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**MIGRANTS IN DEVELOPMENT:  
A MULTI-PERSPECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE PARTICIPATION OF  
MOLDOVAN MIGRANT ASSOCIATIONS IN DEVELOPMENT  
INITIATIVES**

Eveline Odermatt

PhD in MIGRATION STUDIES  
School of Global Studies  
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

November 2016

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis has not been, and will not be, submitted in whole or in part to another University for the award of any other degree.

Signature.....

*To my parents*

*Non, ce n'est pas la terre plus que la race qui fait une nation. La terre fournit le substratum, le champ de la lutte et du travail; l'homme fournit l'âme. L'homme est tout dans la formation de cette chose sacrée qu'on appelle un peuple (Renan, 1882, Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?)*

*A country without haste. Here a small village, there a small village, colourful houses, rich blue and green. Gentle hills. In between, emptiness filled with emptiness (from fieldwork notes in Moldova, May 2013).*

## Abstract

Today migrants are increasingly seen as potential 'philanthropists' or even as the 'instigators' of development transition in their countries of origin. This thesis explores, via an original multi-perspective bottom-up approach, how the discourse of migrants' contribution to development is constructed and put into concrete practice in the case of Moldova. The young republic is one of Europe's lesser-known countries and yet, with its intense recent experience of migration, it presents a fertile territory for in-depth study of the migration–development dynamic, with special reference to the role of migrant associations. More specifically, the heart of the thesis investigates, with a transnational lens, representations and negotiations of migrants' collective development efforts, firstly among migrants, secondly among development actors, and thirdly the aid-relationships between the two.

The thesis engages with the literature on the relationship between migrants' transnational development practices and transnational power hierarchies, highlighting the role of international development policy discourses and initiatives from an interdisciplinary perspective. It aims to contribute to the broader theoretical discussion on linkages between transnational collective practices of Eastern European migrants living in EU countries and the development transition in the Eastern European 'neighbourhood'. Using a variety of field methods including multi-sited ethnography, the data collection took place over a period of one year – following the 'discourse on migrants' contribution to development' in the transnational social field of migrant civil society and in the transnational field of development organisations across seven European countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Moldova, Switzerland and the UK.

The findings reveal significant differences between migrants and mainstream development agencies on the issues of Moldova's transformation process, development practices and on the notion of 'ideal' development partners. Migrants' collective transnational development practices appear as a dynamic process shaped not only by the current and understudied Moldovan migration features and based on various socio-economic and cultural indicators, but also by the country's Socialist past and its marginalised place within Europe. The results also show unexpected relationship patterns between migrants and state institutions and aid-agencies, in which the latter two rely on migrant associations to carry out their newly-created migration–development policies and programmes. And an overall discomfort was found among aid-workers in engaging Moldovan migrants as their partners, expressed in double standards applied to migrants in 'aidland'.

## Acknowledgments

Relationships and people make my life. My interest in people is the reason why I am doing what I am doing. My thesis is shaped by relationships with many people in my life – a ‘support web’ of family, friends and colleagues.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| <i>Abbreviations</i>  | VI     |
| <i>List of Figures</i>  | VII    |
| <i>List of Appendices</i>   | X      |
| <br>CHAPTER 1: Introduction   | <br>1  |
| 1.1 Research Background   | 2      |
| 1.1.1 The discursive background of the migration–development debate   | 2      |
| 1.1.2 The geographical terrain  | 3      |
| 1.2 Research Structure, Main Aims and Key Research Questions  | 5      |
| 1.2.1 Main aims and overall research structure  | 5      |
| 1.2.2 Key research questions  | 7      |
| 1.3 Relevance of the Research Topic   | 8      |
| 1.4 Thesis Outline  | 12     |
| <br>CHAPTER 2: Theoretical Framework  | <br>13 |
| 2.1 The Rise of the Celebratory Discourse of Migrants’ Collective Engagement in Development   | 14     |
| 2.1.1 Theoretical discursive shifts   | 14     |
| 2.1.2 Political and ideological shifts  | 17     |
| 2.1.3 The latest trends: disrupting the development mantra with ‘different kinds of dialogues’  | 18     |
| 2.2 Looking Out and Going Beyond Linear Views: The Social Dimension of Migration and Transformation                                     | 21     |
| 2.2.1 The social dimension of migration: blurring binary categories of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ migration                                       | 21     |
| 2.2.2 The social dimension of development transitions: what kind of transformation?   | 24     |
| 2.2.3 Challenging the ‘entrepreneurial self’ as the dominant ‘discursive subject’ of the migration development discourse                | 27     |
| 2.3 Breaking away from Dichotomous Views of ‘Here’ and ‘There’: Transnational Social Practices  | 29     |
| 2.3.1 Breaching the binaries of ‘here’ and ‘there’ and of ‘West-East’: the transnational social fields of migrants and development      | 30     |
| 2.3.2 Deconstructing the concept of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ migrant associations: from unitary social actors to transnational social practices | 34     |
| <br>CHAPTER 3: Methodology  | <br>39 |
| 3.1 Research Design   | 39     |
| 3.1.1 Qualitative methodology   | 39     |
| 3.1.2 Fieldwork rationale: from Berlin and London...to Chisinau and Tiraspol... to Paris and Rome                                       | 41     |



|  |        |
|--|--------|
| 3.1.2.1 <i>Fieldwork phases</i>  | 41     |
| 3.1.2.2 <i>Fieldwork breaks</i>  | 42     |
| 3.1.2.3 <i>Mobilities</i>  | 43     |
| 3.1.3 Transnational approach and multi-sited ethnography   | 45     |
| 3.2 Sample, Design and Sites   | 48     |
| 3.2.1 Sample group and access  | 48     |
| 3.2.2 Sites  | 51     |
| 3.3 Methods and Analysis   | 55     |
| 3.3.1 Primary data sources   | 55     |
| 3.3.1.1 <i>Semi-structured in-depth interviews</i>   | 55     |
| 3.3.1.2 <i>Participant observation</i>   | 59     |
| 3.3.1.3 <i>Ethnographic walks</i>  | 61     |
| 3.3.1.4 <i>Visual methods</i>  | 62     |
| 3.3.2 Secondary data sources   | 64     |
| 3.3.2.1 <i>Analysis of relevant documents</i>  | 64     |
| 3.3.3 <i>Grounded-Theory and Reflexive Analysis</i>  | 65     |
| 3.4 Ethical Considerations and Positionalities   | 66     |
| <br>Chapter 4: Encounters at the Fringe of Europe: Moldova's Development Transition                                      | <br>69 |
| 4.1 Main Characteristics of Moldova's Transformation   | 70     |
| 4.1.1 Introducing Moldova: economic and political reforms  | 70     |
| 4.1.2 Moldova's search for identity  | 75     |
| 4.1.2.1 <i>Multiple development orientations</i>   | 75     |
| 4.1.2.2 <i>Moldova's fragile political equilibrium: emigrant engagement towards a contested notion of 'home country'</i> | 79     |
| 4.1.3 Migration as an integral part of development transition  | 83     |
| 4.1.3.1 <i>The role of emigration in today's Moldova</i>   | 83     |
| 4.1.3.2 <i>Emigration and development projects</i>   | 85     |
| 4.2 Stagnation and Degradation: Migrants' Visions and Revisions of Moldova's Development Transformation                  | 89     |
| 4.2.1 Degradation, the culture of distrust and the 'immature' Moldovan society   | 90     |
| 4.2.1.1 <i>Migrants' visions of Moldova's transformation</i>   | 90     |
| 4.2.1.2 <i>Degradation and distrust</i>  | 93     |
| 4.2.1.3 <i>Moldova – an immature society</i>   | 96     |
| 4.2.2 Unravelling the past and regaining confidence through transnational development practices                          | 98     |
| 4.2.3 Migrants' perception of Moldova within Europe's socio-economic configurations                                      | 100    |
| 4.3 Shifting gazes: Moldova's Transformational Change from the Perspective of Intra-European Interconnectedness          | 102    |
| 4.3.1 Moldova's development transition as integral part of Europe's transformation                                       | 103    |
| 4.3.2 Regaining space: (re-)connecting Moldova with Europe through transnational development engagements                 | 104    |
| 4.4 Conclusion   | 108    |

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| CHAPTER 5: Discontinuities within Continuities: Main Characteristics of Moldovan Migration   | 111 |
| 5.1. From Sadova to Padova: Key Features and Development of Moldovan Migration   | 112 |
| 5.1.1 Essential characteristics of Moldovan migration  | 112 |
| 5.1.2 Diversification of destination countries and migration types   | 118 |
| 5.2 Moving Beyond 'the Earn and Return Typology': Four Current Moldovan Migration Realities  | 121 |
| 5.2.1 "I am 'here' only temporarily, but I don't want to go back 'there' forever": high (intentional) onward migration and constant reorientation              | 122 |
| 5.2.2 "I am a lone wolf": socio-cultural integration and emotions of belonging(s)  | 124 |
| 5.2.2.1 <i>The Moldovan migrant community – an invisible community discretely growing</i>  | 125 |
| 5.2.2.2 <i>"From the prisons of paradise": low socio-cultural integration of Moldovan migrants</i>   | 127 |
| 5.2.3 "You cannot jump twice into the same river": delayed return and return visits  | 130 |
| 5.2.4 Family reunification   | 134 |
| 5.3 "Misery is in Italy, Poverty in Moldova": Ideological and Normative Shifts of How the Moldovan State and its Key Development Actors Portrays its Absentees | 137 |
| 5.4 Conclusion   | 143 |
| CHAPTER 6: 'Channelling the Good Spirits': Moldova's Engagement with its Emigrants and Migrant Associations  | 146 |
| 6.1 Moldova's Creation of Policy Mechanisms for Migrants' Involvement in Development   | 147 |
| 6.1.1 Reaching out to migrants for Moldova's development   | 147 |
| 6.1.2 Getting organised: overview of migrant association-led policies and programmes   | 152 |
| 6.2 'We Are Not Yet Developed as the Africans': State-of-the-Art on Moldovan Migrant Associations  | 156 |
| 6.2.1 General characteristics of the associational landscape   | 156 |
| 6.2.2 Main activities  | 157 |
| 6.2.3 Teaming up for development: inter-associational relationships  | 159 |
| 6.2.4 Towards more 'professionalism': the importance of capacity building  | 162 |
| 6.3 "No Interest is Better than Fake Interest": Migrants' Views on State and Development Emigration Policies   | 164 |
| 6.3.1 Migrants' viewpoints on the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora   | 165 |
| 6.3.1.1 <i>A 'fuzzy' and 'top-down' structure</i>  | 165 |
| 6.3.1.2 <i>"The idea is to search for ideas": a reversed asymmetrical relationship between migrants and state institutions</i>                                 | 166 |
| 6.3.1.3 <i>"The bureau for manipulation of the diaspora": the category of political control</i>  | 170 |
| 6.3.2 'From talk-shops to work-shops': the evolution of the Diaspora Congresses  | 172 |
| 6.4 Conclusion and Key Findings  | 174 |

