Transnational mobility and cross-border family life cycles: A century of Welsh-Italian migration

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ABSTRACT

During the late nineteenth century, Italian immigrant settlement in Wales took the form of chain and clustered migration, based on origin-centred networks of extended family members. The original migrants' reliance on transnational family support networks endured and evolved through descendant generations. Family formation and the progression of lifecycle care exchanges served as key drivers of transnationalism between Wales and Italy. Many families established catering businesses in Wales that relied on staff recruitment from kin in Italy. Migrants' heritage and affective anchorage to Italy were maintained through 'circular' mobility premised on endogamy and shared language. In recent decades, despite a decline in endogamous marriage, transnational family interaction has continued on the basis of the ease of European Union cross-border mobility. Changing modes and motives for cyclical and return migration encompass new forms of marriage, professional and retirement migration. Based on etnographic research with three generations of Italian migrants in Wales, this article explores the relation between family social networks and local attachment in supporting transnational practices, positive integration and heritage maintainance, tracing the cultural and social change in the generational process of migration.

KEYWORDS: Transnational families, Italian migration, cultural heritage, intergenerational relations, family care-giving, oral history, translocality.

Introduction

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Italian migration in Wales has been portrayed as a story of migratory success and integration (Chezzi 2015; Colpi 1991; Giudici 2013; Hughes 1991). This narrative is shared in the collective memory of the Italian community to the point that, to typify the natural sympathy with the natives, Welsh are often referred to as 'Italians in the rain'. Yet politically, Italian migration to Wales has transitioned from restrictive immigration policies linked to employment status, to episodes of 'alien' detention or deportation during the Second World War, followed by normalised border access after the war, and the establishment of EU open borders during the 1990s to the present – pending Brexit negotiations (Carradice 2003; Chezzi 2014, 2015; Giudici 2014; Wren-Owens 2015). Furthermore, the settlement of the Italian community in Wales has taken place against the background of the assertion of a Welsh national identity within the 'otherness' of the British state (Giudici 2014; Wren-Owens 2012).

Studies on Italian migration to Wales have so far focused on historical and economic aspects of this migratory experience (Bugitti 2009; Carradice 2003, 2012; Chezzi 2014, 2015; Giudici 2013, 2014; Hughes 1991; Sponza 1988; Wren-Owens 2015), however no research has so far adopted an intergenerational and transnational approach. This article examines Welsh-Italian family networks and intergenerational solidarity as central drivers of transnational economic, social and cultural ties through political shifts and economic fluctuations. Over time, circular migration between Wales and Italy has become structurally embedded in the family life cycle, notably at marriage and retirement stages. While the original migration flow was prompted by financial considerations, subsequent mobility between Wales and Italy has been increasingly motivated by family interaction.

The following sections of this paper provide an explanation of the field methodology deployed, a theoretical discussion of transnationalism and its relation to translocality in the context of this case study, historical background on the Bardi Welsh-Italian community and the making of transnational families through endogamous marriage practices and translocal mobility. The changing form and purposes of Welsh-Italians' circular mobility to and from Italy are traced during the twentieth century to the present, shaped by family formation, intergenerational care and family life cycles, followed by a discussion of their effects on cultural heritage transmission.

Field methodology

To capture the transnational and intergenerational nature of this migration, this study, which was conducted between April 2010 and July 2011, adopted an ethnographic approach based on a combination of oral history, participant observation, and visual methods. Life history narratives were collected through 26 in-depth interviews. The majority of interviews were carried out with different generations in the same family. We collected family relational data through the construction of family trees. Further contextual information was gathered through participant observation at community meetings and events, while additional literature was researched in archives in Italy and Wales (ACLI Archives, Clerkenwell, London; Cardiff University Library).

The overall sample included families of Italian ancestry, predominantly from Emilia-Romagna Region in Italy, in particular, the Ceno Valley and Bardi. Three control families were from other parts of Italy (Udine, Cassino, Cuneo). Each family network encompassed three generations: G1 grandparents, G2 parents, and G3 grandchildren. The research was carried out in the main areas of Italian migration in Wales, the Rhondda valleys in South Wales, between Cardiff and Swansea (G1 and G2). Younger generations (G3) were found mainly in cities: Cardiff, Swansea, and London. Due to the high mobility of transnational families between Italy and Wales, some of the interviews were carried out in the Bardi area during families' summer seasonal migration.

Participant families and grandparents were accessed through initial contacts with associations and community organisations such as ACLI (Christian Association for Italian Workers) in Clerkenwell; Italian-Welsh Association 'Amici Val Ceno Galles'; and the Italian Consulate in Cardiff). Successive recruitment took place through gatekeepers, which facilitated access within the migrant community. The selected families met the following criteria: grandparents of Italian birth, Italian mother tongue, resident in Wales, with descendent siblings (children aged above 18).

