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Diasporic identity and orientation to co-development:

a survey on foreign students attending the University of Pisa

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Abstract

Strength of ties and amplitude/frequency of contacts with other natives (living at home and/or abroad), are generally considered the main proxy indicators of a transnational structuration of migrant groups and the principal evidences of a diaspora. Despite of this evidence, there are (at least) other three cultural and sociological conditions that make this outcomes possible or not: (i) belonging of the migrant group members to a wider transnational network, (ii) sharing a common sense of community with its members, (iii) participating with a common project that involve all the community.

The paper discusses the main outputs of an on-line survey between young foreigners attending the University of Pisa, with the aim to investigate how “sense of community” (McMillan and Chavis, 1986), “social capital” (Van der Gaag-Snijders, 2004) and co-development orientation between members of the same ethnic groups (living in Italy or abroad), could help researcher to identify, conceptualize and measure everyday and informal transnational relationship becoming to a new definition of the concept of diaspora (Cohen, 1997; Cohen, Vertovec, 1999).

1. Introduction

One of the main characteristics of the global era is the expansion of the field of definition of personal identity, of social relations, and even of institutions that are beyond the limits of the co-presence and contemporaneity of the actors involved (Giddens, 1990). The main economic and political dynamics, as well as the communication and cultural dynamics, are now played out within distinct scenarios and spread out on a (potentially) planetary scale (Appadurai, 1996). This leads to breakdowns and restructuring both in terms of subjective experience and in terms of the social processes that are fundamental for collective life. This is why our era has been defined as the era of "complex connectivity" (Tomlinson, 2001), in which individuals feel a novel possibility of dislocation and being able to project their own sense of belonging and identity, their own system of values and beliefs, their wishes, their myths, hopes and shared fears beyond the physical constraints in which they live. They do this by constantly integrating into their local daily lives all the experiences of cultural difference that education, employment, culture and the mass media bring to their world (Beck, 1999). But dislocation is not only a new dimension of subjective experience. In fact it constitutes at the same time the trajectory along which all the processes of composition and transformation are defined of the collective aggregates and social systems. These processes on the one hand feel and amplify the cumulative effects of subjective dislocations, and on the other hand have an impact with their own special energy. They thus create the conditions for the dislocation of the main social actors of our time: from families and primary groups to ethnic communities, from political and cultural associations to social networks, and from enterprises to institutions.

Since the early 1990s, the reflection on dislocated social relations has had the theoretical and applied research support provided by a new generation of studies on the translocal and transnational character of migratory processes. These are characterized firstly by an anthropological trend mainly focused on case studies (Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szaton, 1992), followed by a sociological trend that is interested in the typification of transnational practices and of the formulation of a mid-range theory of transnationalism (Portes, 1998; Portes, Guarnizo and Landolt, 1999). Recently, the interest of some scholars has been more generally on the use of the transnational perspective to update the sociological reflection on "relational spaces" in the global era (Faist, 2000). Studies in this field have grown exponentially and have focused on issues and sectors that are completely different from each other (from economic to political to cultural transnationalism) and have given rise to some new analytical categories, such as transnational communities (Portes, 1998) or diasporas (Cohen, 1997;

Cohen-Vertovec, 1999). These categories are certainly of importance in representing new and innovative phenomena, however they are not sufficiently precise in the theoretical and conceptual reference framework and are thus still ambiguous, vague and too generic in many of their applications (Faist, 2007; Ambrosini, 2007).

The analyses and reflections that have derived from this new approach have become more and more important in many areas of applied research and in particular in the studies of the socio-economic development of nations and communities. In last years international agencies and academic research groups have been studying the intensity and direction of the connections that interlink the transnational structure of the migratory circuits and the dynamics of the development of the countries of origin and destination. These studies go beyond the original approaches that concentrated exclusively on recruiting processes (brain drain), on money transfers and on returns, by investigating more deeply the increasingly multidimensional and multidirectional character of the phenomenon. The recent spread of the idea that between the countries of origin and destination of migrants there could be circular processes of co-development based on the transnational practices of migrants (Nair, 1997) has meant that these studies could be extended to the perception of migrants as collective agents of social change (Faist, 2007). Research in this direction is being supported by new and significant theoretical arguments and new empirical evidence.