|   |     |
|---|-----|
| CHAPTER 7: 'Solidarity Not Charity': Collective Transnational Development Practices of Moldovan Migrants  | 179 |
| 7.1 The Social Formation of a Community of Collective Practice  | 180 |
| 7.1.1 "From doing picnics in Italy and France to transnational-oriented development activities": migrants' self-reflections on their community of practice                        | 180 |
| 7.1.1.1 <i>The viewpoints of non-members of migrant associations on collective activities</i>   | 180 |
| 7.1.1.2 <i>"I have been in the diaspora for four years": migrants' self-reflections on being a 'diaspora' with the analytical template of the migration–development discourse</i> | 182 |
| 7.2 The Underling Logics of Collective Development Practices across Time and Space  | 187 |
| 7.2.1 Regaining a name – online and offline   | 188 |
| 7.2.1.1 <i>On becoming a person again: development practices shaped by migrants' professional skills</i>  | 188 |
| 7.2.1.2 <i>To see and to be seen: belonging and self-representation</i>   | 189 |
| 7.2.2 Compassion and moral compensation   | 192 |
| 7.2.2.1 <i>Metaphoric forms of transnational development practices</i>  | 196 |
| 7.2.3 Transnational development practices and anticipated return migration  | 198 |
| 7.2.3.1 <i>Re-establishing personal support-networks in prospect of return</i>  | 198 |
| 7.2.3.2 <i>Humanitarian projects as a stepping-stone for future self-employment</i>   | 199 |
| 7.2.3.3 <i>Addressing gaps in temporary return and employment programmes</i>  | 200 |
| 7.3. "We Want to Keep It Human": Migrants' Understanding of Development Practices in Relation to Mainstream Aid-Giving  | 202 |
| 7.3.1 Migrants' perception of mainstream development practices  | 203 |
| 7.3.1.1 <i>The positive portrait of the aid-industry</i>  | 203 |
| 7.3.1.2 <i>The negative stances towards 'professional' aid-practices</i>  | 204 |
| 7.3.2 <i>"I am bored of pure idealism": migrants' development interventions as self-help practices</i>  | 207 |
| 7.4 Conclusion  | 210 |
| CHAPTER 8: Discomfort: Aid-Relationship Dynamics between Migrants and Development Actors  | 214 |
| 8.1 The Pure Versus the Selfish Altruists: Double Standards in Aidland  | 215 |
| 8.1.1 The positive view of aid-workers on migrants' humanitarian interventions  | 215 |
| 8.1.2 Double standards in aidland   | 218 |
| 8.1.2.1 <i>The pure versus the selfish altruists</i>  | 218 |
| 8.1.2.2 <i>The malaise with the diversity of migrant associations</i>   | 220 |
| 8.1.2.3 <i>'Savoir and savoir faire': migrants' expertise and practical competences</i>   | 222 |
| 8.2 Too Close for Comfort? Migrant Associations and Conventional Aid-Practices  | 224 |
| 8.2.1. The confusion over migrant associations' role and the search for the ideal migrant partner   | 225 |
| 8.2.2 A closer look at migrants and distance  | 228 |
| 8.2.3 History repeating: Strengthening the migrant civil society with low degree of migrant involvement   | 232 |
| 8.2.4 Worlds apart: the migrant civil society and the Moldovan civil society  | 234 |

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| 8.3 “With the Russians it’s either a ‘Yes’ or a ‘No’”: Dynamics of Migrant-Development Actor Relationships in Joint Development Settings | 240     |
| 8.3.1 Collaborations between migrants and IOs and government-related institutions  | 240     |
| 8.3.2 Relationships between migrants and development NGOs in Moldova and in host Countries   | 244     |
| 8.4 Discussion and Conclusion  | 246     |
| <br>CHAPTER 9: Conclusion and Discussion   | <br>251 |
| 9.1 Synthesis and Discussion   | 251     |
| 9.1.1 Findings obtained on each research dimension   | 251     |
| 9.1.2 Summary of findings obtained across all research dimensions  | 258     |
| 9.2 Discussion and Recommendations   | 260     |
| <br><i>References</i>  | <br>270 |
| <i>Appendices</i>  | 289     |

## Abbreviations

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| ASM    | Academy of Sciences Moldova   |
| BRD    | Bureau for Relation with the Diaspora   |
| BTI    | Bertelsmann Transformation Index  |
| CIM    | Centre for International Migration, Frankfurt (part of GIZ)                                   |
| CEE    | Central and Eastern Europe  |
| CIS    | Commonwealth of independent states  |
| DEVCO  | International Cooperation and Development (EU) (former EuropeAid)                             |
| DFID   | Department for International Development  |
| EEA    | Easter European Accession States  |
| GFMG   | Global Forum on Migration and Development   |
| GIZ    | Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Society for International Cooperation) |
| IASCI  | International Agency for Source Country Information   |
| ICMPD  | International Centre for Migration Policy Development   |
| IMF    | International Monetary Fund   |
| IO     | International Organisation  |
| IOM    | International Organization for Migration  |
| IPP    | Institute of Public Policy  |
| IMF    | International Monetary Fund   |
| LED    | Liechtenstein Development Service   |
| NGO    | Nongovernmental organisations   |
| OSCE   | Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe  |
| PRSP   | Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper  |
| SDC    | Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation  |
| TdH    | Terre des Hommes  |
| TACIS  | Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States                                |
| UNFDPA | United Nations Population Fund  |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Program  |
| USAID  | US Agency for International Development   |
| WHO    | World Health Organization   |

## List of Figures

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Figure 1.1: Impressions from Moldova  | 2  |
| Figure 1.2: Overall research rationale  | 5  |
| Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework   | 13 |
| Figure 3.1: Geographical distinction of research sites on fieldwork activities                                | 43 |
| Figure 3.2: Mobility  | 45 |
| 1. Bus table, central Bus station, Chisinau   |    |
| 2. Train station Reggio Emilia, Italy   |    |
| 3. Collage of tickets from fieldwork  |    |
| 4. Central train station Bologna  |    |
| 5. Train station Orléons  |    |
| 6. Central Bus station Chisinau   |    |
| Figure 3.3: Transnational connections   | 47 |
| 1. 'Scoreni-Paris taxi'   |    |
| 2. Coffee shop 'la Paris', Corjeuti   |    |
| 3. T-shirt 'Where is Moldova?', promotion material for Moldovan migration programmes, IOM headquarter, Geneva |    |
| 4. Migrants demonstrating in Paris: 'Moldova's destiny is in the European Union'                              |    |
| Figure 3.4: Fieldwork sites   | 55 |
| 1. Bologna's arcades  |    |
| 2. Business building, Chisinau  |    |
| 3. Official government billboard: 'Moldova my home country', Chisinau   |    |
| 4. Piazza Unità d'Italia', Novellara  |    |
| 5. Map of Canary Wharf, London  |    |
| 6. Main square in Chisinau  |    |
| Figure 3.5: From centres to peripheries   | 58 |
| 1. Entrance to my flat in Chisinau  |    |
| 2. Coffee place in Novellara  |    |
| 3. Canteen of an orphanage, Edinet, Moldova   |    |
| 4. A typical interview setting, Preganziol, Italy   |    |
| 5. Canteen of a vocational school, Vulcanesti   |    |
| 6. La Défense, Paris  |    |
| Figure 3.6: Office worlds   | 59 |
| 1. NGO office in Cantemir, Moldova  |    |
| 2. A new meeting room for a migration–development programme, Chisinau   |    |
| 3. Locality of an NGO in Comrat, Gagauzia   |    |
| 4. Office of an agricultural organisation, Cantemir   |    |
| 5. Entrance to the Moldovan office of a bilateral development agency, Chisinau                                |    |
| 6. Building of an NGO in Tiraspol, Transnistria   |    |

7. Headquarter of Swiss Development Cooperation, Berne
8. IOM headquarter, Chisinau

Figure 3.7: Participant observation 61

1. A meeting between migrants and government officials in Bologna
2. Assembly of a migrant organisation in Paris
3. Members of an informal migrant network, Padua
4. Diaspora conference IOM, Geneva
5. A workshop on the role of the diaspora for Moldova's development, Chisinau

Figure 3.8: Ethnographic walks 62

1. A neighbourhood in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, near Paris
2. A suburb in the North of Paris
3. A kiosk in Gagauzia
4. 'Rooms to let – Moldovans only', Bologna
5. A 'Hotel' letting rooms to Moldovan migrants for the long term, Paris

Figure 4.1: Geographical location of Moldova (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2013) 70

Figure 4.2: Moldova – a land full of contrasts 75

1. Billboard in Chisinau: 'Europe – for a decent life'
2. The mallDova: a shopping centre in Chisinau
3. A house in Rezina
4. Contrasts in the capital city
5. A new business centre in Chisinau
6. A school office in Transnistria
7. A market place in Cahul

Figure 4.3: Emptiness and reminiscences of the past 79

1. A statue of Lenin in front of the Parliament house, Comrat
2. Main road from Chisinau to the north of the country
3. Emptiness
4. Flyer to celebrate the Russian Victory Day on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May, Chisinau

Figure 4.4: Moldova's struggle for identity 82

1. A pro-Russian graffiti, Chisinau
2. A pro-Romanian graffiti: Moldovans are Romanians (Moldovans so Romanians)
3. Official government billboard: 'Love your language! Love your country!', Balti
4. An anti-Russian graffiti, Chisinau
5. A pro Moldovan graffiti, (Moldovans are not Romanians), Chisinau

Figure 4.5: 'Keep my world together!': information campaign for parents planning to move abroad (TdH 2014) 87

Figure 4.6: Moldovan emigration 89

1. An empty Moldovan village in the east of Moldova
2. Departure time table for international destinations, main bus station, Chisinau
3. A list of former beneficiaries of an NGO in Edinet, indicating their current domicile (mainly Russia and the Ukraine)
4. A private provider of bus connections between 'Moldova and Europe'

## 5. A social service centre in a village

## Figure 4.7: Contested public messages 98

1. An Anti-emigration and pro-population government billboard: 'Children, not money make you happy'
2. A US-migration programme, Chisinau
3. Publicity for construction work in Israel,
4. Official government billboard: 'Moldova, my home country'
5. Publicity for a Canadian work abroad programme, Chisinau

## Figure 6.1: Talent-programmes (BRD 2014) 151

## Figure 6.2: Mobilising the Moldovan diaspora: A programme by the Austria development agency (Ada 2013) 155

## Figure 7.1: The associative life of Moldovan migrants 187

1. A cultural event in Rome
2. The contested implementation plan for a food-festival, listing the names of the villages where the material needs to be collected
3. A pro-European political event, Paris
4. Publications from the diaspora
5. Mailboxes in a community centre in Paris, hosting Moldovan migrant associations

## Figure 7.2: The church 196

1. Russian Orthodox priest after the mass, Padua
2. Time-table of an improvised Russian Orthodox Church in Novellara, Italy
3. A registration list for free French language courses, offered by the Romanian Orthodox Church in Montreuil, Paris

## Figure 7.3: Migrants' collective development interventions 202

1. A nursery school supported by a migrant association, Balti
2. Beneficiaries of a vocational school supported by migrants, Vulcanesti
3. A food-festival near Chisinau
4. A Geneva-based migrant association collecting school material for a Moldovan school
5. A Charity event, Padua

## Figure 8.1: The donor community's support of migrants (BRD 2014) 237



## List of Appendices

*Appendix 1: Profiles of Principal Informants*

286

## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

The Republic of Moldova is not exactly what one would call a press darling:

*"If there are any reports at all from this landlocked country, whose location most Europeans don't even know, they highlight intense poverty, illegal organ trading, human trafficking, civil war and communism. Something about wine too" (Lonely Planet: 2010:7).*

Indeed, this small country the size of Belgium – situated between Romania and the Ukraine – is little known and unspectacular. There are no breath-taking mountains, no sea or raging rivers. This is precisely one reason why Moldova is spectacular in my eyes. Since I 'risked' a visit to Moldova the first time – as a Swiss Newspaper entitled an article on travelling to Moldova (Le Temps 2012) – I have become attached to this place at the presumed margins of 'Europe', wherever we claim to fix its eastern borders<sup>1</sup>. While visiting social projects around the country on several trips during the years 2005-2009, in different positions as a consultant to development agencies and as a researcher, I felt what I call the 'omnipresence of absence'. I could feel the absence of the working-age population – of men and women alike, especially in small rural communities. Yet, no aid worker was openly addressing the issue of Moldova's large-scale emigration. It occurred to me that, although a host of academic, policy and civil-society publications consider migration as an 'integral part' of broader social change, and migrants as 'agents for social change', mainstream development agencies remain ambivalent about the phenomenon of mass emigration, its effects on the overall country and the incorporation of migrants into their development work. This observation intrigued me and provoked my curiosity to dig further into this topic. More precisely, in my thesis I focus upon the complex picture of representations and negotiations of Moldovan migrants' collective involvement in development initiatives.

