concerning the ways that couples keep in touch with those at home, was the strategy by which each partner communicates transnationally with members of his/her family.

> *Each with his own family, me with mine, him with his […] it is the most healthy way for us.* (Sanda, UK)

Tünde (Romania) communicates daily via Skype with her daughter in Hungary, whereas the communication with her son in the USA only happens weekly:

> *Sundays a little, when he, too, has time, since he often works during weekends. The daughter-in-law enters briefly, waves at us with her hand, says a few words. She, on the other hand, talks with my co-mother-in-law every day for an hour, when she is going to work – they have some kind of free telephony. She doesn't call us.* (Tünde, Romania)

But, most frequently, as in the case of couples with members of their extended family nearby, the responsibility of maintaining relations with family members falls on the women. This chain of transnational commu-

nication among women has been brought to the fore within transnational motherhood research, which is explainable in the respective context through the fact that the main goal of these relationships is the transfer of care for children at home (Parreñas 2005; Ducu 2014). Additional research on communication has shown that women are more open to exchanging messages with personal content than men (Boneva et al. 2001).

For the couples, this practice of making the women responsible for keeping contact with those at home is in fact natural. Moreover, even on the part of respondents, the women remaining at home are usually responsible for maintaining this communication.

This duty may, however, become difficult when the two women do not share a common language. In the binational couple of Adi (Romania) and Katerina (Latvia) in the UK, the responsibility of communicating with the extended family falls on Katerina. She talks for at least two hours per day with her mother via Skype, especially with her seven-month-old daughter present, in order to ensure the virtual presence of the grandmother in the girl's life and to facilitate her learning of Latvian. But it is her, too, who exchanges several messages per day with Adi's mother on Facebook. Katerina does not speak Romanian, while Adi's mother does not speak Latvian any better. Their communication is mediated through Google Translate. Katerina writes in English and translates it into Romanian, and Adi's mother does this the other way around. They chose English as a translation language since the quality of translation between English and Romanian is better that the one between Latvian and Romanian.

This transnational communication encourages the "stay-behind" elderly (Baldassar et al. 2017) to accept technological challenges and—so it seems—"the motivation to share life experiences with children and grandchildren […] becomes particularly relevant for them once the family members move long distances away" (Ivan and Fernández-Ardèvol 2017, p. 13).

> The learning process is usually mediated by youngsters, and grandparents, especially grandmothers, express a vivid interest in the use of more sophisticated and diversified technologies of communication to better adapt to their migrant children and grandchildren needs, communication habits and daily schedules. (Nedelcu 2017, pp. 122–123)

However, due to the fact that transnational communication is very much based on technology, we often meet—especially among those at home, who are sometimes elderly—an overturn with respect to gender roles, which allows us "to explore possible gender differences" (Khvorostianov et al. 2011, p. 596): in many cases, older men take over the leading role in maintaining communication with migrant family members, being more open to learning technical things.

Marin (Romania) is responsible for technology when he needs to manage communication with their son in Canada. He has been the one who has managed communication through the internet for years, while their son has been able to afford to lead online conversations with both parents. For the last two years, their communication has been transferred to the phone because "something happened to his computer in Canada, and we were not able to talk via the Internet anymore, while ours is still working; it is sitting there with the camera on top." For Maria, this change in the mode of communication is welcome, since she can also initiate a conversation with her son this way, whenever she wants. Even if she has free access to communication (she used to be dependent on Marin's presence before), the decisions concerning the service infrastructure through which the communication is conducted are still Marin's. He chooses what type of landline and mobile contracts they have, which allow free communication with their son, since they want to ensure that he does not pay for talking with them.

The same decisions in managing mobile telephony and Internet providers, in order to ensure free communication with his son and daughter-in-law in the UK, are the responsibility of Vasile (Romania): "I have such a good contract, they only need to give me a beep, and I call them back." That said, his wife is completely dependent on him when communicating with the family in the UK; she does not dare approach the computer or Vasile's mobile phone, while they do not have a landline. Hence, she stays around Vasile, so that he can give her the phone from time to time to talk to the children, or to start the computer for her.

Ibolya can call her daughter in the USA over the landline, but she is completely dependent on István if she wants to see her, too. She does not know how to use the computer, while face-to-face visits are impossible, since her daughter is not staying legally in the USA, and they, in turn, have been banned from entering that country.

Our data are in agreement with the findings presented by Khvorostianov (2016) concerning the fact that, within couples, it is men who, as

Internet users […] became responsible for activities that spouses previously did together: shopping (online), sending gifts for relatives and friends (by bank transfer), and keeping in touch with them (via Skype). Skype rendered the communicator role more effective, enabling them to interact with grandchildren who lived abroad, teach them Russian, and even served as a bridge during family celebrations, as children in Russia and parents in Israel raised glasses simultaneously. At the same time, the family role of the second spouse decreased in significance. (Khvorostianov 2016, p. 8)

In general, even in the case of the elderly who stay at home in Romania, the person responsible for communication is the woman (Nedelcu 2017), who tries to develop all necessary abilities, as in the case of Katerina's mother-in-law, who maintains transnational communication beyond the language barrier. It seems, however, that, in the case of Romanian elderly couples, just as in the case of elderly migrant couples in Israel, we quite often see gender roles overturned, with men becoming mainly responsible for communication.

Recreational Visits of the Elderly Abroad

Visits are among the most important family practices. "In the first place, it is simply about visiting, a repeated activity that affirms and renews existing ties and is a form of display (Finch 2007) stating that 'we are a family that works'" (Morgan 2011a, p. 86). Reciprocal visits among transnational family members are more rare or frequent, especially depending on the economic status of the members (see Chap. 3 for details) and the occasions through which these families physically reunite.

This is clearly related to family practices, the visit provides an opportunity for doing things together. These include visiting other sets of relatives, having meals, shopping and exploring neighbourhoods. The practices here are clearly family practices. (Morgan 2011a, p. 87)

Since most of the research on transnational families has focused on how care relations are configured among active and dependent family members, these contact visits have been very scarcely addressed in comparison with their importance within the functioning of transnational families. Another aspect, which is less emphasized in the literature on transnational family relations, concerns recreational visits to relatives, which migrant

transnational family members make by coming home, or indeed members at home, including the elderly, make by visiting their kin abroad.

For several years, Geta (Romania) has spent her winters visiting her four children and their families in Spain.

Vasile (Romania) took advantage of his son being in the UK and visited London, its museums and touristic landmarks, as well as other towns, along with traveling in Scotland during his visits to his son's. He has done all these little trips by himself, as he did not want to bother his family while at work, and using his own money, since he also wants to help his child.

For Dana (Belgium), the fact that she can host her mother, her only living relative, during her very frequent visits, is a reason for joy. Moreover, each of the mother's visits is associated with a small trip—"from the North Sea to Paris, it is very easy to travel through Europe from Mons." Dana is paying for all of her mother's transportation.

Recreational visits of leaver family members in the country of origin are fairly well known, but it is less understood that the elderly in transnational families become mobile family members as well, not only under the constraint of necessity—as in the case of the notorious "flying grandmothers" (Baldassar and Wilding 2013; Ducu 2014), old women traveling to take care of their grandchildren. I consider that mutual visits (Ducu 2016) among transnational family members are just as important in the set of practices of "doing families" as transnational communication, ensuring the "real," physical dimension within the constellation of these families. Research should, therefore, focus more on this element of transnational relations within these families.

