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SOCIAL DIVIDES AND TRANSNATIONAL VALUES.

EN-GENDERING HOMES IN THE INTERGENERATIONAL NARRATIVES

OF PUNJABI DIASPORANS IN NORTHERN ITALY

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Abstract

The thesis develops a critical ethnographic study of today's Punjabi settlements in rural Lombardy (northern Italy), as it considers their global diaspora itineraries as well as local integration dynamics focusing on the shift from first to second generation migration with a gender perspective.

Building upon burgeoning international literature on transnationalism and diaspora studies, including crucial area scholarship about South Asians overseas, this investigation contributes to the emergent debate on Indian minorities in the Italian national context, providing underexplored accounts of the production and resistance to multi-scale social differentiation.

From an engaged posture (being I a language teacher for immigrants and advocate for migrants' integration in the same setting where I began my research), my enquiry challenged clear-cut representations of the Italian Indian collectives, unveiling the latent conflicts that snuggle under the social texture of a highly heterogeneous *ethnic* minority in a *host* context of mounting super-diversity. Through a 20-month multisite fieldwork (which involved participant observation and narrative interviews across Italy and India), I explored how Punjabi migrants set up and gave meanings to their diasporic homes within their mobility projects, seeing them as they juggled with competing sets of moral values and politics of belonging, often moving from the status of NRIs (non-resident Indians) to that of new Italian citizens.

Thanks to the nuanced disclosure from my interlocutors, especially eight closer collaborators from four diverse families (with regard to faith, caste and class) with whom I worked with in both field sites, I traveled the joint processes of displacement, re-production and transformation of Punjabi identities as these unfolded in the daily lives and tales of women and men, younger and elder migrant subjects. Social dramas enacted in their transnational households and local neighborhoods revealed to what extent the domestic microphysics of power is embedded in wider networks of interaction, drawing upon contingent ideologies and political economies.

Applying intersectional analysis, I argue that an increasing social differentiation among the Italian Punjabi community not only impinges on migrants' agency (their situated access to resources and capability to partake in the local milieu with global orientations), but it also makes room for strategic forms of resistance or mobilization against structures of domination (from classism to patriarchy, from border control regimes to the neoliberal governance of migrant capital, from *jati*-based discrimination to civic stratification).

Far from being an invisible and passive labor force, occasionally perceived as victims or criminals, people of Punjabi descent in Italy confront multiple forms of exclusion and inequity, individually and collectively, in private and public. In doing so, they put at stake social divides and transnational values across interconnected spaces: from their homeland, within their immigrant community, in the national society and on the global diaspora media-scape they simultaneously inhabit. Giving voice to my collaborators' struggles and claims for social recognition and inclusion opens up new fields of enquiry into Indian diaspora consciousness and activism, while it adds to local community development and possibly recommends Italian migration policy-making.

Key-words: Punjabi diaspora, Indian immigrants in Italy, transnationalism, politics of belonging, intersectionality, life narratives, critical ethnography.

Acknowledgments

Ethical Caveat

I have chosen to italicize my informants' direct speech throughout the text in order to prioritize and emphasize their words and perspectives above those of scholars, politicians or public commentators.
Names and identities have been systematically altered to protect the anonymity of individuals concerned.
All the photos are my own unless stated otherwise. Most fieldwork shots do not compare here in order to protect people's privacy. Selected pictures with recognizable personal identities were included thanks to prior informed consent granted from the subjects involved.

Acronyms and Glossary of recurrent Punjabi terms

NRI: Non-resident Indian

PIO: Person of Indian Origin

OCI: Overseas Citizen of India

MOIA: Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs

ISC: Italy Sikh Council, Sikh advocacy association in Italy

ISKCON: International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Panjab: lit. Land of five Rivers, transliteration from the Sanskrit, upheld by scholars who rebut the British internationalized standard Punjab

Hindustan: (Hindi definition of) the Indus plains, for extension all northwestern Indian subcontinent

Gurdwara: Sikh temple

Mandir: Hindu temple

Darbar: Ravidassia temple

Guru Granth Sahib/Adi Granth: Sikh Holy Scripture

(Sikh) Panth: lit. path of the guru

Har: Ravidas insignia

Diwali: Hindu festival of lights

Baisakhi/Vaisakhi: Sikh main celebration (harvest festival and Khalsa anniversary)

Khalsa/amritdhari: Sikh orthodoxy, lit. community of pures, those who have taken the Sikh Baptism

Bani: sacred writings

Dera: not-for profit spiritual and social welfare organization

Puja: act of worship (esp. in Hindu traditions)

Prasad: offering to God(s)

Langar: free kitchen served in gurdwaras (and other Indian temples)

Sewa: free public service, often performed in a langar

Begumpura: utopian egalitarian society (esp. in Ravidassia ideology)

Qaum: religious community (similar to Muslim Umma)

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Reht Maryada: religious Code of Conduct

Gurmukhi: Punjabi language script

Dastar (pag/dumalla): Sikh turban (esp. but not only for males)

Salwaar Kameez: male and female Punjab rural attire (long sleeved shirt and loose khakis)

Dupatta: shawl

Saris: traditional Indian dress for women

Kurta: fancy Indian blouse worn over trousers

Pravasi: Indian Diaspora people

Desh: (Indian – south Asian) homeland

Pardesh: home abroad

Desi(s): those who live abroad

Pravasi (Bharatiya) Divas: non-resident Indian community Day

Inditian(s): people of Indian ascent living in Italy (irrespective of nationality)

Partition: separation of India from Pakistan in 1947 after the Independence from the British Raj

Operation Blue Star (1984): Indian military operation against Sikh armed separatism

Khalistan: nationalist political liberation movement for an independent Sikh Punjabi State

Pind: village

Ghar: home (house and household)

Umeed: hope, great expectation

Raksha: safety

Visavaasa: trust

Shraddha: faith (also devotion esp. to ancestors)

Stri-dharma: a (Hindu) wife's moral conduct

Purdah: female modesty/women's seclusion (not only Muslim)

Izzat: honor (familial and feminine)

Karma: cosmic principle of deed in Hindu philosophy, for extension one's fate or destiny

Parivaar: (affective) nuclear group

Ristaderi: marriage alliance

Biraderi: brotherhood, extended kinship (based on patrilocal descent)

Dalals: intermediaries, middlemen

Jajmani: form of rural patronage

Varna: lit. "colour", for extension "caste"

Jati: lit. birth group, a sub-division of caste

Bramin: higher varna, traditionally associated with the occupational role of priests or teachers

Ksatrya: mid-high varna, traditionally associated with governors or warriors

Vaishya: mid-low varna, traditionally associated with landowners, merchants or artisans

Shudra: lower varna, traditionally associated with laborers or service providers

Dalits/ Pariah: lit. Outcaste or untouchables

Gatka: Sikhi martial arts

Kabaddi: Punjabi contact sport (popular among youth alongside cricket)

Bhangra: British hip-hop style dancing based on traditional Punjabi folk music

Shayari: emotional aphorisms

Dan: gift

Kanyadan: gift of/for a daughter (possibly synonym of dowry)

Dhaba: roadside diner

Viaha: marriage in northern India

Anand Karaj: Sikh wedding

Vivand Sankaar: Hindu wedding

Karva Chauth: Hindu fasting observed by wives for husbands' wellbeing

(Raksha/Rakhi) Bhandan: rite celebrating the bond between siblings

Mehndi: henna body tattoo (especially for brides)

Pyaar: (romantic) love

Mata-pyaar: a mother's love

Bhai/Paji: brother/kin pal

Bhan(ji): sister (elder)

Baba(ji): old wise man (a grandfather or a local saint)

Ji: suffix for "honored"

1 lakh = 100 000 (rupees)

1 crore = 10 000 000 (rupees)

Introduction:
from personal friendship to authorship, getting into ethnographic design

Really, do you want to include me in your research? Who would give you money for that?

(Asha, December 2011)

Where it all began, a foreword. Somehow, my research pattern reversed the usual route from curiosity and driving questions to approaching gatekeepers and gaining access to field. In fact, my investigation input arose after having already tied personal relations with a few Punjabi migrants in my neighborhood, between chance friendships and (language) mentorship. Being an instructor of Italian for foreigners in my hometown and a parent delegate in the municipal school my children attended, many immigrant women, their children and youth transited through my home and entered my private life, often asking for favors, at time pouring over their heart and troubles. I did not enter in close relations with all, but, was it serendipity or *karma*, I started to spend time and share everyday concerns with two Indian-born women in particular, Asha and Anuk (two of the pseudonyms I use throughout the text to protect the privacy of my interlocutors). Soon, I was drawn into their family and community fields even before designing my ethnographic endeavor.

The present thesis deals with the strategies contemporary Punjabi Diasporas have been developing over the past three decades to resettle in Italy, mainly in the wealthier north-eastern regions in demand of low-skilled rural and industrial labor force, taking into account both their *transnational migratory patterns* and their *integration processes* into the local Italian context. My research inquiry began to get shaped through the words and trajectories of my collaborators, as they hinted unceasingly to the riddles of *being* migrant subjects "betwixt and between" (Turner 1964) the two banks of Punjab and Italy, *belonging* within Indian Diasporas and *living* in a southern European country. The puzzle of such *trans-local sociality* (Nieswand 2009) emerged particularly thick and laden in their life histories and collective narratives, when Punjabi migrants tried to interpret how they could construe and manage their (somehow mobile) *homes* making sense and possibly use of their many at times contradictory affiliations. Attempting to trace the diasporic construction of home and belonging undertaken by the Italian Punjabis, I had to grapple with two complementary facets. On one hand, how multiple social divides (such as faith, caste and class) are re-produced, questioned, possibly transformed in the migratory process, putting at stake transnational values of many connected domains such as kinship, religion and market (Gregory 2013). On the other, how personal agencies may navigate hierarchical structures (particularly as far as gender, generation and capital combine), where subjects occupy at different stages relative sites of power or domination

(Thapan 2012). Adopting a transnational view "from below" (Smith, Guarnizo 1998), while I consider the broader context of *transnational space* (largely determined by governing bodies and trading institutions that put into motion social dynamics across regions), I expand on *transnational fields*, looking at the interpersonal networks where individuals and groups are embedded in given times and places, notwithstanding global orientations (Levitt, Schiller 2004).

Conceived as a *multisite ethnography*, my research was carried out for about 20 months, between September 2012 and May 2014, in the Lombardy region and in the Indian Punjab. The most extensive Italian site focused on Bergamo and Brescia districts, besides occasional transfers to bordering areas in the Po Plains, which jointly register the highest share of Indian minorities in the country. The Indian site spread across rural and urban sets in the Federal State of Punjab, where I spent two months hosted by kin of my closest immigrant informants in Italy. A brief period I could not extend due to mothering commitments and financial constraints, but proved valuable for cementing my fieldwork collaborations and reach a deeper understanding of my empirical data.

Extensive and prolonged participant observation in both domestic and public spaces (private homes but also places of worship, work, education and recreational settings) was made possible through my particular access and positioning in the field, as my status within the local Indian population varied from friend, to native resource, to minority advocate. My poor mastery of Punjabi (which I had started to learn in a local *gurudwara*, Sikh temple, attending classes held for second-generation offspring and employed for basic exchanges while in Punjab) did not allow me to interview research participants in their mother tongue, so that I run most dialogues in English or Italian depending on the interlocutors' skills and preferences[1]. Yet, such initial community-language knowledge helped me to gain trust and confidence from prospective collaborators. With the progression of fieldwork and the widening of my snowball sample, I relied and built upon *intensive narrative work*, while close bonds with four diverse Punjabi families (via their women and youngsters) gave me the occasion to discuss at length and across time about the lived experiences of their expatriate collectives. Sixty-two *narrative interviews* were conducted with Punjabi migrants (44) and local Italians (18) interacting with them (of which twenty-five longitudinal *life stories* were recorded and transcribed), besides a much longer roll of informal talks (either one to one, occasionally as unarranged focus groups) I joined in during participant observation and sharing. Trained in *critical discourse analysis*, I was also concerned with mass media representations of Indian immigrants in the "host" local environment and how the Diasporas themselves deployed social media in confronting their global "co-ethnic" landscape (Jain 2010).

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[1] It is important to notice that English and Italian are both hegemonic languages for Punjabis, the first being the idiom of the colonizers, the latter that of the immigration society. Yet, the mastery that my respondents were able to activate in either or both languages proved their multiple cultural capital and social empowerment.

Without sounding too cautious, I wish to uphold the *idiosyncrasy* of my small-scale qualitative research, considering both the magnitude in numbers of the Punjabi diasporas worldwide and in Italy too (figures which respectively top over 10m and 150k), as well as the internal diversity which characterizes these transnational movements (Clarke, Peach, Vertovec 1990; Jayaram 2011). That explains why I deliberately use the plural form in addressing the diasporas connected with the Punjab (a macro region which today stretches along the national border between India and Pakistan and maintains various linkages across South Asia, due to centuries-long contacts and hybridization). An inherent plurality which was patent in the array of the four *families* I developed a tighter relation and spent far more time with, a Sikh Jat household and a Ravidassia Chamar one, a Hindu Sonar household and a Bhakti Rajput one (an over-simplified categorization based on religion and caste labels and critically described in the methodological chapter 2). Soon did I realize that among the intersecting social variables within the Italian Punjabi communities (from faith to citizenship, from caste to class, just to mention the most relevant and debated), gender and generation operated as ineludible axes of power around which migrants designed their lives between structural constraints and personal agencies. The experiences of women and youth were not only most accessible to me in reason of my own on-field position and preferred ethnographic ties, but precisely because of their relative *marginality* these voices cast new light on the overall community networks (Brah 2003).

When I set out with my project proposal I thought it was sage and original to reflect upon Punjabi migrants' remittances, their size, scope, sender-receiver relation and so forth, but I soon realized that, although significant, these patterns of transnational exchange were not going to be my focus simply because they were not my interlocutors' one. Remittances sent home from my sample families, who had been living in the Bergamo and Brescia area for at least a decade, were no longer frequent nor sizeable. Making one's ends meet in Lombardy by the end of the 2010s in the midst of recession had become a harder toil not only but particularly for immigrants and neither private givings let alone philanthropic donations were a prime concern for my research subjects. What was then the core of their everyday struggles? Could I portray an encompassing view of what it meant for Punjabis to live as diasporans in northern Italy? Could I seriously write a monograph on the *Indian ethnic communities* in the Lombardy plains? Was I trying to fashion a well-rehearsed ethnographic account of "my people", just dragging into the picture theoretical transnationalism and empirical multi-sitedness in search of hip amendment (Vertovec 2013, Falzon 2009)?

The relatively small sample of closer collaborators and the extensiveness of my participant observation on the two banks of Punjabi migration to Italy gave me both prospects and pitfalls. The disclosure from my informants was such that I was left pondering what to do with all the ethnographic data available, especially in terms of life narratives and daily observations, of which

some were just so confidential and sensitive I knew I could hardly put them forward to public acknowledgment (Alcott 1991; Gill, Ryan-Flood 2010). Going through my pictures, field notes and interview transcriptions, I was overwhelmed by the assortment and thickness of my empirical material and I tried to *search for patterns within the oddness of lived experiences*. Then something struck me, in the midst of such different cases and themes, characters and events, I singled out the recurrence: in all my friends' experiences and narratives, of course from different stances, there was a claim, a claim for social recognition that I had been asked to log and only occasionally been able to address.

Not that I did not know to what extent culture and place are intertwined with power (Gupta, Ferguson, 1997), but taking in firsthand experiences of living through diaspora and transnational migration made me exceptionally aware of those processes of place-making, identity and resistance which shaped and were shaped by my research subjects. While anthropology has long being concerned with the development of cultural critique (Marcus, Fischer, 1986), migration studies in particular have benefited from the "bifocality of migrants" themselves (Portes, DeWind 2007), whose mobilities allowed for the emergence of critical stances across cultures and places (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013). Ethnographic studies of migratory movements have given evidence to the inextricable tie connecting migration and inequalities. Following Katy Gardner in her study of a rural Bangladeshi village: "*access to* bidesh (*abroad) has increasingly become the pole around which inequalities are clustered. Not only has it helped in creating them, but so too it has become a metaphor for thinking about them*" (Gardner 2001:108), a remark which pertains simultaneously to the homeland and to new resettlement milieus. Besides stringent economic considerations, migrations are overall "project of transformations" (Gardner, Osella 2004). Seeking for betterment, migrants forge new identities and may *challenge* existing social orders, whose established rules assign meanings to places across the sending, transit, receiving contexts and determine the breadth of life possibilities for individuals and groups, as well as their connivance with or resistance to differentials in power.

I am not maintaining that all my collaborators were involved in social critique or active advocacy. A few were bluntly conscious of inequality processes and inscribed their experiences into global ideological frames. Most condemned forms of discrimination or exclusion that concerned them personally in their everyday. Some were not keen on discussing differences, which they felt might have privileged rather than affected them. Others dismissed or dwelled on the topic altogether depending on the circumstances where our exchanges took place. All in all, my interlocutors made me partake in their vision of the worlds they inhabited, often questioning if not contesting existing social orders which operated across India and Italy, Punjab and Lombardy, embedded in wider

supranational regimes within the local span of their daily lives. Did I find out that claim for homing and social recognition because I was seeking for it, or did I crop it in my data steering conversations and happenings towards the emergence of latent social conflicts and resistances? I probably did, sometimes deliberately, at times unconsciously. Following Tölölyan (2012:15):

> The paradoxical combination of localism and transnationalism, the fierce aspiration to achieve economic and social success and the willingness to sacrifice for the family, the community and the homeland, indeed the oscillation between loyalty and skeptical detachment that characterizes the performance of diasporic lives offers a sample of the way everyone, including nationals, will have to live in an increasingly heterogeneous and plural world.

The relations my collaborators and I shared entangled in a mirroring game. I was a *western* woman researcher, an Italian "married" young mother and a schoolteacher involved in several community projects (from tutoring Italian to migrants to acting as a parent delegate), besides having ideological bias and political views of which I occasionally made my interlocutors participant. Not only my professional commitments but also my previous research expertise was forged under the rubric of diversity and equality; I had done investigation on the Travelling people in the British Isles being forced to convert to sedentary lifestyles and with diverse immigrant women in Italy confronting local healthcare systems during childbirth. Researching migration has invariably dealt with processes of cultural diversification and social differentiation, or even with "states of exception" (Agamben 2005): people being there but meant to be elsewhere according to governing bodies, whether national states or political economical institutions and bureaucracies (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013). Human mobilities repeatedly defied territorial borders, but also re-defined social boundaries, tracing hidden geographies (Grundy-Warr, Rajaram 2007) through sites of departure, transit and resettlement(s). Power relations, inscribed across axes of gender, age, race/ethnicity, class, citizenship, social and cultural capital and so forth, are constantly renegotiated in migrations, to an extent which goes well beyond the categorization of immigrants in host countries as either victims or criminals. Any double movement of emigration/immigration reshapes the places that are being crossed, as well as the social positions of those who take part in the shifting. In the migration process (Werbner 2000), evermore in a long-term immigration project, people may well be seen as "migrants of identity", *searching for home* through their very same movement (Dawson, Rapport 1998).

In the life worlds and life words of my research participants being caught between and betwixt Italy and Punjab, the shuffle of different and competing social divides and transnational values could be appreciated through latent and patent *social dramas* (Turner 1974). These narratives reported "a sequence of social interactions of conflictive, competitive or agonistic type" (Turner 1974:33) within households and between families (Rytter 2013) and, albeit never exhaustive, they were emblematic of a whole and plural immigrant collective.

How the work is structured, a synopsis. The dissertation is thus organized into two main parts. Clarifying my research design, in the first section I outline objects, contexts and aims of my study and explain reasons and techniques of my methodological choices. I build upon pertinent literature and key-debates to identify concepts and frames that served as a springboard to interpret and discuss my empirical issues. The second section is entirely devoted to my ethnographic accounts, where I present and analyze my findings following an inductive approach and try to discuss them through dense life narratives, which were selected and compared on the basis of their gender and generation reference. I follow a logically sequenced pattern in order to describe and debate what changes *Punjabiyat, i.e. Punjabiness* (an asserted distinct Punjabi cultural identity) has gone through in being displaced, re-produced and eventually contested in the migration process. I saw social actors transit from being aspiring NRIs (non-resident Indians) to nearly native Italians, Punjabi diasporans turn Indian-Italian or *Inditian*[2], as some of my interlocutors' remarked. At last, I discuss the paradoxical search for *(un)settledness* among the community, their struggle for emplacement in the context of resettlement and wish to remain on the leeway. I conclude the hermeneutic cycle of my ethnographic work, identifying its limits and breaches, suggesting possible directions for further research.

Given this overall mapping, I will now proceed to summarize each chapter, trying to convey a more nuanced and progressive picture of what so far sketched.

In Chapter 1, I frame my research situating Punjabi diasporas in northern Italy in virtual *transnational villages* (Levitt 2001): deeply wired neighborhoods which are simultaneously ethnic-based (via face-to-face transnational kinship/patronage ties and global media alliances) and open to continuous contact (from cooperative to conflictual) with the Italian resident society. Drafting the history of Punjabi resettlements in Italy since the Eighties, I emplace the *local lives* of these *global migrants* (Gardner 1995) focusing on livelihoods and wealth circulation in order to enter their "domestic moral economy" (Sykes 2009). Aware of the literature on transnational migration and diaspora (from Basch, Glick Schiller, Blanc 1994 to Vertovec 2010), my work confronts established scholarship on South Asians overseas (Gardner, Osella 2004, Werbner 1990, 2004, Mishra 2007). Besides postcolonial linkages, Punjabi diasporas in the UK (Parekh, Singh et. al 2003) stand for academic reference elsewhere in Europe (Myrvold, Jacobsen 2011, 2012, 2014) and remain a touchstone for Italian Punjabis (Bertolani 2011, 2013; Gallo 2012). I finally locate my ethnography

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[2] Inditian and Inditians are term I use extensively to address Punjabi immigrants in Italy, whether already naturalized or not. This (not so) hyphenated designation takes after the work by M. Restelli (2013), an Italian journalist and scholar of Indian cultures and after a new bi-national online portal which was launched in Milan in 2013 to foster exchange between Indians resident in Italy and natives. Most of the youth who partook in my project were so enthused by this definition that some started to use it currently as a self-identification.

within the still scarce but vivid literature on Italian South Asians, identifying the gaps where I place my contribution carved out on contested and emotion-laden family narratives of home making.

In Chapter 2, I expand on my research techniques and methodology, illustrating the multisite settings of the study (Falzon 2009), which I carried out through different locations between Lombardy and Punjab, and the forms of interaction that were possible with my selected research subjects. I stress how *identity politics* in the field, specifically related to gender and age, but also to race/ethnos, faith, class and cultural capital, compelled me to approach my inquiries with a special attention to how personal narratives were being embroiled into wider social networks and political frames (Salih 2003; Resnik, Benhabib 2009). I also advance my analytical approach, discussing the *intersectionalism* (Prakayashta 2009, McCall 2011, Yuval-Davis 2012) adopted in confronting the diverse Punjabi diaspora communities in Italy (Brah 1996, 2003). I also expose the ethical riddles and forms of ethnographic engagement I was drawn to assume in the field (from sharing and support to public teaching and education, Low Merry 2010).

Chapter 3 inaugurates my ethnographic remarks. I argue that Italian Punjabis (mostly on long-term resettlement) engage in a process of "homing" (seeing house as a place and a meaning, a home and a household) for reaching *flexible stableness* in diaspora between continuity and change. Their home-making takes place through an organized combine of intangible as well as material culture (Miller 2010) and a skillful code-switching and mixing (Qureshi 2011), in order to communicate and interact with diverse languages and semiotic backdrops (a competence depending on the social and cultural capital available). I found the idea of *home* and its actual ménage a valid key point to counter argue radical views of transnationalism converging on mobility only, whereas the daily lives of my research subjects indicate that home was being bestowed with crucial and diverse meanings in the diasporic pursuit of "ontological security" (Taylor 2013). If my attention to gender and generation rendered home more visible according to the experience of women and youth, the microphysics of power within households revealed not only how domestic relations were played out, but also how they might reflect patterns of social interaction at large. A first life story of a Punjabi migrant young woman accounts for the hurdles in envisaging and experiencing diasporic conditions.

From chapter 4 to 6 I built an interpretative model for understanding Punjabiyat (a shared Punjabi identity, strongly claimed but often fuzzy and situational, Ayres 2008) within the diasporas in Italy, highlighting step by step how such social construction gets dislocated, reproduced and even contested in migrants' lived experience across times and spaces, by different stakeholders and with different strategies. While I found viable this progressive arrangement of my arguments, "*moving matters*" (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013) in the Punjabi diasporas are not moored to a strictly oriented

path which proceeds from dislocating through re-producing to contesting, since all these processes might occur at once, in diverse ratios and combinations.

In Chapter 4 I contend that the displacement of Punjabi diasporas has long thriven on a deeply-embedded culture of emigration in the homeland (Cohen, Sirkeci 2011) and that the Punjab macro region has been hyper-mobile for centuries (Blunt 2007). I also suggest that a clear-cut partition between Sikh religious refugees and (mainly Hindu) Punjabi labor migrants (thus between an encompassing Punjabi and a restricted Sikhi culture) needs to be re-assessed, also due to a global mediascape that today sustains both transnational movements (Appadurai 1996). I then consider how mobilities can be influenced, aided or else often hindered, by the intertwining of social, political, legal and economic facts (Soderstrom et al. 2013). In doing so, I try to disclose how migrations might cross (or produce) multiple institutional and everyday boundaries, focusing on the drive for social upward mobility (Hage 2004, 2015) as it is imagined and practiced among Italian Punjabi diasporas, between tropes of back remitting and narratives of (un)success. Two selected life histories will demonstrate how gender differences among first time migrants may reinforce or dispute traditional Punjabi assumptions of labor division and domestic relations.

In Chapter 5, I delve deeper into how Inditian diasporas enact and re-produce their transnational identities. While I refute a reified version of this highly ideological concept (Cohen 1997), I recognize the relentless social weaving and cultural labor it takes for migrant subjects (be they individuals, households or groups) to nurture their future through means of their past (Connerton 1989). To maintain a collective memory and raise new generations walking on the tightrope of "coming from there, being here, possibly going elsewhere". (Also considering that Italy may be a paradoxical long-term transit shore for Punjabis, before either return migrating or double moving to more sought after destinations, Bertolani 2012.) I tried to interpret the experiences and accounts of my research participants taking in the meanings they assigned to their dailies in private and public (from home, through work and school, to local services or places of worship and other milieus for real or virtual rallying), in the multiple social networks they were enmeshed. I strove to understand how person and community making were performed via ordinary and extraordinary rituals over the life course, chiefly marriage, childbirth and new household formations (Gardner, Grillo 2002; Charsley 2012), where competing sets of moral values were at stake (Sykes 2009). Two thick life histories illuminate how gender might traverse age and generation across the Punjabi immigrant community and how diasporans engage or disengage in their multiple politics of belonging (Tölölyan 2012).

Chapter 6 reasons critically on the shifting plurality and super-diversity (Vertovec 2007) integral to Punjabi diasporas in Italy. Inward and outward dis-connections of the local Indian community are

taken into account, revisiting homeland-laden divides such as faith and caste and migration-driven boundaries such as race/ethnicity and citizenship, relevant in the interplay between national majority/ethnic minorities. Class stands somehow in the middle, as it pertains differently in both contexts and reveals how larger scale mechanisms of social differentiation are historically determined but work jointly across space. A tentative view on transnational patriarchy and capitalism is advanced through the analysis of the wedding market among Punjabi migrant families, discussing intra and inter-marriages and the itinerant dowry-system (Bachu 1996, 2004, Oberoi 1996, Shenk 2007). Ethnographic accounts matched with media representations, where imageries of diversity spread via telecommunications to different audiences and with often-unpredictable effects (Diminescu 2007, Maneri 2013). Two further life histories of second-generation Inditian youngsters unravel the gendered dimension in defying given inequalities and demanding fairer social recognition.

Having slightly progressed from first to second generation migrants, exposing age and gender-bound challenges in daily experience, in chapter 7, I attempt to discuss the social reality of Inditian diasporas describing it as "a *chaordic* place of home and belonging" (Werbner 2002), which is at once ethno-parochial and cosmopolitan. Visiting the home-making strategies of Punjabi minorities in Italy, I chose to highlight immigrant's critical attitudes and activist behaviors that make for a tempered accommodation in a peculiar Western democracy and the matching quest for a more inclusive polity in their global Diasporas, in spite of enduring social and political local setbacks. My view engages the urgency to render more visible and less biased the current prejudiced public image of people of Indian descent in Italy. Yet, my perspective was answered back by a young Punjabi woman, a "white collar" migrant, who, in relating her life story, suggested an alternative and more problematic view of her co-ethnics' transnationalism and social integration in their new country.

 In the final remarks, I recap how diversity and inequality processes observed in the transnational social fields of Inditian diasporas can be addressed through family narratives and might ultimately be understood in their home-making strategies. While exposing the limits of my research (in sampling and analysis), I also try to open up my results for the benefit of community sharing as well as for informing local policy-making.

An iconographic appendix adds maps and and original photographic documents to the text, which are not merely descriptive but thoroughly commented in the ethnography. With the auspice that a prearranged collaborative video documentary will be realized soon, with the active participation of my Punjabi friends in Bergamo and Brescia (and their Indian-based kin), to whom this work is indebted and dedicated.

PART I
Research rationale and methods

Ch. 1 Sensing life in an Italian Punjabi "transnational village"

This opening chapter intends to set the platform for the whole ethnography and the arguments that will follow. This showcase though is both theoretical and empirical, since there is no scientific look out of nowhere and anthropological reflection is inextricable from the fieldwork that produces it. Thus, I here browse through, rather than systematically review, the concepts, frames and issues with which I will deal throughout the analysis and discussion of my ethnographic accounts. As I shall say repeatedly, while I prioritize the words and perspectives of my research participants, I tried to craft a coherent ethnographic narrative through the aid of pertinent anthropological literature

The conceptual kit of this work harbors within *migration studies*, a burgeoning and interdisciplinary scholarly field, which spans across social sciences and to which anthropology contributes with its scientific legacy and methodological focus on lived scales (Brettell, Hollifield 2013). Two substantial concepts from migration studies backdrop my work, *transnationalism* and *Diaspora*.

The selected literature is functional to my case study and embarks the new turn on "critical mobility" (Soderstrom et al. 2013). In the age of migration (Castles, Miller 2009), persons, info, resources may move depending on the different powers that connect space and relations (Gupta, Ferguson 1993). For a long time, migrations charted causal and teleological explanations; my take defies the linear premise "departure then settlement", in order to confront migrants' "politics of mobility" (Cresswell 2010), their *relative* capability to move or stay put under contingent conditions. With this "motility" approach (Kaufmann et al. 2004), I follow the trails of migrant Punjabis, as they leave the homeland, resettle in a southern European rural area, but try to remain on the leeway.

Besides adopting a double perspective on sending-receiving contexts (mainstreamed in anthropology since the Nineties and polarized "between two shores," Riccio 2007), I probe onerous terms such as "identity", "integration" and "transnational ties" seeing how my research subjects lived across several simultaneous social fields (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004) and engaged with multiple loyalties (Zeytlin 2013, Vathi 2015). Challenging the binary *sedentarism vs. movement*, I connect the notion of homeland to the practice of home as developed in Diaspora studies (Tololyan 2005, 2012) and experienced by my diasporan interlocutors.

Indian Diasporas constitute a particular subset of South Asian Diasporas and a merger of smaller ones, of which the Punjabi makes a large share (Jayaram 2011). Following what Brah (1996) defines "cartographies of diasporas", multiple figures, motives and journeys subsume under this picture. After sketching the historical reasons that gave rise to Indian diasporas across the globe

(Colonialism and its aftermath), I pause on the Indian British Diaspora: a scientific reference for its consistency in time and numbers, and a migration model cherished by other Indian diasporas.

Tackling the national literature on south Asians in Italy, I present the sites of Punjabi resettlement, the crammed Po Plains and my precise fieldwork location: rural and semi-urban eastern Lombardy. (Specifically Brescia and Bergamo districts, where almost 30 thousand people of Indian origin live, representing about 50% of the regional quota and a fifth of the national aggregate, Istat 2014). A few focal topics are here introduced, such as the different phases of Punjabi relocation to Italy, the shift from a labor to a family-driven migration and the cultural representations that accompanied these recent migratory flows. The localization of my study combines with a critical review of the Italian literature, which has alternatively explored the Sikh, Punjabi, Indians and south Asian minorities recently resettled in the national context. Acknowledging this recent and varied scholarship, from Bertolani (2011, 2012, 2013, 2015) and Gallo (2012, 2014), through Lum (2012) and Thapan (2013), to Priori (2012) Della Puppa (2014), I also identify some of the gaps where to place my original contribution.

What issues do I tackle in my ethnographic endeavor? Considering the scale of my fieldwork and the size of my sample, I anticipate my practice of *domestic ethnography*, which strikes a balance to the persistent focus on labor and religious matters so far analysed in the above cited literature. While I will reason over the methodology I adopted in Ch. 2 (a radical "life history approach" which gave me to benefit to analyze a generational change through family and personal narratives), in this opening chapter I introduce the notion of "domestic moral economy". Within this general frame, I explain how the narrative work shared with my research subjects rendered salient their own evaluations of living transnationally, their "quest for the good life" and their forms of sharing, in their *homes* as much as in the translocal neighborhoods they inhabit. Over the course of this work we will see whether and how Italian Punjabis go on about in their daily lives, laboriously homing in an "Italian Punjabi *transnational village"* (Levitt 2001).

1.1 Concepts. Theories of mobility and inequalities

In this section, I sharpen my theoretical tools anticipating core notions and analytical views adopted throughout this ethnography. If there is a hierarchy of topics in migration research, once aware of the dogmas in my research field, I tried to ply any "approachism" in order to study the *ordinariness* of migrant lives. Theories were relevant as far as they endowed me to live up to practice and ethics, to oblige to ethnographic priority and to my informants' research consent. One single

anthropological approach that I made mine is "ethnographic person-centrism"[3] (Levy 1994). This work stems from close collaboration with my informants and unfolds through their life narratives (see ch.2), while it critically boards on the socio-centrism of migration studies.

1.1.1 Transnationalism and Diaspora studies

Although both Transnationalism and Diaspora are "catch-it-all" terms, radial and overused, I resorted to these theories in order to understand my field and interpret my interlocutors' experiences. First, I will review some influential delineations of Transnationalism and Diaspora; then, I will explain how these concepts apply to my empirical work.

Transnationalism. If migration studies altogether have a longer lineage (Castles, Miller 2004) and transits across national borders have always occurred, adopting a transnational perspective is a relatively recent advancement (Brettell 2000). Transnationalism as an analytical approach dates back to the Nineties (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Kearney 1995; Hannerz 1996; Appadurai 1996; Mintz 1998; Smith, Guarnizo 1998; Ong 1999) and took hold into the 2000s (Levitt 2001; Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004; Levitt, Jarkowsky 2007; Dahinden 2008, Vertovec 2009, Faist 2010, Nieswand 2011) with a varied empirical basis and uneven theorization.

There is almost unanimous accord on transnationalism having challenged for the first time "methodological nationalism". Transnational studies started to confront spaces of lived interaction that were not bound to national borders and where social relations and territories had lost any supposed isomorphism[4]. Transnationalism in anthropology also began to intend a novel modality of/for doing research, where the traditional "field" became either mobile, following people's movements, or located across "two shores", namely sending and receiving contexts of migration (see ch.2 for the methodological debate on multi-sited field research, Marcus 1995, Falzon 2009).

Swaying between de-*territorialization* and re-*localization*, transnational research flew against the tide of essentialism, inflating dynamism in "ethnic communities" gone transnational and in itinerant subjects addressed as "transmigrants" (Baumann 1996, Riccio 2001). Globally mobile groups and individuals were seen *simultaneously* living across multiple locales, inhabiting bounded territories, but possibly continuing to engage socially, economically, politically and culturally in other territories, explicitly the "homelands" (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004).

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[3] Ideally, I follow Levy's statement and see the "person" in anthropological discourse as "an active node of history and context" (Levy 1994:229). In practice, the legacy of Culture and Personality, with its rigid contextual behaviorism, faded in contemporary ethnographies of transnational migration, in favor of fluid hybridity (Gilroy 1993, Bhabha 1994).

[4] This challenge appeared even more complex for a discipline like social anthropology that forged the connection people-culture-place also through its paradigmatic fieldwork location (Ferguson, Gupta 1997).

Despite some redundancy and muddiness in transnational scholarship, a few distinctions can crop its potentials. Some authors drew a line between "transnational spaces" and "transnational fields". Following Nieswand (2009), the first refers to *locality*, i.e. the geographic spaces inhabited by transmigrants, the latter to *sociality*, i.e. the relational nets transmigrants live by. Some scholars observed another distinction between transnational "networks" and transnational "subjectivities" (Dahinden 2008); in this view, *transnationalism* as a process occurs through the lived experience of *transnationality*. Transnational subjectivities also differently articulate according to the "ways of being" and /or "belonging" that transmigrants develop.

> If individuals engage in social relations and practices that cross borders as a regular feature of everyday life, they exhibit a transnational way of being. When people explicitly recognize this and highlight the transnational elements of who they are, they are also expressing a transnational way of belonging (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004: 1011).

Overall, these adjustments yield a useful posture to analyze transnational *communities* and to loom some of the apparent contradictions and ambivalence that transmigrant *people* express.

Another fruitful distinction runs between transnational and "translocal" geographies (Brickell, Datta 2011), which appear to be additional and overlapping rather than separate. If transnational migrations highlight both the connectedness between and embeddedness within places, these are not only bounded to the nation-state level (which anyway remains central regarding governance and citizenship) but also and foremost to local levels. *Translocality* thus draws attention to multiplying forms of mobility without losing sight of the importance of localities in everyday people's lives, demanding us to adopt a *multiscalar* perspective (Glick Schiller, Caglar, see ch.5). In my case study, while grappling with the transnational social fields of Italian Punjabis, I simultaneously focus on their local emplacement in Eastern Lombardy, which I observed and partook on a daily basis (see ch.2).

These micro-debates lead us to the critical question of this work: how can we grasp the complex and fluid relation between movement and settlement among the Punjabis in Italy? Beyond the paradigm of transnationalism, how did I link the multiple ambivalent localities and socialities that Italian Punjabis inhabit and navigate?

Ensuing with ethnographic work, a valid key to access Inditian *translocality* was in fact the *home*. The discourse on the homeland and the practice of transnational "homing" were two sides of one coin for reasoning with my informants over their journeys, memories and desires. In their generational narratives, my interlocutors literally "engendered" their homes, seeing and inhabiting transnational domestic spaces according (also) to their age and gender (Olwig 1998, Ray 2000, Blunt 2005). I shall expand on the matter of "home-making" closing this chapter (section 1.3) and in fact maintain this reflection throughout the ethnographic analysis that follows. Meanwhile, the

theme of "home" also connects the literature on transnationalism to that of Diasporas. People's sense of belonging in diasporic contexts is always in progress, and emerges in constant interplay with "host" cultures, as Avtar Brah's (1996) seminal work on diasporas reminds us. Yet, as Brah wrote (1996:197): "The *homing desire* is not the same as the desire for a *homeland*. In spite of diasporans' yearning to feel at home, not all of them sustain an ideology of return."

Diasporas. Since the 1980s scholars from different backgrounds contributed to the reinvention of "diaspora" (a term which etymologically referred to the historical displacement of the Jews from Palestine in Biblical times), posing the question "what is at stake in the contemporary *invocations* of diaspora?" (Clifford 1989:302). Given its exquisite political pliability, as an analytical tool Diaspora built into the triadic relations of "expatriate minority communities", and travelled across disciplines. Indeed, the blast of use of the word "diaspora" led Brubaker (2005:1) to complain that "as the term has proliferated (…) this has resulted in what one might call a 'diaspora' diaspora, a dispersion of the meanings of the term in semantic, conceptual and disciplinary space". Since the dissemination of the *term* did not mean the disappearance of the *fact*, diaspora could denote a collectivity or a condition, a process or a field of inquiry. Brubaker thus isolated three elements constitutive of a diaspora: dispersion in space, orientation to homeland and boundary maintenance; seeing this social fact as "an idiom, a stance and a claim" rather than a bounded entity.

Against the erratic course of diaspora studies, I selected a few works whose perspectives eased my understanding of Punjabi diasporas in Italy.

Vertovec (1997) highlighted the continuity of Diasporas with transnational communities, considering "three modes of diaspora" among south Asian religions as "a social form, a type of consciousness, and a mode of cultural production" (see section 4.1). Recognizing the triadic relation between dispersal, homeland and new emplacement, he also signaled the tensions between diasporic multiple *loyalties* and the economic connections among their many *locations*.

The "place which is diaspora" was probed by Werbner (2002, 2004), whose contribution in trying to solve the knot between chaos and order, elusive centers and multiplying peripheries of the south Asian Diaspora I amply discuss in ch.7. Similarly, Jacobsen and Lal (2015) observed that Indian Diasporas altogether, a notion that emerged in the late three decades despite being a fact for the past 150 years, is plural and divided in its aspiration.

> Indian migration and resettlement abroad is longstanding, but a *consciousness of a diasporic community* is recent phenomenon. Whatever the reason, migration is an accomplished fact of life in India. A foreign passport or permanent residence a cherished symbol of success and achievement. (Jacobsen, Lal 2015: 160).

Besides its cultural *economics*, our understanding diasporas might be enhanced by linking movement with connectivity and focusing on the cultural *politics* that activate the imagination of

transnational dynamics and the infrastructure which make it possible (see ch. 4.1). Diasporas are not given communities but belong to what Anderson (1991) termed "imagined communities", fecund of narratives and discourses that sustain relevant frames of self-identification and collective action. In his masterly introduction to the topic, Cohen (1997), once transcended the Jewish benchmark, typified four diasporas based on their empirical manifestations (victim, imperial, trade and imaginative). According to Cohen, Indian Diasporas altogether would fall under the imperial or (post)colonial category, while the Sikh one would set aside and *par excellence* embody the lure for a home never existed on the maps[5].

Acknowledging these influential interpretations, I could not neglect that my person-centered research called for a more nuanced and less socio-centric view in order to grasp the lived reality of those who made the Inditian diaspora, its *diasporans*. Commenting on Brah's work (1996, which we already cited and will continue to do so in the rest of the ethnography), Hall (2010:27) observed that diaspora is also "an interpretive form to face the perplexing interfaces between the social and the psychic". This posture is shared by Tololyan (2005, 2012), who, by overcoming the binary between dispersion and belonging, the loss and the link, exilic nationalism vs. diasporic transnationalism, reason over the construction of home and belonging in diasporic conditions. As the ethnography unfolds, we will see that Inditian diasporans construe their homing with no clear cut between sedentarism and mobility, rather they come to terms with the unsettledness of their migrant lives with as much creativity as possible, amidst tussles and hindrances.

A paradox recap: settling into motion. Baubock and Faist (2010) drew an intuitive connection between transnationalism and Diaspora, "dance-partners" in contemporary migrations. Although the consistencies between these two concepts are ineludible, and diasporas are often conceived as a subset of transnational migrations, I tried to merge these notions in my own interpretation of Punjabi migrations to Italy: at once a transnational and a diasporic movement. While my research subjects hardly ever assigned themselves the label of transnational migrants, they used to encode their migration experience in the dichotomy "expatriate from Punjab" *versus* "immigrant in Italy", thus signaling the relevance of *locality* in *mobility* itself and the ties which link in unpredictable ways such diverse locales.

At the same time, some collaborators deliberately called in the trope of "diaspora" belonging and the not-so-chosen or even forced movement it implied. A few set their personal narrative within a genealogical *chaier de doléances* after the 1947 Indian Partition[6] and especially the 1984 Sikh

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[5] If we consider *Khalistan*, the Land of the Pure, imagined by Sikh radical fringes in the Early XXc and revitalized by some expats since the Eighties (Dusenbery 1995, Appadurai 1996, Ballantyne 2006, Chopra 2011, see section 4.1).
[6] In 1947, India and Pakistan gained independence as the British Raj finally ended since its inception in 1858. As the British made their exit, they approved the partition of colonial India into two separate states, one with a Muslim

persecution[7] (a painful rhetoric embraced by Sikh first time migrant refugees since the Eighties, Chopra 2011, see next section and ch.4). Many, most second generations, incorporated in their language the imaginary of a thriving Indian Diaspora (worldwide but Anglophone, diversified but middle class), they would instead (aspire to) partake (Mishra 1996, Jain 2010, Jacobsen, Lal 2015).

The tension between locality and mobility pertains in all transnational social fields Italian Punjabis navigated, but is embedded in the scale of their daily life in resettlement. In the next paragraph thus, coherent with my main fieldwork in Lombardy (to which my Punjabi research stay offered a counter-site), I will review the scholarship relevant to understand the translocal emplacement of expatriated Punjabis as immigrants in Italy. Is there a place for "homing" elsewhere for a transnational diaspora?

Following Brah's politics and poetics of diaspora once again:

> What is *home*? On the one hand, 'home' is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense, it is a place of return, even if it is impossible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of 'origin'. On the other hand, home is also a lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, sombre grey skies in the middle of the day…all this, as *mediated by the historically specific of everyday social relations*. (Brah 1996:192)

We shall discuss in the next section about the irresolvable intricacy in the Indian diaspora of *Desh* and *Pardesh*, "homeland *vs.* home abroad" (Ballard 1994), displacement and emplacement (Tololyan 2005), up-rooting and re-grounding (Amhed et al. 2003). Tololyan (2005) and Werbner (2002) argued for the need to study the located nodes of global diasporas, materially and institutionally inscribed but lacking a distinct center. In Brah's (1996) view, studying diaspora entails being alert to the "third space" (Bhabha 1994) where processes of emplacement occur, which implicate "host" societies as well as the imaginary loci of possibility (or lack of it).

For now, let us see that the historical every day for Punjabis relocated in Lombardy, which I approached with ethnographic observation and narrative work (see ch.2), acquired meaning also through the wires of the social theories developed once migration-driven diversities became relevant in European policy-making. If the experience of multilayered social diversification is ever in the making, the governance of *ethnic* diversity countered the modern nationalist discourse with a

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majority (Pakistan) and the other with a Hindu majority (India). That political resolution came with a militarized enforcement of a State borderline that resulted the largest mass migration in history of some 10 million. About one million civilians died in the accompanying riots and local level fighting, mainly in the Western region of Punjab that was cut in two by the border.

[7] The 1984 Sikh Massacre was a series of pogroms directed against Sikhs in India, in response to the assassination of Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. The PM was held responsible for ordering the Indian Army to attack the Golden Temple (Operation Blue Star) and eliminate insurgent Sikh separatists. Sporadic violence continued and paramilitary operations led the way to a massive emigration from the country, a full-fledge diaspora, political and religious at once (Chopra 2011).

postmodern "multicultural" model, which for some sounds already obsolete, for others remains unachieved. "Making home anew is not just a matter of conviviality and tolerance; it is also one of friction and exclusion" (Sigona et al. 2015: XX).

1.1.2 Migrations and multiculturalism

Not differently from transnationalism or diaspora, as Hall (2001: 3) observed, "'multiculturalism' has come to reference a diffuse, maddeningly spongy and imprecise, discursive field: a train of false trails and misleading universals. Its references are a wild variety of political strategies". In this section, I intend to argue over the riddles of multiculturalism as a *theory of praxis* for engaging with a world increasingly plural (not necessarily pluralist), as a result of diffuse dispersals and migrations. To emerge from this spongy field, I point to the latest discourses that questioned multicultural politics as this was thought and implemented since the Nineties. While there are significant national variances in multicultural policies, I here mainly consider: a. the British theorization, b. the recent European skeptical turn against multiculturalism, and c. the *sui generis* multiculturalism operating in Italy (with opportune reference to my fieldwork location).

As G. Baumann (1999:VII) asserted: "Multiculturalism is not the old concept of culture multiplied by the number of groups that exist, but a new, and internally plural, praxis of culture applied to oneself and to others." Aptly defining multiculturalism as a paradox, Bauman went on explaining that multiculturalism asked to establish an equal relation among three forms of identification, namely nation, ethnos and religion. As we shall the Punjabi diaspora already face an inner conundrum, being constituted of many national and religious affiliations (Indians and Pakistanis, mostly Hindu, Sikh or Muslim), while ethnicity remains under questioned (see ch.6). These multiple belongings get activated (either stressed or downplayed) in the contingencies of resettlement, as Baumann (1996) himself describing the high-density immigrant hub of London Southall (see next par.).

The challenge of multiculturalism emerges when this perspective goes beyond the descriptive usage and is assumed as a policy orientation, which would ideally foster mutual recognition between diversities, while in fact may establish new differences under a certain humanist stratification[8]. By the 2000s, "a kind boom time for the anthropology of migration" did not only see the discipline's burgeoning interest in transnationalism, but also registered new directions in the research applied to migration, "not least with regard to public debates around multiculturalism" (Vertovec 2007:961).

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[8] For the subtle but significant gap between *diversity* and *difference* (comparative and celebrative the first, discriminatory and condemning the latter) see Bhaba 1994 and Eriksen 2007.

As the term entered in commonplace discourse, Modood (2007) redressed multiculturalism as a "civic idea", grounded in the principles of individual quality and democratic citizenship (in an ideally liberal and pluralist society). Being itself culturally framed, the multicultural model for co-living with diversities in the face of historical condition had a serious backlash since 9/11, when Islamophobia dramatically raised (and periodically returns in Europe following the waves of Islamic terrorist attacks).

We shall see in ch.5 that the mounting suspicion and discrimination against Muslims had an impact also on the politics of displaying one's cult for Punjabi communities. (In particular the Sikhs who, in spite of their iconic turban often mistaken for an Islamic sign, worked to emerge as the non-thratenong other against the stereotyped menacing Muslims, Sian 2013).

In recent years, many debates arose in academia and the media about the failure of multiculturalism and its possible misdeeds, as a contributory cause of exclusion and segregation. Vertovec and Wessendorf (2010) explicitly queried the "skeptical turn" against cultural diversity and pondered the effects media coverage had in portraying events with this embittered attitude (see section 6.2). The authors investigated the feedback between public discourses and actual national and local policies concerning the management of diversity and immigrant integration, but also wondered whether discourses and policy shifts actually reflected in everyday practices within (super) diverse settings. They also tried to give coherence to family terms such as *assimilation*, *incorporation*, and *integration*, fiercely installed in the lexicon of the new policies and politics of recognizing difference, often with little consistency from case to case. Their work drew a comparison between European countries, where national histories and trends concerning the governance of cultural diversity might radically differ despite the EU normative frames. British multiculturalism paired with French nationalist assimilation, or German politics of *gastarbeiter*, not to mention post-socialist developments in Eastern Europe. While Italy, with its unstable political situation and relatively little experience of managing immigration does not compare in the text, it is vital we account for the existence (if any) and the practice of "Multiculturalism-Italian style".

In the homonymous anthology (Grillo, Pratt 2002), the governance of diversity in Italy is seen through the joint exercise of a *politics of recognition* (i.e. how authorities and institutions perceive and try to manage cultural diversities) and a *politics of difference* (i. e. how minorities and subaltern groups reclaim their right to difference and equality). While most contributors to the volume focused their gaze on central Italy (specifically Emilia-Romagna, with its leftist-wing political tradition and solid engagement of the local Trade Unions), this interpretative model might still be useful, although the historical context has changed since and so have many of those migration policies and politics.

Overall, Italy pines the imperfect pluralism of a country whose national existence is barely 150 years old and where regional localism and parochialism have been on the rise, because of a "fear of small numbers", the alleged menace to an (incomplete) national majority that immigrant minorities posed (Appadurai 2006). As Allievi (2010) reminds us multiculturalism is a "missing model" in Italy, that is normally considered a mono-cultural and mono-religious (Roman Catholic) country, in spite of empirical evidence and even though immigration undermines this self-image.

The missing model has been anyway tested in diverse urban settings, although the governance of migration and diversity does not reach the accumulated experience of other European settings (Ambrosini 2012) and has not yet been extended to the various Italian rural and township scapes, where local dynamics remain unheard unless events of public relevance break out (see section 6.3).

My work also aims to fill some gaps in the knowledge of local multiculturalism-Italian way. It primarily queries the status of everyday "commonplace sociability" (Wessendorf 2011) and the diversity policy in the rural and semi-urban contexts of eastern Lombardy. In doing so, I first explore the rural and urban geography of Bergamo and Brescia (centers with approx. 150k and 200k inhabitants each, but very populous provinces with many townships of around 10 to 20 k). Further, I raise some questions about the national and local *stakeholders* in the area, from the main political parties (especially the rightist and xenophobic Northern League that rules the area) and the Catholic agencies (traditionally engaged with the needy in general and the immigrant population in particular). Throughout this ethnography, seeing the homing process of Indian diaporas in Italy, we will grapple with the politics of recognition and of difference that these transnational migrants and the local society entertain.

Multiculturalism is thus one of the many ways to infuse theories of diversity and (in)equality in the new landscape that migrations, Diasporas and contemporary mass movements have inscribed in a world at once enormously globalized and unexpectedly re-localized. It is also a relevant lens to acknowledge the puzzles of emplacement, since transmigrants and diaporans, in spite of their seemingly uprooted imaginaries, do not loiter in vague space, but manage their everyday life grounding in new locales, for brief spells, either for long or for good.

Provisionally concluding, I anticipate a nuance of engagement with transnationality, diaspora and multiculturalism that emerged during fieldwork and that resonates in the title of this ethnography: social divides and transnational values. As we shall see, on one hand, there is a striking level of internal diversity among Punjabi communities and processes of hierarchization always re-occur during diasporic movement. On the other, Punjabi ethical values and social organization, embedded within kinship, inform the simultaneous transnational orientations and local emplacement of the Inditian families I worked with. Once given the *scapes* of my research and before exposing its

scopes (analyzing the riddles of homing in migration), in the next section, I will introduce the *scales* of my work: how can we approach Indian Diasporas and what is singular about the Punjabi diaspora relocated in Italy?

1.2 Frames. Cartographies of Indian regional Diasporas

In this section, I first consider the stunning variety of Indian Diasporas worldwide and their British momentous, which is inseparable from the colonial and postcolonial ties that shaped India's cultural hybridity over the past two centuries and that have informed the expatriates' routes in material and symbolic terms (Appadurai 1996, 2012). Besides being more or less rooted in a homeland and exercising some form of cosmopolitanism, any diaspora turns "vernacular" as it develops in specific relocations, assuming certain connotations that pertain to the new emplacement (Werbner 2008). Hence, I try to gauge *Inditian vernacularism*, considering the migration process of Punjabi minorities in northern Italy, its translocality and the debates so far arisen in its emergent literature.

1.2.1 South Asians overseas and the postcolonial UK reference model

Being the scholarship on south Asian diasporas extremely vast and ever in progress, I singled out some focal contributions which, over the span of the last thirty years, could back up my own ethnographic study of a specific Indian diaspora.

The anthology edited by Clarke, Peach and Vertovec in 1990 (re-published in 2010) front run the following research on the ethnic and race relations of south Asian communities living overseas. This analytical model, based on the British sociological intents at the time but still in use (Jacobsen, Lal 2015), set the two general periods of south Asian migrations, roughly named "dispersal" (under the scheme of British Empire indentured labor) and "free" movement (labor migration charting the former Commonwealth routes), which could be imprecisely labelled *colonial* and *postcolonial*.

An array of studies in this field emerged since the Nineties in the United Kingdom, often with a focus on singular south Asian nationalities, but with a remarkable continuity in themes and debates that tend to crisscross the countries of migration provenance. The UK stood then and still stands as the epicenter of south Asian diaspora scholarship, at the once the main recipient of these migratory flows since the end of the Raj and literally the reference model for subsequent diasporas. Political ties with the former colonizer might have loosened, but a hybrid (and ambivalent) Anglo-Indian imaginary kept thriving with academic, economic and political feats (also attested in the Anglo-Indian narrative, Mishra 2007). As the "Empire stroke back" (Gilroy 1982), an entire generation of

sociologists and anthropologists confronted the issue of race and ethnic relations, devoting its research to the most sizeable and visible immigrant minority in the country, the south Asian lot. That era marked the beginning of *community studies* and brought forth the incipient policy-related research on multiculturalism, as we have just described in the previous paragraph.

The odd one out of these *community-studies* was the groundbreaking "Contesting Culture" by G. Baumann (1996), who came to question how dominant discourses of identity were claimed (and disputed) by five different immigrant groups inhabiting the city hub of London Southall: Hindus, Sikhs, Muslim, Afro-Caribbeans, Whites. Of Baumann's insights, which run against essentialism and adopt culture and community as emic rather than ethic concepts, two findings were paramount to confront. First, the apparent separation between the Hindus and the Sikhs; the ones engaging in a "culture of encompassment", the others in asserting their "majority *community*". Second, the pragmatic (but ambivalent) construction of a demotic identity discourse in which south Asians, Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs but also Punjabi Muslim (and to a lesser extent Bangla and Sri Lankans), mingled in resettlement through mean of their common mother tongue and semiotic repertoire (see section 3.3 and 6.2). Baumann's artfully messy portrait of this multicultural (*ante-litteram* super-diverse) urban neighborhood set a standard for my ethnography, although I tried to re-scale his spurs in a different setting in space and time, working with a diaspora, the Italian Punjabi, which did not fit the "community case" after all (not least because of religious rifts and multi-stranded heterogeneity).

When it comes to *south Asian community studies*, two leading UK scholars have been my rod light, namely Pnina Werbner and Katy Gardner.

Werbner, an urban anthropologist interested in gender and Islam transnationalism, did extensive research on the British Pakistani communities, publishing dazzling works on the elusive complexity of south Asian Diasporas and an ethnographic series known as the Manchester Migration Trilogy, which interrogates the translocation of Pakistani culture from rural Punjab to urban Britain. In particular, her first monograph "The Migration Process" (Werbner 1990), where the author intersects concepts from the domain of kinship, religion and economics (such capital accumulation, the gift economy and conspicuous giving), was a precious spur to understanding the livelihoods, economic transactions and social values among the Punjabis I attended. By the end of my work, I will thoroughly apply some of the author's insights on the chaos and order that inhabits diasporic places, taking after her latest contributions on the structure and meaning of south Asian diasporas (Werbner 2002, 2004).

Gardner did all her research on Bangladeshi communities, in the homeland and the UK, mostly in rural Sylheti and London. Her approach to south Asian transnationalism, combined with a gender

and age perspective, was a real boulder for my ethnography. An in-depth study of the sending context, "Global migrants, Local lives" (Gardner 1995) examines the transformations associated with overseas migration in a village in Bangla Sylhet, focusing on the shifting patterns of land, family structure, marriage and religious practice in relation to the economic and imaginary hype of outward migration. "Age, Narrative and Migration" analyses Bangla elders' tales of migration, ageing and illness in Britain, suggesting that transnational migration ought to be understood as a gendered and embodied experience (Gardner 2002). In both works, the attention to life course and the sage use of life histories rendered the dynamic nature of migration, exposing the interpersonal level where cultural changes unfold. Through the narratives of her informants, Gardner illuminates the *projects* that stand behind and run through migration, which are not only determined by political and economic forces, but also get shaped through people's uplift aspiration.

Betterment targets though may vary and move according to contexts and contingencies, as it is evident in the text "Migration, modernity and social Transformation in south Asia" that Gardner wrote with F. Osella, a specialist of Indian Kerala (Gardner, Osella 2004). Connecting the many migratory movements in and from the Subcontinent, the authors corroborate the thesis that physical movement is a project of transformation, of personal, family and community uplift, in a word of *social mobility*. As it shall turn evident, this tenet underpins all my ethnography (see sect.1.3, ch.6 and conclusion).

Considering Punjabis overall, R. Ballard is the leading scholar, who set a trail with his edited book "*Desh Pardesh*" (1994), whose central concern was to explore the way in which migrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh had set about making themselves at home in Britain, already noticing the emergent contrast between first and second generation inflows. Ballard's further publications mirrored his interest in legal anthropology, consulting for "poly-ethnic" juridical cases often over family matters, thus literally applying its longstanding competence of kinship in Punjabi emigration.

Nonetheless, the container of a Punjabi diaspora is inextricable from its main content: the Sikh diaspora. While I will treat this ambivalent theme in Ch.4, I here anticipate that, since the flood of events following 1984 (Operation Blue Star, Indira Gandhi's murder and anti-Sikh militarized displacement, repression and civil riots) a whole new scholarship developed. This scholarly turn hardly ever combined Punjabi (Hindu?) labor migration and Sikh (Punjabi) religious diaspora (Dusenbery 1995, Tatla 1999, Axel 2001, Ballantyne 2006, Chopra 2011, Hawley 2013), being today vital and refined, but somehow tainted with political bias and cultural essentialism (see also next par. and the analogous situation on the Punjabi/Sikh literature in Europe and Italy).

Further, I shall mention some south Asian scholars who reasoned over their own diasporas without necessarily focusing on the British arena. The most comprehensive work coming from this tradition might well be "Diversities in the Indian Diaspora (Jayaram 2011), a collection of essays by stellar authors. The text focuses on the "diversity" of the large Indian diaspora, exploring themes such as the nature of institutional and socio-cultural diversities; managing/levelling of diversities and the assertion of Indian-ness; religious, caste, regional, and linguistic associations of the diaspora. To my intents, the most fruitful contributions came from Judge and Jain, who expanded on the diversity within the Punjabi diaspora, their identity construction in relation to nationhood and mobility patterns.

I close the circle with Jacobsen, Lal (2015:169), who recap the formation of the notion of an Indian diaspora and confront its puzzling diversity. On one hand, they revisit the historical split between dispersals and free movements, on the other they assert the pivotal role of all Indian religions as catalysts of socialization and cultural transmission in the diaspora. The authors brilliantly conclude on the "more informed awareness of the diaspora itself" which has been rising in motherland India. This double perspective recurs in my work as I will discuss the culture of migration from the Punjab (in Ch.4.1) and constantly refer to my interlocutors who are resident in the Punjab and their perception on expatriated kin (Ch.5).

Arguably, the most inclusive literature on Punjabi diasporas in the UK *and* Europe sits in the recent trilogy edited by Jacobsen and Myrvold (2011, 2012, 2015) and significantly titled "Sikhs in Europe", "Sikhs across borders", "Young Sikhs in global world". Despite the evident focus on Sikh migrations (both editors stem from religious studies), these works gather a significant array of debates and contexts pertinent to all Punjabi diasporas in contemporary Europe. Contrary to most British publication on the topic, written by Indian diasporan scholars, the authors recruited by Jacobsen and Myrvold (affiliated to the Sikh Studies Centre in Lund, Sweden) leave in the shade postcolonial retorts, feature contributes from the Atlantic shore and overall offer an enthusing multicultural and interdisciplinary perspective on these specific south Asian mobilities. National case studies are analyzed with reference to the new "host" countries and their institutions, while a shared ethnographic method accounts for both local emplacement and transnational practices of European Sikh/Punjabi communities, freshly looking at the new generations, their diasporic imaginary and changing habitus.

The only Italian scholar who appears in the collection is the sociologist B. Bertolani, whose decennial works on Sikh first and Punjabi immigration to Italy afterward stand today as the reference for this incipient field of study in the Italian national context (Bertolani 2011, 2012,

2015). Stemming from her work, in the next paragraph I will introduce the local scale of my enquiry and the national debates that contributed to construe and interpret my research object.

1.2.2 Punjabi settlements in eastern Lombardy beyond the "undisturbing turbans"

In this paragraph, I introduce the specificity of my main fieldwork location. First, I give a short historical account of Punjabi immigration towards Italy, including some statistical evidence. Then, I review the most compelling Italian scholarship on Sikh, Punjabi and South Asian immigration, signaling continuities and ruptures with my work, which I will signpost in the next section.

It is well established that south Asian migrations to mainland Europe came as a later wave of the several relocation bouts from the homeland (or from XIXc indentured labor diaspora such as East Africa), which took place after Indian Independence and Partition, as a result of British imperialism, Commonwealth ties and post-colonial legacies (Clarke, Peach, Vertovec 1990; Jacobsen, Lal 2015). As we anticipated in the previous paragraph and shall see in Chapter 4, discussing the physical and symbolic *dislocation* of Punjabis, the anti-Sikh riots that seized the Indian Punjab after 1984 marked the beginning of a massive emigration from the region, which took the contours of a religious diaspora and political persecution (Tatla 1999, Axel 2001, Hawley 2013). By the late Eighties, a substantial number of young male Sikhs moved out of the Punjab, literally fleeing in exile, often clandestinely and demanding refugee asylum. It is extremely difficult to access reliable statistics on these figures, thus to distinguish dispersal from "free" movements, since European countries, and Italy in particular, were unprepared for this new "stock" of migrants, whose destines merged with those who, either Sikhs or not, came from the greater Punjabi area in search of *labor*.