The majority of the interviews were conducted in English, with participants frequently mixing English, Italian and Bardi dialect. Reflexivity was carried out to account for the

researcher being an Italian national, from a bordering region to Emilia-Romagna. Although this familiarity facilitated trust and access to the community and was conducive to richer, in-depth interviews, it was acknowledged it could also lead to identification and a possible sampling bias, self-selecting migrants with a more positive attachment to their Italian heritage.

Delineating transnationalism and translocality

Within the migration scholarship, transnational migration has predominately been associated with an individual quest for political justice or economic betterment (Bryceson 2019). However, efforts to secure family maintenance, care and formation are equally powerful driving factors behind transnational movement (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Fouron and Glick Schiller 2001; Lam and Yeoh 2019; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014). Migration represents a fracture in intergenerational family relations and an uprooting from community belonging. Alongside the economic hardship of the settlement in a new country, migrants seek to socially mediate the affective shock of breaking away.

Traditionally, Italian communities abroad navigated this social and economic stress by relying on the support of networks of extended family and peer villagers (Burrell 2006; Fortier 2000; Sponza 1988; Whyte 1993; Zontini 2006). In the process, they reproduced abroad the familiar safety system they had relied on in Italy. In the case of Welsh-Italians, the changing significance of family networks for transnational migration can be traced along the lines of translocal and circular forms of cross-border mobility.

The ethnic practices of Welsh-Italians have concentrated around two specific areas with similar geographic characteristics, the Ceno valley in Northern Italy and the Rhonnda Valleys in South Wales. The localised nature of the Welsh-Italian connections, evidences the significance of local attachments for ongoing cross-border mobilities as well as the overlaps and tensions between translocality and transnationalism.

The concept of translocality has been increasingly applied to comprehend more localised aspects of international migration by placing a stronger emphasis on relational notions of place, the situatedness of mobile actors, and the importance of local-to-local attachments, to appreciate ‘grounded transnationalism’ (Brickell and Datta 2011; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013). In the Bardi migrant community, translocality has been initially

established through ‘cluster migration’ involving the creation of communities of people derived from the same geographical origin in Italy (Campisi 1948; Medaglia 2001; Whyte 1993) and ‘chain migration’ where first settlers ‘pull in’ further migrants from the homeland, particularly to join economic activities in the catering business. (Colpi 1991; Fortier 2000; Sponza 1988; Whyte 1993). More importantly, translocal movements deepened over time by means of ‘circular migration’, based on regular periodical returns of migrants to their homeland (Attias-Donfut 2013; Baldassar 2007; Burrell 2006; Fortier 2000; Sponza 1988; Zontini 2015).

Feminist literature has highlighted how these transnational and translocal activities are significantly shaped by family life cycles driven by ‘kin work’ (Fouron and Glick Schiller 2001), in particular in connection with care and marriage migration (Baldassar and Merla 2014; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002; Lam and Yeoh 2019; Yeoh and Ramdas 2014) and how, especially for Italians, ‘family social capital’ is a core support structure for migrant networks abroad (Zontini 2006).

Circular translocality can be carried on across generations, resulting in what Wessendorf (2007) defines ‘root migration’, the return of the second generations to their ancestors’ homeland, motivated by intergenerationally transmitted notions of memory, belonging and ‘roots’. Such phenomenon, already noted for other migrant communities, as in the case of the cross-border mobility between Italy-Switzerland (Wessendorf 2007), has reached an uncommon endurance across up to five generations in the case of Welsh-Italians. Geographical localisation is key to the successful settlement of particular migratory groups. Literature on Welsh-Italians (Giudici 2014) has suggested that situated interactions within the Italian and Welsh minority cultures may have enhanced the inclusion of Italians as a ‘model minority’ while reinforcing a tolerant and inclusive national image of Wales. Similarly, some research has argued that transnational activities, in particular economic ones, are more effective when they are firmly anchored in specific locales (Zhou and Tseng 2001). Although the establishment of niche catering activities in Wales has been instrumental in supporting the economic settlement of Italians, the uncommon ethnic longevity of this group is not only explained by geographical and economic reasons.

This research will look at the interplay between family and local attachment as core drivers of transnational mobility. Capitalising on an extraordinary long time frame of three generations of Italian migrants in Wales, this study explores the relation between circular translocality and family social networks in supporting transnational practices, heritage maintenance and positive integration, tracing the cultural and social change in the generational process of migration.

A brief history of Italian migration to South Wales

During the late nineteenth century, hundreds of migrants were drawn from Italy to the Rhondda valleys in South Wales. The majority came from the valleys of the Emilia- Romagna region in Italy and, within this, the most cohesive and visible group came from a mountainous area around Parma, called Val Ceno, particularly from the small settlement of Bardi.

