

Migrants in Italy, Citizens in Europe? Trajectories, Experiences and Motivations of the Multiple Mobilities of Italian-Bangladeshis Relocating to London

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The paper looks at the recent phenomenon of Bangladeshi immigrants in Italy who are onward-migrating to London, after their acquisition of the Italian citizenship. Adopting an intersectional approach, we seek to answer two questions: what were their mobility trajectories before arriving in Italy and within Italy? Why do they onward-migrate from Italy to the UK? For most Italian-Bangladeshis, Italy constitutes just a step in their migration trajectories: their mobility biographies are marked by many arrivals and departures. This responds to their desire for upward social mobility and their realization as adult men. This also leads them to leave Italy and move to London: in order to escape socially limiting factory work, to invest in the educational future of their children, to join a much larger Bangladeshi community set within a receptive multicultural and religion-tolerant society.

Keywords: Onward migration; Motility; Migration trajectories; European citizenship; Multiple mobilities.

Introduction

The 30th anniversary of the Schengen Agreement felt on 14 June 2015. Over the last three decades, many things have changed. Since 2008, the economic crisis has had a profound impact on both the European Union and countries beyond its borders, with significant implications for migration mobilities (Della Puppa, 2018a). It has contributed to a shift in migration patterns: European countries, e.g., the Mediterranean countries, have re-emerged as sources of labour migration (Lafleur, Staneck and Veira, 2017) and are being re-imagined as peripheries.

Meanwhile, the crisis is contributing to the relatively new phenomenon of “onward migration” within Europe (Della Puppa and King, 2018), i.e., the reactivation of migratory mobility through Third Country Nationals (TCN). That is, migrants originating from non-EU countries who, once they have acquired EU citizenship in one EU country, leave for another. So, EU citizenship is the ultimate goal for some TCN migrants (Sredanovic and Della Puppa 2017; Carrillo, 2015), whereas others see formal citizenship as a means to obtain the freedom to move within the EU and start new (e)migration (Sredanovic and Della Puppa 2017; Danaj and Ćaro, 2016; van Liempt, 2011).

This has led to the flourishing of rich literature that criticises the conceptualisation of migration as a simple bipolar event – a move from A to B. “Onward migration” is just one of the many terms for this type of mobility (Ahrens, Kelly and van Liempt, 2016; Tsujimoto, 2016). Indeed, there are several other terms and perspectives scattered across the literature, including transit migration (Collyer and de Haas, 2010), secondary migration (Legomsky, 2003), step-wise migration (Paul, 2011), multiple migration (Ciobanu, 2015).

Despite – or perhaps because of – this terminological complexity, few empirical studies have been conducted to explain the migrant’s representations of reasons for these multiple mobilities. Undoubtedly, the ongoing search for better opportunities may be the key to answering this question in many cases.

Here, we will focus on multiple mobilities of migrants originating from Bangladesh and arriving in the UK via an intermediate migration stage(s) in Italy where they acquired their European passport.

Taking this case study, this contribution poses two sets of research questions. First, what were the mobility trajectories of these migrants before arriving in Italy and within Italy? How can these trajectories be interpreted in the light of an intersectional approach that

considers gender identity, class position in the country of origin and their upward social mobility strategies? Second, why do they onward-migrate from Italy to the UK? How do they articulate the mix of factors in operation to frame their decision to move to another country?

Firstly, we sketch the necessary background concerning the Bangladeshi migration to Italy and the social profile of migrants. A section on the multiple mobilities of the interviewees and the transformations of their social, identity, family and administrative statuses then follow. The final six paragraphs focus on the British context and, especially, on the migrants' representation of the reasons for their relocation. The conclusion highlights the paper's most significant findings, combining migration mobility with social mobility through an intersectional perspective.