2. Aims, subject and methodology of the research

On the one hand, the aim of this paper is to contribute to the methodological specification of the concept of a diaspora by proposing an operating definition based on the use of five indicators that are able to identify both the instrumental and expressive components of the transnational links between members of the same community. On the other hand, the objective is to use a case study to highlight the links between the diasporic structure of a migratory network and the propensity of the members to support the development processes of their own community.

We can summarize the hypotheses underlying the research in the following four points:

1. Migrants have a high propensity to develop transnational ties with their community of origin, both with the one consisting of compatriots who live in the home country and with the one made up of compatriots abroad. This is particularly evident for well-integrated migrants who have resources, and cultural and technical / professional skills and competences (Snel et al., 2006);

2. The strength of the ties that characterize a transnational community has been measured by the consistency and heterogeneity of the practices found in the context of economic, political and socio-cultural *exchanges* with other members of the network (Snel et al, 2006). These elements accentuate the instrumental character of transnational communities, but underestimate the more expressive, daily and informal side of the equation, such as the sense of belonging to a community (McMillan-Chavis, 1986), identification with members of this community (Snel et al., 2006), and the potential for help and prestige that members have which derive from belonging and being recognized as belonging to a community (social capital).
3. A transnational community within which members have a high level of exchanges - both instrumental and expressive (transnational ties) - can be defined as a *diaspora* if there is also a high and shared level of belonging, a strong sense of identification, and a high level of support and help among members.
4. The way in which migrants act in the present on the basis of the future they have in mind (for example savings and financial investments; but also cultural and professional, in the home country or abroad), and their active participation in cooperative projects for developing the community of origin represent what can be defined as "co-development orientation", which we hypothesize as being positively associated with the diasporic structure of transnational relations.

This paper analyses data from an online survey conducted in June 2008 on 274 foreign students² doing degree or post-degree courses at the University of Pisa (Italy) between 2000 and 2007.

Foreign students are a particular category of temporary migrants both in terms of personal characteristics and in terms of the specific nature of the institutional contexts with which they have relations during their migratory experience. They are migrants with a high level of education and have considerable resources and skills, both in terms of communication and relations, but frequently also financial. With regard to institutional contexts, they are migrants that

² There was a total of 2057 students with a foreign citizenship enrolled in degree, masters and PhD courses at the University of Pisa between 2000 and 2007. Our research was based only on 900 of these students who gave their email addresses to the administrative offices of the university. 276 students completed the questionnaires.

have left their home country to develop abroad cultural and technical / professional competences and thus have become part of academic and professional networks (university, research centre, enterprises, staff etc) which will constitute in an increasingly distinct way their opportunities of a future career.

The combination of these characteristics and the specific circumstances facilitate in the present a good integration of foreign university students upon their arrival, and lead to the hypothesis that in the future they will be able to develop an international if not cosmopolitan career. However, the orientation of their career entails some ambivalence that derives from the very nature of being "foreign university students". In terms of being "university students", such migrants develop and reinforce their active integration with international professional and knowledge-based communities, which are independent from ties with the home community. This phenomenon has recently been defined as *epistemic communities* (Faist, 2007). On the other hand, in terms of being "foreign", these university students maintain ties with their home community and contribute in some cases to the potential organization of a *transnational community*.

The aim of our research was to find answers to some basic questions regarding the transnational dislocation of foreign students at the University Pisa. To what extent do foreign students in Pisa maintain instrumental, symbolic and normative ties with their community of origin, and on the other hand, to what extent do they seem to re-orient themselves towards the society and culture of the host country? In what cases do such students take part in *transnational communities*? In what cases does a transnational community come to life, is it seen by them as a *diaspora*, and what factors facilitate this process? What connects the diasporic structure of the transnational ties of these students and their propensity to support development processes in their home country?

In order to analyse the results, we first categorized the respondents into geographical groups³. This led to a set of three typologies within which we analysed and compared data on the interviewees' ties with (i) the *host community* (the Italians in Pisa), (ii) the community of *compatriots that live in Italy*, (iii) the community of *compatriots that live in the home country*, and (iv) the community of *compatriots that live abroad* but not in Italy.