Prompted initially by the boom in Welsh coal and iron mining industry, Italian migration to Wales continued into the twentieth century, before reaching its peak after the Second World War. As was the case in other parts of Italy, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rural poverty of Bardi triggered extensive diasporic migration to the US, Australia, France, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK). In the UK, the primary area of settlement for Bardi migrants were the Rhondda valleys in South Wales. Here the migrants found their main means of economic livelihood through the establishment of bars, chip shops, ice-cream parlours and other catering businesses, as well as employment in shipping, mining and factory work (Chezzi 2015; Colpi 1991; Sponza 1988). This research focuses on the sub-group of Italian migrants engaged in entrepreneurial catering activities, which expanded the local service sector and transformed the ethnic composition of the valleys, creating what was popularly called a ‘café culture’ in Wales (Carradice 2012; Chezzi 2015; Giudici 2013; Hughes 1991).

The time of the arrival of the Italians also coincided with the growth of temperance religious movements across Wales. The Italian bars, sometimes referred to as ‘temperance bars’, offered a friendly, non-alcoholic alternative to pubs, and increasingly became popular as

social meeting points (Chezzi 2015; Giudici 2013; Hughes 1991). The establishment of Italian cafes in Wales is recalled by these interviewees:

When Italians came over to the valleys, mining was booming. At that time there was a niche market for cafés and eating places, because the Welsh people weren't doing that [catering]. The Italians brought over their own help, their relatives or friends, by word of mouth in their home village… to better themselves. Because Bardi had no work, there was only low paid farm work. And they built up what they called 'a community', an Italian community here in South Wales. (RS, G2, Restaurant Owner)

The story goes that there was a pub on every corner and a chapel on every other corner. A lot of the immigrants to South Wales, then, were people from West Wales, who were very rural, very religious country people. No alcohol, no papers, no you know, very strict upbringing. They didn't want to go to the pubs. So the Presbyterian Protestant teetotallers from West Wales mixed with the Catholic wine-loving Italians and…those were the Italians' customers. (RS, G1, Retired Entrepreneur)

It eventually became a social event to go to the cafés. On Sundays, my father's shop for instance was open. In those days, you did not open a shop on a Sunday. You went to chapel on Sunday. You did not go in an Italian café. Eventually it got accepted. And the miners would fill the shop on a Sunday. They wouldn't stay in a cramped house with ten people. They wanted to go out for a bit of social life – on Sunday, which sometimes was their only day off. On Mondays, my family had to go to court, because they paid a [ten shilling] fine for opening on a Sunday (laugh). And this went on for years until eventually the authorities thought 'this is bloody silly'…So they changed the law. (RB, G1, Retired Café Owner)

By the turn of the twentieth century, the Bardesans had experienced a relatively smooth integration in Wales (Carradice 2003; Chezzi 2015; Colpi 1991) during a period of no passport control. Immigration controls were instituted in the United Kingdom in 1905,1 followed by the 1914 Aliens Registration Act introduced at the outset of the FirstWorld War (Spencer 2002). Widespread unemployment in the 1920s and 1930s and the mounting threat of fascism led to more brittle immigration policies restricting entry to specified occupations and professions. When Mussolini declared war against Britain in 1940, the British government arrested and interned male Italian migrants who had not taken British citizenship formally.

Prisoners were usually sent to the Isle of Man or to Canada. The Arandora Star passenger ship, carrying 470 Italian internees to Canada in 1940, had 53 from Wales. All lost their lives

when the ship was torpedoed by a German U-boat. This episode was the most painful in the history of Welsh-Italian migration (Balestracci 2008; Carradice 2003; Chezzi 2014; Giudici 2014; Servini 2010; Wren-Owens 2015).

The Second World War created many cross-border anomalies. Within some families, there were splits between those holding British passports who joined the army, and those with Italian passports who were interned in the UK. One interviewee (RB) described the irony in which one of his uncles joined the British forces, while another was considered a Fascist and interned on the Isle of Man; and yet another, who lived in Italy, joined the anti-Fascist movement. Before the declaration of war between Italy and Britain, some parents had thought of sending their children to their relatives in Italy was safer. A large cohort of Welsh-born children of that generation faced a war-blocked border and were raised in Italy, only able to re-join their nuclear families as teenagers after the armistice. Anti-Italian incidents were experienced during and in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War:

My mother had a very difficult life because she lost her husband, she lost one of her daughters, and there were a lot of bad feelings also towards the Italians at that time. When the war ended she went back to open the shop. She found that the windows were smashed, the door was broken in… and … bad names were written on the building. (AR, G2, Retired Café Owner)