In this first chapter, I introduce my thesis, which is inscribed in the broader research topic of the intra-European migration–transformation nexus. First, I briefly map the discursive and geographical background of my research. This is followed by a summary of my overall research design, the main aims and key research questions, and a justification of the relevance of the research topic. I round off this scene-setting chapter with a brief outline of my thesis.

---

<sup>1</sup> The sense that Moldova has somewhat altogether fallen out of today's European map is encapsulated in the title of the geographical board game – 'Where is Moldova?'



Figure 1.1: Impressions from Moldova

## 1.1 Research Background

### 1.1.1 The discursive background of the migration–development debate

First, it is widely accepted that social remittances – the transfer of ideas, behaviours, values and norms between migrants' destination countries and places of origin – are an important aspect of social change in migrants' countries of origin (Levitt 1998). The economic, human and social benefits of migrants' initiatives for their countries of origin are fairly well-documented, and there is now a voluminous literature dealing with the various forms of transnational activities of migrants (e.g. Lacroix 2016). Secondly, as a leitmotiv of the ongoing rather positive interpretation of the linkages between migration and development since the late 1990s, migrants are seen as potential 'philanthropists' or even as the 'instigators' of development (Newland 2010a; Page and Tanyi 2015). This optimistic framing of the migration–development nexus has further provoked a growing academic and policy interest in migrant associations'

development initiatives and in their potential to alleviate poverty in their countries of origin<sup>2</sup> (Lampert 2014). And thirdly, since the transnational turn in the 1990s, migrant associations have increasingly been considered as members of 'transnational civil society'<sup>3</sup>, or as actors within transnational spaces (Faist 2000). They have become a familiar motif in debates within different disciplines where a spatial framework that privileges the transnational is commonly deployed (Mullings 2012). For all of these three reasons, a range of international development agencies have launched migrant association-led programmes and policies aiming at maximising their development potential via financial and technical support, and at bringing the associations' activities into the development establishment; for instance, their social or educational projects. Yet, policy efforts to incorporate migrant associations as 'partners' into official national and international development raise a number of questions about the actual degree of practical inclusion of such associations into the international development field, or what is commonly referred to as 'aidland'<sup>4</sup>. These questions include: How is development imagined among migrants and their associations? How are the entanglements between the migrant associations' strategies and international development agents shaped? My thesis aims to address these questions by exploring Moldovan migrant associations' involvement in formal development policies and practices.

### 1.1.2 The geographical terrain

The Republic of Moldova presents a thought-provoking case study in reference to both development and migration. Moldova is the poorest country in Europe (World Bank 2014)<sup>5</sup>. It was estimated that in 1999, nearly 50% of the population of Moldova lived below the poverty line. Even if Moldova has undergone profound economic and political transformation since its independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, its economy remains weak, and the country's political situation is fragile, especially in the light of the ongoing insecure situation in the neighbouring Ukraine. Hence, it is no surprise that Moldova is the top recipient of EU financial support per capita in the EU-neighbourhood area, and that the international donor community is strongly present in the country.

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<sup>2</sup> I prefer to use the term 'migrant association' instead of terms such as 'home town association' (HTA), frequently used in the academic literature (e.g. by Lampert 2014), as this 'home place' usage by associations is not always a town. It may be a district, region or a country. Moreover, some of the migrant associations not only support bilaterally their 'home' but also the 'home' of others.

<sup>3</sup> I opt for what seems to me the easiest definition of civil society, namely the space between the state, the market and the family (cf. Gellner 1994).

<sup>4</sup> A number of academic publications on the topic of development use 'aidland' in their titles (e.g. Mosse 2011).

<sup>5</sup> According to the Human Development Index, Moldova is currently ranked 117th out of 178 countries, behind many West African and South American countries (UNDP 2014).

Moldova is also an interesting case regarding migration. After gaining its independence, Moldova has witnessed out-migration on a large scale, to an extent that it has become a serious impediment to political, social and economic modernisation (Robila 2014). Estimates of the number of migrants range up to 50% of the economically active population, or one third of the total population (Mosneaga 2012). This means that over one million people have already left the country (UNDP 2011). Furthermore, Moldova is the world's second recipient of remittances per capita, and remittances account for 43% of the country's GDP (IMF 2014). Moreover, the country currently occupies third place among the world's fastest shrinking countries, after Syria and the Cook Islands (UNFDPA 2015).

Even if Moldovans migrate both eastwards and westwards, I concentrate on migrants living in Western and Southern European countries, as there has been a considerable increase in recent years of 'Western' destinations of Moldovan migrants, including in the countries in my study: France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland and the UK. This increase has been accompanied by a rise in formal and non-formal networks, organisational activities, and grouping of activities under umbrella-like schemes in these countries (Cheianu-Andrei 2013).

Lastly, given the massive scope of migration that significantly alters the country's demographic structure – with entire villages depopulated – numerous Moldovans have either emigrated themselves or they are personally part of migrant networks through their relatives and friends. Everybody I have encountered on my fieldwork in Moldova could either share with me their personal experiences of migration or the migrant stories of families and friends – be they my female neighbours in a typical Soviet suburb of Chisinau, whose husbands, sons or brothers were working at that time on construction sites in Sochi for the Olympic Games; the high-flying young professionals in the head-quarters of international organisations (IOs) in the capital, who narrated their experiences as international students in Western Europe or in the USA; male employees of rural NGOs, some of whom had experienced slavery-like working conditions in the agricultural sector in the Ukraine or in Russia; female aid-workers who experienced exploitation in the Middle East or in Southern Europe as domestic workers; elderly shopkeepers spontaneously sharing their past migration experiences; or rural children who are beneficiaries of development projects describing to me their family situations with either one or both parents living abroad. In a nutshell, with an exceptionally high number of international migrants, Moldova constitutes an interesting case for studying migration – a fairyland for migrant researchers so to speak. Hence, it surprises me that Moldova is also somewhat of a black hole in the European map of migration studies, with the exception of the topics of financial remittances and the 'children left behind'.

These brief remarks on the discursive and geographical background of my thesis form the starting point for the overview of my research design and the relevance of the research topic.

## 1.2 Research Structure, Main Aims and Key Research Questions

### 1.2.1 Main aims and overall research structure

On a meta-level, the thesis seeks to contribute a better understanding of the relationship between transnationalism and transformation in the intra-European migration context.

*The main aim of this thesis is to capture the complex picture of representations and negotiations of Moldovan migrants' collective involvement in development initiatives among migrants and among development actors, and to get a better understanding of the ways in which the relationships between the two are shaped in practice.*

I explore Moldovan migrant associations' development-oriented activities and their involvement with the development establishment by drawing upon a multi-perspective and multi-dimensional approach, and a set of qualitative research methods. The overall thesis structure consists of a triad of three main research dimensions, on which my analytical framework is subsequently built. Figure 1.2 shows my overarching research design.

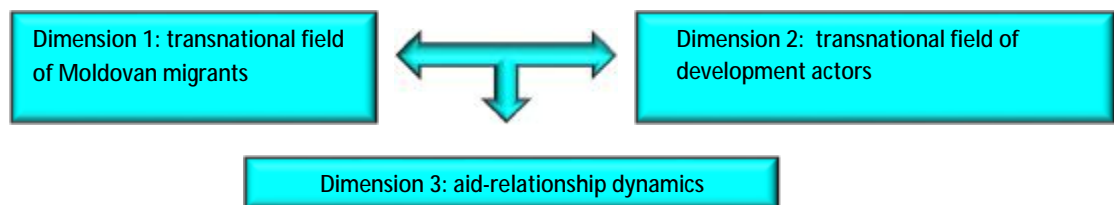


Figure 1.2: Overall research rationale

Within this triad, I seek to hear the polyphonic voices of all actors involved in order to reflect upon migrants' involvement in development initiatives and to assess their mutual relationships. I aim to understand the multiple subjectivities that all actors involved bring forward within the three different dimensions as a collage of a variety of scales: individual, organisational and the policy level. I analyse both sets of actors, the migrant civil society and the development actors<sup>6</sup>,

<sup>6</sup> I define the official international development aid system (Development) as 'a chosen array of policies, interests, procedures, relationships and resources that form a system dedicated to international development cooperation' (Fowler 2005: 1). By 'development actors' I mean all individuals and institutions that act with the intention to contribute to development. This includes governmental departments for international development, including the Moldovan government, multilateral agencies and international and local development organisations (NGOs).

as non-static entities, underlining their own dynamics and multiple rationalities and belief systems. To this end, I conceptualise both actors as multi-sited, multi-layered and multi-scaled transnational social fields, spanning across a variety of time-space contexts. Thus, my research is highly transnational and constructed within a multi-sited approach, as I will trace the transnational social field within which migrants appear not as foreigners to be differentiated, or natives in a specific geographical context, but as actors that connect one another through their collective engagement with transnational development processes and policies. Consistent with my research triad, the main aim of the thesis is disaggregated into the three research dimensions.

#### Dimension 1: the transnational field of Moldovan migrants

In the first and central dimension of this thesis I aim to identify what visions of Moldova's transformation migrant associations support, whose interest these visions serve and how they are negotiated among migrant leaders. By assessing how collective social interventions of migrants are performed in practice, I bear in mind that these might depend on the migrants' overall socio-economic situation and degree of incorporation in the receiving societies. Furthermore, through the examination of migrants' viewpoints on their contribution to Moldova's transformation, I am particularly interested in gaining new insights into the transnational development practices of migrants that exist, but which have thus far escaped the interest of official development actors. Therefore, I engage with a heterogeneous sample of collectively engaged migrants, beyond the 'best and brightest' migrants who commonly feature in research on migrants' development-oriented activities in other geographical contexts. That being said, the subjects of my study are also those migrants and associations who 'do not do development' according to the development discourse; the habitually 'silent members' of the Moldovan migrant community – the low-skilled migrants. In a more literary style, besides Favell's 'Eurostars' (2008a) – the highly skilled free-movers between the 'Eurocities', I equally encompass the invisible stars, who do not shine in the skies over the 'Eurocities' in this thesis – Brussels, London, Paris, or Rome – but who are nevertheless there, as distant stars for family members and vulnerable groups in Moldova.