In Ch. 4, we will examine sociological push and pull factors, internal and external, which generated Punjabi emigration towards Europe in that new phase (whose heyday migrants are known as *Babas*, an honorific title for grandfathers and old wise men). In this passage, I focus on the receiving contexts of that exodus, in particularly Southern Europe, which was a target at once easier to reach on a first illegal entry and in due time easier to settle down (Mingione, Quassoli 1999). By the early Nineties, a steadily increase in the agriculture labor market opened its gates to Punjabi rural workers, who came indeed from a rural economy, plagued by the backlash of the Green Revolution, see par. 4.1, although not all Punjabis had a background in farming[9]. This trend occurred likewise in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy, with opportune national variations (Lum 2012).

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[9] It will become apparent in the narratives that the rural gist was still a potent metaphor for channeling ties between the Punjabi and the Po Plains (Azzeruoli 2013), although the socioeconomic and professional background (as well as the cultural and career aspirations) of my interlocutors clashed with this ambivalent imagined *peasantry* (see ch. 4 and 5).

By the turn of the century, Italy grew into a preferred target for Punjabi labor migration, at least for two interrelated reasons. First, the national legislation for granting entry and work permits to foreigners established a relatively flexible double system based on the so-called "Quota" and "Sanatoria" (Scevi 2010), timely setting the number of new labor immigrant entrances and the chance for over-stayers to be regularized once they had a formal residence and job contract. Second, the Italian Po Plain became a preferred destination: rural laborers, farmers and herders, were in great demand, as the rural market kept thriving, although Italian youth was going urban and disdained employment in the first sector. Punjabis came in flocks and fulfilled the demand of that agriculture labor market, which often provided work and abode in a single homestead. As a result, the likelihood of permanent job contracts started to soar the facts of family reunification: both a spouse and children left back in India, or a new spouse "arranged" from India (see next section and the discussion on Punjabi endogamy in the diaspora in ch.5).

While my work is exquisitely qualitative, some statistics may suffice to back up the wider frame of Punjabi immigration to Italy. Referencing throughout this work to annually reports published by leading Ngos and think-tanks (such as Caritas 2011, 2013 for the national level; ISMU 2012, 2014 for the regional one; ORIM 2011-2014 for the provinces of Bergamo and Brescia), I here drag the attention to some figures accessible online at demo.istat.it, the official site on Italian demographics.

Looking at the last census of "foreign citizens" in Italy (data collected in 2014 and issued in 2015, disaggregated on nationality), Indians sum up to over 150k, with a gender proportion male to female 3:2, which turns more equal in the northern provinces. Lombardy is the first recipient of Indian migratory flows, hosting over 49k Indians (followed by Emilia Romagna 17k and Veneto 15k). Respectively 13k and 16k people holding Indian citizenship reside in Bergamo and Brescia, the two districts in northeast Lombardy where the research took place.

On one hand, these numbers are impressive and support the international literature that places Italy second only after the UK among the European countries hosting Indian minorities (Lum 2012). On the other, local figures and gender index attests the concentration of Indian immigrants and longer settlements in the northern regions (comparing the same sources available since the late Eighties and tracing a longstanding increase in immigration rate).

A few remarks need noticing. First, the figures for India do not separate religion nor ethnicity, although the Indian Consulate in Milan estimates that approx. 80% Indians in Italy are Punjabis, of whom three out four belong to the Sikh community. Second, the Italian demographic statistics do not include those who were Indians, but have since acquired Italian citizenship (who are sparsely

traced in the Indian Consulate and outnumber 10k in Lombardy only[10]). Third, the estimates for other south Asian minorities ought to be taken into account: Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Sri Lankans. In particular, the Italian Pakistani minority (mostly Muslim of Punjabi origin) represents an equally sizeable community to the Indian one in the Brescia province, where I observed an intense interaction in labor settings and businesses. Finally, the data totally lack an estimate of non-registered Indians in Italy, whose unsure and fluctuating numbers may count up to more than 20k, shifting with the needs of seasonal workers in agriculture especially in central Italy (the Latina province being a basin for over-stayers, Azzeruoli 2013).

In this evolving landscape, a groundbreaking local report on "the Sikh immigration in the Cremona Province" (Compiani, Galloni 2002) spread the adage of Punjabi labor migrants in rural north Italy as "turbans who do not disturb". That commonsense axiom contributed to a long-lasting positive but subaltern cliché, in which Indian immigrants (invariably turbaned Sikhs in the collective imaginary) embodied the hard-working foreign laborers, well-inserted immigrants whose integration was not even to discuss since their presence went unnoticed except for their iconic exotic(ised) head cover. While deconstructing this stereotype (an ambivalent auto and hetero-representation for the Sikh politics of recognition [11]), in several parts of this ethnography, that catchphrase opened the way for an original scholarship on the Sikh, Punjabi, Indian and south Asian minorities resettled in Italy, most within a sociological frame, all based on sound ethnographic evidence. Although I will confront some of this literature in depth as my ethnography unfolds, I here suggest a bird's eye perspective.

The most relevant contribution to Punjabi studies in Italy is proffered by Bertolani, whose several articles and book chapters, in national and international publications, covered in the past decade a wide range of topics, from ethnic and family networks to local integration (Bertolani 2011, 2013; Bertolani, Ferraris, Perocco 2011), from transnational marriages to second generation youth (Bertolani 2009, 2012, 2015). Bertolani tackles with clarity of style the plurality of Punjabi diasporas, although her empirical focus seldom transcends the field of Reggio Emilia (a small province in central Italy), and she has not yet dared to reflect on her unique methodological challenge, as a spouse of a Punjabi Sikh immigrant, cultural mediator and occasional co-author[12].

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[10] These data are insufficient and unreliable to date. In my sample, out of the approx. 30 Punjabi families I knew, only one out of five had become Italian national; others were in the process of acquiring citizenship. From the narratives, some of those who turned Italian took the chance to relocate elsewhere in Europe, often moving to Great Britain.

[11] In ch. 6, I will discuss how my informants surfed the ambivalent model minority cast on them in order to accommodate in the national/local society, depending on their gender and generation positions in different interactional milieu.

[12] Also considering that their union accounts for one of the very few intermarriages between Italian women and Punjabi men to-date registered in Italy (see ch.5).

Bertolani's master swaying between the sociology of labor and religion recurs in other compelling works, articles that describe and analyze the centrality of *gurdwaras*, Sikh temples, for community making and social recognition (see Gallo 2012; Gallo, Sai 2013; Ferraris, Sai 2014, amply discussed in section 5.2). Moving from the relevance of Sikh immigration to the multi-vocal presence of Punjabi minorities in Italy, Galloni (2009) published an interesting case study from Cremona focusing on the schooling experiences of young Inditians and their uneasy educational achievement (see section 5.2).

Under the CARIM - India Project at the European University Institute in Florence, Lum (2011, 2013) and Thapan (2012, 2013) conducted innovative applied research on the Punjabis in Italy. The first is a young scholar of the Dalit Ravidassia religion, the latter a recognized sociologist based in Delhi with solid expertise on Indian gender studies and the diasporic imagination. Lum freshly intersects caste and faith cleavages among Sikh European minorities focusing on two diaspora contexts (Catalonia and central Italy), though with little acknowledgment of transnational practices. Thapan, finely inferring young Inditian female subjectivities, advances a still unheard gender perspective, which she arguably defines as *emic* (considering she is herself a Hindi woman from Haryana), somehow eluding the gap between her own position as an aged, upper caste and class, academic and the migrant women she interviewed.

In this panorama scattered with a profusion of rich case studies, the reference text on the Indian Punjabi communities in Italy remains the anthology "The Sikhs, history and immigration" edited by Denti, Ferrari, Perocco (2005). The title suggests the misunderstanding that has saddled much literature on Punjabi Diasporas, i.e. its conflation into the singular view of Sikh culture, a presumption we already observed in the emergent European literature on the topic. The Sikhs account for half the populace in Punjab and in fact outnumber their Hindu counterpart in the Diaspora[13]. In spite of the discrimination historically suffered, the Sikhs maintain a dominant position in the Punjabi Diaspora (partly due to their Jat caste and landowning in the homeland) and an emerging Sikh scholarship that blends religious and social studies is thriving in the UK and Europe (see the trilogy edited by Jacobsen and Myrvold presented in the previous par.). This literature however confronts the inherent diversity of an imagined Punjabi identification (which is practiced on contradictory ethnic, regional, national and religious lines, Jayaram 2011) and often calls in the wider scape of other south Asian minorities.

Two full-length contributions investigated the Bangladeshi minority in Italy. The first monograph (Priori 2011) confers the social networks and transnational routes of Bangla expats in the city of

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[13] The Indian consulate in Milan estimates that approx.70% of Punjabi immigrants in Italy profess Sikhism, while in my accidental sample from Bergamo and Brescia the rate was slightly lower. Sikhs were still overrepresented, although Hindus were a growing minority as much as were Dalit Ravidassia (see section 2.2).

Rome. Interlacing a transnational perspective with the local abusive speculation that these urban immigrants may face in the Capital, the study engages the ambivalent social processes for making community solidarity in the context of resettlement. The second monograph (Della Puppa 2014) debates the construction of migrant masculinities among the Bangla residents in a leather district of the Veneto Region. Complementing migration studies with gender analysis, the research focuses on labor migration and family reunification as a strategy for making a transnational manhood culturally endorsed. Both texts teased my work, and I tried to articulate some of Priori's acknowledgement of ethno-community faulty cohesion, with Della Puppa's accent on gendered mobilities. Yet, the context and object of my research only partially responds to Bangladeshi minority experiences.

Given this fresh and increasingly rich scholarship on South Asian diasporas in Italy, where does my ethnography fit? Does it claim to fill any gap in the literature? I anticipated the threads that run through my ethnography in the introduction. In this first chapter, I have so far presented the *scapes* from migration studies and the ethnographic *scale* from which I reasoned. In the next section, I will focus on the *scope* of my research. I focused on long-term immigrant Punjabi families in the scattered rural urban context of Eastern Lombardy, who were experiencing a generational changeover, which put at stakes power roles within and out of their domesticity and I did so from the explicit vantage point of my own gender and professional engagement (see next chapter; Okely, Callaway, 1992; Law, Merry 2010).

1.3 Issues. Towards an Inditian "domestic moral economy"

As I explained in the introduction, when I was about to start fieldwork and construe the object of my research, the topic of remittances, once hit in migration and development studies, had become uncertain. The global financial crisis had struck Italy severely, evermore for those migrants whose capability to settle depended on the conditions of the labor market. Skimming through a first round of literature review, I scanned a theoretical frame that turned out profitable indeed in my research although the course of fieldwork changed my initial focus. That pane was the so-called DME "domestic moral economy", or as the Manchester project that bears its name recites "the quest for the good life in precarious times; grassroots perspectives on the value question in the 21st century".

Enthusing reflections coming from this field of inquiry, eclectic ethnographic case studies and opportune recovery of hoary anthropological legacies that counterintuitively combine religion and economics, the gift and the market, which I did not deepen nor could have found span in this work. Nevertheless, some key issues that the domestic moral economy covers went on guiding my research questions and, retrospectively, gave coherence to my entire ethnographic grind. What is the

DME, and how did I apply it in my work? The domestic moral economy is an anthropological perspective that entangles home, morals and economics; it is concerned with people's a. kin orientation to attend the world; b. their evaluation in order to meet obligations to others; c. their (trans)actions for being an integral part of economy at large. I actually make use of this frame in a loose or metaphorical way, as I acknowledge that the word "domestic", evermore in diaspora, has lost the connotation of 'local' as the family has become transnational. Kin transnationalism itself is maintained through *remittances* (material as much as symbolic or "social", see ch. 4, Levitt, Lamba-Nieves 2010) and life-cycle rituals (Werbner 1990; Gardner, Grillo 2002).

In this section I will first apply the DME frame focusing on the peculiar configuration of Punjabi diasporic migration to Italy, which we have just seen in the previous section as a (primarily rural) labor migration shifted towards a long-term "family-driven" resettlement. Then, I will consider the "homing" process of Inditians, their "re-grounding" in Italy without "up-rooting" from the Punjab (Ahmed et al. 2003). Since there is no way out of the circularity theory-empirics in anthropology, this section introduces the methodological reflection advanced in Ch.2 on the way I substantiated my ethnography with a *domestic* focus.

1.3.1 From labor to family-driven migration

In this paragraph, I shall explain the social configurations of Punjabi immigration flows to Italy. Specifically, I argue that Hindustani labor migration has been steadily shifting towards a family-driven pattern of migration. Motives and consequences of this structural social change account for my methodological choices on the field (in terms of doing *domestic ethnography*) and for the locus of my analysis (the *ghar* or family home).

As I will describe in ch.4, Punjabi immigration towards Italy, let alone its Sikh refugee intakes, has long been explained as a low skilled, rural, hand labor migration. Invariably, lone, young adult males took to plunge to move, believing their spatial mobility equated with a social upward mobility. Migration and betterment, or "middling migration" (aspiring to reach a middle class position, Rutten, Verstappen 2014) were almost synonyms in Punjab. A longstanding "culture of migration" (Cohen, Sirkeci 2011) had in fact thrived in the Greater Punjabi Region well before 1984 and even ahead of the Partition (Axel 2002). Yet, as we recounted in the previous paragraph, the lure for NRI status came clear in the early 2000s when the Indian Government itself started to court its mushrooming expatriate communities and the mediascape filled the diaspora imaginary with this mobility promise (Mankekar 2008). While the data and the literature amply substantiated

this economic rationality of first-time Punjabi migrants to southern Europe, as time went their movement turned into a model of *family-driven migration.*

As much as it was enacted by highly aspiring bachelors, Punjabi emigration had always been *family designed and arranged*. Regardless the faith cleavage between Hindus and Sikhs, as Thapan (2013) showed a deep-seated "culture of emigration" is *rooted in Punjabi households*. All my informants engaged in the double choice to emigrate/immigrate following family resolutions. Indians who obtained residence permits in Italy through family reunion now exceed 70,000 (ISTAT 2013), a figure which proves a strong network of kin relations. Transnational kin then keeps playing a role in exercising social control over generations and balancing habits and integration (see Ch.6).

As much as emigration initiatives are family-steered, new household formations occur anytime during the migration process. We will see that *transnational arranged marriages*, an apparently traditional practice, may turn to be a possible legal device to subvert normative restrictions through personal and family agency in the Diaspora (Bertolani 2012, Charsley 2012, Rytter 2013). At the same time, the physical and social mobility assured by marriage through family reunification might lead to a redefinition of conventional gender roles and behaviors, as it will be patent in some life stories.

The centrality of marriage and family reunions puts to the forefront the issue of *house-holding* in migration. As we shall see in detail in Ch. 5, there are three facets of "being a family" that need to be considered in the case of Punjabi diasporas and this primary social institution works in the migration process. Briefly anticipating*: parivaar, ristedari and biraderi* are key terms to deal with.

Parivaar stands for the affective dimension of one's (ideally three-generations) "household", which in migration may include (or deliberately exclude) also close kin residing away. *Biraderi*, roughly translated into "brotherhood", indicates one's patrilineage but it is liable to expand and absorb a wider "clan" claiming some (real or imagined) consanguinity through a paternal ancestor. *Ristedari* is the kin linkage of affinity established via marriage or *rista*.

Normative ideas of kinship appeared to be questioned with people's mobility. Throughout this ethnography, I argue that the family stands as a prime site for "gendered ethnic identity work" among Punjabi diasporas (Manhoar 2013; Merhotra, Calasanti 2010). In particular, the tension between *biraderi* and *parivaar* (Malhotra, Mir 2012), the ideal endogamous kin group which constitutes one's transnational network and the living-in household, reveals how social continuity through change is played out within the cultural code of patrilocal kinship in the Diaspora (Palriwal, Uberoi 2008).

By now, I just want to highlight *the riste*, the use of marriage as a vehicle for facilitating the expansion and consolidation of transnational networks. Marriage (and/or spouse reunion) is the

preferred route to initiate a kin migration chain; the bridgehead then opens the way for others'
(often dependent) mobilities. Thus, being Punjabi migration to Italy a form of family mobility
(Bertolani 2013, Bonfanti 2015a), an unequal "regime" of mobility rights first and of civic
stratification then, differently affect family members (Benhabib, Resnik 2009, Kraler 2010).

Over all, families are the prime actors of *home-making* in the diaspora. The paramount importance
of kinship in Punjabi social structure and its performance in transnational migration resonates with
the double meaning Punjabis assign to their *ghar*: the home and household. In the next paragraph
will present the riddles in analyzing Punjabi diasporic homes, which push us beyond the binary
edge *mobility vs. sedentarism*.

1.3.2 Homes and rightful shares

The theme of home is of particular concern in this work since it combined methodological
relevance and euristic potential. On one hand, most narrative work with my collaborators took place
in their homes and as I travelled back to Punjab I was referred to the "homes" of their kin still living
there. On the other, the discussion over the materiality of Inditian homes will be sustained
throughout the ethnographic accounts, in order to literally emplace the process of "homing"
(Tololyan 2012, Taylor 2014) as Punjabi disporans resttled in the districts of Eastern Lombardy. In
this paragraph, I shall raise only some introductory remarks to the topic.

At a theoretical level, we saw that migration and diaspora studies frequently engaged with concepts
such as emplacement, displacement, and home. In anthropology, the notion of place has
traditionally been associated with bounded scales and cultures. This approach though has long been
criticized (Gupta and Ferguson 1997) since it prodduced a pervasive sedentarist bias that linked
people irrevocably to place. In recent times, however, there has been a move toward rethinking
place again, since we cannot dismiss that people form relationships with places in concrete and
emotionally loaded ways. Diaspora studies have grappled with these questions and conceptualized a
diasporic construction of home, in the imaginary as much as in the everyday (Tololyan 2000,
Werbner 2002, 2008). Another aspect of this debate is the logic of mobility privileged by a number
of scholars. Critiquing implicit assumptions about staying or moving in place can open up questions
about the relative valorization of emplacement and displacement, or that being mobile means to be
uprooted (Ahmed et al. 2003).

At an empirical level, the Punjabi home may indicate at once the material location of emplacement
abroad, or the prime scope of family remittances sent homeland. In fact, remittance houses, fine
lodges construed in the homeland through the savings sent back from the expats, are the icon of the

monetary and symbolic values inscribed in migration (see ch.4, Benedix, Lofgren 2007; Lopez 2015). At the same time, *ghar* home and abroad, *desh/pardesh* are filled with hybrid material cultures and domestic practices (Levitt 2004, Boccagni 2013, ch.3) and the ethical concerns of those who inhabit them, be they transnational kin or locally reconstituted nuclear groups (Olwig 1998, Blunt 2005, ch.5 and 7). Finally, the politicization of the family and its home life takes place also outside the house, as it has become a key site for debates about immigrant integration, multiculturalism and diversity management (Grillo 2008, ch.6).

More than intimate nests, domestic spaces are located in wider scapes, casting light on the links between household relations and the outer society, material culture and symbolic meanings. Seeing how this space is imagined and lived by Diaspora groups, who defy normative sedentariness and unleash new enactments of homes (Glick Schiller, Caglar 2011) may be of exceptional relevance to challenge the binarism of diaspora studies between displacement *vs.* emplacement or between mobility *vs.* settlement.

In their narratives, my interviewes thread the shifts of kin and possessions back and forth from Italy and Punjab in order to inhabit their multiple houses across two continents, in both presence and absence (Miller 2001). Locating transnational homes reveals how migrant people envision, construct and timely reside in far apart but connected domestic spaces: from provisional or permanent dwellings in resettlement, to aspired and remitted to new abodes in the homeland. Long-distance homemaking strategies signal different engagements with properties, rural and urban landscapes and local communities (Hosagrahar 2005). With tenancy being fiddly for immigrants (for administrative and informal sociability reasons in contexts of mounting super-diversity, Biehl 2014), budding expats' investments in real estate seek out city flats in gated residences (Falzon 2004) or countryside family mansions (Taylor 2013). Social mobility can thus be detected through the simultaneous but ambivalent aesthetic re-production of homes in migration: if the right to housing is still denied to a large destitute population in South Asia, diasporans' middle class hopes materialize into neoliberal homes as icons of consumer display (Appadurai 2013).

In this work, I argue for an academic focus that acknowledges the role of imagination and emotion, as well as the material processes in which transmigrants articulate their relation to home places. Homes represent a powerful indicator of belonging in the diaspora, as they are at once transnationally maintained and locally inhabited. Domestic settings offer a piercing perspective to explore the complex entanglemnts of family values and possessions (Petersen, Taylor 2003; Singh 2006). Homes are a rich site of experience for understanding the development of a translocal moral reasoning across (Sykes 2009).

Some conclusive remarks. Closing this first chapter, which set the context of the ethnographic study and exposed the literature informing the construction of my research object, there is a small thread still under the lines. I will develop the implication of doing critical ethnography in the next chapter. Yet, I want to make clearer how the concepts, frames and issues here presented connect to the *political stance* adopted throughout my work. Transnationalism in migration studies also crisscrossed the "mobility turn" of social sciences in the early 2000s, which stemmed from transport research to acknowledge new forms of enhanced connectivity, not least "patterns of social experience connected through communication at a distance" (Sheller, Urry 2006:208). We shall see that this positive(ist) view has been thoroughly critiqued by scholars who argue instead for a "politics of mobility" (Cresswell 2010), where mobility and stillness are not mutually exclusive, rather the possibility for individuals and groups to move across space tangles with a ceaseless production and dismantling of borders and crossings, material as well as symbolic. Global interconnectedness may seem evermore sought after, but remains critically uneven; mobilities and inequalities are tightly linked in a non-linear way (Soderstrom et al. 2013). Though physical mobility within and out of the Punjab, besides depending on socio-economic capital and maneuvering geopolitical borders, is often thought of as fostering upward social mobility, such an equation becomes ambiguous once the emigrant has moved to the other side of migration, where they qualify as an immigrant, enmeshed in new social relations and "g-local" hierarchies (Kearney 1995).

Throughout this study, we shall confront the small scale, local level of Inditian *transmigrancy*, from the Indian Punjab to eastern Lombardy. Considering the experiences of first and second-generation migrants, caught as they are "homing" in Bergamo and Brescia, we will compare personal diasporic narratives, which are embedded in a *politics of mobility* and contribute to shape an *ethics of home*. Seeing Italian Punjabis as they resettled in the diaspora but remained open to further adjustments, we will probe their simultaneous displacements and emplacements, the paradoxical unsettledness they actively pursued.

Ch. 2 Performing critical ethnography

In this chapter, I will discuss my methodological choices in pursuing a critical ethnography of the Italian Punjabi Diasporas. A first and foremost question needs to be addressed: what is the *critical* in critical ethnography? Following Madison (2012:5): "Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain". Introducing the processes of social differentiation and inequality I intend to deal with (economic disproportion and civic stratification), coherent with the claims raised by my collaborators (primarily but not only against patriarchy and 'racial' discrimination), I need to make clear how I proceeded with ethnographic work, stemming from my research objects and the literature reviewed in chapter 1.

I will sustain my arguments at three different levels: *empirical, analytical and ethical*. These facets of fieldwork anyway intertwined and jointly operated in the construction of my data and interpretations. First, my research site was both multi-sited and small-scaled (Falzon 2009). I carried out fieldwork in Italy and India (Lombardy and Punjab) for different periods over two years between 2012-2014, with a privileged cluster of collaborating subjects, mostly four immigrant households and their transnational kinship, with whom I conducted participant observation and longitudinal life-course interviews. Then, while adopting narrative analysis to interpret Punjabi diasporans' lived experience, I applied an intersectional approach to deconstruct how several marks of difference connect ad overlap in creating contingent social barriers or opportunities for migrant groups and individuals (Prakayashta 2009, 2011). Last, my access and positioning in the field rendered different forms of engagement unavoidable as much as straining (Low, Merry 2010).

2.1 Doing multi-site research

2.1.1 Fieldwork settings and scale: participants and data construction

Multisite fieldwork has been somehow a catchphrase at least since the Nineties, when a first generation of anthropologists interested in escalating international migrations started to challenge national boundaries (Glick Schiller, Blanc, Brettel 1994) and the very *habitus* of most ethnographic practice (Marcus 1995). Indeed the simultaneous plurality of my research settings moved between the "two shores" of sending and receiving contexts (Riccio 2007).

I chose to conduct part of my fieldwork in India, given that this transcontinental shift not only responded to the migratory trajectories I was investigating, but also because my research subjects and friends depicted India itself as a not-to-be missed destination: for either tourism, research or "life experience" purposes.

> *You've been teasing me for years with floods of questions (...), even picked up some language and are almost as good as me in making samosa [giggling], what are waiting for? Get a flight, my husband and I will suggest you where to book it for cheaper (...) and then, don't worry, my parents will take good care of you there (...) and you'll be as safe as a bird in its nest.* (Asha, 4/5/2013, her home)

> *I just wish we could go back together, you cannot truly understand my lifeways if you don't see where I came from (...) meet my kin, see the Devi Talaab mandir, sit in Rangla Panjab for the best* lassi *ever (...) if only we could go back together, I would be your lead and we would enjoy it so much!* (Veena, 16/10/2013, language school)

Instead of describing it just in terms of homeland, or place of origin, whether breathed in until adulthood or imagined since infancy, my Indian collaborators tried to see Punjab with my eyes, with a sight from a distance. To travel back with expatriates was a riddle in itself:

> *To me, a second generation Italian, but I can see also for my parents who have been away for ages, India has become* quite an hologram *(...) and even going back for vacations feels like entering home as a foreigner, because* to say homeland is not to say home. *(...) When we fly back [to Milan] it will be coming home, in the country where I was born and the town we live, every day, even if sometimes I fear I will never fully belong* (Sunny, 10/12/2013 on our way to Delhi).

In December 2013, via Delhi as enter and exit point, I travelled up north and then towards east covering a relatively small geographic area, from the border with Pakistan to the foothills of the Himalayas. There, I lived for approximately one week each in the four home places of my closer Indian informants, hosted by their families of origin and collaterals: Ranjewal village on the outskirts of Amritsar, Jalandhar City, Padrana village near Garshankar and Mohali-Ajitgarh hub in the suburbs of Chandigarh. These four families represent a diverse and balanced sample of Indian Punjabi diasporas, differing in religion, caste and class: respectively Ravidas, Julah Chamar, weavers and relatively needy; Hindu, Sonar, goldsmiths and prosperous; Sikh, Jat, land-owners and relatively well-off, Bhakti Hindu, Rajput and noticeably wealthy. This operational cataloguing (discussed in the next paragraph) will reveal its contradictions in the ethnographic accounts I will put forward, since family social status and class position may differ on the two sides of migration (see chapter 6).

My fieldwork had nevertheless been multi-located even within the close geographical borders of northern Italy. Punjabi immigrants often move across neighboring districts or regions in order to follow jobs, residences or patrons, which would make their lives abroad doable, and a constant

internal migration affects those halfway rural and urban areas (Ferraris 2009) between Bergamo and Brescia described in the first chapter[14].

Between September 2012 and April 2014, I did most of my ethnographic research in Indian-based public places and private homes across the districts of Bergamo and Brescia, besides occasional visits to Mantua and Cremona. I attended the main temples where Indian migrants get together for religious celebrations, according to their diverse faith, network and dwelling location. These were the hub of social life for all who identified themselves as either Sikh, Ravidas, Hindu (Bergamo province: Sikh *Gurdwara* Singh Sabha in Cortenuova and Mata Sahib Kaur Ji in Covo, *Darbar* Guru Ravidas Ji in Cividino, Hindu *Mandir*/Hare Krshna Village in Chignolo; Brescia Province: *Gurdwara* Singh Sabha in Flero, Shiv Shakti *Mandir* in Gussago). I also interviewed Punjabi migrant laborers and their Italian employers in different work settings (two manufacturing firms, a horticulture company, a family-run farm, a bakery, as well as two groceries and a travel agency owned by Punjabis themselves). Almost every day I interacted with 1.5 and 2nd generation Indian students and their teachers in local secondary schools and in public language education settings for adult migrants, where I worked as an Italian instructor in Albano S.A. If I were to count the numbers of people of Punjabi origin I came to know and somehow blended with, I would assume they would top well over a hundred. About twenty-five were those I worked steadily with during the period of my research, mostly in the networks of the four main families I chose as representative sample. Given that I lived in the field and habitually got together with my collaborators, who were friends above and beyond research partners, participant observation and mutual time-spending took place not only in customary public and private spaces, but also during off-the-cuff leisure activities (such as shopping in selected Punjabi stores, going to the movies, dancing *bhangra* and watching cricket matches.) All these goings-on were time consuming and not always straightly research-led, but gave me the chance to appreciate daily petty realities, which I would otherwise miss out.

The first outcome from my fieldwork was that there was not a single and organic community of Indian migrants even in the small territory of Bergamo. According to the last ISMU survey (2013) about 14,200 people of Indian origin live in the district, of which 57% are male and 43% female (plus over a thousand Indians estimated to be irregularly resident), but the statistics do not report religious affiliation. Sociologically speaking, the subjects in my case study show variable parameters and multiple belongings that depend on the situations and stakes involved, as much as on social ties alternatively pursued or disabled.

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[14] There is no statistical evidence, but on the railway line which connects daily the two cities, Punjabi is possibly the second most spoken language amongst commuters and that brief setting made a great place to test my Punjabi oral understanding.

Not only Punjabis trace personal *cartographies of diaspora* (Brah 1996) in the context of settlement, but their ongoing transnational contacts with kin, co-ethnics or devotees "home and elsewhere" draw virtual patterns of long distance interaction (Diminescu 2007). Apart from telecommunications, Italian Punjabi migrants (who can afford it) pay occasional visits to their kin's scattered across Europe, rarely to North America. These flows have long gone beyond the duality of sending-receiving countries (Jain 2010), to acknowledge possible "serial migrations" (Ossman 2013) in the pursuit of diasporic homes (Taylor 2014).

Punjabi transnational mobilities occur across spaces, experienced or imagined, but they also happen across times. While I do not deny the *simultaneous* perspective (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004) which migrant people maintains between or among far apart contexts of reference, I had also to take into consideration the *rhythm* of movements across people's life-course (and generation).

> *Italians just see me as an immigrant lady, but this doesn't tell my story. When I was younger, I never thought of leaving my home (...) then when we escaped to Himachal only there I felt safe (...) and still wish to go back one day. I do not really move now, been here twelve years (...) few times I could afford to get back. But when our children are settled, we, my husband and I, might return.* (Kanval, 23/01/2013, her home)

> *See, I was born and raised in Dubai, then moved to Punjab when my parents went back and did my higher studies there, in Italy now for thirteen years after my husband (...) always been on the move, but when you live in a place you don't really think of past or future. I mean… you can remember and you can plan, of course you do, you have to. But don't clearly see of what comes next… when kids are small you just get by day after day* (Asha, 04/10/2012, at her sister in law's)

I will reason at length over Kanval's and Asha's migratory trajectories (chapter 4 and 5), two middle class Punjabi women approaching their forties of different *jati* and faith backgrounds. It was anyway evident from the beginning that their migration length, course and scenario depended closely on the rest of their kindred's choices and needs: families' of origin expectations, husbands' job conditions, children's prospects. Working with Punjabi families challenged not only my idea of personal and kinship relations, but also the very foundation of soliciting "life-stories" from my collaborators. As Das highlighted (1993:198-224) Punjabi kinship rules allow for multiple identities to be performed in the household space so that a sort of "inclusive solidarity" is staged where each and every family member embody a shared "ethics of totality" (see Dumonts's discussion, 1966, on "dividualization", i.e. decentralization of individual prerogatives in Hindu ideologies). Punjabi diasporans' biographies are dramatically intersubjective and while I delved on personally related accounts, my ethnographic writing was bound to depict genealogies and wider collective narratives.

2.1.2 Family and community narrative work: petits récits on transnational stages

All the quotes so far cited report the life worlds of my closest research participants, out of those *four Punjabi migrant families* I selected as privileged interlocutors. While the initial contact with them might have happened by chance, I then sustained the relations partly because they represented a diverse and interesting sample of households, partly because I frankly enjoyed their company and always believed that only significant dialogical relations could make room for ethnographic reasoning (Crapanzano 1980, Lassiter 2005). The respective family members who acted as *gatekeepers*[15] were a mother in her thirties and three teens (a girl and two guys), who were or turned all major of age by the end of my research. All of them had been living in the Bergamo and Brescia districts for at least a decade (only one of the male teens was in fact a second-generation Italian born) and their everyday lived accounts provided an excellent taster of transnational migratory trajectories and local integration processes.

Peeping through their domestic backstage meant that I interacted as well with their co-living kin, developing new close intimacies, which at times became tricky as my presence had an influence on their family dynamics (see par.2.3). In turn, my active and continuous association with these units shaped how I perceived the larger Inditian community and how they perceived me. For instance, going to the temple with some preferred collaborators meant to be seen as one of their family members, or at least an Italian affiliated with specific kin (thus potentially weaving allies and competitors across the landscape of *biraderi*, transnational brotherhoods, Rytter 2013). Given this relatively small fieldwork scale, all the households intensively involved in my research knew each other at least "by name" (a *gossiping* feature among this local Indian minority which corroborates its "transnational village" dimension, Levitt 2001). As a result, their mutual relations or mere representations served me to reflect on the "cultural intimacy" (Herzfeld 2004) within Punjabi diasporas and on their attitudes to those diversities and differences which they embodied and performed, between reproduction and transgression.

When I state that I closely worked with a Sikh Jat household and a Ravidassia Chamar one, a Hindu Sonar household and a Bhakti Rajput one, I still feel some uneasiness. I find this categorization over-simplified, based on religion and caste, whose labels are often used by my research subjects in order to project themselves into Italian society while they perfectly know they can't be reduced to such sets. It was clear in my younger informants' words that their socio-cultural-national-religious identifications were just part of an *apprenticeship,* a transnational socialization (Zeytlin 2013) that drew simultaneously from their kin and community rules and from the larger society expectations.

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[15] I had met Asha as a parent delegate when our elder kids attended pre-school. I got to know Veena and Guninder as they came to my language school to sit an Italian examination. Backed by Guninder, I met Sunny as he was appointed to introduce native Italians to the local Ravidas darbar during a civically sponsored multi-faith festival.

I got used to describe myself, well, no, I mean, my family as Punjabi Ravidas, sometimes I had to say Sikh, otherwise Italian people couldn't understand me. *That is not the whole story. Only when teachers or friends' parents are more curious and come to darbar, I try to make my origins, how should I say, more, more "true" [...] but it is not easy to explain what you, yourself, don't exactly know... that's way I study the scriptures* (Sunny, 05/11/2012, Ravidas darbar)

No fuss in saying I was Indian, but then this girl from Mysore came and I had to set me apart. (Veena, 04/03/2013, language school)

I don't like when they confuse me with Pakis... I feel mistreated [...] don't blame me, but we have to stand up and make clear who we are. Sikhism is a religion for all*, but the Sikh people have* a history of their own (Guninder, 19/09/2012, Patronato Bergamo)

Against gross simplification and stereotyping recurrent in the Italian media news (good laborers or potential criminals, see par. 6.2), my work aims to bring to the forefront local Punjabi family upheavals (Rytter 2013), which enact cultural diversity within and between households and may be emblematic of a whole immigrant minority. To focus on family tales concedes that

…the challenge of being (and, more importantly remaining) Indian in a globalised world is one that must be met equally by those who stay at home and those who live abroad... Secondly, whether at home or abroad, it is the Indian family system that is recognized as the social institution that quintessentially defines being 'Indian'. (Uberoi 1998:308).

Working with families responded not only to the social organization around which Indian communities shape their social lives, but also to the expectations held by Italian local and national administrative agencies. More than seventy thousands family reunifications over the past twenty years have proved a significant *demographic transition* within Indian immigration in Italy (Caritas 2013, ISMU 2013). It follows that the image of lone young male first time migrants has long been replaced with "re-united nuclear households", whose women in fertile age and newborn children have become a target for public policies in healthcare and education (Tognetti 2011).

Accordingly, even the foci of the debate about Indian minority have steered towards these new subjects of research. Much had been written about the integration of Indian minorities within post-colonial British society, who have now reached third, even fourth migrant generations (Bhachu 2004, Oberoi 2006, Charsley 2012). In the Italian context instead, topics of interest have focused either on the labor market of Punjabis in the countryside (Denti, Ferrari, Perocco 2004; Bertolani et al. 2011) or on their places of worship (Gallo 2012). Only modest attention has so far addressed families, gender and generation matters (Galloni, 2009; Bertolani, 2012; Thapan 2013).

I also argue that family accounts reported by selected *"marginal" voices* (in so far as gender and age are concerned) offer a valid *oral history* alternative, pluri-vocal and from below (Gardner 2002, Brah 2003). These views could complent both the grand *policy discourses* over South Asian international migration and those dominant *metanarratives of diaspora* that Punjabis (and especially the Sikhs) have been unfolding in reconstructing their troubled past (Axel 2001, Das 2007*)* with

specific political aims. The family stories I will discuss, giving voice to diverse actors and standpoints, are indeed *petit récits*, but their value seem to me to lie precisely in their being an *ethnography of the everyday*. Out of the ordinariness of personal struggles in family upheavals, I could grasp the intersection of many concurrent variables within the Italian Punjabi communities (from faith to citizenship, from caste to class) and at the same time assess the heuristic potential of gender and age differences around which Indian diasporans designed their lives between structural constraints and personal agencies.

2.2 Intersectional analysis

The genealogy of "intersectionality" dates back to a concept developed by Crenshaw (1989) within the Black Feminism and then merged into an encompassing theoretical and methodological approach in McCall's works (2005, 2013). Implicit or explicit, intersectional is the perspective we adopt gazing at social structures, where individuals and groups are simultaneously located through different axes of power. Intersectionality pertains in the interstice between social categories (gender, sexual orientation, class, ethnicity and so forth), as well as within each category, generating centers and peripheries. While being applicable to all social actors and not only to those in the margins, the intersectional approach has proved fruitful in analyzing (and defying) social processes that combine gender and class hierarchies, patriarchy and capitalism, even though among its detractors was dismissed as a rather naïve version of Marxist feminism or a "buzzword" despite its popularity (Davis 2008). Following Yuval-Davis (2012), who tested the intersectional key to reflect on multiple "politics of belonging", I argue that this approach seems the more pertinent with the scope of my study. If categories such as age, gender, religion, class, caste, citizenship, occupation and cultural capital represent as many different and simultaneous social locations of my ethnographic subjects, the relevance of certain sets over others was not given once for all, rather it was situational and flexible, depending on the intentions of social actors in contexts. The intersectional approach thus is not just an instrument of analysis implemented by the researcher, but it is a strategy individuals and collectivities implement in order to negotiate the terms of their own existences.

2.2.1 Diverse departures and arrivals: faith, class, caste and migration-led civic stratification

> Given the diversity of south Asian communities worldwide, of which Gujaratis, Punjabi Hindus and Sikhs represent the majority, such umbrella become rather unwieldy, their membership elitist, their mass support slight; their survival remains crucially dependent on the effectiveness of such labels in the global arena under diverse configurations of hierarchies. (Judge in Jayaram 2011:74)

Approaching people of Indian origin living in Lombardy, I was faced with a first and foremost striking question: is there a distinct recognizable "community"? Whilst they do display (more or less blatantly) an undeniable connection to Punjab (shared with the almost equally sizeable Pakistani minority,) besides their national belonging as *Non-Resident Indians* (see chapter 3)**,** all the Indian transmigrants I met could not be reduced to a single social group, nothing near to to a neat "ethnic community" (Baumann 1996, see chapter 6). Although the typecast assigned to them by mainstream Italian society has so far remained quite essentialized (Compiani, Galloni 2002; Ferrari, Denti, Perocco 2005), Punjabi diasporans credited themselves with plural and at times contested loyalties and not only identity cross-references, but also the length of permanence on the Italian soil, the "social adjustment" in rural northern Italy, informed their lived realities.

Two axes of ascribed diversity appear to be more relevant when asking Indian migrants to introduce themselves: *religion and caste*[16], but while the first is more openly staged, the second remains taboo[17] for most Punjabis in Italy. (As we shall see, in the modernizing Indian diasporas, caste taboo is particularly common among the Sikhs, who construed their identity claiming the eradication of caste and the advent of an egalitarian society *versus* the traditional Hindu hierarchy).

Whether Hindu, Sikh or Ravidass, religious beliefs and practices have a large impact on the personal lives of Punjabis and influence their public life on a daily basis. Home-based rites or *puja* fulfill the need for personal devotion, while collective celebrations, ordinary or exceptional, endorse migrants' belonging to one's cluster. Places of worship are not only a gathering space, but function as merging institutions where different interests and projects converge and at times compete. As far as gurdwaras are concerned, the temples proffer a greater visibility to a certain "orthodoxy", which may be both empowering, for those who take part in or even lead it, and constraining, for those who stay at the margins. (That is the state of the relation between Jat and not Jat Sikhs, or between Khalsa and those who haven't "yet" take *amrit*, baptism). These religious institutions (in fact cultural ones according to the Italian legislation, which has not yet ratified a bilateral agreement with the Sikh Council[18], although freedom of worship is granted in our Constitution) are getting progressively politicized (see ch.5). Religious politics stremming from temples is also deployed in nurturing cross-cultural dialogue and maintaining good relations with local societies (Baumann

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[16] Not being able in the length of this paragraph to further the debate on "caste", I resort to an operative definition, considering caste as a hierarchical system of social classification, given by birth and endorsed with specific work profiles, which establishes permitted or forbidden interactions with other groups and is perpetuated through an endogamic rule. I refer to the literature (Srinivas 1996, Gupta 2000, Moliner 2007) for a detailed analysis of this category of difference, which has no equivalent outside the Subcontinent, but point out its resilience (between persistence and transformation) also in the ideologies and social practices of Indian diasporas in Italy.

[17] Besides, the taboo of caste is by now a general phenomenon throughout post-colonial India, not least because caste discrimination is condemned by the Constitution, which also formally abolished caste.

[18] See the discussion in chapter 5 over the claims advanced by the ISC - Italy Sikh Council.

2009, Sai 2010, Gallo 2013), especially local administrators to whom Inditians refer to for carrying out public events during their holy celebrations. Abandoning a politics of ethno-mimesis, gurdwaras are sites where respectability and cultural exchange may be built and put forward (Gallo 2013), yet at the same time where ambivalent and instrumental relations are established, between solidarity and exploitation (see section 5.2).

I learnt it was not advisable to ask questions about caste directly and I could rather get there with discretion through the wire of discourses about class and social status. Among Inditians we are witnessing a sort of dis-invention of caste, or at least a growing gap between ideology and practice (especially within Sikhism where two competing sets of values co-exist, egalitarianism and hierarchy, Nesbitt 2001). Viewpoints on this topic occupy a vast range from the denial of caste survival to a rhetoric of resistance and they intersect with other representations of diversity, the most remarkable being accusations of chauvinism to Ravidassias: "castes exist for those who suffer from them", as a Khalsa Jat man told me (see ch.6 and also Lum 2010, Moliner 2007). In fact, the Sikh diaspora, which constitutes the majority of Punjabis, is no long as cohesive as it could appear until a few years ago. The 2009 shooting of a Ravidas leader ignited an internal fracture within Sikhism, from which the Ravidas rib officially dismissed, calling into question class and caste differences that Sikh egalitarian ideology had always opposed but never discarded (Jaffrelot 2003).

Whilst it was commonplace that migrant laborers in the first sector had not been severely affected by the financial crisis that struck at the end of 2008, economic recession has rendered Italy and Southern Europe in general a less attractive destination for prospective Punjabi emigrants (Sacchetto 2013, Azzeruoli 2013). Despite a slower immigration pace registered across Lombardy since 2010 (ISMU 2012), phenomena such as temporary returns have been modest among the Italian Punjabis. Inditians tried to compensate for hardships and lost jobs in creative ways. Some, engaging in petty activities in the informal sector (where young women started to partake, especially as seamstresses). Others, leaning on remittances that literally went the other way round (kin still in Punjab or in better off countries, noticeably the Gulf States, forwarded loans or grants of ambiguous reciprocity). Many, setting into motion a double migration through *ad hoc* marriage choices (Bhachu 1996, Charsley 2012). While not systematically questioning their relocation in Italy, economic destitution has brought about a stern accrual in *class differentiation* among the Punjabi community (see chapter 6) even though class is not fully considered an achieved status, since ascribed social prestige and attained upward mobility are subtly intertwined (Thorat, Newman 2010; Rutten, Verstappen 2014). Not only patterns of capitalist consumption (Jaffrelot, van der Veer 2008) among NRIs are inscribed within a dominant discourse on the rise of a "grand new Indian middle class" (Fernandes 2006, 2015), but also the perception of Italian social operators who

deal with migration are increasingly becoming aware that Punjabi diasporans are not the destitute ones from India.

India has changed a lot since I left [in the Nineties]. You can find anything there now, any good or service you will ever think of... in the big cities, once you have enough money, you can buy your whole life! (Rajeev, 20/01/2013, at his workplace)

Correct me if I'm wrong, but from pure statistical evidence [in the school records] Indian Punjabis are a kind of bourgeoisie. Never found one who is not alphabetized, many were properly schooled in English also. Some are better skilled than you would think of when you imagine them in the fields. (Sandra, headmaster, 07/02/2014, EdA, Albano)

While Indian immigrants in Italy have reached a figure of more than 150,000 nationwide (Istat 2014), two to three decades after the pioneering settlements, some earliest Punjabi immigrants have been acquiring *Italian citizenship*, with a set of rights and duties that this legal recognition implies (Colombo et al. 2011). This grant specifically affects younger generations: the adolescents who were born in Italy or raised there since infancy, where they have been schooled, are now in fact Ital-Indian or "Inditians", a self-coined term which echoes a brand new bi-national and cross-cultural web portal (indit360.com). Italian citizenship turns then into a pre-requisite to access that "truly modern future" younger Inditians aspire for and connote with a broader Europeanism (quoting from an informal talk with Gurinder). Some 2nd generations are engaged in a fierce civic battle towards the implementation of *ius soli* over *ius sanguinis* (see chapter 7, Ambrosini, Molina 2004; Guerzoni, Riccio 2009). Many believe that their mark of difference will not be ousted out with citizenship, and complain that *subtle racism* (expressed through sly cultural discrimination, which weighs down their education attainments and cultural capital) has prevented them to fully partake in social life and in the upper segment of the labor market (see civic stratification, chapter 7, Colombo et al. 2011). Job shortage in the industry and some rejection from Punjabis raised in Italy to remain curbed in the agricultural labor market like their elder co-ethnics may prompt some newlyweds to move to "farther northern" destinations where career opportunities look more attractive (launching a double or "serial" migration recurrent in Indian diasporas, Bhachu 1996, Ossman 2013).

In this compound community framework, *gender and generation conflicts* have arisen especially within households, where grown-up children hardly face and navigate their multiple belongings and dual construction of home-land (Thapan 2012, Bertolani 2014), under a constant scrutiny from their seniors. Parents and elders play a definitive role in exercising social control over new generations and they set the rules for the maintenance of traditions and customs they deem "imported" from India, which are not fading away but for which the youngsters demand self-tailored adjustment (Bonfanti 2013). Since most of my ethnographic work was done *on* and *with* women and youth, partaking their lives and narratives implied being confronted with particular views on northern

Italian Punjabi settlements. I acknowledge the partiality of their views, but also recognize that "marginal standpoints" could be exceptionally creative to activate "situated imaginations" (Stoetzler, Yuval-Davis 2002) reasoning on differences and inequalities otherwise unquestioned or taken for granted.

2.2.2 Unraveling super-diversity through genders and generations

> Borders are gendered: most women and girls admitted as permanent migrants to the global north still enter on the basis of their relationship to a man (typically a husband or father) and would not otherwise qualify as independent immigrants. Gender is bordered: enforcement of the boundaries of gender identity is sufficiently strict that crossing these borders is not called migration, but transgression. In multicultural societies of the global north, it is not uncommon to seize upon immigrant women who belong to diasporic communities as victims of illegitimate discipline by minority cultures or faiths. The bordering of gender in the broader society tacitly emerges as appropriate, benign, or even natural. (Macklin in Benhabib, Resnik 2009:276)

We have discussed so far about the striking level of internal diversification among Indian diasporas, which are continuously re-shaped and doomed to increase in the local context where actual transnational migratory flows resettle *ad interim*. In this paragraph, I would like to bring forward the discussion applying the concept of *"super-diversity"* to the case study of Indian Punjabis in Italy, as it was proposed by Steven Vertovec (2007:1024):

> Britain can now be characterized by 'super-diversity,' a notion intended to underline a level and kind of complexity surpassing anything the country has previously experienced. Such a condition is distinguished by a dynamic interplay of variables among an increased number of new, small and scattered, multiple-origin, transnationally connected, socio-economically differentiated and legally stratified immigrants who have arrived over the last decade. Outlined here, new patterns of super-diversity pose significant challenges for both policy and research.

While enough criticism has plagued the term, and I may concede that its first theorization sounded to my ear not new rather quite 'presentist' and 'eurocentrical', I still find its heuristic potential invaluable when we see to the application of the idea. Super-diversity was introduced to re-conceptualize the nature of migration in European countries over the past decade. Essentially, our experience of migration has changed from when migrants largely came from a relatively narrow number of countries and followed privileged routes to former colonial powers. In the UK migration had historically been from the Indian subcontinent and parts of Africa or the Caribbean, a relatively narrow range of countries of origin, language and faith, which led to longstanding minority *ethnic* communities and evolving forms of "multicultural racism" (Panayi 2010). On the contrary, for much of its national history, Italy has been an emigration country and the rapid growth of immigration rates by the end of the Nineties found the State and the civil society unprepared to face and manage an explosion of cultural diversity (Palidda 2008). When we compare Indian minorities

in Italy and UK it is not only a time-lag we are being faced with, but different contexts, issues and debates.

Although super-diversity is a promising concept to recognize a rapidly changing reality, it is crucial that we don't restrict it to issues of ethnicity, faith and immigration status, as though they were in a separate silo from other kinds of diversity such as disability, gender, age and sexual orientation, whose intersection altogether determines equality of opportunity, inclusion and integration. Shouldn't we broaden the concept of super-diversity to be more inclusive and move beyond an identity-based approach recognizing that these interconnecting diversities are also present and on the rise within and among migrant communities in contexts of resettlement?

In recent times, the "diversity turn" in migration studies has elected the city and urban spaces as privileged fields for observation (Berg, Sigona 2013). The case of Punjabis in the northern Italy challenges this assumption, since almost all my respondents worked and dwelled in relatively peripheral areas: rural and industrial districts, villages or small towns. That raises further questions about super-diversity and policy, as these municipalities have neither the experience of managing diversity nor the integration programs that may exist where immigration has been around for longer (Ambrosini 2012). At political level, right-wing parties (the overtly xenophobic Northern League having the largest grassroots base of supporters) often govern these neighborhoods, counteragued with a humanist tentative crossculturalism by the Catholic Church (Garau 2010). Overall, the social texture of these regions gets once and again saturated with rhetorical discourses casting a nexus between the perils of unleashed immigration and the search for public order and securitization (Appadurai 2006, see ch.5). In a local (and partly national) context where *grand narrations* on the phantom of immigration abound and deter from exploring everyday super-diversity even in marginal semi-rural areeas, *petit récits* can challenge and amend simplified essentialism or mystified cultural clashes (see chapter 6).

The balanced variance of the life narratives I focus on shed light on the intra and inter relations between genders and among generations within the Indian Punjabi diaspora in eastern Lombardy. The borders between women and men, first and second-generation migrants catalyzed other boundaries and trespassing, they were at once empirical relevant and feasible to research given my *positionality* in the field (see next paragraph).

A life history approach provided me with the advantage of seeing through the coherence (or at times incoherence) my interviewees created their own stories with (Linde 1993), between silences, secrets and occasional re-telling (Alcoff 1991; Ryan-Flood, Gill 2010). The potential for social understanding behind personal narratives was paramount also according to one of my young closer

collaborators, who praised the didactic feature of much Indian literature, sacred and secular, based on popular biographies or hagiographies.

> *I like the way you are going around and asking questions with eyes and ears wide open. I like it more you are taking time to sit down with me and* listen to what I have to say *(...)* There's lots of value in one's story, *the teaching of saints are all in their life tales... the best I've learnt come from the Satguru Ravidass Ji and Lord Ambedkar...* (Sunny, 05/11/2012, Cividino darbar)

Times after, Sunny himself signaled me this post on Sikhtoons.com, a cartoon series on "global Sikhism" which is edited on the web and advertised in magazines across the US:

> *What defines me are not the identifications, be they social, cultural, national, religious or professional, but the never-ending transitions that breathe life into my existence. (...) So perhaps next time you see a stranger and have the impulse to ask: "who are you?" or "where are you from?", try instead "*what is your story?*"* (Vishavijit Singh, Sikhtoons.com on Hyphenated-identities, 30/12/2013).

Not only the content of the post explicitly recognize how life stories can account for the fluid complexity of one's "hyphenated" identity, but the medium where the message is spread across a global audience may stand for the new frontier of exposing one's life and tales to public knowledge (Kozinets 2009, Miller 2011). The very limited extent of *netnography* I conducted, mainly connecting Facebook profiles with my collaborators and their kin, demonstrated that individuals are indeed social networking sites. Again, as I will argue throughout, gender and generational positions change the scope and breadth of using social media, which can be at times empowering or constraining once one's intimacy is put forward to public disclosure (ch.7).

While offering alternative views and vantage points to deconstruct stereotypes and critically interpret Italian Punjabi diaspora lives, my gender and generation perspective in analyzing their narratives and experiences was not exhaustive nor encompassing.

An intrinsic limit of this ethnography lies in its failing to interrogate non hetero-normative views of sexuality and the possible parallel construction of blurred or queered gender identities (Gopinath 2005). I chose not to pursue this path of enquiry since its empirical evidence was quite negligible in my work (to be honest it sounded taboo to most of my respondents) and such a discourse remains undisclosed in all the literature so far produced on the Italian Punjabi diasporas. I still find it a promising field of research, which will be worth serious investigation, in the light of those polarized feminine and masculine typecasts I discuss in chapter 5.

Last, I should point to those generations which are not represented in my work, but whose echoing presence all across the diaspora is palpable: the *elders* and the *very youngsters*. With the term elders, we identify the parents of first time migrants, most of whom are in fact "third" agers and generally still live back in Punjab. Their role as depositaries of family and community memory and values pars with the social recognition and homage still paid to seniors throughout India (see

chapter 5). Depending on family circumstances back in India (such as the presence of other kin members who can take care of them, as in the case of Asha's parents) and means and livelihoods in Italy, some longer-settled Punjabi migrants, especially if already naturalized, may think of reunite their elders. (That was the original family plan for granddad Dev, Kanval's father in law, a widower approaching his seventy). This may well be in the near future a new frontier for the Punjabi diaspora households in Italy, where under the same roof a paradoxical structure of novel but "traditional" joint *parivaar* will host three generations: from the newly expatriated elders to the second generations Italians. As for those kids who are in fact born in Italy and have since lived there continuously (such as my adult women friends' children and minor of age pupils in schools), I did have many occasions to observe and note down their behaviors and remarks, their perspectives on being Inditian and daily discovering their belongings. Yet, I purportedly chose not to interview them neither to account for their stories in my ethnography out of respect for their minor age: aware that the procedures to meet ethical requirements and obtain parents' informed consent could have been fiddly enough. As a mother of two myself, I also believed that such a delicate ethnographic work needed to be conducted with extreme caution and deserved a total commitment and tailored research plan to discover "transnational childhoods" (Zeytlin 2013).

2.3 Ethics and on field identity politics

2.3.1 Mutual situatedness: from feminist to participatory research?

> This essay is an argument for situated and embodied knowledges and an argument against various forms of unlocatable, and so irresponsible, knowledges. […] But here also lies a serious danger of romanticizing and/or appropriating the visions of the less powerful while claiming to see from their position [….] The positionings from the subjugated are not exempted from critical re-examination;[their] standpoints are not "innocent". (Haraway 1988:583-584)

While my work makes a strong case in assessing the reciprocity (or lack of it) between representations and configurations of diversities within the Punjabi diasporas in northeastern Lombardy society, it does so under the premises of a larger turn on *reflexivity* in social science research (Salzman 2002). Claiming that I explored my field through the eyes and words of those located at its margins, women and youth, does not exempt me from recognizing that their supposed marginality was both contextual and relational. At the same time my tuning with their views did not come out of nowhere, neither was the result of deliberate rational choice.

Since I believe that ethnographic research is a process of giving meaning to social practices carried out jointly by the researcher with the subjects involved in the study, *my own lived intersectionality*

determined certain mechanisms of mutual expectations in my informants. I was a young Italian woman, a mother, a teacher, taken for Catholic though non-practicing, known as a community-based worker for the integration of migrants, seen by my close informants as a "socialist" and "feminist"[19].

Though insisting on cases which trail a long tradition of feminist studies "on women, by women, for women" (Harding, 1991; Oakley, 2005), I intend (any) gender as a byproduct of relational processes. The focus on femininity emerged as a result of the interpersonal ties I was able to weave in the field and it fitted into my overall attempt of tracing diasporic gendered homes, but I also made sure that male points were equally represented, even though I could actually won over some confidence from the youngsters only. My relations to adult male migrants were rescaled as purely instrumental (for information exchange) or as a family extension of the intimacy that I had gained through their wives and children. Considering the way homes were "en-gendered" among Italian Punjabi families, there was a strong epistemological circularity between theory and method, between *postcolonial feminism* and *ethnographic reflexivity*.

On one hand, postcolonial feminism has just begun to lay bare the part that gender played in defining the Indian State in colonialist and nationalist discourse, particularly the role that Indian women performed in their households for collective community building (Ray 2000) and the way this feminine discourse is changing in the diaspora (Brah 2003, Bhachu 2004). On the other, I agree with Rosaldo's statement (2000:532) on ethnographic knowledge that "the notion of position refers to how life experiences both enable and inhibit particular kinds of insight". Any fieldwork interaction, ordinary occurrence or extra-ordinary event is always embodied and gendered. As researchers we could not investigate stepping out the materiality and instrumentality of our body, which is itself as a heuristic device, given that any research endeavor takes place through a process of *embodiment* (Csordas, 1990). My gender yet did raise some questions in the field. For instance, I was advised to participate in rituals with my husband, or I was specifically asked to be accompanied by the latter during my journey through India (either for my alleged "safety", or because I was slightly "unruly" even in the eyes of the families which had offered to host me).

I soon learnt comply with the community social rules, particularly regarding sex-separation (such as space management in temples, appropriate clothing and formal approaches to people of different gender/age/status). Yet, once I had established actual friendships with some women and girls, I

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[19] To declare myself as a feminist, i.e. someone who believes in gender equity and contest the male-stream and unequal gender relations I could see and experience in society, does not equate with my work being active feminist. While I did particularly access and consider the life tales and social conditions of Punjabi immigrant women, I rather articulate my analysis against pre-given categorizations, essentialist views of women or patriarchy. I tried to interpret my data on multiple social differentiation through a continuous dialogue with my diverse interlocutors and their ongoing de-construction and re-construction of reality, where nonetheless women's views and their engaging stance to the world occupy a larger portion of my findings and discussion.

struggled to step back from *the role of counselor* I was invited to take on especially by the younger ones. I estranged some fathers' approval, entering as an alien and presumed opponent in their private space of managing kids' education and control. As I will discuss in the next paragraph, not that overt clashes ever occurred, but my interest in delicate and contested issues nestling in families' cultural intimacy (Herzfeld 2004) was partly countered or at least misunderstood. I did not wish to be seen as an advocate for women's rights in the field, seeking redemption for young Inditian women in and beyond the matter of dowry. My research project was not policy-driven nor commissioned, neither did I aspire to impose normative views of reality to the people with whom I shared and co-habited the field, being likewise critical of my own reference cultural models. Trying to avoid the pitfalls of the dominant/subaltern paradigm, abused in gender relations as much as in ethnography itself (Nader 1989; Spivak 1989; Bimbi 2012), I could not refrain from observing my own positioning in the field and its relative pliability on the two banks of migration.

While in Punjab, when he introduced me to friends, acquaintances or passers-by, granddad Dev on his own initiative used to portray me either as his grandchildren's Italian teacher, a social science graduate student or even a Guru Granth Sahib scholar. The way he was able to adapt my identity and account for my stay at his home, selecting the details he believed more in tune with the people we were with, encouraged me to rethink my own standpoint as a young white woman and a western anthropologist. Being an "outsider" on the Indian soil among Indians enhanced my awareness of the politics of identity and of my situatedness as an ethnographer in the field (Fabietti 1998) and it prompted a reconsideration of my Italian fieldwork.

In Italy, or better in Lombardy if not "in my backyard", being a native whose apparent authority derived from being a researcher and community-based worker in public education, gave me a relative power stake which my Inditian friends recognized and occasionally took advantage of.

Not only did I skip the initial stage of getting in and finding privileged interlocutors in the community that I was going to study. Being already involved in the process of accommodation and integration of the local Indian minority (via friendly sharing and 2nd language teaching) put soon me under struggle, as I felt in several occasions afterwards during my fieldwork that I was walking on a tightrope between socio-cultural and applied anthropology.

Nonetheless, the nexus policy-research seemed to me unavoidable, evermore when we talk about migration and the thorny "multiculturalism" it brought about (Vertovec 2013). Sharing the *diaspora attitude* of my research subjects meant to maintain a simultaneous perspective on the contexts of emigration and immigration (often others than two), but also on the transnational governance which allow diverse patterns of mobility and construction of home and belonging. Thus, within this ethnography I will consider policy-related issues the way my collaborators did, either as alternative

chances to take or limits to defy in order to design and possibly achieve their social mobility projects (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013).

2.3.2 Forms and dilemmas of engagement

> I often talk about 'engaged anthropology'. That does mean that you become politically engaged in the problems of the people you are studying – if they want you to. But it is not something one sets out to do. It is something that one should be open to doing. I think there is no way that one can do anthropology or social science without in fact taking a political stance. Those people who insist that one should be political neutral are deceiving themselves. Often the dynamics might be micro-political – gender relations in a household, class relations in a small village – but still political. ("Interview with M. Herzfeld", Kings Review, 24/12/2013)

In this paragraph, I will explore on-field identity politics and its ethical implications delving into two significant episodes of my close collaboration with Punjabi diasporans in Italy, which illustrate forms and dilemmas engagement yields in ethnographic practice. In finding my way through anthropological commitment, I built upon the provisional definitions set by Low, Merry, 2010. The authors proposed a progressive range of possible ethnographic engagement, identifying *sharing and support, teaching and public education, social critique and collaboration* as the phases of engagement which took place and I experienced during my fieldwork (while I did not explore in-depth direct forms of public engagement such as advocacy and activism[20]).

Instead of reasoning at a theoretical level on this topic, I choose to reflect at an empirical level from my own research experience about what I called "gendered nuances of engagement". I will introduce now two micro-case studies from my fieldwork on which I will relate in the next chapters (5 and 6 respectively), going over two of my collaborators' life histories. So far, I will just sketch a *situational analysis* (Kapferer 2006) of the episodes, trying to see how the micro-crisis and conflicts there embedded become meaningful considering a broader network perspective.

The first case I extend on may be seen as **a** private family issue, which then echoed on a larger net of households and even turned transnational**,** setting into motion manifold representations of cultural diversity. Put it very briefly: I first endangered my onsite credibility when informally sent to settle a family conflict. It took me weeks to mediate between a close Punjabi teen runaway from home and her kin, who perceived me as a pernicious outsider while she deemed me as a counselor

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[20] In autumn 2013, I was in fact dragged by my collaborators to partake in two events I would ascribe to advocacy and activism. In the first case I chose to take part in a public wake staged to commemorate the victims of local riots where Punjabi immigrants were involved (see chapter 7). In the second I was invited to accompany a ISC Sikh delegation to Genève in order to put forward religious minority's instances at a UN convention, event from which I withdrew since I did not want to be identified as a direct supporter of a cause I found partisan and ambiguous (see chapter 8).

and go-between, seeing me as an Italian young mother, an "expert" on Indian transnational migrations, an advocate for women's rights.

When Veena, a 1.5 Indian teen immigrant expressed the desire to partake in a beauty contest known as "Miss India in Italy" her parents strongly opposed her decision and the girl, who had long considered me as her *bahanji*, elder sister, entrusted me with solving the issue. My tentative negotiations were polarized between a family which pretended to re-affirm control on their daughter and protect her from "risky alien" cultural models (those of a certain Italian TV show business) and a young Indian girlfriend who knew me well and assumed my personal views on gender equity would make me act in her favor. It was painful to fulfill her expectations, even bluntly blaming me for not having been "active(ist)" enough in supporting her rights.

In the end the event was cancelled because of political reasons impinging on the diplomatic relations between India and Italy (the so-called "Marò's Affair"). Nonetheless, that family trouble turned uncomfortable to me in the field, as rumors spread for weeks and on several occasions I perceived being looked upon with resentment by many Indian acquaintances and my discomfort was cleared out only months later when I travelled to Punjab in winter and stayed for a fortnight with Raman, Veena's uncle and his joint family.

Still, I was not able to sort out the apparent clash between my self-perception of being a feminist advocate and the perception of others on my performing feminist advocacy. Was I bartering my ethical judgments on women's *self-objectification* of their bodies as long as a young migrant woman could breach what I thought was a patent form of patriarchal domination?