Conversely, other interviewees remembered episodes of solidarity by the Welsh population:

There was never ever a problem with the Welsh community accepting the Italians coming in the valleys, to open up the cafés, and to be part of the community. I can tell you an example. My father was interned in the Isle of Man. The local policeman was told, 'Go down to pick up F. now'. He was ordered to bring him down to the police station, right? 'Cause Britain was at war with Italy. He knocked on my father's door. And he was crying. He was saying, 'F., I'm sorry, you got to come with me now. You have to be interviewed down at the police station.' And that's the reaction the Welsh community had. (RS, G2, Restaurant Owner)

By contrast, the 1950s was a decade of business expansion for the Italian cafes (Chezzi 2015; Colpi 1991; Giudici 2013; Hughes 1991; Sponza 1988). However, in the 1970s, the economic profile of the valleys started changing. The closure of the mines and higher mobility to the cities led to a depopulation of the valleys and eroded the client base of the Italian cafes, many of which were sold (Chezzi 2015; Giudici 2013; Hughes 1991).

Very few are now working in the family business. The old generation that had the fish and chip shops and restaurants that were handed down from grandfather to father to son, well, most of their sons don't work in the shops [anymore]. They go away to study, which is fine. They want to travel and be more involved in the modern world of technology. There's a lot more competition for younger people now than what existed 20–30 years ago. Then, there weren't so many clubs, pubs, discotheques or distractions. The Italian community, as a family, stayed together. We all met together, and we all married Italians. I have two brothers who both married first generation Italians whom they met at Italian dances. Now it's all dispersed. (RS, G2, Restaurant Owner)

Overall, cafes served, on the one hand, as a catalyst for 'chain' migration, by providing work for multi-generational household members, and, on the other, became an important channel for Italian cultural transfer to Wales. The Italian café culture was based on niche businesses that 'branded' Italians as non-threatening to the locals while contributing to local social infrastructure (Hughes 1991). However, over time, the shrinking numbers of cafes in later years was perceived by older community members as a visible sign of ethnic dilution.

Transnational mobility through chain, cluster and translocal circular migration

The type of translocal mobility enacted by the Val Ceno Community has developed along patterns that are classic in the history of the Italian diaspora and are to be found in Italian groups elsewhere (e.g. in the US, Australia and South America). Initially, Italian diaspora settlers tend to pursue strategies of 'chain' and 'cluster' migration, 'pulling in' relatives and friends from the same geographic area in Italy. By doing this, they reproduce abroad on the basis of community networks derived from their common area of origin, establishing the foundations for circular migration between their localities of origin and destination (Burrell 2006; Fortier 2000; Sponza 1988; Whyte 1993).

Geographical similarities between the Ceno and the Rhondda valleys in Italy and Wales, propelled the reproduction of homeland, peer villager and family dynamics. Bardi migrants emanated from a geographically delimited valley and migrated to another delimited valley with similar geomorphic characteristics in Wales, where it was physically easy to keep community cohesion.

Clustering among first and second-generation migrants can be partly explained by language fragmentation in Italy at the time of early migration flows to Britain. Italy was nationally unified relatively late, in 1861, and Italian, as a common 'national' language, was only widely adopted after the Second World War. Geographical and linguistic fragmentation meant that early immigrants spoke only local dialects that were highly diverse. The lack of a common national language made peer villager groupings the most natural associational tie in migration. The establishment of family businesses further intertwined social networks through economic exchange and marriage. As cafés required staff, employees were commonly recruited from the Ceno Valley amongst relatives and acquaintances. Equally, newly arrived migrants, typically sought work or lodging from Bardi migrants already settled in Wales.

My grandfathers knew each other. When my father moved to Wales my grandfather told him: 'Make sure you go and see L. who was my mother's father, living in Caerphilly. So my father used to go and see L. in the shop, and met my mother that way. (GF, G3, Teacher)

Typically, Italian communities abroad conserve practices, which were widespread in Italy at the time of migration, but which presently disappeared in the homeland (Burrell 2006; Colpi 1991; Medaglia 2001; Sponza 1988; Whyte 1993). A similar high retention of traditions and values, such as community and religious practices, is observed among Welsh-Italians. The mismatch between Welsh-Italian practices and modern life in Italy is inferred in the following interviewees' comments:

We feel that the Italian community in Wales - that they are more Italian, especially today, more Italian in their customs, in their ways, maybe even more religious than the Italians in Italy. (LC, G2, Tour Operator)