Maybe the most illustrative case for understanding the importance of these visits is the event of their impossibility. Ibolya and István, for example, cannot meet their daughter—who left for the USA 15 years ago—at all. Their daughter cannot leave the USA, since her papers are not in order and she risks being unable to return. The elderly parents tried to apply for a visa a few years previously in order to visit her and her family, but were rejected. After several years, as ethnic Hungarians, they received Hungarian citizenship and with it the right—as citizens of the Schengen area—to freely travel to the USA. When they landed on American soil, the border authorities discovered that years earlier their visa application had been rejected, as they were then Romanian citizens. Hence, they were accused of an "illegal entry attempt into the US" and summoned to take the first plane back to Europe or face arrest. In short, the elderly parents are unable to physically meet their daughter or their grandchildren who have been

born in the meantime, except when the other grandparents (the parents of their son-in-law)—who are also ethnic Hungarians and have received their Hungarian citizenship and can travel without a visa—bring them for holidays to Romania.

The binary logic between leavers and stayers when approaching transnational family research (Sørensen and Vammen 2014) somehow creates the illusion that we could regard transnational families as having a fixed part (those who stayed) and a mobile part (those who left), whereas belonging to a transnational family brings with it the dimension of mobility for a significant number of its members too.

The Relationships Between Family Members Spread Across Several Countries

An increasing number of Romanian transnational families are, in fact, multinational families, as their members are spread across several countries. "Doing multi-local family requires the development of mobile and translocal practices that are adapted to the specific time-space context of the multi-local familial arrangement" (Schier 2016). We shall show below how the two large components of transnational relationships—ICT communication and visits—are organized in these situations.

One set of such practices is represented by the multinational communication that technology makes possible (online conferencing through Skype or multiperson phone calls).

Zana (Romania), who has two children with families in Italy and two with families in France, has taken a bank loan and has bought a tablet computer to be able to talk to them every day. In the evening, when they all have time, she tries to speak either with her daughter and three sons or with her daughters-in-law, who are more likely to be available. Since they all live in their own houses, it is easier if she tries to speak with as many families as possible at once. Hence, she tries to initiate a video conference on Skype and find out what they have been doing during the day. For Zana, this way of keeping the family together is very important, especially due to the fact that, although each family has come to the country at least once per year, they have only been all together once in the last six years.

Laura (Belgium) considers that her mother and her sister in Canada need to be consulted on all decisions concerning her elderly and needy parents, who have remained in the country, so that her sister can have a

chance to become involved if she wishes and the mother can give her consent. For this, Laura initiates multiphone calls several times a week with her mother and sister; since the parents are very sick, she always needs to make decisions concerning their treatment or other forms of help.

Another set of practices, which these families employ, are family reunions: on the occasion of major family events, as well as spending vacations together. "The visit is clearly an example of concentrated rather than diffuse family practices as large numbers of family members are involved and there is a considerable degree of orchestration of several different activities" (Morgan 2011a, p. 87).

"The visit may provide opportunities for being there at key moments to do with the life-course or for clear reasons for shared celebration" (Morgan 2011a, p. 87). In terms of major events, the best occasions for family reunions, namely weddings, baptisms and funerals, have seldom been mentioned. Usually, it is weddings where migrant and nonmigrant family members of the extended family meet, especially at weddings held at home. Indeed, weddings are usually planned at least a year in advance in order that people can make sure they are available.

For funerals, it is very difficult for migrant family members to be available for the two or three days available to get to a funeral in Romania. Since crematoria have appeared in larger cities of late, the practice has also emerged that, when a beloved member of the family dies, the family incinerates them and then holds the funeral at a later date, such as in three to six months or even more, when family members from abroad can also be present.

The baptism is also an event that is quite difficult to celebrate with family members who live abroad, since there is a practice, especially in the Orthodox rite, that a child needs to be baptized as quickly as possible, in no later than n 40 days.

The 50th anniversary of their marriage was a special occasion for Tünde and Attila. Using their own financial resources, they organized a family reunion where the families of their three children were able to be present: their son who lives in the USA, together with their daughter who lives in Hungary and their other daughter in Romania, who had not all been in the same place for the last five years. The three children responded to their parents' invitation and came with their families to take part in this reunion, as well as compiled a photo album as a gift for the parents, containing pictures from all three families, along with a picture of the three siblings on its cover (taken at this very reunion).

Larisa, Zana's daughter, wanted the baptism of her daughter to be the occasion where the four departed siblings and their families could be reunited after six years with their sister and parents at home. On the occasion of this event, the five siblings took their first picture together after six years.

Beyond these family events, families spread across several countries employ the strategy of spending vacations together at a resort and time chosen by general agreement. Mila (UK), who lived in Serbia for 15 years and moved to the UK 5 years ago, chose to invite her sisters: she invited the youngest to the UK, while the two other sisters who were living in different towns in Romania, together with their families, spent a vacation together in Greece, especially since her daughters in Serbia hardly knew their extended family in Romania. It was the first time in 20 years that the four sisters had spent 10 consecutive days together and the first time that the four families had met. The four children of the family also met for the first time, as well as met with all of their relatives. This example confirms the special role that Morgan (2011a) attributes to visits within transnational families: "This may be particularly important in the case of children who come to know relations who, up to the present, have been just names or photographs and, similarly of course, these relations come to know new children" (p. 87).

For some, these visits are rare. Laura (Belgium) organizes family reunions every year in her villa in Mons, bringing her elderly parents and sometimes contributing to the travel expenses of her sister in Canada, in order that she can see the family in Belgium.

This multinational functioning of families deserves a more profound analysis in order to understand the differences between them depending on various criteria: the social category of leavers/stayers, which is closely associated with access to resources, the target countries of leavers and the configuration of family relations.

THE TRANSNATIONAL FORMATION OF THESE COUPLES

A defining moment in the life of people on the move in foreign countries is the *formation of transnational couples* (Romanian-Romanian of binational), in which we can observe the role that online technology (e.g., Facebook, dating sites or simple transnational communication by phone) has in finding a partner, either in the home country or in another. This moment in the life of a couple tends to be analyzed as a specific moment;

but, in the case of couples who are formed transnationally, it tends to be the transnational relationship that is highlighted, since this differentiates the period when the couple was formed and/or existed in a virtual sense from that when it actually became physically connected.

Young Romanian migrants, as in the case of migrants of other nationalities, tend to form couples with other Romanians, even if it seems that they are the Eastern European migrants who are most open to binational marriages (Robila 2009). When the migrant's partner lives in another country, usually in Romania, ICT plays a fundamental role in developing and crystallizing their couple relationship.

The classical scenario is thus: the young migrant meets his/her future partner while the latter is on a trip abroad, or during the former's visit to Romania while making new acquaintances or rekindling old ones. During these (usually short) encounters, a contact is made, and then partners switch to communication through ICT means. Eventually, their relationship reaches a new level and they decide to move in together, meaning that the Romanian partner follows the other abroad.

Rareș met his wife Anca while she was visiting a mutual friend in the USA. They went onto communicate through Yahoo Messenger for nine months. After nine months, he traveled to Romania to marry her. Their decision to marry so quickly was influenced by US legislation; otherwise, Anca's reunion with Rareș would have been much more difficult.

András, who joined his parents in the UK at the age of 14, met his wife, former schoolmate Maria, during a tenth-grade school graduation anniversary, to which he was invited in Romania. After this reunion, Maria and András became friends on Facebook and continued to communicate for a few months, before the couple decided that Maria should move to London as well. After a few months, the family in London organized the wedding.

Laura met her partner during a short visit to Romania in a town where she used to live before moving to Belgium. They communicated for several months using ICT, before deciding that Codrin should move in with her in Belgium.

These limited connection times, followed by the consolidation of the relationship through ICT, reflect the most common ways in which couples involving migrants and stayers form. Technology has made it possible to develop new strategies of transnational couple forming, whereby the partners meet and develop a relationship through ICT, then go onto form a real-life couple.