Months later, I attempted to perform a *participatory ethnography* when hired, as a lecturer of Italian to immigrants, to run a public seminar on the local integration of Indian ethnic minorities. Calling in the training another Punjabi woman friend who related her life-story, I felt the uneasiness as a feminist anthropologist in "speaking for others" while demanding the voice of others be heard.

I had asked my friend Asha to join me in the occasion as she could narrate her own migratory story as well as being able to answer potential questions on "cultural differences and likeness" between Punjab and Lombardy, India and Italy, much better than I could. As an outsider, my expertise was forged on anthropological enquiry, while as an insider she had lived-in *emic* experience of both contexts. Much to my own distress, I couldn't expect our audience to be so unwilling to listen and take in what my friend had to say, coming up with quandaries which were clearly *essentialized* and had the effect of silencing Asha, who found it very difficult to answer back to clear cut representations of "Indian structural violence and patriarchal culture". The two of us discussed at length what had happened that day and we were similarly disappointed with the turn of the debate.

In fact, she bitterly regretted her "performance" and I felt guilty too. My plans for a fruitful inter-cultural session turned out a pillory for her and instead of empowering my friend, I unwillingly threatened her own self-esteem.

Once again engaging with my women collaborators proved challenging: did I not realize that the social critique of Indian patriarchy upheld by "reformist" Italian women did not necessarily tally with Indian women's claims? That the domination my migrant friend tried to fight against was more the outcome of civic stratification and structural violence as an immigrant woman, rather than regarding herself as a deprived Indian forced-bride and subaltern wife?

Analyzing what each ethnographic episode brought to surface (working with an Indian teenager who was almost a second-generation immigrant and with a mature Indian first-time migrant woman), I tried to determine how these two different episodes might link and whether they may aid me to reach a deeper interpretation of field engagement and collaboration. In the first vignette, a generational domestic disagreement turned nasty community gossip and transnational topic of discussion among households, spoiling the feasible carry-over of my ethnographic research. In the second snippet, conflicting biased perceptions of cultural differences hampered the mutual understanding between a sample of local population and a migrant person who stood as her community spoke person, also affecting my reliability as a professional. In both cases, the development of on-site collaboration and intimacy with my Indian migrant women friends put at stake the foremost tenet of practicing anthropology: "do no harm" to those whom you are "observing". Was I, unwittingly, intruding in their *personal* lives and potentially turning for the worse their *"political"* struggles? Could I effectively turn my "troubles in the field" (Fortier 1996) and my personal experience in a source of knowledge?

Following P.C. Salzman (2002), *positionality* may be moot and debatable, but provided we are able to critically analyze it without taking it for granted as an undeniably positive feature of fieldwork, we may see to what extent reflexivity and engagement inform our ethnographies and eventually generate new understandings of social and cultural lives. The micro-crisis I have just related impinge on different conceptions of social life and particularly of female normative conducts (see chapter 5). While my collaborators and I did our best to solve the plain contradiction of positions, between Veena's aspirations and her Punjabi parents' desires, between Asha's narrations and her Italian audience's expectations, neither dispute did find a final resolution. Nonetheless, both happenings worked as a dialectic *praxis* that suggested possibilities for social change and eventual emancipatory actions, in private and in public life. I finally contend that forms of engagements and participatory research prompt methodological and ethical reflexivity to surface in ethnographic

narratives, broadening the horizons of *critical anthropology* within and beyond migratory contexts: such will be the approach that informs the rest of my work.

A conclusive remark. Between chaos and order, this chapter brought together all the different "locations" of my research: Italy and India, gender and age, home and public struggles. It did so, seeing how my fieldwork encounters enhanced or inhibited the construction of anthropological knowledge (Amit 2000) about the Punjabi diaspora I considered. If my passage to India was a separate field entity to my everyday life, that was instrumental to better understanding the extensive Italian field, where my professional and personal areas of activities were not divisible. I chose not to compose a separate chapter on my Indian shift fieldwork, because it worked as a counter-site to my main location almost as it did in the lives of my diasporan collaborators. The lines of reflection developed in this methodological chapter will thread with the many topics charted in ethnographic accounts that will follow. Chaos and order in Inditian lifeways will unfold through their powerful narratives and my panting ethnographic reflexivity.

PART II
Ethnographic Accounts

Ch. 3 (Almost) Non-Resident Indians, *bylaw* moving matters

This chapter opens a window on the daily-lived experience of Punjabi migrants in Italy, introducing some basic key-facts such as the legal status of so labelled "NRIs", Non-Residents-Indians, and the complex process of construing home and belonging in the diaspora, with a specific reference to material culture and language use. A first life story will then account for the tension between locality and sociality in studying but foremost living in a condition of transnational migration. Insisting on the pun *life worlds/words*, I intend to juggle with the strategies Italian Punjabis resort to in order to make sense of their (more or less) "mobile lives" (Elliott, Urry 2010) and to be able to relate them. Narration, whether in the form of autobiography or oral community history, is a performative instrument that allows embodied experiences to be turned into objects of social transmission and possible debate (Turner, Bruner 1983).

3.1 Life worlds and life words of Italian Punjabi migrants

3.1.1 NRI OCI PIO: the acronyms business in defining ethnic Indians overseas

Before attempting to account for the Italian local lives of Punjabi diasporans as global migrants, I need to make clear how such a transnational space is saturated with a plethora of legal definitions that strive to order and discipline the status of *ethnic* Indians overseas (once again raising awareness that the term "ethnic" may be subject to diverse interpretations). This large-scale taxonomy responds to political economy interests, as migrants are simultaneously considered cross-bordering citizens and fiscal subjects, trapping their dailies in neoliberal schemes of national belongings, occasionally fostering diasporic paths to development (Bharte, Sharma 2014).

According to the law, a non-resident Indian (NRI) is a citizen of India who holds an Indian passport and has temporarily migrated to another country for six months or longer for employment, residence, education or any other purpose. A person of Indian origin (PIO) is a person whose ancestry (up to four generations) were born in India or in nations with Indian heritage (referring to the colonial pre-Partition era), but who is not a citizen of India anymore and instead of another country. A PIO might have been a citizen of India and have subsequently taken a foreign citizenship. Other terms with vaguely the same meaning are *overseas Indian* and *expatriate Indian*. In common usage though, these often include actually Indian-born individuals (and also people born in other nations with Indian heritage) who have been granted citizenship in other countries and so

lost entitlement to their former nationality. According to the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs (2012), India has the second largest diaspora in the world after overseas Chinese, which is being estimated at over 25 million worldwide. In response to persistent demands for dual citizenship, particularly from the diaspora in North America, the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) scheme was introduced in 2005 by partially amending the 1955 "Citizenship Act". Indian authorities have interpreted the law to mean a person cannot have a second country's passport simultaneously with an Indian one. Therefore, OCI is a formal identity recognition, but not an actual citizenship of India and it does not amount to dual citizenship or nationality, although the card is a substitute for an Indian temporary/lifetime visa to enter the country.

This controversial set of definitions refers firstly to the fiscal status of a person, because rates of income tax are different for persons who are "resident in India" and for NRIs, as many of my informants signaled[21]. At the same time, since the beginning of economic liberalization in India (1991), NRIs have played a dynamic role in foreign direct investment in their former homeland. Besides being the recipient of tons private remittances, the Indian Government took the chance to actively involve NRIs in the national booming market economy, setting up regional branches after the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs. In fact, the Punjab-based branch of MOIA was established comparatively late, in 2009, since for a long time Punjabi emigration was mainly low skilled and only recently the Indian Government started to recognized high skilled Punjabi emigrants as potential partners for national development. In turn, this further administrative stratification of NRIs, based on their alleged potential for the homeland economic development. has prompted a more acute rivalry amid diasporans in their local scale. Expats and prospective returnees compete in becoming part of this elite cluster of migrants "*who can* really *give something back to one's homeland, more substantial than* just family drifts" (Manisha, 10/03/2014), giving way to novel narratives of achievement and failure as successful *middle class* diaporans (see chapter 4 and 6).

I do not proceed further into these specifications, as cases enormously diverge and Punjabi migrants generally respond to these state categories (NRI, PIO and OCI) with pragmatism and strategy (Qureshi, Varghera 2012). Anyway, it is apparent that the varied legal statuses of who is entitled to be considered an Indian national forge just as many values attached to *homeland* citizenship, from "emotional" (Ho 2009) to plain economical. A partly analogous statements could be made about granting Italian nationality to long-stayers immigrants (or the dispute on their Italian-born second generation), a lengthy discussion on *host-land* citizenship which I postpone to chapter 7.

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[21] A complex counting systems assign residency status and formal NRIs enjoy a scheme of relaxed fiscal taxation, a benefit which is not automatic but must be supported by administrative evidence (and provided a sizeable annual fee gets paid every year). This status affects then both the viewpoint of exchange control law and of income-tax law.

Beyond this broad transnational perspective, in the next passage I'll move towards a local portrait of how *home landing* is imagined and performed by Italian Punjabi diasporas, leaving the icon of mother-country in the background to acknowledge the time and space bound practice of creating home in the country of resettlement amid global orientations (Brah 1996). A discussion on global house holding enhances our understanding of the NRIs politics of identity, connecting home making to new cultures of citizenship.

3.1.2 Global house holding and local home-making, lived experience through material culture

Desh Pardesh can equally well be translated as "home from home" and "at home abroad".

(Ballard 1994:18)

In this paragraph I will introduce the core of my research, since with the progress of fieldwork notions, practices and emotions attached to the idea of *home* in diaspora (Tölölyan 2012) resonated in any facet of my participant observation and narrative work. Yet, loaded with meanings and expectations by my research subjects, home revealed itself not a unified nor stable concept, partly because both its material location and intimate social network were often split across time and space, partly because due to such precariousness the everyday domesticity seemed to undergo a conscious and continuous (at times incongruous) re-makign process.

Thirty years ago, Wallerstein commented that "*households are seen neither as isolates nor as small units of social organization related to national economies, but instead as basic units of an emerging world-system*" (Smith, Wallerstein, Evers 1984:8). Today, in the scale of contemporary global migrations, the household is a vital institution not only for social reproduction but also as a locus for decision-making and mobility drives, as I will clarify analyzing the Punjabi *culture of migration* (see paragraph 5.1). The term household loosely identifies a compound of people related to each other that generally dwell under the same roof. Anthropological discourse has long utilized both terms family and household to indicate a variety of possible "domestic groups", even though membership to either one of the collectives was marked by kinship (either by consanguinity or affinity) in the first case and propinquity in the latter (Yanagisako 1979), with frequent overlapping and "fictive" linkages. Recent contributions emphasized how the sedentary paradigm that typically tallied up house holding with co-residence has long turned anachronistic, as members of a domestic group may be scattered around the world in diverse forms of diaspora and migration (Kearney 1995, Charsley 2012). On the other hand, thy also suggested how the global political economy of the household, especially in highly populated Asia, has been incorporated into development planning and policy-making at national and supranational levels (Elias, Gunawardan 2013).

To focus on the Punjabi diasporic household means first to grapple with what stands for "domestic group" in Punjab. Without overstating the encompassing nature of family life in a supposedly Punjabi traditional mindset, it would be fair to concede that most of my collaborators stressed the importance of family-ties in their lives not just because they were in a migratory/diasporic state, but because they made strong arguments in self-portraying the (ancestry) homeland as a family-based society. Even those who never moved out of India, like DevJi (Praneet and Guninder's granddad) came to state:

> *we, all of us, Sikhs and all Punjabis alike don't simply live in a family,* they are as a family. Parivaar *means everything to us (...). Now that my son and grandchildren are out there I don't not exist, I survive till they're back, under one roof with me again.* (Dev, Ludhiana, 26/12/2013)

Since the heyday of both text-based and field-based ethnographic enquiry, *caste, village and joint family* were recognized as the core values and institutions of Indian society (Shah 1998), even though these configurations have been subject to multiple transformations over the time, particularly due to the two driving forces of "Sanskritization" (emulation of higher *jatis*) and modernization (Srinivas 1956). As Robinson (2001:14) pointed out:

> Literature on the family in India was, for a long time, saddled with particular assumptions. [...] Especially, it was considered that the three-to-five generational patrilineal household was the typical familial living arrangement. [...] Anthropologists have shown that there is no such thing as a perpetual joint or nuclear family. At different stages in their development cycles, households may move from being nuclear to being joint and, further, to different degrees of joint-ness.[...] Further, while joint families can occur across castes, it is agreed that they generally tend to be found more often among the higher castes.

Notwithstanding its variability, this peculiar rootedness of Punjabi society in the kinship domain was often argued by my interlocutors as a par with an imagined Italian family-based culture. Well-known anthropological scientific objects like "amoral familism" (Banfield 1958), though long revisited and fairly discredited in academia, reverberated in how Indian migrants perceived Italian local society: a battleground of civic distrust and self-interested family-centric orientation. This representation was then incorporated into the overall image of Italy held by Punjabis and strategically deployed when immigrants intended to either emphasize the earnest warmness of both native Italian and migrant Punjabi households as safety nets, or to denounce the double-tie both cultural institutions burdened on their members. That comes true in the obligations many Punjabis owed to kin middlemen (see chapter 7) or the alleged petty "mafia" practices they reported with a grin in interacting with Italian services and bureaucracies:

> *Even when you go up to the counter at the Indian visa centre in Milan [run mostly by Italians], you know that a little backhanding will speed up your papers' procedures [...] so, is that an Indian or Italian dealing custom?* (Darsan, Veena's dad, 06/11/2013)

In this case, my collaborators used to refer not to *parivaar* as a nuclear affective household, but to *biraderi*: a sort of brotherhood which establishes genealogical affiliations across *jatis*, birth-right groups within micro-castal divides. *Biraderi* becomes ever more significant during the first phase of emigration and relocation, as it sets the network of allies/rivals in receiving contexts[22].

While I will expand later (in chapter 5, 6) on the mechanism of social reproduction and the adaptive morphogenesis of Punjabi transnational families, I stick here to the daily management of global house-holding through local home-making. I'll try to shed some light on the space of Punjabi homes in Italy and question to what extent these can be seen as a "powerful instrument of identification" (Miller 2010:108). The term Punjabi term *ghar* will run over and over again the text as it did in the narrative flows of my interlocutors. *Ghar* in Punjabi language stands for three interrelated, but not synonym, meanings of "house, household and home", i.e. the material location of one's dwelling, those who inhabit that space and how this is made into a significant place for living. Here, we will focus first on how Punjabi immigrants get an accommodation in Lombardy, and then we will cross the threshold to see what constitutes the domestic space in terms of *home possessions* and which activities are there performed, considering daily acts of *family worship and food habits*. While empirical evidence in the country of settlement shows the pursuit of "ontological security" (Taylor 2013) in Punjabi diasporic homes, a matching strategy of consumer display in the homeland can be witnessed travelling across the Punjabi countryside. *Transnational homing* thus work simultaneously in the immigration locale, in the homeland and in the diasporic imagination, continuously envisioning possibly new *ghar* and emplacements (Benedix, Lofgren 2007, see par7.1).

Finding a suitable "accommodation" for Punjabi migrants in Italy responds to two subsequent concerns: the first being the site for basic short-term *dwelling* (from first arrival in the host country to more or less permanent resettlement, for one person initially, for a larger family in case of reunifications), the second being a place for proper long term *residing*. During the initial stages of immigrant life many Punjabis resorted either to co-ethnic acquaintances or distance relatives to be temporarily hosted; some recounted they were lodged by local Indian-based temples, mainly Sikh gurudwaras, who are customarily open to give abode and comfort for pilgrims worldwide. It is significant to report on the *self-identification of first time migrants with pilgrims*, who felt atoning

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[22] See chapter 6, when a case of violent "Indian family faida" (amply reported in the local press) fuelled the debate about immigrant smuggling/trafficking and patronage among the Punjabi communities, adding to the mounting nationwide open xenophobia and subtle racism.

from a previous under-stated condition towards a better status (thus blending a ritual transformation with an utterly material one).

> *Blessed I was, two months I slept in the (Singh Sabha) gurdwara when I got here first. Others could have taken me in, but I stayed in God's abode and God does not ask anything back [...] I was treasured and my faith grew stronger [...] It was like when we were kids and travelled miles to Fathpuri or Anandpur Sahib [eastern-Punjab Sikh pilgrimage sites]... I became a better Sikhman. Sangat (congregation) had never meant so much to me as during those days, it gave me strength to reach my goals...* home and away (Suraj, 34, Punjabi-born shopkeeper, resident in Lombardy since he was 23, Bolgare, 14/09/2012).

The real estate market interlaces with the legal requirements for immigrants to obtain a regular long-stay permit (according to the juridical double-tie between job and residence status) and thus with the social demands that the local bureaucratic system advances on new foreign entrants at their first screening (Scevi 2010). The troubles migrants encounter in freely accessing the house market, for renting and eventually purchasing an apartment, needs not be underestimated. Most of my research participants reported on a general *mistrust* many Italian landlords felt towards immigrants, being blamed not simply for uncertain material resources in letting a flat but moreover for "*threatening to ruin the place*" as young Praneet denounced. If any foreign migrant might be deemed for conducting a house with different "cultural" standards, Indians are particularly watched with suspicion by local tenants, as Rajeev's boss privately commented with sarcasm that he wouldn't like to live next door to his employee's family, whose kitchen whiffs were just unbearable to his sense of smell. A sensory experience the business owner knew quite well since Rajeev had resided for the past ten years next to his workplace, given that he added to his daytime shift as a laborer with being a nighttime warden, task for which he did not receive a salary but was granted overstay in a two-bedroom apartment adjoining the firm. This sort of accommodation, quite unusual for migrant employed in the second sector, rather resembles the one more commonly in use among the Indian *bergamini*, waged farmers and cattle-tenders; the initial and longstanding niche labor market, which many first-time Punjabi immigrants preferred as it, combined residence and work solutions. While being comfortable enough in their long-term Italian abode, where she had blended mixed interior designs with plenty of "*Indian stuff*" (either sent from Punjab itself or from Dubai where relations still lived) Asha, Rajeev's wife, had been pleading her husband to move out and buy a house of their own. A purchase that she longed for and that he did not deny to be able to afford, but on which he wasn't keen. Dwelling close to his job place meant security and stability to him, while it made her wife complain of feeling curbed and controlled: living outside the bustle of town and being restricted not to cook warm Indian food during the business hours of next-door offices.

The reference to home cooking and dining is not casual, as *food* is a primary means and marker of identification for immigrants; the homeland cuisine represents a thriving market for south Asian

diasporas (Kay, Srinivas 2012) and a business where to enact one's mixed cultural embeddedness (Kloosterman, Rath 2001). There is indeed a growing interest in how migrants worldwide shape new foodways between continuity and change, raising multidimensional concerns on the social, economic and environmental outcomes of food related practices (Janowski 2012). After devoting a paper to the cultural semantics of Punjabi transnational gastronomy and its entrepreneurial potential in the Brescia area[23] (Bonfanti 2014), I could easily agree with my Inditian friends that *"just like in Italy, great matters are discussed over grand meals"* (Baljit, Asha's father, on our New Year's Eve supper in Chandigarh). Still, the symbolic meanings that my interlocutors assigned to *ethnic* food and particularly homemade cooking were far more complex and nuanced. Food and everyday sharing within the house play a big part in North Indian culture in order to foster relatedness[24] and construct kinship ties (Lambert 2000).

The *langar*, the common free kitchen served daily in *gurdwaras* (but in fact in any Punjabi house of worship) marks the space for egalitarian social interaction among a religious collective, while *dabhas* (unpretentious diners very popular in Punjab) serve fast food on the road to those who cannot avail of homemade lunch-boxes. The *raso'i*, or home kitchen, is in its respect a sacred space for preparing *"meals which nurtures the soul of every family members"* (Kaur, Sunny's mother). It is noteworthy that a reverse gender-divide operates in public and private spaces when it comes to cooking. In both restaurants and temples, men are generally appointed as chefs in the preparation (and serving) of food meant for general consumption. In home kitchens, women are expected to fulfill this role, which, far from being merely subservient (though spiritualized like in the Sikh tradition of *sewa*, voluntary public service) is conceptualized as an act of intimacy and self-giving reserved for kin only (epitomizing the gift-work that a wife endows her husband with).

Maintaining food habits was probably the recurrent petty practice of all the Punjabis I met, included those who were actually second-generation and often kept a double perception on their homeland cuisine. On one hand, Punjabi gastronomy was claimed as the richest and most tasteful of all South Asian culinary traditions, delving from and bridging regional variants, on the other, its distinction from Italian cuisine was ambiguously emphasized. Refraining from trivialization, the range of

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[23] In the article, I focused on Punjabi small entrepreneurs based in Brescia who set up the major wholesale of oriental fare in the country, targeting a cross-cultural market of locals and co-ethnics. Their thriving business *patrimonialises* homeland cuisine and fashions a novel transnational south Asian *foodscape*, building new linkages in the host society and across Indian diasporas worldwide.

[24] With regard to fieldwork collaboration, many of my conversations with Indian women started out about food or while preparing food. I was often treated to lavish Punjabi meals; sometimes we shared recipes and cooking tips. Only once I was called in to prepare a traditional chocolate spongy cake, while I generally assumed the role of apprentice to my Indian female friends as expert chef instructors.

spices that substantiate any Punjabi dish often became a tale-motive for my informants: either to brag or to dismiss. While at my place to instruct me on how to prepare MalherKotla style *pakoras* (a Pakistani Mughlai version of chicken-peas coated fried vegetables), Veena reflected on her change of attitude towards this recipe over her life course in Italy, for which she was ragged by her mates when still a pupil. (Once more, my friend raised the embodied aspect of "foul-smelling like Indians" as a motive of social exclusion, see chapter 5).

The recent explosion of ethnic restaurants in the wealthy cities of northern Italy did increase the local credit paid to Indian cuisine by some cosmopolitan and bourgeois Italians. However, as far as my participant observation went, the diners that serve Punjabi cuisine do cater differently for Italian locals and Punjabi natives, not just in terms of dishes or spiciness, but also in arranging diverse eating times for their clients. While Italian may dine in these places with no need for prior booking, the premises get reserved for Indians only when some profane celebration take places, from birthdays to kitty parties, where dozens of people convene and thus an informal immigrant/local separation is enforced. Besides, Punjabi homemade provisions may be destined not only to household consumption, but may be shared beyond the family unity or the ethnic community. For example, during Sunday matches, joint lunches take place among competing cricket clubs and the host team has the duty to provide food for the guest one in order to foster fair play and solidarity (systematically quashed when it comes to on-field scores and out-of-field bets, see chapter 7).

Preparing and consuming food at home is such a dense and delicate issue that I was intrigued when Kanval said they had to move out from her uncle's house because *"two women could not split the same fire"*. Of course, there were subtler reasons for two related families to fall apart[25], but my friend's remark was a deliberate metaphor that stressed the symbolic and practical meaning of fire, around which family life is nestled[26]. In all Indian religious tradition fire is a central symbol of purification (cremation and not burial is the routine funerary practice) and of re-birth (see for instance the *Lohri* revels celebrated by Hindus only and the *Diwali* ones rejoiced by Sikhs as well, as described in chapter 5) and it may figuratively be found also in domestic settings. As Kaur stated:

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[25] While it may occur that two related households co-habit in a flat for a while as a mean for saving and sharing domestic chores, interfamily issues often end in the later-arrived to move out and take up its own family residency. As I will argue later discussing the options of locality for newly-weds in chapter 5, most of the longer-settled Punjabi families in northern Italy live in nuclear households: a house is usually occupied by parents and their children.

[26] Still, double bedrooms are recognized as most intimate places, and when women and kids wish to retreat from the male conversations, which occur in the public venue of the sitting room, they find their space for rest, chat and play there. I actually think I have spent far more time on Asha's double bed chatting away with her and sipping *chai* while our kids were playing and jumping on the mattress, than in any other place of our respective houses. Exceptionally, the master bedroom may turn into the stage of a relevant familial conversation, when serious matters are to be debated with all its members. When I was hosted at Raman's, by Veena's kin, her uncle and auntie invited me over for a night time long talk in their master bedroom, where they literally *interviewed* me for over four hours.

When my husband is free, we drive for food shopping to Iper or Bennet [the leading supermarket chains in the area] there is a large assortment and the prices are ok [...] the problem there is I cannot find home provisions like in Desi's or ManJi's [two small Punjabi retailers in her town]. But then, when I cook on my fire everything will turn pure and safe, homemade *just as it is meant to be!* (Albano, 20/03/2013)

In the homes of my collaborators, which I visited quite often for months (years in some cases, and still do at times), the immediate aesthetic signs of a Punjabi-run house are in fact its *cult-related supplies*. The most striking feature that distinguishes a Hindu form a Sikh home is the presence of a small indoor shrine to perform private worships. As Manjeet, Raman's wife, summoned me while I was staring at their impressive home shrine in the midst of their lounge:

Come closer, look: the heart of every Hindu home is its shrine, the sacred space we maintain for praying the gods. We Hindus may visit a temple everyday or go there to request a favor or fulfill a vow (...) or on festival days. But the pujas *that take place in the home shrine are the most important; they set all our family actions and decisions (...) and* shraddha *is the puja we can never miss, because it shows our love and respect for the dead fathers and mothers... It (the altar) may be large as ours or tiny, but it is here that we do* puja *at least once a day, we honor our deities, we wash their statues and adorn them with flowers and vermilion, burn incense... offer nectar, milk and fruits on a tray...* (Manjeet, Jalandhar, 19/12/2013)

Hindu homes display a whole assortment of bright posters and statues of one or more deities out of over a thousand pantheon, also considering that each family member may be devoted to a particular god and set up a niche shrine next to their bed, with special crafts handed over the generations. Instead, being the Sikh faith monotheistic and strictly aniconic, no visual aid is used in the daily private worship (and even in the congregational one in gurdwaras it is the *Adi Granth*, the Sacred Scripture, the only attribute to the *nirankar*, formless God). Nevertheless, in Sikh homes as much as in their temples abound pictures of either one or more of the ten Gurus, among whom the first and the last, Guru Nanak Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh, are probably the most popular (so to be held as guardian images in any car or cab I happened to drive while in Punjab).

Pilgrimage commodities and religious objects in general are among the most sought after pieces of material culture that travels across Asia and Europe, India and Italy, re-enacting social interconnection, "home closeness" across a Punjabi de-territorialized space (Qureshi, Varghese 2012). Detecting the flows of *material culture* which is being brought back and forth from Italy to India and the other way around is of great interest because it reveals how commodities, with or without a stringent economic worth, are also assigned other values which are always personally intended and socio-culturally mediated (Bachu 2004).

Focusing on my ethnographic data during my Indian-based fieldwork, Inditians go back to India carrying those luxury goods they like to show off to their non-migrant Indian kin and friends, such as the latest hi-tech devices on the market (tablets or smart phones), as well as branded Italian clothing and souvenirs from popular tourist spots. The better-offs in northern India deem Italy a southern European country (thus placing it lower in standing compared to other "northern

destinations"), yet admire its most distinctive cultural features, like art history, high fashion, fine cooking. There is a real pride, both cosmopolitan and vernacular, in expatriates who can show and gift their mates in Punjab with small presents that prove their economic success abroad, but also their social integration being ambassador of another and valued culture. Kaur herself, with whom I shared the flight to Delhi, went back to Amritsar with two packages of handmade Italian pasta and treated her family to a special intercultural dinner, as she cooked the spinach *tagliatelle* with a local *masala* sauce usually served over Chinese noodles.

Equally remarkable are the objects that expatriates take away from Punjab as they travel back to Italy. All family members use to wrap special boxes filled with local goods for their kin's departure. Teens and younger women especially ask for "girlie's stuff", such as traditional Indian dresses (from hand-sewed Punjabi *salwaar kameez*, to all-Indian boutiques' *curtas* and *saris*), henna's little tubes to realize *mehndi* body-painting (a practice common during female rites of passage in India but used by emigrants as daily "cool tattoos", Veena) and fine bangles and bracelets. Many Indian girls on the sole purpose of "looking good" now wear these ornaments, traditionally worn by Hindu married women according to a complex scheme of numbers, colors and figures, and embodying Indian femininity, like Sanja commented (a teen met in Chandigarh who lived in Asha's parents' gate community[27]). Such an array of objects may be seen as a cultural legacy that belongs to emigrants and thus may be re-actualized in everyday life with a partial shift in meaning, or a souvenir they have felt severed from and serves to fill up their own memory-box (Salih 2003). Most of these goods, minute or precious, are meant to be shared across friends once back, with co-ethnics for fostering ethno-community tightness and with outer friends, Italian natives in this case, for spreading a certain commendable *Indianness*. Some of these commodities (especially food, clothing and music) may also be traded for commercial purpose (see in par. 5.3 Asha's informal dealing in Indian fashion).

Observing the matching flows of material culture and its consumption on both sides of migration, from Punjab to Lombardy and back, enables us to see how stuff is interspersed in constructing migrants' self-perception, interpersonal relations and social imagination (Miller 2010). This sort of commodity fetishism, which some expatriates describe as the erosion of spiritual heritage, equates the treatment NRIs reserved for their real estate properties back in Punjab, as a persistent sign of the importance of remittances. Wide across northern India, the distinctive material sign of emigration

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[27] The phenomenon of gated residential enclaves is burgeoning in urban India (Falzon 2004) and exploding in Punjab, especially in the capital Chandigarh, where a perception of rise in crime and a more "modern" organization of city spaces along ethno-linguistic and religious lines is much sought after by higher middle classes. Located in Mohali, the gated community where Asha'a elders lived was intended by its dwellers as a novel arrangement of "once upon a time village life", where neighbors were addressed as extended kin, but newcomers were admitted only provided they qualified as "having *the right background*, enough means and a lay attitude" towards religious beliefs (Baljit, 02/01/2014).

are the countless recently built *brick mansions*: being able to erect one's dream house over a few years since moving out represents the icon of one's success abroad. It is actually lonesome to drive through the region and see how these buildings (quite luxurious in local standards) are most of the time left empty and unattended; occasional occupation occurs only during holidays or transnational family reunions. (About the remittance landscapes, although in different world contexts, see also Boccagni 2014, Lopez 2015). These deserted properties literally show off the new lifestyle and place of residence of their owners: huge and somehow brassy statues tower over the terraces representing meaningful emblems such as a giant football or a fierce eagle (see chapter 5). *Consumer display* is replacing the ownership and control of agricultural land and produce as the primary means through which home and ontological security is pursued by the Punjabi diaspora within India; this in turn is leading to increasing resentment and conflict between NRIs and the permanent residents of Punjab (Taylor 2013:395).

Overall, the incessant transnational exchange of home commodities between Italy and India, talks about the persistent relevance of remittances. Not so much in their monetary/economic terms, but rather in the way also intended by Levitt (2004, 2011), as a form of cultural transmission through which migrants make statements in their countries of origins about their newly acquired status in receiving destinations (see chapter 4).

Finally, the domestic space may be seen as a privileged realm where to analyze language use and code mixing or switching, as these are performed by Punjabi family members. Contrary to the unquestioned assumption that the language spoken at home is Punjabi exclusively, prolonged domestic participation made me aware that, though still predominant, Punjabi is not the one and only idiom used in migrant households. I will then sustain my findings after presenting in the next paragraph the *multilingualism* that characterizes Punjabi diasporas "home and abroad".

3.1.3 Idioms of Punjabiyat: code mixing and switching; orality, textuality and translations

> The moment we use the word **Punjabiyat** *[a Punjabi term for its English equivalent Punjabiness]* it suggests a reference simultaneously to something that is very tangible while still elusive. [...] Is Punjabiyat a concrete socio-political reality, a project, a movement in process, something in the making, a mere idea floated by some ivory-tower intellectuals and literary figures, a wishful dream of some Indo-Pakistani pacifists, a seductive fantasy of some Punjabi nationalists, a secular utopia envisioned by leftist nationalists, a business plan of market-seeking capitalists, or a dangerous regionalism dreaded by the nation states of India and Pakistan? (Singh, Tandhi 1999:27)

Asserting a discrete cultural legacy, migrant people who self-identify with Punjabiyat come to terms first with its distinctive language. While I will go over again the riddles of Punjabiyat in the next chapters, I'll try now to reflect on the status of the Punjabi language *desh and pardesh*, since

minority language usage may illuminate complex transnational cultural issues (Irvine 1989, Baumann 1993).

In the broad frame of a sociolinguistic theory which acknowledges the impact of globalization pursuing an anti-essentialist critique, language is seen as a cultural code, a multiple modal performance of communicative acts, whose signs may serve as "indexes of local chronicles of complexity" in increasingly diverse social contexts (Blommaert, Rampton 2012). I do not here pretend to compose a paragraph on linguistic anthropology issues about the Italian Punjabi minority, a task for which I am not trained enough, but I deem the following considerations a necessary supplementary lens to be aligned with my ethnographic experience. Ethnological thought has long been permeated by the assumption that a novice ethnographer would little by little get to learn and sufficiently master her "tribe's" *idiom*, so to discover the inmost features and treasured secrets of that group's *culture*: native language acquisition equated with effective ethnographic capacity and understanding of "the other" (Evans-Pritchard 1951). Although I do not object that sound language sharing constitutes a powerful tool for on-field interaction and ethnographic effectiveness, such a proposition fails to see the complexity of existing sociolinguistic diversities especially within migrant/diasporic groups.

I rather argue that one has to confront with multiple idioms connected to the Punjab and its diasporas, at least at three different levels. a) Recognizing several regional tongues spoken in the area, from an historical perspective to a present multi-language polity. b) Taking into account the cultural impact of British colonialism in the East Indies and its enduring effects on language education, socialization and public use. c) Considering the reshuffling and transformation of vernacular languages under diaspora conditions, not least the specific encounter with national idioms in the receiving countries, such as Italian and its many local dialects.

These reflections are not just the outcome of ethnographic study, but they were crucial for determining the leeway I had in doing observant participation and interviewing/interacting with my research subjects. While I often refer to translating cultural meanings in order to process emic views, when it comes to proper speech translation I never had a formal *interpreter*. Being able to switch from English to Italian, plus in case of need to comprehend basic Punjabi terms and simple sentences, I did most of my interviews and ethnographic talks with Punjabis in Italy by myself. When in Punjab only twice I did informally hire a local collaborator (from my hosts' networks) in order to communicate with locals who had no English competence. Episodes when I had to record that my travel companions made a strong point in claiming they were being helpful to me in my

work as well as boasting some superiority to their non-migrant kin and friends because of their excellent English and relatively good spoken Italian[28].

Punjabi (or Panjabi[29] prior to the adoption of the British spelling) is one of the most widely spoken Indo-Aryan languages. In the early 21st century, there were about 30 million speakers of Punjabi in India and some 70 million speakers in Pakistan (Sani 2004, Singh 2006), even though in the first milieu the idiom is recognized by the Indian constitution, while in the latter official status is reserved for Urdu. There are sizeable overseas communities of Punjabi speakers, particularly in North America and the United Kingdom, so that according to the statics and even to my informants' knowledge Punjabi is the second widely spoken foreign language in Britain (Ballard 1994). In India, Punjabi is written in the Gurmukhi script (literally "from the mouth of the guru"), which is particularly associated with the Sikhs. (That script is a member of the Indic family, written from left to right, but it differs significantly from the Devanagari script to write Hindi.) The Urdu script, written from right to left, is used for writing Punjabi in Pakistan, where it is given the imitative name Shahmukhi ("from the mouth of the shah").

In spite of Punjabi's large numbers of speakers and rich traditions of popular poetry, the standardization of the language was historically inhibited by lack of official recognition until the XX century and the different preferences of the three main local faith of Muslims, Hindus and Sikhs. The Partition of the Subcontinent in 1947 along religious lines was marked by particular violence in Punjab, where ethnic cleansing and exchange of populations resulted in the expulsion of most Punjabi-speaking Muslims from India and of Sikhs and Hindus from Pakistan (Axel 2001, Das 2007). Whereas the Muslims had strongly identified with Urdu and the Hindus with Hindi, it was the Sikhs who had particularly tallied with the Punjabi cause. Gurmukhi was first used in 1604 to record the Sikh scriptures, the *Adi Granth*. Furthermore, Sikh writers were mainly responsible for developing Punjabi as a modern standard language, and the Sikh political leadership in 1966 finally achieved the goal of a separate state (although truncated) with Punjabi as its official language; this lawfully recognized Indian Punjabi is generally taken as standard in language grammars. There is a significant degree of mutual intelligibility with Hindi and Urdu, although the three languages are

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[28] Once again, while Italy is often depicted as a second choice country in socio-economic terms because of its daunting unemployment rate and civic stratification that hinders social mobility for many immigrants, it is also represented as artistically thriving with history and literature: a cultural capital whose linguistic incorporation Italian Punjabi immigrants like to parade when visiting their ancestors' land.

[29] There has been some controversy over the spelling of Punjab (imposed by the British) and Panjab (more tymologically accurate in local idioms). If politically I may take the side of the natives who wish to re-approrpiate their homeland designation, for scholarly puroposes I stick to the current internationalised version of Punjab, beware that my interlocutors never queried the question and most British Punjabis are proud of self-declaring themselves so.

sharply differentiated by their scripts, so that between the oral and the textual medium a sort of jet-lag in translations can be observed (Singh 2006, Jayaram 2011).

Language, religion and group identity are a longstanding thorn in the north India, not solely in the Punjab (see the case of Bengala). Yet, out of all India's ethno-linguistic movements claiming for recognition, Punjabi intellectuals were the most successful in achieving their political goals, while never being able to establish a state based on spiritual specificity.

> The Sikh did achieve a state in which they are politically dominant in fact; in theory they were not awarded a Sikh State, but a Punjabi-speaking State, in which they must share power with Punjabi-speaking and Hindi-speaking Hindus. (Brass 2005:277)

While we will reason time and again on the never-ending quest for *Khalistan* ("the Land of the Pure" as a separate Sikh nation), few of my informants commented with benevolence on the *Dal Khalsa* (the political nationalist organization committed to gain Sikh self-rule and independence in the homeland through the active participation of its worldwide diaspora, Tatla 1999). Most Sikhs in Italy believe that the connection of their minority with supposed terrorist groups could have been detrimental to their own successful integration in the host country and, apart from ideological considerations, did maintain good relations with their Hindu neighbors both in Italy and in Punjab (Bertolani 2012). Community cleavages are not always emphasized. They are at times disregarded (for instance Asha and Majeeda used to comment *"Hindus and Sikhs are just like flesh and blood, or bhai bahai, proper brothers"*). They often surge to the surface in pragmatic situations when the beholders maintain advantageous to appeal to sameness and diversity in order to gain specific benefits (see chapter 6).

In the Punjabi region (amidst an Indian nation-wide *multilingual politics* that recognizes twenty two regional tongues in addition to Hindi and English), local language policies and everyday spoken interactions calls for a renewed interpretation of the cultural process known as *Sanskritization*. This phenomena occurrs when social groups placed lower in the caste hierarchy seek upward mobility by emulating the rituals, practices and lifestyles of the upper or dominant ones, see also Srinivas 1956, Charsley 1998. Alternatively adopting Hindi as the nation's mother tongue, English as the global idiom or Punjabi as the regional language of one's own community may be the outcome of a certain socialization or express a conscious preference over a specific tongue's cultural semantics. In any case, language knowledge is a marker of social position and, for those who have been raised bilingual or multilingual, its use is contextual according to the speakers' intentions and social claims (Blommaert 2013). Out of the four families I lived with in different rural and metropolitan milieus in the Indian Punjab, two spoke respectively Punjabi and Hindi (who are anyway mutually

understandable, but at speakers' discretion), and only the urbanite one possessed a working knowledge of English (which was in turn mastered by their youngsters).

When it comes to the linguistic behavior of Punjabi diasporas, I found illuminating the work done by Raveri Qureshi (2012) on the use of "code-switching" among Sikh youth in Britain. Brits Sikh immigrant (3rd or even 4th generation) are moving beyond the paradigm of being caught between two cultures and their mixed-up upbringing yielded ease in navigating across their Punjabi heritage and British everyday, recognizing the advantage of "World Englishes" and creative code-meshing. This socio-linguistic perspective may be applicable to the case of Punjabis in Italy not merely on bilingualism, but on a more challenging multilingualism. Compared to British Indians, Punjabis recently settled in continental Europe (Jacobsen, Myrvold 2011, 2012) face the challenge to master at least three different languages: their kin's mother-tongue, the national language of the country were they reside and last but not least the English language. Cunningly, English is alternatively seen as a relic of (neo)colonialism or a viable means to interact with their global diaspora and eventually be able to double migrate elsewhere (see the appeal of countries as Canada, the US or Australia, labeled "*real* global North" in my informants' words).

Just like other immigrant minorities (Favaro 2011), since the first Punjabi substantial settlements in Italy it was assumed that Indian migrants talked exclusively in their native idiom while at home (Galloni 2009), a view still upheld by most school teachers who blamed parents not to be able to encourage their children's integration due to a lack of linguistic competence.

> *When will they ever realize that their son is all* scrambled up *and strain to write Italian correctly, if not even a single Italian word is used at home […]. If he doesn't get a chance to look at any text written in Italian other than his course books?* (Gianna, secondary school teacher, during a parent's interview I was asked to mediate for a friend's child, 26/10/2012)

Ethnographic evidence suggests that Punjabi remains vital for everyday interaction among the diaspora, for maintaining linkages with the homeland and the whole kinship gone transnational, and for the reproduction of cultural norms and values. I rather argue that the Italian language enters the threshold of Punjabi diasporans' homes, ever more when there are second-generations in the family. Not only SAT TV India channels are continuously on the run, but since the emergence of Italian digital channels I often happened to walk into Punjabi homes and find the kids watching mainstream national channels targeting a youngster audience. Punjabi families who can afford it do invest time, energy and financial means (paying private tutorships) in securing their children achievement through *adoptive language* acquisition, even though the study of the language is not encouraged as a value *per se*, but rather as an *instrument* for gaining social recognition and cultural capital. Amidst satisfaction and envy, some mothers emphasized their children becoming proficient in Italian and eventually being able to act as family interpreters:

I am proud my sons can speak Italian better than me, it's so important for them, to partake with their mates, also to able to understand all the subjects in school (...). Some say better to teach them correct English, in addition to Hindi of course [...] but Italian it's a great help for me too, when I go out with them and they can translate *every single word, it makes me feel awkward if* I can't understand... *of course that's not my husband's case [Anuk's husband, who is a graduate and has an administrative job in Brembo, a major brake manufacturing company, has reached a high level of competency in Italian and been appointed as official interpreter in the courtroom]*(Anuk, 28/04/2013, Hare Krishna Mandir, Chignolo)

Children and adolescents, literally immersed in second language acquisition through the education system and peers entourage, often fulfil the role of "language brokers" (Favaro 2011) for the rest of their kin. In daily interactions, kids come to rescue their mothers who are paradoxically on charge of their offspring's school performance, while they often lag behind with adequate linguistic skills.

With the expression *code-switching* thus we refer to the selective usage of two or more languages speakers master in different communicative settings and for different intentions. The research on change of code has been also interested on "code-mixing", a less easy to investigate phenomenon which occurs when multilingual speakers, either unconsciously or with deliberate specific intentions, freely communicate in the same situation adopting elements from different linguistic repertoires.

Synchronous multilingualism is one of the most enjoyable feature of attending cricket matches played in Italy by young South Asian teams. The spontaneous code-mixing between Italian and Punjabi (plus some Urdu, Tamil and Bangla), English used as a go-between and a few bad words in the local dialect[30] to add some zest, would make any training or disputing session a feast for ethno-linguistic research. The first time I went down to the pitch and watched a five-hour long match of the Albano Cricket Club in my neighborhood, I returned home with a nonstop cry "*shabash shabash, ragazzi, come on*" still rattling and humming in my head! This form of **fused lect** is evident in the language young Punjabi migrants improvise online on social media. Out of all my teen collaborators, some of whom added me to their FB friends, code-meshing was continuous in their daily posts and it assumed either Punjabi, Hindi, English, Italian contours depending on the *imagined community* they were addressing each time. Short text messages also revealed that most Punjabi migrants did find it difficult to stick to the *devanagari* or *gurmukhi* script in their posting or blogging activities: English and Italian were preponderant and adapted versions of Hindi and

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[30] Very few authors (Chiarini 2011) have taken into consideration the issue of Italian regional and local dialects within the socio-linguistic integration of immigrant people in the country. A topic which I reckon fascinating, seeing in my ethnographic observations how for 2nd generations some knowledge of local dialects (at least in the Bergamo area) is a significant marker for better peer-interaction and social inclusion, but it also provide immigrants' children with a tool for *going ironic* and safely convey cultural critique of the outer environment.

Punjabi were often typed with English transliteration, so that the oral medium took over in the written form.

Against this unruly communicative mode, some first generation migrants complained that their dignified home language was losing its pride, especially among the Sikh community who had in fact resorted to teach Punjabi via *gurmukhi* script to their offspring born in Italy.

> *Every Saturday afternoon, when your Italian children go to Christian religious classes, our children come down to the parlor in the gurdwara… we have appointed a teacher here, so kids can learn Gurmukhi, our alphabet, our script, and one day may read themselves our* Holy Book. *Remember, I show you there are now phone apps to translate in English all the* banis [sacred hymns]*? But if we want to raise good disciples we must make sure they pick up the written language [...] it's a tough commitment, some drop out after a while, but it's worth the labor if you want them to follow the* panth [Sikh lifeway]… (Granthi[31] Jasbir,S.S. gurdwara, Cortenuova 18/10/2012)

This dominant position was largely shared among parents and, contrary to my expectations, by 2nd generation children as well. During their Sikhi summercamp at the gurdwara in Cortenuova, where I conducted ethnographic observations in August 2013, primary school pupils gave me enthusiastic responses about their intensive *gurmukhi* learning, nevertheless the effort. One kid even compared the tongue to "a secret code *that only* the best among us *can master*", thus drawing a line between those who had full access to the homeland religious and cultural repertoire, and those who did not. This ideal self-promotion through religious and linguistic engagement is patent in the life stories of two Sikh teen siblings, Guninder and Praneet, although their outcomes, as we will see in the next paragraph, will be rather different.

3.2 Praneet's story: ego and kin relations, (dis)possessions and legal constraints

> *Met P. today. Drove to S.S. gurdwara with her family. Spent over two hours on our own in the upstairs parlour. Her brother had clearly instructed her to explain me everything she knew about Sikhism; unconventional young woman's viewpoints. Unsolicited reference to caste: skin fairness and surnames. Conversation turned interesting when she mentioned her intention to take* amrit [Sikh baptism]*, a spur to discuss about her life here. Less buoyant but just as smart as G. She seemed fairly unhappy. Agreed for a further proper interview.* (From my field notes, Bergamo, 30/09/2012)

Guninder, at the time seventeen, introduced me to his sister, Praneet, the week she had just turned twenty. I've always felt so much in tune with their family, that is annoying to describe them as "Sikh, amritdhari, Jat, low-middle class in Italy, but quite well off landowners back in Punjab". Compared to other easier bonds I had struck up with young women of her age, at first I found quite difficult to get intimate with Praneet, who seemed to be extremely self-conscious of every word pouring from her mouth. As time went by I got to understand that it was not just a matter of

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[31] *Granthi* is by the definition the priest who acts as a custodian of the Adi Granth, the Sikh Holy Book. In contexts of resettlement, this religious figure often plays also the role of *masand* or (economic) administrator of the local gurdwara.

personal shyness and common mistrust, rather her very particular life history could account for her chronic lack of confidence. To the point that she admitted having no real friends she could rely on, neither in Italy where she had been for the past eight years, nor in Himachal Pradesh where she was born or in Punjab where she had spent her childhood.

> *I have moved here, no, not here, to Gorlago, the village next to the town we live now (Grumello) when I was twelve, with my younger brother and father. We came all the way down together when mum got the papers to have us transferred here, to stay with her. At the time she could take us up because she had that permanent job at the bakery. [...] Twenty-eight months we lived in the village with our (paternal) grandparents, the last nine months with Babba only, after Bibi (grandma) died. Many families had someone gone abroad, expatriated, but I was the only one whose mum had left and dad had stayed (...) And then I also had to take care of my brother, it was a great responsibility for me [...]* (Praneet, 03/11/2012, Grumello , her home)

> *It was very hard for me here at the beginning. They put me back one year into junior class, because I couldn't understand the language... it was wearisome, I had always been among the first in my class in Garshankar, now I was no-one, I was...zero. not that I was really ragged as I knew some other Indians were, but in fact I was left most of the time to myself.* It was like being invisible, no friends, but no fuss. *Not even teachers ever liked me: in middle school I had won a competition in maths and they wouldn't believe I had not cheated, but then again in high school I felt like they wanted to get rid of me as soon as possible.* (Praneet, 24/11/2012, Grumello, her home)

> *You know everything about us, how could I add more? All right, we are a Sikh family, not all of our kin are as devout as my brother and I are, but among Jats you can find every sort. [...] I've always enjoyed going to gurdwara on Sundays, it's the only time of the week I do not feel out of place. I love singing and playing kirtan, Guni knows I'm better than him, that's why he keeps on saying 'you sing and I play'... I think went for the amrit because I was ready, it was not all of a sudden, I know that if you take that step you should never go back.* I wanted to show I was committed. [Show to whom and committed to what? I asked]
> *Committed to my faith, an inner commitment. It's not that I wanted to prove anything to anyone, in fact mum doubted I was doing the right thing. I know that now I stand out in a crowd, there are very few young Sikh women baptised, seen only one here turbaned, but then she moved somewhere else. Anyway, I took the amrit as soon as I resigned from my post at the real estate agency (...). They had taken advantage of me there for months, kidding as if I were their daughter and instead treating me as a servant, never wanted to sign a regular work contract... I deserved to turn a new leaf and show I had respect for myself. I'm "mature" enough.* (Praneet, 21/04/2013, Cortenuova, S.S. gurdwara)

First daughter to Akal and elder sister to Guninder, Praneet was extremely devoted to her family, especially to Grandad Dev who had raised her. (Whose affection was reciprocal, as he showed me with tears in his eyes every birthday card he had treasured from the time his granddaughter was a small girl, while I stayed with him in Garshankar in December 2013). Yet, Praneet didn't make a mystery she felt crammed between her brother and mother as they both were "strong characters and winning people", hard to compete with, "an *iron lady* who knew to get going and to provide for herself" and "a charming Khalsa young man", so open and bright that "they all wanted him around, Indians or Italians alike". Praneet never objected the fact that family savings were reserved for Guninder's third level studies and not for herself, in spite of her good results in school. After gaining her diploma as a tourist operator, she first completed an unpaid internship with a real estate agency and was then hired on a temporary post in a textile factory in Val Cavallina, where most of her fellow co-workers were immigrant young women.

The following February, over a lunch I had been invited at her house, while her top-class manager uncle had come to visit from Warwick, the topic of conversation felt on marriages as springboard for the future, with Praneet proudly describing herself as the daughter of a *prabandhit vivaah*, an arranged union that she reckoned successful. While her mother tried to slow things down, her father, also due to reduced working hours in the bakery where he was employed, urged his sister half-joking to act as a sponsor and propose a partner to her niece. Praneeet's dad hinted at some vacant properties they still owned in Mandi Gobindgarh, Punjab's steel hub, which might come in handy to settle down his daughter in wealthier contexts. It took me a while to figure out Sarbjot's plan. He wished for his faughter to secure a profitable marriage and move to Britain rather than going back to Punjab, where the family nonetheless had managed to build a countryside mansion after a decade of prompt remittances. (Where I was hosted by Grandad Dev and from whose terraced roof I had spent many nights birdwatching peacocks to send Praneet souvenir shots). While taken aback by her dad's prospects, on the spot Parameet replied that she "wouldn't mind to get to know a nice, cool […] and *suitable* Brit Sikh" and eventually get engaged.

A few weeks later, in the last interview I had taken from her, she added:

> *I'm not keen on getting married too soon, if I have to choose I would prefer to meet a guy like me, of whom my parents approve (...) and who knows, if he lives in England maybe I can get to move there, that wouldn't be bad (...) provided I like him, of course! Then I think of Babbe, who was a father to me and would like me to go back and give him greatgrandchildren! [...] Let's go back to something else, I don't like gambling on the future too much, it makes me feel edgy... anyway Guni is getting is leaving certificate this year and everything will change, whether he gets a job, goes to college or dad can send him to Canada. [what about you? I asked] As to me, I will have to get a driving license, I cannot keep riding to work every day, when the bad weather comes in... (Praneet, 02/03/2014, Grumello, her home)*

As the summer was ending and I was writing up, I received an unexpected notice via WhatsApp from Guninder, who cheerily and urgently asked me to fly over to India in order to attend his looming sister's wedding. I couldn't believe my eyes: I had been talking with Praneet no longer than six weeks earlier and no sign of the event was on display. Neither their mother had let anything slip out when she was getting started to arrange her "*summer* return *holidays*", as she said. Guninder was enthusiastic about the news and, once my initial surprise converted into mellow words of sincere congratulations and family blessings, he rang me on Skype with Granddad Dev, who was evidently over the moon for having arranged such a wonderful marriage. I feared I could sound rude or intrusive, but there was no need to conceal my earnest curiosity as both my friends were in the mood for chatting away and disclosing all the behind the scenes of the imminent wedding (which was then celebrated just a fortnight afterwards). I knew from my time in India that Granddad had been thinking about a suitable groom for his granddaughter since his own spouse passed away, and he had promised himself he would have found a finest grandson-in-law, who

could drag his beloved *Didi* back to Punjab and settle her down. I felt odd in sending out a well-wishing wedding gift for my friend, as I did not understand whether I had been purposely or not kept uninformed about her intentions. About one month after the ceremony had taken place (considering that while the wedding ritual of *Ananad Karaj* in the Sikh custom is quite frugal, the Punjabi social tradition of days long celebrations was respected and a grand reception took place, chosen by the groom's side but financed by the bride's) did I receive a long thanking reply from Praneet. While our exchanges that day were utterly intimate and I do not wish to report them in my writing, I felt they stood at the core of my ethnographic relationships and engagement. Before I could express my astonishment in what I deemed a rush decision, my friend came first and recounted how the family had swiftly convened that such a marriage could be just timely and convenient for her and the whole kindred. Her groom was just "*the best* deal *she could possibly get*", since "*GrandadJi had been screening him for months*" and both her parents approved. That meant for her to move back to Punjab, to settle down in her husband's hometown outside Hoshiarpur, close to Himachal Pradesh, where she had born and grown up till the age of twelve and had since kept treasured memories. This decision dashed for her a novel personal future, becoming a wife and eventually a mother (a coming of age for which she had declared herself unprepared just a few months earlier, joking about going to visit her auntie who was selecting other possible Brit Sikh fiancés). The move drew a line from her most recent past, what her life in Italy as an NRI had been for over ten years up until that "summer return holiday". Thinking back about all our latest talks that year, I put some pieces of the jigsaw together, as she had lamented more than once that the interim unskilled factory job she had taken in the button manufacture would take her nowhere: no career prospects, not a chance of getting Italian nationality with feeble job contracts dishevelled with periodical dole. I should have seen that something was in the air. What left me pondering about my personal and ethnographic relation was not only my blindness in face of an event which was not unexpected after all, but moreover the explanations I had unwillingly urged my friend to give me "in defence" of her right to get married. Although I thought that the marriage took place according to family arrangements and cultural scripts, Praneet provided me with a remark I couldn't answer back *"I was* stuck*, mum and granddadJi helped me out (...), I'm glad they did"*. And from the photo shots she sent me, I could earnestly see that she looked cheerful and thrilled, while she smiled hand in hand with her handsome newly-wed groom.

While I thought Praneet's life history exemplified a quite common route and thorny trajectory for thousands of 1.5 Inditian girls and young women, the provisional epilogue of my friend's international migration made me cognizant of how diaspora mobilities may change and even halt quite abruptly. Routes and detours might happen not inevitably under a forced return migration, but

according to a family plan that seems to match the original moving out of just a decade or a generation earlier. Praneet's experience of agreeing into a marriage that involved a *transnational return migration* patently displays the complex interlacing of kin and community networks, material (dis)possessions and legal constraints, all which are at work in mobility regimes and where personal choices are always socially mediated and structurally hooked (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013).

I have no buff in saying that my friend did not have other options, rather in the honest way she addressed me after her wedding it was clear that I should have learnt to see with different eyes her life and expectations, crash and projections. I cannot foresee whether she will come over to Italy again, but I do know that I will save money and go to visit her as soon as possible. Fieldwork might have ended and I do not need to collect further empirical data, but when ethnographic ties have become friendship bonds, you cannot slam the door and pretend that significant relationships have expired. That is what I have learnt from those who live and belong in the *interstice* or *third space* of diaspora (Bhabha 1994). *Flexible stableness* is an art and a struggle; (un)settledness takes commitment and strategy, which is just what I will try to argue in the next chapter.

Ch. 4 Dislocating Punjabiyat

The chapter discusses the moral values and social patterns that lure Punjabis to move out, recognizing that a historical *culture of migration* thrived across northern India, also connected to the British rule and its aftermath (Jain 2010, Jayaram 2011). Either to escape adverse conditions, from lack of opportunities to violent conflicts, or to leave home in order to achieve better status and care for their families (Cohen, Sirkeci 2011), flocks of Punjabis went overseas for a century. First as indentured laborers during the colonial era, then as Commonwealth "free" movers after the 1947 Partition, next as refugees since the 1984 anti-Sikh riots, last as "voluntary" international migrants. Over 10 million Punjabis are today resettled in the UK, Canada and the US, Europe, the Gulf and Australia, accounting for almost half of all Indian diasporas worldwide since the Nineties (Clarke, Peach, Vertovec 1990). Sikh Diaspora and Punjabi labor emigration have often been treated separately, with the development of an independent field of *Sikh Studies* (Tatla 1999, Axel 2001, Hawley 2013). On the contrary, I argue that these streams have partly converged as social media have brought about new parting and bridging between such overlapping cultures of migration, enriching the *cartographies of Punjabi diasporas* altogether (Brah 1996; Diminescu, Pasquier 2010).

Like countless transnational migrants from the global South, mobility to Europe and to Italy in particular (the country now hosting the main Indian minority in the EU, Lum 2012) is not an easy choice for prospective Punjabi migrants. Many political, legal and economical constraints as well as cultural and social chances allow some to move and prevent others from doing so (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013; Soderstrom et al. 2013). Given that *mobility and immobility* seem two sides of one coin, I will consider the hurdles Punjabi expats endure in leaving the homeland and keeping their journeys doable, complying with macro-requests from the country of settlement and micro-expectations from their transnational social networks, often through the mediation of *dalals* or intermediaries.

While most Punjabis entered Italy as low-skilled labor, their class reference may be fluid, ranging from small landowners to landless manual workers, from petty craftsmen to unemployed urbanites. Regardless of their background, Punjabis seem to conform to a cultural drive *for middle class achievement* and consumer display, radically on the rise in India since the desertion of national socialist economy (Jaffrelot, van der Veer 2012). Powerful indicators of one's success abroad, *remittances* sent home help sustain social ties beyond national borders (Levitt, Lamba-Nives 2010), sufficing for family back holding or supporting community development (Guha 2013). Yet, the

global financial crisis sternly affected last-hour Punjabi migrants and rendered their journeys uncertain in times of economic recession in Lombardy's rurban areas (Sacchetto 2013).

In order to discuss the ambivalent middle class aspirations of Punjabi diasporans and how these are pursued, I will then present *two life narratives*, discussing with sharp gender-awareness (de Vries, Watt 1996) the cases of Rajeev and Kanval: an adult man and a woman of the same age, belonging to a first migrant generation, respectively Hindu and Sikh. Both moved to Bergamo district over ten years ago and here have since either set up or reunited their households, coming to terms over their life course with different livelihoods and shifting gender relations. In their transnational life stories, it will become apparent that *physical* and *social mobility* are subtly entwined (Hage 2004) and that projects as well as occasional crashes of individual achievement are shared with the extended family and inscribed in culturally scripted migration designs.

4.1 Punjabi cultures of (e)migration

4.1.1 Historicizing the Punjabi macro region, roots on routes

> Though it is assumed to be clearly defined, there has been no unanimity among historians and other social scientists about the space called "the Punjab". They have generally taken for granted a politico-administrative unit, but not the same unit. The Punjab of the Mughal times during the sixteenth-century was not the same as the Punjab of the British period in the late nineteenth-century. After 1947 there were two Punjabs, one in India and other one in Pakistan. *On the Indian side* we have seen three Punjabs: one in 1947, another in 1956 and a third in 1966. There is no difficulty in writing on any because they represent well-defined politico-administrative units. Nevertheless, to choose any of these as our "Punjab" would be arbitrary. For "historical geography" to have a certain degree of significance, a conscious definition of the Punjab is called for. (Grewal 2004:11)

The *Greater Punjab Region*, crossed by five tributaries of the Indus river, dates back to the Harappa culture, pictured in the *RigVeda* and Hindu epic poem *Mahabharata*. Repeated "inventions of tradition" (Hobsbawm, Ranger 1983) took place in connection with past turmoil, through *bordering and ordering* (Van Houtum, Kramsch 2013) a vast area inhabited by diverse shifting groups (Singh 2004). To grapple with this regional history means tackling how a complex cultural legacy was held and restated by diasporans themselves. The "impossible" territoriality of Punjab lies on a paradox: while depicted as the ancestors' home, an emotionally connoted *desh* (its people being *desis* or Hindustani), there is no agreement on its denotative content. Some of my informants referred to Punjab as the Indian Federal State solely, others to the joint Indian and Pakistani regions (those who had experienced *the bordering*), some to the former Eastern Punjab now independent Bangladesh,

others to a *South Asia* covering Pakistan, India and Bangladesh altogether[32]. From the narrowest to the widest, these self-definitions are flexible and contested: the roots define and orient the routes as much as the routes inform what and where the roots are (Clifford 1997). Just when Punjabis displace do they start feeling the urge for locating the *desh* and a cultural fad uneasy to tame. Today's Punjabi diasporas are crafting the idea of *Punjabiyat* and its borders (see ch. 4, Jayaram 2011); cultural *fictions* developed abroad, between memory and longing, mesh with the *factual* homeland lived by its residents, be they diasporans' kin or former neighbors.

Sightseeing across northern India, with locals who took the chance to visit places they had never been before, meant to learn how the (home)land and embedded social memories were collectively *conceived, commodified and patrimonialised*. Today's Punjabi pioneering tourism addresses global visitors (scarce in a region less alluring than tropical southern States), but most new generations and returning expats (Ali, Holden 2006), in an incipient process of *heritagization*: an institutionalized effort to carve out history where major events took place nurturing collective remembrance (Halbwachs 1992: Assman, Czaplicka 2005). I was guided through and "lectured" on both holy and secular places: from the *sancta sanctorum* "Golden Temple" in Amritsar to "Gurphal Science City" in Jalandhar (a park exhibiting national techno-scientific achievements). From "Wagah-Attari Border[33]" (the Army signpost between India and Pakistan where a daily martial pièce parodies the two countries' uptight relation) to Chandigarh "Rock Garden" (an open-air hymn to arts and recycling). From "Rangla Punjab" (a resort staging pre-modern Punjabi village life, advertised all over as offering genuine local gastronomy for a price that few could afford) to "Khalsa Haveli Heritage" in Anandpur (a museum narrating the Sikh Panth development). From "Elanta's Mall" (India's biggest shopping centre) to "PJA Cricket Stadium" in Mohali (the largest capacity one in the region), to the winter resort town Shimla (where XIX-century grand British edifices turned into honeymoon nests).

Striking was the mastery of my informants at *story-telling*, dramatizing the gist each site stood for their people, insisting on an all-India national (at times nationalist) pride or adamant on the loyalty in being Punjabi/Sikh. *Hindutva* and *Punjabiyat* are mutually dependent, projecting a collective identity that may stress or downplay its religious clue, according to a disputable equivalence, which defines Indians as being culturally Hindu, Punjabis as being culturally Sikh (Baljit, Asha's father). Similar concerns apply to how Punjabi communities in Italy self-portray and engage with other Indian migrants, drawing or crossing contingent social boundaries (Malhotra, Fir 2004). As Roy

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[32]Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka form the core of *South Asia*; Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan and Maldives are often added. The term was coined after India's Independence, replacing the British usage of *Indian Subcontinent*.

[33] The "closure of the gates" ceremony enacted a ritual nationalist rivalry (thousands thrilled nationals stood cheering at their country's armies) apparently contradicting the ordinary use of the checkpoint by both parties, where commercial dealings take place unceasingly and freight lorries and carriages keep crossing the frontier much easier than people.

(2014:7) eloquently summarizes "*Punjab is an ethno-spatial complex, a social form and a type of consciousness*". As a site of diasporic nostalgia and desire, the Punjab produces inclusive as well as exclusionary narratives of self, home and community.

Before discussing the issue of the Sikhs within Punjabi diasporas, I need to clarify a patent limit of my work. Though I refer to Punjabis considering the migrants who self-assigned such *endonym*, and in northern Italy both Indians and Pakistanis are equally represented, those who took part in my research were all Indian Punjabis. Accounting for my preference, there are two reasons why I did not include Pakistani Punjabis in my sampling.