I think we got stuck in a time loop. Our perception of Italy is dependent firstly on a town in Italy which is not exactly cutting edge (laughs) in terms of technology, in terms of music and so on. So we are a little bit 'behind', in our perception of what's Italian culture. When we have an Italian dance we play waltz music, or we sing 'quel mazzolin di fiori' (popular turn-of century song) (laughs) … Bardi is, geographically quite insular. So this is an interesting question for me: are those Italian influences, common influences in my life, actually Italian or are they peculiar to Bardi? (RB, G2, Business Advisor)

Unlike Italians in the USA, the relative proximity of Italy and UK fostered a peculiar pattern of transnationalism with regular translocal returns to the 'root' ancestral village (Wessendorf 2007). The dynamic is illustrated by the following respondent:

South Wales is full of immigrants, a lot came from Hungary, Poland, Ireland, and Spain. They all lost their connection after one or two generations. They don't go back to their roots as the Italians do to Bardi. And I don't know why, other than maybe Bardi is just a nice place to visit. And because South Wales is a small area and Bardi is a small area, the families are close, there is a link keeping them together. A lot of the Italians in South Wales are related. When my father started a business he would call a cousin or an uncle, because of the strong family link. Because South Wales is in the middle of nowhere, and Bardi is in the middle of nowhere, there's a close link. (RS, G1, Retired Entrepreneur).

Welsh-Italians are part of a transnational diaspora, whose anchorage refers back to the original migrants' ancestral land in Italy. Family and community contacts have been fostered for generations by cyclical returns to the original ancestral village of Bardi. Tracing Welsh-Italian family trees reveals not only family networks distributed radially across Italy and Wales but their linkage to kinship networks extending to other countries and continents, notably France, the United States and Canada.

In the early 1900s, it was not infrequent for Bardesans to spend long periods of time either in Italy or Wales, with siblings being born in different countries and with different nationalities. This situation became even more entrenched during the Second World War, when border-crossing of civilians between Wales and Italy was restricted.

Despite strict border controls during the war, communications between different communities of Bardi migrants around the world continued, facilitated by transcontinental networks. When postal services between the UK and Italy were interrupted, it was a common practice for Welsh-Italians to have their mail forwarded via Bardesan acquaintances in the US. After the war, relative proximity to Italy, and Italy's integration into the European Union, unimpeded by visa restrictions, have afforded more fluid transnational trajectories that take the form of circular mobility. This is motivated by economic reasons related to businesses, houses and land owning in Italy and, not least, transnational family relations encompassing endogamous marriages and intergenerational care.

The interplay between transnationalism and marriage migration

Endogamic marriage is a primary strategy for ensuring cohesion of ethnic diaspora, particularly prevalent among first and second-generation migrants (Burrell 2006; Campisi

1948; Colpi 1991; Medaglia 2001; Sponza 1988; Whyte 1993). Endogamy is also an important initial driver of trans-border mobility. Welsh-Italian cultural identity was initially retained and reinforced by inter-marriage between Italian-Welsh and Italian nationals. Three different patterns of inter-marriage evolved among Bardi migrants. First, marriage among Italians in Wales was stimulated by the large concentration of Bardesans and their intensified exchanges across isolated valleys. Such encounters were promoted by active community life and 'Italian' ethnic events such as dances and social gatherings. The founding of Italian associations, notably the Amici Val Ceno Association, was instrumental in encouraging interaction of Italians in southwest Britain through the creation of purposeful events, trips and gatherings amongst Italians. Events and dances organised by the association became dating and marriage opportunities.

Second, men living in Wales used to go on holiday to Italy and marry Italian girls who would return to Wales with them and eventually start working in family cafes.

I found my husband when I was twenty-one. He came for holidays in Bardi, to visit his sister. After three years we got married. My husband was born here in Britain, but his parents were from Italy. We had a café in the Rhonddas and I worked for thirty-four years there. (AM, G1, Retired Café Owner)

Third, cross-country endogamy occurred with migrants from Wales marrying Bardesans residing in other communities outside Italy, for instance in Paris. Endogamy sometimes led to deeply entwined relational connections. One interviewee (RS), coming from a family where three out of four brothers married Bardi women met at dances, noted that at some point families became so entwined that he was both cousin and nephew to his aunt.

The Italian dances kept the culture together and kept us together as an Italian community. Unfortunately now there are too many distractions and there are less Italians marrying one another, fewer 'keeping it in the family', as they say. Once you have married a foreigner half of the culture is gone. (RS, G2, Restaurant Manager)

Predictably there was an initial stigma about marrying out, as this would 'dilute' ethnicity and weaken bonds with the original culture, particularly if an Italian man married a Welsh woman, as women are normally perceived to be better at maintaining ethnic ties.