³ The three geographical groups are: (1) Advanced countries (UE, USA, Canada, Japan, Australia); (2) Eastern Europe (extra UE); (3) Other countries

3. Analytical categories: definitions and operationalizations

As mentioned before, in our research we used five distinct analytical categories and indicators. The first category (transnational activity) was used to verify the existence and to study the form of ties between the various groups of students interviewed and the community of their compatriots who reside in the home country or abroad. Three other categories were used to measure the different weight of reciprocal ties (social capital) and the symbolic and value attachment (sense of community and identification) that the groups of respondents maintained both with the community of origin (compatriots in the home country and abroad) and with the host community (compatriots in Italy, and Italian residents). The fifth analytical category (orientation to co-development) was introduced to measure the disposition of the students to invest in the future of their community of origin.

In the next sub-sections we describe the nature and operative definition of each of these categories and how/why these are used within our research.

3.1 Transnational activities

A recent theoretical and methodological review of the main research works on transnationalism, proposed the use of a "critical threshold" with which to be able to distinguish (in terms of intensity and frequency) a transnational phenomenon from a phenomenon that cannot be defined as such. This threshold was seen as a preliminary means in order to deal with the empirical translation of any transnational theory and if necessary with how it could be measured (Boccagni, 2007, p.116). The author admits that there are still only a few studies that have tried to establish the base criteria on which to define and measure "when" and above all "to what extent" a social phenomenon can be considered as transnational. The most recent works have established the level of social ties at a distance by measuring the activities regarding the community of belonging that the migrants develop in the economic sector (consumption of ethnic products, money transfers, sending presents, investments in enterprises etc), socio-cultural (visits, participation in public events in the home country, membership of ethnic associations etc), and political (interest in the problems of compatriots in the home country, affiliation to political parties in the home country, political activism etc) (Snel, 2006).

In our research on foreign students this measurement is particular important because it means that it is possible to identify and select those groups of interviewees who maintain stable, and in some way "institutionalized" relations with their community of origin (compatri-

ots in the home country or abroad) and thus find more than the others the need to develop 'bifocal' attitudes and orientations.

For the measurement we used 13 of the 17 items proposed by Snel et al. (2006) for the study of transnational activities of immigrants in the Netherlands with reference to the following parameters: economic (both everyday and professional), political, and socio-cultural.

3.2 Social capital

For several years the concept of social capital has been one of the key themes in social research and was applied thanks to the initial thematization by Bourdieu. The concept was then deepened by its application of the theory of exchange to the social networks made by Granovetter, Coleman and Lin, and was exploited as a guiding concept for macro geographical surveys.

Although this notion primarily refers to the instrumental functions of exchange between members of a social network, some recent contributions (Pizzorno, 1998) have also underlined its expressive meaning - they suggest that social capital could be considered as an indicator of community aggregates. This then is the meaning that we have given to social capital in our study of foreign students. In order to evaluate it we used a sensitive indicator - a resource generator (Van Der Gaag- Sniijders, 2004) - which sheds light not only on the instrumental value but also the expressive value of the resources that a member of a network can activate.

This indicator of social capital is constructed by adding up the points obtained on a battery of 20 items. Each of these items is representative of one of the resources that the interviewee claims to have access to thanks to his/her network of contacts.

In our research on foreign students we identified three groups of resources that make up the social capital of an individual.

1. Prestige: access to relational and communicative resources (advice, information, contacts, etc) via the power, background and wealth of friends and acquaintances.
2. Help: direct availability of relational and communicative help (advice, information, contacts, etc) both in terms of private life (accommodation, family, friendships etc), finances (legal help, financial help) and professional (work, university).

3. Support: access to concrete material support in case of need (personal assistance, hospitality, help with children, money loans etc).

3.3 Sense of community

The availability of resources that can be mobilized by a member of a social network due to that member's belonging to the network represents an initial and important indicator of the cohesion of that network and the extent to which it can qualify as a community. However, the contents of belonging to a community are not just based on the availability of social capital, since they are by nature symbolic, emotional and motivational.