"But when relationships are developed online, they are done so without all of the information one might ascertain in a physical world" (Hertlein 2012), which can lead to some of the most complex situations that these couples will need to overcome. Cristi, who lived in the UK, met his partner, Petra, who lived in the Czech Republic, through an online dating site. They communicated for months through Facebook, and then decided that Petra should travel to London in order for them to meet in real life. The surprise of the date was that Petra spoke no English and used Google Translate to write her messages. Another piece of oral translation software on Cristi's phone made their communication possible for many months: Cristi spoke English and the phone translated it into Czech. Petra answered in Czech and the phone translated it into English. In time, Petra learned English, such that their communication became possible without technological support.

Garry, an Englishman from the UK, approached his future wife, Elena, by phone while she was living in Italy. He got Elena's phone number from her sister, who gave Garry Romanian lessons in order to be able to meet and converse with Romanian women for possible marriage. He spoke Italian, and they were able to use this common language as a basis for practicing Romanian with Elena instead of her sister. Their phone conversations did not improve Garry's Romanian skills at all, but a relationship between the two was formed, after which Elena moved to the UK. In a few years, they moved to Romania together.

The above two examples not only illustrate how technology is the medium of choice for certain—somewhat exotic—binational couples, they also make it less surprising that such technology-driven communication can determine the creation of human relationships, even before physical contact.

At the same time, technology is the medium wherein traditional couple formation practices are reproduced as well. In Romanian villages, there was a custom (Hossu 2018) that partners should preferably come from the same village; those from neighboring villages were narrowly accepted, but strangers were hardly ever. Due to massive migration on the part of the young in order to work abroad, the chances for couples to be formed in this traditional manner diminished. Facebook, however, offered a new opportunity for those seeking relationships. Marian and Ramona were just friends' friends on Facebook when he was in Italy and she was staying in her native village. By following her indirectly through friends' posts and comments, Marian decided he liked Ramona and asked for her virtual

friendship. We could say that the two shared an "ambient co-presence" (Madianou 2016b) before they met. In time, their Facebook friendship speeded up and turned into a Facebook romance. They finally decided to marry. After organizing all the details of their wedding through online communication, Marian returned to the country for a short wedding trip, before they moved to Italy together.

The role that ICT plays in the transnational relations of couples has already been highlighted in the literature, but it seems that these technological advances also make the creation of couples, which would otherwise not have come to pass, possible. We note how couples in the above examples only met through polymedia or a passing physical encounter, and then consolidated their relationship through ICT prior to becoming a couple. Of course, ICT has a large influence on the formation of couples whose partners are from the same town/village as well, especially in the form of dating sites. But, for those in another country who wish to find a partner from their home country or even from their actual home town, polymedia seems to be the ideal solution.

Conclusions

In this chapter, we have explored transnational family practices (Morgan 2011a, b), which suggest the feeling of copresence (Baldassar et al. 2017; Nedelcu and Wyss 2016), both from the perspective of migrant members and from that of those staying at home. We have in turn presented four understudied aspects of Romanian transnational family relations: (1) gender roles in transnational communication; (2) recreational visits of the elderly abroad; (3) relationships between family members spread across several countries; and (4) transnational formation of these couples.

Addressing these four dimensions of transnational relationships doesn't allow for their deep analysis, thus raising a limit to the present chapter that makes it into a paper signaling issues to study, not aiming to tackle them in detail.

In general, all these aspects are fairly understudied within transnational family research, especially in terms of transnational families with Romanian members. The number of people from Romania who find themselves in one or another stage of transnational mobility has risen greatly, especially in the EU, where Romania is ranked in fourth place in terms of the number of citizens living beyond its borders, and the second in Eastern Europe (not to mention the ratio to overall population size, and the fact that these

are barely the official numbers). The ranking is as follows: in first place is the UK (still in the EU), followed by Poland, Germany and Romania. The numbers show that almost 3 million Romanians live in other EU countries; by only taking these into account and associating them with just one family member at home, we can state that this situation implicates about 6 million out of the 19.63 million Romanian citizens who were registered as of 1 January 2017. In other words, well over a quarter of the population is permanently connected transnationally and—in most cases—manage to "do family". Studies focusing on the transnational relations of Romanians are scarce in comparison to the amplitude of the phenomenon, and much more data are needed about the way in which these families are formed and coexist in order to better understand what we might call a real-virtual hybrid cohabitation.

To summarize, this chapter has shown that, in the case of Romanian transnational families, it is usually women who play the role of the person responsible for communication within the extended family. The peculiar approach to doing family (Morgan 2011a, b) through ICT indeed ensures an ordinary copresence (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016), but sometimes introduces technical difficulties in terms of adjusting to new expectations for certain women, especially in terms of the elderly at home. Hence, we can witness gender roles being overturned, with men becoming the primary ones responsible for communication, while women lose their importance (Khvorostianov 2016) in this new configuration of family roles, with the latter often becoming dependent on their husbands to communicate with the extended family. Visits constitute another set of practices, which ensure "doing transnational families" (Morgan 2011a), while the role played by the elderly, who have stayed behind, in this set of displaying families (Finch 2007, 2011) has long been ignored. The analysis of recreational visits by the elderly allows us to see the whole extended transnational family in various kinds of mobility, beyond the mobility of care analyzed by the research on "flying grandparents" (Ducu 2014; Hărăguș and Telegdi-Csetri 2018). Within the context of doing multilocal transnational family (Schier 2016), one of the roles is played by the practices of multinational communication, which ensure a daily multi-coexistence for these families, as well as the practices of family reunions, which are exceptional opportunities for displaying multinational families. The formation of many couples, comprising Romanian partners from abroad and ones from Romania or sometimes partners who are both abroad, is mediated by polymedia (Madianou and Miller 2012) and sometimes by ambient copresence (Madianou 2016b),

which is possible due to online interfaces that both partners are using (e.g., Facebook). This virtual transnational period in the forming of couples is, most of the time, the only opportunity for them to consolidate their relationship. In the absence of transnational relations, these couples would never have been formed.

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Romanian Children in Multiple Worlds

Abstract The objective of this chapter is to present multilayered situations that children from Romanian transnational families go through, as seen in two dimensions: the first concerns the movement of children between countries in relation to the educational system, and the second contains elements of identity and children's allegiance to countries they (also) live in.

Keywords Children • Education • Hybrid identity • Belonging

INTRODUCTION

After the fall of communism, the number of adults living for a longer or a shorter time abroad started to increase. These adults were joined by children who had either left Romania with their parents, joined them after some time, or were born abroad. The movement of adults is not one-directional, since the stories presented in this chapter generally concern people who either are or were at some point in a state of transnationally suspended living (see Chap. 5), that is, they do not have/have not had the slightest intention to be definitively integrated into the target country. They move to and fro between the countries of origin and destination, and the children are caught in between these movements. A growing number of Romanians also changes their target countries (see Chap. 4)—and they have children too; their situation, however, is not addressed in this chapter. The way in which education is provided in the diverse situations that

these children go through, as well as the aspects of their cultural identities and allegiances to certain countries, will be presented here through the voices of 11 women and 2 men. The testimonies have been gathered in various countries (Romania, Belgium, the UK, the USA, Canada and Egypt), and, most importantly, they come both from families where both partners are Romanian and from ones where the parents are a mixed couple. This comparison is critical, since it reveals the less-visible aspects compared to what one would find from a single perspective. The objective of this chapter is to present the multilayered situations that children from Romanian transnational families go through.