Methods

The empirical material for this paper consists of 40 in-depth narrative interviews with Italian-Bangladeshis: 20 were interviewed in London having already made their relocation, and 20 were interviewed in North-East Italy. This latter group were Italian citizens planning to move to the UK. All interviews were with male household heads aged from their 30s to 50s. The fieldwork was in two phases: in Italy during 2010-2011, and in London in 2015-2016. Interviewees' names are fictitious.

Migratory, Social and Gendered Mobilities

Bangladeshi migration in Italy is a relatively recent phenomenon. It was not until the 80s that many migrants reached the northern shores of the Mediterranean, due to the closure of borders of other European countries (Priori, 2012) along with the deep economic and social transformations and the turbulent political and economic scenario taking shape in Bangladesh (Chossudovsky, 2003). Political instability has led to the rise of economic insecurity related to structural adjustments and intense privatisation campaigns imposed by international financial institutions. Deep budget cuts blocked economic development, stopped the nationalization program adopted after the "liberation war" that created great expectations among the population. The continuous changes in the political landscape brought about a climate of violence, insecurity and corruption, blocking the aspirations of middle-class families who, although possessing the means of subsistence and cultural capital, were not able to improve their social status.

Italy qualified as an important destination of the Bangladeshi migration during the 90s. In 1986, the number of residence permits issued to Bangladeshi citizens barely exceeded 100 units, but this had increased to almost 4,000, in 1990, and more than 70,000, by the early 2000s. The Bangladeshi community today numbers almost 120,000 (Priori, 2012). In the 90s, Italy still offers relatively good working and wage conditions by virtue of a growing labour market, the structural importance of the shadow economy and the need of highly flexible and low-cost labour force that the country tried to satisfy through “instrumentally lax” immigration policies.

Nevertheless, the high economic cost of migration in Europe and Italy compared with other destinations (the petro-monarchies of the Middle East *in primis*) has worked as a social filter, selecting the middle and upper-middle class migrants whose families had sufficient economic capital to support such investment. In addition to the social position of the first generation of Bangladeshis in Italy, their gender identity should also be underlined: this migration, in fact, was opened in almost all cases by a male first-migrant (Della Puppa, 2016).

This generation of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy is mainly composed of young bachelors and members of the middle-class of Bangladeshi society: sons of wealthy families with a good cultural capital who agreed to undergo a downgrading process in Europe in order to improve their (family) social position (Zeytlin, 2006). In fact, this migration is configured as a strategy of the middle classes to regain the path of upward mobility – for themselves, for their family of origin and for their future “elective” family – blocked by recent historical, economic and political trends that have affected the country:

I was from a neither rich and neither poor family. An average family. “Average” means that my father had a work and we have always had a life without problems. We ate, we slept and every month we haven’t saved anything, we were always at the same level. For this, when I grew up, I was thinking, “What if I take over the work that was doing my dad who lost his life, I will lose my life. If I want to improve, I must leave the country” (Tariq, Italy).

At the same time, the reactivation of upward social mobility and the socio-economic improvement of the domestic aggregate through migration constitute responsibilities of which their fulfilment can be seen as a necessary step to the self-realization as adult man and the social construction of the male identity (Della Puppa, 2014). Therefore, the migration experience represents a necessary journey in order to be viewed through different eyes (Monsutti, 2007; Osella

and Osella, 2000). *Bidesh* (in Bangla, “foreign land”, “abroad”) – that for middle-classes means Europe – constitutes the place where it is possible to become adults, to pass the test of manhood through which it is possible to prove one’s capability to carry the burden of family responsibilities and individual ambitions:

I left my country because I wanted to be someone, I wanted to establish my life totally with my trying. What is the aim of every man? [...] I had the desire to be a success a man, to be in a good position. I don’t have the desire to be too rich; I just have the desire to be a success man from my own and not from my mother and father (Mujib, Italy).

For the representatives of the first generation of Bangladeshi migrants in Italy, therefore, the migratory experience constitutes a strategy for individual and collective as well as family and personal realization that intersects gender and class categories, outlining a social construction process of gendered class and gender of class.