#### Dimension 2: the transnational field of development actors

Although there exists a considerable strand of anthropological and sociological literature on the mobile international humanitarian professionals working in developing countries (e.g. Bergmann 2003; Fechter 2012), the aid-practitioners' accounts on my research topic have been strikingly absent in the debate so far. The 'key development actor' of the migration–

development debate is often narrowed down to a set of impersonal policy documents produced by large multinational development agencies and to broader development theories (cf. de Haas 2010). Therefore, 'the key development actor' is often rather a 'discursive object' than a 'subject'. Guided by my bottom-up research rationale of multiplicity, and by my ethnographic approach, I engage in the second research dimension with the lens of development policy makers and aid-practitioners working in international or local development agencies in Western European headquarters or in Moldova<sup>7</sup>. I explore their viewpoints on migrants' development initiatives, so as to get a better picture of how Moldovan migrant associations are imagined and constructed as agents of transformation of their home country, and how these imaginations are translated into concrete policy-actions and programmes in Moldova.

### Dimension 3: the aid-relationship dynamics

In my view, the life-worlds of the two social actors, the migrants and development actors, have been conceptually kept for too long as 'worlds apart'. These life-worlds, I assert, unfold most expressively in their micro-relationships in joint development settings. With this in mind, I seek to get a better knowledge of the relationship patterns between the two social actors as they unfold in concrete development practice. By addressing both the discursive level and the level of actual everyday development practice, I aim to trace the discrepancies between the dominant policy discourse and the practices of integrating migrants' development efforts into the professional field of development.

#### 1.2.2 Key research questions

In accordance with the three research dimensions, the three overarching research questions guiding my ethnographic research ask:

#### Dimension 1: the transnational field of Moldovan migrants

How is the development policy and practice of actively involving migrants in development efforts perceived and negotiated among Moldovan migrants?

The sub-questions in this first research dimension are:

- *What are migrants' visions of Moldova's transformation?*
- *Who is engaged on a voluntary basis in collective transnational social practices regarding age, education and gender?*
- *How do migrants define their role as agents of transformative change in Moldova?*

<sup>7</sup> My understanding of development practitioners and aid-workers follows that of Rosalind Eyben: "Development practitioners are people working in the international development sector – in bilateral and multilateral agencies, in international NGO, as staff member or consultant. They might be also located in a private sector consulting company or a philanthropic foundation" (2006: 4).



- *What forms of collective transnational engagement do migrant associations implement, and how are these forms shaped by migrants' everyday lives?*
- *If the associations and networks are involved in development initiatives, how do they decide about strategic and organisational matters with regard to their concrete involvement in development donor programmes?*

#### Dimension 2: the transnational field of development actors

How is the 'policy idea' of involving migrants and their organisations imagined within the transnational field of development?

- *How do development actors (including local NGOs and the Moldovan state) view migrants and their associations; their activities, members and their role as development actors?*
- *Are they seen as partners or beneficiaries?*
- *How is the policy category of migrants' involvement negotiated and sustained among development policy makers and practitioners?*

#### Dimension 3: the aid-relationship dynamics

How are the aid-relationships between migrants and development actors shaped in practice?

Here, I put a special emphasis on the degree of migrants' integration into the development field. In line with Faist, who states that "only by integrating migrants into policy circuits on various governance levels can the migrants' potential in terms of remittances and solidarity be realised" (2007: 15), I ask:

- *How are migrants integrated into the field of transnational development policy?*
- *How do migrants and development actors experience their collaborations?*
- *Are migrants and their associations just 'invited' to participate or do they have influence on the decision-making processes of development policies and initiatives?*

With these questions in mind, I turn to the next section, in which I highlight the relevance of my research topic.

### 1.3 Relevance of the Research Topic

The statement that Moldova is not exactly a press darling can also be applied to the broader academic world across the humanities and social sciences. As we are at the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union at the time of writing, numerous books and edited collections on post-socialism are hot off the press, but one usually fails to find any contributions on Moldova. Moreover, the topic of migration more broadly is often absent in ethnographies of post-communist transformation.

Moldovan migration is also commonly missing in collective contributions on current dynamics and transformations of intra-European East-West migration in the post-communist era – such as on topics of circular migration within the EU and between the EU and its Eastern neighbours (e.g. Triandafyllidou 2013). As a non-member of the European Union, Moldova is also absent in the dynamic and fast-growing field of migration research on EU post-accession migration from Central and Eastern Europe<sup>8</sup> (e.g. Engbersen and Snel 2013; Glorius et al. 2013, among others). In short, Moldova has largely escaped the attention of qualitative migration researchers, and current Moldovan migrant realities remain in many ways unexplored.

As in other Eastern European countries, most of the studies completed before the enlargement of the European Union focused mainly on large-scale demographic trends or the political framing of migration, and less had been undertaken on the micro, ethnographic level (Favell 2008b). Additionally, until now, research on Moldovan migration has covered a very limited range, and has focused almost exclusively, on the above-mentioned topics of children left behind (e.g. Robila 2014; Vanore et al. 2015) and on financial remittances with a quantitative approach (e.g. Mahmoud et al. 2013; Piracha and Saraogi 2012). Both have been a constant academic and political fixture for some time now. Besides these aspects of Moldovan migration, we know very little about the Moldovan migrants' everyday experiences, their potential agency and their cross-border social ties spanning between the Western and Southern European destination countries and Moldova. That being said, I attempt to connect areas of study, which have remained separate, notably Moldovan migrants' everyday lives, which I consider central for understanding migrants' transnational engagements, and the migrants' impact on Moldova's transformation. I aim to bring a fresh look at Moldovan migration beyond the dominant research focus on remittances and children left behind.

Because migration is a dominant feature of contemporary Moldova, there has been a considerable interest in the country in migration–development programmes within the framework of the 'Extended Mobility Partnership in the EU-Neighbourhood Area'. Currently, Moldova is the country with the highest number of EU migration-development initiatives (EU 2013a). In the words of a research participant working for the EU: "In Moldova we gained the most experiences – it's our test case". Furthermore, since the year 2005, the support of migrant associations is one of the priority areas of the migration-development component within the European Union (EU 2013a), with Moldova being a priority country. In this context, Moldova and its development partners have recently started to launch 'diaspora-building' activities of 'accessing' and 'mobilising' migrant associations' activities for Moldova's national development

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<sup>8</sup> The countries are those included in the EU's enlargements in 2004 and 2007, also referred to as the 'EU-10': Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

strategies. During my fieldwork stay in Moldova there was a dynamic process of ‘top-down’ ‘diaspora-building’ efforts. This turns the Republic of Moldova into an ideal case study for exploring aid-relationship dynamics between migrants and international development actors. Initiatives to engage migrant associations as new international development partners are, however, based on limited knowledge. Little has been written on post-socialist or post-communist countries in respect to transnational collective activities carried out by migrants in general and on Moldovan migrant associations in particular (cf. Vullnetari and King 2011). Presently, there are three pieces of research on specific aspects of Moldovan migrant associations available. The first one is a comparative study focusing on associations based in Italy, Israel and Russia (Schwartz 2007), commissioned by IOM Moldova. The second study focuses on the top-down state-led mobilisation of the scientific diaspora, which addresses the ‘knowledge-transfer’ between migrants and the Moldovan scientific community (Varzari et al. 2014). The third study maps more broadly the Moldovan migrant community, and partially encompasses migrant associations (Cheianu-Andrei 2013).

In general, the academic focus on transnationalism and development so far has mostly been on the diffusion of development practices between Western European countries and the U.S.A. on the one hand, and less developed African, Caribbean and Asian countries on the other (Grabowska and Garapich 2016). Due to the tight conceptual relationship between the social remittances literature and the ‘migration–development nexus’, social development practices contributing to the transformation in migrants’ countries of origin within Europe have received much less attention (cf. Vianello 2013b). However, according to Castles, “The notion of social transformation signifies profound structural modifications of social relations” (2016: 19). This transformation in the context of CEE countries from communist and centrally planned economies to democratic systems with free market conditions is geographically uneven, with some ‘leftovers’ from the communist era, and with delayed convergence with Western democratic countries in many spheres of life. These conditions can create context-dependent gaps for social remittances which can be captured in transnational social spaces (Faist 2000) or transnational social fields (Glick Schiller 2005), for instance within the Moldovan migrant community in Western European countries.

Furthermore, besides the lack of research on the topic of ‘mobilising’ migrants from this geographical context in regard to their capacities to become ‘voluntary or professional development workers’, there is also a research gap in the area of specific historical and cultural aspects. For example, there is a void in taking into account that, in contrast to other post-communist countries, Moldova was never an independent state prior to the dissolution of the

Soviet Union in 1991. How a fairly new national script shapes the enrolment of migrants in national development efforts remains unexplored.

By and large, the academic literature focuses on well-established migrant communities – as there is a common assumption that only well-established migrant communities of a large size maintain transnational collective practices worth studying. For instance, numerous studies exist of co-development projects, in the cases of migrant communities with a longer migration history and larger emigration populations – e.g. Nigeria, Morocco, the Philippines or Mexico, among many others (e.g. Østergaard-Nielson 2011). Another research strand focuses on migration communities that some migrant researchers rightly or wrongly label as ‘culturally highly associative’, for instance Ghanaian migrants. The Moldovan migrant community does not fall under these categories. Therefore, how the somewhat optimistic view surrounding diaspora-led development policies and programs works in practice with less established, less experienced, and smaller communities like the Moldovan migrant community, has been sidelined thus far.

Moreover, besides the topic of ‘the children left behind’, the current discourse on the topic of migration and development in Moldova is highly constructed from an economic perspective (Lücke et al. 2007). Some authors stress the need to better understand the social dimensions of migration, such as migrants’ collective social forms, that this relatively new intra-European migration has taken, or the impact of emigration on the social fabric of Moldova more broadly (cf. Pinger 2009). I attempt to fill this research gap by bringing forward the micro dimension of Moldovan migration, like the migrant’s own perspective on the broader migration–development debate. I assert that, in the light of new development policy trends, such as the ‘migration-centred approach’, this bottom-up approach becomes even more relevant.

Lastly, as mentioned earlier, the relationship dynamics between migrants and development agencies in concrete aid-practices have been largely absent in the dominant top-down approach in much research on the role of migrant associations in the migration–development nexus. This is an area where little empirical work has been done on the ethnographic level (Mullings 2012).

Ultimately, I argue that with the exception of particular geographical contexts, for instance Caribbean or African migration (e.g. Lacroix 2016; Mercer et al. 2009), there are only a few studies that take a transnational approach of exploring empirically migrants’ development interventions in their countries of origin. The majority of research addressing migrant associations and their border-spanning activities is either conducted within wider studies of migrant transnationalism, and therefore does not constitute a specific focus, or it evolves from research that concentrates on migrants’ associational life in the receiving societies (e.g. Pirkkalainen et al. 2013).

#### 1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured in nine chapters. In Chapters 1-3, the research rationale, context, methods and key theoretical concepts are introduced. This is followed by two longer mixed chapters of both background description and my own empirical material. In Chapter 4, I engage with Moldova's development transition, and with three interacting key-factors that set Moldova's development transition apart from other former Soviet countries: the country's mass emigration, its complex identity building, and its slow social and economic development. I also illustrate how the migrants' experiences of the Soviet era and the country's current marginalised place in Europe shape migrants' development activities. In Chapter 5, I address in more detail the main characteristics of current Moldovan emigration and its potential impacts on migrants' collective development efforts. In the Chapters 6-8 I discuss my findings around the three main research dimensions. Firstly, in Chapter 6 I debate *the role of migrant associations as transnational actors in promoting positive change in Moldova* and the evolving policy strategies of Moldova and its key-development actors towards its emigrants. In Chapter 7 I analyse *how migrants' collective transnational development practices are performed in practice*. The focus of Chapter 8 is put on *the micro-relationship dynamics between migrants and aid-agencies* in joint development settings. Finally, I move to the conclusion and discussion in Chapter 9.