If an Italian boy marries a Welsh girl, chances are that, slowly through the years, he'll adapt to Welsh ways and that will become his social life. On the other hand, if the girl is Italian and marries a Welsh guy, quite often you will find that the Welsh guy will come into the business. This is the way these things happen. Usually it is the fellow who adapts to the girl's ways. At first you've got this strong coherence 'Noi siamo Italiani', but then you get leaks into society and it spreads, and the original thing, forget it, it doesn't happen anymore. Language in the first generation was important. In the second and third, it doesn't matter. We were all speaking two languages, you know. And the thing with people like us is that, in effect we have two cultures. So I can't say I'm one hundred per cent Italian, because I'm not. You go back to Italy and something will annoy you. The culture has changed, hasn't it? It's seems to be a different culture. (RB, G1, Retired Café Owner)

Although the older generation perceives 'heritage dilution', and the risk of ethnic extinction arising from the prevalence of 'mixed marriages' with people of British origin, marriages among Welsh-Italians currently still happen in the third to fifth generations.

In addition, young Welsh-Italians occasionally marry Italian peers whom they met during their summer holidays in Bardi. So too, marrying in Bardi castle has become 'trendy' for Welsh-Italians. Transnational dating still occurs among Welsh-Italians in other countries as well.

I was born in Cardiff 44 years ago, but my great grandparents on my father's side were from Bardi. My family have always come for the summer, every year. We have always kept a holiday home and spend 15–20 days here in Bardi. So I have made special friendships, with people here that I meet every year. So one summer, I met my husband, who is from Bardi, then we met again later and in the end I just stayed here in Bardi. (MC, G3, Entrepreneur)

Family support networks and care-directed circular migration

Italian ethnic communities, both in the motherland and abroad, are characterised by a strong emphasis on family culture, which is evidenced in intensive intergenerational relationships fostered by frequent care and material exchanges. For these reasons, the Italian welfare system has often been characterised as a 'familialistic' or 'kinship solidarity' model (Ferrera 2005; Hollinger and Haller 1990; Naldini 2003; Saraceno 2016; Saraceno and Keck 2010).

Exchanges of family care-giving and interaction between adults, older parents and children tend to occur with greater frequency in Italy than in the northern European countries (Tomassini et al. 2004). Strong intergenerational ties are manifest in high levels of co-residence and spatial proximity (Glaser and Tomassini 2000), with higher normative values placed on filial piety (Lamura et al. 2008; Naldini 2003). Women in mid-life are particularly likely to provide assistance in cases of the poor health or disability of parents, while grandparents normally provide extensive childcare services (Ferrera 2005; Lamura et al. 2008; Naldini 2003; Saraceno 2016; Saraceno and Keck 2010; Tomassini et al. 2004).

Italian migrants preserve such intergenerational ties across nations, which reconfigure rather than disappear over time (Baldassar 2007; Zontini 2006, 2007, 2014). Intergenerational contacts are fostered by different strategies and modes according to distance, time and place, with a higher incidence of technology and multimedia communication usage in younger generations (Baldassar et al. 2016; Reynolds and Zontini 2014; Zontini 2014). Cross-border intergenerational care, especially for elderly parents and the disabled, occurs frequently, (Baldassar and Merla 2014; Burrell 2006; Zontini 2006, 2007) and is facilitated by temporary generational co-habitation. Informal care for children and older family members is still frequently practiced within Welsh-Italians' extended family networks. Such care is motivated by familial duty and is most often provided by women. Intergenerational care drives transnational temporary and longer term mobility between Wales and Italy, especially for older family members.

When my grandad was ill, my mother would go over for a while to Bardi to look after my Dad's parents. (MT, G3, Engineer)

Behavior towards the elderly is completely different [from what happens generally amongst the Welsh]. When my mother got ill, we made the choice to take care of her, me, my brothers and my father. For months one of us was always looking after her. I decided this because I appreciate the importance of what my Mum gave me and I felt I had to pay back the sacrifice she made for me for all these years. (PS, G3, Entrepreneur)

Amongst Welsh-Italians, social and financial transfers have generally been enhanced by spatial proximity, co-residency and multi-generational participation in family businesses. At the same time, occupationally, cafés or shops have provided economic subsistence to

multiple generations of family members, both long-term or temporarily.

Contemporary forms of transnationalism, intergenerational family heritage and cultural transmission

Ethnic transmission in the Val Ceno community has proved extraordinarily lasting over generations, in contrast to various other migrant groups, due to the mutual reinforcement of interlinked family networks and translocal mobility. Regular returns are a key factor in ethnic maintenance, testing and refreshing Italian identity in younger generations. Intergenerational care and spatial proximity have sustained the transmission of a number of ethnic practices. Studies of Italian communities within the UK (Burrell 2006; Colpi 1991; Fortier 2000; Zontini 2006, 2007, 2014) observe that Italian migrants identify a high level of extended family contact as the main marker of Italian ethnicity.