Multiple Trajectories

The interviewees report almost overlapping journeys. Administrative irregularity in Italy and inclusion in the “shadow economy” represent common experiences. After having spent a more or less prolonged period as irregular migrants, usually in Rome, they have regularized their administrative position through amnesty.

However, their arrival in Italy could be interpreted just as a “milestone” of a multiple mobilities experience. For example, some have opened their migration trajectory with an initial shift to the territories of what was the Soviet Union that has always favoured the entry of *probashi* (in Bangla, “those who went abroad”, “emigrants”) (Piori, 2012). In fact, after the implosion of the regimes of the so-called “real socialism”, many have turned to Mediterranean Europe.

Others have left their country of origin to move initially to the Middle East. In this case, this often short-term first experience constituted a sort of initiation into the migration and, above all, necessary work for the accumulation of the necessary resources to undertake a second migration to Europe:

I went to work in Iraq, I have been there three years and then I returned to Bangladesh and then I came to Italy. I worked three years in Iraq, earn some money, then returned to Bangladesh. [...] After six months, I arrived in Italy, in 1990 (Matin, Italy).

From the narratives of interviewees, stories emerge of diversified mobilities based on their unequal economic and transnational social capital. For instance, one respondent said he arrived later in Europe, after a first experience in the Middle East, another managed to land directly in Rome with a tourist visa and another, who arrived in Italy for the administrative regularization, experienced a real migration episode:

After Japan, I went to Malaysia, then Singapore, after two months I came back to Malaysia, worked there almost two years. After, I went back to Bangladesh, two or three months there, then I returned to Malaysia again, in 1991, and I have been lucky that I found a visa for Holland. I was there seven years. Then Italy (Selim, Italy).

I went to East Germany, then in Italy, in 1979, eight months, I lived in Milan. Then returned to Bangladesh, I went to Singapore. I found a job on the ships. Cargo ships, stuff that went from Singapore to China, from China to India, from India to Middle East, then every now and then, six times, I was in Bangladesh [...]. I came a second time in Europe, England directly. 1989. From '89 to '98, Switzerland, Germany... Never returned to Bangladesh in ten years, because I did not have documents to go and come back. Then Germany, then Italy, in '96 (Karim, Italy).

The Italian residence permit, in addition to representing an element of class distinction, provides migrants with the opportunity to return “home” and explore the marriage market in their country of origin, where they have acquired social credentials as successful migrant men. In fact, their condition allows them to arrange marriages that are particularly advantageous, often with women from a higher social status. In addition, the marriage – made possible by migration – could constitute an individual and collective strategy of reactivation of upward social mobility and, at the same time, a further experience of social construction of adult masculinity.

In Italy, this regularization has allowed many migrants to shift from Rome to the industrial suburbs of northern Italy and to consequent work (in a factory) and residential stabilization, which are the necessary conditions for reunification with spouses and the birth of a second generation. Becoming a father triggers new reflexivity processes for migrants and loads them with new responsibilities, including providing to their children more opportunities for socio-economic achievement than those of previous generations, meeting an intra-family and intra-generational mandate. At the same time, as previously mentioned, despite their social position in Bangladesh, the work they do in Italy «they would never dream of doing in their

home country» (Zeitlyn, 2006: 32). Geographic mobility from the “global south” to Europe corresponds with downward social mobility from the middle-class to the working class (Priori, 2012).

Arriving in Italy between the 1990s and 2000s, today, these representatives of the first generation of *probashi* have fulfilled the necessary requirements for acquiring citizenship: in Italy, it is possible to apply for citizenship after 10 years of regular and continuous residence in the country. If granted, it is transferred to the children and – after at least two years – to the spouse (Catalano, 2013).

Again, upon becoming a father, *probashi* must comply with his new status and take on new responsibilities; among these, in addition to the satisfaction of material and emotional needs of his family, there is also a better chance of upward social mobility for his children and the guarantee of solid legal and social stability. Formal citizenship satisfies both these aspects (Zanfrini, 2013).