## CHAPTER 2

### Theoretical Framework

In this chapter I situate my research in its theoretical terrain by providing an overview of the key concepts I will subsequently apply. I engage with the growing literature on the relationship between migrants' transnational practices and transnational power hierarchies, highlighting the role of international development, policy discourses and initiatives. The three main sections of the chapter are consistent with the overall theoretical framework located at the intersection of three interrelated bodies of literature. The first section deals with the broader discourse on the migration–development nexus. Secondly, I look at the literature that conceptualises migration and transformation as a social process. This is followed by an analysis of the contributions of scholars to the study of migrants' transnational social activities. Here I explore the way that the analytical concept of transnationalism contributes to a deeper understanding of the pathways connecting the actors within and between the two transnational social fields; the migrant civil society and international development. The illustration below gives a schematic overview of the main structure of theoretical framework:

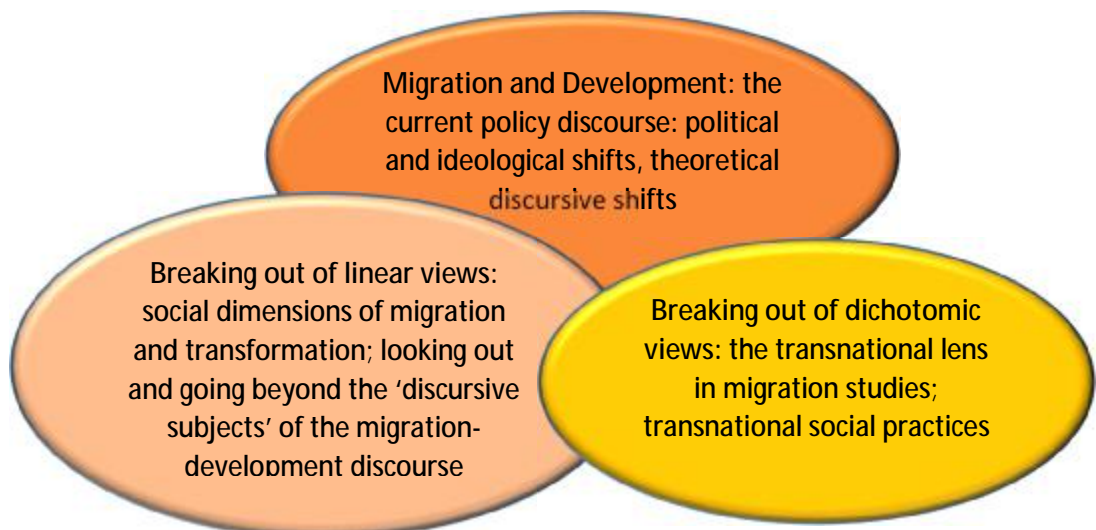


Figure 2.1: Theoretical framework

## 2.1 The Rise of the Celebratory Discourse of Migrants' Collective Engagement in Development

Recent years have seen a growing interest from academic researchers in a range of disciplines, such as geography, anthropology, and economics, as well as from development policy-makers, into the linkages between migration and development. My overarching research focus is situated in this theoretical landscape. I first address the rise of the newly discovered interest in the role of migrants and their associations as transnational subjects. Second, I briefly sketch the state-of-the-art on the rapidly evolving debate on migration and development. To this end, I draw on theoretical approaches within the broader academic literature on the migration–development nexus, on the analytical concept of transnationalism and on theories of development.

### 2.1.1 Theoretical discursive shifts

After an earlier phase of neoclassical economic optimism about the migration–development nexus in the 1950s and 1960s, a considerable pessimism in the 1970s and 1980s, mostly expressed by the emigration of the skilled or ‘brain drain’, was predominant in the discussions on the topic of migration and development (de Haas 2012). Migration in this latter optic was believed to mainly increase inequality in sending countries and communities because migrants tended to be skilled, employed and better educated. Consequently, remittances and other benefits of migration also disproportionately accrued to the already better-off (Portes 2009). Additionally, international migration was considered a sign of development failure. From this perspective, migration was conceptualised as “a territorial or geographical exit upon failure of the state or other institutions to deliver well-being and human security” (Faist 2008: 22).

In the late-1990s, after this sceptical period, governments from the Global South and North and international aid-agencies began to place renewed hope in migrants as their ‘new partners and shareholders’ in development (de Haas 2010). This has coincided with the rediscovery of remittances as a ‘bottom-up’ source of development finance, and of migrants’ development contributions by means of skill transfers (Le Bras 2012). This shift is well illustrated in the change of language used for skilled migrants; from ‘brain waste’, ‘brain drain’, or *le pillage des cerveaux* (the pillaging of brains), to ‘brain gain’, ‘knowledge-circulation’ or ‘skill transfer’. As Raghuram puts it “[...] migration has been rediscovered as a key intervention apparatus in facilitating development, offering a route to mitigating deepening inequalities” (2009: 103). The

rediscovered policy and academic interest in migration's positive role for development is usually highlighted by an illustration of numerous conferences and reports on the theme, and has increasingly become a 'development-migration machinery' (Raghuram 2009). Examples of this 'machinery' include the establishment of the Global Forum on Migration and Development in 2009 and the UN Human Development Report on Mobility and Development in the same year (Piper 2009).

De Haas (2010) maintains that this positive interpretation of the migration–development nexus should also be seen as a part of a more general paradigm shift in social and development studies. He maintains that the emphasis within social theory is focused on 'agency theories', meaning that individuals are seen as capable to diversify, secure and improve their livelihood and to overcome structural barriers to development. This leads to a more optimistic assessment of migrants' development potential. Also, this shift means that there is a certain discredit of the structuralist approach. Regarding development, this leads to a less negative interpretation of dependency and to a more positive value of the global incorporation process of regions and countries in the Global South – a process of which migration is an integral part (de Haas 2012). A number of conditionalities, however, have to be met in order for migrants' economic and social remittances to effect positive transformations in migrant-sending countries (e.g. Lampert 2014; Skeldon 2012).

This paradigm shift in social and development studies has provoked a lively academic debate about the overall role of migrants and their newly imposed responsibilities for development of their home countries on the one hand, and a robust critique about the neglect of institutional structures on the other (e.g. Glick Schiller 2012; Vammen and Brønden 2012). It has been argued that migrants' initiatives are added values, but not a substitute for aid, and that they should not be a compensation for developmental mismanagement and global inequalities (Castles and Miller 2009; Lampert 2014; Skeldon 2008, to name a few). Other critical voices have added that there is also a 'moralistic overtone' of the assumption that migrants should support their nation's development (Bakewell 2007: 33), especially taking into account the fact that they often experience de-skilling, low-waged work and racism in the receiving countries.

In sum, collective migrant actors such as migrant associations have come to increasingly occupy the imagination of both academics and development policy-makers as a result of a shift in more recent years in the broader theoretical discussion on the topic of migration and development: from a negative perception of migration to the view that migration is a positive contribution to development.

Yet, the bipolar terminology of phrases such as 'impact of migration on development', or 'contribution to development', has been increasingly criticised as reifying migration theoretically



as something separate from development, or as a 'thing apart' that can be used to promote development (Skeldon 2012). Rather than looking at migration separately as an independent variable, in the sense of being 'cause' or 'outcome', it should be viewed as "[...] an endogenous variable, an integral part of change itself and a factor that may enable further change" (de Haas 2010: 253). Reflecting on this, I opt for a conceptual approach that underlines the mutual interconnection between migration and transformation to explore migrants' transnational development engagements. This means I view migrants' transnational practices as stimulated and fostered by many of the globalisation processes to be found in the broader literature on globalisation. In turn, as Vertovec (2009) states: "[...] such transnational migrant practices accumulate to augment and perhaps amplify such transformational processes themselves" (2009: 161). Entangled with this view, Faist (2007) argues that there is currently a semantic change in viewing not only remittances and return migration as a way of transferring resources across borders, but that the migrants themselves are increasingly painted as 'mobile persons' – travelling back and forth. He goes on to say that: "All of the new terms such as co-development point to the emergence of new transnational agents, such as migrant associations whose members may be engaged in sustained and continuous cross-border practices [...], the story is not about migration and development anymore, but about transnationalism" (2007: 9).

On a meso-scale, migrant associations have come to increasingly occupy the imagination of both academics and development policy-makers in the positive interpretation of the broader migration–development nexus. I further use the term migrant associations throughout the thesis to refer to "those associations, both formal and informal, set up by migrants that relate to a village, town, a region or Moldova as a country" (Mazzucato and Kabki 2009: 232). Second, I define a migrant association when at least half of its members or half of its board members are of Moldovan migrant origin (either foreign-born themselves or having at least one foreign-born parent, thus including first and second generations). By informal networks, I refer to those migrant collectives which have no name or constitution, that do not charge membership fees, and that have relatively loose connections among their members. Lacroix (2009) uses the term 'development networks' in a similar way, to describe migrant organisations involved in projects for the improvement of villages of origin. These networks are made up of highly diverse structures, "from informal groups of individuals from the same village, to genuine migrant NGOs [...] with same forms of leadership and the same ability to articulate the discourse and adapt the sense of international development" (Lacroix 2009: 1666).

One of the main reasons for the increased interest in migrant associations and networks as actors of social change in the context of transnationalism is that they are increasingly perceived as transnational grassroots organisations representing local communities (Smith and Guarnizo

1998). The overall recognition that transnational networks are also produced by multiple actors 'from below' has made other types of organisation visible, including the 'migrant civil society' and the 'diasporic civil society' (Portes et al. 1999). From this theoretical perspective, migrant associations are viewed as members of 'transnational civil society', and they have become a familiar motif in debates in geography, anthropology and development studies, where a spatial framework that privileges the transnational is commonly deployed (Mullings 2012). In Mullings' words: "associations of transnational migrants, the building blocks of 'migrant civil society' and 'diasporic civil society', seem to fit neatly into this imagined geography of transnational civil society" (2012: 423).

Furthermore, a considerable number of anthropological studies since the late 1990s addressed the topic of the economic and social importance of migrants' individual and collective engagement with families and communities back home. In the last decade, great emphasis has been placed on studies that address migrant associations and their transnational activities within the wider research context of migrant transnationalism. In Faist's opinion: "Most empirical studies on transnationalisation and development from a sociological or anthropological point of view focus on association and organisations, a line of research which needs to be continued" (Faist 2007: 11). My intention is to continue this line of research, focusing on collective transnational practices as my main unit of analysis within both fields: the transnational social field of migrants, and the transnational development field.

### 2.1.2 Political and ideological shifts

The optimistic perspective on the development potential of migration has also a strong ideological and normative dimension (Faist 2008). It is commonly known that any shifts in the ideological underpinnings of social and economic policies in the donor countries are usually bound to spill over to principles of aid. The regime of management, for instance, has become the leading semantics of and for the social, including the spheres of international social development and migration. In Foucault's (2000) opinion, managerialism can be seen as the dominant form of governmentality, that is a conglomerate of techniques and rationalities for ruling others and the self. The political tendency of managerialism and neoliberalism towards privatisation of social welfare and social services has meant that concepts such as 'community', 'civil society' and 'participation' have become a principle of Development. De Haas (2010) argues that the rise in interest in migrant associations constitutes an expression of this privatisation trend known as the self-help principle. As civil society actors, the migrant associations fit well

within this current development paradigm advocated by governments and large development agencies.

