

# The Net as a Living Experience of Distance Motherhood within Italian Culture

C. Papapicco

**Abstract**—Motherhood is an existential human relationship that lasts for the whole life and is always interwoven with subjectivity and culture. As a result of the brain drain, the motherhood becomes motherhood at distance. Starting from the hypothesis that re-signification of the mother at distance practices is culturally relevant; the research aims to understand the experience of mother at a distance in order to extrapolate the strategies of management of the empty nest. Specifically, the research aims to evaluate the experience of a brain drain's mother, who created a blog that intends to take care of other parents at a distance. Actually, the blog is the only artifact symbol of the Italian culture of motherhood at distance. In the research, a Netnographic Analysis of the blog *mammedicervelliinfuga.com* is offered with the aim of understanding if the online world becomes an opportunity to manage the role of mother at a distance. A narrative interview with the blog creator was conducted and then the texts were analyzed by means of a Diatextual Analysis approach. It emerged that the migration projects of talented children take on different meanings and representations for parents. Thus, it is shown that the blog becomes a new form of understanding and practicing motherhood at a distance.

**Keywords**—Brain drain, diatextual analysis, distance motherhood blog, online and offline narrations.

## I. INTRODUCTION

MOTHERHOOD is an existential human relationship that lasts for the whole life and is always interwoven with subjectivity and culture. Hence, the migratory experience generates new family practices and dynamics, changing roles, social positions or creating new ones, as happens for the "transnational"[1], i.e. mothers separated from their children who have embarked on the path of emigration. In the highly flexible and competitive Western business world, there is an increase in qualified young people who leave their homeland to reach another, in search of better professional and personal opportunities [2], [3]. This phenomenon, which is part of the process of great migrations, has been called "Brain drain" [4]. An epic of migration has been created around this mobility, especially when skilled young people are involved. There are some aspects that characterize it and that it is necessary to take into consideration because it can be understood how the way of being and living of those who remain is reorganized: that is an aspect not directly visible in the phenomenon of mobility.

The mobility of qualified people is a consequence of changes in the labor market and a revised concept of "human capital", in terms of employability. In a climate of work flexibility linked to globalization - therefore - at the opening of the frontiers and the elimination of space-time barriers, up

C. Papapicco is a PhD candidate at University of Bari "Aldo Moro", Dept. of Psychology, Bari, Italy (e-mail [concetta.papapicco@uniba.it](mailto:concetta.papapicco@uniba.it)).

to smart working forms, employability begins to be connected to the concept of "entrepreneurship." Being entrepreneurs of themselves, in a liquid world [5], [6] means being responsible for one's own skills and career path and this means become attractive and competitive. In addition, firm and intra-firm career developments become fundamental, or the willingness of each worker to link the career path to a territory or relocate it [7] and "escape". In this landscape, it is necessary to clarify the culturally idea of "escape". There is not yet an operationalization of the "brain drain" in the literature of the social sciences, since, even on the linguistic level, there is no univocal term to define the phenomenon. In many Romance languages such as Italian, Spanish, French and Romanian, reference is made to the escape or exodus to describe the outgoing mobility of qualified human capital ("*Cervelli in fuga*", "*Fuga de cerebros*", "*Fuite / Exode de cervaux*"; "*Exodul de creiere*"); while in Germanic languages, the phenomenon is linguistically described as "drainage", "exit" or "circulation" of the Brains ("Brain Drain" or "Drain Exit").

On the other hand, that of "brain drain" is not a recent phenomenon, however, the element of novelty concerns the way of living this escape, especially from those who remain in the native land, such as parents who implement coping strategies to confirm the role of mother and father in a distance situation. This is because the information age is a historical period characterized by a technological revolution centered on digital information and communication technologies (TICS), concomitant, but not causal, with the emergence of a social network structure, in all areas of human activity and with the global interdependence of this activity. This revolution is a multidimensional transformation process that is both inclusive and exclusive depending on the dominant values and interests in each process, in each country and in each social organization. Its consequences of this transformation and its characteristics depend on the power of those who benefit from it [8], as in the case of distance motherhood. Starting from the mother figures, the research investigates the ways in which Italian families construct new practices and meanings of their being parents at a distance and transnational families. Specifically, the research aims to evaluate the experience of a brain drain's mother, who in turn was an expat came back to Italy, who conceived a public storytelling blog that intends to take care of other parents at distance. The blog has become an exclusively Italian cultural product. The interview with the creator of the blog has been qualitatively analyzed by means of Diatextual Analysis from which emerged the dense plot between text and the context of distance motherhood meaning culturally defined.

## II. DISTANCE MOTHERHOOD WITHIN ITALIAN CULTURE

The residential emancipation of young people who decide to go and live abroad, because they have other professional and life expectations, creates new relational configurations within the family, producing breaks with respect to the traditional concepts and practices of motherhood. That is true especially in society, such as the Italian one, culturally built on the basis of values such as caring for children and the unity of the family [9]. Mobility, however, is undermining these paradigms and is creating other family models, such as distance motherhood or transnational families. These two patterns or ways of experiencing parenting are quite distinct.