So that we could understand and measure the expressive dimensions of the experience of members of a transnational community (belonging, identification, attachment etc) we referred to the synthetic indicator of sense of community (McMillan-Chavis, 1986), which is described as a feeling that the members have of belonging and being important for each other and a shared trust that the needs of the members will be satisfied by their commitment to being together. This indicator is constructed by adding up the points obtained from a battery of 12 items, each of which the interview declares his / her adhesion (or non-adhesion) to (eg "this community is a welcoming place where I feel good", "I have no influence on what happens in this community").

In our research we maintained the four dimensions of the sense of community identified by McMillan and Chavis in 1986 which are:

1. Belonging: the presence of social borders within which the members recognize each other and feel safe.
2. Influence: the awareness of members that they can impact through their actions on how the community functions but also (reciprocally) recognition of the authority that the community exerts on the members.
3. Integration and satisfaction of needs: the possibility that the community guarantees to its members that they will have their social needs gratified, such as shared ideas and values, and common approaches in terms of projects, priorities and aims.
4. Emotional connection: the sharing amongst members of a strong emotional investment in the community which leads to a general and basic emotional and spiritual consensus.

3.4 Identification

In a recent study on the transnational involvement of migrants resident in the Netherlands, Snel-Engbersen-Leerkes (2006) measured the respondents' ethnic identification, or rather the extent to which migrants living in the Netherlands identify with (1) native Dutch people, (2) compatriots living in the Netherlands, (3) compatriots living in the country of origin and (4) compatriots in third countries. The authors state: "These social identities indicate how people define themselves in relation to their social environment. It is not about what distinguishes one individual from the other, but about what is shared with the others. The social identity of a person refers to the two basic questions in life: (1) to whom I do belong? and (2) how should I behave? These two key questions relate to the group dimension and the normative dimension of social identity respectively" (Snel et al., 2006, p.290).

Using the same logic and schema (but not the same number of statements) as the Dutch research, we asked our respondents to express their level of agreement regarding 20 statements. On the basis of our respondents' answers to the statements we constructed three indicators representing: (1) group dimension (statements about to whom they feel close, are proud of, are occasionally ashamed of), (2) normative dimension (statements about whose norms and values are taken into account, with whom they agree on the 'important things in life') and (3) project dimension (statements about which community they feel will be theirs in the future and the future of their children) of identification.

3.5 Orientation to co-development

Orientation to co-development is a personal attitude, an emotional and intellectual disposition that is difficult to measure, and even more so to synthesize into one or more indicators. However, it is a crucial parameter for understanding not only the type of transnational ties of the migrants but also the possibility that some of these ties (particularly those with compatriots in the home country and abroad) can be structured as diasporas: transnational ties that are very close knit and at the same time able to catalyze and orient in favour of the home country the future projects of the members, whatever the country where they reside.

In our research we examined two parameters of the orientation to co-development: (1) the interest of the interviewees in using in their home country the scientific and professional

competence that they have acquired abroad, and (2) the participation of the migrants in co-operation development projects that are directed to supporting the home country.

4. Data analysis

A total of 276 foreign students enrolled at the University of Pisa responded to our survey, of whom 160 female (58.0%) and 113 male (40.9%). 31.2% were aged between 25 and 29, and only 26.1% were younger than 25. Students from developed countries represented 31.5% (most from EU countries), 27.9% from Eastern Europe (mostly Albania), and 34.8% from other countries.

Table 1 – Migrant groups

		%
Developed countries	87	31.5
Eastern Europe (extra UE)	77	27.9
Other countries	96	34.8
N/A	16	5.9
Total	276	100.0

Overall, the level of socio-economic integration was good. 67.4% were living in a flat or house, mostly rented, which 88.4% deemed as very adequate for their needs. 43.1% maintained themselves by working (with a regular contract in 67.5% of these cases). Those not working were able to maintain themselves with a grant (63.1%) or with the help of family members living in the home country (27.0%) or in Italy (35.3%).

The levels of relational integration were also positive. 30.1% were married or living together, and of these 62.9% with an Italian partner. 46.7% spent their free time above all with Italians, whereas 18.1% spent it with family members.