In the first part, we will offer a short review of the theoretical framework relevant to this chapter. The presentation of the research results will follow, in two dimensions: the first concerns the movement of children between countries in relation to the educational system, and the second contains elements of identity and children's allegiance to countries they (also) live in. Finally, we shall offer some concluding remarks.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the last few years, we have noticed an ever-increasing research interest in children involved in transnational families. Indeed, we have observed that three edited volumes (Spyrou and Christou 2014; Nagasaka and Fresnoza-Flot 2015; Seeberg and Gozdziak 2016) and special issues of journals (White et al. 2011; Mazzucato and Schans 2011; Gardner 2012; Carling et al. 2012) have been dedicated to this topic.

Regarding children from Romanian transnational families, very few studies have focused on this segment compared to the impact of the phenomenon.

The situation of children who are left behind is mostly addressed in studies that explore various topics, including the emotional impact of separation from one's parents, the effects of parents' absence upon the education of these children (Robila 2011; Bezzi 2013; Botezat and Pfeiffer 2014; Sănduleasa and Matei 2015; Popa 2016) and the retrospective stance of youth raised in such circumstances in relation to their experience of a childhood with their parents abroad (Rentea and Rotărescu 2016).

There are very few studies on Romanian children involved in migration within the EU, or "Intra-European family migration" (Moskal and Tyrrell 2016; we should also mention the volume edited by Valtolina in 2013), especially those that address their relationship to the target country (e.g.,

Italy—Valtolina et al. 2013; Spain—Trias et al. 2013) or the country of origin (Bratu 2015). Children in Romanian transnational families from the extra-European space are even less present within research.

"The open-ended orientation of many of the families allows diverse future scenarios" (Moskal and Tyrrell 2016, p. 464) and "certain types of childhood fit into, are shaped by, and shape certain types of society while other types of childhood go with other types of society" (Seeberg and Gozdziak 2016, p. 3). "Migration places children in new social and relational contexts, different in terms of family and friends they can rely on in their everyday lives" (Sime and Fox 2014, p. 15). For these children on the move, one important issue is switching between the educational systems of different countries.

"Mobility has also been described as some sort of mental process rather than a physical process" (Wentzell Winther 2015, p. 215). One example of this concerns the dreams of migration among children from Ghana (Coe 2012), who, although they have never left their country, are already in this state of physical mobility through these future projections. The future of children in the context of migration can often be associated with their projection, not only of departure, but also of returning; hence, they have a sense of belonging to their country, which is affective, rather than administrative. In the case of Romanian youth born in Romania and raised abroad (the "1.5 generation"), the "typology of ways of relating to [the] home country [is] divided into strong, ambivalent and low attachment to the home country" (Bratu 2015, p. 22).

Closely tied to the feeling of belonging is the identity of these children who are in between countries; this is strongly mediated through language, style of dressing and even skin color (Rysst 2016). These children develop a "hybrid identity drawn from everyday cultural practices and a combination of the host country and home country culture" (Vathi 2015, p. 63).

This chapter is written from the perspective of adults, with the children treated as its objects, not subjects. Transnational parenthood tends to be seen only from the perspective of departed parents and their relationships with children at home. However, all migrant parents joined by children who intend to live for a limited amount of time in a country "do" (Morgan 2011a, b) something similar to transnational parenthood, since the entire set of practices—from birth, if this is the case, to child raising and education—are submerged under a transnational setting between the country they are in and the one they will be in: from prospective citizenship, language or decisions concerning the education system. "Transnational parenthood is

affected in gender-specific ways" (Carling et al. 2012, p. 193). Mothers are considered to be prominently responsibly for transnational parenthood, but the introduction of the perspective of fathers has been rising (Mazzucato and Schans 2011). In Romanian transnational families, "mothers are the ones considered the main provider of emotional closeness" (Robila 2011, p. 331), while the fathers apparently become less involved or are sometimes only a pretext. In order to fulfill their return wishes, as Vlase (2013) illustrates, fathers may use children's education as an argument for the family's return: "the real reason for return is the husband's preference, while the children often serve as justification" (Vlase 2013, p. 754). Even in the case of Romanian parents who are raising their children in Italy, "some Romanian interviewees reported having egalitarian ideals, despite asymmetrical practices" (Santero and Naldini 2017, p. 10), with mothers remaining responsible for raising the children. "Romanian fathers appeared more likely to rationalize the gap between egalitarian ideals and asymmetrical practices in terms of different (biological) predispositions" (Santero and Naldini 2017, p. 10) between men and women. Indeed, the present chapter confirms the interest of women within the family as being of child raising and education, women being the primary respondents with such concerns within our research. Fathers become visible in more special situations, such as in binational couples, who share their experience about delicate decisions concerning citizenship, language and religion, along with a heavy concern for developing the Romanian dimension of the children's hybrid identity.

CHILDREN MOVING 'TO AND FRO' AND THE RELATIONSHIP WITH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS

A Better Western System

"Although there […] [are] a significant number of children left in Romania, some families – especially if they are intact – migrate together with their children" (Bradatan 2014, p. 374), or the departure of the parents is often followed by the departure of the children. The fact that children need to be with their parents is self-evident and somehow more pronounced in the case of Romanian transnational families, who—especially the mothers—have had to confront a heavy wave of accusations of abandonment (Ducu 2013, 2014). Therefore, the family, including the extended family (grandparents, for example), views the departure of children as natural, although extremely painful.

Often the relocation of the child is well received by the family, since, by migrating to the West, the children have access to a more modern education system compared to the Romanian one. Stela told us, with enthusiasm, how her granddaughter managed to become integrated relatively quickly into the UK.

> *Here she didn't get enrolled, here she needed to get into the zero grade, and there, since they start school at five, just like that […] they enrolled her directly into the first grade. […] And now she is in the third. It was not easy, but she adapted very quickly. School there is a little different from here, it is much closer to the pupil. It's like this: […] after they have the lunch break, for example, after they have the lunch break and the play break, since they play in the yard and eat there, after that there is an assistant teacher, one who manages four children, so it is a kind of after-study there. They are not given any homework.* (Stela, Romania)

However, there are situations in which only the children migrate in order to go to school abroad. Marilena told us how, since she had an adult child in France as well as several members of the extended family, she decided to send her 14-year-old to study there in order to give the child the opportunity to access an education system that was superior to the Romanian one. Even if this was a success story (since the child grew into an adult who went onto take up a leading position and became part of a mixed couple with a French woman), Marilena can never forget the sacrifice she made by being separated from her child so early on.

> *Very painful! So, when I left him there it was very awful! So, I couldn't stop crying and I cried until Paris. I had the urge to tell the man: mister, stop, let me get back to take my child!* (Marilena, Romania)

This attitude of idealizing the Western educational system aims to emphasize the idea that the departure of children is not just about accompanying their parents; it is also about better educational opportunities. The story of Marilena is an example from the past, where cases like hers—sending the children without the parents—were rare. A growing number of Romanian parents take such decisions on their children's part and make a special effort, especially for the period of high school, with the aim of ensuring access to prestigious foreign universities. Johana, a financial manager in one of the large Romanian private companies from her town, was trying to sell a fairly important property for her family in order to support her son,

who was studying at a high school in the UK with the goal that he would later go onto Cambridge University. During his free days, the teenager was working part-time in the UK in order to be able to support himself.

Since these decisions often imply large financial efforts, people try to access a scholarship system. Adriana, the vice manager of a well-rated high school in a small town in Romania, besides being the leader of a group of professors who voluntarily worked with the children in order to prepare them for applications to foreign universities, has struggled to set up a program at her institution, which would allow high school students—including her son—to study in Germany in their final two years, thus guaranteeing them higher chances of going to a foreign university afterwards.