Going back over history, it can be seen that some cultures, for example the Italian one, are characterized by a system of values linked to care: an example is the nurturing of children. In literature, this aspect recalls the Mediterranean family model, characterized by sedentarism and physical co-presence, as fundamental preconditions for child care [10]. The concept of family, in fact, in the ancient Mediterranean societies and which has been transmitted for a long time to the threshold of capitalist society, is based on two ideas: that of indivision and that of dependence, for which, the house is the center of reunion of all family members. In the traditional Mediterranean society, the family constitutes the pivot of the individuals' life who perform different roles: father, mother, children, spouses. In this traditional society there are no individual personalities but all men, women and children are expressions of the family, the community and nuclearity, which sees the family as the smallest social unit composed of a conjugal union and legitimate children. On this basis, Mediterranean family culture is imbued with "amoral familism" [11]. The term 'Familism' is used because the individual would pursue only the interest of his own nuclear family and not the interest of the community. In the community, however, cooperation is required between non-blood relations. "A-morality" because, following the rule, the categories of good and evil are applied only between family members, and not to other individuals in the community. Love-relatedness would therefore not be related to internal family behavior, but to the absence of a community ethos, the absence of moral and social relations between families and between individuals outside the family. This concept, which in the theory of Banfield's studies materializes in the relationship between family and community, is redefined in the study, instead, in the relationship between mother and children and above all in the choices of emancipation of children. The children migration, experienced in this context as a real abandonment, breaks the patterns of common perception of the sense of care. In fact, when we talk about "distance motherhood we refer to emotional support networks and economic material that transcends national borders" [12]-[16]. Transnational families, on the other hand, consist of people who are not physically present in the same place. It therefore becomes interesting to understand how these separate families give life to their way of being a family. The articulation of the relationship between individual characteristics and cultural baggage due to family and national belonging makes transnational families aware of

being bearers of differences, which are perceived above all as potentialities for the relationship itself. The quality of their relationship seems to depend on the way in which the partners manage to articulate and negotiate the differences that they carry, or when the positive aspects prevail over the difficulties, which, however, are recognized. All these difficulties manage to become a resource and an element helping the relationship, depending on the specific situations and the individuals involved, thus assuming a strongly contextual characteristic.

More generally, the family structure is seen as a microcosm, which, in the interweaving of relations, reproduces the nation-state link [17]. If the family is understood as the geographical presence of all the members and as a reproduction of the nation-state bond, this microcosm generates a sense of "banal" nationalism/familiarism [18]. By banal familiarism, it means a feeling of belonging to the family that is consolidated in habit. This consolidation brings out a psychological familiarity that emerges when a sense of ontological security is endangered by the risk of the routines collapse. This approach to care, families and states reflects the way in which nations and communities have, until recently, been widely theorized and are intrinsically connected to a geographical location. The mobility of a family member is experienced as a process that deviates from the norm of sedentarism. Globalization and mobility, in fact, put the family in a phase of rupture where the challenges are manifold. The capitalist forms of production become an obstacle to the preservation of family structures based on solidarity and on the sharing of values and projects. So, in the research it is wondered about what are the strategies for supporting mothers at a distance and, consequently, for distance parenting. An example of such help comes from TICS, new technologies capable of connecting and reaching a large number of recipients or breaking down space-time barriers. The TICS are technologies that concern information and communication, which allow acquiring skills both of a technical nature, for example, in the use of computers, and in managing the multiple meanings or practices that multimedia and Internet users are capable of create. Parents at a distance, therefore, develop these skills, giving an unprecedented meaning to the use of new technologies, re-signifying the relationship with emigrated children and meeting, as in the Italian case, in virtual communities, such as the blog "mammedicervelliinfuga.com".

## III. RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS AND METHODOLOGY

The need of mothers at distance to reinvent their role creates new objectives, such as those to take care of these mothers, who are in a position to experience parenting at distance. The research starts from the hypothesis that the way of living parenting at a distance is culturally determined and this implies a need for coping through the use of technologies. The co-construction of meaning linked to the experience of distance motherhood following the brain drain and the re-signification connected to taking care of other mothers with whom to share the same experience, implies a coordinated development of the personal and social field. In the relationship between Object and Subject, culture is in the

middle [19] and emerges by means of discourse. In the research, the discourse of a mother with brain drain children is analysed. She is a creator of the only existing blog, a virtual community that unites parents with distant children.