My ethnographic research suggested that, though interacting through a common spoken idiom (Ch. 4), Indian and Pakistani Punjabis did not steadily mingle. Not only national rivalry and religious divide averted them from doing so, but many Indians flaunted aloofness over Pakistanis. While in India the social border between Sikhs and Hindus was quite easily traversed (commensality and alliances being the norm, despite still rare intermarriages), I logged a rife umbrage against Islamic people. From Narinderjit's patronizing demeanor on his Muslim recruits being "*nuts about God they have lost contact with the real world*", to Gourav's blunt hate "*those fucking Pakis, if I were India's PM I'd shot them all dead*"[34] as he pointed west from the top of his terrace in Jalandhar. If I witnessed broad tolerance towards any personal worship, a law-abiding respect for minorities clashed with a dominant negative attitude towards Muslims (Ahmad 2009) and specially Pakistanis. Islamophobia was a stance largely shared among the Indian diasporans I worked with. I often (over)heard my Indian friends remarking the alleged *backwardness* of Pakistanis: a rhetoric hoax they threw in anytime hot topics on equality and modernity in India were debated. This preventive discrimination was also a *leit-motiv* for some Indian women to disparage their Pakistani counterparts (see next chapter), handily condoning gender unfairness in their homes, while emphasizing that experienced by their closest "other" (Moliner 2007, Sian 2013).

Secondly, to include Pakistani Punjabis in my study would require a better knowledge of Islam as a strong identity marker in the area, to understand its relation to nation building since the Mughal Empire (Pirbhai 2009) and to develop an emotional ability to surf the unease through the biases just mentioned. In recognizing this limit of my work, I also intend to suggest new directions for future investigation, since neither in Italy nor elsewhere among the diasporas, Indo-Pakistani relations have been adequately searched (Talbot, Thandi 2004). Interactions between Indian and Pakistani Punjabis seemed to be based on a certain form of *cultural complexity* (Hannerz 1992, Eriksen

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[34] Surprisingly, Gourav's young wife, Pooja, was born in Pakistan in a Hindu family and grew up in Malerkotla, which is today the only place in the Indian Punjab that has a majority Islamic population (over 55% percent of the residents in town are Muslims and this is the only site where Urdu is taught alongside Punjabi in schools). During marital petty fights, he used to tease her calling her *Prengi or Musafir*, derogatory terms for "foreigner" in Urdu.

2007): an organization of diversity culturally leveled, but socially enacted. "*We share the times gone past, but we do not* hang out *together*", Tej joked in Amritsar while ordering bread *pakora* from a Pakistani food stall, which is the opposite strategy I saw at work in the relations between Sikh and Hindu *Indian Punjabis*.

4.1.2 Punjabi emigration versus Sikh Diaspora: a martial partition within global assemblages?

Versus a recent "mobility turn" in social sciences (Shelley, Urry 2006), northern India has long been known for its inner diversity and hyper-mobility patterns (Gandhi 2013). Recollecting the historical events that brought about migration over the last two centuries, in the literature there stands a gap between a "full-fledged" Sikh *Diaspora* (with the *1984 Blue Star* massacre as a landmark, after earlier mass displacements, Tatla 1999) and a "mere" Punjabi labor *migration* (unrelated to religious persecution, Blunt 2007). Still, I find this twofold analysis deceptive. Punjabi flows do comprise Sikh diasporas, but the latter, major in figures, are inherently plural (Axel 2001), made up of many social groups based on their *jati* (birth groups, or caste-family lineage within the four main *varna*) or intra-religious orders (such as the "elite" *Khalsa* or *Nihang* or the "humble" and lower caste *Ramgarhian* and *Ravidassias*).

The adjective *Punjabi* is a wide umbrella tendering over national and religious borders and was a "catch-22" for the people I worked with. Indeed, to direct query most Hindu Punjabis replied self-describing as Indian>Punjabi>Hindu, Sikh Punjabis as Sikh>Punjabi>Indian (see Ch.1). Situational identifications call in the figures of Indian Punjabis and their different transnational power. A numerical majority both in Punjab and overseas, the Sikhs hold unlike weight home and abroad: a religious and political minority in a Hindu secular Nation (now turning Hindu nationalist), they have always been dominant in the Diaspora, following recruitments in the British regiments, hired as a "martial[35] race" (Chopra 2005, Shani 2008). While some Sikh informants in Italy evoked how their families had to flee from the region after 1984 (see Kanval's tale), all the Punjabi households I met endured the transfer of some members, placing personal experiences in *migration designs* that bear consistent drives as well as happenstances and improvisations.

Social change and shifting political economics account for Punjabis' propensity to move. "Ethnic Punjabis" began emigrating out of the historical Punjab to the rest of world from the late XIX century (Ballantyne, 2006). Colonial reasons linked to the British *Raj* informed the trajectories of many South Asians (Cohen 2008). After Independence (1947), Indian citizens retained favored

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[35] As Ferraris and Sai (2014) aptly described, the Sikhs in Italy undertook a politics of recognition also popularizing their historical image as transnational "warriors of peace", who participated with the Allies in the two World Wars (see the celebrations held at the Indian War Cemetery in Forlì).

passages through the agreement rules set in the Commonwealth (1949). As Narinderjit (a Sikh entrepreneur who managed a holiday-farm inn in Amritsar) put it to me, in early post-colonial times

> *after serving in their armies and being browbeaten in mines and fields, advantaged Indians [those who had been high militia officers or local governors under the Indirect Rule] ...well, also not-so advantaged but hardworking of us, brave and high reaching... we were granted free visas to enter the UK* [Amritsar, 14/12/2013]

The UK in fact remained for decades the most sought after destination. To-date the Punjabi Diaspora numbers more than 10 million, clustered in Britain and North America, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and recently Australia (Hawley 2013).

Collective and individual perceptions of Punjabi *diaspora-making* are nuanced and varied, regardless the faith cleavage between Hindus and Sikhs. Yet, as Thapan (2013) showed, a deep-seated "culture of emigration" is *embedded in Punjabi households*. All my informants engaged in the double choice to emigrate/immigrate following family resolutions. Indian men who obtained residence permits in Italy through family reunion now exceed 70,000 (ISTAT 2013), a figure which proves a strong network of kin relations. A young son often took the plunge: looking at trends of Punjabi settlements in Italy, bachelor first movers and later spouse reunification mostly occurred (an increase in middle-class spinsters' trails towards northern Europe is not equally documented in Italy, Rytter 2013). The transnational family then keeps playing an ongoing role in exercising social control over generations and balancing habits and integration (see Ch.6). Satana, a young Sikh dairy farmer in Bergamo since 2006, who used to provide me with raw milk at a nearby stable and did not mind engaging in long conversations, once explained:

> *I never said I wanted to leave, my parents expected me [to do so]; in every house in Punjab someone moves out for the better. It would be shameful if I didn't ...move, send crore back, care for them. That's how you get the best out of your life! You don't just walk away, keep looking back as you travel forward (...) you're not supposed to return if you haven't achieved what was promised (...) When I was a boy they used to tell me that in Punjab the only culture is agriculture. Here in Italy I made agriculture my own culture.* [Pedrengo, BG, 03/09/2012]

One's kin well-being is attained *through* individual migration, on which deep collective *value* is placed and where *material and symbolic upward mobility* are entangled. The narratives I collected from would-be emigrants and immigrants, thrive with *signs of success*. In fact, many expatriates who return for a while boast about their European experience, described in terms of better education, higher wages, comfort goods, modern conveniences and "freedom" despite actual hardships[36]. It often remains unsaid that, even once mediators have been paid back, solidarity networks among immigrants stand on the blurred border between social capital, human trafficking and everyday petty corruption practices (Gupta 1995, see discussion in the next section). Scripts of migration narratives also depend on the context where telling takes place (Gubrium, Holstein 2008).

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[36] In Punjabi two opposite terms describe successful migrants: *salaf* and *afarnà*, the first hardly gained its due through hard work, the second is a *despicable* boaster.

A family experience of relocation may result more or less satisfactory according to who relates it. That's the case of Rajeev and his wife Asha we will discuss at the end of the chapter, but also of Barinder and Meena, two spouses met in Garshankar who depicted with far apart strokes their challenging integration into British society and their kids' identity as self-proud Indian Londoners (see Ch.6).

Last, a longtime emigration dock, Punjab has also turned into a new immigration destination (Oberoi, Singh 1983). Thousands "internal migrants", laborers from south India and Nepal and refugees from Tibet, live along Punjabi locals and returnees, between tolerance and detachment. These apparently separate patterns of mobility are instead subtly linked. Countering the absence of new generations and male youth, once sent out their offspring wealthier Punjabi families hire domestic help from a pool of low skilled immigrant laborers, as well as seasonal farm workers and manual ones occupied in brick-yards and steel industries. As Sunny sensibly grinned, sharing thoughts on our return flight from Delhi just after New Year's 2014: "we *move out to get* our *better chances (…), someone else moves in for* their *better ones. You know, it's just a matter of where you* come from *and where you* can head to". It's staggering that such a note came from a 2nd generation Italian, a young man (at the time eighteen) who was not a migrant himself, but employed a *pluralis majestatis* to account for his people's timely diaspora. In Sunny's words it was clear that while roots may be known and relatively firm, routes get paved underway, with different as much as unequal options and possibilities. It is no wonder that the virtual *mediascape* (Appadurai 1996) produced and consumed by Punjabi diasporas plays a prime role in shaping their actual mobilities.

4.1.3 Contemporary e-diasporas: worldwide networks and imaginaries

Whether we name it transnational migration emphasizing its border overturning, or stress their political claims using the term Diaspora (Cohen 1997, Vertovec 2004, see Ch. 1), over the past decade overseas Indians set up a real *e-migration culture* simultaneously inhabited across the globe (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004). Punjabi emigration does not proceed as it did in the early Nineties, when the first Indians moved to Italy and the Internet had not yet spread his worldwide webs. We may better grasp the ongoing growth of Punjabi diasporas observing their media practices, which unveil how *present social relations* are lived and what *collective future* is imagined.

A critical issue in diasporas has been their ability to maintain ties despite physical distance. Since the Eighties, social scientists (Sayad 1985) put forward diasporas' proclivity in using various and latest media; the advent of the web accelerated this trend, at lower and lower costs. Speed links and the diffusion of ICTs have transformed *uprooted migrants into connected migrants* (Diminescu

2007). Tracing their "cartographies of Diaspora" (Brah 1996), whether to maintain one's cultural identity or find room for expression outside traditional media (often difficult to access because of their minority status), Indian expats heavily invested in cyberspace and massive telecommunication infrastructure is being built across India and areas of Indian resettlement. Long-distance interaction is regular in Punjab and electronic devices fashionable: taking digital pictures to tag in social media are daily pastimes, a global trend that conforms to a rampant consumer's display and crave for Western modernity, epitomized in Vodafone adverts found even in remotest areas. I often observed the crushing extent my Indian friends made use of telecommunication, with diverse purposes and addressees: either to touch base with their kin and friends afar or to partake in virtual communities with global co-ethnics or co-religionists.

While it would need more detailed *netnography* (Kozinets 2009) to sustain a network analysis of Indian diasporas' websites, a preliminary qualitative approach off their content may be tried through the *e-atlas diaspora*[37] *project* (Diminescu, Pasquier 2010). From the analysis of the corpus gathered (1089 sites), a variety of identity claims are expressed on the web: the Indian diasporas' cyberspace highlights several sub-national groups, among which Punjabi Sikhi sites are statistically prevalent and more accessed. Other emerging identities, from faith to caste to professional can be identified, included a supra-national South Asian identity. Both Hindu and Sikh nationalists support the advent of a Hindu and Sikh State in India, the latter projecting a universal appeal. Sikh web platforms also function as a public space for collective grievance casting community consciousness. Territorialized yet global claims have found resonance among Indian diasporas mainly in north America, giving rise to alternative *transnational* networks and *long-distance nationalist practices* (Glick Schiller 2005), designed to evade the gaze of authorities in the countries of residence. Diasporas are also targeted by the booming Indian *real-estate*, since investing in construction "back home" has become a favorite transnational practice among the well-off expats. Though Internet offers ethnic business tools for reaching out, the web does not seem central yet for channeling relations between migrants and the real-estate sector, which is divided into local markets in Punjab and operates at a translocal rather than at a transnational level.

In my ethnographic experience, I recorded no real generation gap among web users. All Punjabi generations who can resort to broadband communicate daily with their kin abroad: Dev and his grandkids constantly exchanged pics on Facebook, Asha and her mum (and sister in Dubai) regularly connected via Skype, Viber or Whatsapp. Though elder generations do not disdain screen mediated touch-base, virtually experienced e-communities are more common amid youngsters.

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[37] An *e-diaspora* is a self-organized migrant collective which is foremost active on the Web: its practices are those of a community whose interactions are enhanced by digital exchange. An *e-diaspora* is also a dispersed collective, whose existence rests on the elaboration of a common direction, constantly renegotiated with newcomers and goers.

Punjabi-based or Sikhi-sites (from *royaljatt.com* surfed by Avtar to download bhangra music to *sikhiwiki.org* browsed by Guninder to draft a school essay) are a rich source of information about Punjabi "origins": a remark often heard by 2nd generations. These portals provide cultural references, but also social networks to build diasporic relations and craft global diaspora imageries ("matchmaking sites", such as the popular *punjabishaadi.com*, are highly relevant, see next chapter and Bonfanti 2015a).

Provisionally closing, there is a tie between *physical moving out and virtual moving around*. Postmodern and hi-tech cyberspace enhance the traditional northern Indian hyper mobility offering endless motifs and allies for imagining or acting double, multiple, serial migrations (Ossman 2013). This consideration applies to the most captivating site of all: according to my young Inditian friends the UK based *sihchic.com*, a blog on the "arts and cultures of the Diaspora" founded in 2007. Despite its Sikhi name, the site caters for all Punjabis: politically correct, it hosts numerous authors from India and abroad who raise high-level social debates. It remains to see whether and how Diaspora discussions engaged through the web may assume local contours in projecting global alter-politics (Hage 2015). For instance, as we will argue in Ch.6, Indian feminist claims are ever more upheld by Punjabi immigrant women, who address gender inequalities in the countries they now inhabit appealing to local law courts (Duvvury 2008). Yet, I have so far found these forms of advocacy among Inditians more often expressed at interpersonal level rather than displayed in public movements.

The mechanisms of a cyber-Diaspora do not produce similar outcomes in different locales. Punjabi communities in Italy, while sizeable in figures and raising in length of permanence, have often been considered a latest and rather low-caste, unskilled, uncultured wave of Punjabi expats by their British and north American high flung counterparts (Jacobsen, Myrvold 2012, 2013; Sandu 2013). The following section reconsiders these assumptions, unraveling recent shifts in Inditian displacements that account for the social continuity and change occurring in the Diaspora, a debate on identity re-production and contestation, on which we will expand in the next two chapters.

4.2 Im-mobilities and boundaries

4.2.1 Structures and agencies on the move

Limiting our gaze to the last 30 years since Punjabi settlements gradually took over in Italy, we could detect both continuity and change. Quantitative data aside (as national and regional annual reports such as Caritas, ISTAT, Ismu and ORIM didn't yet separate key social variables in Indian

migrant minorities such as ethnicity or religion), I am better equipped to reflect on my qualitative material and see through *iconic narratives* how Punjabi migratory trails and their symbolic meanings have been transforming. Besides the impact of new media, transports and technologies, less immediate but equally cogent social changes impinged on Inditian lives. Internal and external determinants altered Punjabis' attempts to leave their homeland, move to Italy, settle there or leave for elsewhere. We will now focus on the linkage between migrant's *labor markets* and policies of *migration control*, retaining a dystopia on the sending-receiving contexts and their transnational articulation.

As seen in Ch.1, since the Nineties Punjabi immigrants found their way in Italian agriculture as farmers and cattle tenders, in small and medium industries as low-skilled laborers, occasionally in itinerant circuses (Bertolani et al. 2012). Small entrepreneurship started up as soon as the local communities grew larger (ethnic groceries and ICT centers attended to the needs of a booming co-ethnic population), once filled the legal requirements for regular permanence. Countering the social construction of immigrants in the Italian public discourse as urgent floods fleeing from expulsion, every second or third year a *sanatoria*, a periodical amnesty for irregular movers to get one's papers and reside in the country, granted Punjabis - like many others - lawful stay in the national territory as a desirable workforce (Colombo, Sciortino 2004). The Italian informal economy, a typical insertion sector for incoming immigrants, partly remained so even after regularization: documented migrants shared underground labor with undocumented ones in post-fordist age southern Europe (Mingione, Quassoli 1999). The hazy transition from irregular to regular (or the other way round, faltering the conditions for renovating one's permits) has been played out on a transnational economic springboard, dragging in national policies on migration control that respond to public opinion pressure. Likewise, *family reunions* stood out as a preferred strategy for first-hour migrant Punjabi males to recompose their households in the context of relocation (Tognetti Bordogna 2004, 2011; Della Puppa 2014) and effectively proceed from individual to kin's enacted mobility.

This macro report would be incomplete without recognizing that *agents, brokers and middlemen* (mostly co-ethnics, but also other foreign migrants or even native Italians) peeked through and steered newcomers' settlement and integration. Azzeruoli (2013) did extensive research on the role of Punjabi ethnic mediators who subcontracted their fellow nationals with temporary jobs in the agro-food industry around Mantua. Intermediaries, known as *dalals*, are key-informants and *passeurs* for prospective immigrants and their lumbering presence in receiving contexts has also increased in formal industrial relations over the past few years. While the figure of Punjabis in Italy at large and in Lombardy at most raised (ISMU 2013), the economic recession downsized effective jobs, so that competition among contractors and laborers themselves grew unbearable. Since 2008,

the financial crisis and down closing of many production lines, on top of immigrants' rising numbers, augmented social segregation within the Punjabi community and determined crossed exploitations[38] (see Ch. 6).

Right outside the Singh Sabha Gurdwara, I once hit upon Kasmir and Avtar chattering about work, chiefs and contractors. Avtar was playing it cool stating that he knew from whom to request a "favor" fearing he would be sacked soon, Kasmir was thinking of applying by himself for an "open advertised" post in a hi-tech shop downtown (despite the high status of his *Bedi* kin in the Sikh community). Joined the chitchat, asking whom they believed a *dalal* was, Kas replied on the spot:

> *well, anyone could be a* dalal *in Punjab, he's the one who regulates the sales, a sort of village trader between the farmers and the market. When the Government doesn't come in, let's say he should prevent abuses, that's all I was always told…* [Cortenuova, BG, 17/02/2013]

Faced with this mild interpretation of *middlemen*[39] out of an imagined rural Punjab (since Kas had moved from Ludhiana to Brescia at an early age), I solicited a comparison with *dalals*' activities in Italy, rumored about but rarely defied. Big issues over small talks, Avtar pondered:

> *when dalals outnumber their duties, you have* khacha arthee, paccha arthee [petitioners for different payments] *and so on, then they lose authority… and become a real hassle. That's why we've got all these campaigns in India for eliminating the middlemen (...) but abroad is different, people do not go around trading,* the only trader you need is the one that makes you stay settled. *That's why here their control is so great (...) There are many, but you pick one of your kin, for your sake, so that you can trust them (visavaasa). They come in the middle, but never meddle with them!* [Cortenuova, BG, 17/02/2013]

As the two friends went on, I noted down the ambivalences in conceiving Punjabi mediators in Italy and outsourcing to them. Otherwise Azzeruoli (2013), I never interviewed a contractor (though I knew two at least, being their credit quite uncertain), but I was often reported episodes where middlemen starred as the main characters. Neither rescuers nor abusers, *dalals* were in fact charged by co-nationals to supply services that could not be acquired through other means and only occasionally were held of taking unwarranted advantage of their role. *Meddling practices*, a social capital between profit and aid, might also consist in formal and lawful activities that set up material infrastructures for Punjabis to stay mobile. Asha regarded as a *dalal* a Punjabi tourist agent long term resident in Bergamo, who had been able to guarantee flights for diasporans from Orio airport to Delhi via Vienna until 2010, when the economic backlash rendered the fare untenable.

Airfares were in fact an all-time topic for my informants, who rejoiced free travelling (and transiting kin and stuff) back and forth Italy and India as the proof of their *agency* as hit migrants.

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[38] Although occasionally fostering real violence outbursts, these happenings were cherished by the local press, which easily turned work-grounded competition into atavistic family antagonism and culturally-based *feuds* (Bonfanti 2015b).
[39] In fact, the newer phenomenon of *patronage* in Punjabi transnational migrations has been linked to the traditional rural system of *jajmani*, an economic practice in which lower castes performed various duties in favor of higher castes receiving provisions in return (Jodhka, Prakash 2011).

The very flight I took with Inditian friends from Milan to Delhi (with a stop-over in the Emirates) was momentous, as doing multisite ethnography entails diverse locales and fast transfers (Hannerz 2003, Falzon 2009). From setting off to landing, this journey "home" activates emotions and expectations in those who enact it as a family obligation, a friends' revelry, a personal reward. Air travel acts as a *threshold* (Turner 1967) to re-enter a cherished territory, a homeland either *experienced* in person or *imagined through reported experience* (for 2nd generations). While in the era of jet transfers this time lapse may be greatly reduced, Sunny made me consider how the trip we did in a-day-time was completed years ago over weeks. Then, pioneering Punjabis came to Italy often without the necessary documents that would avert them from hazardous sea and wheel transfers, covering thousand miles across Eurasia, under the threat of being trafficked by co-ethnic *brokers* who smuggled them through (Kelly, Turner 2009; Shelley 2014).

On one hand, this unlikely diasporic transport system rested on the *indebtedness* of entire families for sending out their children (and thus expecting some remittances back out of reciprocity, see next paragraph); on the other, it shows the far-fetched labor it takes prospective migrants to move without regular IDs, visas or other legal paper endorsing their displacement. Today these *hidden geographies* (Rajaram, Grundy-Warr 2007) take place also via charter planes from Turkey to Italy, where Punjabis might aboard with false identity documents: an account I was rendered by a zealous border police officer[40] at Orio airport.

If these tales seemed quite distant from the everyday life of the long-term resident Inditian families I worked with, nonetheless they represent a fragment of the vast repertoire of mobility experiences most Punjabis in Italy have undergone at some stage of their migration process. Kanval and Rajeev, who appear in the next section, embodied some of the migratory changes we've just pointed to. Their accommodation or *migration-tuning* reflects different personal choices over one's life-course calling in a number of co-agonists, but at once it feeds back on the institutional frames where moving itself gets reshaped: global and local economies, transnational politics, legal scaffolds. Still, there seems to be a core foundation in mobility drives that timely embarks various practices: the quest for uplifting, what Punjabis name *umeed*, "hope" or rather "(high) expectations".

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[40] Uncannily, the inspector had come to informally interrogate me after a public seminar on the Punjabi diasporas I had run, searching for possible evidence on "ethnic criminal" activities. In the end, without disclosing details which could put in vain at stake Indian friends troubled with renovating stay permits, I managed to formally interview the officer and got instead plentiful ethnographic data on how local authorities tried to patrol transnational migrants' moves.

4.2.2 Tropes of remitting back and narratives of (un)success

While the literature on migrants' remittances grows day by day (see discussion in chapter 1), among policymakers and scholars alike, the urge for "bringing culture back" in the economy frame (Russell 1986, Guha 2014) led some authors to argue about *social remittances*: "ideas, behaviors, identities and social capital that flow from receiving to sending countries" (Levitt 1998:926; Levitt, Lamba-Nieves 2010). In current Punjabi diasporas I found exceptionally hard to separate social from economic remittances. Just like Satana's words epitomized (paragraph 5.1), sending *crore*[41] back played a big part in one's mobility. Besides any personal achievement in the context of resettlement (in relation to cultural capital such as education and work), one's success in moving out meant securing social capital through sending back material means.

Transnational consumer's display among Punjabis is a mark of distinction that tallies with the Sikh reputation for hard work. Among the pillars of Sikh ethics there stand toil and sharing with others the fruits of such labor[42]. Yet, across all Indian diasporas, set free of religious variation, transnational social fields are lived up through wealth flows that rebuff a division between material and spiritual or economic and social realms. Without delving into the Hindustani notion of *dan* or *dana* (an endowment that doesn't need to be reciprocated, Heim 2004), "gift giving" permeates Punjabi emigration cultures and can be at once understood as rational exchange, a way to build political and social relations and an expression of moral ideas and cultural meanings (Sykes 2009).

When I began to work with Punjabis in Italy, I searched for different flows of money and commodities that could disclose individual and group Diaspora strategies. I found out that material drifts linked several phases of migration: brokerage to emigrate; work recruitment; family wealth management (within households and across transnational kin, dowry system included); bequest to worship places; charity/development projects. Despite their variety, all dealings shared the assumption that wealth (and money, standing for quantifiable control over goods and services, Firth 1964) was a metaphor for social value (Maurer 2006). Far from being taken for granted, transfers took place within a net of social and power relations, impinging on Punjabis' local integration and transnational migration patterns.

Every household I visited in Punjab was partially dependent on the money sent back from expats. The amounts received were vital for caring the elders and educating the offspring (with a preference for boys), for house maintenance or enlargement (Gourav showed me around his three-storey city mansion pointing at sleek furniture purchased through his UK uncle's transmittal) and for setting up

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[41] The terms *lakh* (10,000) and *crore* (10,000,000), derived from the Vedic numbering system, are used in Indian English to express large numbers, normally in relation to currency: *n* lakh or crore means *n* ten thousand or ten million *rupees*.

[42] See the recommendation for *sewa* in the sacred scripture *Adi Granth* and in the *Sikh Reht Maryada,* Code of Conduct. See also Guninder's interpretation of his faith tenets in paragraph 5.3.

small family enterprises (Muskan's dad clothe shop was funded by his brothers in AUS and Baljit opened a restaurant for his younger son thanks to his elder in Italy). A few bi-national projects were also on the run. Exploiting the rural vocation of the region, in 2013 *Punjab Agricultural University* launched a partnership with Emilia Romagna for introducing new farming machineries from Italy. *Campo Prova Punjab* is a co-development trial aimed at improving rural productivity, where the experience gained by Punjabi farmers in Italy is reinvested upon return.

India is the first global recipient of international remittances and hosts the second largest domestic remittance market after China; transfer of funds from the diasporas is critical to the Indian economy and to the GDP of many Indian states (Tumbe 2011). Indians use a variety of methods to send money back home: electronic bank transfers, Internet-based providers such as *Remit2India* and *Western Union*, which in 2001 signed an agreement with *India Post* in order to penetrate in rural areas. The specific contribution of Italy and Europe to the Punjabi economy is still relatively small in volume compared to the cash flows from North America and the Gulf (Lum, 2012). The nature of remittances varies: inward direct cash flows are high, modest withdrawals from NRI's accounts are used to invest in the Indian real-estate market. Regardless of the share, the Punjab State greets any transmittal[43], considering that 15% of its GDP comes from "private givings".

This term (adopted in Guha 2013) broadens the definition of transnational redistribution primarily capturing two forms of transfers: a. kins' *remittances* (customary household gifting, made for the consumption purposes of families) and b. humanitarian *donations* (made intentionally by migrants to positively impact on the local economy and society at large). Building on Guha's effective distinction, I want to focus on two ambivalent experiences of back remitting from Inditian families. Sending money back, encouraged on all sides and sternly pursued, is not the ultimate godsend: gift giving may also be short-lived and lead to misinterpretations.

a. Kanval's story, analyzed in the next section, typecasts the purpose of family remittances in maintaining tight links with kin left home and projecting a transnational household. Once resettled in Bergamo, the first resources she was able to dispatch served her children to attend a Christian school (despite them being Sikh, since primary institutions run by Catholic or Protestant nuns are regarded as top quality education providers in India). Quite soon (hastier after she had reunited her husband and kids) cash gained in Italy was set aside each month and sent back to Garshankar so to have a new extended family house (a proper *ghar*) built over her in laws' lands[44]. It took the family six years to complete the rural villa, where I was hosted by Granddad Dev even before his

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[43] This is also reflected in increasing institutional efforts to cultivate relations with and defend the rights of expatriated nationals: in fact Punjab established the *Department of NRI Affairs* in 2007.
[44] Among Jat Sikhs, rural land possession had always constituted a form of capital; recent house-building sponsored by expats could be seen as a form of further capitalization in an age of de-peasantization.

grandchildren could come to visit, sleeping in one of the three en-suite double bedrooms. The mansion was opulent indeed in local standards (a golden-plated plaque honoring its backers), standing on a street which began to be called "The Bakyah's road" after its (apparently) most wealthy residents (who in fact had left a decade earlier and lived there just a few weeks every second year). As Kanval admitted, after three years of financial destitution in Italy due to labor shortage and with her kids coming of age, flows of cash back had come to a stop. The magnificent *ghar*, which aroused village esteem, remained a capital for possible return migration or an asset for marrying her children off.

b. Sunny's family (whose story comes in chapter 6) opted for another strategy of back remitting. Their dwelling in Amritsar was scanty indeed (when compared to their fine apartment in Brescia) and uncle Tej apologized there wasn't room nor adequate "sanitation" for me to stay there. (They dropped me at Narinderjit's farm, once their *patron*, a rich Jat Sikh whose munificence they always praised). Since Sunny's dad, Harban, had lived in Italy "for ages" (over twenty years) after a passage in the Arabic Gulf, where he worked in construction and earned quite well, I wondered why I did not detect the customary "brick-made" sign of his success back home.

Then, one morning uncle Tej took me to a nearby *Dera Sachkand Ballan* and gave me some insight. *Deras* in rural Punjab are (mushrooming) *ashrams*, worship places that survive next to the main tradition of *gurdwaras*. *Dera* movements started as a reform of Sikhism, often believing in the bodily form of Gurus, but their sites soon became the core of local political life, mainly attended by marginal groups (Kumar 2014). *Dera Sachkand* is a sect devoted to the teachings of Guru Ravidas, with a dedicated Schedule Caste following. Belonging to Julah Chamar *jati*, Sunny's kinfolk had long identified with the deras' cause. Almost all revenue Harban had saved in a lifetime was meant for Dera Sachkand. While Sunny praised the humanitarian action of their *dera* (that run infirmaries, orphanages, itinerant schools caring for the downtrodden), Tej exalted its crucial activism for empowering Chamars, *shudra* and outcaste alike. Once in Italy Harban attended the Ravidas *darbar* in Cividino, but he sensed that his envisioned social revolution could take place only back in Punjab, longing for a *Begampura* utopia[45] come true. Also Kaswant Kaur, Sunny's mum, defended their refusal to "back" a house for their kin, unlike many other Punjabi expats, noting with a sob:

> *we don't need a better place in Ranjewal (village in Amritsar tehsil). We've lived in Italy for long,* my sons belong there *(...). My husband didn't buy a plot here*[46]*, not for the money... the neighbors would stare at us, feel resentment,* envy (irakha)… home is where we're entitled to have what we deserve! *we already had enough anger (daivasa) thrown at us, I mean, as a group, a caste... for reservations, for moving abroad…* [Ranjeval 16/12/2013].

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[45] Begampura is a town in the district of Lahore (now belonging to Pakistan, just north off the Grand trunk road) where Guru Ravidas was said to have taken abode and settled an idyllic community of equals (see Ch.6).

[46] Historically, *dalits* were denied property rights and their new purchase of lands or enterprises are often frowned upon.

Kaur's moan rhymed with Harban's struggles in being a thriving expatriate (in class) yet still a low-status Punjabi (in caste). Remittances and transnational possessions were time-bound, rising or thinning due to economic turns, but also space-bound, interpreted in shifting value-systems.

If we contrast Kanval's and Sunny's tales of remitting back, it becomes clear that *tropes of migratory success* are complex and contradictory. Kanval's remittances funneled in a family expats' *ghar:* a mansion that soared her kin's reputation but could not be lived up since times of hardship in the immigration country had begun to deter their physical mobility. Sunny's dad still remitted to a Punjabi charitable Ravidas *dera* that advanced a social reform he himself could not yet embody: his migratory achievement questioning his kins' place in a given *dharma* or social hierarchy. While remittances are a metaphor for one's success abroad, moving out works as an overall strategy to improve social status well beyond any plain profit. Social and financial remittances are embedded in migration designs where physical and social mobility are anyway double bound.

4.2.3 Ideologies and enactments of upward social mobility

> Those we classify as migrants, people who engage in a specific mode of physical mobility, are often people who initially feel symbolically *stuck* where they are or at least they are moving *too slowly*. They are not "going places"(…). It is only when we feel stuck symbolically that we start dreaming of moving physically. (…) Physical space is only a launching pad for this symbolic movement we yearn for. This again brings hope into the equation, for what is hope, if not a projection of our dreams of upward symbolic mobility? (Hage 2004:112)

I concur with Hage that *hope* or *umeed* was an undeletable feature of the oral histories I collected on the two banks of Punjabi migration to Italy. However, I want to prevent my analysis from reiterating an *orientalist* paradigm (Sayad 1979) for which the *East* in general and India in particular (assuming due to its cosmic principle of *sanathana dharma* or eternal re-cycling, Piano 2003, pertaining to Hinduism and Sikhism) would be a land of stagnation, lacking historical consciousness and prey of unrelenting social immobility. Not only this objection was put forward by an earlier generation of *subaltern studies* scholars (Guha 1997), but it has been at the forefront of a. a general critique of the supposed immobility of the caste system (Gupta 2000, Dirks 2001) and b. much applied social science research on quota and affirmative actions (Deshpande 2013).

When one reflects on durable inequalities (Tilly 1999) in India, the caste system practiced in rural Punjab, which only apparently subsumed *jati* inequalities under the Sikh Jat ascription, rendered landlessness itself a social stigma in an ideal *qaum* or community of equals. Meanwhile, the reservation policy for "scheduled, backward castes and classes" (1953, 1980) tried to compensate for the most disadvantaged, partly reaching its ends, partly reifying a social stratification with a modern taxonomy developed by the British which raised civic discontents.

The *varna-jati* system should be understood as a graded stratification, where contemporary dissociation between caste and traditional occupations brought about a "reshuffling of the deck" (Jaffrelot 2003). These circumstances explain the hunt for viable alternatives by those who were at the margins of Punjabi society: mainly land-dispossessed and *dalits* (Sunny's family exemplified it perfectly, see previous paragraph). While the latter appealed to spiritual salvation (Ravidassias and Ramgarhian), in the name of a Marxist revolution set by Ambedkar but never come ripe (Thorat, Newman 2012, see ch.6), all prospective migrants searched for a lived *utopia* outside the contested borders of Punjab, drawing from a culture of migration propelled by diasporans' popular narratives. Nonetheless, there is a growing gap between ideas and practices of upward social mobility as Punjabi diasporans conceptualize and put it into action. A tension which recurs through my work and I will deepen in Ch. 5 and 6, when considering how Punjabis, once relocated, re-produce their family life on a transnational scale at the same time as they locate themselves within the local Diaspora, between affiliations and cleavages.

I just wish to anticipate that, as much as emigration initiatives are family steered, new household formations occur anytime during the migration process. I will soon show (opening the next chapter) that transnational arranged marriages, an apparently traditional practice, may instead turn to be a possible legal device to subvert normative restrictions through personal and family agency in the Diaspora (Bertolani 2012, Charsley 2012, Rytter 2013). At the same time, the physical and social mobility assured by marriage through family reunification might lead to a redefinition of conventional gender roles and behaviors, as it will be patent in the life stories I'm about to discuss hereafter. *Umeed* is a social aspiration that entails many aspects, but it is always shaped into a family mold. As migrants live through places of departure and arrival, kin networks transform and swell over one's life course, fastening families of origin to newly created households. In Ch. 5, we shll see that *hypergamy* is a preferred choice for marrying up and granting one's upward mobility (Bonfanti 2015). We've already explained that *biraderi* and *parivaar*, sundry genealogical linkages (see Ch. 3 and 4), actually permit or restrain migratory choices and set the basis for *future* personal and collective *mobilities and moorings* (Soderstrom et al. 2013).

Talking about "the future as a cultural fact", Appadurai (2013) identified three facets of human ability in driving the upcoming: *imagination, aspiration, anticipation*.

Punjabi diasporas' imagination leaps from collective memories drawing from a diversified tank of past heritage. The myth of eternal return does not adequately describe the Punjabi longing for home(land), for *desh* has increasingly merged with plural *pardesh* (making homes *hic et nunc* in world corners, see Ch. 4). The region's historical hyper mobility and its more recent social unrests

seem instead to validate Kaur's passionate statement: *"home is where we're entitled to have what we deserve!"* Imagination is indeed inflated with issues of rights and identity.

Yet, as Appadurai demonstrates, the capacity for aspiring is always unequally distributed. Punjabi immigrants seek for a loose middle class achievement (see ch. 6), which may be expressed through a superior house, consumer goods, higher education and better jobs. Still, coming from a hazy class continuum and a severed caste background, they keep constant remind that status exhibited in possessions is accredited once inscribed in the family, in the line of descent, so that *hypergamy* remains a cultural code to enshrine upper social mobility.

Finally, anticipation calls in *social risk assessment*, an ability to evaluate one's stand and plan new directions. Inditians are critically viewing their second country's economic security and their own accommodation in local societies. Work and residence permits, formal and participatory citizenship are among the features considered to determine whether relocation is definitive or temporary and a new migration, circular or double, may be profitable (see Ch. 7). While returns have been negligible to date, twice migrations are burgeoning (Bertolani 2013) and interrogate the actual status of Punjabi long-term immigrants in Italy caught in a precarious "geography of citizenship" (Creswell in Soderstrom et al. 2013) which may adversely affect their social mobility.

In the next section, I will untie the knot of diasporans' hope, relating the stories of two pioneering immigrants to northern Italy who were able to rather successfully resettle and remit back, and grew to be the "bridgehead" of other kin's emigrations. Out of the grand narration of Punjabis moving northwest in search of social mobility (unlikely demanding access to capitalism and equity), we will observe two diverse households performing their migration since the late nineties over a generation time. Ethnographic minutia and narratives will add critical nuances to the ongoing processes of Punjabi displacement.

4.3 Rajeev's and Kanval's stories, gender among first-time migrants

4.3.1 R.: kindred's projects and transnational male breadwinners?

That individual emigration is a family resolution at first and continues to be so even after years since a kinsman left is patent in Rajeev's life history.

Rajeev is a 42 years old man from the Doaba region in eastern Punjab, who comes from a Hindu and fairly high-caste caste Bhanot family, a subcaste of Rajputs. He is married to my friend Asha and they have two "second generation" minor kids (a boy aged 12 and a daughter aged 8 both born

in Italy). He works full time as a welder on a permanent post in a manufacturing industry on the outskirts of Bergamo. After having lived in Italy for over 16 years, only last year did he decide to apply for Italian naturalization.

I interviewed Rajeev years after since we first met and my amity with his wife long secured. I assume that his tales were to be framed within this hoary pre-acquaintance and considering that he felt his words could not contradict how I knew his household from Asha's view. As he sat on the sofa in their living room, unnervingly stretching his long legs, I could not miss to notice his eyes wandering from side to side while he strove to assemble a meaningful autobiographical narrative, taking the cue from the family portraits his wife had scattered all over the sideboard, next to their *puja* shrine.

> Achha (right), *I was born in 1972 in Padrana, finest village of the twelve* Bhanot Pinds *(Hoshiarpur distr). I went to* DAV *college like all my brothers, a good public school, anglo-vedic education… it's not just about modern knowledge but also Indian wisdom. (…) When my elder brother joined the army, I was a* jawan *(junior officer) for one year but then I wasn't selected. Instead my brother did all his career there and he, yes, he got the lifestyle! (…) But a good thing he could do, he fetched me a visa, simple* tourist visa, *with that I came over to Italy in March 1997. We thought: if others* did their lives *moving to Europe, I could try it too.*
>
> *In Verona there was* this cousin[47] of ours, *he was in the circus (…) moving around, but he knew people from Hoshiarpur and got me* a contact *in Bergamo, to replace another Indian who had left in S.C. (electronic manufacturing company).* For a small fee, *I worked there for four months. It was hard time, I lived in Dalmine in a shared flat, there were three Banglas too (…). When the tourist visa expired I stayed but it was* off the books*… better than nothing, but it's no good when you don't have papers on you, it's like, like you are invisible, you cannot do anything. My manager was a fine sir, in 1998 he made me apply for* Sanatoria *so I got my first stay permit for work (…).* [Seriate, 31/10/2013]

After recounting his departure from Punjab and early time in Italy, Rajeev stood up and invited me to leave the house and follow him touring around his next-door working place, where he had been employed for the past nine years, first as a generic manual worker, then as a specialized welder, after he had undergone in-house training. While he was visibly shaken in recounting the tales of his "*irregular stay*", the tenor of the conversation turned easier and he regained his self-confidence as soon as he was able to show me and describe all the gears and assembly lines of the steel manufacturing industry that he felt somehow "*his own*".

Rajeev's integration in the local context could be described as a partial self-confinement: had it not been for his family, especially for his kids' Italian social networks, he would have never interacted with local people, besides stringent necessities. Even his knowledge of Italian bore this instrumental feature. In spite of a lengthy permanence in the country, his spoken but moreover written skills in the language were faltering, while he knew surprisingly well the micro-idiom of his work and I heard him myself addressing his workmates in local dialect. Rajeev's second-language acquisition

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[47] The term *cousin* (or brother's cousin) recurs in many informants' narratives and signal how the idiom of kinship work as a "cultural unity" for making and understanding relations in a "polyethnic mileu" (Bauman 1993).

had developed exclusively immersed in a labor context, in which he had infused a massive emotional investment. The "cold roll pressed sheet" firm where he worked was a thriving business of over 130 employees in the Bergamo plant with a smaller Romanian joint division. While working conditions in the factory were not easy to bear and often physically risky[48], Rajeev firmly placed his psychosocial well-being and ontological security in his job.

> *My work here keeps us going. You see,* my boss trusts me more *than anyone else, I do a great job in the morning, I'm one the most skilled here, sometimes even instruct others (...) but* I am *also in* charge *to go out at night and patrol everything is ok. You know, it's a danger: we had burglars breaking in once, they drove in with a lorry and took away so much material, precious coil and silver wires. I called the police and the boss didn't hold anything against me, but then I felt so bad, it was* like they had robbed my house…

Deeper exploring the unequal relation between Rajeev and his employer, a middle aged Bergamo-native (whom I interviewed in his office the following day, not without discomfort in taking note of his conceited remarks), it was uncanny to see to what extent their tie was based on mutual need, subtle exploitation, genuine trust.

> *Rajeev is a good chap, he seems* a bit of a dumb *sometimes (...) but he works well and I have confidence in him. I can ask* my little Indian *any task and* he wants to please me, he wouldn't let me down. *I gave him the apartment for free, just the bills I count on him, in exchange he has to look over the place all the time… sun or rain, in and out. He won't walk off, he knows* he's found the America here with us! [Seriate, 02/11/2013]

Rajeev's ambivalent relation with his boss put forward the latent patronizing of Italian employers over their immigrant employees, but also the essentialist and culturally racist expectation of *cringe* from Indian workers, who are commonly said never to answer back (Bertolani 2011). It felt even weirder to hear the company's owner address Rajeev as if he was a young and clumsy guy, while his employee was over six feet tall and clearly physically apt, besides being the fastest runner I had ever seen in amateur cricket matches.

Rajeev's self-fulfillment was coherent with his cultural idea of being successful abroad, but it also meant to compromise and give in to the lack of everyday sociality, for which he was often reproached by his wife and elder son. While Asha complained that her husband had to stay in town and watch over the premises even in mid-August when the firm was shut down for summer holiday (suggesting that his sly boss took advantage of him), nonetheless in Rajeev's opinion that job represented the source of his whole attainment in Italy. It gave him the security of a steady salary (being on a permanent post). He had been able to save money besides daily providing for his spouse and children (they could have long afforded purchasing a house but he never wanted to leave his free-rent flat next to the factory, see ch. 3). He had sent remittances home to take care of his

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[48] In fact, when I had the chance to talk to other workers on-site (mostly males, long-term immigrants from Eastern Europe and some locals) they all lamented overrunning nightshifts and little adherence to safety procedures, rumoring about former employees who had been severely injured in performing their tasks.

widowed mother and had also been able to sponsor his younger brother Vijay to relocate in Italy too (the latter had taken up a post in the same factory and since reunited with his wife and kids). It was indeed that working position and everything that came with it to have gained him his whole kindred's approval, esteem and gratitude.

Considering his slight time off, only on Sundays Rajeev's family enjoyed the company of Indian friends often attending religious celebrations in the local ISKCon[49] Village in Terno d'Isola. This Hindu *mandir* in Bergamo is a worship place shared with a flock of Italian Hare Krshna followers (who originally founded it) and only a few selected Hindu families have access to it, on the basis of an informal bail-chain to which Rajeev's family was admitted thanks to the mediation of a former Italian colleague. Meanwhile, a brand new Indian-sponsored *mandir* opened in summer 2013 in Gussago (Brescia), for which crowd funding among the local Hindu families had been running for a couple of years. Generous philanthropy, at once ethnic and local, turned Rajeev's family unit for the very first time upfront the elite of the Hindu section in the area, considering that, besides being set apart from Italian society, he had self-secluded from the local Indian community too. (An attitude that could be traced back to his first experiences as an immigrant in Italy, when he had found vulnerable and disoriented nor his co-ethnics seemed trustworthy enough.)

> *I'm busy all day, no time to loiter. My family asks me to drive them to places and see people, but I have to take care of* my business*, everything else comes after (...). To be honest* she *[his wife] does a great work too, takes the kids to school, makes sure they do their homework, takes our son to football training... yes, football, he is a fine goalkeeper, really well he plays, I saw him on the field last week... It's good to have him share with his Italian mates, the teachers suggested so (...) my wife does what's needed to raise them up properly in this country (...) she is devoted to family and represent us out there, how do you say* she is the deputy, no? *(spoke-person, I suggested) yes,* I let her speak in behalf of the family... (Seriate, 31/10/2013)

Although he was in fact the only wage earner in the household, since Asha did not work outside the home, Rajeev drew on his time-consuming job as a rhetoric device in admitting, lowering his eyes, that he was not the one who took the decisions in the family. (A statement that was not correct altogether as he had so far imposed his way in not yet buying a house of their own). Still, this inter-spouse gender relation was quite unusual in my research sample: fathers did have the last say in most family matters and women strived to have their way cunningly (see ch. 5).

The year before, Majna, Rajeev's aged mother, visiting her son for Diwali, told me in front of Asha how pleased she was to have her as a daughter in law. In Majna's opinion, in order to settle in Italy Asha had agreed into marrying Rajeev, who was good-looking and well raised, but surely not up to her, neither educated, nor high-caste as she was. Remarks, which I found unexpected as caste

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[49] International Society for Krishna Consciousness is a religious movement that also identifies itself as *The Hare Krishna Movement*. ISKCon belongs to the *Gaudiya-Vaishnava sampradaya*, a monotheistic tradition within the Vedic and Hindu cultural traditions. While originated at the beginning of the XX century in the West, in the US, the appeal of ISKCON has taken over among the upper classes in the East over the past twenty years, so that a new age western reform movement is now turning into a truly global religious wave (Lundskow 2008).

discourse was never light-heartily discussed by any of my informants. I also wondered: could this rare solidarity between mother and daughter in law be accounted for the unconventional matching? Most marriages in Punjab occur under the rule of hypergamy: brides aim to marry up and their families of origin make sure this plan turns into reality through the provision of a conspicuous dowry (see ch. 5). While this stereotyped pattern does not always take place, it did not exactly work out in the case of Asha and Rajeev. Rather, hyper and hypogamy were mutually produced. She had found a groom slightly inferior to her in background and education, but he had taken his newly-wed bride over to Europe, exactly where she had aspired for; in fact he held *a mobility capital* to win her over and outdo all other candidate matches (Charsley 2012, see Asha's story in Ch. 6)

Precisely because she had never intended to return to India for good, and thinking about the future of their two young kids born in Bergamo, Asha persuaded her husband to apply for Italian citizenship once he could comply with due legal requirements (over ten years of ongoing residency and regular work in the host country). While in his wife's perspective this move was a positive step for the family's permanence in Italy (and for any further move to Europe), I sensed that Rajeev was not keen after all on losing Indian nationality. Since formal double citizenship is not admitted in India, as soon as he got the certificate stating his acquired Italian nationality, he would resign his former Indian by birth one.

> *'Till the end of the year I have to wait, at least, maybe longer, it takes time to receive all the papers. Then we'll fill in the forms for the kids and for the wife, she gets it two years later, likely. So much time to wait…* wait for the proof that I have become Italian *(…). The only thing that I don't like about it (about becoming an Italian citizen), is that* they will take back my Indian passport… *you see, Italy is fairer about it, there are Italians who have double citizenship, that is not possible in India. The will give me a OCI (Overseas Citizen of India) card instead, so I can go back and forth whenever we want because it's like a lifetime visa, but it's not the same. It will be like* I'm cheating myself if I say I'm Indian anymore… *my brother told us that then, on my daughter's birthday (9th Jan.), we will have to celebrate* Pravasi day[50]! (Seriate, 31/10/2013)

The partial feeling of loss and hurt Rajeev expressed in having to resign his former passport signaled an emotional attachment to his homeland (Ho 2009) which he did not perceive as alternative to the enormous labor he had so far endowed in Italy. Becoming an Italian citizen did match his wish for fully belonging in the country of settlement, but it wiped out the possibility of recognizing *in the papers* the permanence of his Indianness in spite of emigration; no longer being inscribed by the State, Rajeev felt wavering his former national status (Gupta 2012). When I tried to bring the interview to a close, asking rather naively like I habitually did whether he was happy to live here, which were his *desires* and *aspirations*, Rajeev's answer was pragmatically swift and surprised me more than I could expect.

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[50] *Pravasi Bharatha Diwa* (lit. *Day of our People Abroad*) was established in 2003 by the Indian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The celebration occurs worldwide on 9th Jan. to mark the contribution of Overseas Indians to the development of the country.

See what I got: a very good job, save money, family, position… and leisure… freedom to travel (as he said this he pointed, on his PC monitor, to a picture of his and other Indian friends taken in Lugano, Switzerland, where they had been on a rare day trip the earlier weekend). Don't think we will return, nor leave, we think of getting my mother over to care for, my brother and I (…). Hope I'll stay on the job and my boss doesn't close down (…) or send me to Romania (in the off-shore plant). You know then what I would do? go for my own business… when I am officially Italian it'll be easier, put my savings in a petrol license and, off I go, running a station! People will always buy gasoline, India or Italy cars line up to get fuel! (Seriate, 31/10/2013)

4.3.2 K.: women's (in)dependency and family reunifications

Kanval's her-story[51] epitomize that transnational migration may not be an exclusive prerogative of Punjabi males.

Kanval is a forty years old woman, Jat and Sikh. She is married and has two children both major of age (Praneet 22 and Guninder 19). She has been living in Lombardy for twelve years, where she acts now as a housewife and informally as a seamstress.

I had known Kanval through her son Guninder for a while and I had no doubt from our first encounter that her life story deserved to be scripted and analyzed in reason of the variation it bore from the experiences of most other Indian women I knew. Besides a roll of informal exchanges, I run two interviews at her place, as we talked away in the kitchen over preparing *naan* she would then take to a nearby Punjabi food store to be sold.

It was a toil for me to follow Kanval's arguments and transcribe her words. She kept on hopping on and off different topics, so that her life narrative was scrambled up and I had to re-organize in a chronological sequence the events and experiences she had reported (for the first time partaken with an Italian lady as she confided afterwards).

recollecting my girlhood, that's something I never liked, it's all about bad memories (…) bloodshed and people lost. I was ten in 1984 (…). Grown up enough to understand, too young not to fear. When the riots started west of Ludhiana our house was under siege, people full of hatred came yelling at the door, I remember the flashing of torches, arsons all around (…) civil servants, officials, came to threaten us, some we even knew, we cried, how could you do that to us? They were after my uncle, his name was on their list. A terrorist, but with no charges, he just was in the Shiromani Akali Dal (Sikh separatist party). My father run us off, then we found out uncle was arrested, beaten up, they let him die (…) And our house was occupied, with no authority (…) there were nine in my family, all evicted and we could never get the properties back. In 2000 we tried to file a claim, some were successful, but the (our) instance was rejected… they told me flats were allocated in 2010, but we never had justice, no reparation for living in exile. (Grumello, 10/05/2013)

Following the routes of thousands other persecuted Sikhs, from the Punjabi plains Kanval's kindred moved up to the hills, reaching north east Himalaya and settling down in Palampur city (Kangra

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[51] The term "her-story" (Morgan 1970) derives from a well-known second-wave feminist posture that contested conventional historiography for having often purged or at best overlooked women's voice and agency in any historical process. In this case, rather than soliciting a clear feminist epistemology, I want to highlight the self-conscious gendered dimension of Kanval's life story, which works as a partial amendment to stereotyped femininities about Indian migrant women.

district, a few kilometers from Dharmsala where Tibetan refugees and the Dalai Lama himself have taken abode). The first migration Kanval could remember and has experienced was thus linked to a mass displacement, which produced internal refugees and asylum seekers within the national borders of India and of the Greater Punjab itself. While I then understood how those sorrowful memories had affected her whole family history (descending into the next generation's imaginary, as it will come to the surface in Guninder's accounts, see also Das 2007), I was relieved in hearing Kanval describing, with a warm smile, her youth in Himachal Pradesh. Hilly H.P. is the region she still considers her home, so to deem herself a *Himachali Sikh*, rather than a Punjabi. While offering shelter to Kanval's family, relocating in H.P. meant for her father to downgrade his social status as a professional: once a merchant, he was bound to take up work in a tea plantation.

After finishing secondary school and trying out being a junior math teacher in St. Paul's, the Catholic institute she had attended, Kanval was soon to marry Manbir. The young Jat Sikh groom was chosen after her father had got into business with his son's-in-law father (granddad Dev, who, at the time, was a rampant executive transporting electronic appliance all over the region). As she kept on talking, Kanval took out from her bedroom drawer a worn photo album and showed me some pictures of her youth. A school-going teenager in her uniform with thick braids, her long hair today still as black as it was, her precious wedding shots, where the bride and the groom were barely nineteen years-old, a few pictures with the newborn kids back in the Punjabi countryside where she had moved in with her in-laws. In a further section of the folder, the kids were slowly growing up, but their mother was not in the frame with them. I came instead across a print of a younger Kanval wearing, under her *dupatta*, a football t-shirt of the Italian national team that she said had been taken on the shores of Lake Iseo (Brescia Province).

Kanval's migratory path grabbed my attention for being at odds with the well-rehearsed script of family reunification via male spouse, widely in use among the Punjabi diaspora in Italy. Kanval first came over to Bergamo on her own in 2002, leaving back in Punjab the rest of her kin, sponsored by another uncle from her dad's side who had already re-settled there. I knew all about his mother from Guninder, but I was craving for hearing Kanval's own version of her quite unusual choice and migration. I should have bitten my tongue, but instead I teased her:

> *Didn't you do something very masculine? I mean, how did it come, why was it you who left and not your husband? I know for most other Indian spouses it happened all the way round, ladies were reunited with their warranting men, not like you did.*

With one move only, although chancy and extremely demanding on her, Kanval had defied clichéd representations of the migrant subject on the two sides of migration. On the Punjabi side, she had

breached the tacit tenet that a young bachelor was to take the plunge and then provide for the rest of the unit. On the Italian side, she had challenged the bias that women are not easily able to provide for themselves through work, let alone immigrant women to hold enough financial means to call over their families from abroad[52].

> *You see,* I had the chance. *My husband would have left, but there was* none of his kin *able to offer him a* safe *place where to go (...) unless he wanted to* take the risk *and come over with a bunch of others, I mean, illegally, many men from Punjab were* recruited so… one pays and gets passed*, to Italy, Germany, France.. we knew their stories, but they don't come easy (...). But my father in law (who obviously was the headman of the joint household) understood I had a smoother chance to move out,* he said "let her go". (Grumello, 10/05/2013)

Kanval's uncle initially intended to hire his niece as a domestic helper. After her insistence though, the man was able to find her a temporary job in an Italian owned family-run local bakery in a nearby village. While she had never worked in that field before, Kanval took the apprenticeship seriously and gave full availability to her employers: she was then offered a regular post in the oven under the condition she could be in for nightshifts on requests. Those work commitments compelled Kanval to make room for an independence she had hardly ever known. She went to Italian classes to pick up the language and got a driving license so to be able to drive her uncle's car when needed. While formally under her uncle's *protection*, overall her kin hosting family treated her as an elder daughter with a boosted freedom. Being a married woman and a mother, who had emigrated with the consent of her husband and to whom she was remitting her monthly wages, her *izzat (*family honor) was out of question, for the unusual autonomy she enjoyed at the time was devoted to her family plan.

> *Of course* I left for my children*, it was so bad being away two years, every night I could here them wailing (...) but then the hard work was rewarded. When I got a longer stay permit, I applied to get my family over, after two years, it was like the time never came… Then, thanks God they arrived. Before we all lived in with the uncle, after a while we were able to rent a house on our own (...). Manbir (her husband) took my post at the bakery, I had to take care of the kids then (...) and now I add with some sewing (...). Together we sent load of* lakhs *(lit. thousand rupees) back home and with the savings my father-in-law had the* ghar*, a beautiful villa built for us (a brick mansion) on the Bakyah's (family name) lands* (Grumello, 07/06/2013*)*

Once reunited with her children and husband through the wires of family immigration laws, Kanval and Manbir agreed that she would resign and literally hand over her job to him and with that the reins of the household. Rather than expressing self-denial, this decision in Kanval's words came as an obvious follow-up of their family transnational migration project, which was thought and performed collectively and not individually, where personal actions acquired meaning within the logics of kinship. While apparently Manbir regained his breadwinner status, this job-swap turned

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[52] While femininization of migratory flows and family reunifications through female sponsors have been recurrent in other transnational movements (see for example Eastern Europe, Philippines and Latin America), they have never been the norm in Indian diasporas. On the contrary, according to the data on the Indian minority in Italy (Caritas 2013, ISMU 2013), this immigrant populace is still men-based and most family reunifications occur through male sponsors.

rather prickly for him, who found it difficult to replace ex-novo his wife and still lamented he had never been treated as well as she was at work. On the contrary, Kanval went back to her traditional role of children's caretaker and homemaker, economically depending on her husband's income, yet retaining the status of *moral* head in the family. While I stayed with granddad Dev in India, it was the two of them I overheard making arrangements over the phone, while Manbir's presence was often disregarded (see Praneet's suggestions about who orchestrated her marriage, previous chapter). Ironically, Nimrat, Manbir's sister (who lives in Britain and comes once a year for visit) once joked:

Can't you see my sister-in-law is the Sardar in this house? (Sardar is the Punjabi term used to describe any devout Sikh man who, through his piety, play out political pressure: an eloquent metaphor for "army chief")

Talking to Praneet and Guninder (see Ch. 5), the leading position of their mother in the household could also be accounted for her stronger religious attitude. Their father instead (who never took the *amrit*, Sikh baptism and I never saw wearing a *dastar*, neither in the *gurdwara* where he often dozed off after a nighttime shift) seemed to loosely adhere to spiritual practice. Guninder also maintained that his mum's lived experience of the 1984 Sikh pogroms had instilled in her a more intense identification with the Sikh cause and he reckoned this was a most valuable teaching he had benefited from her.

In fact, in re-enacting a Punjabi traditional female gender role, Kanval committed herself to be the herald of a certain upbringing of her children, to whom she was pretty severe perhaps trying to compensate for the time they had been apart. Since Praneet and Guninder came to Italy when they were nine and twelve respectively, their 1.5 migrant condition was double challenging: within the local Sikh community and the larger Italian society they were thrown in. Kanval made sure her kids lived up to the expectations of both social milieu. She had them trained in liturgical music, playing the harmonium and singing *kirtan*, wecomed by the religious echelons of the *gurdwara* and esteemed in their Sikh migrant circle of acquaintances. Nevertheless, she also strongly supported their Italian language acquisition paying for extra classes and certifications, so that they could perform fairly well at school.

Following the urge to sustain the family's overall prestige at a transnational level and to foster a sound integration in the Bergamo environment, just like many other Indian women, Kanval invested a great deal in her children's *education* as a stepping-stone towards their future. Yet, compared to her own unconventional migratory trail, she seemed to have staged quite conservative paths to social achievement for their children, on the basis of an unequal gender divide. When I finally asked her about their future intentions, she dryly replied:

For three years, last three, we have been a lot under strain: in Italy it is no longer as easy as before. Manbir is losing all sleep, they call him for extra hours but in the pay roll there is never the amount he expects *(...) You see, there are targets we cannot more set, no finances to send back when it's hard to make the ends meet here. (...) it was just an idea to take DevJi up here, I don't think it'll be worth it now (...) We are pleased the kids are doing well,* Praneet did it *with her diploma and this first internship (...). It all depends on Guninder now,* we want him to keep on studying third level*, then see where he can go. Perhaps to Canada or England,* we have siblings-in-law there to ask for invitation and papers. (Gorlago, 09/10/2013)

This last interview from Kanval, dated October 2013, recorded the drawback of economic recession on her household, but it also demonstrated, a year ahead her daughter's *return marriage* to India (see the discussion in paragraph 3.2) when none of it could be foreseen, that in the woman's mind her two grown-up children ought to have diverse life and migratory paths. The binding relation between *being* and *moving* which was topic in Kanval's her-story would assume different contours in Praneet's and Guninder's stories. The first did move to go back to Punjab, within the scheme of an arranged marriage she agreed into as it released her from being "stuck in migration" (Hage 2004). The latter was yet to self-determine his next movements across a range of possible transnational destinations and futures. If no choice is ever free and agency is always structurally constrained, I mildly denounced that the girl did not have the same span of options her brother did. Culturally assumed gender roles operated as a prime marker of differentiation in mobility prospects, which were once again family bent and endorsed (Benhabib, Resnik 2009). I never dared to openly contest Kanval on the issue, but it seemed to me that the great pride she had legitimately shown in her own eccentric migratory route, could have yielded different or at least more gender-equal outcomes in her off-springs' experience[53].

Some conclusions. The heuristic potential of comparison. Rajeev's and Kanval's migration stories present as many similarities as differences. They belong to the same age group but embody different genders. Both come from a *jati* background considered as mid high-caste within their respective communities of faith. They moved to Lombardy in the same migration season, around the turn of the XXI century, where their first contacts were Indian *dalals*, close or alleged kin who helped them to get started in work activities owned by Italian employers. Both managed to set up or reunite their nuclear group in Italy and were differently able to provide for them and for the rest of the transnational family left home. One has reached a relative stability and will soon be naturalized Italian, the other is currently experiencing hardships and thinks about possible returns. Both look at their elders and moreover youngsters before deciding their future family plans, where social and

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[53] Still, the gender equality I appeal to is a byproduct of my own enculturation and it doesn't have universal validity. Moreover, reporting my privileged informants' stories I arbitrarily picked a piece of their lives, and as an ethnographer I cannot predict the next moves of those who were once my research subjects and kept on being friends ever after.

physical mobility remain central but may be altered in due course to respond to new projects and possibilities.

While times, channels, modes and aspirations of Rajeev's and Kanval's mobilities could be juxtaposed, albeit the cleavage between Hindus and Sikhs in the local Punjabi community cannot be ignored, it was significant to discern in their experiences *the dialogic relation between dominant discourses and private narratives of gender roles* (Abu-Lughod 1986). Both my collaborators performed their migration trajectories being aware of the social expectations linked to a certain Punjabi 'gender normativity', which insisted on active male and passive female subjects (Oberoi 1996, Dasgupta 2000). Yet, in the frame of transnational mobility, they tried to come to terms with dominant views on masculinities and femininities with alternative strategies that they clearly employed in inter-spouse relations (Benhabib, Resnik 2009). Rajeev was in fact the transnational male breadwinner but admitted his wife acted as a family spokesperson in the country of settlement; Kanval returned to be dependent form her husband, but did not deny she still was the chief or *Sardar* of her household.

As far as I knew I knew their respective partners and the rest of their families, these role ambivalences seemed to be navigated with quite ease by all relatives, home and abroad, anyway better than in their kin networks back in India, where gender and generation conflicts were less apparent but more severe (see Ch. 7). Because of the migratory venture, whose implementation determined gender uncertainties that urged to be navigated towards the whole family's success, intra-household power stakes were continuously bargained between wife and husband, with a tacit consent from their seniors (Agarwal 1997). In the next chapter, I will explore how these enacted contradictions might heighten or transform taking into account first migrants' children, in whose experience generational dissent adds to gender dialogic. I will also try to extend the approach to bargaining power beyond the domestic realm, to address the interlinked arenas of market, community and the State.

Ch. 5 Re-producing *Punjabiyat*

Once overcome the early ordeals in emigrating out of Punjab and moving to Italy as an *ad interim* destination country, in the process of resettlement diasporans come to terms with their community *identification*, with how they represent themselves and how they are being represented. The immigration experience adds up to the complexity of a putative *Punjabiyat* that we know already crammed with diversities and contradictions (Ch.4).