Moreover, there is also a normative dimension in the discourse surrounding migrants' collective development initiatives, namely that networks and associations are considered to have a wider social impact on development of the countries of origin, than the purely 'private' remittances sent home to family members (Newland 2010b; IOM and MPI 2012). The dominant development policy discourse assumes that values need to be changed among migrants in order to persuade people to get more involved 'collectively' into 'development-shaped engagements', rather than to invest solely in their 'private family matters' (cf. Lampert 2012). Migrants are expected to become members of associations that do not directly benefit families and friends, that operate without a commercial gain and are not intended to achieve political power (Mullings 2012). To quote a publication on this topic: "Private remittances are largely used for short-term, daily consumption rather than productive investments that can fuel sustainable economic growth" (IOM and MPI 2012: 131).

Lastly, the underlying normative politics are also evident in the current discourse of 'consequentialism' or 'root causes' within development studies, which argues that the lack of development in the South or East can lead to undesirable immigration to countries in the North (Duffield 2006). In these terms, underdevelopment is viewed as a security threat for developed countries. Fuelled with an increasing anti-immigration public discourse in Western Europe, development aid funds are increasingly used to 'contain' migration flows from the Global South (Hettne 2009). That being said, apart from the outlined ideological underpinnings of social and economic policies in the donor countries, principles of aid in regard to migration are also embedded within the broader migration policies of donor countries. According to Laveneux and Kunz (2008), migration–development policies were introduced as an instrument of migration policy rather than the other way around. This means that development policies are not to disturb broader migration policies of a receiving country.

### 2.1.3 The latest trends: disrupting the development mantra with 'different kinds of dialogues'

I find it a challenging task to follow up the rapidly evolving discussion surrounding the migration–development discourse and the development policy approaches on the issue. In this subsection, I provide a brief overview of the most important new trends in the practical and theoretical framings of the issue.

Some scholars have recently taken a position of moving away from the above-described optimistic view of the migration–development nexus, while key development actors continue to

view migration as positive for development. One of these more sceptical scholars is de Haas who maintains: “Now that the migration and development pendulum has swung from sheer optimism to sheer pessimism and back again, it is time to nudge it steadily towards the middle” (2012: 22). Indeed, there has been recently a ‘nudging’ of the pendulum in terms of setting expectations of migrants’ engagement for development right. Drawing from my primary ethnographic data, I argue in Chapter 8 that one reason for adjusting the expectations is the development practitioners’ ‘first practical experiences’ made with migrants as their partners in joint project and programme settings. So far, this standpoint has been neglected in the debate. Partly, this is because the aid-practitioners’ viewpoints on migrant associations’ involvement into aidland have been absent in the dominant top-down approach in much research on the topic<sup>9</sup>. Nevertheless, programme descriptions and strategy papers of international and bilateral agencies highlight a substantial growth of interest in the migration–development field, including in migrant association-led policies. This is articulated with a higher priority given to the topic within development strategies of numerous bilateral and international development organisations, as well as with a rise in budgets for migration–development programmes (e.g. EU 2013b; EU/UNDP 2013; SDC 2014). My key argument is that the ‘nudging of the pendulum’ or even a ‘backswing towards pessimistic views’ among scholars does not necessarily reduce the interest of development actors in the migration development field. This observation contradicts scholars who proclaim that the overall boom in migration and development is over, and that the peak of interest in the migration–development discourse has passed (e.g. Vammen and Brønden 2012). Rather, I argue that the ‘nudging of the pendulum’ points to an overdue shift of conceptual, geographical and thematic perspectives taken by multilateral organisations, governments and development agencies on migration and development, that coincides with a recent overall paradigm shift in international development, which I outline below.

Firstly, In Chambers’ (2012) opinion, after a period in which diversity and downward accountability, expressed for instance with participatory aid-practices, has gained some terrain, the current nomos of the transnational field of development is increasingly ‘delivery oriented’ and organised according to the principle of ‘value for money’. This discourse and practice of international mainstream development is top-down with strong control measurements, standardisation and upward accountability. It mainly focuses on ‘things’ – infrastructure or regional administrative support, and less on ‘people’. This shift can also be observed in the analytical approach of the migration–development nexus, in which currently a change of

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<sup>9</sup> With the exception of some mandated studies (e.g. DFID 2007; de Haas 2006) and studies on co-development projects in which the institutionalised dialogue between migrant associations and development NGOs – almost exclusively in the receiving context – has been examined (e.g. Marini 2014; Østergaard-Nielson 2011).

concepts, language, values, and methods can be observed (e.g. EU/UNDP 2013). From the years 2000 to 2011 the main focus of most migration–development programmes was put on what is commonly known as the development mantra (Kapur 2004): remittances, diasporas as actors for home country development, circular migration and brain-gain programmes (including return programmes) (e.g. EU 2011; SDC 2014). Most programmes implemented in the Moldovan migration–development field are still inscribed in this ‘mantra’. At the moment of this writing, however, we find ourselves on the discursive level in the so-called ‘broadening the traditional agenda’ (EU 2011: 1), or ‘the way forward: beyond the traditional agenda’ (EU 2011: 1). The idea of this new agenda is to move from the dominant focus on remittances to the social and human impact of migration and on migrants, their families and communities by applying the ‘migrant centred-approach’ (EU 2013b). This agenda includes: addressing the needs created by emigration flows in countries of origin, protecting human rights of migrants during their transit process, and South-South migration, among others (EU 2013bc).

The focus on ‘things’ rather than ‘people’ comes along with the approach of engaging non-state actors in aid modalities for better development outcomes and governance, commonly known as the ‘multi-stakeholder approach’, as well as with de-centralisation programmes (Eyben 2013; EU/UNDP 2013; SDC 2014). An illustrative example for this trend is the second programme-launch of the EU-UNDP ‘Joint Migration and Development initiative’ aimed at strengthening the contribution of migrants to development by reinforcing its local dimension, in which migrant associations and networks are planned to figure as policy consultants for regional administrations (EU/UNDP 2014). The shift back to the ‘regions’ and the ‘migrant-centred approach’ is accompanied with new programmes that can be summarised as ‘Know before you go’ services. These are support measures for potential migrants that prepare and inform them prior to their departure, so that they can migrate ‘cheaper’ and ‘safer’ and consequently ‘return better and smarter’ (e.g. EU 2013a). This tendency demonstrates that the previous sedentary bias à la ‘keep the people where they are’, practised by aid-agencies, is slightly changing (cf. Bakewell 2007)<sup>10</sup>. Yet, as I will show in Chapter 8, migrants’ distance to Moldova and its key-development partners and their corresponding attributed role, either as partners, beneficiaries or as consultants, is more contested in development practices than commonly assumed in the migration–development policy literature (e.g. UNDP 2012).

Another trend is to interrupt the Development Mantra of remittances, skill transfers, diaspora and return through various types of dialogues with migrants: the systematic dialogue

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<sup>10</sup> My personal perception of the current European public and policy discourse surrounding the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ and ‘security concerns’ is that governmental aid-provisions are once again increasingly legitimised by keeping people where they are.

(IASCI/Nexus 2014); the structured dialogue (SDC 2014); the positive dialogues (EU 2013a); the constant dialogue (EU/UNDP 2011); the South-South dialogue (GFMD 2011); or a continued dialogue (BRD 2014), to name a few. Some aid-agencies also support others in their dialogues with migrants. The SDC for instance, seeks to help shape the political dialogue on migration at the international level (SDC 2014). However, In the course of my research, when exploring the aid-relationship patterns between migrants and aid-workers in concrete real-life situations, for instance in workshops and meetings, I came to understand that there is much *talking about migrants* and very few talking *with* migrants. In Jean-Paul Sartre's words it is rather a 'dialogue of mutes'.

To summarise this brief outlook on the newest round of the migration–development nexus; the two essential new characteristics are a less 'euro-centric' focus, and an enhanced 'migrant-centred' approach. It will be interesting to follow how these new aid-approaches trickle down into migration-development practice in the near future.

## 2.2 Looking Out and Going Beyond Linear Views: The Social Dimension of Migration and Transformation

In this section I remain within the broader theoretical framework of the migration–development discourse, and I opt for a multi-perspective and processual definition of both social phenomena – migration and transformation. In line with various authors stressing that migration and transformation have not been separately analysed sufficiently within the migration–development nexus (e.g. Glick Schiller 2012), or that the social dimension of migration and development has been neglected in the current economic and positive approach (e.g. Raghuram 2009), I focus on the social perspective of the migration–development nexus. I interrogate the predominantly linear economic (and managerial) assumptions behind this discussion by defining migration and development as a co-involved social process, and by reintroducing migrants' own perspective on the topic.

### 2.2.1 The social dimension of migration: blurring binary categories of 'good' and 'bad' migration

In general, the migration and development discussion is still dominated by the deep-rooted belief that economic growth can deliver social justice and development (Matsas 2008). From this perspective, mainstream development actors view migration chiefly from a financial, controllable and linear viewpoint – as an option for national economic improvement. Moreover,

even if migrants are seen now as 'subjects', rather than 'objects', they are still predominantly viewed as economic actors in the sense of a 'homo oeconomicus', and only to a lesser extent as socio-political actors (Raghuram 2009). This means that the main migration driver is usually limited to the improvement of migrants' income (Matsas 2008). Furthermore, migration is perceived as something that can be under all circumstances globally contained, controlled and 'managed' (Matsas 2008). In that sense, migration has become in mainstream development practice, or what Foucault calls 'a political technology: used to manage and control processes' (2000: 58). In de Haas' opinion (2010) one reason for this still-present one-dimensional economic viewpoint on the migration–development nexus is that the current positive economic debate has evolved rather separately from general migration theory. That being said, drawing from migration theories, I emphasise the social dimension of migration and I place the migrants and their experiences as knowledge producers at the centre of the debate. I point to social dimensions that are marginalised in the lens of the positive view and excluded in economic considerations, such as migrants' transnational community structures as well as social and cultural aspects shaping their transnational development interventions. More specifically, I first consider the social dimension of migration as referring to the 'social developmental dimension', which is related to issues such as the accumulation of social or human capital that migrants may gain through the migration process itself, or by means of their transnational development practices (e.g. Piper 2009; Østergaard-Nielson 2011). Second, I reflect on the generational and other relations such as gender relations, as part of the social dimensions that are often neglected in the positivist view of the migration–development nexus in general, and in studies of migrant association-led development in particular (Dannecker 2009; Vullnetari and King 2011). The advantage of my bottom-up approach, that brings forward the micro and ethnographic dimension of migrants' transnationalism, is exactly to generate dynamic processes, such as generational or gender aspects and 'temporalities' in regard to migrants' trajectories which are difficult to grasp with a simple quantitative query.

Secondly, according to King (2012b) and (Sayad 1991), I conceptualise migration on a macro-level beyond the typology of as either 'good' or 'bad' in terms of the dominant perception of 'migration as a problem', but as an intrinsic element of globalisation itself, and as an integral part of broader social changes. Migration per se, however, is not a static social phenomenon. As Portes stresses: "Migration is, of course, change and it can lead, in turn, to further transformations in sending and receiving societies" (2010: 1544). From this perspective, I analyse Moldova's large out-migration and its self-undermining dynamics, which affect the entire social fabric of the country and its capacity for transformative societal change. Another reason for conceptualising migration as an integral part of social transformation is given by the

geographical scope of my research. East-West migration flows within Europe are intrinsically linked with Eastern Europe's post-communist political and economic transformations. As Engbersen et al. stress: "Once these countries embarked on a process of democratisation, economic reforms and European integration, the economic 'earthquake' determined by declining state subsidies and inflation ultimately led to the impoverishment of large cohorts of the population" (2010: 19). This is also true for the Republic of Moldova, even if the country is not (yet) fully integrated in the European Union.