In particular, the study aims to evaluate the mother's experience at distance with the intention of detecting the coping strategies of this "painful tear". The research, therefore, starts from the detection of what are called "Socio-Epistemic Rhetorics" [20], or the social representations of the phenomenon of motherhood at distance, which materialize into discursive acts. This is the set of cultural artifacts that a society creates, for example a blog, which, when transformed into a discursive act, becomes categories of understanding and interpretation of what communicators convey. One of the cultural artifacts that contain public narratives of distant parents is the blog *mammedicervelliinfuga.com*. It is a virtual space, divided into sections in which, with the mediation of the blog administrators, mothers at distance can share experiences and personal narrations, which in the transition to the online context, become public, able to reach a wide audience of Internet users. Specifically, these representations will be surveyed, firstly through an interview with the blog creator and later with an ethnographic research on the same blog.

The ethnographic methodology [21] is useful to describe what happens in a social context. The Digital Revolution and, therefore, the pervasive use of the online environment has made it possible to arrive at netnography, a methodology of describing what is observed in a virtual context, such as a blog. According to the social context, observation can also be participatory or the researcher can observe from the outside while maintaining, in both situations, a neutral, objective attitude. The research opted for a non-participatory observation, since the sections of the blog are accessible, but contents cannot be created without the mediation of the administrators. In netnography, there are elements that are structural, in the case of the blog the sections that compose it, the colours used, the participation of users, as participation is promoted, but also more conceptual elements with the analysis of texts.

In the study, both the interview of the creator and the blog posts were considered not as mere texts, but as diatexts [22]. The term 'diatext' contains the Greek prefix 'dia' which means 'through'; in fact the operation of a researcher who uses the Diatextual Approach is to bring out the meaning of the texts, crossing them. With the Diatextual Analysis it is possible to bring out the Socio-Epistemic Rhetoric, analyzing the text, that is the discourse, or what people say/write/communicate and the context of enunciation, for example the distance motherhood in the online context. Specifically, what is analyzed are linguistic markers that characterize the "Who says it?", the Subjectivity; the "How to say it?", the Mode and the "Why do you say it?", the Argumentativity. In relation to the qualitative results in the interview scripts, which were recorded in the blog via Netnography, representations about motherhood and technology can help cope with distance.

#### IV. CARING OF MOTHERS AT DISTANCE: THE BLOG BIRTH

The blog *mammedicervelliinfuga.com* originated from the idea of a sociologist who has combined her personal experience of former brain drain after coming back to Italy; she is now mother of two brain-drain children, with her academic experience in the social sciences. Although the interview was not structured, areas of in-depth analysis of the experience of a distance and transnational mother emerged, concerning: the narration of personal history, the emotional state of parent at a distance, the birth of the blog, some questions on aspects unclear and the representation of indirect mobility, i.e. that of one's children.

In the interview some aspects emerged on which the blog's creator focuses. As far as it concerns personal history, the choice of children to leave is often defined as a predictable decision, because it is inherited from the parents. In fact, there is a recurrence of the expression "*Era nel DNA dei nostril figli*", in the English translate "*It was in the DNA of our children*". The idea of heredity is explanatory of how the children have "learned" from the parents themselves a mobile and international lifestyle, above all because highly qualified people, with high degree of education, could have found a good occupation also in the country of origin. This explains, in reality, that at the base of an "escape", there is always a possibility of decision, or a reasoned choice linked to the evaluation of push factors (for example the lack of satisfactory job opportunities in the country of origin) and attraction factors (for example, the presence of job opportunities with higher wages in the country of destination). Another aspect highlighted in personal history concerns the creation of cross-cultural/transnational families and the living apart together couples, as a consequence of a life lived in contexts in which multiple cultures are integrated and where there is respect for "diversity", as shown in the following extracts:

**Eg. 1** "Poi, invece, si è visto che durante il dottorato ha trovato l'amore... è un amore, tra l'altro anche esso straniero, perché questa ragazza è turca e hanno deciso di mettere su famiglia e di restare negli Stati Uniti"

En. Translate: "Then, instead, we saw that during the doctorate he found love ... it is a love, also a foreign one, because this girl is Turkish and they decided to start a family and stay in the United States"

**Eg. 2** "Ora vivono, come si dice, living apart together, quindi pendolano per due volte al mese, una volta verso New York e l'altra verso Champaing."

En. Translate: "Now they live, as they say, living apart together, so they commute twice a month, once to New York and the other to Champaing."

Furthermore, in the interview, very often reference is made to the "empty nest syndrome", particular psychological state that affects parents when their children leave their home. It emerges with the occurrence of expression as "*This house is too big*". This is another culturally typical aspect of Italy. The possession of large houses where to build "the nest" for the growth of children. But, this condition of empty nest is experienced by the interview protagonist when her daughter, towards whom she has expectations of approach and not

escape, decides, like her brother, to emigrate. This empty "space" left by the daughter, which is physically configured in her "empty room" and emotionally "in the most stable relationship", takes on a new meaning, that is to understand that she is not the only mother separated from her daughter. So, she started to research online other mothers at distance to join them via the blog. In this case, the network becomes a powerful dissemination tool, capable of reaching a vast audience, as well as motivated in the interview:

**Eg. 3:** "Per arrivare all'ultima parte della mia storia, ho smesso di fare la libera professionista circa tre anni fa e dopo mi sono detta "mah, come si dice? Trasformare le minacce in opportunità?" Beh, forse questa storia di vivere separata dai figli, innanzitutto non è solo mia, riguardava anche gli amici della porta accanto. Però, come sempre, il cappellino da sociologa, una volta che lo hai infilato, non lo togli più. Quindi, ho iniziato a studiare e ho visto che non era possibile che nessuno si occupava delle famiglie. Perciò, le ho cercate online, non ho trovato studi, non ho trovato piattaforme, non ho trovato blog e ho pensato "Va bene, allora lo faccio io!". Così è nato [mamedicervelliinfuga.com](http://mamedicervelliinfuga.com). Un poco in sordina inizialmente, ma poi è esploso alla grande."

En. Translate: "To get to the last part of my story, I stopped being a freelancer about three years ago and then I said to myself "mah, how do you say? Transforming threats into opportunities?" Well, maybe this story of living apart from your children, first and foremost is not just mine, it was also about friends at the next door. But, as always, the sociologist's hat, once you've put it on, don't take it off anymore. So I started studying and saw that it was not possible for anyone to look after families. So, I looked for them online, I didn't find any studies, I didn't find any platforms, I didn't find any blogs and I thought "Okay, so I'll do it!". Hence, was born [mamedicervelliinfuga.com](http://mamedicervelliinfuga.com). A little muted initially, but then it exploded big time. "

The empty nest, the room of the daughter, becomes a place that takes on a new meaning, being transformed into the "operational base" of the blog. This reconfiguration is a vehicle to reaffirm its parenting role as a mother at distance. With regard to the void, the protagonist of the interview notes a different experience of the distance experience of parents and grandparents, emphasizing that being a remote parent involves a certain degree of responsibility, instead for the grandparents there is the displeasure of don't see them grow, but the assurance that someone will take care of them. In fact, the importance of technology as an approach is noted, becoming, as in the example "grandmother via Skype". As for the affordances offered by the blog, in the interview the attention is focused on the blog section called "mom looking for mom". It is a section born with the intention to create a virtual migration chain, or to help mothers get in touch with another mother in the host country, who then acted as mother/adoptive family. It is noted that this goal was unsuccessful, due to a lack of promptness in the "adoptive" mothers. This section, however, has turned into one of the

logistical troubleshooting sections, which concern, for example, difficulties in finding accommodation in the country of destination. In fact, the sociologist notes that the question of housing becomes an international problem, since it is possible to encounter the same difficulties in all parts of the world, as shown in the following extract:

**Eg. 4:** "la questione abitativa è una questione internazionale, non è solo il desiderio di "tesoro, ci pensa mamma a trovarti casa", no, davvero a Berlino ci sono poche case, oppure sono fuori centro, sono molto care...lo stesso a Londra lo stesso a Parigi..."

En. Translate: "The housing issue is an international issue, it is not just the desire to "darling, mom thinks to find you home", no, really there are few houses in Berlin, or they are away from the center, they are very expensive ... the same in London same in Paris ... "

From the mother's words, it emerges that the research for the house is one of the main problems both for those who emigrate both for mothers who live this issue at distance. This is a real worry, because the house is both a symbol of "security" both of "stability". It is no coincidence that the word "house", which in Italian is "*abitazione*", is used instead of "home" in referring to a problematic situation for any mother. In this case, it can be find the presence of *débrayage* markers, of emotional detachment in the description of the problem, linked to the fact that the "home" is the place where there are affections, in particular where live the family, while the house is an almost momentary place, structurally conceived as the set of rooms and walls. On an emotional level, on the other hand, there is never a sense of anger towards the choice of children to leave parent's house, even on the part of parents registered on the blog, indeed there is a sense of pride. The sense of anger, on the other hand, emerges in relation to the system and politics. There is no anger about mobility, but about the lack of freedom, of choice, as shown in the following extract:

**Eg. 5:** "Non è data l'opportunità di scegliere e questo è quello che non funziona. Cioè un paese civile, un paese moderno dovrebbe essere in grado di fare politiche per coniugare quattro verbi: restare; partire; tornare; arrivare, perché non ci dimentichiamo l'arrivare, che è importantissimo. Quindi c'è molta rabbia, ma è una rabbia politica, non una rabbia individuale"

En Translate: "The opportunity to choose is not given and this is what does not work. That is to say, a civilized country, a modern country should be able to make policies to combine four verbs: to stay; to leave; to come back; to arrive, because we do not forget to arrive, which is very important. So there is a lot of anger, but it is political anger, not individual anger".