These children who leave Romania and study abroad by themselves are completely missing from current research, as well as the children who give up finishing school here and leave for work abroad without their parents. Some of them manage to enroll in the education system abroad in order to continue their studies.

Returning to Romania

Situations where parents who have migrated together with their children decide to return home are frequent, but the parents' decision is not shared 100% by the children, especially since they have difficulties in using the Romanian language. Flavia told us with emotion of her son's attempt to adapt, after which he returned to Italy.

> *He did the first grade there. In the beginning, he liked it, but he didn't want to. […] And it was very difficult for him at school. […] He was afraid since he didn't manage to speak well. And now, he still has a little difficulty in articulating words, but he speaks very well! I didn't expect it so quickly, since he has been [in Romania] four months. […] And he made his group of friends, he is an open type, he isn't one to get ashamed. He goes, he doesn't know, he goes and asks, he plays.* (Flavia, Romania)

Flavia has come back from Italy with her son and with her daughter, who is a few months old, earlier than planned, precisely in order that the boy can start school in Romania, since he had already started school in Italy, and she did not want him to be integrated there too much and have difficulties in Romania later on. Her husband stayed in Italy for an undetermined period, hoping to eventually join the family as well.

The destination countries are not always Western, and the course of political events sometimes changes the opportunities that parents have abroad, from better opportunities for the children's education to very unpleasant alternatives, whereby the educational system that the children have access to becomes a reason for returning to the country. Cristina was just preparing to return to Romania with her children in order to have access to a better-quality teaching system. Living in Egypt, after the Arab Spring, her situation, along with that of her Egyptian husband changed and are increasingly worse off financially. Whereas before they could afford to send their children to the most expensive, elite schools in Egypt, now they are facing the threat of having to use the ordinary public system, which is very poor compared to its equivalent in Romania. In order to save the children, who also have Romanian citizenships, from this situation, Cristina has decided to return with the children, while her husband remains in Egypt for the time being.

Yes, obliged – forced! Because now, […] for about six years since the Egyptian revolution began, have just about lost our businesses. Inflation is very high, and the schools became […] So, they have three kinds of schools. There is the state school, […] in fact, you cannot call it a "school", it is a ghetto, nothing more. […] These are the state schools. There is an "experimental" school, which is what they call it, where the school is better equipped. It costs a little more than the state schools, approximately […] let's put it in lei, 2,000 lei, you know? […] Where, at least the children are more quiet, a little more protected. At least they have a toilet they can use, the poor ones. But, at the level of teachers, it is very much wanting! There is a fourth option, too, a third one, sorry, that is a private school, but it goes together with the national curriculum, where we pay something like 20,000 lei. So, you see how much it jumps, from 2000 to 20,000 lei […] And we also have the last option, which would also be the most ideal one and the one that we tried and, in fact, that's how we started school here, in Egypt – it is the International American School, where we pay 50,000 pounds a year […] We couldn't sustain this anymore, because our legs were cut off, you know? The businesses have been lost too, they've been lost and we haven't had a workplace either […] they cut it all for us, suddenly! I was forced to take the kids out of the American School when they were already in the fourth grade. So, being used to a more relaxed, better system […] Right. Er, now, during the last three years, we haven't managed to pay this school of 20 [thousand] […] We have come down to […] they do some things here like […] they call it a game. Where everybody puts money and each takes for the month in question, all the money, to pay for their schools. So, we are returning out of necessity. We said that

I would rather go and take my slaps on the head in Romania, but at least I am not paying anymore, yo, bro! And I can feed you like humans! (Cristina, Egypt)

As we can see, transnational parents must be ready up to a point for a possible return of their children and prepare them for integration into the Romanian school system. The most difficult problem in these situations is not knowing the Romanian language well enough for the integration to take place easily (as in Flavia's case).

It is not just the children, however, who change educational system, because of their parents' decision to change countries, but sometimes it is the parents who need to change countries in order for the children to have the opportunity to access a better educational system.

Cristina, who is part of a mixed couple, has missed this preparation, especially since she did not view herself as a transnational parent and had not taken into account the possible situation of a transnational life for herself and her children. She saw herself as always living in Egypt with her husband. Since it became impossible for the children to continue their studies in Egypt, the solution that the family adopted was to send the children with their mother to live in Romania until they complete high school, with the mother returning to Egypt afterward, while leaving the children to decide whether to go onto a university in Romania or in another country. Happily for them, even if they had not taught their children Romanian, there are numerous international schools in larger cities in Romania with English as a teaching language and of a better quality than what she could access in Egypt. Thus, at the time of meeting her, Cristina and her children were about to move to a larger city for the sake of the children's schooling, although not in the same part of Romania where Cristina was born and where her family was living.

We have also encountered the strategy of sending the mother back to the country earlier than would otherwise be necessary, in close connection with the educational system in the case of Júlia and Tibi, the ethnic Hungarian couple from Romania who were living with their two children in the UK. Given that their son was facing difficulties in meeting expectations during the first school years in the UK, while their daughter was about to start school as well, the couple decided that Júlia should return with the children to Romania earlier than they would have wanted and to enroll them into the state educational system. The children joined an alternative teaching method group—called "step by step"—which is

something similar to how their son was taught in the UK, in order for him to adapt more easily. Tibi joined them after a few years.

We have similarly witnessed the decision to choose to live in Romania, for at least the children's compulsory schooling duration, in the case of an American woman, Shannon, and Levi, an ethnic Hungarian from Romania, who had lived in various countries, one after another. When their child approached the age of four and needed to go to school, they did not choose the USA for the child's education, as they were completely dissatisfied with the quality of the state education system that they could afford there; they decided to select a village in Romania, where they also bought a house.

These complex combinations between educational systems that transnational family members have access to show us the difficulty of deciding, especially when speaking of the education of one's children, which country one prefers to live in. We have, for that matter, encountered a significant number of families—especially in Spain and Italy—who have failed in their attempt to teach their children the Romanian language above the conversational level, that is, reading and writing, and have also postponed returning to the country for the first school years, when they had little to catch up with, although they would have liked to, until finally this became impossible for them, due to the integration of the children into the educational system.

From the experience of these families, we understand that belonging to one educational system or another can play a major role in the constellation of the family and the localization of its members over time. These families "are done" (Morgan 2011a, b) and "redone" depending on the decisions taken at certain times concerning children's education. While adults are relatively "free" to choose their workplace and country if they so wish, for children who are enrolled in an educational system (something compulsory in many countries), gliding is not all that simple; hence, temporary suspended transnational living (see Chap. 5) is, for many families, prolonged for the duration of the children's schooling period, or at least one cycle thereof. International schools abroad or in Romania are available for some of these children who glide between multiple educational systems, but not for all.

Elements of Identity and Allegiances Among Children

Speaking the Romanian language, as well as keeping the Orthodox faith, is decisive for the development of the Romanian component of children's hybrid identity (Vathi 2015; Rysst 2016) in families that find themselves in a state of temporary transnational suspension. Children born abroad are given the opportunity to obtain citizenship of the host country in the future; but in more difficult situations, such as multiple possible citizenships, parents need to make choices. Beyond mere administrative allegiance, parents also confront the emotional belonging of children to one country or another, feelings that are not necessarily in accordance with future plans if parents who—in these temporarily suspended situations, at least theoretically—mostly want to return to Romania.