Interviewer: What would you say is 'Italian' in you?
Interviewee: The connection that we have with all our families in Wales, the closeness of the family, the fact that every year we come back here [to Bardi]…and the relationship to our grandparents. I remember as a child, going to their café, getting involved. It was a lovely, lovely, relationship. (GB, G3, Teacher).

Cultural heritage and shared values of mutual care are channeled especially through conviviality, language and food culture. Italian cuisine and family meals are among the most long-lasting intergenerational practices, maintained over five generations, even if families are ethnically mixed and do not identify as being strictly Italian.

Italian culture is quintessentially the 'family gathering around the table' [for a meal]. It doesn't matter if they [Italians] are scattered in Bardi, London, Wales or Scotland, it is more difficult to keep the family together, but it is always in their hearts and in their heads. (RS, G2, Restaurant Owner)

Descendants of Bardi migrants are now predominantly UK passport holders, nonetheless, there are approximately 3250 dual nationals holding Italian passports in Wales (ONS 2013) and it is estimated that about 40,000 have direct or ancestral ties to Italy (Carradice 2012). The blurring of borders, connected with the European Union's open entry migration policy for EU nationals, and cheap airfares to Italy have contributed to a more fluid pattern of

border crossings. While cycles of circular migration of the first and second generations of Welsh-Italians tended to be prolonged and driven by economic survival and relational ties, now new travel modes and motivations have given rise to more frequent border crossings associated with the seasonal rhythm of families' holidays or the progression of the family life cycle. These involve return migration for retirement and migration for younger generations 'seeking their roots', who effectuate expat experiences in Italy, incentivised by work, relationships or second home owning in Bardi. New forms of translocality denote rising economic affluence and encompass a number of different purposeful forms of migration.

With improved economic conditions, remittances to Italy and ownership of second homes there, the focus of cross-border mobility has increasingly shifted to life cycle changes and leisure time pursuits rather than economic improvement per se. In addition, a cultural shift in the post-war era led to the representation of Italy as an attractive travel destination. The location of Bardi, formerly problematic for employment, is now key to attracting Welsh-Italian visitors for holidays, because of its beauty, relative proximity to other Italian tourist sights, and sense of meaning derived from return to one's ancestral homeland.

Regular annual summer holiday returns are encouraged by the establishment of events such as the annual 'migrant festival' (13th August). This festival attracts members of families of Bardi descendants from all over the world each year. Older migrants tend to extend their visit over several months, particularly during the winter when the climate is warmer than Wales. Rather than making temporary visits, some older Welsh-Italians prefer to retire permanently to Italy and resettle in Bardi, taking advantage of the warmer climate and second homes that they may have inherited or purchased. Younger generations tend to maintain and reshape the ethnic practices that they perceive relevant to their needs, using their Italian background as social capital. Some young Welsh-Italians capitalise on their second language and social connections in Italy to establish import businesses of Italian products or to pursue other transnational professional careers.

Because of my Italian connections and culture, I have been able to go forward in business and I have been able to expand and diversify my business. So you know it's a terrific, valuable bonus being 'born of immigrants in another country'. It has worked well for me. (RS, G2, Restaurant Owner)

Others enjoy returning to a place where they have family roots and friends. The more recent use of digital technology and social media has a key role in fostering new forms of transnational links.

My parents and grandparents always made sure I came back to Bardi, because if I didn't, the connection would stop, you see? So if I keep returning to Bardi, and when I get married I will take my children there, and they will meet other Bardesans and the other emigranti, and they'll keep everything going.

I know all the Italian boys and girls around here [Bardi]. We are all friends on Facebook now. Sometimes I give them a call from UK. We always speak Italian. Sometimes they visit Wales. There are massive links between Bardi and Wales. Lots of Welsh-Italians like me have Italian passports, cittadinanza. I vote in Italy as well as in the UK. And everyone still comes back to Bardi, every summer. So we still keep Bardi close. (GF, G3, Teacher).

The strategy of returning to the Italian family home in childhood is often stressed in second and third generation narratives as essential for forming an attachment with one's ancestral homeland and Italian heritage. Owning a second home in Bardi, traditionally inherited from previous generations is perceived as the strongest pull factor 'drawing' current generations of migrants back to their roots. Narratives and memories of the homeland transmitted by grandparents encourage visits by later generations of family members to return.