At a theoretic level, this chapter disentangles some "value questions" relevant for Inditians as they work through *identity-making*. If burgeoning theories about *values* in anthropology strived to combine economic and moral issues in given localities (Gregory 2013, Otto, Willerslev 2013, see Ch.1), contemporary international migrations challenged the interplay between the envisaged "profit" of mobility (labor migration *in primis*) and the manifold social "worth" of being mobile (Hage 2004). Throughout migration re-enacting one's individual and community identification is a complex process and project constantly calling for skillful adjustments (Vertovec 2001, Eriksen 2015). Avoiding the pitfalls of discussing *assimilation vs. integration* as "etic" analytical tools for describing Punjabis' incorporation in northern Italian society, I'd rather suggest some "emic" routes this community developed for doing *boundary work* (Lamont, Molnar 2002), for retaining cultural distinctiveness while fitting in the new context, balancing distance and proximity. If immigrants worldwide may face competing or conflicting social belongings and sets of *values* (that are not drained in the dyad sending-receiving country but also assume transnational configurations, Grillo 2015), Italian Punjabis often live with distress and adopt provisional solutions to the ambiguities and clashes in the diverse "moral reasoning" they activate everyday (Sykes 2009). Our ethnographic enquiry considers here both private and public contexts, revealing that, although these settings overlap, some discrepancy might arise between the behaviors people assume in either milieu with different social co-actors and contingent intentions. We will thus confront the *politics of emotions* and the *institutional frames* (Skrbis 2008, Svasek 2010) through which Inditians design and stage their multivocal identities in "the place which is diaspora" (Werbner 2002).

At an empirical level, the chapter discerns whether some Punjabi cultural values gone and ongoing transnational (such as specific family obligations, social hierarchies, work ethics and religious piety) may operate as "models of meaning-making" (Graeber 2001) throughout migration. It also discuss how these evaluations might inform the diaspora lifeways between continuity and change in Italian resettlement (feeding the circle of "moral breakdown and ethical demand", Zigon 2007).

Since the focus on family matters remains paramount in my work in both methodological and analytical terms (see Ch. 3 and 4), I firstly tried to identify some everyday moral issues at stake for

Punjabi diasporic households. With a multilayered approach, I interrogate the psychosocial dimension of these migrants' individual (gender-specific) *coming of age*, thus discuss the cultural implications of *marriage and childbirth* for family reproduction and finally widen the frame to gauge the resilience of the extended *transnational kinship* as a legitimizing and performative mobility network (Charsley, Shaw 2006; Charsley 2012, Bertolani 2013, Bonfanti 2015).

Acknowledging that any identity-making process unfolds within discourses and practices of sameness/difference (Van Meijl 2012), I will then look beyond domestic walls to see how social interactions among Punjabi migrants as well as between migrants and locals (Rytter 2013) take place in the northern Italian context. I elected three settings of social life for in-depth investigation. First, I explore the civic dimension of *neighborhood,* somehow transferred from the *pind* or *Indian Punjabi village* to rur-urban Lombardy districts (see Ch.1), but there fueled with increased super-diversity (Vertovec 2009) and shaped by unequal infrastructures in ordinary life. I then gaze at the *education and labor markets* that Punjabis encounter and navigate during their migration and life-course, where most social interactions and pragmatic dynamics between insiders/outsiders, immigrant minority/local majority are put in motion and migrants strive to turn "strangers no more" (Alba, Foner 2015). Thirdly, I peep into the various *places of worship* attended by Indian migrants in order to assess the role religion*s* play in their personal and community life (for preserving collective memory and carving out endogenous/exogenous relations, Baumann 2009).

While my arguments will just sketch a picture and won't exhaust the many interpretations emerging from these contexts (considering that job settings and temples were the foci of interest for much sociological literature on Indian communities in Italy, see Bertolani 2011, 2012, Gallo 2013. Ferraris, Sai 2014), my empirically based insights may forward a better understanding of this specific Punjabi diaspora identity-making, between social reproduction and cultural transformation at a minute level. The *locality* of my study, the "cartography" of Punjabi diasporas (Brah 1996) clustered in the Bergamo and Brescia provinces, comes here to the forefront and serves as a stage for the performances and narratives of my research subjects. *Scaling* proves not just as my analytical perspective: transnational migrants themselves continuously enact scaling strategies in order to "emplace" in the "host" country developing new local sociabilities within and beyond communitarian biases (Glick Schiller, Caglar 2011).

If my insights are spurred and backed by many fieldwork interlocutors, by the end of this chapter I will discuss the life tales of my two closest collaborators (throughout and yonder the research) in order to question once again gender and age intersections. I chose to compare the migration experiences of an adult first-time migrant Hindu woman and a second-generation Sikh male youth. Both confirm and subvert at once some commonsense stereotyping about "Indians in Italy"

(Bonfanti 2015). Asha confronts her image of dependent Indian wife holding a strong cultural capital but living pretty secluded from the outer society; Gurinder scuffles his embodied icon of young Khalsa yet well-integrated undergraduate student. Pairing these two apparently very diverse subjects and migratory paths, I highlight convergences and dissonances of personal narratives in the labor and toil of re-producing Punjabiness among this sizeable and steady Italian-based Diaspora.

5.1 The value question in private space-times, the role of emotions

Within the anthropology of migration, we have seen a very recent "turn on emotion", a first mapping of the way emotion and migration are mutually constituted (Boccagni, Baldassar 2015). Following Svasek (2010), a pioneer ethnographer in this sense, emotional processes shape human mobility and vice versa. The life stories so far presented, from Praneet's disquiet over her return migration (see Ch.4) to Rajeev's and Akal's diverse long-term immigration outcomes (respectively naturalization or prospective double migration, see Ch.4) proved that emotions cannot be neglected in understanding migration. Moral valuing strategies are deeply entrenched with emotions (Gardner 2001, Sykes 2009) and "emotional judgments" are particularly useful when applied to analyzing social interaction between migrants and members of local communities as well as interaction within transnational families.

> Emotions connect individuals to changing human and non-human environments, shaping their engagement with the world. To understand this process is necessary to take a multi-layered approach, examining not only how people define and talk about particular emotions and attachments, but also exploring how sociality is shaped by emotional interaction and how attitudes and interactions are informed by people's *emotional judgments and habitus*.[…]. It is also crucial to examine the ways in which individuals and groups manage emotions when following, or refusing to follow, group-specific emotion rules, and to explore their involvement in the politics of emotions. (Svasek, 2010: 876).

In this section, I argue that emotions play a large part in the migration process of Punjabi diasporans, and that this was far more evident (though not easier to handle as an ethnographer) within domestic spaces (*ghar*): in the private homes of immigrants in Italy and in those of their non-migrant kin back in Punjab. I will particularly explore how emotional judgments shape moral values and cultural habits in the daily ménage of Punjabi diasporic families, from the construction of self-hood, through biological reproduction, up to the articulation of transnational kinship. While most of my fieldwork was conducted within Punjabi communities in Lombardy, ethnographic observations carried out in the Indian Punjab complement and enrich my insights as much as it occurred in the lives and accounts of my immigrant Inditian interlocutors.

5.1.1 Daily and ritual person-making: coming of age

"Coming of age" has been a preferred topic for much anthropological literature, where *rites of passage* especially connected to puberty flooded pages of ethnographies with disparate cultural designs for *(en)gendering* an adult, becoming a man or a woman in any given society (Van Gennep 1909, Glucksman 1962, Turner 1969). More recently, despite a perceived tantalizing globalization, migration studies have begun to enquire how the transition to adulthood (and other age transits) occurs when people from any corner of the globe enact forms of transnational mobility over their life-course. Rites of passage are at the core of one's person-making and they assume a symbolic or iconic value in group identity-making, evermore when communities face a large scale migration process often destabilizing shared beliefs and social norms (Brettel, Hollifield 2013). With physical mobility performed out of choice or necessity in search for some desired social status advancement, migratory projects always entwine with age passages and their related cultural codes.

When it comes to South Asian studies in Italy, Della Puppa (2014) offers us a sophisticated account of what he dubs the immigrant Bangladeshi "male labor", describing how migration serves as a gendered rite of passage for Bangla male youth to qualify as adult men and then possibly set up their own family in the destination country. This analysis seems indeed to resonate with Punjabi first-time migrants male experiences, both in the state-of-the art literature (Clarke, Peach 2004; Jacobsen, Myrvold 3011, 2013) and in my own fieldwork (as seen in the previous chapter, Rajeev's tale is a case in point). Physical movement does not only yield possible upward social mobility, meanwhile it entails a self-hood progression towards a riper age (and socially recognized status) of being in a transnational world. Della Puppa brightly discusses the unequal mirroring set between himself and his interlocutors, who often questioned his status as a young bachelor not yet come of age (and thus tried to partake him in the aloof realm of adult men proffering him suitable matches). I was better able to explore women's issues thanks to my gendered identity in the field as a female ethnographer who had instead already come of age. Being seen as a researcher and teacher (regardless my job precariousness) but also as a grownup woman, a wife and mother, granted me with social acceptance from my research subjects and opened a leeway for working with a feminist stance "with women, on women, for women" (Bell, Caplan et al.1993, see my discussion on methodology and reflexivity in chapter 3).

In fact, this overall ethnography deals with coming(s) of age. Tracing through gendered life-tales the shift from first to second generation Punjabi migration to Italy I learnt to address and infer how age transits where part of the game in the diasporans' quest for "flexible stableness" (see Ch. 4). Although I tried to temper male and female experiences, the intimacy established with women collaborators made them the main actors of my ethnographic narrative, to whom men were co-

agonists. Re-producing (and transforming) *Punjabiyat* took a great deal of "gendered identity-work" within the family (Merhotra, Calasanti 2010, Manhoar 2013); both men and women significantly contributed to it, but it was the women's perspective I was often better able to grasp and inquire.

While Akal's self-initiated migration to a certain extent mimicked that male coming of age (though she emotionally discarded her autonomy later, favoring a regained *paterfamilias* balance, see Ch.5), for most Punjabi immigrant women in Italy coming of age was marked by resettlement through family reunification. At the end of this chapter, in her autobiographic narrative Asha made clear how she reached womanhood after her wedding with Rajeev took place in India and she moved to Italy as a *reunited bride* (Morris 2004): a legal status which combined mobility agency (the chance to resettle in Europe) and economic dependency (from her breadwinning husband). Asha's words vividly interpret pros and cons of this *culturally-encoded and gendered coming of age* for Punjabi expats, but they also reflect upon the options and perils in turning a full-fledged "Indian lady" wherever this takes place in the diaspora space (Oberoi 2006, Werbner 2006). This reflexive posture on what she terms *stri-dharma*, "a wife's conduct", engages her own experience of growing up as a NRI in the Gulf, as well as that of her small daughter born in Italy. Asha's concerns about her young girl reveal the emotional burden for a mother to "properly coach" her daughter toward womanhood and the contradictions encountered by the latter in growing up as a second-generation Punjabi in Italy. (Under this light, Praneet's anxiety for the future till she took the plunge for a return marriage, as we reported in Ch.4, connoted the hard toil for second-gen girls in coming of age and how she came to embody the liable equation between a family-steered match and womanhood. This calculation has been harshly confronted in the literature on Punjabi family life, Oberoi 1996, Thapan 2004 and we will argue it over in Veena's contested life story in Ch.7).

Considering instead Punjabi male youth coming of age, we will see closing this chapter how Praneet's younger brother's *rite de passage* might be equally complex and emotionally charged, though apparently more open to alternatives. As a young man just out of teenage, for Gurinder marriage remains an ideal yet deferrable horizon, whose fulfillment intertwines with other personal desires, kinsmen-driven ambitions and community endorsements for "becoming" a man. In the case of Gurinder, who pridely felt and exhibited his Khalsa religious belonging, the ritual passage meant growing to be a time-honored "saint-soldier" but also a "vanguard" Italian Sikh.

Whilst I will debate the ambivalent plurilocal public roles that Gurinder assumed as an Inditian young man, across my multi-sited fieldwork most Punjabi women appeared to be overly concerned with their private roles as spouses, mothers and caregivers. I initially tried to step out of this gridlock, avoiding to repeat the typecast of Indian women as primarily mothers and daughters (and their patriarchal dominance). Nonetheless, I could not refrain from witnessing and trying to

interpret how the social positioning of transnational Punjabi women within their families did in fact map the relations and interactions, the social fields in Bourdieu's view (1985), which my research subjects were experiencing and producing.

Although I went about for months interrogating my informants about formal rituals related to puberty especially among girls, the responses I received were rambling. On the one hand Sikhism is indeed sober about age-related ritual practices, keeping it to a minimum (essentially birth or *Nam Karan*, marriage or *Anand Karj* and funeral or *Antam Sanskaar*, Nesbitt 2001) in order to (ideally) defeat any possible discrimination whether caste or gender based. On the other, even among the Hindus where rites conventionally abounds (Della Casa, Piano, Piantelli 2007), I could log several gender-based practices related to spouse o sibling relations (such as *karva chaut or bhai dooj*), while specific puberty rites where often reported as unmodern or typical of an exoticised South India rather than Hindustani. Elder women's accounts were quite coherent whether these were Punjabi migrants or non-migrants. Among middle class diasporans, the traditional *kala samskara* (a women-only celebration which took place after a girl's first menstrual period and culminated with her moving to her arranged in laws') had been replaced with a swifter boon showering from female relatives or merely by a mother's gift giving (*saris* or necklaces being the commonest items). While in Chandigarh, I found the arguments advanced by Poonam, teenage Sanja's mum, most revealing:

> The **ritu** [how kala samskara is sometimes abbreviated, so perceived by earliest British observers] is old-fashioned, they didn't do it for me neither, since my mother died when I was too young [...]. But when the time came, well, I never thought it was high time for Sanja; she is our only daughter, best to shield her from unwanted eyes too early we said [grinning] But we gifted her with a precious brooch, so she knew that her mother and father cheered she was no longer a girl. (Poonam, Mohali compound, 4/01/ 2014)

Poonam's words pointed surprisingly well to the double register of female coming of age, the biological fact and the cultural artifact, which she interpreted as two separate and not immediately coincident life times. Excitement and fear blend in that perilous stage for a young woman who is socially recognized, for the first time, as being physiologically capable of reproduction.

In fact, the two focal rites of passage in Punjabi culture remain marriage and childbirth, regardless their caste and religious based specific enactments (Oberoi 1996). While I will unravel marriage choices for Punjabi diasporas in the next chapter, as a mean of establishing desired kin connections (Ballard 1990; Charsley and Shaw 2006; Charsley 2012; Bertolani 2013), I want now to focus on the collective validation of individual coming of age: the birth of one's offspring. I will reason over childbirth through a single gendered viewpoint, as this was a topic easier for me to observe and discuss with female Punjabi interlocutors, given my gender belonging and mothering experience, but also because of my enduring research interests in the relation between motherhood and culture (Bonfanti 2012).

5.1.2 Embodying cultural genealogies: migration, reproduction, identity

I know it happened by chance, or it was Lakshmi's interception, my mother prayed for it every single day (...), but I never had to face the states *my friends found themselves in (...). I mean, I was* fortunate, *I was blessed with the birth of two kids of the* appropriate gender *and age difference (...) Rajeev [her husband] is a such a good man, a real* dulaa, *but, you never know, when something disrupts the norm of daily life... It's not really your husband who forces you to do anything; it's more a kind of social pressure, you have to behave properly because you're expected to. A woman has to follow* her stri-dharma, *the way of the wife.* (Asha, her home, Seriate, 23/09/2012)

With these words, Asha tried to fill my blank stares one Sunday afternoon, as we sat down in her master bedroom, drinking *chai* and chatting away until her friend Kachitta rang us to apologize she wouldn't join in that day as she was assisting her neighbor after a "miscarriage". While some dumb discomfort suddenly arose, I did not dare then to deepen the issue, as I knew the term miscarriage lied on the slipping border between chosen and unintentional end of pregnancy. Referring to my more comprehensive paper on "family rhetoric and birth control among Indian migrant women in Italy" (Bonfanti 2014), I find it compelling to sketch how procreation is thought and practiced within Punjabi diaspora communities, setting these immigrant women's reproductive experiences (and in/fertility management) across the twin scenario of departure/destination.

The changing demography of contemporary Punjab comes to terms both with its deep-seated culture of emigration (ranging from refugees to labor movements, see previous chapter) and with a sex-ratio disproportion induced by a wide female feticide practice sternly opposed (Prohibition of Sex Selection Act 1994) but nonetheless still in use. Without dragging into the picture the dowry system (over which we will discuss in the next chapter dealing with wedding arrangements), socio-economic organization at large and property laws (Duvvury et al. 2008) affected the historical desire of having sons rather than daughters in Indian households (Talwar 2002). *Child gender preference* also intersected the population control program that India launched promoting sterilization since the Sixties (Mamadani 1973). Punjab's *birth rate* in the past decades did not contribute to the federal country's demographic overgrowth, standing still at replacement level, but perpetuated the rhetoric of "male gender first choice" (India Census 2011).

Reproductive discourses in Punjabi communities, homeland and abroad, are entrenched in ideologically laden frames (Ayres 2008) as much as in local and global kinship ties that I found decisive for scripting *socially desired genealogies*. In particular, the Punjabi family model has long undergone a process of *Sanskritization* (Charsley 1998) in the homeland: a "traditional" patrilocal joint household with numerous kids and three generations under the same roof has largely been replaced with a more "modern" nuclear family standard that mimicked the upper class fashion (Shah 1999). The ideal middle-class family size is made up of (normatively heterosexual) parents and two children, preferably a son and a daughter. This family pattern is nowadays sought after also among the Indian diasporas (Thapan 2009). In Italy, since a Punjabi male immigrant usually is the

(prime or only) wage-earner and has to provide for his local household besides sending remittances back, stringent economic reasons may also call upon this choice. This family size is anyway preferred in cultural terms as it profiles better social status (Mishra 1996) and mirrors what is perceived being the typical Italian middle-class household composition (Bertolani 2012). Asha's household embodies indeed such a desired family pattern when she candidly admitted having been "*blessed* with the birth of two kids with the *appropriate* gender and age difference".

The predominant Punjabi mindset on childbearing (where I could not appreciate sensible differences between Sikhs or Hindus, higher and lower castes, see Malhotra, Mir 2012) imposes a *normative model of femininity and motherhood*, requiring married women to be devoted to their husbands but moreover to be fecund and caring mothers (Bhachu 2004, Oberoi 2006, Thapan 2009). While this tenet may apply cross-culturally and I'm oversimplifying it, today Punjabi women are constrained between *contradicting sexual and reproductive discourses over their life-course*. Marriage first and the birth of two children then are the two life stages Punjabi women are supposed to (and actively pressed to) go through, following their "natural" *stri-dharma*. As young women they are expected to remain virgin until marriage, turn prolific as soon as possible thereafter; many young brides are sent to "sex specialists" if they do not conceive within a year after the wedding. Pooja's, Veena's cousin, was adamant in sobbing that her mother in law had taken her twice to see a physician "to fix her barrenness", without questioning her son's fertility. Once become mothers (giving birth to two children only, ideally of diverse gender, a son and a daughter, or to two sons[54]), Punjabi women are asked to prevent further, *assumingly* undesired pregnancies, through several contraceptive methods, included abortion as a last resort. Though highly valued, women's fertility must be limited to a set extent and birth control remains chiefly a *female affair*[55], although full information and access to contraceptives might be out of women's grasp (Williamson et al. 2009).

In my paper (Bonfanti 2014a), I discussed the experiences of in/fertility management for three Punjabi women first time migrants in Lombardy. One resorted to transnational fostering to overcome her sterility and adopted her sister's in law baby daughter born in Punjab. The others, already mothers of two, decided with (or were swayed by) their husbands to terminate their third unplanned pregnancy, although facing scorn and malpractice in Italian medical services[56]. Without

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[54] While I do not discuss here child gender preference, it was patent in my ethnographic observations that an unquestioned priority to male children was constantly enforced and that Italian medical practitioners held a quite biased view on South Asian women asking for ultrasound scans to early detect fetal sex.

[55] This does not mean that men do not invest *reflexivity* in the reproductive process. They may be knowledgeable about the physiology of birth and thus perform their sexual activities according to their beliefs and un/willingness to procreate (this may include petty practices such as counting the days of their partners' menses, buying condoms or feeding on *neem* tree juice which is an Ayurveda remedy for male contraception). Still, in most Punjabi households, women have full responsibility for childbearing and only through them I gained sufficient ethnographic intimacy to explore the issue.

[56] While access to abortion is guaranteed in Italy since 1978, conscience objection is common among gynaecologists in public hospitals across Italy, a figure particularly high (over 30%, Lombardi 2011) in Lombardy, where women who

retracing in detail the three life stories I there analyzed, peeping into the reproductive experiences of Inditian mothers made me partake in their throbbing adjustments to dissonant normative orders.

Punjabi migrant women engage in a polarized arena when it comes to reproductive choices. Crammed between a hoary Hindustani family model which demands them to produce the right heirs in number and gender and an Italian public opinion and dominant medical discourse which allow for intended abortions but deck them with moral dismay, Indian women are left to take extra care of their bodies and watch over their reproductive potential, where nonetheless their male partners and extended families have the last say. Besides living with insecurity and uncertainty, excluded or discriminated against in the local healthcare and hardly accessing the treatments they consider most effective, these migrant women are trying to partake in the decisional process of childbearing. Religious beliefs and material (dis)possessions are taken into account but do not determine fertility management, which is rather a ground for reproducing cultural norms navigating unequal gender relations and mandatory household formation. I saw Inditian women's procreative experiences as *social dramas* (Turner 1985), where their embodied in/fertility threatened to breach social rules so that normative practices were called upon to restore normality enacting *symbolic and structural violence* (Krais 1993). Seemingly distant influences, Italian and Punjabi, recent and deep-rooted, familial and governmental, shape and constrain local reproductive experiences, intersecting transnational forms of power and resistance (Rapp, Ginsburg, 1995).

The childbirth accounts I elicited from Punjabi mothers bore witness to the reconstruction in Diaspora of a female net of otherwise lost *gendered intimacies* (Thapan 2013), engendering an informal repertoire of reproductive behaviors and emotions, collectively shared and eventually passed on to new generations. As far as procreation is concerned, first generation Indian migrant women seem to reproduce a *patriarchal* system which they hardly ever contest in public and are seldom able to challenge in their private lives. Some reshuffling in gender relations may be appreciated among 2nd gen Punjabi young women who are coming of age (see next chapter and Bonfanti 2013). Yet, the role of first migrant generation remains decisive in opening up, through tensions and conflicts, possibilities and change (Sandu 2013). Childbearing for Inditian women is thus a personal rite of passage that at once is set in and yields the reproduction of Punjabi diasporic genealogies. Changing cultures of motherhood and mothering among Punjabi diasporans are a research issue still inadequately tackled that calls for further ethnographic investigation.

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file a request for a voluntary interruption of pregnancy are often left awaiting for weeks (or diverted from this choice when they happen to contact Catholic sponsored family planning centres such as CAV pro-life counselling facilities).

5.1.3 Extended transnational families: morphogenesis and adaptive strategies

> Migrants are part of a unique **transnational social field**, in which they can simultaneously take upon themselves roles and obligations that have consequences for people of the family network of origin and for the kin groups of reference in the society of immigration and in other countries abroad. Immigrants can draw on the material, affective, symbolic and relational resources, which are available to them within all the boundaries of the transnational social field, and at the same time, contribute to its modification. (Bertolani 2013:69).

The Punjabi unique transnational social field that Bertolani (2013) explores starts and develops through transnational kin networks, which are continuously recreated working through internal rules (such as who reunites with whom, how, when and where) and through the ways in which kin members build prestige and relationships with each other.

For Punjabi expatriates kinship is both a matter of daily-lived household relations and of virtually experienced transnational kin connections, though physical and emotional proximity or distance may not necessarily tally. Indian communities in Italy are overall slowly moving forward from a first to a second-generation migration. Thousands of first-comers settled in the Po Plains since the late Nineties are now in their forties and have young or teen kids who are mostly born on the Italian soil (with their citizenship issue pending; Galloni 2009; Bertolani et al. 2011, 2012; Colombo, Rebughini 2012). Seniors and collaterals, either still in Punjab, reunited via "flow laws" or resettled elsewhere, are occasionally granted visas to travel over and meet their kin, according to migratory laws, but remain daily connected through the web and telecommunications in *e-Diaspora* networks (Diminescu 2007), which maintain extended families on the long-distance.

The literature on South Asian families abounds (Ballard 1990, Shaw 2000, Oberoi 2006) and it has been widely recognized that kin networks are a device for migration spur and continuity. I already made clear that my fieldwork was mainly devoted to *family ethnography* (see chapter 3) and that *marriage* was the turning point in many of my informants' life tales. While I will argue over marriages (how they are often facilitated if not arranged in traditional Punjabi customs, according to caste endogamy and lineage exogamy) in the next chapter, I here find it essential to disassemble the many articulations of a Punjabi family. To understand how the Punjabi family works in the migration process, we first have to understand what this social configuration is.

In Punjabi language, my informants addressed their families with different terms that activate as many semantics associations: *ghar, parivaar, biraderi, ristedari*. *Ghar* is likely the most common and polysemic of family definition, since it also covers the notion of "home". *Parivaar* stands for the affective dimension of one's (ideally three-generations) "household", which in migration may include (or deliberately exclude) also close kin residing away. *Biraderi*, roughly translated into "brotherhood", indicates one's patrilineage but it is liable to expand and absorb a wider "clan"

claiming some (real or imagined) consanguinity through a paternal ancestor. *Ristedari* is the kin linkage of affinity established via marriage or *rista*.

Normative ideas of kinship appeared to be questioned with people's mobility. While this family vocabulary looked clearer when I worked with non-migrant Punjabis (where both anthropology and the colonial enterprise had a role in shaping this lexicon, see the work on Pakistani kinship, Shaw 2000), first and especially second generation migrants in Italy seemed to battle with these hypostatic notions and tried to render them intelligible through their own life experience.

Throughout this ethnography, I argue that the family stands as a prime site for "gendered ethnic identity work" among Punjabi diasporas (Manhoar 2013; Merhotra, Calasanti 2010).

Firstly, the tension between *biraderi* and *parivaar* (Malhotra, Mir 2012), the ideal endogamous kin group which constitutes one's transnational network and the living-in household, may aid us detect how social continuity through change is played out within the cultural code of patrilocal kinship in the Diaspora (Palriwal, Uberoi 2008). While I do not wish to overstate a typecast Indian patriarchy (against which leading feminist scholars have written, Dube 2001, Uberoi 2006), my qualitative data prove that male and parental control are key powers in a Punjabi family and that within private domestic walls (*ghar*) lies the first arena of many agonistic public interfaces in resettlement contexts (Werbner 2008).

Secondly*, ristedari*, the use of marriage as a vehicle for facilitating the expansion and consolidation of transnational networks, invariably brings up and downsides, although the consequences these may have for the individuals concerned differ enormously from context to context and from case to case. Marriage (and/or spouse reunion) is the preferred route to initiate a kin migration chain; the bridgehead then opens the way for others' (often dependent) mobilities. The *riste* between Asha and Rajeev, Kanval and Manbir, Praneet and Bilal all add to the personal variations of a cultural script, to the adaptations made possible surfing through legal structures, *generational change and gender inequalities*, as it will become apparent knitting and comparing their empirical cases in the next chapter.

Being Punjabi migration to Italy a form of family mobility (Bertolani 2013), an unequal "regime" of mobility rights first and of civic stratification then, differently affect family members (Kraler 2010). Within an "engendered theory of citizenship and migration" (Benhabib, Resnik 2009), both mobility and social integration are staged in each domestic unit, where gender and age power relations intersect. The capability to move and/or to stay are dynamically interlaced with regulatory constraints but also with contradictory desires and responsibilities of migrants, which chiefly depend on the position they occupy in their family and kin network.

As I draw this section to a close, I would look back at the way I opened it, recollecting how emotions represent "a glue of an existing co-dependency" between the family, transnational migration and social belonging (Skrbis 2008:234). Highlighting the role *irony* in addressing kinship migration plays for controlling emotional distress among expatriated Malayalis, Gallo (2014) interrogates how diasporic lives produce and reflect changing "cultures of affection". Among my interlocutors, the notion and experience of the Inditian family befell as much a *site* for migration and identity production as a *trope* for ambivalent "emotional work" (Svasek 2010). However highly valued, family ties are at once a resource and a restraint, imbibed with pragmatism and affection. They alternatively catalyze empathy and detachment, protection and emulation, but also competition and conflict. Veena and Praneet, two 1.5 Inditian young women whose life tales I respectively discuss in the previous and next chapter, were poles apart in making their own diasporic Punjabi way. Yet, when interviewed on the topic, they shared some droll thoughts in coming to terms with their own families, for which they felt gratitude and impatience and they reserved sweet and sour words.

> *[In a Punjabi home] just add* Ji *to any relations and you'll be rewarded with benevolence.* Ji *stands for* respect, *the one thing that matters in a family. You can think the worst of them, as you listen to how they boast about their latest buy (...) but utter* Ji *and you'll be pacified.* (Praneet instructing me before leaving for Punjab).

> *Dearest relatives, poisonous relations, you say in Italian? An Indian family is a* jumble, *you grow up and discover you had relatives in Khandaan [an unspecified diaspora location]... I didn't choose my family, I fell in it. Hope I can learn to make use of its feelers before they clog me!* (Veena reflecting on her dream to double migrate).

5.2 The value question in public space-times, the role of institutions

> How some forms of wealth are valued over others, how some forms of relationships are valued over others? […] Moral reason confronts contradictory experiences as when a person, who is born social, must think about the fact that they hold mores and values they do no share with others they meet in everyday life (Sykes 2009:21)

In this section I'll discuss the "moral reasoning" life in Italy activates for Punjabi migrants, considering that some value questions posed (and hardly answered) within their diasporic homes resound and magnify as they are enmeshed in the outer society of resettlement. In the migration process, people face the dilemmas of rapid cultural changes associated with globalization and re-territorialisation, rising what psycho-sociologists define the "dialogic self" (Van Meijl 2012). In a diaspora context, people seem to forge an ability to reason over identity and otherness, to think of themselves and their hosts as distinct but mirroring social groups who may hold diverse but not necessarily opposing values. Ethnography can capture this "society of mind" when we observe specific "institutions", forms of organized social life where cultural encounters are not merely casual but also programmatically encouraged. Neighborhoods, work and school contexts and places

of worship hold out a kaleidoscope for gazing the bristly re-production of a Punjabiyat that is still in the making among northern Italian local societies.

5.2.1 From home village to hosting neighborhood and back: changing glocal hierarchies

Depending on which scale we adopt, people of Punjabi descent living in Italy are referred to as (trans)migrants moving from South Asia to Europe, from India to Italy, from Punjab to Lombardy: a binary territorial report which is widely used in the social sciences and shared by governmental bodies and agencies. While this is an operative tool I did apply myself in the research and for disseminating its results, I believe this partially reductionist naming (heir to the *divide et impera* motto of political history) should be complemented with a more nuanced and fine-grained acknowledgment of the factual *localities* experienced (and imagined) by such migrants.

Introducing the setting of my research in Chapter 1, I explained that I carried out most of my fieldwork in Eastern Lombardy in a rur-urban context, in the small towns and villages gravitating around the twin cities of Bergamo and Brescia. These two metropolitan areas are in fact seldom accessed by Punjabis unless bureaucracy needs take them there, to pay visits to Italian police or government headquarters or further to the Indian embassy in Milan, as many informants remarked. When it comes to minor administrative practices there is a plethora of *small talks* going on among Punjabis about local county councils, town halls, health and social services, so that immigrants often happen "to be better-informed about our facilities than *we* (Italian natives) are", as a rather unsympathetic clerk grudge while I was filing with Asha our children's requests for "dote scuola" (a regional small grant destined to low-income families with school going children).

I would now expand on the scaling of the local hinterland lived by Punjabi immigrants, on how this context is not a mere place of residence but a site from where to gauge one's local incorporation and project one's global engagement (Glick Schiller, Caglar 2011). To explain this understated dimension I use the notion of "neighborhood" as developed in urban anthropology. From the Chicago School's first insights to Hannerz's renewed enquiries on the social organization of meaning (1992), urban community studies revealed the intricate hierarchical relations that certain lots of urban configurations produced and displayed. Putting it simply, historically poverty-stricken ghettos seem now to have been supplanted by the globalization-induced super-diverse vicinity (Alba, Foner 2015).

When we look at the dwelling reality experienced by migrant (and non-migrant) Punjabis, the home village or *pind* stands as a prime site of reference. Although in the Indian Punjab there are a few large cities (namely Amritsar, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala and Chandigarh, which

I visited or passed through in my Indian fieldwork), the urban population there swelled since the Seventies with internal migratory flows from close-by countryside areas (Bhogal, Singh 2014). Most Punjabi immigrants in Italy come from a rural background (over 70% in the rate response to my questionnaire) and even among those whose family resides today in cities there hardly isn't a recognition of previous cherished rural origins. With *pinds* quite variable in size (from uncle Tej's tight Ranjewal borough to grandad Dev's Garshankar junction), this assumption remained valid for nearly all my collaborators[57]: the village (and its life) is a trademark of *Punjabiyat*, of its social organization built on land property and its customary sociability based on "family and community" (Jayaram 2011).

Many first time migrants were lulled by the idea of an *environmental connection* between the Punjabi and the Po Plain countryside. Darsan, Veena's dad, so opened his life tale:

> *It was 2001, September, when we got here it was late summer (...) sounds, voices were new to my ear, but the landscape I saw with my eyes, no, not really new. The canals drifting by the fields, the roads cutting through, IVECO tractors pulling in (...) We lived in Jalandhar for long, but I felt* coming home *the first time I stepped out in Flero. I was used to what I saw, no problems in setting I thought, and then I was to* discover the world, the people! (Darsan, Palazzolo, A&G. greenhouses, 11/04/ 2013)

Some authors speculated on the apparent ties between the two plains and how this imagery spurred migration from Punjab to the Po Valley, beyond the pull of the local rural labor market (Restelli 2013, Azzeruoli 2013). This "transnational place-making" was also masterly represented in a documentary movie released at the turn of the century (Fasano 2004) when Punjabi communities in Lombardy where burgeoning and gradually came to be perceived integral part of the landscape even for locals. The power of shared environmental imaginaries stroke me one day while working with Amandeep, a second-gen Punjabi informant, in the Italian language school where I taught. Looking through some of her pictures taken the previous summer, which I had asked her to provide me for prompting oral language tasks, she pointed to a sunlit one portraying herself and kid friends riding around their bikes on a dusty country-road. Tickled, she commented: "you see, that's just like the Punjab!". When I disputed that she had not been back since she was seven, another teacher intervened:

> *But she's right, Punjab is no different! I've seen many of* their *(Indian migrants') photographs, you can hardly tell the difference, just the muddy thatched roofs we don't have* here *anymore (...). That's way they have settled in so easy* by us, *no-one gets surprised if you go down to the Cherio (River) and see them* all dressed in colors doing their *baths, not for swimming, it's like the Gange or something like that, isn't it?*

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[57] Very few noticed that the *Pind* is a contested historical legacy, popularized but also mocked in latest Bollywood movies, where long-time expat British Indians ridicule the gullible characters of first time Punjabi peasants (possibly embodied by latecomer southern European Punjabis, reinforcing a cultural discourse that operates a class divide between different diaspora waves and destinations, see Ch.1).

Beside the paltriness of my colleague in pairing "here and there, them and us", there seemed to be a watered-down consistency between the rural imaginaries of Punjab and Lombardy in the eyes of a young transmigrant and of an aged native. Following Salazar (2010:567):

> At the roots of many travels to distant destinations, whether in the context of tourism or migration, are historically laden and socio-culturally constructed imaginaries. People worldwide rely on such imaginaries, from the most spectacular fantasies to the most mundane reveries, to shape identities of themselves and others. These *unspoken representational assemblages are powerful because they enact and construct peoples and places*, implying multiple, often conflicting, representations of Otherness, and questioning several core values multicultural societies hold, by blurring as well as enforcing traditional territorial, social, and cultural boundaries.

This curious double bond between the Indus and the Po plains served locals and migrants to partly fill the gap between an exoticised eastern (travel) destination for Italians and a tamed western (migrant) destination for Indians. Yet, like Darsan soon discovered, once removed the veil of landscape resemblance, social life in Lombardy differed quite a lot from the rural Punjab. Even for those families who initially found an income (and a dwelling) being hired in small local farms, the unequal relation with their employers and furthermore the complexity of everyday living at once among foreigners and co-ethnics with whom they shared information, resources, work and spare time created multiple social cleavages as much as connections (Lum 2012).

Rurban neighborhoods in resettlement host and produce a whole lot of complex relations and positionalities, including intra ethnic hierarchies that are not simply related to pre-migration status (such as faith, caste and class divides) but are also migration-driven, from the establishment of *passeurs* to the rising of other multiple intermediators, primarily work brokers or *dhalals* (see Azzeruoli 2013 and previous chapter). While a Punjabi *pind* is ruled by federal administrators in theory but governed by *gram panchayat* in practice (a local assembly of distinguished best men), Lombardy municipalities are of course under the jurisdiction of Italian national, regional, provincial and local law, to which Indians dutifully comply. We argued (ch.1) that the *ethnic* lens is a fiddly tool to reason over Punjabis in Italy and that the *community* dimension is as much problematic since diverse Punjabi families are scattered in hamlets across the Lombardy countryside. Yet, the lack of a recognized political ethnic élite leaves what Punjabis identify as their plural Indian community in a sort of acephalous status, with shifting room for personal initiatives and new improvised and contested minor *sardars*, small bosses who try to set ethnic rules for work and local integration.

(Indian) migrants' social incorporation goes hand in hand with their civic stratification (Morris 2003), a twin process that does not only depends on clear-cut legal issues such as short or long term stay permits or naturalizations, but it may better be addressed through the urban configuration of spaces, i.e. observing how a locale is inhabited through daily activities ranging from housing to commuting for work or shopping, from worshipping to recreational activities. The folding of such

spaces encourages or prevents a set of *urban sociabilities* (Glick Schiller, Caglar 2011), with co-ethnics as much as with natives, included the meddling with other migrant minorities.

While I will focus on work and religious practices in the next two paragraphs, I drag a first conclusion on Indian neighborhoods in Brescia and Bergamo underscoring that most informants of mine lived in rent accommodation in historical town centers. According to my interlocutors, pros outweighed the cons in these lodgings: quite shanty apartments came for a rather affordable rate, the requisite to live not off the books but with a regular tenancy contract gave many long-term resident families the chance to apply for regional FSA (Renting Grant Schemes, ORIM 2104:44-46). Women and youngsters particularly rejoiced that these buildings were centrally located and within walking distance from their usual hangouts (ethnic stores or public squares and sports centers). Such urban location represented for some long-term resident men an upgrading from the farm setting, which was more secluded and uneasy to travel around with public transport though it came with the benefit of rent-free (at times no-bills) lodging. Nonetheless, this accommodation, which seemed to match offer and demand, also presented some drawbacks. In rurban Lombardy, historical hamlets have often turned into sundry immigrant enclaves, possibly adding to a super-diverse but also marginalized milieu (mainly low working class and often socio-economically distressed), possibly setting the scene for "cultural clashes" with native neighbors and local administrators, between alleged reports on urban insecurity and first attempts for gentrification (Biehl 2014).

In the very town where I live, since 2010 a spontaneous association of native residents has raised their voice to contest immigrants supposedly taking over their territorial heritage, under the slogan "Let's rescue our historical center!" Oddly enough, xenophobic positions (close to the Northern League party ruling in the area) dialogue with socialist instances open to diversity inclusion. Yet, not even grassroots movements and ordinary interactions may always concur. During a local get-together threw for fundraising the association's aims, Neetu, my Inditian friend who resides in the area, remarked:

> *I can't understand. Sunday noon they asked us to make our traditional recipe, put it on a stall and offer it to passers-by (...). On Monday, the neighbor lady gives out to me to keep my windows shut when I fry my food... At night someone will hassle Rohit [a Pakistani who owns a kebab takeaway next door] to turn off the music and close his store before any other [Italian] snack bar in the street.* Does it take an occasion to make us friends for once? *How long does this last for?* (Neetu, Albatros Fundraising, Seriate, 12/05/2013)

Revisiting what said in chapter 3, making one's home in migration is a material as much a symbolic continuous effort. Locating Punjabi migrants' lodgings in rurban (midway between rural and urban) Lombardy means to observe not only where but primarily how the re-production of Punjabiyat takes place in resettlement, looming how houses and household nets are entrenched in wider social fields

continuously negotiating with different identity claims and contestations. Paraphrasing Neetu's distress, under which conditions would (Punjabi) migrants feel and be felt "strangers no more"?

5.2.2 Work ethics and educational agencies

> Full membership means having the same educational and work opportunities as long-term native born citizens, and the same chance to better their own and their children's lot. It also means having a sense of dignity and belonging that comes with acceptance and inclusion in a whole range of institutions. (Alba, Foner 2015:23)

Being the Punjabi immigration to northern Italy and to Lombardy in particular (ISMU 2014) a substantial, resilient and long-term one, workplaces and schools have received greater attention from social scientists and administrators alike as they are the key settings where Indian immigrants encounter local people and institutions engaging in daily interactions. While arguments over these two research contexts may be countless, I will pinpoint some empirical issues that might be relevant for theorizing *the way to social incorporation* of Inditians in Lombardy rural towns. Where are Indian Punjabis occupied in Bergamo and Brescia? How do their children attend school? What are the possibilities and constraints embedded in these social fields for meeting one's livelihood?

With Punjabis registering a high trend of *labor mobility* for over a century, their resettlement to Italy since the late Eighties was first spurred and then sustained (or more recently put at stake) by pulling economic factors, which display both similarities and differences with other concomitant labor migrations, particularly wider South Asian ones (see chapter 1). Job vacancies in the farms initially (mainly in southern Lombardy and Emilia-Romagna) and in industrial manufactories later (across Eastern Lombardy and in the Veneto area) were indeed the driving forces behind ongoing transfers from the Punjab. Out of the 44 questionnaires I sent out enquiring for family livelihood, the 38 I received back indicated that most breadwinners (26) were dependent laborers in small, often family-run, manufactories or in larger agro-industrial companies, 5 where hired in the marketing sector, 4 held their own business as shopkeepers or food entrepreneurs, 2 were on redundancy and one only reported to be temporarily unoccupied and in search of a job. All my respondents were males aged 19-54, over two thirds (30) were head of a family with dependent spouse and children.

The transnational neighborhood we described in the previous paragraph was in first instance an informal marketplace for recruiting new labor-force through words of mouth, recommendation and obligations (with all the riddles this process brought about in setting or crossing new and old social boundaries). This (ethno)community backstage was also a privileged space for reproducing a

certain *work ethics* via ongoing comments and contestations. Rajeev's life tale was exemplary in narrating how a job is a central if not "mandatory" prerequisite in the Punjabi migration project: it guarantees legal stay, feasible sustenance and potential wellbeing for raising (or reuniting) a family and/or sending remittances back. Besides being instrumental for individual (and kin) migratory achievement, work is deeply inscribed in the social ethics of Punjabi culture and it is even proverbial for the Sikhs (Axel 2001). If job chances and choices could be rather different according to the living context, either homeland or in diaspora, and depend on one's social belonging and cultural capital, for Italian Punjabis hard work remains a transnational value (Denti, Perocco 2005, Bertolani 2012, Azzeruoli 2013). "A fine job" is the key to economic success and moral respectability, like most parents and elders kept instructing their youngsters (as Rajeev's son often sighed with boredom).

Back in Punjab, pointing to his self-portrait hanged on the wall in his sitting room, Praneet's GrandadJi kept on boasting about his thriving 30+years business in selling electrical appliances all over the state, an activity he described as "inspired by the gurus, blessed by God and shared with the *Sangat*". With less emphasis on community redistribution but equal pride in his lifetime business, Baljit, Asha's father, displayed pictures of the Indian scents shop in Dubai that he had inherited from his father and made his family undeniably "rich for two generations' *worth*".

On the other side of migration, in the Italian resettlement context, discourses about work were as much as intense as occasionally filled with dismay. Most first-time migrants arrived in the Nineties benefitted of a relatively easier insertion in the labor market as low-skilled manual workers regardless their occasionally higher education (although it was not unusual to hear them complain about their employer's bossiness or ill-treatment). For more recent immigration waves finding a job and stabilizing in it or hoping for a progression seemed ever more difficult. This consternation was particularly felt by 1.5 or 2nd generation Inditians, who often held higher aspirations which were at odds with their professional chances at the national level, hampered by the financial downturn and by their own marginality as a minority group. Debating with Kash and Avtar (and interviewing Gurinder, see next section), it was clear that these young Inditians did not want to remain curbed in the first sector ("*the frantic job of our -Punjabi- peasants*", Avtar). Neither did they aim for becoming small entrepreneurs like many British co-nationals ("*would you ever imagine in this country -Italy- people craving for rice curry instead of tomato pasta?*", Kash), when they had often studied for third sector jobs or aimed at a professional career ("*I'm a qualified programming accountant and going to graduate in IT. I don't expect easy money, no, but the job I deserve, yes*", Gurinder).

Children of Indian immigrants in Italy display a patent disillusion in entering the national job market, fearing a likely discriminatory treatment, regardless their factual skills or citizenship. Lifting his eyebrows in disbelief, Asha's son reported that an elder Punjabi friend had "taken the piss out of his naturalization", warning him that "*he could flaunt his Italian national ID as much as he wished; he would always remain a B series citizen in the eyes of white native Italians*". (See the ethnographic account of the episode in section 7.1). Social exclusion on the grounds of either race/ethnicity or immigrancy was still more of a grand narration for Naresh rather than a firsthand experience. A truly 2nd gen boy, just out of primary and beginning middle school, Asha's elder son was often adamant in outing his enthusiasm for Italian school life, where he never lamented to feel mistreated or discriminated against, although he needed extra language training the first two years to keep the study pace with his native schoolmates.

Considering Italian formal *educational settings* we have to take into account both Punjabi parents and children's views and the comparison they draw with their homeland schooling.
The Indian school-system is a microcosm of Indian society, wedged between ideal equality and actual unfairness, endorsed access for all and lived social disparities (once again intersecting class, caste and gender). The Indian Constitution delivers education as a fundamental right and reserves a significant number of seats under affirmative action for disadvantaged *Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes* (Deshpande 2013). Yet, notwithstanding increasing primary education attendance and expanding literacy, girls' dropouts especially in secondary schools are still a plague. The relative higher literacy of my informants, which corresponds to the average education and semi-skillness of most Punjabis relocated in Italy, should not conceal the rate of the uneducated in Punjab, where almost 25% of the populace is still *illiterate* (Census of India 2011). Both public and private first and secondary schools are run in the country, whose funding come from central, state, and local sources. Those who can afford it, irrespective of their religious beliefs, often select a Christian institute for their children, said to guarantee the best possible education. Even among my young Punjabi informants in Italy having attended a St. Joseph's or St. Francis's boarding school is held to mark better education and social achievement. That was the case of Praneet and Gurinder, whose schooling in Punjab gave them the advantage of good English-speaking. All South Asians take education in great consideration as a stepping stone to gain a better future and their firmness on English as a vehicular language for global learning is paramount (Qureshi 20102). Asha sent her children to English summer camps to compensate for poor-quality English classes in Italian primary school and our Punjabi Pakistani friend Naveed accounted this as

the prime reason for his family transfer to the UK, which ironically took place as soon as he was naturalized Italian.

Overall, Punjabi parents and children held positive opinions of the Italian school system, despite many 1.5 young immigrants experienced difficulties in learning the language and adjusting to the national learning curricula, often "losing out" one or two school years when they asked for official recognition of their previous learning career in Punjab, like it happened to Praneet. Galloni (2009) offers us a fine-grained analysis of the interplay between Indian immigrant families and local schoolteachers in Cremona adopting strategies to facilitate their children integration in the national educational system. Having myself direct experience of public schools both as a parent and a teacher I partially agree with Galloni that primary schools better operate for first socialization and language learning, while middle and especially secondary schools presented ambivalent outcomes.

On one hand, secondary school choices appear segmented for immigrants alike, who are diverted to opt for vocational or technical institutes and supposedly held unfit for lyceums, not enough literate in the Italian language or anyway not foreseen as university students. If and when the transfer to third level studies ensues, Punjabi families also seem to reenact another cultural bias, favoring their male rather than female offspring's further studies and pressing the new generations for "functional learning", which could guarantee a solid career either in IT or medicine (see Asha's and Gurinder's views on the topic in the next section).

On the other hand, occasional but harsh episodes of discrimination ostensibly occur with more frequency during teenage, when the pressure for blending in with one's cohort is most acute. Galloni (2009) and Thapan (2013) both convene that girls of Punjabi descent tend to perform better in learning and shun away from possible peer conflicts, whereas boys often have it tougher as they try to stand out and bodily project their hegemonic masculinity (Gill 2012), facing bullying and clashing with other migrants' or native's male models. While this dynamic of *gendered teen social exclusion* in secondary education works as a rule of thumb, Praneet's and Guninder's experiences offer a counter back. The girl did never fit in her schooldays and withdrew in the gurdwara for socializing, while the boy steered in the temple but also mingled easily in his class with both natives and co-ethnics. Things were not liable only in terms of gender or personality: Praneet was sent to a small far-out vocational school with no support for children of immigrants. Gurinder opted for a technical college in a major town highly credited for diversity management. Another shift occurred once schooldays were over and the two siblings came of age.

The *transition from school to work* for young Inditians is a step still underexplored and often oblivious to gender differences. Working at the intersection of gender, race/ethnicity and class in the production of discrimination, Farris and de Jong (2014) analyze the shift from school to work

for second gen south Asian immigrant girls in Britain. Following their insights, I argue that from being relatively advantaged at school, Inditian girls turn to being further disadvantaged in the labor market. Meeting double cultural expectations (that of their families and community and that of the local society) young women of Indian origin are anticipated to be married off soon and thus to quickly exit from work. In fact, Praneet[58] was not sponsored for further studies, found an underpaid low-skill job and went back homeland to marry a Punjabi resident. Gurinder's parents funded his undergrad course in Italy, leaving a leeway for his further mobility to UK or North America. An elder sister and a younger brother, Praneet and Gurinder pursue their Punjabi migration projects well aware of their gender roles, making room for themselves in their Italian diasporic home.

This sibling case sheds light on the interplay between structures and flukes in migrants' social integration and it suggests that we could capitalize on contingent ordinary episodes that ethnographic studies intercept and interpret. If an anthropology in action could ideally ply institutional structures to forward more inclusive meddling practices, it is indeed from work and educational settings that public engagement should move forward.

The next paragraph will instead show that the quest for acceptance and social inclusion may also be realized by migrant themselves through their own institutions. In the case of Punjabis in Italy, religious establishments have come to play a decisive role in doing *boundary work*, knitting, not without difficulties, community assertion and social insertion.

5.2.3 Aesthetics of remembrance and politics of religions

> South Asian migration into Europe [exemplifies] a wider tendency towards the pluralization of transnational routes and of mobile subjects taking place in the continent, and the role of religions in supporting the frame of collective diasporic identities […] [It also] is a valuable prism through which to understand how contemporary debates on migration and pluralism are linked to the role historically played by Christianity in framing the ways in which "religion" and "religious difference" have been understood in Europe and beyond. (Gallo 2014:5).

Over the past three decades, South Asian migrations have become an integral part to a new European landscape of immigration and contributed to the reshape of religious pluralism in the historically most secularized supranational governance (Bramadat, Koenig 2009). While shunning away from any religious essentialism, it wouldn't be feasible to detach religious affiliation from the Punjabi diaspora living in Italy.

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[58] If Praneet's life tale partly conforms to this typecast, Manisha's history offers a different perspective. Manisha is a Punjabi Brahmin from Delhi, shortly living in Italy on her own as a doctoral student, who acknowledges the preferential treatments she was often given despite her apparent double disadvantage as a migrant Indian young woman (see next chapter).

From my own fieldwork in Punjab, I could not contradict what most Indologists commented on India: it is indeed a country where the sacred is ubiquitous and manifold (Eck 1982), refraining from any naive *exoticism* or *orientalism*. Shani, one of my Inditian teenage informants, once objected: "What I can't stand about India (…) is that there *everything is possibly a god.*. they see a strangely shaped stone or tree and then they set up a shrine and say there it stands a god: *what a nonsense!*". A certain attitude to daily life in Punjab is a by-product of this constant gaze of marvel and how religious emotions are collectively held regardless creed affiliations. Even for those migrant and non-migrant Punjabis who set detached from religion (although "atheist" is an adjective they never used), the Subcontinent is portrayed as land of *spirituality* and Punjab as the homeland of some of the greatest world cults. I registered the co-existence of six main different faiths across the region (Hindu, Sikh, Muslim, Christian, Jain, and Buddhist) in a context of relative mutual tolerance, where countless shrines and places of worship stood side by side.

When we turn our attention to the Italian resettlement, whether Hindu, Sikh, Ravidass (or Muslim in the case of Pakistani Punjabis), spiritual beliefs and practices have a large impact on the personal lives of these migrants and influence their public life on a daily basis (Ballard 2007). As previously sketched (chapter 4), home-based rites or *puja* fulfill the need for personal devotion (*bhakti*), while collective celebrations, ordinary or exceptional, endorse immigrants' belonging to one's group. Places of worship are not merely a gathering space, but operate as merging bodies where different interests and projects converge and at times compete (Moliner 2007) and from where minorities can effectively claim for their accommodation in local societies (Gallo, Sai 2013).

As shown elsewhere (Jacobsen, Myrvold 2011) religious institutions constitute the hub of social life among Inditians (Denti, Ferrari, Perocco 2005, Bertolani 2011). All across Italy, with Punjabi settlements turned numerous and long-term, the establishment of worship places meant a lot of time, effort and financial investment by the local communities, marking their accomplished relocation and projecting further social utopias. The geographical distribution of "ethnic" Punjabis' temples bears witness to a history of tempered and progressive territorialisation; an ongoing material and symbolic appropriation of space which was captured with the term "*templeisation*" (Baumann 2009). While collective domestic prayers were common among Indian groups in the heyday of immigration, since the Nineties longer settlements brought about "the creation of 'arranged' gurdwaras in industrial buildings throughout the country" (Ferraris, Sai 2014:177). This tenet is in fact particularly valid for Sikh congregations or *sangats*, with over 40 gurdwaras open nationwide to-date[59], but applies also to Hindu and Ravidas groups though on a smaller scale.

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[59] A quite informal census, since we do not dispose of official statistics, but the same approximate figure is confirmed by different informants, local *granthis* and civic administrators.

As far as gurdwaras are concerned, temples proffer better visibility to a certain "orthodoxy", which may be empowering for those who take part in or lead it, and constraining for those who stay at the margins. That is the state of the relation between Jat and not Jat Sikhs, or between Khalsa and those who have not "yet" take *amrit*, the Sikh baptism[60]. These organizations are deemed as "cultural" ones according to Italian legislation, which has not yet ratified a bilateral agreement with the Sikh council, although the Italian Constitution protects freedom of worship. Many informants credited that gurdwaras were getting politicized in order to nurture cross-cultural dialogue and maintain good relations with local societies (Sai 2010, Ferraris, Sai 2014), especially with municipal administrators and the Catholic church, to which Inditians refer to for carrying out public events during their holy celebrations (Vaisakhi festival in *primis*). In Italy, the Catholic Church historically held the license to dictate the pace of integration for other religious belongings in mainstream Italian society, according to a politics of recognition aptly seen as "selective solidarity" (Pace 2008, Garau 2010). Presenting their faith as non-threatening Catholic values (and artfully setting it apart from Islam[61], Sian 2013), the Sikhs invested in an affirmative identity politics. Abandoning a first ethno-mimesis (when just being turbaned could be problematic), gurdwaras are nowadays sites where a politics of *recognition* and of *difference* may be put forward (Grillo 2001, Jacobsen, Myrvold 2011, Gallo 2014), where at once ambivalent and instrumental relations are established, between solidarity and exploitation.

Out of the many Sikh temples I visited in Lombardy, I most often attended the "Singh Sabha Gurdwara" in Cortenuova (serving the largest Sikh population in Bergamo and hosting over a thousand adepts on Sundays, see picture in appendix). Its original building was an empty warehouse first let and then purchased through a communal mortgage signed by 30 local families that monthly contribute to pay off the debt. Recipients of monetary *prasadas* (offers set aside thanks to the generosity of attendees), the echelons of the Cortenuova *gurdwara* have also planned to renovate and refurbish their temple so to make it in line with traditional Sikh religious architecture. This institution came into life after a split from an earlier *gurdwara* existing in the area (just 10km away, "Mata Sahib Kaur Ji" in Covo), because of alleged "radical reasons" as the *granthi* Jasbir Singh put it: a lexicon which reveals the sneaky contrasts played out within religious walls. Spokespeople from each temple contested the rival one to be "mistakenly sikhi": Covo was suspected of disguising separatist militancy under the mild icon (potentially feminist, Gayer 2012) of a guru's

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[60] Even the use of this vocabulary loan (clearly taken from Christian lexicon) signals the permeability of the Sikh liturgy and the *sangat*'s intention to render the *panth* accessible in cognitive and emotional terms to different audiences.
[61] The historical relations between Sikhism and Islam have been ambivalent and often conflictual. While I do not investigate the issue in depth, it is remarkable that, evermore after 9/11, contemporary Sikh diaspora base their overseas emplacements on the construction of a religious identity alternative and antithetical to Muslims immigrancy.

mother[62], Cortenuova was accused of mainstreaming Jat Khalsa and censoring any deviancy from orthodoxy. The association often invites other Sikh expatriates (such as prominent British *kirtan* players who were hosted there on a Barsi date, when four thousand people showed off) and complies with the supreme ethic rule of *sewa* (selfless service, which includes preparing and distributing free meals to defy the most loathed devil, *lobh* or greed). It also fulfills the role of a charity association, as it offers shelter to dispossessed and homeless co-religionists and has taken the lead in instructing younger generations. During summer vacations, when Italian public schools are closed, there runs a daily Sikhi camp. Lessons in Gurmukhi script, *bani* explanation, *kirtan* singing and instrument playing, *gatka* and martial arts are available to all Sikh youth, with a strong record of attendees among male prospective *amritdhari* youngsters (since the rift between Khalsa and non-Khalsa boosts a pressure for orthodoxy to which young men seem more receptive).

The double flag of initiating one's ethnic youngsters while approaching local society and institutions is also upheld by the minoritarian Ravidas *Darbar* in Cividino. This recent local Indian-based temple serves a smaller population of a few hundred people, yet it is growing most proactive towards Italians, for whom their *sadhu* (lead cleric) is preparing reading materials he had agreed to distribute in the local Parish with the help of the Catholic Pastor in the municipality. Don Sandro welcomed Binhat's effort in raising awareness of caste subordination, according to the Ravidassi "rise of the oppressed" ideology (a particular historical interpretation of modern India's social inequality, Dirks 2001, Jaffrelot 2003). Further research on Ravidassias in Italy appears urgent, especially in the Bergamo area where the community was almost unknown to the public until the media reported that this was the religious affiliation of the Punjabi immigrants involved in a tragic murder (see also ch.6 and Sunny's life history).

Italian Punjabi Hindus, who are a minority within a minority, are instead better protected in terms of official recognition of their creed: in 2001 the Italian Government signed a Decree granting Hindu associations the status of religious organizations (with all the economic benefits that this would entail and igniting the quest by the Sikhs for an equivalent recognition). Between Bergamo and Brescia two are the worshipping places attended by Hindus (who occasionally didn't disdain to pray in gurdwaras closer to reach), one is the Radha Ramana temple and hamlet in Chignolo d'Isola (BG), the other in Shiv Shakti Mandir Gussago (BS). The first is an ISCKON *mandir* shared with Italian Hare Krsna followers (who originally founded it) that just a few selected Indian families can attend (on the basis of the informal bail-chain transferring acceptance and respectability Rajeev informed us of, see ch.5). The latter was established in 2012 after four years of chitty funding and with the explicit intention to set it apart from other temples in the area, whether Hindu but Italian

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[62] In Sikh hagiography, Mata Kaur was the mother of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh Ji and is the leading figure of all *Kaurs* Sikh women involvement in the *panth.*

owned or Indian but Sikh practiced. Vijay, Rajeev's brother, so burst out with relief getting off the minivan he and his friends had hired to visit the new *mandir*: "*How beautiful! At last, we have our place to pray our Gods, not someone else's. They all gave us room* out of bounty, *but looked at us sideways anyway (...) We were not the same lot, we are Indian Hindus. We are not* Vattan Wali [dastar wearers], *we revere Krsna like all other avatara (...)*".

Provisionally concluding, temples are merging institutions for the different religious communities of Italian Punjabis, propelling cores from where they continuously reenact a boundary work that reaffirms specific identities while trying to make them known and valued across diversities. Guninder's life narrative in the next session will provide a personal account for this walking on the tightrope between sameness and difference, identity and otherness, building on the cultural and moral repertoire that religions offer *desh pardesh*, home and in the diaspora.

5.3 Asha's and Gurinder's stories, gender across migratory generations

Opening this section is perhaps the most challenging task out of my ethnography. Asha and Gurinder were indeed my two closest interlocutors during fieldwork and I have since sustained an ongoing friendship with both after the research came to an end. The strength of this tie prompted me to face enhanced ethical issues in reporting their voices, as I felt even more compelled to poise the confidentiality they gifted me with and the public resonance of their private experiences. I was often left pondering to what extent I could analyze my friends' personal narratives in order to investigate what Herzfeld (2004) poignantly described as *cultural intimacy*. While limiting the total numbers of formal interviews I carried out with them (three each), countless informal talks and the depth and extension of shared participant observation stood at the core of my all research. I will never thank Asha and Gurinder enough for their willingness to answer my endless questions (often naïve, at times disturbing) and for their ability in widening and redressing my project. If the ethnographic exchange always rests on a structural asymmetry, I hope I could reciprocate my debt through the effort I put in fulfilling my informants' pleas for engaging as an "allied native" in their demanding everyday lives as Indian migrants in Italy. My forms of sharing and commitment (Low, Merry 2010) within the field were notably shaped by these two collaborators' views and pragmatic calls for engagement. Further, in balancing emotional proximity and distance, I had to carefully select the ethnographic accounts to focus on and could render just a portion of the enrichment I gained in parting mundanity and worldviews with two amazing research partners and lifetime friends.

5.3.1 Asha: revisiting migrants' (dis)engagements

I met Asha for the first time eight years ago. Clearly South Asian, wearing black leggings and a golden *curta*, with her long dark hair cropped on her head, she sat on a bench next to me queuing for a parent-teacher meeting in the playschool attended by our elder kids. As she stared at me smiley, with a baby girl asleep on her lap, I couldn't help striking up a conversation. After a few exchanges in Italian, that she hardly understood at the time, we quickly shifted to English, a language she mastered like a native having been educated in international schools as she soon revealed. Twenty minutes later, she pleaded me to follow her in the classroom and help her out in communicating with the teachers. That was the onset of our longtime sharing and friendship.

As much as I claim for doing ethical research and applying critical analysis, I still find it awkward to define people with categorical labels, a discomfort heightened when it comes to describe close collaborators and actual friends. The level of intimacy Asha and I built over the time tallies with the censorship I had to operate on our sharing and even on some of her life-tales, a narrative work we kept on since and where her own interpretative effort was paramount.

If I were to introduce my friend like I did with all other informants, at the time of the interviews Asha was a 38 years-old woman; she introduced herself as being *middle-class* (like most Indians did anyway) and high caste, Rajput. She practiced Bhakhti Hinduism and held a degree in political science from Jalandhar University. She had been living in Italy for 13 years, resettling there after her husband with whom she then had two children now of school age. While she always was a housewife in Bergamo, her husband Rajeev worked on a permanent post as a skilled metal laborer and recently applied for Italian naturalization. Given these directions, Asha *herstory* would just seem complementary to Rajeev's *history*. Instead, delving in her earlier life experience, there was "so much more" like she used to say.

Asha built her life story around her double migration and prior experience of being a NRI well before moving to Italy. She was actually born in Bahrein and raised in Dubai where her parents had moved to run a family business opened in the Fifties. Her mastery in narration was gripping and I could easily understand why her kids often pleaded her to tell them *Hitopadesha tales*, a collection of Sanskrit fables she had learnt while living the Gulf.