Speaking the Romanian Language

The classical strategy of communication mentioned by families with children living for various periods abroad is this: they speak Romanian at home, and they speak the language of the target country at school. Our respondents mentioned, with pride, that their families manage to communicate with their children in Romanian, while the level of success was even higher if the children had been born abroad. The parents, especially mothers, often make an effort to keep the language alive, beyond the conversational level. They appeal to various online acquisitions of children's books in Romanian or to various exercise materials and try to practice reading and writing the language at home. Many Romanians follow Romanian-language television channels in their homes when abroad, while the fact that many foreign-language television shows or films are still not dubbed—but subtitled—forces the older children to practice reading in Romanian as well. The effort to retain the language is maintained, especially given that the language of the host country is usually the "playing language" of children outside their home, as well as frequently inside it, among siblings. Since they socialize in playgrounds and at school using the host country's language, it seems natural to the children to continue playing in the same language among themselves, even if their parents speak another language.

The most illustrative role of language is highlighted in the case of children whose parents form a mixed couple. The way in which binational

couples use language to communicate within the couple and with their children is a key part of the configuration of mixed families' functioning (Ducu and Hossu 2016). Beyond the usual situation in which either the minority partner is completely assimilated and the child does not learn the minority language or the majority partner's language is spoken in the household, while the child also learns the language of the minority partner, lately one can encounter mixed couples in which the partners do not speak each other's language at all, but speak to each other in a third language.

We present below the language practices that two binational couples living in the UK—Cristi and Petra (Romania and Czech Republic, respectively), and Adi and Katarina (Romania and Latvia, respectively)—have developed in order to maintain the hybrid identity of their children and the ethnic component brought to the family by each partner.

Katarina (K): When I'm alone, I talk to her in Latvian. When we are together, we speak English and…
Adi (A): I am going to speak Romanian to her.
K: So, the main language for her, we want it to be English, but still, we are going to teach her Latvian and Romanian as well.
A: It is going to be good, you know, at least the basics to know in Latvian and Romanian.

I'll speak Romanian to her, but in different situations. Our plan is like this: I'll speak Romanian to her only when I am alone with her. She [his wife] will speak Czech to her only when she's alone with her and we'll speak English when we are together, cause the trick to it is not to teach her the actual languages, cause that's easy enough, but the trick is to get her to talk to you in the language you are requesting. (Cristi)

These efforts made by parents, especially in mixed couples, to keep the Romanian language alive are strongly associated with temporary transnational living. It seems that when the relationship with Romania starts to fade, the idea of ever returning and living there disappears (either due to parents' renouncing these plans or due to family decisions, for example that of grandparents' moving abroad, which completely disaffected the relationship with Romania) and the efforts of parents to keep the language alive dies; all this is usually associated with children's "refusal" to speak Romanian. The case of the couple formed by Mihaela and Andi is illustrative here. Andi was born in Romania to a Romanian mother and an ethnic

German father, having Romanian citizenship. During communism, under the large repatriation program of ethnic Germans, the father wished to emigrate to Germany, but the mother refused; so they divorced and Andi remained with his mother in Romania. After the revolution, Andi, now an adolescent, wanted to move in with his father in Germany. He maintained contact with his circle of friends in the country, and, during his vacations spent in Romania in his student years, he met Mihaela. After a transnational relationship lasting two years, and already pregnant with Maia, Mihaela moved in with him in Germany, and they were married. She spent much time and energy with Maia, so that she could learn Romanian and have a relationship with the country. They continued communicating with relatives and friends transnationally, and spent all their holidays in Romania. When Maia turned ten, Vlad, her little brother appeared. This was the moment when Mihaela decided that her mother, her only relative alive in the country (her sister had meanwhile moved to Italy together with her family), should join her in Germany. This was the moment when her relations with Romania "cooled off." We also witness a change in educational practices at this precise moment: it would have been logical that once the grandmother has joined the family as well—even if not living in the same house, but in the neighborhood, not having any other acquaintances but them—and when they also had a new family member (Vlad), they should continue speaking Romanian with more enthusiasm. It was the exact opposite that happened: under the pretext that Maia refused to speak Romanian in line with her friends, Mihaela and Andi decided to only speak German to their children. Hence, they reached the paradoxical outcome whereby Vlad, who is now seven, has never learned Romanian, meaning that the grandmother cannot communicate with her grandchildren at all, although they live very close by and visit each other daily.

A similar situation can be found in Zsuzsanna's case, a Romanian citizen of Hungarian ethnicity living in the USA, who is married to Ben, an American citizen. Zsuzsanna invested much energy during the first years of their daughter Kira's life to teach her Hungarian, the language of her relatives in Romania, and was making serious plans to teach Kira and Ben Romanian as well. The first years of the girl's life coincided with the time when they built a villa in one of Romania's large cities (her native city), while they lived in a tourist village in the USA. Building the house was associated with the possibility that the family might, one day, move to Romania and have a life here. However, financial crisis kicked in and the family was unable to bear the burden of all the loans for the two houses

(the other being in the USA), so they put the house in Romania up for sale. Meanwhile, her mother died and the family's plans changed. Instead of making further plans for a life in Romania, they decided to start planning to bring over the living grandfather to the USA, even though he spoke no English. Associated with these events and with the change in life plans, they decided that Kira should not speak Hungarian anymore, since there was a slight accent that people sensed at school, and Spanish was enough for her as a foreign language.

It is interesting to note that, in these two situations where mothers insist on the linguistic component while projecting their family in a transnational situation with Romania, as their orientation toward a future is oriented toward the host country, they come to the conclusion that it is in the interest of their children to learn the language of the latter as well as possible. This is even if—as we have seen in both situations—the grandparents cannot communicate with the grandchildren at all anymore, given that they do not speak the language of the country they are being moved to, thus becoming completely dependent on the adults and somehow isolated even within the family.

THE CHOICE OF RELIGION/RITE

It is noteworthy that children's baptism is very important to Romanian Orthodox couples who have children abroad. This practice reinforces a child's claim to a Romanian identity, as the Orthodox rite is strongly associated with Romanianness. Besides, the Romanian Orthodox church is strongly present within Romanian communities abroad. Romanians go to church services as a practice in which their identity as well as their belonging to this community is manifested, even if they need to go to another town to do so—for example, our research respondents in Mons had to go to Brussels on Sundays in order to attend liturgy.

If it is generally easy for Romanians to adhere to the Orthodox rite, similar to Albanian Muslims who are able to keep their allegiance to Islam in the UK (Vathi 2015), in the case of children born in binational or ethnically mixed couples, we have encountered a certain discomfort, similar to that of Albanian Muslims in Greece and Italy (Vathi 2015), among family members when needing to choose. It seems that the extended families in Romania manage to impose their wish for these children to be baptized as Orthodox, rather than the other partner's religion (Ducu and Hossu 2016).

Adi and Katarina chose to baptize their daughter in the Orthodox rite, even if they are not married, under pressure from Adi's parents.

> *I am Orthodox, she [his wife] is Lutheran. [Q:And R. – Their daughter?] She is Orthodox. Anyway, we're not into that religious stuff, but… you know, I had some arguments with people, like, 'You said you're not religious, but why did you baptize your kid?' Or, 'Why do you, when you're not married, go to the church?' Because I have parents and they are like, 'Titititititi, do it! Do it!' You know, it's annoying, but you have to listen to them sometimes.* (Adi, UK)

We encounter a similar situation in the case of Luiza (Orthodox) and Andrew (Methodist), who were yet undecided with respect to the baptism of their daughter, but were persuaded by Luiza's mother to arrange for the baptism in the Orthodox rite.