The main problems regarding integration were: 67.3% dealing with bureaucracy (residence permits, relations with public offices) and structural (accommodation and work); 14.3% language problems, loneliness, and homesickness; and 9.8% lack of respect by Italians and even racism. In any case, 62.0% said that they would have chosen Italy again.

4.1 Transnational ties

Our analysis of the transnational activities of the students interviewed revealed that socio-cultural practices were more common than political ones which in turn were more common than financial ones. This was true both for ties with compatriots in the home country and those with compatriots abroad.

In all these contexts, two elements were highlighted that underline the strictly ego-centric nature of the network of transnational relations of the respondents: (1) ties with the community of origin were stronger than those with communities of compatriots abroad; (2) private transnational activities have a greater weight than public / institutional activities.

The most common socio-cultural transnational activities were “frequent contact” with family and friends in the home country (80.5%) or abroad (63.6%), and the “systematic visits” to these (59.4% family and friends in the home country; 36.4% for those abroad). Far less significant were participation and promotion of national or ethnic events (13.9% in the first case and 13.3 in the second) and time taken up in socio-cultural organizations (12.4% and 8.7%).

The most common political transnational activities were reading newspapers from the home country (64.5%) and keeping up to date with current events that involve compatriots abroad (55.5%). These were followed by maintaining contact with politics in the home country

(49.0%) or with the community of compatriots abroad. Only 7.6% participated in public events related to the country of origin, and 2.8% belonged to a political party in the home country. More significant was participating in activities of compatriots abroad in order to support parties and political candidates in the home country (7.5%).

Everyday economic activities were most based on professional economic ones. The most common were sending goods and products to family members in the home country (27.5%) and abroad (15.6%). This was followed by sending money to family members in the home country (25.1%) and abroad (14.5%), and money for charitable activities promoted by the home country (10.8%) or by the community of compatriots abroad (8.1%). Few respondents had commercial and entrepreneurial activities with the home country or with compatriots abroad, 8.8% and 8.1% respectively.

The answers based on the geographical location of the respondents' home countries revealed two polarized behaviours. Those from developed countries had much weaker transnational ties than those from other countries (apart from contact and frequency of visits to family and friends and commercial activities in the home country). On the other hand, students from Eastern Europe, and above all those from countries further away and less developed ("other countries") had much stronger ties with compatriots in the home country and with those resident abroad.

Those from Eastern Europe had a greater tendency to read newspapers from their home country (73.2%), and more generally in finding out about current affairs that involve their compatriots (59.0%), transnationally supporting of parties or candidates in the home country (15.5%), sending goods and products to compatriots resident in the home country (38.0%) and abroad (20.4%). Respondents from other countries were more likely than the other to take part in or promote events that involve compatriots abroad (18.0%), contact with compatriots abroad (68.9%), interest in the political situation of the home country (53.6%) or which in any case involve compatriots abroad (54.1%), participation in demonstrations related to country of origin (9.5%), contribution to charitable activities in favour of the home country (17.9%) and sending money to family members in the home country (31.0%) or abroad (18.0%).

Table 2 – Transnational activities per migrant group (in percentage of the group total)

	Developed countries	Eastern Europe	Other Countries
<i>Everyday economic activities</i>			
Transfers money to family	19,5	26,8	31,0
Sends goods to country of origin	20,7	38,0	26,2
Contributions to charities in country of origin	4,9	11,3	17,9
Average value	15,0	25,4	25,0
<i>Professional economic activities</i>			
Invests in companies in country of origin	0,0	4,2	7,1
Conducts trade with country of origin	6,1	4,2	3,6
Average value	3,1	4,2	5,4
<i>Political activities</i>			
Reads newspapers from country of origin	61,0	73,2	60,7
Keeps in touch with politics in country of origin	51,2	43,7	53,6
Member of political party in country of origin	2,4	1,4	4,8
Participates in demonstrations related to country of origin	4,9	5,6	9,5
Average value	29,9	31,0	32,2
<i>Sociocultural activities in country of origin</i>			
Visits family/friends in country of origin	68,3	64,8	45,2
Frequent contacts with family in country of origin	82,9	74,6	83,3
Member/supporter of social and/or cultural organization in country of origin	8,5	15,5	11,9
Participates in cultural/religious/sport events in country of origin	12,2	16,9	13,1
Average value	43,0	43,0	38,4

4.2 Social capital

The finding that students from developing countries have greater contact and exchanges with their home country than do students from developed countries was further supported by our analysis of the social capital declared by the respondents with reference to the four social reference networks of their experience as migrants (compatriots in the home country, compatriots abroad, compatriots in the country of destination, and Italians).