> *Babbe came from Doaba Punjab, he went to the Gulf but not out of the scheme of bonded labor like all others, after India's Independence, he wanted to open his enterprise. So with Bahu's help, she was a Sahini [a well-off caste], he set up an Indian scent store that seemed popped out of "The Arabian Nights".*
> *By the time I was four and my sister born my father took us to Dubai, in the Eighties the economy was liberalized, there was a booming real estate market there. We had a whole condo, some flats rented out and a big, big one for ourselves only. Reja and I attended international boarding school, classes were held in English and our schoolmistresses were all true NRI.*
> *I had this vision of India, it smelled like the perfume shop. I didn't go back much as a kid. Never thought to leave*

Dubai, my sister married there. But then I was sent back to Jalandhar: I was a bright student and there wasn't a good college in the Gulf, I mean as decent as the Indian ones, with the same quality like Britain itself. (Asha, her home, Seriate, 28/08/2012)

Going over her early years Asha weaved genealogies and locations with excitement and nostalgia. When she was to trace her life as an immigrant in northern Italy, since that marriage and spouse reunion that worked as her coming of age like, time seemed suddenly flattened and space compressed. Although a smart graduate, she never worked outside her home in Italy and she did not yet master Italian, erratically attending language classes due to family duties. That did not mean she was confined in the home, she added to house chores and kids raising an informal microenterprise set up with another Indian Hindu lady. Her friend would send into Bergamo from Ludhiana cases with fine handmade *saris* and Asha would re-sell them among a cohort of female friends and acquaintances. While Asha stood as a reference model among her Indian lady mates, who addressed her *Bhabi* or *Bhar ji* (a name reserved for a brother's wife, blending respect and affection) and turned to her for practical help, it would be hard to depict her as a well-integrated immigrant.

Among the countless episodes we shared, I once invited my friend to join me in a seminar on Punjabi culture I run at a public institute. The ensuing debate was heated and prolonged: after Asha related her migration experience, the audience began to scorn her feeble knowledge of Italian and query that her "self-arranged" love marriage was just a forced one with a chance happy-ending. Discussing the scene afterward, Asha regretted her "performance" and lamented that no one had understood how she fell in love with her future husband when her parents proposed him to her.

He was such a charming expat, gentle and knowledgeable (...), but above all he could take me away to Italy, where I always dreamt of! During college I was so passionate on arts history, I read all about Florence, Rome, Venice, fine arts and food… naturally he won me over!

That was a prospective groom who could outdo all other local spouse candidates on the grounds of his "mobility capital" (Kaufman et al. 2004), providing her with the prospect of moving to Europe after him and fulfilling her most compelling desires.

That training worked out as a participatory ethnography (Clifford 1983) as we both realized to what extent mutual representations of cultural diversity might affect social encounters in migration contexts (Vertovec 2009). Connecting global rights to local realities, Asha noted:

Being an Indian woman is not easy, whether you are born in a wealthy or poor house, a higher or lower varna. I understand that international media depict India as a women-unfriendly country (...) but it all depends on where you actually come from and you can move forth (...)
to tell you the truth, I felt more a modern woman back in Jalandhar, after I finished college and went to teach 4th grade (pupils).. now I can barely walk around, not because my husband forbids me to do so, but because Italians do not see me as someone who could go out and do some work, I mean who could do something good. (Asha, 07/04/2014)

My friend bitterly acknowledged the setbacks of pursuing her goals in Italy, as an immigrant Indian lady who was subordinate on the grounds of gender, culture and legal status. Conceding she might put more effort in searching for "integration" (Vertovec, Wessendorf 2010), she denounced being daily put off by most locals, whether *"civil servants or shopkeepers"* who treated her as an *"unfortunate immigrant lady"*, deprived of any knowledge, skills and autonomy. More than formal policies, it was a commonplace sociability she felt alienated from.

Two months later though, Asha rang me in frenzy to announce she had enrolled for driving classes, encouraged by her husband, and also intended to train to become a cultural mediator, aiming for a professional role recognized in the local context with an advance of status within and beyond her ethno-community. While the outcome of my friend's decisions turned hard to sustain, her attempts to *mobilise* herself impinged again on her family:

> *I really want my* dears *to be* proud *of me (…), my parents who did so much for my education and especially my daughter, to rejoice I can help her (…) and to have them [Italians] see that also women coming from India are worthy, worthy of* respect.

Social recognition in multiple domains turned out to be an individual requisite to fulfil Asha's migratory path, which initiated through her husband but seemed to have come to a standstill in her personal experience of immigrant woman (Rinaldini 2011).

Since she never intended to return to India for good, proud of their two kids born in Lombardy, "the most productive of all Italian regions", Asha swayed her husband to apply for Italian citizenship once he could comply with the due legal requirements (ten years of regular residency and work in the host country). While her husband only could take this step on her behalf, she exercised her agency pressing him to realize what this shift could mean for their family's permanence in Italy (and for any further move to Europe). Rajeev lingered for a few years before applying for naturalization, uncertain of losing his Indian nationality and the emotional attachment he still bore to it. Asha's insistence on naturalization turns clear in reason of her female dependence in the scheme of family immigration law (Morris 2003, Skrbis 2008) as well as in her biography as a NRI before moving to Italy. Born and bred in a Punjabi expat household, Asha interpreted her ascribed homeland identity more as a family legacy and cultural capital than a national membership:

> *See, I grew up as a PIO (Person of Indian Origin) in a Gulf Country; of course I feel Indian: Indian the house I came from, Hindi is my heritage, Hindu my religion (…). But I have never been an Indian citizen* dot *(full stop). When I agreed to marry an expat I knew this was going to be my future,* I chose to go to Europe after him. *France or Italy I wanted to reach...*
> *What could I* ask for more *now than turning an Italian OCI (Overseas Citizen of India)? Have I not lived here enough? Do I not know how to make* dhal polenta *(a Bergamo corn recipe with Punjabi-style lentil stew)? I gave birth to my children here and Italian is their tongue (...). Imagine how much they could* reap from *being Italian nationals!* (Asha, my home, 03/11/2013)

Naturalization appeared in Asha's words to cast effects on her children in the end (see section 7.1). She dreamily logged the easiness to travel around Europe, the leeway to go and study third level in the UK, the chance of "moving further north" (even to Canada if sponsored by diaspora kin living there, likely her uncle and foster brother's father). Like many south Asians abroad (and transnational immigrants alike), she saw global mobility (or *motility*, the possibility of being mobile, Kaufmann et al. 2004, se ch.5) as a social capital inscribed in the citizenship status of an EU member State. In the near future, naturalization seemed the family's best bet for accessing local services and provisions, from children's regional school grants to municipal tax exemptions, for earning civil rights (and economic benefits) that she and Rajeev felt more urgent than the political rights (and duties) to vote (and ideally be elected for). Being citizens also doomed an easier route for obtaining a mortgage from the bank and finally being able to buy a residential property and move out of a house, which, though rent-free, Asha had never felt as her family home.

I noticed already in ch. 3 that the *ghar* issue was such a source of continuous disagreements between Asha and Rajeev. Not only did she spend most of her time in the house, but her feeling of inadequacy was also due to the comparison she drew between her own *lodging* and her family *properties*. Her sister had inherited part of the condo they were raised in Dubai. Her parents' gated residence in Chandigarh looked the quintessence of a safe and bourgeois accommodation. She was on the verge of becoming an Italian PIO, but still lacked the confidence in opening her house to throw family gatherings when relatives came all the way from India, the Gulf, France, Norway, Canada (all places she had visited to see her kin during the past twenty years).

> *My home. A place to call* my home, on paper and in slippers *(...) That is what I'm missing out here now. Still a guest and not a host in my house. You saw my brother's in law flat and imagine... they've been here far less time than us!*

For Asha, an Inditian woman with a treasured NRI history, re-territorialisation meant to have a freer access to *public space*, possibly developing a real civic engagement and legally turning a citizen. But it also implied to dispose of a *private space* that would make her equal to her diasporic family networks, balancing mobility and stillness as she pleased. In a scalar perspective, an owned residence would be the ultimate evidence of a successful relocation for Asha's entire household. At once, as a gendered space she would rule, this idealized home would give her the chance to detach from the fuss of a local society she still, fifteen years after resettlement, knew and understood but preferred to step out. Her feeble knowledge of Italian (quite good in comprehension and poor in production) was the embodied metaphor of her alternative dis/engagement with/from her local identity, which was but one of her multiple emotional belongings.

5.3.2 G.: a moral career to diasporic leadership

…[out of the five Ks[63]] Kirpan is the most revered and famed, it gave us trouble because they misrepresented it as a weapon in the West, instead it has nothing to do with jihad, *Islam holy rage, or such, it is a pure symbol of strength and defense of the weak. In size it is not much more than a Swiss jackknife, look at mine, tiny as a lucky pepper horn [...]* Kara *and* Kachera *are the ones for clear thinking before acting, the first [a bracelet] you wear it on the right wrist to guide your hand with wisdom, the latter [an underwear garment] reminds you of being self-controlled.* Kesh *and* Kanga *are uniquely Sikh, people think it's the dastar that makes a true Sikh man, but it's what you wear beneath it!* Kesh, *hair must be kept long and unshorn, in respect of God and the miracle of life persisting,* Kanga, *the comb serves to disentangle our thoughts, it must be wooden so that's not just ecological but also the negative ions are brushed away, even science agrees!* (Gurinder, Bergamo, Patronato S.Vincenzo, 31/10/2012)

The passage reported a vignette I had seen Gurinder acting at least three times in different contexts, in his secondary school during students' self-organization, and in two editions of the public event "Molte fedi sotto le stesso cielo" ("Many faiths beneath the same sky") that was yearly organized by the Catholic Dioceses to foster interreligious dialogue in the Bergamo district. While I often joked with his sister and friends about Gurinder being a histrionic performer, and no doubt his audiences were enthralled by his self-confident manners and coaxing voice, this Indian-born young man determinedly played out his role as a proud Sikh Khalsa bred in Italy. Gurinder firmly believed he could mediate between his Punjabi origins (and ardent religious loyalty) and his Italian enculturation. The lecturing he used to give (in Italian to local peers or seniors, occasionally with slides he himself prepared) are a fragment of his continuous intercultural commitment, which he directed outward to connect his multiple social networks and inward, constantly *self-fashioning* to create and embody the character of a successful diasporic young Sikh[64]. When I think of our first meeting I'll always remember the iconic look he bore. Besides being turbaned anytime (exhibiting his *amrithdari* status), Gurinder was hyperconscious of his appearance and systematically paired (or "parade", like his best friend giggled) the tint of his *dastar* with either his *salwar kameez* (worn when in company of co-ethnics) or his casual outfit (jeans, runners and shirt worn when he was off to school or with non-Indian friends).

Gurinder's migration history was partly common to many of his Punjabi peers. A 1.5 migrant, he was born and first socialized in India, where he was left back as a child and rejoined by his mother at age 9. During the two years his mother was away (Kanval had moved to work in Italy, see previous chapter) and his dad was trying (rather unsuccessfully) to keep up his own father's

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[63] The so-called five Ks are unanimously recognised as the symbols of Sikhism, consisting in five items worn daily by *amritdhari* Sikhs to ritually denote their ordinary ethics.

[64] In fact I did not recruit Gurinder for the research, he was just seventeen when he came to me first after having chancy talked to my husband who taught ICT in his class for a while, drove by the curiosity of meeting someone who was purposely "studying my (his) culture" as he exclaimed greeting me in the Cortenuova gurdwara.

business (distributing electrical appliances), the boy and his elder sister were reared by their grandparents and developed a close tie with Grandad Dev once his wife suddenly passed away.

Always looked up to Babbaji (GranDa), and he looked after me so well. I don't say it meanly, I have great respect for my father like the Gurus predicated and I know how crushed he is (...), but Daddiji is my inspiration, as a Sikh man I mean. You'll see the grand house he built for us in Garshankar, nothing would have been possible if he hadn't got the land, he made good money in commerce, honestly, no cheating. *Then he matched my mum and dad and cared for her as his own daughter, advised her to* go West *when she could. He bore all the family on his shoulders and never complained. If he had more he would share, other he would save, he respected God and God blessed him. He is a* healthy *Sikh, if you know what I mean (...) My mother gave me the teachings, my grandfather showed me the way.*

Gurinder's affection and admiration for his paternal granddad built on top of family-driven religious piety. Dev was a devout Sikh, in practice more than in theory. In his mid-sixty he would still get up at 3.30 in the morning, do his ritual ablutions, pray in the house with a liturgical music channel turned on and pay a visit to the nearby temple to proffer his daily giving. (By the time he got back to home-make breakfast and wake me up when I stayed with him in their Punjabi country lodge it was barely six in the morning and the rooster just heralded the dawn). Devji was highly respected by his kinsmen for reaching a wealthy position as a self-made entrepreneur while never going astray from the *panth*, the path of the Gurus which he followed with a depoliticized attitude. This role model was rock-hard for his grandson, but not the only one the boy could appeal to.

Gurinder's religious belonging was inseparable from his *parivaar* and *biraderi* legacy, although his matrilineal and patrilineal engagement in Sikhism were quite different. If we already mentioned the lay approach to religion that Manbir did not conceal in his daily life in Italy, Kanval's pious attitude also resonated with her family "militant genealogy". Kanval had made her kids partake in her aching recalls of 1984 without flying the flag for anger and revenge, but it was evident that Praneet and Gurinder knew more than they liked to re-tell.

The occasion to argue over Sikh militancy came one Sunday in April 2013, shortly after the serene celebrations for Vaisakhi, when Gurinder took me to the cinema with a bunch of friends to see "Sadda Haq" (lit. *Our Right*), a just released movie which combined fictional and documentary material to reconstruct the timeline of anti-Sikh violence from the mid-eighties to the present day, denouncing revisionist attempts and the alleged forgetfulness over political prisoners still withheld after 30 years. There were about two hundred people in the small theatre in Telgate where the screening took place, a venue that Kash's father had rented out from the local parish after kinsmen from Southall sent him off the flick (dubbed in Punjabi but subtitled in English). No wonder I was the only Italian in the room but at least I did understand the plot and observed with awe and unease the audience's intense verbal and kinesthetic reaction at some intense scenes. As we drove back,

Gurinder was unusually quiet, and only a week later I could get across his viewpoint on the movie and the issues it cast.

> *...it made me worry to see my people getting so hot. I think the film was real but also provocative; it was necessary but dangerous in a way (...) If the Sikhs want justice we ought to keep on lobbying for hidden court cases to be reopened, for our missing brothers to be freed. I told you about Bapu Surat Singh [Sikh civic militant known for his repeated hunger strikes],, he's undergone another fasting, he might die this time, but that's a righteous way to fight for the truth, not to instill blood in people's heads(...). That's why I stay with Jasbir and with Bhagat (the granthis in Cortenuova and Gorlago), they don't say* Sikhi is mystic, Sikhi is active, but active for good...

When I questioned that unspecific ethical claim, Gurinder shoveled a list of what *committed Sikhs* would do for the advancement of their people and of humankind, although the connection did not seem at all clear, until I made him go through *his own commitment*. The two *granthis* he hanged out with were prominent religious leaders and the close relation my friend entertained with both made him foreseen as the frontrunner of the local *Sangat*. Having learnt to play the harmonium and the tabla when a little boy in Punjab and still rehearsing liturgical music everyday which he found inspiring and inclusive, Gurinder was the appointed instrumentalist during ritual services and parades around Bergamo (see pictures in appendix). In May 2012, he had won a competition for the Sikh Awards in Italy and was then invited to perform in a European Sikh music festival in Austria. Following Jasbir, Gurinder also partook in a national delegation that went up to Geneva in October 2013 demanding the UN multi-faith roundtable to consider the case of Sikhism in Italy (and support the ISC Italy Sikh Council in pleading juridical recognition for their cult from the Italian Government). These travels conferred Gurinder a wider view on being a European diasporic Sikh, besides what he could reap from his transnational kin ties, especially with his paternal uncle and auntie long resettled in Birmingham and his maternal cousins living in Canada, with whom he maintained regular contacts at a distance.

Cultivating and displaying one's Sikhi(ness) meant for Gurinder a double bond: on the one hand he consciously wore a typecast eastern look in the eyes of Italians doing his best to promote cross-cultural understanding, on the other he pursued a way to fit in with his local ethno community and gain their trust and esteem. While he tended not to be overt critical, the gurdwara was the epicenter of Gurinder's *multiple civic participation*, as it was clear when he welcomed in and tenderly embraced the Cantamessa parents mourning over their murdered daughter (see the debate on the black chronicle episode in Ch.6).

As he grew up, Gurinder's engagement with his Sikhi, notwithstanding occasional frictions he downplayed as "skirmishes", contributed to his sound experience of long-term immigrant life in Bergamo, including his peer relations in secondary school. He was extremely well integrated in the

class and formed a popular duo with his best mate Khana, another 1.5 gen Punjabi Sikh guy, who was not *amritdhari* and acted much more mimetically, westernized and branded from tip to toe and notorious for his knack in informal girl dating. Contrary to common sense expectations, that tight ethnic friendship was not marginalizing, rather it worked as a joint alliance in trialing different behaviors for (well)being as young male Inditians in the local context. Gurinder completed his studies attaining high marks in the final exam, when he also submitted a "tesina", an original essay on Sikhism in Italy. The examiners praised his expert and passionate work, which he had asked me to edit and comment beforehand leaving me gawky. How could I revise anything compiled by my spot-on informant on the topic I was searching and he was himself the living whiz kid?

The baccalaureate (qualifying him a programming accountant) meant for Gurinder his first coming of age: "now I understand why they call it *maturity*", he exulted clenching the certificate in his fist when his family invited us over for lunch. After celebrating his achievement and spending two summer months back in Punjab (also to attend his sister's offhand return marriage where he acted as a best man), Gurinder knew a decision had to be taken. What to do next? With his parents' strenuous support, though their finances were quaking in the worst economic phase since they moved to Lombardy and broken by the expenses of Praneet's wedding, Gurinder chose to proceed to 3rd level studies and enrolled at Bergamo University in the Bsc degree program in Informatics Engineering. Helping him out in implementing the procedures for college, for once I perceived my buoyant young friend being nervous and unsure of his means.

After a few months, college life had begun to run smooth, then all of a sudden one night Guninder phoned me to relate a discrimination episode he had suffered and asking for my advice. He was shattered, how could his worst *experience of exclusion* ever took place in what he judged "the temple of unbiased knowledge and education for all"?[65] A university lecturer had verbally attacked him in class, probing him to leave the room unless he removed his "hat" (the *dastar*), an item that the professor deemed "offensive", disrespectful of the academic milieu and its *laicitè*[66]. Although Gurinder politely replied but stood still in his position receiving later some support from fellow college students, he thought that the affair could not be dismissed. He wisely refrained from informing the *granthis* on the spur of the moment, fearing to stir another local ethnic protest and media turmoil. We agreed that he would first report the incident to the Dean of the Faculty and then denounce it to UNAR (National Unit against Racial Discrimination) through the local Students'

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[65] Privacy reasons force me to disguise the details of the happening, since I'm writing this thesis from within the same academic institution, but I do not believe that conflict of interest should do away with evidence. I stick to the ethical diktat: "we should never develop theories that contradict our experience of what being alive is like", R.I. Levy 1994.
[66] Given the many cases of "mistaken identity" (after 9/11), when the iconic *dastar* was connected to Muslim public image, Gurinder believed that that xenophobic and blasphemous attack also betrayed some anti-Muslim rage.

Union. In the end, he received formal apologies from the offender and was reassured by academic heads that no abuse nor discrimination would be abided in the institution. If the public facet of the occurrence was swiftly sorted out, with Jasbir thanking me for confidentially fleeing in to restore religious tolerance and social justice, the private upshot of the experience kept troubling Gurinder.

> Enough is enough. *We spent so much time in acting the good guys, proving we deserve living here. I am a good guy. A turban does not make me unequal or inferior. (...) To be treated like that, for no reason, by a university professor, I would never expect it. Whenever my friends told me they were said this or done that, I'd shrug my shoulders and say "al lupo, al lupo", (...) much ado about nothing. It's the first time I think maybe this is not my place.* I don't want a place like this to be my home. (Phone conversation, 05/12/2014)

The unexpected episode of intolerance hoisted in Gurinder's biography as a critical event (Das 1995), a sudden rite of passage, when he experienced the emotional charge of becoming a man in a country that he had learnt to know and love but from where he suddenly felt estranged and downtrodden. Once again the perils of racialization and civic stratification affected this young Inditian's approach to life and anticipation (Appadurai 2013, see Ch.4). If it became a truism to argue that mobile lives battle between structure and agency, Gurinder's experience equally proves that engagements and happenstances may alter the course of migration. Overwhelmed by the incoherence of the bias he suffered against his quest for double belonging, this young Italian Sikh took to re-think with his family their long-term immigrant stay, in the face of economic hardship but ever more in the face of a social rejection sturdily put at bay but never eluded.

Drawing to a comparative close. If I were to juxtapose the life narratives of my two closest collaborators, *intersectional* convergences and dissonances become clearer.

On the one hand, Asha's and Gurinder's life-stories are indeed pole apart in gender and generation: a lady first-time migrant, a 1.5 migrant young man. They respectively belong to distinct communities of faith: Asha being a devout Hindu believer, Gurinder being a fervent Sikh Khalsa. Their class and caste reference are different but comparable: they both claim to fit in a hazy Punjabi middle-class (apparently higher the first, lower the latter) which underwent some social status adjustment through their long-term family immigration to Italy as much as they both downplay (but do not reject) their "favorable" caste belonging, Rajput the one, Jat the other. Their heterogeneous Punjabi provenance marks the difference between a rural origin and an urban NRI one, which may also impinge on different mobility projects and outcomes. Finally, their migration journey occurred in different times during their life course and in each case it was prompted by the transfer of another family member (Asha's husband and Gurinder's mother).

On the other hand, my two friends' tales patently exhibit their closer kin network supportive presence in personal life projects. While the *biraderi*, the extended transnational kin, occasionally serves as a network resource for accessing physical mobility (but it is often kept at bay to avoid

intrusion into the nuclear family's own agency), it is the *parivaar*, the transnational household they have (been) nurtured (by), these Punjabi transmigrants rely on to fulfill their hopes and share wellbeing. If changing family dynamics were witnessed in previous generations of Punjabi diasporans in Britain, although *ristedari* or marriage choices strongly remained endogamous and ethnically oriented (Oberoi 2006, Charsley 2012), Italian Punjabis seem to experience family life and social reproduction with the validation of a similar close kin structure in northern Italy (nuclear three-generational), which tallies with the Sanskritization of the traditional Punjabi household discussed in chapter 4. To put it short, the *parivaar* was the source and the target of my two collaborators' endeavors, the reference of hardly all their life choices and commitments. The strong position Asha and Gurinder both held in their families partly seemed to reverberate in their social collocation within their ethnic (and peer) entourage: the first as a trusted *stri-dharma* mentor, the second as an inspiring young Khalsa. Yet, as we zoomed out to gauge their positionality in the Bergamo outer context, where they have both resided for over ten years, we registered how they recognized their own "cultural" biases in front of a "relative" *integration* in the local society. Asha being still (formally) unemployed in spite of her sizeable human capital (and on her way to achieve Italian language proficiency and a much needed driving license). Gurinder being remarkably well integrated but faltering to find a pathway to success in the country where he was raised despite still lacking citizenship recognition. Paradoxically, Asha's migration course is approaching naturalization (after her husband Rajeev's application) and likely hints to an ever more permanent settlement also for the sake of her children. Notwithstanding his much felt Italian national loyalty, Gurinder's (and his family's) aspirations may soon draw him towards double migration in search of that "further North" that remains a longing horizon for many Punjabis in southern Europe.

Asha and Gurinder finely represent (and argued for) the tireless re-production of one's *Punjabiyat*, which is not only plural and diverse, but also began to acknowledge existing and mounting social divides and potential contestations in the daily locale (both in the face of racial discrimination at a national level and within the scope of their ethno-community stratifications at a transnational level). Putting forward this last argument, in the next chapter we will look at some literally second-generation children of Punjabi immigrants, who poured out more overt social claims, where gender seems to remain a distinctive mark of difference.

Ch. 6 Contesting *Punjabiyat*

The present chapter builds upon and takes farther some of the premises set out in the former. We have realized that re-producing Punjabiness is a continuous cultural performance Indian diasporic migrants enact every day in multiple domains, not without ambivalences and setbacks, moral contentious and social dis-connections in private and public. Asha and Gurinder brought to light their personal daily toil in (well)being a first-time migrant Indian mother and a 1.5 Italian Sikh young man. We will now detect and comprehend some disputed experiences Punjabi diasporans may face living in northern Italy, within the community and the larger social milieu. Relying on the arguments sustained by two second-generation Inditian teenagers, we will examine eventful happenings that my informants considered *breakpoints* or *critical experiences*. As we shall see, a family upheaval and a local group riot cracked in the routine habits embedded in migration.

Das (1995:144) defines "critical events" those moments in social history and personal biographies characterized by the "overturning of accepted patterns of intelligibility and the advent of radical new ideas". Eventful happenings operate as time-borders, creating a rift in one's subjectivity while remaining as tidemarks (Green 2009), at once lines and traces of a change either material or in perspective. Throughout this chapter, I distilled some events that Italian Punjabis found "critical" in their migration experience, but that could also be interpreted as such in the broader definition of critical theory and anthropology (Nugent 2012). Ethnographically ordinary or rather singular, these events were anyway indicted with my informants' dynamic effort in understanding and tentatively capsizing specific social differences that they deemed burdening and unfair.

Anthropological literature has long been concerned with *diversity* and *difference*, and while I will not recur this (ongoing) debate, I agree with Eriksen (2007) that in the blanket term "cultural difference", we ought to distinguish between horizontal and vertical forms of *social differentiation*. Equal and hierarchical differentiations affect any form of social life, granted that the neoliberal governance of migration has unquestionably raised the level of class differentiation (Hage 2004, 2015). In this ethnography, gender-based differentiation clenched with "class" positionalities, although my analysis remains empirically centered and does not overarch with neo-Marxist feminism, which still entertains an "awkward relationship" with anthropology (Strathern 1987; Lewin 2006). Challenging multilevel social differentiation is a key struggle that my research subjects, Punjabi diasporans resettled in Italy, strived to sort out in their personal and civic daily life.

In this chapter, I first reason over the community cleavages that Italian Punjabis come across and act upon in diaspora. We learnt in Ch. 1 that we can barely conceptualize the resettled "*ethno-community*" as such, since this collective keeps redrawing its *borders* (Barth 1969, Jenkins 1997, Wimmer 2013), also due to intersectional differences (class, caste, faith) frantically lived out in the everyday (Lamb, Mines 2010). Once spotted the alternative processes of parting and connecting Punjabi diversities in several social settings (such as those related to work, education and worship, see ch.5), the institution of marriage debunked the continuum between public and private alliances.

Besides being a personal rite for attaining one's adulthood (see ch.5.2), *marriage* stages the views that Indian Diasporas maintain on this *social covenant*. For Italian Punjabis, wedding precipitates the simultaneous entanglement of "home making" and "ethnic bordering". In particular, evaluating a suitable partner for oneself, the offspring and especially a daughter, impinges on the ambivalent discourse of "(self)-arranged" marriages (Charsley 2012, Bonfanti 2015a). We will thus explore the social evaluations that accompany one's matchmaking, trying to distinguish *intra and intermarriages*, unions that occur within or beyond a "traditional" Punjabi endogamy.

However, this normative code for alliance (caste endogamy with lineage exogamy, Oberoi 1996) appears pliable in notion and practice, exhibiting incongruities and clashes in the migration process. Selected narratives from my informants and their transnational networks render the exertion in maneuvering the choice of a spouse. In particular, the *dowry* "gift of/for the daughter" critically exposes the stereotyped unfairness of gender relations in northern Indian culture (Talwar-Oldenburg 2002, Shenk 2007), but also the inconsistent parading of a rising "Indian middle class" (Fernandes 2006, 2015), to which expats contribute largely in material and symbolic terms (Jacobsen 2015).

Middle class achievement is a potent but problematic prism for looking at Inditian migration (see the frame presented in ch. 1 and the analysis of migrant labour and remittances in ch. 4). In this chapter we talk about "middling migration" (Rutten, Verstappen 2014), seeing how transnational transfer is inscribed in contradictory experiences of social mobility for Punjabi diasporans in Italy, bringing forth "status paradoxes" in origin and destination contexts (Nieswand 2011). Class vertical mobility is hindered by other social differences and structural inequalities, while wealth gaining often fails to be the great equalizer it promises (Gardner, Osella 2004; Taylor 2013).

Class belonging and modern aspirations interplay with the opinion Italian society holds over Indian immigrants, long seen as a reliable labor force and pacific folks easy to accommodate, a "model minority" compared to other racialized groups, included other south Asians (Saran 2015). Last, we will account for a chance local/regional swift of this paradigmatic representation: a critical event and media turmoil, which upset years of viable integration for Punjabi migrants in Lombardy, and activated multiple "ethnic" contests (Maneri 2013, Bonfanti 2015b).

Closing the chapter, I introduce two life narratives rendered by second-generation Inditians who transited from teenage to majority during fieldwork. Veena and Sunil, a Hindu high-caste *and* middle-class young woman and a Ravidassia low-caste *but* high-income young man, occupy unalike "positions" in the local Punjabi community considered, yet from the common vantage point of having acquired Italian nationality (Benhabib, Resnik 2009, Yuval-Davis 2013). Both shared diverse but corresponding concerns for their lives as "situated" members of an immigrant group in their country of citizenship, in turn among Indian diaspora women and the double minority of Ravidas devotees. Fighting their relative lived-in *marginality*, my young informants tried to *advocate* for social changes at large. Gender (and the power relation it casts) remains an index to map the space for contests within the age group, intersecting with caste, class, faith and citizenship axes and producing that "chaordic" place for home and belonging (Werbner 2002) we will resume in the next and last chapter.

6.1 Community cleavages

In this section, we will discuss the everyday social borders that Punjabis encounter and produce in their migration process (Brah 1996; Jacobsen, Lal 2015). Our cockeye will remain focused on both origin and destination countries (as well as globalized imaginary), transnational but concurrent sites (Levitt, Glick Schiller 2004) for the dislocation, reproduction and confrontation of intersectional differences. First, I will question the mismatched representation of Punjabi "ethno"-communities, which appear internally highly differentiated and localized (Gautam 2013). Then, I will consider to what extent my ethnographic dowel reveals the yoke between the Punjabi labor diaspora and the middle class rise in contemporary India (Fernandes 2006, 2015). Last, I will interrogate how social hierarchies and neoliberalism concur in what I named the "marriage market" of Italian Punjabis (Bonfanti 2015a, Charsley 2012). This search path also revisits the Inditian *domestic moral economy* outlined in Ch.1 (Parry, Bloch 1989; Sykes 2009), ethnographically surfing the seam between symbolic values of kinship and material possessions, gender relations and capital.

6.1.1 Ethnicity and alternative processes of parting and connecting

Studying Indian Diasporas in continental Europe, Gautam (1999, 2013) argues that the Western-derived idea of "ethnicity" was a resource for founding (and developing through the accelerated processes of globalization) "social capital" among Indian expatriates. Emigrants would first identify with their immediate regional (and language) reference and then expand their orientation to Hindustan and India, signaling their belonging to a territorial community and a national State.

> The origin of the Indian Diaspora has always been the regional social structures of the emigrants and migrants. On the basis of regional cultures and languages, in Europe Indians create their Bengali, Punjabi and Telugu Diasporas. However, when there is a question of the Indian Diaspora, they always feel a part of it. It is the shared cultural heritage of Indians, which lays the foundation for the Indian Diaspora. Globalization of the Indian diaspora had already started during the emigration period to the plantation colonies. The terms of *Jahaji bhai* (ship brotherhood) and *Dipua bhai* (depot brotherhood) were the cementing factors and beyond caste, religion and language created a globalised feeling of being the Indian Diaspora (Gautam, 1999:43).

Acknowledging the *long durée* of this analysis, we already stated that the picture is far more complex, given the haziness of Indian borders and mobilities and the added diversity of "scaling" the Diaspora from different locations and viewpoints (Vertovec 2004; Werbner 2008; Glick Schiller, Caglar 2011).

I firmly maintain that Indian Diasporas urge us to overcome the "ethnic group" representation, which was mainstream in migration studies between the Seventies and Nineties and much contributed to the discourse on "multiculturalism" and its binary "assimilation *vs.* integration" (Turner 1993, Vertovec 2009). When it comes to label Punjabis in Italy as an ethnic group, before discarding the term, I would assess its resilience in current cultural policy and commonplace social interaction.

Ethnicity is a disputed notion, yet fertile for researchers and social groups who claim or contest it for whatever political aim. Revisiting the literature, I trail a red thread, then applied in my analysis, which starts with Barth, ensues through Jenkins and caps in Wimmer[67]. In a socio-constructivist view, ethnicity consists of a "social organization of difference" through *boundary work*, an effort for framing collective belonging. Barth (1969) first intended ethnicity as a negotiated status, determined by the interplay between external ascriptions and self-identifications. Situational and flexible, ethnicity relies upon making and up keeping *borders*, which overstate cultural discontinuities and underscore the leaky *boundaries* with the "nearest others". Jenkins (1997) expanded on the power and resistance inherent in ethnic boundary work, focusing on the dialectics between *groups* and *categories*, one rooted in internal definition, the other in external designation. Actors may also purse diverse bordering strategies at once, depending on institutional incentives, their position within hierarchies and networks of alliances. Wimmer (2013) queried how far ethnic boundaries might allocate resources and spark political passion. Hidden social dynamics might render *certain,* but not all, ethnic cleavages politically relevant and associated with (new or old) solidarity circles.

Provided ethnicity is not a neutral idea, why do we still argue about "Punjabi ethnicity"? Ethnicity as a *lived categorization* seemed relevant in my *ethno*graphic work at three levels: a. in

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[67] All these authors consider ethnicity as an *explicandum* rather than a self-evident designation, devised in the vocabulary of social sciences to amend the naturalization (and resulting discrimination) of cultural difference inherent in "race" (Eriksen [1993] 2010).

the plural networking among Punjabis; b. how local residents in immigrant neighborhoods drew boundaries against each other and c. how the perception of ethnic diversity influenced the values of different social actors in context. I particularly address Punjabi ethnicity for two mirroring reasons. First, this self-ascription may generate "social capital" in the diaspora (a theme underexplored beyond kinship, Mand 2006). Ethnicity encompasses Punjabi diversities, adding value to contingent identity claims (Werbner 2004). Second, ethnicity is a model invoked by local authorities (and natives) in resettlement, a metaphor for explaining cultural difference (or justifying differential treatment) rather than a measure for analyzing immigrant groups which are mapped on nationality (or religion), at least in the Italian context (Caritas 2013, ISMU 2014). Following Ballard (2002:28), "ethnic consolidation is not a product of cultural distinctiveness *per se* but is best understood as the outcome of the articulation of cultural distinctiveness *in situations* of political and/or economic competition".

"Ethnicity" anyway is a category I never heard invoked by Punjabis, neither in Italy nor in India. When I queried some informants, I was given an alternative emic definition in Punjabi language or a rash shrug: there was nothing like a Punjabi ethnic group, there were many Punjabi social groups.

We have upajati *(tribes) down the Belt (in mid-south India). Never did we say* 'ethno' *here. There are* jatis *(castes, birth groups), some scheduled some not (...). We are* Bhai*, Punjabi* Bhai *(brothers), all of us from Punjab, of any religion. Are you talking about* nasala *(a clan-like system)?* (Narinder, Ranjewal, 18/12/2013)

*I don't really understand what you mean with that word [*ethnicity]. In Punjab, you never question you are Punjabi.* It's the home and the tongue. *When you leave, you are an Indian (...). In Italy, I am an Indian. If you ask who am I, where am I from? I was born in Punjab and* I am an Arora Sikh[68]. (Kapoor, Bergamo, Baisakhi 13/04/13)

Punjabi immigrants in Italy often reevaluated being Punjabi because of migration: Punjabiyat became salient through mobility and resettlement (Gardner 2001, see Ch.4). Beside kinship, within the sizeable Punjabi "transnational village" in Lombardy (Ch.1) new and old forms of solidarity feed on a larger *bhai* emotional brotherhood, whose dynamics of inclusion/exclusion breech formal *biraderis* and do not match an odd Punjabi "ethnicity". Other elements of social distinction make for connecting and separating. An elusive idea of ethnicity may be propelled by the local context (in administrative policies and media reports, see next section), but it is superseded by the many "diversities within diversities" that actually make up Punjabiyat (see ch.4; Jayaram 2011; Jacobsen, Lal 2015).

According to one's beat of migration and life course, I trace three steps in the re-appropriation of individual Punjabiness. 1. Long-distance homing, Punjabis first time expats look

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[68] Kapoor's plain self-introduction, based on caste and faith belonging, seemed to me inadvertently biased and paradoxically contrary to Sikh emphasis on egalitarianism, which was being celebrated on that Baisakhi date.

out for other "Indians" who share their regional provenance and language. Incoming male laborers usually end up in South Asian temporary dwellings and build work channels through that human capital (see Rajeev's case in ch.4). 2. Once family resettlement steadies, Punjabi migrants arrange their networks on intra-borders: confession comes first (see Ch.5), caste belonging next, and class positioning as a last and uneasy take (also due to its provisional nature, with fortunes coming and going). 3. For second generations, Punjabi "ethnicity" sounds like a clue instilled from schooling[69] or social media. Being Punjabi allows youth to socialize with a diasporic peer community, giving sense to an identity they someway "inherit" and might embody with pride, modesty or shame in different situations (see Praneet and Gurinder's case in chapter 5, Veena and Sunny's in par. 6.3).

I witnessed several episodes and talks where parting or connecting took place among the Punjabi people I worked with. In the ethnic boundary-work of Punjabi migrants there ran indeed patterns of intelligibility, though with little consistency between setting apart from a sub-group, sticking closer to one's kind or adjoining with another's. Even within the four families I collaborated in my transnational field, liaisons often came unexpected and required a careful *situational analysis*.

Religion was the divide Punjabis most openly displayed, especially the Sikhs who remain the visible Indian majority in Italian immigrant neighborhoods (Bertolani et al 2011; Ferraris, Sai 2014). However, that did not deter laidback Hindu Veena from attending the local gurdwara for "hit" events. Likewise, Hindu Baljit, Asha's dad, used to invite his Sikh best comrade to enjoy a banned sip in his men's closet. *Caste* only disputably determined spaces for interaction, although it was an issue still considered but not abided in weddings (conceded its resilience in diaspora, Bonfanti 2015a, see next parr.). Migratory experiences often disrupted cultural habits, starting from household intimacies (Gardner, Grillo 2002, Bertolani 2012, Charsley 2012, Gallo 2014). Asha and Rajeev's nuptial contravened the hyper-gamy mandate in order to initiate a promising family migration. Praneet forsook *amritdhari* orthodoxy in her return marriage, celebrated thru a Sikh rite but a Hindu revel, once her groom's *jati* and wealth matched her family wish. *Class* was indeed a co-structuring element in configuring social dynamics, raising many questions beyond the mere financial assets. Not being an ascribed status but a potentially achieved one, Punjabi migrants replied to their upward aspirations "middling" spatial and social mobility (see Ch. 4). In the next paragraphs, I will show how Inditians envisage and enact their specific "middle class" goals through everyday practices in migration, trans-locally adapting dominant patriarchal and neo-capitalist ideologies.

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[69] Many Inditian students I worked with in educational contexts argued that their "ethnic" embodiment arose out of those "multi/inter-cultural programmes" that teachers arranged in order to foster diversity recognition and dialogue.

6.1.2 Minor utopias of Indian transnational middle class(es)

The term "class" would require a historiographic analysis to address the shifting social stratification of India and its diaspora, a scholarship that I leave to better informed sources, including the influential "subaltern studies" (Chaturvedi 2002, Gottlob 2006). The smaller issue I work through is what do Indian diasporans, in particular Punjabi residents with kin abroad and Italian Punjabi immigrants, intend when they argue about "class"? Is there such a collective solidarity that transcends other boundaries and generates new social capital? Was I able to trace social class-consciousness beyond the ubiquitous referral to a paradigmatic "middle class" most my interlocutors self-attributed?

Political economists and sociologists struggled with defining class in India (Béteille 2002); in face of ascribed diversities, they came to question whether class in post-liberalization Indian regions is a real *achievable difference*, in terms of both economy and ethics (Lobo, Shah 2015). My research urged the need to seam the *grand narrative* over the rising of the "middle class" in India (and in its diaspora) with the disruptions brought by *personal accounts* of "middling migration" (see Ch.1, Mines, Lamb 2010; Rutten, Verstappen 2014). In this paragraph, I will first sketch the hype of the Indian middle class escalation (confronting the literature with snapshots from my fieldwork in Punjab) and then turn to the uncertain experiences of middle class achievement by my Indian migrant informants in Italy.

Today estimates number India's middle class to more than 250 million people rapidly growing (Fernandes 2006). Public reports focused on this emerging group's consumer potential, while global views of the country new economy range from excitement about market prospects to anxieties over outsourcing service sector jobs. In proportional terms the Indian middle class makes less than a quarter of the total Indian population, but its absolute size provides a wide consumer base to a market-based economy and the most courted electoral base for local, national and federal politics (Maiorano 2014). Shifting between Orientalist and Third-worldist views, it was also argued that, "unlike the Western context, the Indian middle class lacks autonomy; it remains dependent on patronage and perpetuates the patronage culture" (Jodhka, Prakash 2011:55).

A merger of caste, religion and gender shape this rising populace. De-colonization first and the turn to neoliberalism after, gave an ideological frame to the new independent middle class, deemed as as a promoter of democratization, in fact a highly heterogeneous social group. Despite its diversities of income, occupation, caste, community and region, this imagined middle-class has a "dominant section", which represents dominant groups in India, i.e. the upper-caste, urban and invariably Hindu. While Indian middle classes are globally mobile and inhabit modern spaces, they also participate in the articulation of a new hierarchized identity politics.

India's middle classes cannot be reduced to a problem of measurement or to easy narratives about consumerism and elitism. The political force of the middle classes lies in a productive and messy ambiguity that shape the boundaries of this group. This ambiguity is idealized through the promise of access and aspiration for new entrants even as it is mired in a politics of inequality and exclusion. In the midst of this uncertainty, individuals and social groups attempt to survive, adapt to and contest the unwieldy and weighty border that seeks to contain 'the Indian middle class'. (Fernandes, 2015:242)

Commentators agree that understanding the impact of India's middle classes requires analyses that hold in tension the ambivalence between dominant narratives and internal differentiation. I argue that this would also need to incorporate the counter effect of an equally rising Indian diaspora, which makes its middle class achievement (and maintenance) through worldwide mobility itself, struggling with "minor utopias" whose goalposts though seem to keep moving (Hage 2004).

Some reflections from my Indian fieldwork come in handy to grasp the contradictions in retrieving middle class status in contemporary Punjab. Let us see the class positioning of the four families who hosted me and whose middle class claims intersected other axes of difference. And let us also consider the continuous negotiations of this status with the rest of their kin since expatriated.

From my informal talks with Baljit, Asha's middle-aged father and returned expat (and his neighbors in Mohali Chandigarh gated residence), it emerged starkly that capital accumulation and consumer display was bound with a new urban middle class ethics and aesthetics. Modern estate properties, multinational white collar posts, high-flung private cars concurred in assembling this higher middle class purlieu that, despite diverse affiliations, claimed its share in paving the first era of Indian democracy after the Congress[70]. As to Veena's cousin in Jalandhar, Gourav's novel fashion store seamed traditional mid-upper caste rank with new middle class entrance (to which the Hindutva young man added with active BJP partisanship). Among my Punjabi hosts in rural areas, middle class attainment appeared intimately linked to religious/caste affiliation. Gurinder's Grandpa, Dev, put on display his *family remittance house*, as if the villa ratified their middle class exploit through migration, past being Jat landowners. For Tej, Sunny's uncle, *social remittances* from Italy flew in the *Dera Ballan* charity project. As Kaur, Sunny's mother, explained (see ch.3), inequalities other than "class" (i.e. the persistence of casteism) discouraged Dalit Ravidassias who made their fortunes abroad from building a home in their native land.

On the other side of migration, these families gone transnational because of their middle class aspirations, often struggled with maintaining that claim. In spite of her father's de-luxe property in India, Asha still dwelt in a scanty rent accommodation in Italy and battled with her

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[70] When I did my fieldwork in Punjab it was high time for the Federal elections campaign, and all the three major political parties, BJP, Congress and Aam Admi, courted these phantomatic new middle classes. In May 2014 Narendra Modi's victory sanctioned BJP's ability in dragging consent, not surprisingly winning over the ideological dominant (and patronising) "urban, Hindu, upper-caste middle class", to which Baljit and peers belonged.

husband to put his copious savings into a family owned house. Praneet's improvised return marriage served to dampen the unsteady middle class status her family could reach remaining in Italy. Veena's parents strived to maintain their non-expat kin higher status, facing at once good civic integration and poor economic betterment in a long-term immigration scheme. Sunny's father entrepreneurial feat in Italy compensated the discrimination experienced on the grounds of caste and their bourgeois family Inditian home emplaced the multiple belongings of household members.

My multi-sited ethnographic findings (see the analysis of transnational labor and remittances in ch.4 and the next paragraph on dowry matters) and the literature on the Indian diaspora cultural economics (Appadurai 2006, Radakrishnan 2011) share the assumption that it is not just financial means the migrant enterprise is after. Middle class achievement is foremost a matter of *status*.

As discussed about the recent Gujarati immigration in the UK, the new mobility of Indian youth is a project of "middling migration" (Rutten, Verstappen 2014): better off and educated young move out in order to advance or safeguard a favorable "(middle) class positioning", which totters in sending families. Yet, resettlement may not be as favorable as promised: underpaid jobs and crammed guesthouses appear the norm in the initial phase of migration and the progression to a better future lingers. Similarly, Nieswand (2011) described the "status paradox" of Ghanaian transmigrants who, in order to advance their social stance in Africa, put up with downgrading in their European resettlement. This dynamic, which lowers one's status abroad to rise it (or preventing it from falling) in the homeland, could also apply to Punjabi labor migrants in Italy. If Inditian first time migrants seem to confirm this trend (see Rajeev's and Kanval's tales in ch. 4), we may not directly apply this scheme to all Punjabi waves to Italy, often less affluent in origin and destination than their timely British counterpart (see Ch. 1). Forth, the configuration of Inditian family migration, altered over the past twenty years with a generational turn and different livelihoods, demands to assume social change and confront the Punjabi 1.5, 2nd generation immigrant experience. Beware of generational makeover, what class status do Italian Punjabis envision, seek and attain when "middling" *their* migration?

The rickety middle class feat among Inditians relate global economic structures to local family chances. Not only status depends on conventional bases such as income, education and occupation, but it also relates to "modern" habits, tastes and sensitivities, which do not necessarily follow one other. Wealth, once acquired and displayed *desh/pardesh* home and abroad, often does not work as the great equalizer it was intended (see ch.4) and "consumer citizenship" does not exhaust the modern subjectivity that accompany middling migration. What kind of transnational possessions thus prove Inditian achievement? Is it all about im/mobile properties? Where do these stand and who owns them? While the allocation of family resources and remittances is vital to

middling migration, it does not complete the scope of a sociology of family and money in the Indian Diaspora (Singh 2006).

One afternoon I joined in a Skype conversation between Asha and her mother. They were debating the best option to deposit Asha's personal assets in a local bank (either in Italy or India, with better interest rates for NRIs) or in the family house cabinet. Babita sagely called for approval: *"Care nets or safety-boxes (…), does it make any difference, don't we all search for* raksha *(haven)"?* Later Asha clarified: middling migration meant more than realizing modern middle class status through mobility, whether in the pursuit of goods or social respect. It also entailed to reach a multidimensional "safety", a shield from threatening conditions, material or relational deprivations. Wealth and family could both offer a sense of "ontological security" against the perils of migration itself (Taylor 2013).

The way money gain and relational ties coalesced emerged clearly in the transnational re-production of kinship, starting with marriage and the normative exchanges that came with it.

In the next two paragraphs, I reconsider marriage among Inditian diasporas complementing the reflection advanced in Ch.5 on wedding as a *personal rite of passage*. "Cross-border marriage" (Constable 2005) was a favored topic of debate with my informants since it was a key in their search for social/territorial mobility, which was often enacted through transnational family migration (Charsely 2012). Thus, wedding was thought of and lived as a "critical event" (Das 1995).

I now analyze marriage as a *social covenant*, an institutionalized experience for doing kinship (and gender) in the diaspora. My arguments will follow an article of mine recently published (Bonfanti 2015a), titled "The marriage market among Punjabi families in Italy: designs, resistances and gateways". Hereafter I will discuss the economic transactions that encode wedlocks in Punjab and the diaspora. Henceforth, I will decode the lengthy matchmaking that render these unions possible and desirable.

6.1.3 Punjabi "marriage markets" and the itinerant dowry system

The research on diaspora marriages emphasises transnational *networks* and spaces created by spouses, their family and community members, as well as the *transactions* of economic, symbolical and cultural resources between the places of origin and settlement (Constable 2005, Charsley 2012). As my fieldwork progressed, my research shifted from broad-spectrum "social remittances" (Levitt 2010) to the modes of income production, consumption, wealth management and circulation which take place within the domestic sphere (Parry 1986). Since all households are entrenched in micro,

meso and macro contexts (local immigrant community, receiving society, and transnational networks), I began to explore how the domestic moral economy functions among Inditian families across genders and generations (Singh 2006). Considering intra and inter family flows of capital and commodities, the boundary between the gift and the market turned blurred. On the one hand, Punjabi households link in chains of migration, ethnic neighborhoods and job-niches (sometimes ties of reciprocity/obligation that existed in Punjab are reactivated in Italy, bordering on smuggling, trafficking and exploitation, see Ch. 4, 5). On the other hand, when dealing with the "costs of culture" such as wedding events or other life-cycle rites which involve "gift remittances" (Sykes 2009), deep-seated Indian customs (Heim 2004) activate financial exchanges, which are hard to regard as symbolic only, especially when it comes to nuptial unions frequently arranged under the *dowry* formula.

In the present paragraph, I reflect on the Punjabi-based *dowry system*, arguing that the "economic" concerns there involved respond to a "moral" component of marriage arrangements. In the next one, I consider the *family-led process of matchmaking* and the riddles it poses to transnational immigrants when wedding habits and choices fails to cultural continuity.

In classical anthropological theory (Goody, Tambiah 1973; Tambiah 1989; Srinivas 1999), the Indian dowry is considered a form of marriage compensation, which entails the transfer of property in goods or cash from the bride's family to the groom's, before the wedding is agreed upon and celebrated according to the religious rites chosen (Hindu *vivaah sanskar* or Sikh *anand karaj*). The Punjabi dowry (*daaj*) may include land or properties, as well as belongings like golden jewelry, luxury goods and household items, meant for the newlywed couple, and only occasionally redistributed among the groom's kin in derogation of personal bridal property laws[71]. The practice of *daaj* (or *kanyadan*, gift of/for a daughter) became more popular and substantial with the development of capitalism in post-independence India. Socially prescribed but legally sanctioned, this custom is often still carried out during a wedding exchange, and is inscribed into the Indian tradition of *dan*, a gift of good omen that does not require reciprocation and spans all religious systems in the Subcontinent (Gregory 2007).

Despite dowry payments being banned under Indian civil law ("Dowry Prohibition Act") since 1961, the practice is still widespread and is said to have fueled thousands of crimes against women: domestic abuse, "kitchen burnings", and femicides (Shenk 2007, Duvvury 2010). In rural Punjab, the dowry is often a disproportionate burden on the bride's family, because it operates as a system of debt and credit (whose agreed amount may have to be paid over years), and it is recognized as

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[71] A structural-functionalist perspective shows that in "traditional" rural Punjab the dowry system enabled households to retain property of the land over time, a prime symbol of wealth and social prestige, which could be inherited by sons only and passed from generation to generation (according to agnatic and patrilineal descent).

one of the reasons mothers resort to sex-selective abortion, favoring the birth of male heirs and producing a gender-skewed demographic ratio (see ch.5). Contested by human rights activists, the dowry should be located within a broader historical (Talwar Oldenburg 2002) and transnational geographical perspective (Myrvold 2004, Bertolani 2012) and be considered in relation to appropriate ethnographic evidence. Although a far-reaching policy against dowry-related gender violence in India must be implemented, functional models of the dowry as a form of inheritance or investment in daughters and their children also need to be accounted for (Shenk 2007).

While a few studies have been published on the "shifting dowry code" across British Indian diasporas (Bhachu 1996, 2004; Oberoi 2006), there has been no research at all into how this scheme is conceived and accomplished among Indian migrants in Italy. This is partly because of the relative impenetrability of accessing such a field of inquiry; cultural intimacy within families (Herzfeld 2004) is hard to explore, since it requires dealing with language barriers (many Punjabi women in Italy still have a limited knowledge of Italian, often being unemployed and housebound) and gender boundaries which are marked with palpable patriarchy (Thapan 2013). Alongside, a debate on the structural subordination of Indian immigrant women and the alleged consequences of a mystified dowry system, gone transnational, occasionally dash in the public opinion, when local media report ethnic gender violence crimes within families (often in the guise of "honor murders", Sacchi 2011, Bonfanti 2013, see also Veena's story in par.6.3). Only in private participant observation was I able to overhear comments or steer the discussion towards the issue of the dowry, where I found some discrepancy between notions and practices.

Even first generation migrants are said to be critical of and hold different positions on the notion of dowry, ranging from underestimating the incidence of the phenomenon, softened as a Punjabi anachronistic mindset (or relic of Hinduism, which Sikhism would have always opposed, Sani 2008), to recognizing it and turning it into a rhetoric of gender resistance. It is challenging in this context for an ethnographer to pose direct queries. During one of our first joint lunches, when I asked Asha to explain what her own opinion on the dowry was, the embarrassed smile with which she glossed over it turning to her husband Rajeev and asking him "*what do you think I should say?*" put me back into perspective. Between us two, Asha went on to recount how, at the time of engagement, her in-laws stressed that they did not expect a dowry payment, while her own parents thought it was their duty to provide for their daughter and compensate the groom's family for the profitable marriage arranged, since their son-in-law was a successful expatriate (see ch.5).

More than any shared civic opinion, "dowry small talks" anchored in the everyday. The marriage market is not a linear supply-and-demand mechanism that compensates for material insecurities, rather a stage where social actors enact their public marketability. In an interpretive horizon, where

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both the subjects and categories defining them are produced by social dynamics and relations, dealing and bargaining in the marriage market bring to the surface new ideas about what it means, for women and men, to be "marriageable" in the Inditian community (Oberoi 2006) and what it takes to embody an ideal spouse candidate. I argue that matchmaking in diaspora, as a form of "transnationalism from below" (Smith, Guarnizo 1998), operates as a magnifying glass in proving how several social hierarchies are traversed at the personal intersubjective level.

In addition to the focus I here maintain on wedding economic exchanges (and their gendered nature), transnational marriages may be analyzed from various parallel perspectives, such as legal frameworks, processes of social integration and gendered cultural dynamics. As part of a wider move to consider emotion in migration research (Svasek 2010, see ch.5.1), the turn to emotion in understanding transnational marriage has been recently underlined and resonates with my work.

> This vein of scholarship attempt to move beyond the binary image of marriage-related migrants as essentially economically motivated […] or conversely as vulnerable victims of a patriarchal and/or global-financial structures of power […] to create more rounded and nuanced portrayals of transnational marriages. (Charsley 2012:8)

In the next paragraph, I will contrast the opinions that three of my close Inditian collaborators (the Sikh Bakyah siblings and Hindu Veena) faced transiting to adulthood, as they experienced (or debated) the actual practices regarding dowry and matchmaking. Specifically, I will set the *emotions* of my interlocutors against the marriage *patterns* they can envision, as gendered subjects who are situated among their transnational families and community in the northern Italian resettlement.

6.2 *Ethnic* minority's outer relations

In this second section, we will again enlarge the scope of our study to look at the complex interrelations between the Punjabi immigrant community and the local Italian milieu where configurations, representations and interactions of/within diversities take place (Vertovec 2009)

First, we will follow the thread of Punjabi transnational marriages, which make crucial social bonds in immigration contexts, where the potential repertoire for intimate partnership is wider but also more hazardous (Charsley 2012). Which union can actually be defined an *endogamous marriage* and which an *intermarriage*? Who are the candidate spouses and thus the (unprecedented) social parties involved? Once again, I will touch upon the super-diversity issue, adding to the proverbial internal diversity of displaced Punjabi communities the lived mounting diversities of contemporary northern Italy. Among Inditians, a snooping match with the resilience of endogamy (Moliner 2007) may be seen in the "model minority" typecast that immigrant Punjabis enforce on themselves and

local authorities commend (Ferraris, Sai 2014; Saran 2015), also insisting on the dis-connections with a wider South Asian reference. Last, I will present an original analysis of a critical media event (Maneri 2013), a local "crime news" that lays bare the inconsistencies and ordinary marginalization of the once toned down and now treacherous long-term Punjabi immigrancy in eastern Lombardy.

6.2.1 (Self)-arranging marriages: tempered endogamy and risky intimate border crossing

Among Inditian families, multiple belongings and social claims (which may trigger multi-scale overlapping conflicts at home, within the migrant community and in mainstream society) can first be traced in the marriage patterns in use (Moliner 2007; Bertolani 2012).

For first generation migrants, by far the commonest marriage model was family reunification through male spouses: the man who had emigrated rejoined his wife and children, if he had them, after the time required for regularization and for obtaining a longer residency permit, within the existing legal framework[72]. Young Inditians also take this route, but those who have already become Italian citizens literally embody an extra value, an "asset" for a partner from Punjab or abroad.

Veena (the Hindu second-gen immigrant girl whose life story closes this chapter) commented on the fact that for her "as a *female*" being granted Italian nationality might become a burden as much as an honor; not an instrument of civic participation but rather an attribute of further domination. "*Now I can allure those guys back in Punjab who wish to come over to Italy [...] an EU citizenship is worth something, and sought after..., almost like a proper daan* (dowry)*!*" Following Mooney (2006), "apparently traditional practices of arranged marriage are a fully modern way of negotiating the boundaries of citizenship imposed by States". Transnational wed locks work within a system of civic stratification (Colombo & Rebughini 2012), which may either benefit or disadvantage those who are entangled in it (Bertolani 2012). In informal girlie discussion, Veena told me that her two former *morosi*, "boyfriends" as she teased me in perfect regional dialect, were strongly opposed by her family. In the first case her parents rejected Bilal, a young second-generation Punjabi, because of his *Ravidas* faith and lower caste (*chamar,* former *Dalit* or outcaste), who also happened to be the elder son of Veena's father's erstwhile job contractor (Jaffrelot 2003). The second case (she had not properly informed her parents yet) involved Armir, an Albanian, and she admitted that having a love affair with him would be unfeasible in the eyes of her family[73]. Even before questioning

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[72] The Italian policy for immigrant reunification visas, restricted by the 2002 Bossi-Fini decree, was amended and simplified in 2008 and has affected the design of existing or prospective transnational families (Tognetti 2011).

[73] In my fieldwork experience with Punjabi migrants, inter-marriages that cross borders of both ethnicity and faith might be perceived as risky, especially when partners come from a Muslim community (see Moliner 2007, Sian 2013).

marriageability, these hidden relationships indicate the hurdles young Inditians go through when meeting peers of the opposite sex and involve the gender segregation (patent in public settings such as places of worship) and the female subordination I often recorded in the homes of my collaborators[74].

The marriage prospects of young Inditians involve three additional designs.

The first, *Ghar Jamai* (live-in son-in-law), entails the newly married couple settling down *ad interim* with the bride's parents in Italy. This rule contradicts the tradition of patrilocal residence common in Punjab and affects the gender balance within the household. While it may ease the demand for a dowry (since the bride's family takes care of the newlyweds and can avoid or defer other "deeds"), this new custom also seems to resemble the ordinary middle-class Italian household, where neo-local nuclear families are supported by their kin on the mother's side.

The second marriage pattern, *twice or double migrant* (prevalent among Indian communities in the Middle East), has become appealing to young Indian Italians too. Job shortages, and refusal by Punjabis raised in Italy to remain employed in the agricultural labor market like their elder co-ethnics, may prompt some newlyweds to move to destinations "*further north*" where career opportunities look more attractive (launching a "serial" migration that is recurrent in Indian diasporas, Ossman 2013). Italian citizenship then becomes essential to accessing the "*truly modern cosmopolitan future*" (Kash) younger Inditians aspire to and which connotes with broader Europeanism.

The third marriage model considered, but still rarely achieved, is that of a *mixed couple*, between an Indian "immigrant" and an Italian "native". The three mixed couples I came to meet were all gender-biased, formed of a man of Punjabi origin and an Italian woman (among them I notably include Jasbir, the Sikh *granthi* in Cortenuova, and his Bergamo native wife, married since the late Eighties). While inter-marriage is an option open to both genders on paper, in practice Punjabi families are unwilling to break the endogamic rule, a norm which strengthens the already tight control over their daughters' sexuality. "Marrying out", getting married outside the ethnic group (an endogamy which may be further restricted on caste, class and faith, while based on lineage exogamy) or against family consent, could mean the loss of social recognition for many Inditian young women[75].

Whatever form it may take, *prabandhit vivaah*, arranged marriage, is a social practice in use across Indian diasporas that embeds many sets of meanings and emotions and is primarily based on a

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[74] While proclaiming to safeguard her daughter's independence and free-choice, Veena's mother too referred to *stri-dharma*, path of the wife, a code of conduct of womanly duties which could guarantee personal and social well-being.
[75] Once again, before questioning wedding unions, this consideration might deter many Punjabi girls from having intimate relations with non-ethnic peers, taking into consideration their "female honor" (*izzat*), which is first embodied in their virginity and secondarily turns "marketable" in (proper) marriages.

culturally-grounded analysis of the "risks" of wedding in a transnational context (Charsley 2012). While the literature on this type of marriage, which is seen as a trademark of South Asia, abounds (Constable 2005), my ethnographic data reveal more nuanced attitudes of elders and youngsters toward arranged unions, which are often considered normal rather than normative and performed as facilitated or "*self-arranged*" rather than enforced (see Praneet's return marriage in ch.3).

Among Punjabi migrants in Italy (Bertolani 2012), if child wedlock is almost unknown and forced weddings are rarely reported (lacking any legal recognition), the alleged dichotomy between love and convenience is poignantly argued by those involved. Doubting that a consensual marriage achieved via the scrutiny of a skilled matchmaker would work for her, as she was "*too independent to abide by the rules*", Veena conceded that it could be a chance for some girls to find "*that honey-infused Bollywood*[76] *shit romance, please their parents (...) and secure their future*". Economic and legal reasoning related to migratory projects come into play as determinants, and neither parents, kin nor the youngsters themselves disregard such features of conjugal unions and household designing. Yet, personal views may radically diverge and family contentions occasionally arise (Rytter 2013).

While for Veena marriage choices were just a far-away prospect (which anyway differ from her beloved cousin-in-law Pooja who was enforced to wed at eighteen in Jalandhar), we already narrated in Ch..3 about Praneet's return marriage, which took place after shifty family considerations. If Manbir initially intended to wed off his daughter to a suitable Birth Sikh proposed by his sister, in the end Kanval and grandpa Dev arranged (and paid for, as part of the promised dowry) a grand marriage, transnational but endogamic, for their family girl with a wealthy Jat Sikh Punjabi resident.[77]

Gurinder instead, Praneet's younger brother, was enjoying great popularity among his Punjabi peers (being a talented harmonium instrumentalist and heir apparent for the local *granthi*, religious leader of the Sikh community). With his best mate Khare, he playfully wooed fellow Italian girls, since the age of marriage, he said, was postponed for young Indian men and he intended to go to university abroad, perhaps in Canada, where relatives lived. He showed me a picture on his mobile phone of

[76] Dilwale Dulhaniya Le Jayenge, or DDLJ, is the archetype of Bollywood cultural production after the '90s, which portrays the golden tussles of male and middle class expats, with capital to invest in India and in search of *authentic* but *modern* Indian spouses. These movies spread the idea of a thriving Indian diaspora and shaped gendered relations among (a selected segment) of NRIs (Mankekar 2008).

[77] Praneet recounted that improvised union as a pragmatic means to overcome her being "stuck in migration". Yet, as far as I am writing, it is not clear whether the couple will remain in Hoshiarpur according to patrivirilocal costume or the two spouses might come over to Italy, should Praneet put to work her still pending long-term immigrant residency to the benefit of her husband.

his Canadian-born cousin, registered on an *online matchmaking site*[78], where young Punjabis sign up in search of their soul mate using a global diasporic repertoire. Alongside a "*yummy*" photograph and maudlin quotes on "*everlasting pure love*" (as Gurinder messed about while we surfed these sites together), caste and religious membership stood out in each candidate's profile; then followed qualifications, occupation and even approximate annual income; for young unemployed women, an estimate of family finances (thus of the hypothetical dowry amount) might appear. Once one had established that the potential partner conformed to the ideal criteria, contact could be made and the person's personality gauged.

Reshaped but not dissolved, the resilient dowry system turns itinerant and survives through the migration process, as it remains a shared glossary for establishing and managing desired kin and family relations, for adjusting debts and credits, and not least for allowing one to "marry up" and for encouraging upward social mobility. Paradoxically, a gender-biased institution which actually discriminates against women can help prospective migrant brides improve their social position by means of (transnational) *hypergamy* (Charsley 2012), as long as both families agree and finances permit, and of course provided this is the solution preferred by the woman (Oberoi 2006, Shenk 2007).