> *Mum, since she came here, has kept reminding us to baptize the little girl! Yes. And finally, we recently decided to baptize her in the Orthodox community and then she can do what she wants later.* (Luiza, USA)

The impact that the larger family has upon choosing a religion in the case of binational children is highlighted by the story of Virginia's child, who was baptized by the grandmother without agreement from the parents:

> *The boy is Orthodox, we baptized him after three years. At the beginning, it was very hard, but, after three years, we said let's baptize him, and we did. I mean, I don't want to lie, my mother baptized him when we sent him on vacation […] Aurica did it without permission, and my sister was the godmother. And he was three years old. Since then he's very religious, he loves the Bible. At Easter and Christmas, he goes to Church, he knows "Our Heavenly Father" in both Romanian and English, he knows both Bibles but… no, he's Orthodox!* (Virginia, UK)

The set of practices (Morgan 2011a, b) through which the family manifests its belonging to the Orthodox rite—respecting the traditions pertaining to the Orthodox religion, attending religious services, the baptism of children—is another way for them to perform displaying family (Finch 2007, 2011; Dermott and Seymour 2011) *qua* a Romanian Orthodox family (Ducu and Hossu 2016) and to reinforce the Romanianness of their children.

CHILDREN WITH MULTIPLE POTENTIAL CITIZENSHIPS

As an effect of the massive migration of young adults from Romania, ever more children belonging to couples, which include a Romanian partner, are born abroad. Often, this means they have the opportunity to access at least two citizenships in the future: Romanian and that of the country they were born in.

This is the case for Ana's child, who was granted Romanian citizenship as well, despite being born in Canada.

> *He is a Canadian and a Romanian citizen. […] Yes, we got him a Romanian passport and a birth certificate and everything.* (Ana, Canada)

The children of mixed marriages often have access to dual citizenship. This is the case for Ema, who was born in the USA to a Romanian mother and an American father. Luiza wants Ema to obtain Romanian citizenship in the future as well, since she has a "natural right" to be a citizen of the state her mother was born and raised in, and where members of her extended family are living.

> *Well, look, it is in a way simple. For example, since she was born here, she is automatically an American citizen. So, there is no strict prohibition against dual citizenship. […] She has this natural right, so to say, and she can invoke it anytime. But she must fulfil certain demands. In Ema's case, [she needs] to show her birth certificate and to show that I am a Romanian citizen.* (Luiza, USA)

Ever more binational couples live for certain periods of time in a third country, different from any of the countries of origin of the partners (Ducu and Hossu 2016), while an ever-growing number of children are born to such couples. In their situation, the parents need to decide, on the child's behalf, which citizenship (or more) to access. This is the case for Petronela, who was born in the UK, whose father Cristi is a Romanian and whose mother Petra is a Czech.

> *Cristi: Yes, she was born in the UK. She doesn't have a UK passport and she can't get one until she's 18. She is a resident of the UK, she has a UK birth certificate and, if we wanted British citizenship for her, first of all, one of us has to earn it. So, we can't get it [for her] until one at least has it and you*

> *have to be in this country for longer than five years, I believe… I am not going to bother with that. I am not very interested in British citizenship, not for me, not for her, not for my daughter.*
> *Question: Is she Romanian then?*
> *Cristi: She is nothing yet!… We applied for Czech citizenship, just because it lasts a few weeks shorter compared to the Romanian paperwork. This was the only choice. We are waiting for the papers. […] Until she gets her passport, we can't go anywhere with her. I mean, we can, but we can't come back until everything is sorted. […] We are going to apply for Romanian citizenship as well. Both of these countries allow dual citizenship, so why not?*

Similar to children born abroad being eligible for Romanian citizenship, even if they grow up abroad, an increasing number of children born abroad—even if they eventually move to Romania—have the right to request the citizenship of the country they were born in, but perhaps not raised in. A whole generation of Romanian children is growing up with two potential citizenships. For many of these children, parents have not requested the Romanian one (and/or another in the case of mixed couples); hence, the question arises as to how the children themselves will relate to these administrative frames.

The Feeling of Belonging to a Host Country

Studies show that these children develop a hybrid identity (Vathi 2015) by developing a feeling of belonging both to the target country and the country of origin (Bratu 2015), although the families can sense their children's battle with difference. We shall present below the situation of three mothers. Lilla, from a binational (Romanian-Slovak) couple, lives in a temporary transnational situation and has three children in a third country. Raluca, from a couple comprising Romanian citizens, has returned "definitively" with her child from Canada. Krisztina, from another couple comprising Romanian citizens, has been raising her children in a temporary transnational situation in another country.

Lilla's children, who live in a family where the mother is a Romanian citizen and the father is Slovak, while possibly becoming Belgian, are confronting the burden of choice and have come to a clear decision as to their country:

'My mother is from Romania, my father is from Slovakia', if someone asks them. And they are from Belgium. 'But we speak both Slovak and Romanian.', is what they say. (Lilla, Belgium)

Sergiu, who has dual Canadian-Romanian citizenship himself, while having fondly returned to Romania when he was five, at seven he increasingly wants to return to Canada:

Well, he has understood. At the start, I told him and he said, 'Yes, I want to go to Romania!' He was delighted! We went to the doctor and, at the last medical exam, he told him [in English], 'We are not coming back!', since he asked when he would be coming to the next exam. Yes, he was very delighted. On the other hand, we came here and first he didn't say anything.... Frankly, I don't know. He said this, 'I miss Canada!', but he keeps saying this since we came.... 'I want to go to Canada!' I told him we were going to visit, but I didn't have the time since there were events all the time, like that, whatever! And he says, 'I want to go to Canada! I miss Canada!' 'But, what exactly do you miss? Tell me what you miss.' What is his constant answer? 'Because I was born there!' (Raluca, Romania)

We encounter this choice of one country, regardless of citizenship, in the case of Gabriel as well, who lives in Belgium but was not born there, unlike his sister, who will have the right to claim Belgian citizenship by birth. However, he has nevertheless assumed Belgium to be his own country. Whenever he travels to Romania, he is happy, but wants to come back the next day:

'I want to go to my Belgium, I can hardly wait to get to my Belgium!' I don't know why he wanted to go so much to his Belgium, since they like it a lot in Romania. (Krisztina, Belgium)

The three mothers have expressed their worries concerning these attachments, especially since Raluca's family does not want to return to Canada, while Krisztina's wants to return to Romania and Lilla's also wants to settle in Romania in the future. But all three mothers have confessed that these wishes of children are not completely ignored, and that the parents take into consideration living in the country chosen by the children as well, provided that this option does not limit their financial and social opportunities too much.

CONCLUSIONS

For these children born abroad or only raised there, the relationship with the home country seems to ameliorate a little, at least administratively. Registering children born outside the country, as well as their visits home—especially for those living in countries needing visas for Romania—becomes more viable thanks to the new 2017 legislation, which has lifted all fees:

> *Do you know why I think we will succeed this time? Because before, when I went to make a document at the embassy, it cost between 80 and 100 dollars. […] So, I was obliged to bring the money in dollars. But the law has changed and, since 3 February 2017, I reckon, all the documents, all the consular services are absolutely free! I also have children, you know… thus, having Romanian-Egyptian children, I was asked to pay […] almost 100 dollars for the visa to go with my children to the country! […] That is also why we visited very rarely, since I haven't been to Romania for seven years. But now everything has changed, now it is for free.* (Cristina, Egypt)

That said, many other issues have to be managed by the parents who raise their children transnationally. Many studies have taken into consideration the role of children in parents' decisions to leave the country, but these have rather focused on the financial aspect of this decision. The case of Romanian children who are sent to study abroad, unaccompanied by close family members, is underresearched. The access of children to a given educational system seems to be an important argument when changing countries, rather than simply a pretext (Vlase 2013). Keeping the Romanian language is necessary for the children who move abroad with their parents—especially since most departures are temporary. But, in the case of children born abroad, especially those born to binational or nationally mixed couples, the situation gets more complicated, in respect of language, religion and citizenship. Alongside these challenges of transnational parenting is the fact that the sense of belonging (Vathi 2015; Bratu 2015) of children to a specific country is not always consistent with the future plans of their parents.