For this generation of “Italian *probashi*”, therefore, the acquisition of citizenship has occurred concurrently with other events – both of structural and biographical-family nature – that pushed migrants to re-shape their biographical and mobility trajectories. On the one hand, the global economic crisis has changed the horizons of opportunity, reducing the chances of socio-economic realization and satisfactory individual and collective achievement. This situation is especially true for the southern European countries, such as Italy, characterized by a severe economic and social immobility and especially for the young people of the underprivileged classes (Gjergji, 2015) of which many Bangladeshi migrants belong in Italy. On the other hand, the birth and socialization of their children in Italy has caused migrant fathers to reflect on the discriminatory mechanisms of Italian society and, especially, its labour market they have experienced on their own as migrants – even if formally as Italians.

Therefore, the Italian passport may symbolize the ultimate step of a stabilization process in Italy, whereas for others it may become a strategic factor for reactivating migratory mobility (Sredanovic and Della Puppa 2017). By becoming Italian citizens, the *probashi* become European citizens also. By acquiring the nationality of a Member country, they acquire the ability to move within the territory of the EU and to undertake any new migration (Danaj and Ćaro, 2016; Della Puppa and King, 2018) – almost always oriented towards a context generically defined as “Londoni” – thus, demonstrating a cosmopolitan conception of the European space: «Then I go around Europe», says Ali. «Then the world opens up», confirms Masud.

“To Go Upward”

These first ethnographic suggestions help to interpret the quantitative dates. In fact, according to the Bangladeshi embassy in Italy, there are approximately 6,000 Italian households of Bangladeshi origin (approximately 25,000 persons) who left the Italian peninsula and moved to London. This figure is very low compared with the number of Italians residing in London – who, according to the 2011 census, equal approximately 130,000 (McKay, 2015) or more than 200,000 according to other sources (Scotto, 2015) – but at the same time, these statistics are quite substantial compared to the number of Bangladeshis in Italy.

As mentioned, one of the representations constructed to explain and justify the onward migration traces it back to the crisis that is affecting the Mediterranean countries with particular intensity. For them, however, rather than the economic consequences of the crisis, what determined their choice was the awareness of upward social mobility for themselves and especially their children, confirming the “male” realization of the migrant (Della Puppa, 2014).

Previous research has shown that the crisis has affected immigrants and their families more harshly, (Bonifazi and Marini, 2014). However, the interviewees reported that in Italy they worked with permanent contracts in engineering, tanning or catering companies, insisting they were not particularly concerned about the maintenance of their job:

I worked for a company called DLP, an engineering company that did industrial tie-rods. I had a permanent contract, calm, all settled. The crisis hasn't created serious problems to me, to my job (Rahaman, London).

Despite this, the reactivation of the migratory mobility is described as an “escape” from economic and social immobility that characterizes the Italian scenario and denies any possibility of realization for younger generations. It is then represented, above all, as an investment aimed at the reactivation of the upward social mobility for the children born in Italy:

I chose to come to England because I thought first of all to the future. The future not mine, not ours, mine and of my wife, but the future of my children. Looking a bit around, in Italy, in fact, knowing that there is a crisis, talking to young people... I could not see any future for them in Italy. I was afraid for the future of my children. So, I came to England for them, to give them a better future, because I feel that there are better chances (Mukul, London).

When they reached the Mediterranean north shore between the 90s and 2000s, Italian society presented a still vaguely expanding economy, a relatively inclusive labour market and some flexible migratory policies. Thus, it constituted a stimulating environment in which to aspire to social improvement for themselves as well as for future generations. Through this, they were able to pursue the realization of themselves as man and father, to demonstrate their successful masculinity in front of their family, countrymen, society and themselves.

Today, Italian society is static and asphyxiated, and the possibilities of realization and social mobility are severely limited. For Italian-Bangladeshis, the only way to fully realize their goals and their lives as men and not frustrate the efforts and sufferings of the migration experience is to mortgage their social and material Italian achievements and invest in the upward social mobility of their descendants through an onward geographic mobility.