The attention and the choice of the four verbs "to remain"; "to leave"; "to come back" and "to arrive" are interesting. Their consequentiality is not accidental, as the first two verbs are intransitive and represent a type of traditional migration, known in the common imagination as the migrant "with the cardboard suitcase", in Italian "*con la valigia di cartone*". These verbs, in their intransitivity, represent opposites of a

decision-making continuum, where, however, the actor of the decision-making process is a passive subject. On the contrary, the verbs "to come back" and "to arrive" are transitive/intransitive and characterize the new mobility, that of a "modern country", providing the possibility of deciding and facilitating travel, not only in Europe but also in the rest of the world. Further attention deserves the verb "arrive", also emphasized by the mother in her interview. While the preceding verbs refer to the semantic sphere of the "movement", the verb "arrive" has a meaning related to the displacement, but another meaning is values. "To arrive" has the meaning of seeing one's children happy because they have

been able to reach an important or satisfied goal for the new living conditions. This sense of pride is linked to the representation that the mother provides of her experience as a parent at a distance. In the representation, in fact, the metaphor of the "little birds" comes again. The use of the diminutive is an indicator of a desire to mitigate the expressed content, like a mother who sees her children always small, but accepts and proudly supports their choices, comparing themselves, to a "peacock".

The results of the qualitative analysis can be summarized in Semiotic Square, Fig. 1.

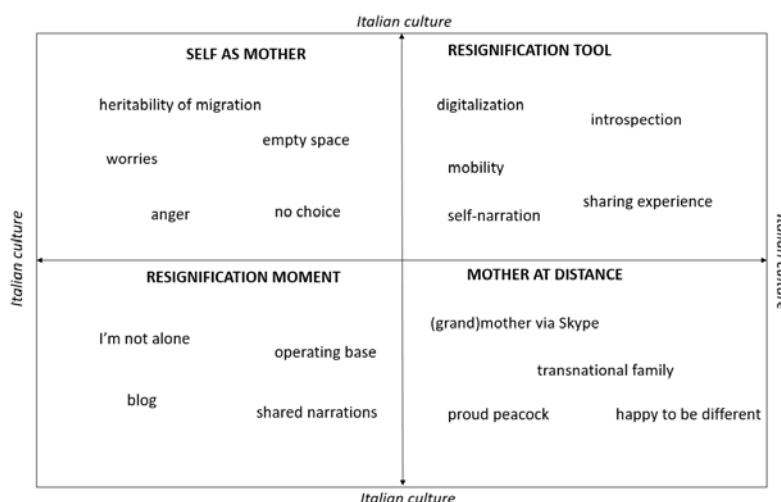


Fig. 1 Semiotic Square of mother at distance's experience

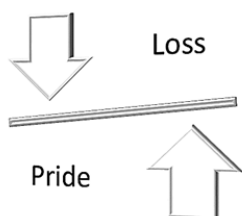


Fig. 2 Socio-Epistemic Rhetoric of Italian motherhood at distance

As emerges from the Semiotic Square depicted in Fig. 1, the experience of an Italian mother at distance is divided into two distinct and contrasting moments: to question one's role as a mother following the choice of children to abandon the "nest" and the re-signification of the mother at a distance. Between these two moments, two other phases are inserted: a subjective one, of introspection, in which one recounts to oneself and recounts the horizon of possibilities and meanings linked to separation from children, putting oneself on the line and learning to use new ones technologies; another phase of sharing the experience in the form of public narratives (via the blog), but which in reality aim to create a culture of "being mothers at a distance". In this framework, Italian culture and the mother's concept of caring for children has promoted the transition from a "traditional" conception of physical closeness to a re-defined conception, where it is no longer important

where one is, but how to keep oneself in contact. Starting from the latter "world view", the contrast between two Socio-Epistemic Rhetoric emerges in the experience of distance motherhood between the rhetoric of the "loss" of the bond with the child and that of "pride" to have raised a person, qualified human capital for foreign countries, as summarized in Fig. 2.

V.MAMMEDICERVELLIINFUGA.COM: A NETNOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

New technologies have changed many signification practices linked to different areas of human experience, becoming also facilitators of relationships in the mobility process. An example of a virtual space that has performed this function is the blog, an online environment in which the participants themselves have the ability to produce multimedia content, accessible to registered and unregistered users. Unlike other tools, such as video call systems, which help mothers to maintain relationships with distant children, the blog has more a function linked to the virtual encounter with other mothers at distance, but above all, through narration and re-narration, it has a function of sharing the experience. This is in fact the mission of "mammedicervelliniinfuga.com" (<https://www.mammedicervelliniinfuga.com/>), a blog dedicated to the mothers of brain drains. Specifically, the blog's mission

is to build a collective narration through which to share the "parallel universe" of mothers (and families) of brain drain: new everyday life, new times, new sensibilities, new relationships, new projects short, new expectations and future prospects. But also that of creating a virtual community among families, by sharing stories, feelings and moods; also practical advice, mutual help, travel. In addition, the blog is designed so that it is easy to access, use by mothers at distance, who then reinvent themselves and experiment with digital skills. To date, the blog has about 7800 mothers signed. Often in the research reference was made to "distance parenting", but from the numbers of the participants in the blog, we note a prevalence of the mother compared to the dads. This is an important fact because the Italian cultural element returns, but mainly from Southern Italy, typical of patriarchal families, where the care of children is entrusted mainly to mothers.