Based on my fieldwork observations, I do not suggest that the choice of suitable spouses among Italian Punjabis is made through an indisputable rational selection, a cultural "risk assessment" steered by the elder generation and driven by money (*paisa*). This basic scenario is countered by a cultural economy of desire, consisting of real and virtual experiences of intimacy, models of femininity and (hyper)masculinity and discourses on love (*pyaar*).

As she spread cardamom on her pumpkin samosa, waiting for her husband to come home from the greenhouses, Nita, Veena's mother, once wittingly commented:

> *Before being a covenant (...),* a well arranged marriage is just like a well-prepared recipe*: throw in and mix the right* ingredients *[bride, groom and respective relatives], follow the* cooking method *[fixed matching meetings, venues for kin discussion, maybe some horoscope consultations] and your final dish is ready! (...) that does not mean that it is bound not to burn out, it takes a lifetime to work in a marriage even once the table has been successfully laid out!*

While coming of age for Inditian youth increases parental control over female sexuality and re-stages the contradictions of dowry, family making may challenge kinship and social relations in a local Italian context that decries the collapse of "traditional" families (Piccone Stella 2007). At the ethnographic level, I recorded trends but not uniformity in Indian migrants' strategies for setting up new households within the strict boundaries of family immigration policies. Expats and their

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[78] The following are some of the most popular matchmaking sites for young Punjabis in Italy: www.shaadi.com, www.sikhmatrimony.com, and www.punjabimatrimonialsindia.com. Each of these sites tags a particular sub-Indian community and identifies a precise "target market" of potential spouses.

children are both insiders and outsiders with respect to India (Jain 2010), which is for evermore an imagined rather than a lived in homeland. Located in a "third space" (Bhaba 1994), these youth experiment with new and diverse social ties, intimacies and legal frameworks, trained to exercise a double look and critically assess the cultural habits of the many worlds they partake in and feel they belong to.

Provisionally closing, wedding represents a "critical event" for thinking and enacting one's gendered identity and stands as a binding rite that produces kinship in the diaspora. The challenges that Punjabi *matchmaking* arises draw on the binaries love/convenience, control/freedom, mandatory endogamy/hazardous exogamy, but in fact confront a gamut of quotidian possibilities and constraints. Intimate partnership does not just nestle in the home, but is embedded in a wider scale of social relations and interactions. Multilevel "cross-border" marriages (with the chances or perils they start) boost the complex and continuous *home making* and *boundary-work* that commonplace diversities engage Inditians every day.

6.2.2 "One model" among many other immigrant minorities

In the previous paragraphs, we realized how intra and intermarriages hardly set the borders for intimate alliance among the members of the Punjabi diaspora community and the local milieu. Likewise, in the previous chapter we tracked the conundrums of public life in dwelling, school and work settings, which Punjabi immigrants share in re-settlement with Italians and other minorities. Two apparently contradicting comments need further explication here. First, although the super diverse issue was developed and tested through observation of European metropoles (Vertovec 2009, Wessendorf 2010, Blommaert 2013), I contend that the rural-urban neighborhoods where Inditians are scattered also participate in this new configuration of swelling socio-cultural diversities. Secondly, new liaisons and rivalry among Italian Punjabis insist on a broader South Asian Diaspora (van der Veer 1995, Shukla 2001, Werbner 2004), whose different elements stand between emotional/functional proximity and suspicious aloofness.

Most recent academic scholarship on super-diversity (see ch.2) remains, to my understanding, partly trapped within its own assumptions, between ground level empiric research and an aerial view, claiming to research bottom up the complex simultaneity of sociocultural and religious diversities in the urban landscape of major cosmopolitan hubs. On one hand, this investigation deflated the remains of ethnicity, on the other it prompted policy makers to think out of the case national majorities vs. immigrant minorities. What about the peripheries of this supposed super-diverse social scape? Can we apply this perspective to the rural hamlets of Lombardy, the northern

Italian region with the highest but also most diversified immigration trend? Furthermore, what is the response to super diverse co-living that specific immigrant groups develop, when they are nonetheless classified on their national provenance and struggle with their transnational identity making?

As I clarified in chapter 2, doing ethnographic research with Punjabi diasporans puzzled both my epistemological approach to super-diversity and my procedural choice for delimiting fieldwork. This whole work unravels some riddles in the lives of migrants whose search for home and belonging is traversed by and produce social diversification. While I peeped at this super-diverse landscape, in terms of dissimilar but mutually reasonable Italian emplacements of my Punjabi informants, I could not contain its ever-changing dynamics. Yet, I might turn to minute participant observation and to my collaborators' voices in order to clarify their own perception of and response to a lived locale inhabited with plural encounters and clashes that I deemed super-diverse.

In doing so, I narrow my focus on the Italian classes for immigrant women that I held from 2013 to 2014 in a small rural school[79] twenty miles east of Bergamo. No better setting for crushing down the aerial view on super-diversity and experiencing it on the ground, in the shoes of women immigrants who weekly partook in those morning lessons, most of whom were in fact Punjabi[80]. Besides being gender-specific, this research site replicated on a micro-scale the wider socialities many of my research subjects navigated in their everyday as immigrants in Lombardy. The fact that the majority of students were of Punjabi origins betrayed significant *ethnic* marks: Punjabis were the most consistent group in the area; they conformed to local service providers expectations as better students in terms of cultural capital; their informal liaisons were effective in channeling civic information and threading a gendered net of solidarity. Overlooking many language respects that this part of my research arose, I observed the interactions among my learners and logged their comments as they engaged with the diversity of Punjabi gathering and the super-diversity of the immigrant class.

United in the struggle for speaking Italian, all these young women and mothers sat around the tables in "working groups" where I tried to pair Italian competence, steering off the spontaneous track sprung along mother tongues. If I often shushed my students pleading for "*Shanti!*" ("Silence" in Punjabi) to halt background rumoring, Hindi alongside Urdu and Bangla were the first languages of many attendees and cross understanding facilitated exchanges. This assemblage could resonate with these women migration experiences, and highlighted two key features of their commonplace super-

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[79] This weekly morning language course for women migrants was organized by the public school I.C. Dante Alighieri, Albano S. A. and it was held in the next door toy library where intern educators cared for small children taken along.
[80] My appointment as course instructor partly determined the composition of the class. My local engagement with Punjabi families triggered a snow-balling of which I felt responsible and towards which I developed ambivalent emotions, struggling to remain impartial in my teaching role regardless friendship ties which seemed culture-bound.

diverse sociality (Wessendorf 2010). First, language majority detached Punjabi women from other immigrant groups, with a certain racial consciousness[81] of "*not being black*" (see Sharma 2011). A subtle *intra racism*, which run on the "skin color line", seemed at work, when Punjabi women smirked at being generally more literate than other course participants, who came by chance from Africa (Ghana, Senegal and rural Morocco). Second, the South Asian dialogue did not exhaust in tracing a provisional connectedness. I clearly remember when Balbir, a loud Indian Punjabi young mother, frowned upon Shirat, her wary Pakistani Punjabi school mate who had been able to draft her country's flag with no aid, while most others found the task demanding.

> *Stop showing off, will you? That you're better than us! That's what Pakis want the world to believe, but* Muslims in our country are low *(...) they don't have much education, so you'd better not pretend to be more than what you are just because we all live here now (...)* Indians are the best lot coming in! (Balbir, 19/02/2014, Italian class, Albano S.A.)

Attraction and resistance to South Asian reference, which often cleaved along religious lines, was said to run also among these women's husbands and to have spoilt some labor relations (like Darsan, Veena's dad, noted on many occasions). A similar consideration may suffice for south Asian mingling amid youngsters; especially in agonistic settings, such as newly sprung local cricket teams (see Sunny's accounts in the next section). In spite of Shirat's factual higher education, Balbir's outburst of envy, which flooded over petty *hate speech*, drew on the typecast of "best immigrant lot", which seemed to condemn "Indians" to live up to local culturalized expectations, while ensuing an ambiguous civic participation.

Punjabi diasporas worldwide have long attracted a sort of *model minority* label (Saran 2015), which is not to be taken for granted but was often claimed for pleading access to local services or social integration by the migrants communities themselves in resettlement (particularly the Sikh ones, see Ferraris, Sai 2014). This cultural representation acts as a form of "ethno-genesis", which combines structural forces and subjectivities at a local and global level (Mishra 2007). Commentators widely agreed that outer ascription and inner description (being seen as a certain category and being a certain group, Jenkins 1996), often converged in the case of Punjabis. The simplistic (at times gender and age specific) undertones most of my local informants in Italy cast on their Indian employees, students or acquaintances, ranging from "good and devout folks" and "reliable workers" to "respected women", and "dutiful children" (see ch.2), were generally assumed by Punjabi migrants themselves in order to profit from a favorable consideration. Yet, a similar *ethnic tag*, reassuring but subaltern, might yield both benefit and constrain for migrants in promoting civic

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[81] Racial consciousness among south Asians is a complex issue relatively underexplored (the volume I cited, Sharma 2011 refers to the US context where race relations have a different historical development). Among Punjabis in Italy, *race* is a latent category of identification, which only occasionally emerges to signal one' embodied difference in relation to a white (native) supremacy and a black (immigrant) subordination.

participation (Wimmer 2013). Those were the cases already discussed of Rajeev and the patronage after his "master" (ch.4), or Gurinder and his sore transition from high school to college (ch.5).

This apparently positive stereotype is consistent with, but not identical to, the model minority pattern that Indians in general reproduce and navigate in the UK or the US, where South Asian Britons or Americans are often pictured as "high-achieving" immigrant clusters (Saran 2015), sometimes masking the faltering experiences that do not conform to the dominant narrative. That achievement, in terms of education, income or occupation (formal indicators of class as we argued in the preceding section) is anyway subject to different local possibilities. For Punjabis, middling migration in Italy is still plagued with civic stratification and racialized difference, which affect social and territorial mobility in the long run (Kaufman 2004, see Asha' and Gurinder's tales in ch.5 and the second-gen stories ending this chapter).

However, any cultural tag, even a relatively affirmative one, may shift across time and space as it works out in different locales or in the same milieu at diverse times. What does it happen, when the adage of "turbans who do not disturb" (Compiani, Galloni 2002) appears to losing its grip on Italian local politics and public opinion? In the next paragraph, I will discuss a fortuitous case, in fact a critical event and highly mediatized drama, which sheds new light on the progressive change in perspective Italian nationals have assigned to the Punjabi minority in the country. Specifically, in the east Lombardy area where I conducted ethnographic work and where a tragic and infamous car accident/social incident occurred.

6.2.3 Media and cultural(ized) representations

Cultural representations and social interactions latch a double tie, in the interplay between *happenings* and *hearsay*. Migration studies proved how the media are a powerful semiotic tool to talk about migration with a performative effect, possibly transforming social life itself (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, Larkin 2002). In this paragraph, I present a *collective critical event* that affected the realtions between Indian migrants and local residents in eastern Lombardy since fall 2013, a case I developed in a conference paper now forthcoming (likely Bonfanti 2015b). To construe my arguments, I first give an account of the empirical data and then chart two interpretative lines, considering the new sociology of media in relation to migration (Maneri 2013) and the anthropological model of "social drama" (Turner 1967).

Despite the public image of Punjabi migrants in Italy was down watered for long (see ch.1; Denti et al. 2005; Bertolani et al. 2011), a fatal car accident and its report hype triggered a new media representation of Indian minorities, which surged from a relative national invisibility to a local

hyper-visibility negatively marked. Though interfamily clashes have been part of the Indian Diasporas in Italy as elsewhere (Alexander 2000, Jain 2010), *biraderi* rivalries and antagonism seemed to rise in immigration over the access to resources and job seats, especially in the rural labor market (Azzeruoli 2013; Azzeruoli, Perrotta 2014). Abruptly, the accidental murder of an Italian lady doctor in Bergamo, which occurred in September 2013 during a brawl among Punjabi young men and was linked to trafficking and exploitation, sparked off a redress of Indian migration in the district. The media hysteria following the event and the moral panic growing out of it (Maneri 2013) drew a rift in the process of inclusion and integration of this minority decades after their first settlement.

In my article (Bonfanti 2015b), I ventured a critical discourse analysis on personal narratives, town chronicles and the report of a local NGO, contrasting the views of immigrants and natives, citizens and officials, in order to unravel how the identity outcomes of the episode affected daily social interactions and margins for integration of the Inditian communities established in the area. Without reviewing my abundant empirical material, a few news headlines and focal quotes from local informants may suffice in reconstructing the event and the social criticalities it exposed.

In chronological order, here follow some excerpts from the daily newspaper "L'Eco di Bergamo":

> *Far West last night in Chiuduno. Reconstructed the deadly accident that killed two people. The victims are Eleonora Cantamessa, 44 year old gynecologist from Trescore [employed at Sant'Anna Clinic, Brescia], and Kumar Baldev, Indian living in Gorlago with a residence permit. The Police in Bergamo heard several dozen people, mostly Indians. 9/9/2013*

> *Emergency on our roads. The mayor of Chiuduno: we are fed up, all is granted to immigrants. We are alone and unprotected. Salvini, Northern League: umpteenth tragedy is the outcome of lax on security and immigration. 13/9/2013*

> *The investigators trying to shed light on the death of Baldev Kumar - Indian beaten up 9th September by a group of fellow countrymen and then swept out of the car [driven by his brother] that also killed Dr. Eleonora Cantamessa, stopped by to lend aid - speculate that behind the altercation in Chiuduno there may be illegal hiring in agriculture. 9/12/2013*

> *Bolgare, Bergamo. Anti-immigration measures. New security package approved by the City Council, curfew for the downtown shops and differentiated tariffs for housing suitability, penalized immigrants.16/01/2014*

These documents partake in a wider repertoire of narratives and counter-narratives of the episode and its alleged antecedents. In the news, it runs clear that an embittered xenophobic imagination escalated in transforming local public opinion and the relations between migrants and natives. Promptly, local institutions intervened in a social situation described as unstable, under the threat of violence perpetrated by immigrants, which became an alibi for taking restrictive administrative decisions and for targeting social control. In the wake of this ominous event, the stereotype of the mild Indian family-man working as a farmer gave way to the ruthless Punjabi young man, embroiled in illegal hiring and crime, prone to solving disagreements with violence, beast-like

aggression or "feud" acts of southern Italian memory. These are some comments I collected in my field soon after the accident:

> *Have you seen what your Indian friends did? Criminals! Fine* race*... be wary of whom you let in your home! Those are* beasts*! [Antonio, my neighbor, watchful road]*

> *The Indians were peaceful by nature, a bit like the Chinese. Now they have changed, small bosses want to rule by force. (...) We should dress up like the English, and put them in line. [Fabio, head of the border police at the airport]*

> *We never had problems with Indians before, but now there are too many. These are like our "terroni" (internal migrants form South Italy)... Mafia,* feuds*, they are just the same! [Lina, teacher and principal of a local middle school]*

On one hand, intuitive acts of *hate speech* combined forms of stern racism to criminalization (with a cross reference to southern Italian mafia practices transplanted north as business strategies). On the other hand, among the Indian minority grew an insight that something had disrupted their migration process, years since resettlement. So confirmed some impromptu interviews I submitted to Indian longtime informants and students in the schools where I worked.

> *Amandeep [student, 19, in Italy for 11]: Returning to class was awful; everyone looked at you askew... because now they associate Indians with the havoc in Chiuduno. When I go shopping with mum, I hear the ladies, their chatter. Some say that we are poor things, that Indian women do not know what's going on with their men, that they are dangerous.*

> *Meena [housewife, 28, in Italy for 6]: You know what it means today to be a Kumar? That you're marked, that all Panjabis and Italians believe you are one of them, part in those stories... It's a common family name, but if you live in Borgo Terzo, you are stained, listed again, no?*

The statements of my Punjabi informants betray the unease of "sitting in the dock", the perceived risk of being identified with the deviants of one's group. However, we cannot list the event as a local majority *versus* immigrant minority clash, a straightforward "ethnic conflict"; the strenuous defense of one's lot is inscribed in a dialogism amid many and unequal positionalities. Not only had a gender divide in the Indian collective become apparent, between assumingly passive women and ruthless men. Also within the Punjabi male cluster, long known quiet Sikh family men competed with newly arrived ravenous Chamar bad lads, the first manifestation of mounting south Asian male gangs (Alexander 2000). Interestingly, Gurinder and Sunil, my two teen Inditian friends who engaged more in upholding their community claims, with reference to specific religious belongings, burst out their frustration and concerns.

> *Sunny [student, 17, second-generation Italian]: I have citizenship, but I am part of the Ravidas community and I'm ashamed of what they did. We are good people; our God does not lead us to violence (...) but some are ruining our image.*

> *Guninder [student, 18, in Italy for 8]: With JasbirJi we invited the Doctor's family to a wake in our gurdwara. Many people came, but mostly Indians, few Italians. The Doctor's mother wept but said soft words. We asked for*

forgiveness, from the Sikhs. Even if those brothers were not Sikh, they went to darbar in Cividino, if they hardly did… so they say.

I claim no definitive interpretation of the episode and what it embeds, nor in terms of negative media hype, or in debunking illegal hiring among the Inditian community. (A recruitment system in the thriving agriculture of eastern Lombardy that exploits the vulnerability of seasonal workers, skirting labor standards and profiting from the flawed governance of migrant capital, Azzeruoli, Perrotta 2014). Yet, a preliminary close arose from ethnographic serendipity. A week after the accident, chatting away with Asha, she eagerly recounted how our friend Anuk's husband[82], was summoned to the police station to act as an interpreter during the interrogations of the detainees.

> *Imagine how Naveen felt, being there to say in Italian the words of one who was lying (...). Those* Baazigars *[nomads] are slimy people, not like us: Indians are not all the same! You know that "Kumar" in India means SC [Scheduled Caste] and religion is not enough to make it clear if one is good or not, it also serves the whole family. We are Hindus, there are good Sikhs like Majeeda ... but no God forgives such acts! Now everyone says that Indians are dangerous. After what I saw here, I start to grill someone too. Not even when I lived in Jalandhar, ever I heard things like these!*

In what Asha disclosed like an "ethnic gossip" (Gluckman 1968), there stood the logic of a social drama, whose tip only had surfaced in public. I quote here Victor Turner (1974: 37) and foresee to apply the "social drama" model he developed (with its stages of "infringement, crisis, remedial and resolution") to comprehend how differences and discrimination in the emigration context may reboot in resettlement. Turner himself suggested the possibility of moving forward the ethnographic analysis "*from empirical social drama to a meta social commentary* on the lives and times of the given community" (cit. 39). After the social accident that infringed the rules of a long assumed "decent" migration, the "Ram *vs.* Kumari" tussle (the intra-ethnic conflict after the name of the two families involved) triggered a lasting crisis in the relations between Indian immigrants and Italian citizens on site, apparently with little remedial and far sight resolution. The social dramas that many migrants live in their everyday locale question the co-production of multiple processes of discrimination and oppression on a transnational scale. Consistently with the happenings and hearsays just analyzed, in the next section we will focus on some critical confrontations that young Inditians might grapple with in the complex microscale of the diverse and contested Punjabi Diaspora in Eastern Lombardy.

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[82] Naveen is a Punjabi immigrant naturalized Italian who has lived in Bergamo for eighteen years and is employed as a technician in the local automotive industry. Graduated and proficient in Italian, he also practices as a certified translator in the law court.

6.3 Veena's and Sunny's stories, gender among second-generation migrants

> The caricature invoked by terms such as 'between two cultures', 'culture clash', and 'identity conflict', which portrays young Asians as disoriented, confused and atomized individuals, is not supported by the evidence. There are many and varied influences that impact differently upon different young Asians, which makes for very heterogeneous and variable outcomes. […]This is not to deny that *some* young Asians do indeed experience conflicts, and that some aspects of this dissonance could well be associated with specific cultural practices. The problem arises when this explanation becomes a central paradigm for addressing young Asian people's experiences. […] The question of 'identity conflict' is a very complex one, which cannot be reduced to any single determinant. *Racism, gender, class, the specific trajectory of an individual biography, for instance, are no less relevant to understanding processes of identity formation. In any case, there is no single identity that each and every young Asian avows* (Brah 1996: 42-43)

The life narratives I am about to discuss are likely the most innovative part of my research. Little enquiry has so far been posed to second-generation Punjabis in Italy, even less to the teenagers who are leaving secondary school and enter adulthood in their own/adoptive country. The Bakyah siblings already gave me a chance to grapple with their coming of age, which seemed indicted with the concern to "fit in" (in either a family plan or a double belonging, see Ch.5) and elude possible identity conflicts. Veena's herstory and Sunny's history blew me away for the "resistance to subalternity" they both upheld in their lives (Chandra 2015). Both teenagers showed a similar attitude in contesting structural inequalities (equally lumbering but diverse and gender-specific) that they did not only tackle *de visu*, but also saw with critical detachment. Veena upheld feminist claims, striving to defy gender ideologies that burdened her life as a second-gen Indian young woman. Sunny literally read caste and class inequalities that the Ravidassia double minority he belonged to deemed unfair and asked to call off. Both experienced critical events that urged them (and me as a "sounding board", Low, Merry 2010; Gill, Ryan-Flood 2010) to rethink their identity struggles and walk on the wire of those *social divides and transnational values* this work has been searching throughout.

6.3.1 V.: a personal path to challenging the status quo

V. It looks gorgeous on you!
S. It doesn't: the motif you drew is hip but my skin is so pale. Nothing to compare with an Indian bride.
V. Come on, mehndi today is not just for wedding, it's for pleasure, for being classy… Anyway, Bollywood divas go for skin lightening and you're not pale, you are a white woman born! Now let me finish it off with juice, it turns crimson and then browner. It smells nice, doesn't it?
She squeezed the lemon and some drops splashed into my eyes, we both chuckled.

[Transcript of informal audio recording. Veena and I doing henna body-painting, Seriate, my home, 1st Dec. 2012]

Veena and I spent more than a few afternoons doing *mehndi*, at either her place or mine. At times her mum and little sister or my children were with us, more often my elder daughter who relished being taken into the art of "Oriental tattoos" like she had come to name those domestic beautifying rites. During our cosmetic sessions, Veena and I enjoyed careless banters as if, she once noticed, putting on a décor on our skin, we could strip off the case we wore every day to battle the world.

When I first met her, Veena was a 17-year old girl. Once more, it feels tender to pigeonhole a friend, whom I had come to know through an unconventional route. In September 2012, while I was marking Italian tests that "foreigners", immigrants, set in the public school for adults where I worked, I came across an intriguing paper. Devised to test learners' writing skills, that piece stood out for rather fine forms and engaged contents. It told the tales of a friendship, describing with humor why a second-generation Italian, a girl of Albanian immigrant parents, could be "the best buddy" for laugh and growing up in a country "*once alien, now domesticated*" (quoting from the sheet treasured since). When the authoring girl came to get her CILS[83] C1 level diploma (attesting her advanced competence in Italian), I warmly congratulated on her linguistic mastery (which she then upgraded to near-native level, obtaining a C2 cert two years after), but also on her narrative gist and intercultural competence few other youngsters compared, locals or migrants. Could I miss out such a promising informant, radiant smiling and glittering with *bindi* (Indian sticky bijoux) on her temples?

Veena was garrulous for her age and background. She explained she was attending fourth year in secondary school to become a tourist operator and had been living in Italy for 9 years after family reunification. She was born and raised in Malerkotla, the only Muslim majority town in Punjab (see ch.3), and now lived with her parents and younger sister in a small town close to Brescia, depending on her dad who was a farm laborer in a horticulture factory. She said to come from a middle-class and urban mid-caste, Sonar, and belonged to the Hindu community, though she displayed a lay attitude towards any religion (perhaps also because on her mother's side some relatives professed Sikhism and there was an unusual rate of interfaith marriages).

We started to meet up in different circumstances, and while she never fancied responding to formal interviews (she even urged me once to delete a first consented recording which she regarded uneasy to be disclosed in my work), she agreed I could "observe and participate" in her life as my "mandate" was. Since we met, conversations with Veena soon turned "girlish" as she quipped,

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83 Literally *Certificate of Italian as a Second Language*, a nationally recognised examination issued by the University for Foreigners in Siena. This qualification was not mandatory in Veena's school, but gave her extra credits for higher grades and ideally served this young Inditian to better "emplace herself in the labour market, when the time came".

wishing for a confidant to negotiate the restrictions imposed by her Punjabi parents (whom I slowly came to know, finding the Vaswani household most hospitable and open to dialogue).

Veena was somehow Praneet's alter ego: not only did she master Italian; she also confidently voiced phrases in the local dialect. Contrary to my Sikh young girl friend, she regarded herself not an Indian in Italy, but a full-fledged Indian Italian. In a focus group arranged with other teen Inditians, to my usual question how much Punjabi and how much Orobian (Bergamo-born) she felt, she wittily replied in front of her mates: *"Why should I say only 50-50? I feel 100% Indian and 100% Italian (...) it's not that one belonging must necessarily cut down on another"*. Her positive integration in local peer groups was also due to her commitment in acting as an ambassador of her culture of origin. She had a very personal way to adopt Punjabi popular culture, mixing her family heritage with hip diaspora news (also touch basing with two cousin girls, a married one in Jalandhar and a postgrad student in London) and to lodge that global repertoire in her local rur-urban northern Italian home. *Mehndi* body painting and *bhangra dancing* were emblematic of Veena's Inditian youth[84].

Mehndi is an artistic body painting that stems from the Vedic Scriptures, used for centuries in the Subcontinent to adorn the palms, hands, ankles and feet of brides in pre-wedding ceremonies. By the Nineties and with the commercialization of the practice in popular culture across the Diasporas, *mehndi* was re-appropriated by diverse audiences and began to lose its ritual facet in favor of a more trivial meaning, equated with an essentialized and unspecific "Indian femininity" (Thapan 2009:22). While Veena assumed this dis-enchantment, the practice of doing (and being done) *mehndi* was one of her favorite pastimes, for which she was famed among kin and pals as an excellent body painter. Her design repertoire combined plastered patterns that came all the way from Jalandhar, motives she searched on the net and brand new decorations she created after jumbled print and video cartoons (see picture n). A soothing way to "pamper" herself, Veena lived *mehndi* as an embodied metaphor *of* feeling and *for* venting her ideal femininity: a gendered body aesthetics between two shores, which rooted in India, routed in Italy, opened for improvisation in the diaspora she imagined. Shallow as it may seem, *mehndi* was a significant aesthetical code that Veena adopted to perform her identity as a girl of Punjabi descent in Lombardy and make room for herself in diverse peer-to-peer settings.

Another performative art my friend mastered was *bhangra* dancing, a fusion of South Asian genres (most Punjabi folk music) with Western hip-hop style breakbeats that went mainstream in the British underground scene since the late Nineties (Bakrania 2013). While in Italy *bhangra* is fairly

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[84] I first wondered if it was appropriate to present my friend through these glimpses of her life and talents, fearing I was unduly re-gendering her story. Such snatches though responded to my collaborator's requests. The barter was: she picked her own traits; I was in charge of making them sound sensible.

unknown to locals, almost all young Inditians are familiar with it and, whether bopping it or not, they recognize the implications of this kinesthetic language. Besides being a potential tool for social integration that appeals to the exoticization of global Indianess, *bhangra* is taken up by offspring of Indian immigrants for private parties or ethno-based dancing competitions. If the shows I observed in Punjab were staged for returnees with heritage folk music, the ones I attended in Italy mirrored the new trends coming from the UK or the US. Among youngsters' pop idols Veena exalted famous Brit Indians like Punjabi MC or Ms Scandalous, but also the first Inditian *bhangra* dude Amar Sajaalpuri (born in Punjab and moved to Brescia in his teens) who recorded a world hit in 2011.

Veena made a point in disseminating *bhangra* among her friends: she organized twice her high-school end of term show and trained a consistent group of super-diverse students. Preparing the costumes and rehearsing took a lot of her time; she ended up trimming her curly long dark hair and wearing gym outfits during the classes although that seemed to infringe what she predicated, to "*show loud the true soul of Punjabi women*". Ethics and aesthetics of a gendered and intergenerational transnational Punjabiyat battled in Veena: the archetypal Punjabi wife-to-be versus the modern global Diaspora girl. As an Inditian young woman she did not comply with either, the conformist one set in a forgotten homeland, the outrageous other fit in a more dynamic diaspora than a southern European country. Even the attires she made for her schoolmates, and for a *bhangra flash mob* organized with two Indian friends in March 2013, unveiled the swaying between these divergent feminine models (see pictures).

In December 2012, when an ominous episode of gender violence known as "the Delhi gang rape[85]" broadcast worldwide, Veena was one of my few Inditian friends who took to get informed and discuss about the issue. Most disregarded it, as if it was not pertinent with their expatriated life nor conceivable in their Punjabi networks[86]. Though Veena felt distant from that world and worldview, for weeks, she kept engaging her Londoni cousin and me in debate and she eventually got in contact with Abha Bhaiya, Delhi-based founder of a *sangat* (grassroots association) that supports women's rights and promotes gender equity in India. As a result, on women's international day 2013 Veena suggested connecting a local *bhangra flash mob* in Brescia with the global "One Billion Rising, the biggest mass action to end violence against women in human history". Despite its small size, the *bhangra* performance was a success and propelled Veena's search for "women liberation". Her advocacy sounded to me most honest and passionate, coming from a girl who lived her local

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[85] The case involved a ferocious gang sexual assault that occurred on Dec. 2016 in a southern Delhi suburb. Without entering into details, the media report of that "critical event" went on for months in India and across its Diasporas. A documentary movie by a British feminist director was released two years later ("Nirbhaya, India's Daughter"), continuing to stir protests against a certain culture of gender violence in Hindustan and its patriarchy drifts.

[86] Remarkably, my Indian women friends tended to pass under silence episodes of domestic gender violence that occasionally occurred in immigrant south Asian households and broke up in the news as culturalized "honour murders", considering them exceptional or the expression of Muslim Punjabi patriarcalism (see Bonfanti 2013).

marginality as an Italian second-gen migrant, but who also replied to the global picture of "*other Indian women's' oppression*" to which she felt emotionally connected. This double perspective but unified concern shaped how she navigated the constraints of her Punjabi diaspora family in Italy.

Being close to Veena cost me a lot in terms of personal emotions and for maintaining my on-field credibility. As I was dragged into her family upheavals (Rytter 2013), I was forced to "take a side" (her side in fact) and could not pretend that my "research interest" was neither unbiased nor neutral (Low, Merry 2010; Ryan-Flood, Gill 2010). While Veena's parents often reproached her as a naughty daughter, who tried to dare some Punjabi traditions and was in their eyes unduly captivated by "malicious Italian habits", the situation got edgy when she fled from home after a quarrel with her dad. She rang me from a friend's house (the second-generation Albanian girl she had wrote about in the essay), asking me to intervene and mediate with her parents.

The spring term was almost over and Veena wished to partake in a beauty contest known as "Miss India in Italy", a gala that she hoped might turn into a springboard to access a career in fashion modeling. A prospect her parents strongly opposed, as this venue might "pollute" their daughter and question her purity (*ghee*) and the whole family's honor (*izzat*). While her father never confronted me directly (juvenile in age and looks and often taken for her elder brother, Darsan enforced his *paterfamilias* authority with sternness), I could not mistake her mother's outspoken remarks.

> *Maybe you are well-intentioned, but we do not want our daughter* to mimic customs *which do not belong to us (...) please* don't fool my daughter with rubbish *that will cause her only* women troubles... *for* her own sake, *she must bear in mind we come from Punjab and of course Italy is not the US!".* (Nita, her family home, Capriolo BS, 24/05/ 2013)

As Veena's mother went on disputing her daughter's choice and my shaky backup, she did not only contest a stereotyped Italian femininity (young women who exploited their sexual body to reach fame and success, Bonfanti 2013), but she also noted that some Italian morals, Catholic and patriarchal, would advise against it. In Nita's opinion, Italy was a land of possibility, otherwise they would not move there from India, yet not all routes were either sensible or feasible for her "daughter's sake". Being a mother of a young daughter myself, I took in her remarks. We could act for or against any ideology, but caring for our children stirred our self-critique (see Asha's words on mother's love or *Mata Ji Pyaar* in ch. 5). Maternal care renegotiated rights and duties not because it was a universal affective force, but because it located subjective agencies in perspective, in contingent family and social structures, even if I ebbed a feminist mother's sword (Phadke 2013).

As for her, Veena came to see me and enjoy once more a shared *mehndi*, but I could foresee she bluntly blamed me for not having been *"active(ist)"* enough in supporting her rights.

> Bahanji (Sister), please don't let me down, after all we said and we did*! I was born Punjabi, and know what Indians think of models and actresses (...) but I live in Italy, becoming citizen and turning major of age (...). Am I*

not entitled to seek the career I dream of? Today dad does not let me go to Puglia [where the gala took place], what about tomorrow if I ask to go and live in England like my cousin? Then, why should I ask permission to move at all? We, daughters of Indians [immigrants], are so restrained: we ought to speak out, if we want to overturn the tables! (Veena, my home, 02/06/2013)

Struggling with her double rootedness and cosmopolitan openness (Werbner 2008), Veena eventually went back home. Although family rows did not stop there, she dismissed the event which was anyway cancelled due to the diplomatic clash between India and Italy over the infamous "Marò's Affair[87]".

Meanwhile, that domestic affair endangered my mobility as a researcher (Falzon 2009). For weeks, I perceived being looked upon with (little cloaked) rage by Indian acquaintances in the local gurdwara, overhearing small talks about being a threat for Indian girls' decency and family harmony. My discomfort healed months later, when Raman, Veena's uncle, hosted me in Jalandhar during my research in Punjab. As I recollected in ch.2, after being interviewed by Raman and his wife for hours, Veena clarified to our relief that her uncle had endorsed my probity in a long transnational Skype call with her dad, restoring my positive relation with all Vaswani kindred. As time went by, she took back to address me as her *Didi,* a loving sister. I interpreted that language shift as a my partial failure in being a feminist activist, at least in that contingency, but I was glad to have re-established an affective trust which counted to me more than a beat in the frame of social science research.

6.3.2 S.: a communal way to promote social justice

> Those who believe that Untouchability will soon vanish do not seem to have paid attention to the economic advantages that it gives to Hinduism. An Untouchable cannot do anything to get rid of his untouchability. It does not arise out of any personal fault on his part. Untouchability is an attitude of the Hindu. For Untouchability to vanish, the Hindu must change. Will he change? (Ambedkar 1945: 186-7)

It was Gurinder who introduced me to Sunil, Sunny for his friends, crediting him with "*something different to say*" about the lives of Inditians in the Bre-Be-Mi area (as the bordering distructs of Brescia and Bergamo were known after a new highway connecting the twin cities to Milan was inaugurated in 2011, see ch.1). During the multi-religious event recollected in ch.5, when Gurinder entertained his peer audience with tales from the *Sikh Reht Maryada* or "Code of Conduct", my Khalsa young friend moaned that the annual invitation to host local visitors had then been accorded to the Ravidas temple (*Darbar or Bhawan)* in Cividino, "*the headquarters of a bunch of Sikh exiles*". In Gurinder's soft scorn stood the fuzzy edge between Jat Sikhs and Chamar Ravidas, a

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[87] Diplomatic incident occurred early in 2012 and not yet solved, when two Italian Marine Army Officers were charged for killing two local anglers in Kerala (South India) and still there held pending judgment. The chronicle turned hip in both national presses, also because of the Italian origins of the Congress Party leader Sonia Gandhi.

century old boundary that heightened its political relevance after 2009, when the murder of the cleric Ramanand Dass in Vienna arose worldwide protests and definitely parted the *Dalit panth* from mainstream Sikhism[88] (Ram 2015, see ch.2).

I particularly rejoiced Sunny's life narratives because they gave me the chance to reason in depth on factual second-generation Punjabis' emplacement in Italy, and to do so from an alternative viewpoint within the diverse Inditian community, that of a religious minority which entertained a troubled relation with the Sikh dominant stance.

Sunil was seventeen when I first met him outside his temple in Cividino. Lean and short, he would launch piercing glances behind his modish black spectacles, speaking softer tones than most other Inditian male youth I knew, who generally put on show their Punjabi masculinity (Gill 2011). Even one of his girl schoolmates (who usually refrain from commenting on male co-ethnics, obliging to their female modesty or *purdah*), described Sunny as a "*black swan*", a rare bird amid the brash social performance boys of Punjabi descent enacted in the Italian resettlement[89]. Whether he covered his head with a *dhoti* (small mandatory cloth Ravidassias wear during worship), or he dressed branded tracksuits with fake nonchalance around his peers or else he put on smart attires for formal appointments (like he did for the first interview we arranged), Sunny relentlessly enacted his multiple belongings, trying to give them coherence under one statement.

> *(Ravi-)*das *means* humble *(...) you see the difference from baptized Sikhs, who add Singh to their names, meaning* lion king. *They predicate they're all equal, because they put themselves above the poor. Instead, a man is as great as he does not let anyone demean him, setting forth without exaltation (...). That's what I take after my father: learn to be grand, shake off the shit they throw at you. (Sunil, Palazzolo BS, 22/11/2012)*

This proud young man embodied the very second generation of Inditians: the first of three brothers, he was born in Brescia and naturalized Italian when aged four, once his dad had acquired citizenship, twelve years since his arrival in Italy. Compared to Gurinder, in addition to an "effective cultural integration" that they both actively pursued, Sunny could also rely on a "formal social incorporation" in the country where he was born and raised, which was inscribed in his Italian nationality. This citizenship status gave him enough confidence to perform his double belonging to an Indian immigrant family and to the Italian local society, but also augmented his civic participation.

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[88] Ravidassias are the most demographically important former untouchable group in Punjab and the diaspora. They have also become in the postwar period one of India's most economically and socially assertive SC or Scheduled Caste, an assertion symbolically articulated in the field of religion. Transnational Ravidassia groups are playing a key role in changing the caste status quo in their native Punjab. Looking at the experiences of "casteism" among Italian Ravidassias, discloses how Dalits who are now increasingly educated and middle-class still struggle with the legacy of untouchability.

[89] An alternative performance of masculinity that aroused scornful jokes in some of his Punjabi male peers.

Sunny's dad's long-term residence in Italy (for which the man had also internally migrated, moving from south to north of the peninsula in search of better job opportunities[90]) and his mum's rare local accommodation (evident in her language mastery and hybrid cookery), rendered this household an interesting case of lasting Inditian migration exceeding two decades, not merely because of naturalization. Another respect about the Choors soon grabbed me, the apparent contradiction between their nominal low social background and pragmatic economic wealth: although they did not withhold to come from a Punjabi Chamar *jati* (thus Dalit or former "untouchable", see ch.2), I could describe their social position in Lombardy as being highly achieving middle class immigrants. The Choors were in fact the only one out of my four privileged families who could claim *home ownership*, in a village of the western Brescia province. Their bourgeois house was a semi-detached lodge overlooking the river Oglio, with a fine private garden and four bedrooms over two floors. The interior décor of their Italian *ghar* displayed a mixed cultural repertoire, which reflected the multiple social orientations of its dwellers. A customary Punjabi living room, with refined sofa cushions (hand-made by a co-ethnic neighbor) and a low feasting table matched a top-class Italian kitchen furniture; in the dining hall stood a rose-wooden board, which Kaur confirmed made in India but purchased at a distance and dispatched from Leicester. Like in all other Punjabi houses I entered, family pictures sprung up here and there, but it was behind the cupboard that the whole *parivaar* genealogy took place under a golden *Har*, the insignia of Ravidass *Deras* (lit. sects). The younger sons' dorms were not quite distinguishable from those of local peers, with prints of Italian soccer and pop music idols, except perhaps for Sunny's bedroom, where frames of Guru Ravidas and Dr. Ambedkar stood out on a shelf not dissimilarly from what I had seen on the public board of Ravidassia temples.

While I cannot here render the historical uniqueness of this endo-community of the Punjabi melting pot, Ravidassias are a *double minority* (within Sikhism and the Indian immigrant cluster) which is increasingly making room for itself in the landscape of northern Italy. The Ravidassia issue is of great interest because it purposely exposes some of the latent social conflicts I detected across the Inditian diaspora, with particular crossing reference to caste and faith.

Lum (2011) summarizes the dynamics behind the separation of Ravidassia religion from Sikhism as it follows:

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[90] Sunny's dad, Harban, first entered Italy after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots prompted massive emigrant waves from Punjab to Europe and Italy in particular. After a passage in the Gulf, he left for Europe, landing in Sicily via clandestine sea fare. He managed to work off the records in Salerno for a year, before taking a second plunge and going northern to Brescia where "kinsmen" helped him to settle down, proceed to regularization and further. His exploit in the construction industry turned him into a contractor first and an entrepreneur after, a mildly *rumoured* "career" for a former Dalit.

Ravidasia believe that the best way forward for Chamars is to claim and assert their own identity. For this more independent camp, Sikhism is viewed as obstructing the full development of the Chamar community as a *quam* (separate religion and nation), as envisioned by the Ad Dharm (original people) movement. According to these separatist Ravidasias, the only way for Chamars to progress is to pursue an independent religious path focused exclusively on the figure of Guru Ravidas. (Lum 2011:186)

Whereas Lum describes Ravidassia religion as a spin off from Sikhism, with a strong focus on Guru Ravidass Ji (and the compilation of a new holy book out of his 240 hymns, in replacement of the Sikh *Adi Granth*), the Italian Ravidassia's politics of belonging revolves more around caste inequality than religious diversity. At least inasmuch my participant observation in the Cividino Darbar[91] and my talks with Sunny and Binhat, the local Ravidas *sadhu* (head), let me understand.

Opening this paragraph, I reported a quote recited and explained to me by Sunil himself, who was an avid reader of both Ravidas' *bani* (religious lyrics) and Ambedkar's political essays. These two historical figures were the twin souls behind the Ravidassia community in Lombardy, their "homeland" inspiration for global identity making and local social recognition.

Guru Ravidass was a medieval northern Indian sant-poet, who fought against untouchability and imagined a utopian equal society (*begumpura*, see ch.3). If folktales recount a meeting between Ravidass and Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, who also upheld egalitarian reformism, the socio-economic organization of Punjab where status was (and partly still is) based on land ownership, never translated these ideals into practice. According to Binhat, Sikhism developed as "*the cult of the Jats*". Chamars (tanners, the most numerous of *Dalit Ad Dharma* "Untouchable aboriginal inhabitants") were left at the bottom of the Punjabi social ladder and in the margin of Sikh religious participation, to which nonetheless they adhered trying to break from Hindu-based casteism.

Dr. Ambedkar[92] was instead an early XX-century Indian jurist, politician and civic reformer who campaigned against social discrimination in India, striving for equal rights for Dalits, women and laborers. Born in a Chamar family, he managed to earn a doctorate in economics from Cambridge and was appointed independent India's first law minister, serving as the main draftsman of the Indian Constitution. Mapping social exclusion in India, it has been argued that "the secret of success of the Ravidassia movement lies in the strategy to sell Dr. Ambedkar's socio-cultural revolution packed in an ingenious religious capsule" (Judge 2014:178). Ravidass *Deras* are,

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[91] A second Ravidassia temple was established in 2013 in Gorlago, close to the earlier one in Cividino. While the premise was smaller and less organized, this institution was reported by my informants as being less politically radical and more concerned with spiritual issues (so that also some mainstream Sikhs living in the neighborhood attended it).
[92] It should be noticed that Ambedkar, by the end of his life, converted to Buddhism, and many of its Dalits followers did the same all over north India. This apparent contradiction in the Ravidas ideology, which maintained its religious Sikhi frame with a social revolution stance, has not yet come ripe even among its intellectuals (Ram 2015)

perhaps, the only holy centers where sacred and secular figures (Ravidass and Ambedkar) are blended and projected publicly.

A fragment of a dialog between Binhat and Sunny, recorded in the Cividino *Darbar* after a Sunday function in March 2013, reveals how much the Lombardy Ravidassia engrossed in giving coherence to their newly established cult, which was at once a transnational political project and a local strategy for demanding social recognition.

> *B. It took a liberal Chamar to fix centuries of misdeeds, the Father of the Indian Constitution, Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar (...). We all owe so much to him! He put forward the interests of* Harijans (children of God, in Gandhi's pietistic words)
>
> *S. Yes, and his motto was "educate, agitate, organize"! He gave us the nerve to set free from the chains of ignorance and injustice!* Italians can understand him better *than others, Dr. Ambedkar was a great admirer of* Gramsci *(...)*
>
> *B.* That's why we want to translate Deras papers*, so that you too can read Sant Ravidass' poems and Lord Ambedkar's letters. (...) We do not fight the Hindus anymore; it's their mentality we battle, that Jat Sikhs have taken after Brahmins.*
>
> *S. Don't you know that Chamars still face* insults*, here also? We are not equal to Jat Sikhs and we'll never be even if we work harder, get education and make good money (...) I am Italian and I am Ravidassia. But with Indians it looks like* I have a stamp glued on my forehead: "out-caste". They cannot ruin my home *or take off what we built here; but they can still threaten us. Once, when I was smaller,* I got even spit on my face*! In first class at middle school. The teachers didn't know what was going on, that* it wasn't a bullying like all others...

Sunny's personal assertion and civic engagement built on an intense study of Indian reformism (Jaffrelot 2003), which drew from its religious partisanship and *jati* belonging, but also called in the Italian social context for public credit. Binhat had in fact assigned Sunny, because of his double-rootedness (coming from a Chamar family but being born and raised on the Italian soil), to translate into Italian some "*Deras* writings" in order to divulge Ravidassia instances. Similarly, Lum (2014) talks about "manufacturing self-respect" among Dalit immigrant youth in Catalonia and observes how these youngsters managed pride and stigma connected to low-caste legacy with "cultural juggling" in the Spanish resettlement.

> For Indian diaspora youth from Dalit castes, striving to achieve self-acceptance and overcome caste stigma goes hand-in-hand with cultural juggling. They face not only the social and psychological challenges of biculturalism, but also, unbeknown to the host society, prejudice and discriminations (Lum 2014:114).

The Choors' Italian naturalization and attained wealth gave this household both benefits and constraints. Sunny tried his best to "middle" a migration (Rutten, Verstappen 2014), which he never really experienced in the making, but he grew out of. The odd rupture between his lower lineage caste and higher middle class intensified his sense of displacement from a Punjabi *class cum caste continuum* (Gupta 2000, Judge 2014), which would have condemned him to a social exclusion he did never face in Brescia, apart from rare, but sore, blasts of intolerance.

That may also account for the anxiety that clenched Sunny after the "crime news episode", the critical media event I reported in the previous section. While over the years immigrant Sikhs had managed to gain social recognition, Ravidassia, as a smaller minority and a new separate religious identity, still tried to earn acknowledgement from the local milieu. When that car accident/social incident befell, the Ravidas Darbar in Cividino began to be patrolled as the epicenter of a deviant Indian immigrancy, with Chamars for the first time being addressed in public discourse as the likely "*evil alter ego*" (in Sunny's words) of an otherwise respectable Sikh community. Not only this social cleavage was until then unknown to Italian public opinion, but it heightened a *lived divide* that was latent in the Punjabi community itself.

If my outgoing trip to Punjab started with Sunil, Kaur and uncle Tej as travel companions, over the two years I touch based with this kin I sensed the unease Harban, Sunny's father, attended to me. Being closer to other Inditian families, the Bhakyas in particular, who were *amrithdari* Jat Sikhs, gave me a disadvantage in terms of being seen as a mistrustful interlocutor by the Choors. My methodological impasse somehow matched the fear of deceit that run through the Punjabi community(ies) in Lombardy, where multiple belongings activated contextual solidarities or discords.

While Sunny championed Ravidassia's global political liberation and social recognition in his Italian native locale, his daily ménage surfed other less radical and quite diverse forms of engagement, in which his second-generation lived status played a key part.

He did mingle with other Inditian peers, Hindu or (Jat) Sikhs who were sympathetic with or neutral to his lower origins, Gurinder included. Prized, at times bantered, for being a "bookworm", Sunny was invited to speak on air at "Punjabi Radio Italy", a free private radio that broadcast since 2012 "live from Bergamo". Although orthodox Sikhs managed the business, this mainly gave out Punjabi pop music and reported local news, from cultural to sport events. Sport was another social field Sunny took up to, in fact more as a spectator than an active player. He used to accompany to soccer training his younger brothers, whom he described even "*more Italian-minded*" than he was. Although "a poor batsman", he had been courted by Ganjua Brescia cricket club to enroll in the u-19 team, which was in shortage of Italian nationals to partake in official tournaments (considering the south Asian bulk of new Italian cricket societies, see next chapter).

At last, during his senior years in high school, once a week Sunny undertook social work in his village chapel, helping children do their afternoon homework. (Volunteering with Italian mates with whom he attended the optional Catholic class in school, since his mum never thought that being Ravidassia barred from knowing other religious traditions). That commitment served him to

reconsider his teenage as a child of immigrants (with his learning and socializing toils), and to link with the local pastor who opened dialogue with the Ravidas Darbar.

Once only the exchange between Sunny and I fired up. When I disputed that keeping on talking about *caste*, whether lower or higher, did not seem to me a winning strategy to get rid of *casteism* (since words and discourses performatively create the reality they address), he retorted that I was defending the position of those who had never experienced such a discrimination (or possibly even profited from it). This an excerpt from an email he sent me after we both were back from Punjab:

> *You may well believe those who say that castes will soon disappear, they mean it; but you are naive if you think that one can wipe the slate clean without first saying the whole truth, admitting centuries of oppression (...). You met the* maids *at Narinderjit's* (Chamar elder widows that the Sikh patron took out of the street), *is begging our best bet? (...). If I go on studying (third level) I would pick history, we cannot understand the present-day if we snub the past. (07/02/2014)*

Despite his young age and the swifter tie we developed compared to other my key informants, Sunny saw deeper in what I was doing. Anthropology and history did share some concerns and methods; ethnography was a small-scale history of the present, but it dug wider in space and time (Augé 1996; Eriksen 2001). Focusing on Inditian narratives summoned transnational connections, in Punjab and the diaspora, and, tracing migrant genealogies, larger social processes echoed in minute personal experiences. Sunny's engagement with his Italian Ravidas cluster and my critical ethnography with the Punjabis of Lombardy shared a commonality of intents. If I could only aim to divulge some scholarly work, it was from the youngest of my collaborators, the most socially integrated in the Italian locale but also the most marginalized in his ethno-community, that I foresaw social changes being publicly pursued.

Closing intersectional remarks. Ending this chapter filled with critical events and social confrontations, Veena's and Sunny's life narratives blurted out some of the daily struggles lived by second-generation Punjabi migrants and the macro-histories they evoked.

Their personal experiences of living in Italy entangled with diverse forms of resistances and advocacy attempts. The first, as a casually Hindu young woman who openly contested her situational "Indian female fate" in search of a fictional immigrant women's *freedom*. The second, as a learnt Ravidassi young man who actively promoted a public review of his "double minority group" against multiple *discrimination*. Neither of my young informants shunned away from the binders that living in Bergamo and Brescia as second-generation Italians of Punjabi descent demanded.

Both valued their naturalization as a recognition of their effective social integration, embodied also in mastering the local language. Belonging in Italy though appeared to elicit further queries, into

their Indian roots (of an imagined homeland in fact little experienced) and the riddles these routed into a specific southern European diaspora context. I saw Veena and Sunny representing the *avant-garde* of the Italian Punjabi diaspora, with much to argue for and against. Was Veena's rebellion against her family loads and her cultural critique based on gender only? Was Sunny's political steering of his diaspora cluster centered on either faith or caste divide? What about the latent issue of class shares that in both cases enhanced their diverse contestations?

Confronting the interplay of freedom and ethics in the everyday (Laidlaw 2014), Veena's and Sunny's critical *evaluations* steered my interest towards underexplored streams of those "social divides and transnational values" I identified in my work. Titling this chapter "contesting Punjabiyat" does not suggest that second-generation Punjabis, because of their age and the dissonance *some* of them might sense for growing up as new Italian nationals, opposed their implicit homeland origins (Avtar 1996). Instead, looking backward and forward in time, eastward and westward in space, this diaspora generation turned out in the ethnographic relation to be better equipped and willing to query everyday life as both "a quest and an inquest" (Cavell 1988).

While I enjoyed sharing these youth's life worlds and life words, and I cashed in their fulfilment for "being taken seriously", I was at times left puzzled by some of their views, which I often appreciated but did not systematically endorse nor actively pursue. With my constant studying gaze and occasional external support, I realized I had coxed my young Inditian friends to dredge up the social bordering issues they were experiencing. As I re-wrote down their stories taking in their reading comments (and pleads to edit my arguments to sustain their views), I was reminded once more that we need a "situated intersectional everyday approach to the study of bordering":

> It is within this construction of the everyday life that the study of everyday bordering needs to take place. […] while the 'everyday' is the realm of habit and repetition, domesticity, of our attempts to meet our daily needs and thus can be seen as the location of stability, maintenance of continuity, it is also an arena of conflict and struggle. A struggle aimed at maintaining continuity, accommodating the constant disruption of tradition and the production of the new; struggles between classes, genders, ethnicities etc, between producers and consumers, human desire and obdurate and exhaustible world. It points to the material actuality of living through conflict and change. It's often the site of invisible hurt of discrimination, of constant negotiation of a changing world, of our attempts to live. (Yuval-Davis 2013b: 9-10)

In the next and final chapter, I will try threading all the life stories so far presented, so to move from minute ethnographic analysis to a broader anthropological discussion. Out of a not unison but mutually understandable chorus, gendered and intergenerational narratives will lastly trace the laboring construction of home and belonging among the Punjabi diasporas in northern Italy.

Ch. 7 (Almost) native Italians, through and beyond the citizenship issue

Moving towards a reflexive close, this chapter discusses the *grand tour* of Punjabi mobilities and Italian resettlement, after the many narrative *detours* this ethnography trailed. I will here make use of two core debates on diaspora and migration studies, the well-known portrayal of south Asian "chaordic diasporas" by P. Werbner (2002) and the latest analysis of "personhood shifting" among second generation immigrants in Europe by T. Eriksen (2015). Confronting my empirical work with these influential theoretical perspectives (socio-centric the first, individualizing the latter), I intend to go over the centrifugal experiences of Inditians in search for some patterned social dynamics.

Revisiting Punjabi emplacements in Lombardy, I am going to weave my collaborators' life stories capturing the swing from first time to second-generation migrants, aware that their *petits récits* are embedded in the Chinese boxes of family, community and outer society dynamics. While my research subjects went about to construct home and belonging in their everyday diaspora (see ch.3 and 4), they engaged with different gains and setbacks to "middling migration", defying multiscale processes of social differentiation (see ch.5), whether grappling with forms of Punjabi "patronage" or Italian "racism" (see ch.6). As emigrants from Punjab they tried to enact social upward mobility, as immigrants in northern Italy they demanded social recognition and increasing participation. Local scaling and global alignments concurred in the Inditian migration experience, which may well start out with aspiring *NRIs* non-resident Indians and resolve in "new" *Italian nationals*.

Since most diasporic families who joined my work were long-term resident in the receiving country, I here ponder the riddles of naturalization for Inditians, setting the legal frame of *citizenship* (with the rights, identity and status it yields, Joppke 2010) besides the many social loyalties activated in the migration process. Commenting on Rajeev's application for Italian *naturalization*, I gauge the ambivalent but creative use that his household made out of this personal choice/structural grant: for proving one's political membership exercising local engagement or for advancing further global motilities. I argue that Punjabi Italians seek for a sort of "transnational citizenship", which could combine *some* community belonging and personal freedom, appropriation of the law and happenstances (Kivisto, Faist 2007).

Finally, I poise my arguments with a last life narrative rendered by a Punjabi young woman who is provisionally resident in Lombardy as a transnational knowledge worker. This apparently *standout case* made clearer the limits of my ethnographic work (in sampling and perspective), but it also cast an unexpected coherence on the fetters and promises of a diverse (and always gendered) generational changeover in the Italian Indian Diaspora. Paradoxically, the longer the resettlement, the more "unsettled" these new generations turn out to be.

7.1 *Inditian* Diaspora: a *chaordic* place of home and belonging?

> Diasporas […] reproduce and extend themselves without any centralized command structures. […] The locations of diaspora are relatively autonomous of any centre, while paradoxically they continue to recognize the centre and acknowledge at least some obligations and responsibilities to it and the larger whole. Moreover, *in any particular location, chaorder is the principle of organization: diasporic groups are characterized by multiple discourses, internal dissent, and competition* for members between numerous sectarian, gendered or political groups, all identifying themselves with the same diaspora. […] *What is subsumed under a single identity are a multiplicity of* opinions, `traditions', subcultures, lifestyles or, to use Avtar Brah's apt terminology, *modalities of existence*. (Werbner 2002:123)

Werbner so describes the apparent unruliness but relative predictability of diaspora group behaviors. While she allows for internal diversity (Muslim south Asians in particular, Pakistanis being her main collective of reference, Werbner 1990, 2004, 2008), she rather emphasizes the moral and aesthetical sharing of each diaspora, focusing on "a sense of co-responsibility" group members would entertain. Werbner maintains that chaos and order equally contribute to making a diasporic identity; although all transnational migrations are intersectional and situational, any diaspora would culturally re-produce in a cosmopolitan arena its distinctive "ethno-parochialism".

While this perspective may fit the Pakistani immigration in Britain that the anthropologist studied for decades (with a focus on Sufi cults and Islamic diaspora consciousness), "chaorder" is an appealing lens for reading my ethnographic data, provided pertinent local amendments. First, the Punjabi diaspora in Italy does not only refer to majoritarian Sikhism as its religious organizational principle. Hindus make a distinctive minority and Ravidassias a double minority: notwithstanding the merging of *gurdwaras*, there is no recognizable social center in the national Punjabi community. Second, strong "*ethnic* and kinship ties" are activated accordingly to convenience (Bertolani 2013), moreover, their very enactments, valued in discursive practices, turn ambivalent in daily migration: solidarity and obligation swing from trust and protection to mischief and coercion. Third, my multi-sited ethnography proved that the *grand narration* of Punjabi diaspora and the *petits récits* of Italian relocation work as a canvas for "family-engineered" mobility, but the rhetoric *umeed* and *raksha* hope and achievement, is interspersed with pragmatic sectarianism and contextual discriminations.

Is there, and which is then, the "sense of co-responsibility" that Indian Punjabis entertain in their northern Italian diaspora lifeways? To whom do they respond? Once again, in the terms used throughout this work, which transnational values orient Inditian social fields and interactions?

In this section, I intend to answer these questions through the lens "global migrants, local lives" that Gardner (2001) poignantly sketched. Doing so, I will recount the *localized life stories* and *transnational family dramas* presented at the end of each chapter. Although the personal accounts of my interlocutors were very diverse and socially situated, threading individual experiences within family narratives avert the risk of dissipating critical life views, inserting them in my domestic

ethnography betwixt and between Italy and India, Lombardy and Punjab. The sundry Inditian community of eastern Lombardy constructed home and belonging in material and symbolic *ghar*, houses which were inhabited, in presence or absence, by the affective household, affiliates, lineage relations (*parivaar*, *ristedari*, *biraderi*). Co-living and distant kin and the ties of reciprocity/obligation family members owed to each other produced and signified both chaos and order.

At once, bedlam and consistency were integral to the Italian local resettlement, where community solidarity surfed multiple divides (such as faith, caste and class) and thrived on the complexity of a local milieu, national but super-diverse. From housing to work, from schooling to worship, Punjabi immigrants interacted with local institutions, mingling with the native majority as well as with other minorities, experiencing occasional conflicts and misunderstandings, more often intense exchange and negotiation. Each passage of my ethnographic analysis, which ideally went from dislocating, through re-producing to contesting Punjabiyat (i.e. the diasporic identity that expats re-appropriate transiting to Italy) added further elements of social complexity to that irreducible experience of "migrating and settling in a mobile world" (Vathi 2015).

While my research subjects placed themselves in, and understood their life lanes through, a *family narrative of generational change*, we started to query the significance of the alleged rupture "second versus first migrants" and debate both intergenerational transmission and social integration in the local Italian Indian diaspora.

Confronting my empirical results with the research on long-term migrant resettlement in Oslo (a collaborative project headed by Eriksen over the past decade and which comprised a large share of south Asians and Punjabis in particular), I cannot refrain from finding some similar patterned social dynamics as well as advancing a different discussion from the outcomes of the Norwegian study.

> In the second generation, not only has individualization taken hold, but the processes of cultural hybridization have also progressed further than in the first generation, as a result of changes in the life-worlds and the wider environments of the people in question […]. *The shift from first to second generation*, under communicated in much research and debate about migration and transnationalism, should not be underestimated, and let me be explicit about what it entails. It i*s a change in the conceptualization of personhood from a communal or socio-centric view of the person to an individualist or egocentric view of the person*, resulting from changes in the opportunity situation in a bureaucratic, meritocratic, individualist society. (Eriksen 2015:15)

My ethnographic data confirmed that "cultural hybridization" took hold among children of Punjabi immigrants, not least because of their early socialization into local institutions and Italian society, which I appreciated in my professional teaching with evermore-competent language learners. Concerning an increasing "individualization" among second-generations, I argue instead that some *personhood shift* did not imply a sudden change from socio-centrism to egocentrism. My interlocutors molded their sense of selves in many simultaneous transnational social fields, to which

they felt more or less attached also according to their life course and different age of migration. Nonetheless, second generation Inditian grew up with a strong recognition of Punjabi culture, adapting it to circumstances, also contesting some of its premises (see ch.6). None lost the parental idiom, which they anyway spoke in their Italian homes and learnt in their worship places. Food habits came to include pizza, pasta and ham that were palatable in canteens, but grand meals were served on *tandoori* cuisine at home or at fine Indian-owned restaurants. Endogamy was still the rule for most Inditians, whether it was enforced or chosen through (self-)arranged marriages between love and convenience. Family obligations often remained binding not because of tradition, but because many youth found it ethical and practical to follow the tenets with personal tunings. Even literal second-generations who held Italian nationality searched for belonging in Italy through their Punjabi heritage, whether it was partaking in the country's "Indian beauty contest" and excelling in bhangra dancing or whether it meant to play cricket in local teams and translate into Italian Ravidass holy texts.

This dissimilar scene from the Oslo experience of long-term immigrants (Eriksen 2015) also hinges on the diverse emplacement that Italy and Norway allow as receiving countries. Urban Norway may well be a region of that "further north" many Punjabi expats aspire to (although Britain and the Anglophone "first world" remain top destinations), thus migrants often lived Nordic settlement (see also Ryttel's work on Danish and Swedish Pakistanis, 2013) as a journey's end. Punjabi migrations to rural southern Europe instead appear unsteady also for those whose mobility has long stand stilled and whose national/local settlement has gone forward in time and social incorporation, albeit plagued by economic disproportion and civic stratification. Although the area I considered was evoked as auspicious for aspiring Indian expats, in fact wealthy northern Italy posed many riddles to Hindustani laborers, who, even once settled through work and family reunion, did not seem to have fulfilled their material *umeed*, high expectation, nor felt to have reached existential achievement, *raksha*.

Living through a generational change still in the making, Punjabi Italians are indeed reaching for wider connections in the locale, yet individual(ized) life projects do not leave behind forms of communalism, which on the contrary often seem actively engaged. In my ethnographic experience, children of immigrants heightened their diaspora consciousness, deciding which level of involvement they would maintain in the many social fields they partook and who were those social partners they owe to and pretend from a sense of *co-responsibility* (see ch.6).

Last, there is another level of *co-responsibility* in my work, which I established within the ethnographic relation. Once made clear my engaged posture in methods and ethics in chapter 2, as I wrote down my informants' narratives I felt the unease in mugging their private biographies they

kindly (at times painfully) shared with me. I also felt the great responsibility I had in "making good use" of that sensitive material, as Kanval cautioned me once. My ethnographic *authority* demanded I was co-responsible of the life words and worlds I was recording, interpreting and making public.

This sense of co-responsibility in "speaking for others" (Alcoff 1991) also swayed me to explain how it would be deceptive to ascribe the hurdles of mobility to first time migrants and the benefits to the second generation. Both age groups encountered different perils over their life course and rhythm of migration. Longer resettlement and intergenerational family experience did yield a major commitment to the diaspora locality. Yet, to dispute a soaring immigrants' active participation or "civic citizenship" (Reed-Danahy, Brettell 2008; Riccio 2010), we must first convene on who are the *cives* (peers, allies, formal or informal co-citizens) for those who inhabit transnational social fields (Glick Schiller 2005) and whose social interactions transgress the immanence of given localities (Nieswand 2009). In the next paragraph, I focus on the shifting tension between spaces and relations, locales and connections that Punjabi diasporans experience in their Italian mobility, revisiting the contested but open-ended life narratives of my informants, from first to second migrant generations albeit this distinction is less definite than sociological categorization would suggest.

7.1.1 From patronage and racism… to advocacy and civic citizenship

The quest for a good life in precarious times stood behind the mobility choices of all Punjabis I met, either resettled in Italy, still resident in Punjab looming for a move, or on the verge of further transfers. Within domestic contexts, between secrecy and silence, frank denounce and humiliation, family talks exposed assets and recoils in surfing a transnational migration. Searching the minutiae of the Inditian diaspora everyday, I relied on thick life stories, adopting two joint lens in the ethnographic analysis. Gender and age crisscrossed multiple social hierarchies (Indian patriarchalism or casteism, Italian civic stratification or subtle racism, transnational status paradox and economic disproportion), which differently affected Punjabi migrants and their offspring taken to Italy or born in the diaspora and raised contestations which went often unheard, unless "critical event" were mediatized (see par. 6.2).