English as the Key to the World

The increased attractiveness of London in terms of investment on the future of children takes shape in different areas. First, the dissatisfaction of Bangladeshi parents with the Italian school and university system must be highlighted. The Italian university is not a problem in itself. Rather, it is the impossibility of educating and socializing children in the English language. English is not a language of common knowledge in Italy, which is a significant concern for Bangladeshi parents who are clearly more oriented towards a globalised and cosmopolitan dimension than the Italian population.

The language of the former colonizers continues to attract Bangladeshis. For this reason, and because of the symbolic value conveyed by the former capital of the empire, a university degree obtained in the UK has greater value for many Bangladeshis than an Italian degree. In line with the “global” aspirations of *probashi*, this is also true in other Western countries outside of Italy:

Another reason, that is very important for me and for the Bangladeshi community, is English, for my daughter’s future. If she will study and grow up in English, she will be able to work here, in Bangladesh or all over the world, but if she stays in Italy, she learns only Italian, just a little bit of English, so... (Kabir, London).

Interviewees clearly understood that the expansion of opportunities for social and economic realization that they hoped for future generations – and that will socially and symbolically realize them-

selves as successful family and migrant men – could only take place in an international labour market and through a geographical mobility that transcends national, and probably even European, borders. In addition to being a symbol of status distinction¹ that allows them to recover the original social positioning in Bangladesh, the English language and a more prestigious level of education compared with the Italian degree would provide their descendants with the necessary tools to establish themselves and acquire that social mobility that they have tried to re-activate through a first migration. Furthermore, English allows communication with the world, but is spoken and perceived as native also in the migrants' country of origin. By making communication between their children and their parents and siblings possible and smoother, the *probashi* confirm their realization as family men and are able to enjoy the successful transition between generations.

A Way out from the Factories

Italian-Bangladeshis perceive that if the annihilation of upward social mobility possibilities is a concrete thing for the young Italians of native origin, it is even worse for those of migrant origin. Actually, they reveal that as migrants in Italy they feel discriminated against, especially in the labour market because they are classified as unskilled workers, channelled towards more strenuous, unhealthy and lower paying tasks and deprived of concrete possibilities of vertical mobility. Therefore, being Italian “on paper” would not constitute a sufficient condition to escape the informal and structural discrimination that many migrants face (Andall, 2002). Formally granted citizenship is actually considered by the interviewees as a “third-class” citizenship, a citizenship embedded in all areas of social action, in the body, in the colour of the skin, in the surname and in all those elements that “betray” the Bangladeshi origin (Queirolo Palmas, 2004):

If you live in Italy, but you come from the Third World like me, you'll always be a third-class citizen with a third-class citizenship [...] I am Italian, but only in words. My skin does not change. [...] I'm Italian on the documents, but my daughters will always be daughters of a Bangladeshi worker (Bitu, Italy).

¹ In Bangladesh, only the middle and high-educated classes have access to English language.

Another interviewee found that Italian society is still unprepared to include people from different national, cultural and ethnic backgrounds and expressed his aspiration to live in a more cosmopolitan context. He was especially concerned, once again, about his son, whom he wanted to spare the suffering and humiliation of growing up in a context in which he would likely be trapped in the condition of “foreigner” and “migrant”:

My son was born here; he’s got the Italian citizenship. He feels to be Italian. Some days ago, I got my son into a guitar school. The secretary woman told someone on the phone: «An Indian boy has come to take lessons». My son, eight years old: «Why did she tell me I’m Indian? I’m not Indian!». He is Italian, he feels Italian, but his colour says that he is Indian. It is so painful. What can I do as his father (Zaeed, Italy)?