The overall results of the analysis show above all that this indicator (whose minimal theoretical value = 0, and maximum = 1) reaches the maximum (relative) value when it is calculated with reference to the respondents' relations with Italians (0.55). The same value is slightly less in relation to compatriots in the home country (0.52), decreases significantly in the case of relations with compatriots in Italy (0.31) and reaches its (relative) minimum with compatriots abroad (0.13). However, these values were not the same in the various groups that the respondents were divided into, and nor in the various contexts in which it is possible to make the analysis of the social capital.

In fact, for the respondents coming from developed countries, the value of the index of social capital with reference to relations with Italians (0.60) would seem higher than that for compatriots in the home country (0.56). This difference would seem to be higher with more specific reference to resources of help (0.61 in the first case, and 0.57 in the second).

Also for those from Eastern Europe, the value of the index calculated with reference to Italians (0.54) was generally higher than that for compatriots in the home country (0.47). But in the case of support (0.58) the value measured for the community from the home country were higher than the Italians (0.57).

On the other hand, the value of those from other countries with regard to Italians is quite identical to that for compatriots at home (0.50 and 0.51) and was only higher than the latter in terms of prestige (0.59 versus 0.50). Both for help (0.57) and support (0.62) the values for the community of origin were higher than those regarding Italians (0.54 for both types of resource).

Our analysis of the social capital thus shows that students from developed countries benefit more than others from the relational goods provided by the host community. The other respondents rely more on the reciprocal ties with the community of origin in order to get the necessary resources of support.

Table 3 – Social capital values per migrant group (min=0; max=1)

	Developed countries	Eastern Europe	Other countries	Total
<i>Italians</i>				
PRESTIGE	,62	,53	,59	,58
HELP	,61	,61	,54	,59
SUPPORT	,67	,57	,54	,60
Total	,60	,54	,51	,55
<i>Compatriots in Italy</i>				
PRESTIGE	,20	,27	,26	,24
HELP	,23	,38	,31	,30
SUPPORT	,34	,60	,43	,45
Total	,24	,39	,30	,31
<i>Compatriots at home</i>				
PRESTIGE	,59	,51	,50	,54
HELP	,57	,47	,57	,54
SUPPORT	,65	,58	,62	,62
Total	,56	,48	,50	,52
<i>Compatriots abroad</i>				
PRESTIGE	,10	,19	,17	,15
HELP	,09	,20	,13	,14
SUPPORT	,11	,20	,14	,15
Total	,09	,18	,13	,13

4.3 Sense of community

When we go from more markedly instrumental relations between the respondents and the community of reference to the more expressive relations, then we notice that the direction of the orientations described above tends to follow the opposite trend. Where the direction of transnational ties and the intensity of social capital identified a prevalence of relations with Italians over those of compatriots, the direction of the sense of community confirms the affec-

tive and symbolic belonging of the respondents to the circle of compatriots in the home country (developed countries).

Where the direction of transnational ties and the intensity of the social capital had a important, though not prominent role in relations with the community from the home country, the direction of the sense of community showed a greater affective adhesion in respondents to the host society (Western Europe). Unlike the two other groups, students from other countries confirmed a strong instrumental and affective attachment to the community of origin, both in terms of the direction of transnational ties and sense of community. On the other hand, there was greater ambivalence and bifocal from the direction and strength of social capital.

The overall results of the analysis show that the indicator of sense of community (whose minimal theoretical value = 0, and maximum = 1) reached the maximum (relative) value when calculated with reference to the community of compatriots in the home country (0.57). This value was slightly lower in terms of relations with Italians (0.52), and then decreased, though not much, in relation to compatriots in Italy (0.44). It reached its (relative) minimum in relation to compatriots abroad (0.42). In this case too, these values were not the same in the various groups that the respondents were divided into, and nor in the various contexts in which it is possible to make the analysis of the social capital.