Concerning these situations involving children, which need to be tackled by Romanian transnational families, the voices of women have become relatively louder, in conformity with traditional Romanian

society, where child raising and education are the responsibility of mothers (Santero and Naldini 2017). If we analyze the situation of children returning to the country in order to study, we observe that, with a single exception (the mixed couple of Shannon and Levi, where the mother is American, hence could not have managed by herself), mothers are rather the ones to be sent home to take care of the children. Romanian fathers, especially those from binational couples, involve themselves when the issue of children's citizenship arises, as well as that of their baptism in the Orthodox rite and learning the Romanian language, that is, the development of the Romanian side of their hybrid identity (Vathi 2015; Rysst 2016).

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Afterword: What Next for Romanian Transnational Family Research?

Abstract After a short review of research on Romanian transnational families, in this short chapter, we provide a summary of previous chapters. This is followed by a projection of the future of transnational family research with regard to families including Romanian members.

The Present State of Research

As we have illustrated throughout this book, the number of Romanian citizens belonging to transnational families is exceptionally high (we estimate this to include over a quarter of the country's population, possibly more). The situations in which these families find themselves are very diverse: from emigrated members who have become integrated into their target countries, to the most varied forms of temporary mobility available.

When compared with the amplitude of the phenomenon, as well as with the diversity and complexity of the situations involving these Romanian transnational family members, studies focusing on this topic are limited in number. Most of these studies are centered on the situation of children at home (Botezat and Pfeiffer 2014) and on the role of parents in their relationships with these children (Robila 2011; Ducu 2013, 2014; Bezzi 2013; Sănduleasa and Matei 2015; Popa 2016; Rentea and Rotărescu 2016). Some studies explore the impact of living in another country upon Romanian

children (Valtolina et al. 2013; Trias et al. 2013; Bratu 2015), the role of women in migration (Davidovic 2009; Crisan 2012; Ducu 2013; Aștilean 2016) and on the relationship between the elderly at home and departed members (Földes 2016; Hărăguș and Telegdi-Csetri 2018). The majority of cases are structured around responsibilities and care, while few try to go into fine detail concerning transnational living: transnational communication (Nedelcu and Wyss 2016; Nedelcu 2017), the impact of mobility on accommodation type (Iacob Larionescu 2016) and trafficked women and their role in these families (Hilario Pascoal and Schwartz 2016).

The Book at Hand

In this book, we have addressed topics that are among the least studied within the research on Romanian transnational families. After a short introduction (Chap. 1) and a brief review of the methodology (Chap. 2), on which this project stands, the book is structured into three large sections.

Thus, in Chap. 3, we presented two perspectives on family life through the lens of lodging type, that is, we analyze family practices as employed by migrant members of transnational families with a Romanian member, from the perspective of their allocation to either the "high-skilled" or "low-skilled" worker category. While not aiming specifically to apply these categories, we did encounter them as such during our field research in 2016, when our team members conducted interviews with low-skilled migrants in London, UK, and high-skilled migrants in Mons, Belgium. The level of urban life varies depending on the workplace category to which these families belong: from a necessity versus free choice to live in either an urban or rural area; through whether they live in a house shared with other families as opposed to a house with a high degree of luxury and domestic workers; on having children without the parents being married in order to access the social welfare category of a lone mother as opposed to freely choosing from among elite institutions for their children. Another important differentiating aspect is the maintenance of relationships with family members at home: the difficulty in hosting a family member who comes to visit due to the limited space available to the low-skilled migrants, compared with the ample family reunions in the large houses of high-skilled migrants; rare or needs-only visits home to save money or free and frequent visits. This chapter shows how the life of transnational families is differentiated, depending on the work status of

migrant members, and will help us understand why, for some, working abroad is a necessity and living in a foreign town becomes a way of survival, whereas for others the same work abroad brings a life of luxury, which, in a way, can be viewed as a long vacation, be it in a rural or an urban area. A central dimension of the analysis is that of the status of migrant women, compared to the work category and the degree of acceptance by the target country. We describe two living strategies, which refer to two categories of couples: the strategy of stealthy living among those in London on the one hand and the strategy of living lavishly among those in Mons, on the other.

In Chap. 4, entitled "Staying in Touch": Views from Abroad and from Home, we presented perspectives on transnational family practices, which offer the feeling of copresence both in terms of migrant members and in terms of those staying at home. Transnational communication, mutual visits and the transfer of care between transnational family members are the most common practices that, between the virtual and the real, make the family whole. Besides comparing the two perspectives, the objective of this chapter was also to analyze these practices from the gender perspective, in an attempt to highlight the role that women, who are usually responsible for maintaining relationships with those in the existing family, have in transnational families toward the new family, as well as responsibilities concerning communication, even in cases where they do not know the language of the partner's relatives (as in the case of some binational couples). However, due to the fact that transnational communication is very much based on technology, we often encounter especially among those at home, who are sometimes elderly, gender roles being overturned: in many cases, older men take over the leading role in maintaining communication with migrant family members, being more open to learning technical things. Another aspect, which is less emphasized in the literature on transnational family relations, beyond migrant transnational family members going home to make recreational visits to relatives, concerns members at home, including the elderly, who travel abroad to visit their kin as well. Yet another issue debated in this chapter involves the practices through which the copresence of family members, who are spread across several countries, can be ensured, since there are an increasing number of cases where transnational families with Romanian members are situated in a number of different states. Multinational communication, which is made possible by technology (online conferencing through Skype or multiperson phone calls), and family reunions (on the occasion of major

family events, as well as spending vacations together) are also some of the family practices that these families employ. A defining moment is the very formation of Romanian-Romanian and binational couples, in which we can observe the role played by online technology (e.g., Facebook, dating sites and simple transnational communication by phone) in finding a partner either in the home or in another country.

Chapter 5 discussed Romanian Children in Multiple Worlds. The departure of the parents is often followed by the departure of the children. Often, the relocation of children is well received by the family, since, by migrating to the West, they will have access to a more modern education system compared to the Romanian one. However, there are situations in which only the children migrate in order to go to school abroad. Situations where parents who have migrated with their children decide to return home are frequent, but the parents' decision is not shared 100% by the children, especially if they have difficulties in using the Romanian language. Children with migrant parents or from binational marriages often have access to dual citizenship, but we also encounter more interesting situations when such children are born in a third country, meaning they will be able to access multiple citizenships. These children, by having access to multiple worlds, become actors in a cosmopolitan world with a different vision from that of the nation state in which Romanians used to be educated. We have presented the situation of these children primarily from the perspective of their mothers, while, at the same time, we have considered the effect that existing children (born before migration) in comparison with the birth of a new child has on the migration plans of mothers. Another issue in this chapter relates to whether decisions involving children are the concern of mothers or of fathers within Romanian transnational families.

WHAT NEXT?

Research on Romanian transnational families has started to develop, while an increasing number of research projects involves Romania as a country of origin of respondents within their design. This is a very appropriate aspect of research, especially for practitioners interested in the findings about Romanian members from such studies. However, numerous studies only assume the perspective of Romanians as economic migrants, especially those seeking unskilled work. Research on transnational families with high-skilled Romanian members is insignificant in comparison to the

numbers and lodging diversity of such persons. Comparative studies of transnational families that have been formed during various waves of Romanian migration would be welcome in order to gain a bird's-eye view of the way in which families are reconfigured, depending on the moment of departure of their members, on their legal status at the time and now and on places of destination. Special attention should be given to studies taking account of the cosmopolitan character (Beck 2012; Telegdi-Csetri and Ducu 2016) of a large segment of Romanian transnational families.

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fviorela@yahoo.com