Thirdly, Moldovan migration is diverse in terms of its migration patterns: such as permanent, temporary, circular, transnational and individual types of migration (Mosneaga 2012). As King (2012b) maintains, the dichotomised field of migration studies, inherent with artificial dualities of migration types, such as 'temporary' versus 'permanent' migration, needs to be blurred, as such dichotomies hinder a full understanding of migration. Drawing on this idea, I demonstrate in Chapter 5 that the temporality of Moldovan migration needs to be questioned in order to get a better understanding of the migrants' collective transnational practices. Many Moldovan labour migrants, for instance, extend their stays for undefined periods for various personal or structural reasons, thus disrupting the classical binary categories of temporary versus long-term typologies of migration<sup>11</sup>. Furthermore, I argue that the Moldovan migrants' 'high intentionality' of anticipated onward migration and/or return migration, strongly impacts upon migrants' notions of attachment, their collective transnational social practices and their aspirations to become part of mainstream migration-development programmes. Hence, I conceptualise migration on an individual level as a dynamic ongoing process, taking into consideration that the meaning of migration is not fixed and the reality of migratory behaviour can be situational. As we shall see in Chapter 7, this is rightfully so for many Moldovan migrants; i.e. changing migration status from undocumented to documented, 'constant re-orientation' as a result of onward migration and changing life-situations. Therefore, I take into account that migration can vary over a lifetime between something that emerges out of desperation and lack of alternatives, something which is chosen in order to access money or for other individual reasons (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Ossman 2013). Subsequently, I bear in mind that the frequency and intensity of migrant transnational collective practices can equally vary in response to different factors. These factors include time constraints, difficult financial circumstances, the

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<sup>11</sup> This also applies to Moldovan students and young professionals, who have not always a clear idea about their duration of stay.



lack of trust in institutions and people back 'home', and changing structural constraints in the receiving or sending context that can limit migrants' transnational practices (e.g. Lacroix 2016; Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Pirkkalainen et al. 2013; Tilly 1978). Further, in Chapter 8 I consider in more detail the opportunity structures of the aid-industry, consisting of conventional mainstream development aid-practices, such as the 'result-based' and 'delivery-oriented' aid-practices that can compromise migrants' involvement in the development field and their access to symbolic, organisational and material resources within hierarchies of aidland. That being said, throughout the thesis, I intend to strike a balanced way of exploring Moldovan migrants' transnational collective practices and their involvement in the development field through the lens of migrants' individually lived experiences, cultural and social aspects, and structural aspects shaping migrant associations' development efforts.

Lastly, although I will trace the transnational social field within which migrants appear not as foreigners to be differentiated, or natives in a specific geographical context, but as actors that connect to one another through their collective engagement in transnational development processes and policies, I would like to note the definition I use for the normative and politically connoted concept of integration. I apply Berry's (1996) understanding of integration, as a social process divided into two dimensions, structural and socio-cultural integration. The structural dimension encompasses how migrants are integrated into societal structures (e.g. education, the labour market), and the social dimension refers to integration into the social networks of the majority population in the host society, including emotions of belonging.

### 2.2.2 The social dimension of development transitions: what kind of transformation?

Like migration, I view the collapse of the Soviet Union and Moldova's ongoing transformation from a multi-disciplinary approach, thereby adding my voice to the call of other authors for such an approach in the study of transnationalism and transformation (Glick Schiller 2012; Vullnetari and King 2011, among others). I presently outline some of the literature on post-socialist transformations that deals with the fluid and contested nature of transformational change. Consistent with the literature on the anthropology and sociology of transition that generates discussions on the ways in which transition is talked about and negotiated, I include the perspective of migrants' subjective experiences into the dominant macro-perspective of international development, consisting of structural adjustment, transitions to liberal market economies and so forth. Piper (2009) argues that if development means improved living standards for everyone, the multidimensional perspectives of migrants have to be better

considered within the migration–development discourse. Hence, similar to migration, I opt for a non-normative approach to development according to de Sardan (2005), and I theorise development as a social process – a process that is “multidimensional with different meanings for different actors involved” (Dannecker 2009: 120). In Chapter 4 I discuss how migrants’ personal perceptions and experiences of Moldova’s developmental transformation influences their transnational charity practices and their aspirations to become a part of the Western mainstream development establishment. Moreover, the migrant associations provide a site for interesting and lively debates about the question of ‘transformation’ of their ‘home’ countries (Mercer et al. 2009). Yet, in the excitement over migrant associations as new agents of development, the variable ‘different perceptions of development’ has been side-lined so far. How the migrants themselves view development and negotiate visions among each other is rarely seriously taken into consideration in academic discussions on the topic. One reason for this, according to Raghuram, is the fact that “migrants must reinforce the normative assumption about the teleology of development, if they are to be folded into hegemonic discourses of migration–development” (2009: 112). As a result, they become the passive subject of migration–development policies. Those who do not subscribe to it, because they may have a different perception of transformation, are invisible or absent from the official migration–development discourse (Raghuram 2009). By including Moldovan migrants’ rationalities and the values that have been missed out in the debate so far, I show in Chapter 4 that social transformation is more complex than Western European and American development actors, who have never experienced ‘actually existing socialism’, might wish it to be (e.g. IMF or World Bank), and that migrants’ interpretations of development and development practices can be different to those promoted by the development industry (Long 1992). Thus, I seek to disrupt one of the core assumptions of many development actors, namely that ‘social change is a technical and controllable process’ (Mosse 2005: 209), as well as the development agencies’ instrumental view of policy as form of a rational problem-solving, which makes them often simplistic about the social life of their ideas and blinds them to the multiplicity of rationalities and values of the people (Moss 2011). To this end, I build on anthropological studies that have dealt with multiple ways in which the past enters the present, with the complexity of processes of social change, and the creation of various possibilities for different people (e.g. Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008; Schlögel 2005). Verdery (1999), for instance, defines transformation in post-communist countries as a form of novel adaptation. According to her, the relation between macro-structures and everyday practice is that the collapse of one-party states and administered economies broke down macro-structures, thereby creating space for micro-worlds to produce autonomous effects that may have unexpected influence over the structures that have been

emerging, or that the international community (particularly the IMF, World Bank and the European Union) would like to see emerging. In the language of Habermas, “the disintegration of the system world has given freer rein for life worlds to stamp themselves on the emerging economic and political order” (1998: 67). These new ‘life-worlds’ present a possibility for local improvisations that may press either in novel directions – in the Western development actor’s conception of transformation towards a ‘European choice’ – or on the other hand towards a return to socialism. This theoretical approach seems particularly appropriate in the case of Moldova, where “the very issue of what constitutes Moldovan national identity is implicitly laden with certain political hues, according to which Moldovans may see their development of the country through a socio-cultural and linguistic lens” (Katchanovski 2004: 33). I will argue that the country’s socio-political division can have far-reaching consequences for the migrants’ potential contribution to their country, for the efforts to mobilise migrants around a coherent ‘notion of homeland’, and for the building up of sustainable relationships between the state and the migrant community. However, I find it crucial not to reduce Moldovans, regardless of where they live, to purely geo-political or historical passive marionettes, unable to have their own opinions, torn between the ‘East’ and the ‘West’, as they are commonly described in the literature produced by Western European scholars. Therefore, in order to explore migrants’ transnational development practices, I try to strike a balanced interpretation of Moldova’s Soviet past, the country’s transition period from its independence in 1991 up to now, and the migrants’ own agency.

Furthermore, migration and transformation are both social phenomena that unfold in time and space. Both the elements of ‘time’ and ‘space’ are often neglected in the frameworks of nation-bound transformation policy-making in Eastern Europe. As Augé (2012) rightly stresses, the idea of globalisation, which is defined, among others, by the extension of the liberal market economy, neglects aspects of time and space. The logic of a globalised (neo)liberal market economy is rigidly fixed in the present. Taking up on Augé’s opinion, I argue that the top-down neo-liberal logic of Moldovan development policies with its macro-perspective of structural adjustment and liberal market-economics, imposed on migration–development programmes, does not only neglect the (socialist) past, but it also masks global power dynamics in a broader geographical scope. I view one of the key obstacles to theoretical advancement in the intra-European migration–transformation debate in the lack of looking at both phenomena, migration and development, from a wider perspective of Western and global power, wealth and inequality. For this reason, I look in Chapter 4 beyond the Moldovan national container space as an ‘integral spatio-temporal isolate’ (Marcus 1998: 178), separated from surrounding Europe, as commonly conceptualised in transformation policies of mainstream development. Another

core argument for this approach is the application of grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1973). The analysis of migrants' interviews required me to broaden out the national-bound analytical perspective, and to consider migrants' interpretations of Moldova's development transformation beyond the nation-state borders of Moldova. In these terms, I include further transnational social spaces, such as world systems theories and reflections on globalisation and Europe (Hettne 2009; Morawska 2012; Walby 2009).

This takes us now the last part of this section, namely the introduction of the typical 'migrant interlocutor' of the donor community – or the discursive subject of migration–development policy and research.

### 2.2.3 Challenging the 'entrepreneurial self' as the dominant 'discursive subject' of the migration–development discourse

First, In the reshaping of social politics that has taken place throughout Western societies in the last few years, with its ethos of the 'active society' and managerial thinking, 'the entrepreneurial self' has become a model of neoliberal and managerial subjectivity (Foucault 2000). In Sennet's understanding (1998), the 'entrepreneurial self' rationalises life according to market imperatives, and knows how to seize opportunities by being flexible, polyvalent and mobile. This model of managerial thinking imbricated in the character of the 'entrepreneurial self' has become the main mode of governmentality in the welfare sphere of Western societies and in the development field. Consequently, the 'entrepreneurial self' has also become the 'discursive subject' in mainstream migration–development policies and programmes, in which the calculative nature of migrants is emphasised, while simultaneously neglecting other human or social aspects (e.g. IASCI/Nexus 2014). This once more underlines the importance of (re)-introducing socio-cultural dimensions into the debate, for instance the migrants' personal migration experiences.

In the current delivery-oriented and result-based mainstream development practices, the high skilled migrant is considered as the most suitable to 'deliver' development. Moreover, the key-figure migrant is ideally a temporary or seasonal migrant, due to the assumption that temporary labour migrants do not present integration challenges for receiving societies, that they transmit more financial remittances, and the belief in circulation of ideas and knowledge, which is also connected to a short-term version of migration (Faist 2008). According to Page and Mercer (2012), the 'discursive subject' is mostly portrayed as 'a hard-working international migrant living in the Global North but retaining active and meaningful connections to a home

place in the Global South' (Page and Mercer 2012: 2). Moreover, the 'ideal migrant' is male, entrepreneurial, and preferably a member of the 'scientific diaspora'. 'Them', the migrants who do not belong to this in-group of 'diaspora', because they are not high-skilled migrants or because they are not willing or capable to contribute to development of their home country, are usually left out in the current debate around migrants' transnational developmental practices.