The blog is divided into several sections, which are:

1. **"the toolbox"**, a column dedicated to sharing "tools", i.e. ways of being and behaving, useful for being mothers at distance. This section stems from the need for a mother who claims she is not "equipped to be a mother at distance!". In this case, the mothers of migrant children express the difficulties they encounter in being separated from their children, as in the following example:

**Eg. 1** "Qualche tempo fa, durante una "skypata", uno dei miei due cervelli in fuga negli Stati Uniti comunica che, per motivi di lavoro, si trasferirà con tutta la famiglia per sei mesi in Europa. Un avvicinamento temporaneo insperato! D'istinto sprizzo felicità da tutti i pori: potremo vederci più spesso, non avremo il problema del malefico fuso orario, le bambine potranno passare del tempo da sole con noi, potremmo organizzare una vacanza tutti insieme, abatteremo i costi dei biglietti aerei e faremo altre cento cose meravigliose consentite da una distanza ravvicinata ma: "Mamma, sembravi entusiasta ma ti sei rabbuiata; che succede?" ed io rispondo (con un pò di vergogna) "È perchè mi lasci tua sorella da sola laggiù..." (la sorella, cioè mia figlia, vive anch'essa in USA)...Badate bene che, pur vivendo entrambi i miei figli oltreoceano, di fatto abitano a 1.400 chilometri di distanza e non è che si incontrino tutti i weekend. Ma a me, questo fatto che, almeno logisticamente, sarà più facile stare con un figlio e meno con l'altra proprio non mi è sceso giù. E così, anzichè iniziare a studiare tutto sulla nuova sistemazione europea del primo expat, ho comprato un biglietto aereo per raggiungere l'altra."

En Translate "Some time ago, during a call mediated by Sype, one of my two brain drains in the United States reports that, for work reasons, he will move with the whole family for six months in Europe. An unexpected approach! Instinctively I sprinkle happiness from all the pores: we will be able to see each other more often, we will not have the problem of the evil time zone, the girls will be able to spend time alone with us, we could organize a vacation all together, we will break down the

costs of air tickets and we will another hundred wonderful things allowed from a close distance but: "Mom, you seemed enthusiastic but you were upset; what happens?" and I reply (with a bit of shame) "It's because you leave me your sister alone over there ... " (the sister, that is my daughter, she also lives in the USA) ... Mind you that, even if you both live my children overseas, in fact they live 1,400 kilometers away and it is not like they meet every weekend. But to me, this fact that, at least logistically, it will be easier to be with one child and less with the other just did not come down to me. And so, instead of starting to study everything about the new European layout of the first expat, I bought a plane ticket to get to the other one. "

As can be seen from this post the geographical distance for a mother is perceived as a concern for a state of solitude of the daughter. This is understandable from the expression "alone over there", which indicates the fact that the presence of the brother on the same continent becomes a source of reassurance, in reality, for the new parental role she assumed with the departure of her children;

2. **"travel, advice and recipes"**, a section dedicated to practical advice and suggestions for starting a common migration project; these are experiences that refer to how to learn a (new) language, what to read, how to find accommodation, up to what can you cook in the host country. This section is divided into three subsections: a) a section whose posts always start with "I would go to ...", where there are requests for travel and accommodation information that have logistical nature; b) another section that starts with "who comes with me to ...?", for mothers who have children in the same city and they want know each other and share travel experiences; c) a last section that begins with "I have just came back from ...", which contains stories and testimonies of travel back from a trip. In this section, there is the true spirit of sharing of the blog, as in the following example, in which the mother reports a famous recipe, dedicating it to her son, but at the same time, giving advice to other mothers and children who are in the same area:

**Eg. 2** "*Il risotto allo zafferano di mamma Anna Maria per Nicolò a Londra*

Ogni volta che vado a Londra lo preparo per Nicolò così non dimentica i sapori dei piatti della tradizione della sua città d'origine. [...]

\* A Londra non lo metto perchè non ho mai provato a cercarlo dal "butcher" \*\* portato dall'Italia"

En translate "The saffron risotto of mother Anna Maria for Nicolò in London

Every time I go to London I prepare it for Nicolò so he doesn't forget the tastes of the traditional dishes of origin his city. [...] \* In London I don't wear it because I never tried to look for it in the "butcher"

\*\* brought from Italy"

In the example shown, we can see the emergence of a sense of "de-territorialization" with expressions such as "I never tried to look for it" and a "re-territorialization" detectable by

expressions such as "brought from Italy" or "So do not forget ... the tradition of his origin city". The mother, in fact, tries to create a new daily life for her son who lives in London, imbuing this new life of the territorial heritage of both, thus worrying that the boy does not forget it.