The prospect of a life in Italy would imply the impossibility of any actual improvement in migrants’ socio-occupational condition and the risk that their children will follow the same professional and existential trajectory: workers in a factory or employed in the subordinate segments of the labour market to perform the so-called “3D jobs”. If migrants have accepted the degradation of being considered “third-class citizens”, this condition no longer seems acceptable with the birth of new generations, as it would constitute a failure as fathers and men:

If he did university, graduate, doctor, then where does he work? In the bank? Insurance? Imagine he tries in a bank: let’s say among ten white colleagues, as the son of a migrant what a war he has to do to be accepted, to get hired and then to make a career! Maybe I’m biased, but I speak of my practical experience. Then I asked myself, «But why did I do all this work, as a street vendor, in the restaurants, in the factory, to see my son do the same work that made his father?». I did not want my son had to do my same struggling. One day Italy will change, but it is not so yet. So, when I had my passport, I thought, “If I stay in Italy, it will go this way, if I go to London, it will be otherwise” (Apanan, London).

Interviewees are aware of the perception of the Italian labour market concerning migrants and young people of migrant origin. They also realize that the «serious economic and social immobility» and the disappearance of «possibilities for a satisfactory individual achievement» (Gjergji, 2015:18) that follow affect – albeit with unequal intensity – all members of younger generation, regardless of nationality. Unlike native families, however, Italian-Bangladeshi migrants are used to move and migrate and their mobility capital can be a useful resource in the structural impasse of the country:

In the end, I am a foreigner anyway, no? Italy, England or Germany, for me almost equal. I go where is better. I understood that I can change. Out of Bangladesh, I am always a foreigner. Sure, I lived in Italy for over 25 years and it was my second country, but it is not my homeland (Rashid, London).

To “Feel at Home” far From Home

London, the onward migration main destination of Italian-Bangladeshis, is represented – not without a certain amount of idealization – as the global and multicultural city par excellence, as a meritocratic environment full of opportunities that allow young people of every country to enhance their capacities. This representation of the supposed meritocracy that apparently characterizes the British capital is linked, by the interviewees, to the British multiculturalism governance: a tradition that has contributed to building a society where “ethnic-racial” identities, national origin, religion and culture features do not constitute a discriminative stigma for young people of non-European origin in the labour market:

There are 600.000 Bangladeshi living here. There is a big community in Tower Hamlet. There are three Bangladeshi members in the British parliament. I mean from Bangladeshi origin. In local council, there are Bangladeshis, Africans, British... all together. While in Italy, you will remain always *extracomunitario* [migrant from TNC]. You have got Italian passport, OK, Italian people is good and nice, but it is very difficult to have an institutional role, to have a high-status job. There are no policemen of migrant origin. It is a kind of racism. Here, the policemen are black, Chinese, Bengalis... In Italy, none from our country has a good job, only *operaio* [factory worker], while, here, if you have studied as doctor, you'll be a doctor. Bengali, Chinese, British, it doesn't matter. [...] Here there is the multiculturalism, there are all the cultures of the world. It is normal. Here we are “invisible”, while in Italy we are like in the zoo: visible, foreigners (Mukul, London).

This representation is also attributed to the legacy of British colonialism and therefore, to the long migratory tradition that has linked the Indian subcontinent to the colonial motherland since the seventeenth century and has allowed the creation of the oldest and largest Bangladeshi community outside of Bangladesh. For these reasons, London is perceived as “a homeland outside the homeland”, an environment where you can “feel at home” and live in accordance with what interviewees define “Bengali culture and lifestyle”:

Here there is no difference from Bangladesh. We are many. If you go to White Chapel, it is a “small Bangladesh”: you find everything. If you don’t want to speak in English, it doesn’t matter: 90% speaks Bangla. Here there are music, arts programs, so many things. Here is almost Bangladesh. I feel at home (Rashid, London).