For the students from developed countries, the value of the index related to the sense of community calculated with reference to compatriots in the home country (0.60) was greater than that regarding Italians (0.51). This difference would seem to be higher with more specific reference to the dimensions of membership (0.70 in the first case, and 0.53 in the second) and influence (0.56 vs 0.43).

For the students from Eastern Europe, the value of the index calculated with reference to Italians (0.55) was slightly lower than that for compatriots in the home country (0.56). This effect depends on the weight of the dimensions of integration and satisfaction of needs (0.72 vs 0.61) and sharing of emotional ties (0.57 vs 0.55), since with regard to influence and belonging the values measured for the community of origin were higher than those for the host country (0.53 vs 0.46, and 0.63 vs 0.47, respectively).

For the students from other countries, the value of the index related to sense of community calculated with reference to compatriots in the home country (0.55) was generally higher than that calculated with reference to Italians (0.51), except for integration and satisfaction of needs for which attachment to the host community (0.64) is higher than that of the home country community (0.56).

Table 4 – Sense of community values per migrant group (min=0; max=1)

	Developed countries	Eastern Europe	Other countries	Total
<i>Italians</i>				
INFLUENCE	0,43	0,46	0,50	0,46
MEMBERSHIP	0,53	0,47	0,47	0,49
REINFORCEMENT OF NEED	0,63	0,72	0,64	0,66
SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION	0,48	0,57	0,46	0,50
Total	0,51	0,55	0,51	0,52
<i>Compatriots in Italy</i>				
INFLUENCE	0,39	0,42	0,41	0,41
MEMBERSHIP	0,47	0,54	0,44	0,48
REINFORCEMENT OF NEED	0,48	0,50	0,45	0,48
SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION	0,41	0,44	0,43	0,43
Total	0,43	0,47	0,42	0,44
<i>Compatriots at home</i>				
INFLUENCE	0,56	0,53	0,53	0,54
MEMBERSHIP	0,70	0,63	0,63	0,66
REINFORCEMENT OF NEED	0,65	0,61	0,56	0,61
SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION	0,54	0,55	0,51	0,53
Total	0,60	0,56	0,55	0,57
<i>Compatriots abroad</i>				
INFLUENCE	0,38	0,43	0,41	0,41
MEMBERSHIP	0,40	0,33	0,40	0,38
REINFORCEMENT OF NEED	0,49	0,55	0,50	0,51
SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION	0,36	0,38	0,43	0,39
Total	0,40	0,42	0,43	0,42

4.4 Identification

The analysis of the identification of the students highlights the force of self-perception that migrants generally have with regard to their community of origin. This is represented by the

set of compatriots that are resident in the home country but also (with regard to the dimension of group) those resident in the host country, and then those resident abroad. However, for those students from Eastern Europe, our analysis revealed the existence of identity projections in the opposite direction (at least as far as the normative index of identification is concerned), which are stronger towards the Italian community (0.58) than towards the community of origin (0.56).

Table 5 – Identification values per migrant group (min=0; max=1)

	Developed countries	Eastern Europe	Other countries	Total
<i>Italians</i>				
GROUP DIMENSION	0,57	0,61	0,57	0,58
NORMATIVE DIMENSION	0,52	0,58	0,51	0,54
PROJECT DIMENSION	0,47	0,50	0,45	0,47
Total	0,52	0,57	0,51	0,53
<i>Compatriots in Italy</i>				
GROUP DIMENSION	0,51	0,61	0,56	0,55
NORMATIVE DIMENSION	0,44	0,50	0,48	0,48
PROJECT DIMENSION	0,41	0,48	0,44	0,44
Total	0,46	0,55	0,49	0,50
<i>Compatriots at home</i>				
GROUP DIMENSION	0,72	0,69	0,74	0,72
NORMATIVE DIMENSION	0,56	0,56	0,63	0,59
PROJECT DIMENSION	0,53	0,62	0,59	0,58
Total	0,62	0,62	0,64	0,63
<i>Compatriots abroad</i>				
GROUP DIMENSION	0,44	0,53	0,54	0,50
NORMATIVE DIMENSION	0,40	0,48	0,49	0,46
PROJECT DIMENSION	0,37	0,46	0,47	0,43
Total	0,42	0,50	0,49	0,47