3. "mom looking for mom", a section dedicated to those looking for information to travel or travel friends;
4. "heart of mother and father" and "nonnavéni", a column dedicated to storytelling, free thought and poetry of the parents. This section is entirely dedicated to their children or grandchildren and it is free thoughts that are in the form of a letter, signed by pseudonyms. In this section the most profound experiences emerge, steeped in rhetoricity and poetry. Parents report the impossibility of thinking about the opportunity of their qualified children to live abroad, as shown in the following example:

**Eg. 3** "Lettera di madre Ancenta: Care" colleghi ", ho quattro figli, due di loro in fuga ... uno a Zurigo e uno a Alba (Cuneo). Francesco ha 36 anni è un ricercatore, professore cardiologo presso Università di Zurigo "Per la preparazione della tesi è sempre un ospedale di New York sul Monte Sinai. Un colpo al cuore per me ... è stato il primo figlio a lasciare casa. È stato un tre mesi a New York, è stato vinto e poi è partito per Zurigo per la specializzazione Cardiologia, poi è tornato al dottorato, ora ho un contratto di sei anni all'Università di Zurigo, si è sposato e si aspetta un bambino per il mese che crescerà lontano da me. bene in Svizzera, tutto funziona e la vita non è difficile come facciamo noi. Gli manca la sua famiglia, il suo paese ... ma si rende conto che se vuole lavorare deve restare lì. Non ci credo ... Marco ha 29 anni, lavora nel reparto Risorse Umane di Ferrera e ne è molto contento. Lo hanno appena trovato un contratto indeterminato alla Fox di Roma quando ha parlato con la Fiat a Torino e in seguito ha contattato Ferrero ancora di più ... Dice anche che tornerà ... Ancenta "

En translate: "Ancenta Mother's letter: Dear "colleagues", I have four children, two of them on the run ... one in Zurich and one in Alba (Cuneo). Francesco is 36 years old, he is a researcher, a cardiologist professor at the University of Zurich. For the preparation of the thesis it is always a New York hospital on Mount Sinai. A blow to the heart for me ... was the first son to leave home. He spent three months in New York and then he left New York for Zurich, for the Cardiology specialization, then returned to the doctorate. Now He has a six-year contract at the University of Zurich, got married and expects a child, that will grow away from me. Well, in Switzerland, everything works and life is not difficult as we do. He misses his family, his country ... but he realizes that if he wants to work, he must stay there. I don't believe it ... Marco is 29 years old, works in the Human Resources department of Ferrera and is very happy with it. They have just found an indeterminate contract at Fox in Rome when he spoke with Fiat in Turin and later contacted Ferrero even more ... He also says he will come back ... Ancenta "

In each letter, the parents describe their concerns, but at the end of the virtual narrations, the awareness emerges of having to leave their children free to make an important decision about their future, above all because, the choice to leave is reconfigured as a will of "emancipation", linked to a sense of autonomy and freedom. However, this process of becoming aware is actually characterized by a sense of resignation. The extracts also show the rhetoric of the digitalization of the migration chain and therefore the importance of creating relationships for mutual help. Through blogs, parents are able to create a network in which to contain and share their concerns. Moreover, in the narrations there is the presence of more rhetorical strategies, such as similarities and metaphors. Children are often compared to a "bird". As a bird is ready to leave the nest, so the children leave the family (e.g. "A rather early bird"), but they do not always leave the nest so early, as in the common mental machinery about brains in flight; in fact, there are children who leave just before the age of thirty (e.g. "Francesco is 36 years old [...] Marco is 29 years old). Here the sense of pride of the parent emerges, but at the same time, the awareness that despite the distance, despite the separated life, the children are well.

Regarding metaphors, mothers often think of migration as the action of flight (for example "Buon volo Ludo!", in the English translate "Good flight Ludo!"). Both the similarities and the metaphors in the semantic sphere of the "birds" that leave the nest to "take flight", but in the case of the mobility of the children, the action of "taking flight" is replaced with that of "escape". The escape, in fact, is often also experienced as a "painful tear", because to be "painful" is not so much the choice of the children to emancipate themselves, as the need to assume a new parental role that they had never thought of or not they had never experienced, as a way of facing distance.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The qualified migration, especially from Italy, creates new experiences especially that of mothers, who see their children "take flight" and from whom they separate as a normal rite of passage towards the children emancipation, but this path it develops in geographically different places. Therefore, they begin to create new spaces of meaning to justify and renounce the choice of children, but also to reformulate the parental role. These spaces are configured on the Net: the network as a possibility to reduce the distances with their children, but also as mutual-aid environments between the mothers themselves, as in the blog project *mammedicervellinifuga.com*. The blog is presented not only as a virtual environment of practical help, but also as a space for sharing emotions, moods, thoughts, from which it is possible to understand what is the representation of the talented mobility indirectly lived by the parents. From the Netnographic analysis of the blog and from the narrative interview conducted with the creator and the Diatextual Analysis of the discursive extracts, a painful emotional experience of mothers emerges, from which, however, there is a sense of pride towards distant children and their new life which they want to continue to be part of, reinventing themselves: becoming digital immigrants, also