Another product of British colonial legacy is a sense of admiration and attraction that citizens of the colonial peripheries have for London. Despite the British Empire dominating the sub-continent and its peoples and laying the foundations for economic dependence and mass emigration, it has also provided the base for an administrative, legal, educational, political and social system, shaping the aspirations and the imaginary of Bangladeshi generations, for which London is a “migration dream”. For those who came to Mediterranean Europe twenty years ago, it is a dream finally “within reach”:

The British have dominated and exploited my land, I know it, but my generation also sees British administrators as a model. You always see as a model those who command. You wonder how they live. They are a reference point for us. 99% of Bangladeshi law is still modelled on the English one. Everything in Bangladesh makes you dream of England. The children of rich people, ministers, important people, come to study here, in London. All the important people, politicians, successful entrepreneurs have studied in England or London. For us Bangladeshi people London has always been a dream. Then you think, «Damn, I was not able to come, because my father didn’t have this possibility, but now I have the opportunity to make my children grow up and study in London!». I realize the dream (Apan, London)!

The long tradition of immigration from former colonies makes London a context in which it is not necessary to justify their presence. On the contrary, in London you can claim the status of “citizen” and for your descendants also – even if you inevitably belong to the so-called “ethnic minorities”.

For a Religious Education of Children in Europe

The possibility to express self-ascribed memberships is a very important role played by religion. For many interviewees, the possibilities of living and revealing more freely their religious affiliation in the public realm, to enter a larger community of the faithful and specially to ensure a religious education of their children constitutes a main driving force for emigration to the UK:

[In London] my fellow countrymen go to study the Koran; there are madrassas. All of this is in London, but here it is not. [It is] important for children now to think about this. [...] We think London is better [...] Because we are Muslims and religion is important for my countrymen, so I fear for my children. For the children, the religion is important, how to find the way to God. Here is difficult. Here it is not like in my country. Not like in London. So, I am thinking of [going to] London, because in London there is everything (Mintu, Italy).

In Italy, and even more in the wake of the emotions aroused by the recent events in Paris, Brussels and Berlin, politicians and administrators read the dynamic social environment, especially at the local level, as a “clash of civilizations”, or at least they see Islam as incompatible with Italian society (Saint-Blancat and Schmidt di Friedberg, 2005). This can lead to the creation of a latent conflict, which will surely influence individual choices of Italian-Bangladeshi immigrants and their families (Ambrosini, 2013).

Sometime [I go to the mosque]. Not much. Because I am also scared. Every day the newspaper says, more and more, “Muslim terrorists, Islamic terrorists.” [So] I am a bit scared of going to the mosque [...] I [am] scared that if I go to the mosque maybe police will stop me and create problems. So sometimes, I pray at home, sometimes I go to the mosque, but less now (Masud, Italy).

During the process of migration, religious practice, sense of belonging and Islamic prayer are relevant factors for the social construction of the masculine parental identity. For *probashi* fathers, Islamic practice represents an educational duty towards children born in Italy, a concept map to be conveyed to them so that the interpretative categories and useful reference points. Consequently, the impossibility of fully assuming this duty has pushed Italian-Bangladeshis overseas:

In England, it is different, it is better, for culture of religion. For example, in Italy, in Vicenza, we had bought a space for a mosque. [...] Every time the municipality changed the conditions to use this space. At first, for example, they asked for two toilets and one for the disabled. Obviously, we didn't manage to do this. But it was just an excuse to obstruct the mosque because they were not well disposed towards foreigners, especially Muslims. Even if we had built three bathrooms, they would have found another quibble to bother us, understand? Or on Friday, the day of collective prayer, there were always police checks, so it was never a good situation. Here it is different. Here we can send children to study religion, here there are possibilities (Faruq, London).

Welfare and Security Capital

Finally, the UK is also a more attractive destination compared with Italy by virtue of its welfare system, which is considered more inclusive than the “Mediterranean” system (Esping-Andersen, 1990):

In Italy, if you work, you have everything, if you do not work, you have nothing. Here, instead, if you work, good, but when you lose your job you have benefits (Jahan, London).