I think the Italian language won't die with my grandchildren. They will be learning Italian, because we have my father's house here, and they will go back and forth from Bardi, as I do. It's a bit unusual, because I am third and they are fifth generation, now…I keep coming back because I came here as a child, I loved it as a child, and I'll never forget that, you see? So it is a combination of a lovely part of the world, generally nice weather, good holiday destination and you got a house and some roots. Maybe if we came from Naples or Milan it would not be like this. (RS, G1, Retired Entrepreneur)

The families in the sample who did not own a house in Italy, came from less scenic and hospitable areas,2 or who lacked relevant family and community bonds experienced less

meaningful connections and a more transient relation to place and Italian heritage.

I'll be honest with you. I was born in Italy but I received nothing from the country. I was there, I was unemployed, never had a penny. No work, no hope of work, no assistance of any kind. So, first chance I got I emigrated. My home is here now. I've got brothers and sisters, but they've got their families, they live in different places from where we were born as well. When I go to Italy, the places are abandoned because it's up in the mountains and the people moved to the towns, where there was work. There's just a few old people left. (MC, G1, retired employee)

Protracted mobility between two focal points sometimes amounts to an attempt to reconcile internal divisions in ethnic belonging and a recurrent feeling of being 'fake Italians' (PS, RB) or 'not belonging anywhere' (GF, LC). While Italy, or the socially constructed memory of it (Wessendorf 2007), is 'drawing' descendants of migrants back to their roots, the experience of actual Italy may be problematic for some who have decided to move or retire there.

When I go back to Wales I feel the Italian community is much more friendly and close. Every year they organise different festas, trips and invite one another home for dinners, birthdays, and get-togethers and see each other at church every Sunday. I see more of an old-fashioned kind of community spirit there than I have found in Italy.

It's a 'Catch 22' leading you to feel like you don't belong in any one country. This makes you a very open person, and you adapt very quickly to other countries and different people, but it also makes you feel like you don't have roots anywhere. There is always this feeling, yes, that your Italian side is drawing you back to Italy, and yet, when you are actually living there, you're not totally Italian. And when you are in England you are not totally British, so always this feeling of being neither one thing nor the other. I have spoken to other retired Welsh-Italians and they say they have the same feeling. (LC, G2, Tour Operator)

The ambivalence between attraction to Italy with its of values of warmth, togetherness and conviviality and a more preoccupied, modern lifestyle in the UK follows many into old age. Experience of 'dual belonging' and 'failed returns' are substantiated by literature on migratory groups in the Mediterranean (Attias-Donfut , 2013; Brickell and Datta 2011; Wessendorf 2007; Zontini 2015). As noted by Attias-Donfut and Wolff (2005), the duality of belonging to two places is sometimes only resolved at the final stage of life, in the locational choice of one's burial ground.

Conclusion

This study has explored the changing nature of transnational families' border-crossing migration between Wales and Italy over five generations, encompassing the shift from brittle restrictive immigration policies linked to employment status in the first half of the twentieth century, followed by blocked borders during the Second World War and eventually the blurred borders of open entry conferred on citizens of European Union member states that prevailed at the time of this article's completion.

Emphasis has been placed on the importance of family as a cushioning to the shock of the social and economic hardship of the settlement in a new country. At the outset, 'cluster migration' involved the creation of communities of people derived from the same geographical origin in Italy, followed by 'chain migration' in which first settlers 'pulled in' further migrants from the homeland. 'Circular migration', based on regular periodical returns to their homeland, became a common practice of the Welsh-Italian community and continues to the present serving to nourish and support networks of extended family, reproducing a generational care system linked to Bardi.

The peculiar transnational experience of this group has been driven both by material and emotional factors. Upward social economic mobility, the EU setting of flexible borders and forms of economic capital in the motherland (second homes, business and trade) create a base for regular returns. Within this context, translocal, circular mobility acts as an attempt to reconcile the experience of affective fracturing in the wake of emigration. It maintains, reproduces and redefines family ties, reshaping patterns of family formation and intergenerational care.

Although migration is often initiated for economic reasons, subsequent transnational mobility is significantly motivated by choices arising from the evolution of family life cycles, family care needs and sentiments of ethnic memory and belonging. Intergenerational family relations act as powerful drivers not only in moving people across borders but also in channeling the transmission of ethnic identity. Heritage maintenance and attachment to place emerge as important motivations for mobility in the context of open borders, with cross-generational variations in the choice of ethnic practices. The remarkable endurance of

translocal ethnic practices in this study of Welsh-Italian transnational families demonstrates that family social support networks and local attachment facilitate intergenerational cultural transmission across national borders.

Notes

1. The 1905 UK Aliens Act established an Immigration Board and required immigrants to prove they had sufficient means of support or an offer of employment. It was followed by the 1914 Aliens Registration Act introduced at the outset of the First World War (Spencer 2002).
2. The man being quoted here comes from a different region in Italy whose valleys are barren and abandoned in contrast to Bardi's attractive holiday setting.

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