As I stated in Ch.2, following Madison (2012:5): "Critical ethnography begins with an ethical responsibility to address processes of unfairness or injustice within a particular *lived* domain". All the life narratives I treasured built upon some *social critique* that my interlocutors quietly admitted or openly challenged. The biographies of Inditian migrants entrenched in the uneven social cartography of the Punjabi diaspora, navigating inequalities in multiple lived domains. Although

my domestic ethnography focused on kin relations and family dramas, it was nonetheless permeable to the wider social transnational and translocal fields that my research subjects inhabited and contributed to shape. "Power games" were thus relevant to first, 1.5, second-generation migrants in different combinations according to their modalities of existence (Brah 1996).

In the case of first generation Punjabi migrants, the transfer to Italy and re-settlement depended on legal papers and an array of *intermediaries*. Whether these were formal *dalals* or resident co-ethnics with a greater "capital" (see par. 4.1, Azzeruoli 2014), migration to Italy circumvented borders submitting (money) to brokering roles in the local community. Punjabi first migrants then acted as bridgeheads of following family mobilities.

Rajeev left for Italy on an improbable tourist visa and stayed afloat for months illicitly in the receiving country, working off the records for a complacent local owner, with the onerous *patronage* of co-ethnic contractors. Through a chancy "sanatoria"[93] in 1998, he took service in an expanding local business and began his training to become a specialized laborer. Once a settled welder, though *patronized* by his Italian boss, he went back to Punjab where he bargained his European relocation to marry a higher caste NRI woman who dreamt to move over to Europe. That set off Asha's migratory project and the couple's incipient family.

Kanval, contrary to most Indian women passively rejoined in migration, was *sponsored* by a relative (fled from Punjab after the 1984 anti-Sikh riots to Italy) but autonomously (*backed* by her husband and father in law) reached Italy with the clear plan to reunite her household. Hired in a local premise, she got her spouse and broods actively rejoined after two years. She then retrieved a housewife role, but kept the lead in remitting home to Punjab and governing her local household, making sure her children fitted in the local Sikh community and Italian institutions. That paved the way to Praneet and Gurinder raising as 1.5 diaspora kids.

Those Punjabis who were reunited in a family-driven migration, also *depending* on their gender and age and thus on the kin who made their mobility possible, went on experiencing stern challenges in living abroad *desh/pardesh*, past the shadow of a lost homeland and grappling with daily prejudices in the receiving Italian context they strived to make their home.

Asha welcomed her move to Italy after her husband, which added a European gist to her NRI prior experience in the Gulf and fulfilled her cultural ambitions. Although she gave birth to two children in Italy, as time went by and she gladly saw them incorporating in the outer society, she felt the unease for being an educated immigrant woman who remained home *confined*, with little language

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[93] The entry of foreign labor to Italy is regulated by periodical governmental Quota Agreements (Decreto Flussi), which fix the maximum number of foreigners allowed to enter the State and set the criteria for granting work permits. To this scheme, we add the so-called "Sanatoria", measure by which the administrative national authority waives from taking legal steps against those responsible for illegal labor trading and normalize precarious or irregular migrants permitting them to apply for work visas.

capability to communicate and *underrated* by locals. Still lacking a proper house, *mera ghar*, she pressed her husband to purchase an Italian property as well as to apply for naturalization, in order to extend this citizenship to their whole household and reap its manifold benefits (see next par.).

Gurinder's remarkable integration developed through his consistent double allegiance to the local Italian neighborhood and Sikh community. No other Inditian seemed to me better apt to live across two modalities of existence he did not see dissenting, bred as a high flung young Italian and a diasporic Khalsa future leader. His Jat family rearing and Sikh religious practice joined Italian youth lifeways, with proud firmness until he had to face *intolerance* in public for wearing the turban. All of a sudden, the iconic *dastar* turned from displaying his Sikhiness and promising intercultural sharing, to bearing the *stigma* of an "immigrant Italianness" never fully reached.

Second generations, children of immigrants who were born in Italy or taken there in early infancy, did not run free of *civic stratification* regardless their nationality status. They may live with alienation the progressive detachment from family normative traditions, despite continuing to share some values that they accommodate to a wider and more promising European Indian diaspora.

A socially engaged young Inditian woman, Veena tried to balance the ideal femininities rooted in her mixed cultural repertoire. Coming of age, her desire for a "modern and western" career clashed with the female conduct her parents cast on her between shelter and force. Despite her sound local incorporation, *gender marginality* upset Veena's ambitions not only because of her Punjabi family discourse on embodied *honor*, but also because of the unequal gendered citizenship she could act in Italy regarding professional choices. Turned away after some job interviews, she asked me to revise her CV and queried whether her cultural capital was not "adequate" for a shrunk job market or a more inclusive country could host the daughter of an Indian diaspora. Her orientation to Britain (where a cousin was completing a MSc) was more than a wish, still to be screened against family duties.

Sunil instead, Italian born from a low-caste Punjabi family which had secured a middle class rank (through his father's active but silent brokering), combined his national status with religious Ravidass engagement and activism against ongoing *casteism*. Among the life options available to him after high school, in the country where he said he belonged and mastered the language, Sunil chose to leave and move to Bedford, where he attended college and socialized with an even longer-term south Asian diaspora. After the initial delight for the British adventure, his FB posts betrayed the disquiet in encountering other forms of *social grading*[94], longing for his missed Brescia home.

The narratives of my collaborators covered almost twenty years of Punjabi diaspora and Italian relocation. There were similarities in their mobility experiences, not least the culture of emigration

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[94] When we last talked Sunil recounted of the swear words he had (unwillingly) learnt in his new Brit residence, teased as a *Bondu* or a "gay chick".

they came from (ch. 4) and the immigration locale they were inhabiting (ch.5), but also singularities related to their contested "politics of belonging" (ch. 6, Yuval-Davis 2012). Gender and age, as well as faith, caste and class, co-determined the possibilities for individuals and families to imagine and enact a migratory project. All Italian Punjabi households continued to rearrange transnational homemaking; under certain conditions, some could also demand access to formal Italian citizenship.

7.1.2 "A passage to Italy", assets and riddles of naturalization

After commenting on Veena's and Sunny's naturalization, which came on top of her 1.5 and his factual second-generation life in Italy (see par. 6.3), the process through which Rajeev transited to Italian citizenship and the effect this cast on his family members (thus Asha and their kids) is worth particular consideration. Before discussing my findings on this selected nuclear household, I first need to make clear the larger scale of Indian migrants who acquired Italian citizenship to date.

1. How does naturalization operate in Italy? Ahead of being a legal issue, Italian naturalization is a complex social process (ranging from first-entry accommodation in the host society, through ongoing socio-cultural integration, to full civic participation, Castles, Davidson 2000) and a strict bureaucratic procedure (granting national membership via inscription by the State, Gupta 2012). If citizenship is regulated worldwide on a blending of birth and ascendency rights (jus soli, jus sanguinis), Italian Nationality Law, like many continental European countries, is largely based on jus sanguinis, traditionally more favorable to the Italian diaspora and less inclusive for foreign residents (and their offspring born there). Italian naturalization is the administrative route that allows a foreign citizen to acquire nationality, irrespective of birth or ascendancy, provided he/she "has been legally resident in Italy for at least ten years […] does not have a criminal record and has sufficient financial resources[95]". Leaving out additional specifications, for long-term immigrants naturalization arises as an option after ten years of "legal residence", which is assessed on parameters such as complying with regular dwelling and working status. However, the acquisition of citizenship is not routinely decreed, but it has to be enacted by immigrants themselves filing a request for naturalization.

2. What is specific about Punjabi immigrants turning Italian nationals? Punjabi settlements in Italy make a relevant case study, considering both their time scale (burgeoned over the past twenty years and just peaked), so that we may trace a variety of Indian mobilities to Italy (see ch.1). Yet, the customary migration design has so far entailed an "individual male labor immigration"

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[95] Verbatim quote taken from the Italian legislation Decree 1991/92 "New rules on citizenship", currently (2015) under revision concerning children of immigrants born within the national territory.

followed by "new household formation or reunification" (Bertolani 2011), yielding a significant shift to second generation (Colombo, Rebughini 2012). Although data show some inconsistencies, local authorities and organizations estimate that over 20,000 Indians have acquired Italian nationality to-date only in the Lombardy region (the county hosting most share of Punjabi immigrants in the country; Indian Consulate in Milan, Questura di Brescia). The majority of new nationals remained in Italy; about a fifth chose to move elsewhere in Europe (ORIM2014, ISMU 2014).

Going into my empirical material, hereafter I consider the case of the Sharmas (see ch.2, 4 and 5), reasoning over the engagement with Italian citizenship upheld by different family members of this Punjabi immigrant household that has been long-time Italian resident.

Coherent with my intersectional approach, I adopt a gender and age sensitive view in order to analyze how a breadwinner husband, a dependent wife and their second-generation children may (or may not) invest time and resources in gaining Italian nationality for diverse reasons. Gender and age differences intersect in family immigration law and policies shaping different rights and dependencies (Benhabib, Resnik 2009, Kraler 2010). In fact, citizenship rules for immigrants in Italy implicate the instant extension of one's naturalization to children minor of age (whether born or not on the Italian soil) and the belated addition to one's dependent spouse (after two years). In the case of the Sharmas, Rajeev grew to being able to file a request for Italian naturalization and thus transfer the new nationality status to his children and spouse.

Referring to Rajeev's life narrative as reported in par. 4.3 and his wife Asha's in par. 5.3, the two spouses finally agreed on naturalization after some years of debate. Since she never intended to return to India for good, proud of living in Lombardy, "the most productive of Italian regions", Asha persuaded her husband to apply for Italian citizenship once he could comply with the due legal requirements (ten years of regular residency and work in the host country). She often sobbed that it took her ages to convince him: *"it was more because of his laziness that we had to wait so long (...)* If it was up to me*, riff, raff, all done, as soon as it gets!"* While Asha realized her husband only could take this step on her behalf, she exercised her agency pressing him to realize what this shift could mean for the family's permanence in Italy (and for any further move to Europe). Rajeev was not keen after all on losing Indian nationality and that may account for his lingering over the matter for years. Asha's insistence on her husband applying for naturalization turns clear in reason of her female dependence in the scheme of family immigration law as well as in her biography as a non-resident Indian well before moving to Italy.

Naturalization sounded in Asha's words to cast deeper effects on her children, in the mid and long run. Like many other South Asians abroad, she saw global mobility (or motility, the possibility of

being mobile, Kaufmann et al. 2004) as a social capital inscribed in the citizenship status of an EU member State. In the near future, naturalization seemed the family's best bet for accessing local services and provisions, from children's regional school grants to municipal tax exemptions, for earning civil rights (and economic benefits) that the two spouses felt more urgent than the political rights (and duties) to vote (and eventually be elected for). Being citizens also doomed an easier route for obtaining a mortgage from the bank and finally being able to buy a residential property and move out of a house, which, though virtually rent-free, Asha had never felt as her family home (see par.3.1).

Naresh and Deepti, their kids born in Italy and taken to India every second year on vacations, did not seem interested in these petty practical benefits of citizenship nor yet in their parents' life prospects, but they craved for holding the artifact proving their new national identity, the Italian passport. This legal item finally materialized a year after Rajeev's application on paper.

Rajeev's effective naturalization took place through a secular *rite de passage*: an oath of loyalty to the Italian Republic he had to pledge in the Town Hall of his municipality. The performativity of the oath culminated with the ceremonial delivery of his new national passport, with Rajeev wearing a tricolor flag and shaking hands with the Mayor. Yet, showing me the pics of the event with a thrill, Asha recounted her husband's awkwardness after local administrators scolded him for stuttering, as he read aloud the first two articles of the Italian Constitution. Naresh and Deepti commented the scene behind closed doors, teasing their dad and swaggering about their being "*more* real *Italian*" than he would ever be. The Sharmas then shared the jubilant event with their social networks: they feasted with an all Indian *Pravasi* celebration (with their diaspora community) that night and offered pastries to Rajeev's Italian colleagues the day after. Congratulations came all the way from India, with relatives' long-distance calls and some home fireworks lighted for well wishing.

Deepti and especially Naresh held their own youth views on becoming Italian nationals. The girl, just 9, gave a quirky response about the issue, shrugging her shoulders and mumbling that the new status *"(did) not change much, we have always been Italian (...), when we go visit* Babi *(their grannie in Chandigarh) they call us Italians anyway!"* Deepti interpreted nationality more as a social identification than a normative status. An attitude only partly echoed by her brother. Naresh, almost 13, could not refrain his excitement in exhibiting his new Italian passport to diverse audiences.

> *The first Sunday I got hold of my pass (passport), I took it to the mandir, wanted to show everyone. Then Rahul (his friend), I guess he was furious envious, came up to me: "Get real!* You are still an Indian in looks and manners. *You may be born here and fan that piece of paper (...) but for Italians you'll never live up to a native".* What an asshole!

Naresh's mate warned him against the perils of racialized citizenship (Colombo et al. 2011), of being looked down as a "fake *citizen*" once grown up. For the time being, Naresh (who never whined peer harassment for being a child of immigrants), countered his friend's remark with an uplifting episode.

> *…down to the pitch they asked me to show my ID (…) to enroll in this season (soccer) tournament… there it came the time! I took out my pass; for the first time, in front of the authorities, mine, my Italian national pass. The clerk checked it and pat me on my back, he said something like "well done, son, you're in the Aurora team and can join the national team one day". The boys (his teammates) wooed… that just made me so happy!*

Although Naresh was as good as a soccer goalkeeper as a cricket batsman, the idea of being able to join Italy in the major league one day made his eyes shine. Whether the boy felt that it was just a daydream, such a great expectation charged with emotional value, with joy and pride, his newly acquired national membership. Italian citizenship seemed to endow him with an added recognition of social belonging within his peer network, in the country where he was born and lived since.

The Sharma kids were so far keener on the discourses attributed to nationalities and to how these related to their daily experience as second-generation migrants. That the benefits of naturalization could reach beyond their nuclear household, was an asset Asha acknowledged. Since her mother in law was an ageing widow in rural Punjab, Italian nationality gave them the opportunity to rejoin their elder who wished so, once the rest of their kin consented. The Sharmas credited naturalization with a span of options for several generations within the family: for the first-time migrants to secure their stay, for the youngsters born abroad to move "further north" (UK, EU Schengen Area), for the elders left back eventually to rejoin. Overall, they believed Italian citizenship was an ace in the hole for fruitful life projects of either mobility or stillness, not clear of ambiguities.

Sometimes, nattering over former Indian neighbors who naturalized and then moved out, Asha and Rajeev commented on the *instrumental use of Italian citizenship* and its potential drawbacks. Their dialogic exchanges subsumed the tension between a "politics of identity" and one "of interest" in *shifting* one's citizenship (Brubaker 1992).

> A.: *See what happened to Majeeda[96]'s daughter? Poor girl, she can't bond abroad (…).*
> R.: *What did they think? Once you bring up your kids in Italy, and you're lucky enough to have a job,   a house and pass them on citizenship, would it be easy to resettle elsewhere once again?*
> A.: *Those parents are to blame; they just did not see that naturalization takes more than a visa (…).*
> R. *It's not a gift, we worked hard for it. It's more like* an award, for a life commitment!

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[96] Majeeda, one of Asha's Sikh Punjabi friends, and her family moved to Leeds after fifteen years in Italy and two since naturalization. A blending of immediate benefits and long-term better prospect merged in their UK second migration. The household initially lived off welfare subsidies, then, once Majeeda's husband secured a post in the catering industry, they resettled permanently in the local British Punjabi neighborhood, also accounting for the top education English national system that their children could avail of (Zeitlyn 2013).

My friends' rumors sounded shrill to my ears, as they deliberately ignored the contradiction in censuring another family for doing just what they kept on wishing for their own kin. That (some of) the Sharmas might move out too sooner or later was an option with no blame nor shame. To hold Italian citizenship after naturalization added another loyalty to one's everyday multiple belongings, yet, according to my interlocutors, in juggling with transient regimes of nationality the point was rather to remain able to take ethical resolutions. "*You ought to do what is good for your family (*parivaar*), regardless passports*", Rajeev resolved. For a former Indian expatriate, an EU citizenship could indeed be an asset, but it also required the ability to understand and master the status, rights and identities that came with it (Joppke 2010).

These family snippets reveal the intricacies of naturalization for Punjabi diasporans in Italy, the relentless intersection of personal accounts and normative realities. In biographic narratives, personal meanings of citizenship are negotiated within overlapping frames: the local governance of family immigration and social incorporation, the country of origin's policy for maintaining linkages with expatriates and the Diaspora transnational imaginary.

In the household studied, naturalization may be strategic to rearrange transnational migration. Naturalization operates *hic et nunc* in the local Italian resettlement, bearing easier access to social services and driving full civic participation. Simultaneously, the new Italian nationality acquired through "an adequate length of time on the soil" wipes out the former Indian citizenship held by birth (or ancestry). However, Indian "emotional citizenship" (Ho 2009) often remains significant for first time migrants and some leeway for Indian community membership at a distance has developed. As seen in Ch. 4.3, Rajeev took hold of his PIO-OCI card, a lifetime visa to enter India freely and benefit from banking solutions for Overseas Indians. (See par. 3.1 on the "alternative citizenship taxonomy" with which post-independence India blended nationalist chauvinism and globalized neoliberalism in order to maintain a profitable bind with the expats). Flanked between the restrictive rules for attaining citizenship in Italy and the haziness of India towards emigrates, Punjabis evaluate their national memberships against a grid of ambivalent social loyalties and further motilities or moorings.

Many scholars argued that Indian Diasporas thrive with a diverse imaginary (Appadurai 1996, Mishra 2006). Punjabi communities in Italy look up to their "veteran" and often better-off British counterparts in order to envision and devise migratory paths of social achievement (see ch.1; Bonfanti 2015a). Double or serial migrations (rather than returns) are rising among South Asians relocated in southern Europe. Moving up the social ladder often equates with "moving up north", like the Sharmas suggested. For Italian Punjabis such a prospect is scattered with practical and ethical conundrums and it is still to be assessed whether it will take a second generation (often

naturalized and well integrated, in spite of a mounting "civic stratification", Morris 2003) to effectively take off (Bertolani 2012).

Naturalization stands as a proof of (or a stepping-stone for) sound integration in the country of residence and at once as an endorsed option towards additional transnational itineraries, especially on the European checkerboard. A shift in nationhood through naturalization is both a mean and an end in the immigration process. It is a tool to enact a "transborder citizenry", which is lived across borders within transnational social fields (see Ch.1; Glick Schiller 2005). Citizenship affects one's engagement with multiple locations: the departed home country, the country of residence, and the eventual countries of further destination. Contradictory lived experiences are at odds with the formal properties of citizenship and its reference to territorial sovereignty: ethnographic accounts reveal a volatile terrain for intersecting national belonging, social empowerment and civic participation.

7.1.3 Going Inditians: a room with (more than) a view

Revisiting the life stories and family narratives that animated my work entails to reassess generation disruptions but also to follow up on migrant people's lives. Since I conducted my research and wrote it down, over three years went by. My interlocutors' projects started out, modified, did or did not finalize. In the *chaorder* of the Inditian diaspora, the generational change (with its many intersections) was still a work in progress. No migratory life narrative clinched with a definite resolution, no family claimed permanent achievement; the second generations were possibly more unsettled than the first-migrant ones. If ethnography is by default time and space bound, could I get out of the impasse of narrating the gendered and intergenerational variation in the Punjabi diaspora of eastern Lombardy, without giving a closing remark? What if any possible end was in fact a new beginning?

An attentive reader must have noticed that I missed to recount another Inditian life narrative, that of a 1.5 Punjabi Sikh young woman, reunited in Italy as a teen, where she lived her troublesome coming of age. Praneet's life story inducted the biographic accounts I analyzed (par. 3.2) and stood at the core of gender and generation nodes within her family genealogy, the Bhakyas, who were my other closest household (beside the Sharmas) and whose Indian resident grandfather was dear to me as my own. Praneet's Inditian experience was inseparable from her mother Kanval and brother Gurinder, better integrated kin who acted as foils to the young woman unsettledness in Italy. "Stuck" in a migration she had not chosen (taken to Bergamo at age twelve) and she did not know how to ensue (with no professional aims nor sustaining peer network), Praneet took advantage of

the option her parents (and grandad in Punjab) offered her. An arranged "return marriage" took Praneet back to India; in a few weeks, she wed a young Sikh man who was enthused by his expat bride. If that re-rooting had locked Praneet's routes, I could have wondered whether it was a letdown to my friend's *motility*, her capability to stay or move as she pleased, being a Sikh diaspora young woman. Instead, quite unexpectedly as it had come about, that return marriage soon proved its transnational potential.

Fifty days after the wedding, Praneet went back to live with her parents in Italy, resumed her post in the manufacturing firm on a longer term contract and filed the request to get Bilal, her newlywed husband, reunited. For a few months, as she kept going back and forth between Lombardy and Punjab, this practically unsettled conjugal union grew ever steadier. I happened once at the Bakyhas' home and stood in wonder at Praneet's Skype calling Bilal with laughter and tender teasing, prettified like she never used to. By the time she found out she was pregnant, he joined her over and temporarily settled down with his in-laws (under the infrequent matrilocal residence, *ghar jamai*, described in par. 6.2). Whose agency drove that circular move? Was it Praneet's nostalgia for her *parivaar*? Her groom's interest in becoming part of the fancy diaspora he had chosen to marry into?

The newly enlarged household put some strain on all co-living kin, so that Kanval and Manbir agreed with their Italian property owner to pay for renovating the rented apartment, having an additional *room* built for their daughter's budding unit. The rapid followings, with Bilal searching for work in Bergamo through the brokerage of co-ethnic "brothers" (considering his difficult access to Italian recruitment because of a total lack of language knowledge) and Praneet on maternity leave, open up new scenes for this extended family migration and cannot be trailed in the span of this work. My domestic ethnography cut off with that new room which was literally under construction. A plasterboard wall, precarious as much as effective, made "room" for another family-engineered mobility. No better construction element could show the art and struggle of *home-making* in a diaspora resettlement, which aimed to maintain a leeway for movement.

Praneet's mobility *agency* capitalized on her unsettled emotions and gendered marginality: what I deemed a patriarchal return marriage soon shifted to a second "coming home" migration where she took the lead. Despite her still precarious job and legal status (a long-term immigrant, who had nonetheless grown up in Italy), Praneet sponsored her spouse reunion and turned around the male prerogatives in starting a migratory chain (just like her mother did at her time under different *structural* conditions). Prospecting a third generation under one roof, Praneet envisions the chance for her baby yet to be born to acquire soon Italian citizenship, as nationality rules are currently

being revised in Italy and a tempered recognition of *ius soli* might give new generations of migrants the prospect to choose where to live and make room for themselves.

Praneet's (un)settled story unfolds across spaces and connections, from the vantage point of a middle class Sikh young woman, within a diverse Punjabi diaspora in a specific Italian resettlement. Her biographic route threads genealogies and mobilities, cresting in the "changing face of her home" (Levitt, Waters 2002). While the newlyweds' room attests the affirmative appropriation of an intimate space, overall the relentless family homemaking partakes in a *transnational domestic moral economy*, which is kin-oriented, socially valued, and part of a larger economy (Sykes 2009). At last, the Bhakyas' *ghar* depends on the political economy of migration and on the symbolic room that kin members might carve out to inhabit their transnational Inditian home (Al-Ali, Khoser 2002).

As I come to conclude this paragraph, "going through and beyond the citizenship issue", I find it apt to revise the term Inditian, which I chose to use throughout this text. Who are Inditians, indeed? Are they Italian Indians or Indian Italians, which term is the nominal part of the subject clause and which the modifying adjective? Can we assume that nationality status defines this proposition or is rather the extent of one's engagement in either milieu that renders one membership more salient than the other? Is this an *aut aut* option or, like Veena suggested (see ch. 6.3) "*one belonging does not necessarily cut down on another*"?

In all the family oral histories I collected, in their *narrative generational change*, there ran a shift from a more communal homeland orientation to a more individual local attachment (Eriksen 2015), but with no obvious generalization. Second-generation Inditians appeared involved in and committed to their Inditianness, which they played out "either" or "both" way, according to their gendered and contingent modalities of existence (Brah 1996). The intricate possibilities of their *(un)settledness* developed in the specific chaordic place (Werbner 2002) which is the Italian Punjabi diaspora (Bertolani, forthcoming). Responding to the everyday contradictions lived by my local informants and their transnational kin, I will now proffer a counterargument to my work, through the eyes of an élite Indian young woman in Italy.

7.2 Manisha's story: speaking back and new trails, an *insider* claiming an *outsider*'s perspective

*After some semiformal rescheduling via mail, finally received a straight text message on my mobile from Manisha. It reads "*Ciao. Let's meet at Suardi Public Park at 10.30 Sat morn. I'll be wearing a blue raincoat and joggers, *no typical saree :-)*". Funny way to address me, as if, after having been around Indians in Italy for years, I would still expect to find any south Asian woman dressed in *traditional attires… does she think I'm naïve or is she shunning from (what she imagines) my research subjects' repertoire? (Field notes, Bergamo, 5/03/2014)*

Manisha is the odd one out in the Inditian life narratives I presented and analyzed. Actually, she is not an Inditian at all, at least not in the way my other interlocutors were, (labor) migrants of Indian origins resettled in Italy with their families. A common Italian friend had suggested our encounter accidentally, a former colleague of mine who happened to be Manisha's next-door neighbor after she moved to Bergamo in 2013 for pursuing her PhD studies. It turned out that the two women assumed I could be interested in this young Indian's story for my research. While Manisha's *herstory* was stimulating indeed because it radically differ from my other case studies, the standpoint she projected on her co-ethnics living Italy tendered me a counterargument to my ethnographic work.

A 27-year-old woman from Delhi, Manisha had just moved to Italy on her own through a European research-student exchange, after finishing her master in Germany.

Methodologically speaking, I first met Manisha in public venues of her choice (a city green area and a cozy cafeteria catering for vegetarians), where she came along with written notes intended for my "*collection of Indian memories*". We then arranged a second private talk at her place, a rented flat in tenements with communal balconies, which resist gentrification in the lower Bergamo city and are mostly occupied by immigrants or working class aged people[97]. Her abode was a small two bedroomed apartment, refurbished by the owner and well maintained, in spite of the persistent odor of damp that such dwellings built in the Fifties exhale. Manisha's nest resembled very little the *ghar* of the Inditian families I knew. Spending most of her time at the research Institute and being a strict vegetarian, she used to consume raw food at home and on duty, ate out in cheap diners at the weekend. As soon as we walked in her place, she turned on a German coffee maker, instead of preparing the customary *chai*, black, creamy and overly sweetened Indian tea, always offered in any Punjabi house. Constantly net-wired like most transnational migrants, she frantically juggled with several mobile phones and SIM cards for connecting with her transnational fields in both India and Germany. If the first country was indeed her cherished homeland, the latter had become an emotional home from home *desh/pardesh* over her postgrad years. To date (nine months since relocation), Manisha did not display a similar attachment to Italy, which she lived as a *transit* time zone, instrumental to her "global training" before returning to Delhi where she had planned her professional future with clear prospects.

I entertained a fleeter and lighter relation with Manisha than with all my other collaborators. Yet, that thinner tie gave me the advantage of losing out for once the "authority" I sometimes felt to enact over my Punjabi migrant interlocutors, who engaged with my native status as a teacher and delegate in the local milieu we shared (see ch.2). Manisha instead, proudly being a research student,

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[97] We had a couple of follow up meetings after my fieldwork formally ended (hiking and partaking in a yoga class), which were not research-driven and I do not include in this paragraph in accordance to Manisha's wish.

sensed she was a "peer" to me and was not in search of native mentorship in her Italian *passage*. My ethnographic relation with Manisha proved valuable because it was a "no-commitment" way out of a fieldwork where I had most of the time been highly involved, socially and emotionally.

In migration studies, "doom and gloom" seemed by far the refrain of immigrant lives (R. King, personal communication). While my ethnography tried to understand Punjabi diasporans' everyday, witnessing their struggles but also exposing their feats, Manisha held a quite prejudicial view of her co-ethnics in Italy. She made a point in setting herself apart from the backlash of a community she did not identify with and from a daily resettlement *habitus* that she did not share. This high-flung NRI young woman sounded absorbed in her research work in a premier medical institute, enthralled by the bourgeois cultural experience of living across different European countries. Thus far, she was not concerned with weaving significant local amities in Italy, which she considered a pleasant but provisional destination, nevertheless in approaching any south Asian immigrant on site. Her diasporic individualism did not lack kin and friend relations, parochial and cosmopolitan, which harbored in India and Germany, but there was almost no sign of Punjabi communalism on her part, although that was the ancestry she traced. For sure, there was a strong desire in remaining at bay of the sizeable Inditian community in Bergamo and Lombardy, towards which she displayed a slightly contemptuous detachment, an ambivalent *regard eloigné* in spite of undeniable cultural commonalities.

As Manisha began to disclose her story, all revolved around her early-stage research career.

> *I am a biomedical engineer. This is my first year at the Clinical Research Center "D." in R. (Bergamo), in the Unit of Medical Imaging. I am Indian, but I have a global scholar training program. After graduation in Delhi, I did a Master in Biomedical Informatics, from 2010 to 2013, at the Technical University of Munich. Then I looked for a research post on kidney diseases* (her dad died from kidney failure at 49). *I responded to an ad on Euraxess for a project funded by the E. U. (…). Among the many candidates interviewed, I was chosen (…).*
> *Like everyone, from Delhi I wanted to go to the US, but it would be too expensive. I chose Germany and then I realized this was the best choice I could do. Europe is perfect for me for the cultural and artistic scene it offers. After my superb experience in Germany, I was determined to stay there, or at least to remain in Europe.*

Steering Manisha's narration on her move to Italy, she turned hesitant and admitted that she had not yet fully emplaced in her second European relocation, which started out with a bureaucratic hurdle, though she did not spare mellow remarks for the Italian "*dolce vita*" (sweet life).

> *Getting my entry documents as a PhD student in Italy was a little prickly. In the clearance statement for getting residence permit, they had unfortunately reversed my name with my surname[98]. It took me many visits to the police headquarters, much annoyance before they managed to fix things and I could get the right visa.*
> *After that hiccup, everything went well. A bit slowly, I admit, I am learning Italian.* (Tittering fretfully). *You see, attending university in Munich as a foreign student they expect you to join free German classes. Here in Bergamo*

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[98] This apparently exceptional experience is in fact quite common for newly arrived Indian immigrants in Italy, who occasionally have their names mismatched on official documents at registry offices. I met at least two school going children whose Indian passport identity did not match with the one stamped on Italian residence permits, with the consequence of creating fuss and legal obstacles for free travelling and mere daily ménage (see Restelli 2013).

is different. Some fellows speak good English at the D. Institute and I don't have to take a language course or sit exams in Italian. Well, to get by I started taking lessons from my neighbor, your friend Luciana, a retired teacher (...). I find Italians warm and friendly, I always studied in an international environment and I get along well with my team here. Also, I love the Italian weather and all the fresh produce you grow here!

Manisha disparaged co-ethnic groceries, included a Pakistani store round the corner from her flat. She would rather take the bus and shop once a week in the local farmers' market or else fall back on a familiar German discounter for "comfort food". Her mother occasionally dispatched her parcels with homely gifts, but Manisha's wardrobe was full of jeans, jumpers and branded t-shirts with little sign of any south Asian fashion interest (which was instead "mandatory" in all my Indian female collaborators' closets, either for traditional daily wearing or for exceptional ethnic display).

Recollecting her "good time" in Munich, it appeared that Manisha had instead fashioned her individual migration in accordance to the rhetoric of high-achieving Indian diasporas (Saran 2015). On one hand, this dominant ideology followed her higher background from Delhi: urban, Hindu, Brahmin and solid middle class. On the other, the double expectations of living up to her family and performing a circular *brain migration* required her to maintain a shielding border from Hindustani labor minorities, which she did not want to associate (or be associated) with (Tripathy 2014).

Although, while studying in Munich, Manisha did connect with some south Asian peers who were on a similar path of international training[99], the same did not occur in Italy. Not only was she the first researcher from the Subcontinent at the clinical research Centre (actually one of the few extra-European staffs, beside a young male researcher hired from Brazil). The striking size of the Punjabi diaspora in the area, in fact produced by largely (rural Sikh) male laboring transfers and family reunifications, notwithstanding its rich diversity and comparable "middling migration" intents (see Ch.6), adversely impressed this aspiring young scholar and activated her "self-righteous pride".

In Manisha's view, her first approach to Italy with that bureaucratic scuffle over her name was likely the only similar experience she might have had in respect to Indians or Punjabis in the area.

Anyway, I have nothing to complain really, they treated me like a princess *at the registry offices. It's not just a matter of how you look, it's about how you act in public. They understood* I am a different sort *from those uncultured* mamas *with screaming babies in their buggies (...) I saw many of them queuing for getting their documents,* poor things. *Certainly, in Punjab, they could be miserable, but I am not sure how they get on here. You must know better than I do.*

At first, Manisha condescendence startled me, but it all became sensible once she laid bare her Indian family background and mobility project, which I could guess considering her attitude and academic calling. She conceded that her present Italian "digression" was instrumental to her career and cultural aspirations, which she tailed with great independence, being the second of three

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[99] She also hinted to a love affair with a Pakistani Punjabi fellow, whom she soon castoff, once he vented that in the future she might have to convert from Hinduism to Islam for the relationship to continue and end up in a marriage.

daughters of a Hindu *Brahmin* household. Her eldest sister was already married with a son; the youngest was still in high school. With a wooing smile, Manisha praised herself to be "the far-flung one" among her sisters, apparently taking after her father, who had died over ten years earlier and was a medical doctor in Haryana. Her mother was instead Punjabi-born, anyway coming from a Hindu higher *jati*, whose glorious family house, set midway between Delhi and Chandigarh, was Manisha's site for longing (that was in fact the only picture from homeland she had installed in her new lodging).

When I asked her what she missed from India, her candid answer puzzled me once more:

> *I miss my family most, but my mother came to see me and I went back to India in August for the holidays. It was the first time since I left for Europe. (...) What else?* I also miss the cultural and religious diversity of my country. *Everything is so* neater *here in Europe.*

Whether German Protestantism or Italian Catholicism had bored Manisha, who said she did not care much about spirituality, I tried to suggest iconic "places of difference" she might enjoy in Bergamo too, including the many temples for worship established by the local Inditian communities.

Yet, she did not abide to my cues. On the contrary, as she queried further into my research, she started to ripen an alternative argument to my view of Punjabi transnational migrations to Italy. Not only she could boast a diverse personal experience (in terms of *elite* background and reason for mobility), but she also claimed to own an emic, authentic and "direct" understanding of Punjabi Diasporas, by virtue of a cultural intimacy she refused in practice. Drawing a comparison with the south Asian student milieu in Munich, animated by fellows "*smart and well-bred*", she lamented that no similar scene was "*available*" to her in Bergamo. In fact, I could not introduce Manisha to any peer Inditian who shared her same life "quest and inquest" (see ch. 6), who was a free-riding scholarly *transmigrant*, of higher origins and even higher professional prospects.

Remarkably, what she said to miss from "home" where she intends to go back once a Doctor, (as a "voluntary returning knowledge worker", Tripathy 2014), i.e. the cultural and religious diversity of India, sounded a voyeuristic glance rather than a full appreciation or envisaged engagement with such a social complexity. Like thousand high-skilled Indian migrants, Manisha surfed her strategic mobility to become part of the diaspora *elite* so to "give something back to her country". Yet, once returned, most Indian knowledge migrants fence themselves in international schools, multinational compounds and gated residences (see the Mohali hub I described in Ch.4), merging emotional citizenship with a feel of "superiority". Aware of her top caste and class position, Manisha reserved smooth words for giving back her cultural capital to her homeland, but making sure that would not force her to cross *elite* precincts, neither in India nor in Italy, with "*mediocre*" Indian co-nationals.

Manisha's stern aerial view on Indian immigrants in Italy, on the Punjabis co-inhabiting Lombardy with her, resonated with the differentiated south Asian diasporic imaginary, which is not an encompassing group identity, but a shifting lived-in reality always *scaled* in place and power (Gupta, Ferguson 1997; Caglar, Glick Schiller 2011). As a transnational imagined community (Glick Schiller, Salazar 2013), Indian diasporas tend to draw a line between modern model minorities or high-achieving expatriates (invariably fit for the UK or North American Eldorado) *versus* last waves immigrant labor force in southern Europe with their minor utopias (Hage 2004, 2015, often made of struggling resettlement and search for "further north" betterment).

Manisha's paradoxical *emic/ethic* consideration of the Italian Punjabi diaspora contributed to case a more cohesive image, though drawn as *subaltern*, of that quite heterogeneous transnational "virtual village community" I had stepped in for years. Against my long-time community commitment, her stiff aloofness reaffirmed the undeniable social divides inherent in this imagined and lived-out collective, which I had construed for framing my study and to which my research subjects appealed in their daily politics of belonging (Yuval-Davis 2012). At once, the eccentricity of this young Indian woman in Italy exposed the riddles of social positionalities within the Inditian diaspora, their many alternative participation and detachment, willingness to stay put and get move.

No doubt, this very last life narrative revealed a different script: a more individualized, first-time migrant, female and top migration; a *sui generis* circular, white-collar mobility. Manisha's experience of being an Indian diasporan, enacting a transnational migration and living in multicultural Italy differed from all my other close informants, my Inditian women friends in particular. From Kanval or Asha who left for Italy when they were about Manisha's age for work and family reunification and now linger between permanent resettlement and serial migrations. From Praneet or Veena who are slightly younger than Manisha and provisionally returned to India under an arranged marriage or still aim to move north pursuing disputed careers through Italian naturalization.

Nevertheless, in all these mobility stories it runs some cultural continuity, life words and life worlds (see ch.3) that are mutually understandable not only because they speak (in) the same language. Certain affective dimensions, moral rights and duties, family bonds, economic and legal frameworks impinge on the (un)settledness of Inditians, although differently affecting groups and individuals, according to one's social and cultural capital, structural constraints, personal agencies and flukes. Manisha challenged my interpretation of "dislocating, re-producing and contesting Punjabiyat" as I had come to understand it through the eyes of my collaborators, situated members of migrant families from diverse Indian backgrounds (in faith, caste and class) with dissimilar Italian outcomes (in livelihoods, social integration and political citizenship). Yet, the dissonance of

living *betwixt and between* Punjabi and Lombardy, with gendered and generational variations, was acknowledgeable to Manisha, the daughter of the same "culture of migration" (Cohen, Sirkeci 2011, see ch.4) from a vantage point, just as it was to me after years of participant observation.

I could frame this young scholar's story of fleeting and "crème of the crop" Inditian experience under the rubric of *umeed* and *rakhsa*, high expectation and achievement, upward mobility. But I could not help to witness that the unsettledness Manisha pursued in her Italian *passage* was preventing her from "homing" in the diaspora even for a brief spell (for the duration of the PhD which would cart her to adulthood), unable to see beyond the doom and gloom of her co-ethnic migrancy in spite of ostensible critical differences. Against her cosmopolitan sociability, her detachment from an imagined community she looked down on, dreading to consociate with and operating some intra-ethnic racism (which grippingly paired Indian social segregation and Italian civic stratification), excluded her from approaching a localized but transnational social field that actively resisted and dared multiple discrimination.

The oral history I gathered and this whole ethnography aim instead to render the slogs of "making homes" in the Italian Punjabi diaspora, without hiding its perils and inconsistencies, but also crediting its search for cultural exchange and social advancement. To the benefit of my collaborators, their transnational kin and local communities, I foremost revealed the *micro* efforts Inditian migrants advanced in bridging countries and cultures, places and belongings, arguing for (despite some drawbacks) more inclusive "rooms" among the *macro* regimes of "critical mobilities" (see Ch.1, Soderstrom et al. 2013).

Conclusions: from ethnographic writing to community commitment

A: So, what did you gain? Good food, laughter, travels… what else?
S (mumbling): mmh, tales… and friends?!
A: Achha (right), that was worth it!

(Asha and I, strolling around her home, September 2014)

Where it all came down to. An epilogue. When Asha queried about the final stages of my work, franticly winding up, I was not quite sure of what I had cropped in terms of ethnographic writing, but I knew without hesitation that fieldwork had been immensely enriching, often intense and at times painful. As the writing was almost done, I questioned myself: what did she earn, my *Bhabi* and dear *dost* for partaking with me all the time? What my other close collaborators, looser informants and all the Italian Punjabis or Inditians who had slipped in my work did reap for their company and assistance? Any ethnographic relation is a tightrope walk between take and give, questions and answers, intimacy and detachment. Exchange and returns came from my part in the form of what my situated position as a native and teacher could offer: Italian language tutoring, local cross-cultural mediation, practical arrangements. As I related, some collaborators, especially the youth who were more actively engaged in the local milieu, each with their own tussles and wants, asked for my intervention in minor and major issues, whether for undertaking new businesses or translating into Italian prized Punjabi texts, for solving family conflicts or denouncing spasms of intolerance.

Reciprocity was also a key element in the domestic moral economy of the Inditian families I worked with. Punjabi diaporans' migration and homing in Italy embedded in their transnational kinship and unfolded through many practices of bargaining emotions and values, material and symbolic resources. This whole ethnography stems from a mutual exchange of information and trust sharing. As I was the active recipient of intense narrative work, it was my duty to render the partiality of the life stories I gathered, but also to account for their patterned social dynamics.

The novelty of this work, tracking some common threads. Amidst the disparate trails that this ethnography charted, listening to and interpreting the life worlds and words of Inditians as they made room for themselves in their diasporic everyday, some recurrent terms and themes fleeted in. Three points were particularly salient in my work and give reason to the *original* contribution that my piece advance to the incipient scholarship on south Asian minorities in Italy.

First, this ethnography critically accounts for the complexity of *Punjabiyat,* Punjabi identification. Overcoming the binarism Sikh vs. Hindu, so far imperant in the pertinent Italian literature and against any essentialism in defining migrants' identities, Punjabiness turned *vernacular* in the eastern Lombardy locale. Resettlement unleashed hybrid Punjabi ways of being and belonging, according to one's situated position in the diaspora (divided by caste, class and religion) and to one's situated insertion in the site of resettlement (liable to gender and age and the "dependencies" instituted among migrant family members). *Intersectionality* was a key to understand the inner diversity of Punjabi identification and the increasing social differentiation that takes place within the resettled community, with a reshuffle of private and public hierarchies. In particular, I raised the claims of informants fighting for their rights over patriarchal and caste subordination, but all my collaborators exposed their share of lived inequalities, including a marginalized incorporation in the local society and the suffering from racialized discrimination. Casting an anti-essentialist ethnography urged me to confront the multiple essentialist rhetoric that impinged on these transmigrants' ordinary lives and their uneasy emplacements in northern Italy.

Second, this ethnography narrates a generational change in the Inditian diaspora through a *life history approach,* which is quite unique in the literature on South Asians in Italy. *Gendered and intergenerational narratives* voiced the different wrangles that diasporans experienced as female or male, workers, homemakers or students in enacting their dislocated Punjabiness in Bergamo and Brescia. The uniqueness of each personal narratives embedded in a collective frame of mobility aspiration. On one hand, this approach highlighted the centrality of the *family* in engineering this diapora movement. On the other, life narratives rendered more salient the *locality* of the study, with its dynamics of social inclusion/exclusion. Longitudinally set, life tales also charted the uncertainty of migration, in spite of long-term resettlement and increasing rates of Italian naturalization.

Finally and coherently, this work explores the cultural intimacy of *ghar*, the Punjabi home (and the household which inhabits it) as this is pursued in Italy, maintaining transnational ties with the homeland and global orientations. If most scholarship on the Punjabis in Italy took place in work, religious or school settings, my work touched upon these focal public contexts, but particularly enquiried the "home" in its material and relational arrangement. Generally underconsidered, Inditian homes were as a key place and meaning to understand the progressive "homing" in the local context of Inditian families. Acting a form of *domestic ethnography* and searching for the construction of belonging in a world of movement, my findings rethink the premises of diaspora studies and draws a connection, paradoxical but fruitful, between migration and sedentarism, between a "politics of mobility" and an "ethics of home".

A farewell ethnographic vignette closes the circle of "engendering" homes in the Inditian diaspora, between the means of reciprocity and the end of (un)settledness.

Visavaasa in Punjabi stands for "trust" and pertains to economic or religious discourse: one may entrust an intermediary or devote his faith to God(s). *Rahki*, whose etymology connects to *Raksha*, safety, as we have just recounted, stands for the social bond that make such "shelter" attainable, and once again is inscribed in the language of kinship.

In late August 2013, at the end of a scorching week, Asha and Rajeev's kids were getting excited about the incoming festival of *Rakhi. Raksha Bhandan* is a Hindu celebration distinctive of Punjab and Haryana (in fact known all over India and Nepal), which is also observed by Sikhs and Jains and is incredibly popular across the diasporas. Candles lighted in all corners of their family room, Deepti was to tie a sacred thread (the *rakhi*) on her brother's wrist; in turn, Naresh would pledge to protect her for life. As customary, ritual offers, reciprocal hand feeding with sweets and small gift exchanges crowned the day. The presents that the children picked inscribed the Rakhi inherited by their parents in their Italian childhood; not least, a Neapolitan-style beanos which made them die from laughing. A year after, while Praneet was back in Garshankar, Punjab awaiting for her wedding to be celebrated, she found the time to post a handmade *rakhi* over to Bergamo, Italy to remind her brother of the kinship bond that tied them across transnational spaces and different life prospects. No other jubilee, for its apparent minimalism and ubiquity in the Punjabi diaspora, better threaded the domestic intimacies of Inditian households. Apart from historical controversies over its origins, *Rakhi* is a truly modern non-confessional and culturally encompassing event that marks gender agreement, sibling support and wish for the betterment. In its lived practice, it is a perennial memento of the *raksha* (safety) Indian diasporas search for, homing in Italy or elsewhere, of the *umeed* (great expectations) which settle them into motion and of the kin ties which should sustain them in their diverse mobility projects.

Closing my ethnography, I wish to go back where I started, following the "cartographies of diaspora" that Brah (1996, 2003) showed us as gendered, racialised and always situated, but nevertheless far from the aseptic perimeters of mapping or quantitative descriptions. The domestic narratives I rendered, at the intersection of gender and age, of displacement and emplacement are indeed loaded with a scent of memories and desires, with the rattle of contested inter-subjectivities and the *ghar*, the home and the household, that mediates them. In this way, person-centrism and socio-centrism need not be separate: the person is indeed the active node of context and history, evermore in the unsettledness of diasporic condition.

> The diaspora – as an emergent space and an interpretive frame – unpicks the claims made for the unities of culturally homogeneous, racially purified identities, and constitutes the moment of the problematic of the subject –

when critical thought comes face to face with the perplexing interface between the social and the psychic. (Hall 2010:27).

Limits of the study and recommendations for further research.

While offering alternative views and vantage points to deconstruct stereotypes and critically interpret Italian Punjabi diaspora lives, my gender and generation perspective in analyzing their narratives and experiences was not exhaustive nor encompassing. There are at least four intrinsic limits in my research that account for the methodological choices I pursued in order to restrict the field and make ethnographic work doable, but which definitely calls for further investigation.

First, I acknowledge that the territorial *scale* of my fieldwork was bounded and the size of my social *sample* limited.

Brescia and Bergamo districts "host" almost half of the Indian population in Lombardy and a fifth of this minority at the national level, but their consistency is so diverse that the four privileged households I selected may represent but do not exhaust its variation. The closeness developed over time with my interlocutors and my methodological person-centrism came at the expense of a more socio-centric analysis of the overall local Inditian community. That in turn partially sapped my potential for comparison with other areas of long-term Punjabi resettlement that have been so far better explored, in particular the regional context of Emilia Romagna.

Moreover, my brief but extremely rich fieldwork in India, did offer me a taste of that scent of memory most Inditian friends rummaged over. The unique hospitality of the four extended kin in Punjab resonated in my ethnography and served me to understand how their transnational domestic economy could work on two shores, between mutual aspirations and obligations, remittances and emotions. Nonetheless, I chose not to compose a separate section for my Punjabi fieldwork since its many spurs would have been centrifugal from the core theme of diasporic homing in my ethnographic analysis. Provided I secured some funding, a second journey through Punjab would be a priority for future research, possibly also across the Wagah Attari Border (stepping into Pakistani Punjab).

Second, although I regretted it since the beginning, a clear limit of my work was the exclusion of *Pakistani Punjabis* from my sample. As I explained, there were at least two sensible reasons for this "segmented" choice. On one hand, though interacting through a common spoken regional idiom, Indian and Pakistani Punjabis did not steadily mingle. Not only national rivalry and religious divide averted them from doing so, but many Indians flaunted aloofness and superiority if not patent discrimination against Pakistanis. Islamophobia was a stance largely shared among the Indian transmigrants I worked with (Moliner 2007, Sian 2013). On the other, to include Pakistani Punjabis in my study would require a better knowledge of Islam as a strong identity marker in the area, so to

understand its relation to nation building and develop an emotional ability to surf the unease through the biases just mentioned. In recognizing this ceiling to my work, I strongly suggest new directions for investigation, since neither in Italy nor elsewhere Indo-Pakistani diaspora relations have been adequately searched (Talbot, Thandi 2004). Moreover, Bergamo and Brescia, because of their particular immigrant population share would make an ideal location to pursue such studies[100].

Third, the *generational change* I analyzed within Punjabi families in Italy, with all its undercurrent conflicts and alliances, secrets and silence, considered in fact two generations only: a first-migrant generation and an imperfect 1.5, 2nd generation. That meant I interviewed and daily partook with adult women and men in their thirties or forties, and with their children in their twenties or teenage. Two generations do not cast in my sample, but echo all across the diaspora: the elders and the youngsters.

With the term elders, I identify the parents of first-time migrants, most of whom are in fact "third" agers and generally still live in Punjab. Not only did I recognize their significant authority at a distance in making Punjabi transnational kinship, but I also suggest their possible transfer to their resettled offspring's, in case of opportune ancestral reunion. This may well be in the near future a new frontier for Punjabi diasporas in Italy, where under the same roof a paradoxical novel but "traditional" joint household will host three generations: from newly expat elders to full second generation Italians.

As for those kids who are in fact born in Italy and have since lived there continuously (such as my adult women friends' children and most minor of age pupils in schools), I did have many occasions to observe and note down their behaviors and remarks, their perspectives on being Inditian, their multiple loyalties regardless national belonging. Yet, I chose not to interview them neither to account for their stories in my ethnography out of respect for their minor age: aware that the procedures to meet ethical requirements and obtain parents' informed consent could have been fiddly enough. As a mother of two myself, I also believed that such a delicate ethnographic work needed to be conducted with extreme caution and deserved a total commitment and tailored research plan to see their "transnational childhoods" (Zeytlin 2013). Given my professional engagement in the schooling system, this path of enquiry will make an easier route to continue research with this "model minority" in the locale we daily co-habit.

Fourth and last, *sexuality and sexual orientation* in particular is a sphere of analysis that could add up to intersectionality and gender discourse but I did not cover in my work. It is apparent that I

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[100] I started to develop such an enquiry in two conference papers where I respectively explored Indo-Pakistani diaspora relations in connection with *ethnic* food fare and cricket clubs across the two mentioned provinces. Substantial ethnographic work is still to be undertaken.

found heterosexual normativity rather "normalized" or even "naturalized" in my informants' life worlds and words. My four collaborating households embodied this social heteronormativity and even built up their family migration plans on it. So did the eight informants interviewed at length. Brisk references to alternative forms of sexuality and particularly homosexuality (and the prejudices it cast) seemed to reinforce the validity of the norm (see the case of Sunil in Ch. 6), also in front of masculine and feminine roles and identities which may be altering in diaspora but remain highly polarized (Mankekar 2008, Bonfanti 2013). A follow up of my ethnography could take into consideration this covert missing link, not simply assuming that Inditian second generations may be more or less keen on exploring "other" sexual orientations, but acknowledging that there is an increasing space for debate on these matters. Although neither in Italy nor in India the discourse on sexuality runs free of cultural taboos and legal vetoes, ethnographic research in the "third space" of diaspora (Bhabha 1994) could forward a new understanding of "*queer*" gender and sexuality not necessarily *versus* but also within the "mainstream", adding to its still narrow research in social and cultural studies (Gopinath 2005).

Overall, these curbs in territorial scale, ethnic sampling, age range and gendered heteronormativity may point to new explorations. At the same time, they explicate the uniqueness of this ethnography, notwithstanding the extreme variety of perspectives accounted in these pages.

Implications of findings for immigration policy? The ethnography here presented never intended to make a case for "applied" social science research, although in theorizing the subfield of anthropology of migration (Brettel, Hollifield 2013) a nexus was fastened between migration politics and policies and the discourses and social practices that construe its object of study. Ahead of my explicit intention to reveal critical inequities in Inditian diasporan lives and voice their situated struggles over a multi-stranded social differentiation, all migration research essentially applies to a critical social reality, made of people, transits and transformations, agencies and institutions. In this work, the life narratives of my research subjects were constantly intertwined with countless *stakeholders* shaping their politics of mobility, be they (trans)national assets and legal statuses or (trans)local actors and institutions. Most scholarship on Punjabis in Italy reasoned over labor market and religious matters, which I did touch upon in my work (and were central to some informants' local emplacement), but were not the focus of my reflection.

By chance, doing domestic ethnography and analyzing family generational change, besides being professionally engaged in the school system, dragged me insistently towards issues of *schooling* and building cultural capital. Not that I may give clear indications in this sense, once again due to the limited sample of my informants and because my qualitative findings did not come in the guise

of a research report. Yet, the thickness of narratives about this lived social domain yielded some "applied" considerations. Concerning the national educational system as it experienced by Punjabi immigrants in Bergamo and Brescia, two observations, which again intersect gender and age, surge loud.

As for the children of immigrants, 1.5 and 2nd generations face different hurdles in schools, the one still working through emplacement and language acquisition, the other battling their unquestioned local belonging with more than occasional skirmishes over different (and embodied) cultural habitus. The transition from high school to college or work continues to draw a gender gap between girls and boys, who, as they come of age, do not always avail of the option to decide whether to conform or deviate from given manhood and womanhood. Unless supported by a different recognition of gender equality in personally determining one's future, some stereotyped customs will continue to remain hegemonic (primarily regarding arranged marriages).

As for the first generation migrant, their schooling background radically varied, with some Punjabi immigrants who may feel they have lost their cultural capital in order to fit in the unskilled laboring marketplace (in rural or industrial premises). A specific attention should be devoted to those thousand Indian migrant women, often reunited from the homeland, who remain isolated in the tight confines of their new homes and whose transnational mobility turned into a local stillness, which the effective acquisition of the national language may loosen (as my experience in teaching Italian to immigrant women made evident).

In fact, both housing and schooling raise the issue of a stratified access to local resources and a gendered racialized discrimination. Institutional practices and commonplace social interactions feedback on a biased climate of opinion intercepted by political parties but firmly swayed by media discourses. This ethnography set out to critically re-think the national longstanding typecast of Indian (Sikh) *undisturbing turbans*[101] and ended up exposing the unforeseen rapacity of a local crime news artfully turned into cultural stocks (see par. 6.2.3). In the midst of a cross-European "refugee emergency", the media should be held responsible for dominant discourses that timely give out alarming tags and derogatory stereotypes. Prejudicial targeting also affect social groups that have been for long resettled, thus more or less incorporated or integrated, in the faulty multicultural model that Italy has seen developing every day in its super-diverse "micropolitan gateways" (Bonizzoni, Marzorati 2015). Punjabi diasporas in rural-urban Lombardy make indeed for such a case, calling for a more nuanced discursive representation, which may in turn boost fairer social encounters and more inclusive configurations of diversity.

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[101] Including its fresh spread across different locales and media, if we consider the recent documentary "Sikh Formaggio"(2014) directed by US graduate students and a latest Punjabi insert in the *TimesofIndia* lulling over the "Punjabi cheeesemakers' Italian tale" (9/07/2015).

Overall, this ethnography is a passionate sounding board for divulging knowledge about the Italian Punjabi minority, from a consciously located stance. This stance is entrenched in the everyday lives of two generations of Indian migrants longtime resettled in eastern Lombardy, between prospects and setbacks. Yet, their located experience of mobility *cum* settlement is also interspersed with a diasporic imaginary that makes for transnational connections and a continuous reshuffling of the deck. Finally, the viewpoints here presented are the result of a convergence and a mediation, between my research subjects and my research interests, with all the dis-junctures that possibly came from ethnographic collaboration, nonetheless unequal and where I had the last say.

This piece of writing comes in the end as a tribute to my Inditian friends and their transnational kin, who provisionally settled in my narratives, hinting to the unforeseen of their migration routes and life projects. It is part of a commitment to ease the Punjabi community's emplacement in eastern Lombardy, to raise cross-cultural understanding and denaturalize misleading or derogatory social representation. It is a further step in the progressive ethnographic engagement I developed in the field. To step out of this exasperated ethnographic authority, my next commitment shall take the form of a collaborative project we had long prearranged but not yet finalized: a video documentary whose characters have so far featured in my pages as in a storyboard.

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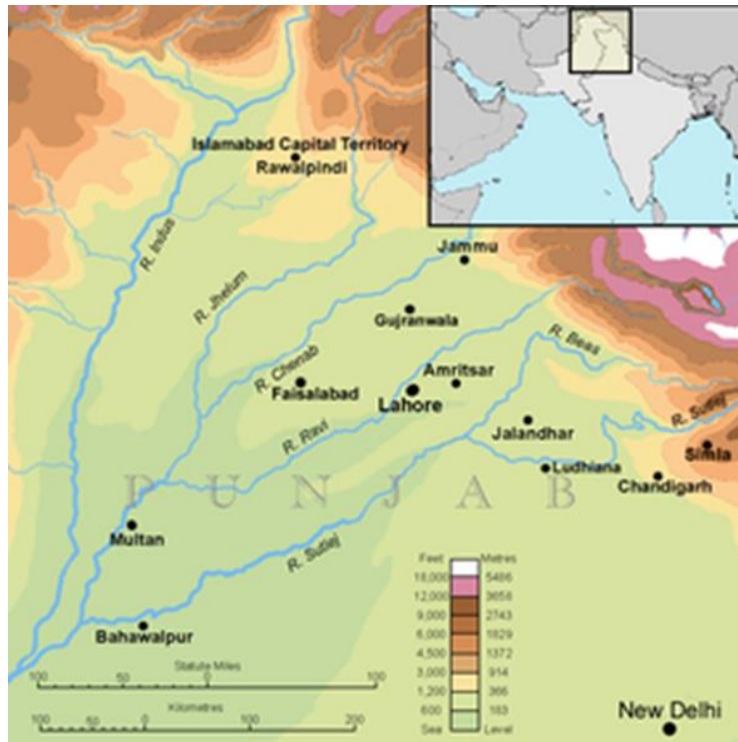
Iconographic Appendix

Fig. 1 – The Greater Punjabi Plain stretching across India and Pakistan

Fig. 2 – Indian Punjab today and its twenty districts (approx. total population 28mn)

Fig. 3 – Location of Lombardy Region in northern Italy

Fig. 4 – Lombardy and its 11 districts (approx. population 10mn, foreign citizens 1.2mn)

Fig. 5 – Punjabi immigrant family employed in a Lombardy milk farm

Fig. 6 – Sikh migrant laborers hired in green houses

Fig. 7 – "Sikh Formaggio", 2014 documentary movie directed by D. Bisson, K. Wise, D. Duran.

Fig. 8 – Small Punjabi food shop in Flero (BS)

Fig. 9 – Punjabi store and ICT centre in Gorlago (BG)

Fig. 10 – Table laid with tandoori cuisine and Italian bakeries for Punjabi kin visiting from the UK, Trescore (BG)

Fig. 11 – End of Karva Chauth fasting and all-women gathering in a rented flat in Dalmine, Nov. 2012 (BG)

Fig. 12 – Remittance house in Garshankar (exterior), Dec. 2013

Fig. 13 – Remittance house in Garshankar (interior), Dec. 2013

Fig. 14 – Material culture in remittance house: Sikh Calendar with the Ten Gurus and pictures of children long moved to Italy

Fig. 15 – Wagah-Attari Border, Martial Parade at the Gate between India and Pakistan, Jan. 2014

Fig. 16 – Harmandir Sahib, Sikh Golden Temple, Jan. 2014, Amritsar

Fig. 17 – Krishna shrine for puja, ISKCON Hindu temple, Terno (BG)

Fig. 18 – Adi Grant exit after Sunday liturgy, Singh Sabha Gurdwara, Sept. 2012, Cortenuova (BG)

Fig. 19 – Kirtan masterclass, second-gen children in gurdwara parlour, Sept. 2012, Cortenuova (BG)

Fig. 20 – A newly arrived copy of the holy text AmritBani Guru Ravidass Ji, Cividino Darbar (BG)

Fig. 21 – Sunday gathering waiting for a prominent Saint coming from Punjab, Oct. 2013, Ravidas Darbar in Cividino (BG)

Fig. 22 – Nagar Kirtan, Sikh open-air celebration performed during Vaisakhi, April 2013, Bergamo City

Fig. 23 – Women marching to contest Kaur Balwinder's "honour killing", murdered by her husband in Jun. 2012, Piacenza.

Fig. 24 – Torchlight procession remembering the doctor accidentally murdered during a brawl among Punjabi immigrants in Sept. 2013, Chiuduno (BG)

Fig. 25 – A Punjabi Wedding: Professional Photographic Album

Fig. 26 – Lit. "Everlasting Joy", most accessed Punjabi diaspora matchmaking site for recruiting online an ideal spouse

Fig. 27 – Doing *mehndi*: henna body tattoo applied by a skillful bride-beautician, Dec. 2013, Jalandhar

Fig. 28 – Narrating one's Punjabiyat: public intercultural event to raise awareness of Indian immigration to Italy, Mar. 2014, S. Paolo (BG)

Fig. 29 – (Gendered) Super-diverse conviviality: ethnic food partying to celebrate end of Italian L2 course, Jun. 2013, Albano (BG)

Fig. 30 – Rehearsing *bhangra* dance with classmates after school, Apr. 2013, Palazzolo (BS)

Fig.31 – ACC, professional junior south Asian Cricket club training on a local football pitch, May 2013, Albano (BG)

Fig. 32 – Guru Gobind Singh Ji, 10th and last Guru, founder of the Khalsa

Fig. 33– K*esh* and haircut: look and identity riddles for aspiring NRIs, "Roots of Love" (2011) documentary movie directed by H. Gill

Fig. 34 – Embodying Sikh (hyper)masculinity: V. S. Chatwal, millionaire Punjabi American and twice migrant Bollywood actor

Fig. 35 – "The Brave will take away the Bride" (1995), most popular Indian diaspora romance movie directed by A. Chopra
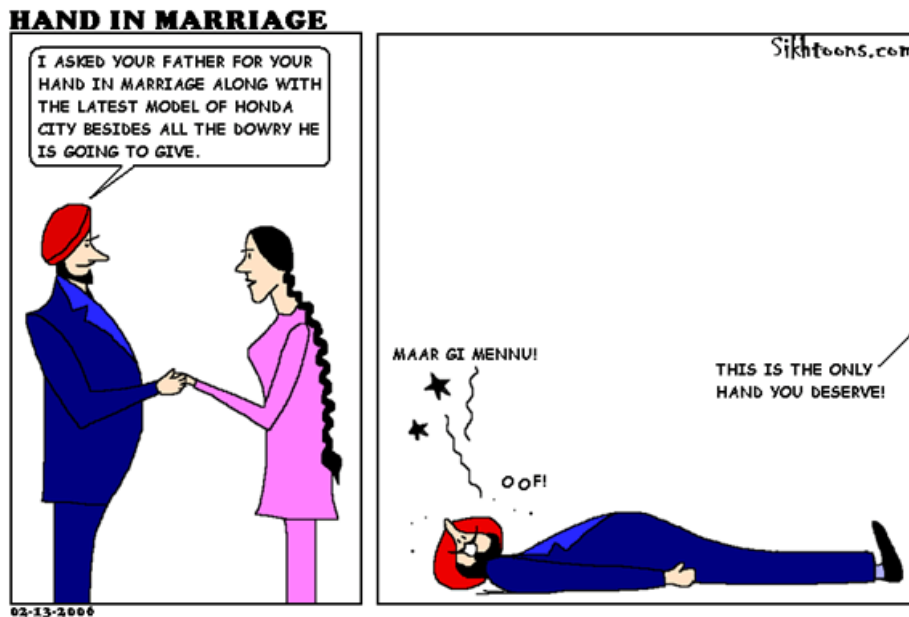

Fig. 36 – Satirical Vignette on contemporary dowry practices, (2013) by US Indian diaspora cartoonist V. Singh