As European citizens living in the UK, the Italian-Bangladeshis are entitled to be supported by the British welfare state. The inclusion in the British welfare system is described by Italian-Bangladeshi interviewees as another decisive factor behind the new migration because it relieves them from the strict responsibility of being the family male breadwinner. In Italy, this responsibility is completely focused on the working dimension – increasing what Zeitlyn defines as “security capital” (2016) and being a safety net on which to rely in case of problems:

Here there is economical support from the benefit. If I lose my job and I don't work for three, four months, I can live. While in Italy is difficult: to pay the rent, the food, everything... As there were many other Bangladeshi friends that came here from Italy, I get this information from there and I decided to come in England me too. Here, if I lost my job, at least I get support. It's a form of security for the future (Kabir, London).

The real contributions distributed by the British government do not fully explain the attraction of the new migratory destination. Rather, this is determined by an unrealistic representation of the British welfare state and its inclusive nature. Thus, an idealized representation that is reproduced through migratory networks has concretely guided mobility trajectories of Italian-Bangladeshi households.

Conclusion

This paper has contributed to a renewal of the conceptualisation of migration as a simple bipolar event – a move from A to B. Further holding together and enriching this conceptualisation in a unifying analytical framework of migration and mobility approaches, starting from an emblematic case study.

The general narrative distilled from the in-depth interviews provided the empirical evidence to answer the two main research questions set out in the introduction.

During the last three decades, Italy has become an important centre of the Bangladeshi migration. In fact, a part of this will find, in Rome and – as a result of both international and internal mobility (King and Skeldon, 2010) – next to many industrial areas of the north of the Peninsula, a stable life situation, characterized by a relatively inclusive labour market and “instrumentally lax” migration policies (Della Puppa, 2014). This responds to the desire for upward social mobility sought by first-migrant men (for themselves and for their future generations) and, consequently, of their realization as adult men.

However, if observed within the migratory trajectories of the respondents, Italy constitutes just a step. In fact, before arriving and during their stay in the peninsula, their mobility biographies are marked by many arrivals and departures, both in the international arena as well as within Italy. Indeed, the peninsula may represent a temporary landing and a broader horizon of possibilities thanks to a “constellation of geopolitical factors” (Knights, 1996). This is particularly evident for a specific component of Bangladeshi migrants: young bachelor middle-class men with good cultural capital, escaping from the social immobility to which they felt to be doomed in their country of origin.

Nevertheless, in the context of migration on the peninsula, the rapid increase of *probashi* – partly as a result of the economic crisis, which is particularly virulent in the countries of the Mediterranean Europe – will soon enter a new phase, targeting the UK that has never lost its attractiveness as the colonial motherland. At the same time, this may frame Italy’s vocation (never completely abandoned) as a country of “transit” and “migration crossroads”. Along with the Italian and European scenario, the trajectories of migrants – in the meantime European citizens – are changing in a society that no longer meets their renewed individual and family needs.

Interviews in Italy and London revealed a variety of interlinked and overlapping pushes to onward migration. Common to virtually all interview scripts were the aspiration to build a better future, especially for the next generation, and the desire to become part of a much larger Bangladeshi community set within a receptive multi-cultural and religion-tolerant society.

Here, then, this “new migration” is part of the continuum of a single migration biography. If the meaning of the multiple migratory mobilities that have linked Bangladesh to Italy can be traced in the search for upward social mobility and the realization of migrants’ own masculinity as family men, the relocation in the UK appears as the only way to ensure that their past mobility continues to make sense.

Finally, the role of citizenship must be underlined. On obtaining an Italian passport after ten or more years of continuous residence, Italian-Bangladeshis have a kind of “citizenship to go” (Della Puppa and Sredanovic, 2016) or “motility” (Kaufmann, Manfred, and Dominique, 2004), which allows them to leave the country and explore new horizons (Ahrens, Kelly and van Liempt, 2016). Nevertheless, the contemporary British scenario could prefigure new mobilities and strategies within their migratory biographies or, at least, a next stage of their lives. Specifically, how their Italian passports and their Bangladeshi heritage will fare in post-Brexit Britain is yet to be determined.

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