"citizens without borders", as "home" is not "where we are", but "who we are". This aspect is fundamental for the emancipation of titled children, who have other life and professional expectations, but this choice is lived in the Mediterranean/Western family model as a failure of the parental role, especially on the part of the mother, who must reinvent her life following the children departure. The blog, therefore, becomes a means for distance mothers to justify the choice of children and their parental role, but also a cathartic, reflective and empathetic place, in which reciprocity becomes the way for mothers not to feel put by part.

**C. Papapicco** is a PhD candidate in Human Relation Sciences at Dept. of Psychology, University of Bari "Aldo Moro", Bari, Italy. Her research interests focus on the psychology of communication and new media, social psychology. The use of quantitative and qualitative methods has allowed to study the discourses of social actors, enhancing their individual "voices".

#### REFERENCES

- [1] Villamizar, Y. P., & Moreno, A. R. (2011). Afectos y emociones entre padres, madres e hijos en el vivir transnacional. *Trabajo social (Universidad Nacional de Colombia)*, (13), 95-110.
- [2] Giddens y W. Hutton (Ed). En el limite. La vida en el capitalismo global. Barcelona: Kriterion Tusquets.
- [3] Grubel, H., B., Scott, A., D., 1966. The International Flow of Human Capital, *American Economic Review* Vol., 56, pp. 268-274.
- [4] Cordero, A. L. H. (2015). El rostro de la maternidad migrante. La fotografía como herramienta etnográfica en el estudio de las migraciones femeninas. *Ankulegi. Revista de Antropología Social*, (18), 97-110.
- [5] Bauman, Z. (2002). *La solitudine del cittadino globale* (Vol. 287). Feltrinelli editore.
- [6] Bauman, Z., & Bauman, Z. (2002). *La società individualizzata: come cambia la nostra esperienza*. Bologna: Il mulino.
- [7] Grubel, H.G., 1994. Brain Drain, Economics of, in "The International Encyclopedia of Education", T. Husen and T. Neville Postlethwaite (eds.), Vol. I, Oxford, pp. 554-561.
- [8] Carr, S. C., Inkson, K., & Thorn, K. (2005). From global careers to talent flow: Reinterpreting 'brain drain'. *Journal of World Business*, 40(4), 386-398.
- [9] Leira, A. and Saraceno, C. (2006) Care: actors, relationships, contexts. *SOSIOLOGI DAG*, 6 (3), 7-34.
- [10] Mirvis, P. H., & Hall, D. T. (1994). Psychological success and the boundaryless career. *Journal of organizational behavior*, 15(4), 365-380.
- [11] Baldock, C. (2000). Migrants and their parents: caregiving from a distance. *Journal of Family Studies*, 21 (2), 205-224.
- [12] Banfield, E. C. (1958). *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society*, *Economica*, vol.26, issue.102.
- [13] Hochschild, A. (2000) *Global care chains and emotional surplus value, in On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism* (eds. W. Hutton and A. Giddens), Jonathan Cape, London, pp. 130-146.
- [14] Hochschild, A. (2001). "Las cadenas mundiales de afecto y asistencia y la plusvalía emocional". En. A.
- [15] Hochschild, A. (2005). *Love and gold, in Feminist Politics, Activism and Vision: Local and Global Challenges* (eds. L. Ricciutelli, A. Miles, and M.H. McFadden), Zed/Innana Books, Toronto, pp. 34-46.
- [16] Wagner, H. (2008). "Maternidad transnacional: discursos, estereotipos y prácticas". En G. Herrera y J. Ramirez (Eds.). *Latina migrante: Estado, familia, identidades*. Quito: FLACSO.
- [17] Wagner, R. (2015). 'Transnational civil dis/obedience' in the Danish family unification dispute. *European Political Science Review*, 7(1), 43-62.
- [18] Baldassar, L., Kilkey, M., Merla, L., & Wilding, R. (2014). Transnational families. *The wiley blackwell companion to the sociology of families*, 155-175.
- [19] Docquier, F., & Rapoport, H. (2008). Brain drain and human capital formation in developing countries: winners and losers. *The Economic Journal*, 118(528), 631-652.
- [20] Caffi, C. (2001). *La mitigazione: un approccio pragmatico alla comunicazione nei contesti terapeutici*. Lit.
- [21] Berlin, J. A. (2003). *Rhetorics, poetics, and cultures: Refiguring college English studies*. Parlor Press LLC.
- [22] Manuti, A. & Mininni, G. (2017), "A rose is more than a rose ... the diatextual constitution of subjects and objects", *Text & Talk*, 37(2): 243-263.