These results are consistent with the trend of the sense of community indicator and thus would seem to confirm (at least at this first level of analysis) the different nature and direction of transnational orientations of the foreign students coming from different groups of countries:

- Developed countries – strong identification with the community of origin, even in the absence of real transnational ties; whereas the social capital is all contained within the network of relations with the host community.
- Eastern Europe – strong transnational ties with the community of origin, with which there is only a partial affective identification (group dimension), since the sense of belonging, the normative dimension of identification and the social capital are defined completely within the network of relations with the host community.
- Other countries - strong transnational ties and identification with the community of origin, social capital equally distributed between the relational networks with the community of origin and the host community.

4.5 Orientation to co-development

The most active group in our survey in relation to co-development was students from developing nations (other countries). This confirms our initial hypothesis that the activation of circuits of co-development is positively associated with the size and intensity of transnational relations.

In 45.5% of cases, students from other countries claimed that they had contributed to co-development projects in their home country – as against 24.6% for Eastern Europe and 11.5% for developed countries. In 43.6% of cases, the same students declared that in the future they wished to exploit to the benefit of their home country (or a country in the same continent) the scientific and professional competences that they had acquired – as against 24.6% for Eastern Europe and 13.6% for developed countries.

5. Conclusions

Our research on foreign students enrolled at the University of Pisa has highlighted on an empirical level the different structure of transnational ties and sense of belonging amongst the various groups taken into consideration.

Data analysis reveals different attitudes between the groups of students considered in the survey. Students coming from developed countries (UE most of all) have an high sense of belonging and identification with their home community, but they seems to have few transnational ties with it. Transnational practices are poor and the social capital indicators referred to compatriots living in home country are weaker than in other groups. On the contrary they present an higher level of expressive relations with compatriots living in home country or abroad. Sense of community and other identification indicators are both higher than in other groups. In general they do not present any significant co-development orientation.

A completely different situation is that of students coming from developing countries. They declare high level both in expressive and in instrumental ties with home community. In fact they have a strong identification with compatriots living at home but also support and maintain it by an high level of transnational practices. They demonstrate the higher level of co-development orientation.

Eastern Europe students reveals a true mixing attitude. They maintain high levels of group identification with their compatriots at home, but at the same they demonstrate an higher sense of belonging and normative identification with the host community. In general they have a moderate co-development orientation.

In summary, students from developed countries are true "passing foreigners", those from Eastern Europe are "Italians born abroad" and those from other countries are a "solidal community" (i.e. a community that tries to look after its own members). At the same time, and still on an empirical level, our research has further our knowledge on the quality of those transnational ties and senses of belonging that more than other are associated with co-development and which, as we have just mentioned, are those expressed by the "solidal communities" i.e. those students from other countries.

On a theoretical level, the research has enabled us to clarify some hypotheses and to respond to some of the questions that we asked ourselves at the outset - clearly these are only preliminary for the moment until we have made further investigations.

Three final statements:

1. not all the students who answered the questionnaire, even though with the same status and a good level of integration, claimed they had developed transnational ties. The size and intensity of transnational ties with the community of origin seems to have an inverse relation to the level of development of the home country, so we could

thus define as being members of transnational communities only those students from Eastern Europe and developing countries;

2. the availability of social capital, of a strong identification and sense of community towards the community of origin are important factors for distinguishing the orientation of members of transnational communities. Where this is present and recognized by the members, the transnational community tends to transform itself into a *diaspora*. Where this is not present, or is in any case weak, the instrumental and symbolic resources of the host community will gradually replace and mix with those of the community of origin, thus generating hybrid transnational communities, in which the members will have interiorized the point of view of the host society.
3. diasporas are transnational communities that are dense, close-knit, rich both in social capital and symbolic and identity resources; but above all represent the type of transnational community which more than the others promotes the sense of responsibility of its members towards the community of origin and induces its actors to co-development.

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