I do not dispute the fact that 'highly-skilled' migrants are considered to be the 'ideal development partners' because of their access to potentially lucrative business knowledge and networks (Mullings 2012). Yet, as highlighted in Chapter 1, I have built my research rationale around the multi-perspectivity of representations, negotiations and performances of migrants' transnational engagement for development. Thus, I aim to widen this narrow perspective by adding the viewpoints of the usually excluded in the policy and academic debates, and I also include the 'other migrants', for instance women and 'low-skilled migrants'. I illustrate in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7 that 'them' are as capable as the 'leader-type entrepreneurial self' of having ideas about Moldova's transformation, and of carrying out transnational projects towards socially transformative ends in the country.

Second, the dominant theorisation of migrants as autonomous self-entrepreneurs, who make rational choices in response to specific motivations such as status-seeking or self-interest (Page and Mercer 2012), leads to another assumption underpinning migrant association-led development policies – that all migrants would aid those at 'home' if they are given stimuli, regardless of their potentially difficult life-circumstances or their cultural backgrounds (Clarke 2010; Weiner 2010). Because of the assumption that more migrants would automatically become involved in 'grassroot transnational aid' (Portes and Landolt 1999: 543), if only they would know how to become voluntary development workers, a dominant concern within mainstream aid is that most of the migrant associations lack information on how to become involved in developmental activities (e.g. Newland 2010a). Yet, development policy interventions and academic contributions on this topic are not limited to how to provide information to migrants in this regard, but they also aim to educate the 'discursive subject' on how to spend his/her financial and time resources 'more efficiently' (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012; Varzari et al. 2014). In Chapters 4 and 7, I go beyond this 'educational' view. I shift the dominant questions of *how to change the behaviour of the 'discursive subject'* to questions of *why*, respectively *why not*, and *how* Moldovan migrants of different gender and class positions engage in transnational development practices.

Lastly, further challenging the dominant tropes of the migration–development discourse, I embed my elaboration of how the state and its development partners paint their absentees in Simmel's categories of the 'outsider' and the 'stranger' (1992a). The concepts of the 'outsider'

and the 'stranger' have been frequently applied in studies on migrants' integration into the host society context, but not with respect to the relationship between migrants and their home states (e.g. Kreutzer and Roth 2006). In harmony with Simmel, who states that an 'outside' in the sense of not being part of society is theoretically and empirically impossible, I conceptualise migrants' absence from their home country as a concurrence of being simultaneously inside and outside (Simmel 1992a). I will apply both concepts to Moldovan emigrants in relation to 'official' Moldova and the broader Moldovan society. In Chapter 8, I argue that one of the reasons for the ongoing discomfort with migrants in aidland is precisely this 'concurrence' of migrants being simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside' the Moldovan society. I find the category of the 'stranger' a useful template for challenging the discursive subject of the entrepreneurial self and for moving beyond the binaries of migrants' supposed engagement 'here' for development 'there'. I argue that the key characteristic of the position of actively engaged Moldovan migrants towards their home country as 'strangers' is that they are 'both...and' in regard to 'here' (the host country) and in regard to 'there' (Moldova). They are near and far at the same time in reference to both societies (Simmel 1992b). Together with the concept of the 'outsider', that emphasises the importance of distance in relationships, I show in Chapter 8 that in the last couple of years there has been a slight shift in the ways of how the Moldovan government portrays its absentees, from 'outsiders' to 'strangers', which subsequently impacts on new migrant association-led policy programmes and on migrants' recognition as partners or policy consultants.

### 2.3 Breaking away from Dichotomous Views of 'Here' and 'There': Transnational Social Practices

In this final main section of this chapter, I unpick three dominant and persisting dichotomies in the migration–development nexus: the migrants' performances 'here' and 'there', the North–South or West–East divisions within international development, and the theorisation of 'good' and 'bad' transnational migrant associations and networks. I point to particular conceptual limitations and I address the two main sets of concepts I draw on: the transnational lens as a suggestion for a more geographically multidimensional approach to my research topic, and the concept of transnational social practices.

### 2.3.1 Breaching the binaries 'here' and 'there' and of 'West-East': the transnational social fields of migrants and development

In the current formulation of the migration–development nexus, migrants 'here' are usually supposed to support development in countries 'there' (Matsas 2008). The spaces for development and of development, however, are already mixed up, and migrants 'here' might need development, while migrants 'there' may be agents of development 'here' (Mercer et al. 2009). Thus, migrants' engagement with development is bound up with social relations across space and the different experiences that people in different locations bring to the question of how to improve the place that is 'home'. Hence, migrants' collective activities allow for "an interesting analysis of the spatiality of civil society at local, national and transnational levels that may breach North-South divisions" (McIlwaine 2007: 1253). For instance, migrant associations and networks may refuse to pigeonhole development as something that is located in their countries of origin, but rather claim that they engage in development of their fellow citizens, wherever they live (Mercer et al. 2009). By this means, migrant associations can destabilise the hegemonic spatial framework of development that pits an already developed 'West' against the developing 'Rest' (Dannecker 2009). In line with migration scholars, I suggest that the relationship between migrants and the field of international development needs to adopt a more nuanced notion of space in terms of a theoretical reframing of the spatial separation between migrants' engagement 'here' and 'there', and a less disjointed configuration of the spatiality of North-South or West-East divisions within international development (e.g. Glick Schiller 2012, among others). The current most popular suggestion for unbundling these dichotomies and for analysing the complex inter-linkages beyond the North-South and West-East divides is the transnational approach (e.g. Portes et al. 2007).

In contrast to large organisations, such as multinational companies, that had been the object of earlier research on transnational studies (Vertovec 2009), the transnational turn in the early 1990s pursued an approach that brought migrants 'back in' as important social actors by emphasising their agency (e.g. Basch et al. 1994). Firstly, in order to get a better understanding of the migrants' perception of Moldova's transformation (research dimension 1), I place my study within this scholarly work of migration researchers that focuses on migrants' transnational social practices and their organisations (Glick Schiller et al. 1999; Guarnizo et al. 2003). In this literature, migrant transnationalism is often broadly referred as "the process by which transmigrants, through their daily activities, forge and sustain multi-stranded social, economic and political relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement, and through which they create transnational social fields that cross national borders" (Basch et al. 1994: 6).

The main focus of these studies centres around the following aspects: on migrant associations' members located in migrant-receiving countries, on aspects of migrants' identity formation, on the meanings of home, on the relationship with home-country politics, on the impact on the migrants' receiving countries' context, and on the degree and forms of migrants' collective activities (Portes et al. 2007).

The acceptance of migrants' simultaneous belongings implies among other things that integration in receiving societies and commitment to origin societies are not necessarily substitutes anymore. Migrants' transnational engagements are no longer viewed as a 'distraction' of their capacity to fully integrate into the 'mainstream' society of their country of residency (Pries and Sezgin 2010). Rather, they are mutually influencing one another, in a dynamic and reciprocal process (cf. Bilgili 2014)<sup>12</sup>. As Erdal and Oeppen maintain: "We argue that the nature of interactions between the two are both constituents of a social process, and that the nature of interactions is further shaped by the human and personal considerations of key actors – the immigrants and those with whom they interact" (2013: 14).

By emphasising at the meso level, the Moldovans' collective transnational communities and their patterns of practice, as the main protagonists of my research, spanning over two or more countries, I aim to investigate migrants' notions of attachment to their home country, their manifold types and degrees of integration in the transnational field of migrants' engagement, encompassing different geographical locations of receiving contexts and Moldova itself. With my understanding of transnationalism, namely Glick Schiller's (2004) and Vertovec's (1999), I explore in Chapter 7 how ways of belonging to different localities – to Moldova, the host society or to the transnational space of the migrant community – influence 'ways of doing development' and vice-versa in a dynamic reciprocal way. Viewing Moldovan migrants' attachments from the perspective of the places they create – as transnational communities of practice, allows me to understand their transnational ties and engagement with the host societies as different processes, rather than reducing the analysis to a simple dichotomy of 'complementary' or 'contradictory' in terms of integration (cf. Erdal and Oeppen 2013).

Secondly, from a civil-society angle, the transnational turn in the early 1990s is reflected in approaches like 'transnationalism from below', which is the result of grass-roots activities conducted by migrants across national borders in civil society (e.g. Smith and Guarnizo 1998). In Portes' opinion, the "notion of transnational activities should be restricted to initiatives by members of civil society, be they organised groups or networks of individuals" (1999: 189).

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<sup>12</sup> For a general overview of the interplay between integration and transnationalism see Erdal and Oeppen (2013) or Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004).



Other authors propose to distinguish between 'broad' and 'narrow' transnationalism, signifying respectively global economic and nation-state practices at one end and networks of relationships between migrant communities and people and places in origin societies at the other end (Basch et al. 1994). In the same vein, others distinguish between 'migrant-led' and 'state-led' transnationalism (Østergaard-Nielson 2011). Most studies on migrant associations and their initiatives directed towards their home countries focus on the narrow relationships within the transnational civil society of migrants and/or between migrants and their local counterparts in their countries of origin (e.g. Lampert 2014; Mazzucato 2009). In order to overcome these conceptual limitations, and rather than viewing these two phenomena – 'narrow' and 'broad' transnationalism – as opposites, I emphasise in my research the recognition of these two forms as mutually constitutive (Bauman 1998). I identify the significance of international and state-led development organisations, such as the World Bank and other agencies of capitalist globalisation, by conceptualising them as 'broad transnationalism'. These transnational agents determine and implement development policies in Moldova and carry out most of the international migrant association-led programmes. To this end, I define transnationalism as 'sustained ties of persons, networks and organisations across the borders of multiple nation-states, ranging from little to highly specialised forms' (Faist 2010: 13). This very broad definition allows me to theorise the actors in both research dimensions – the transnational field of Moldovan migrants and the transnational field of development – as transnational agents that act within and between two different transnational social fields. Thereby, I build on Faist's notion of transnational field, in which "transnational spaces comprise combinations of ties and their substance, positions and networks of organisations that cut across the borders of at least two nation states" (Faist 2010: 21). By applying this notion of transnational field, I seek to delineate the genesis of Moldovan migrant associations as transnational social formations, as well as the particular macro-societal context in which these associations operate, such as the international development aid system. As a result, I view the transnational social practices of migrants within their associations as a form of participation in transnational fields (Guarnizo et al. 2003). In that sense, migrant associations are not just actors of transnational practices in transnational fields but they are also important actors in shaping access to social capital and networks that allows me to understand individuals' perceptions of transnational practices and their performances of these practices more clearly (Vertovec 2009). This transnational lens enables me to trace the transnational social field within which migrants appear as actors that connect one-another through their collective engagement in transnational development processes and policies.

Thirdly, in order to better understand the internal logic of interpretations, negotiations and performances around transnational aid-practices within and between both transnational social fields, I additionally draw on Bourdieu's field theory (2001, 1985). According to Bourdieu both social fields are created by relational positions of actors who are involved in the struggle over power and symbolic resources; e.g. struggles over the right mainstream aid-practices within the development field (1985). Thus, I seek to get a better understanding of the experiences of the actors' transnational practices within both fields, how within the field logics (nomos), categories of policies and practices, such as 'the migrants as social transnational actors' arise, and how they are defined. Simultaneously I attempt to analyse field-specific symbolic, organisational and economic resources. These resources include, for example, the ability of individuals, such as migrants and their associations, to participate in multiple localities (Amelina and Faist 2012). That being said, I further aim to understand how the genesis of unequal social positions are reconceptualised between the two transnational fields.

Additionally, in the context of the micro-relationship dynamics between migrants and development actors in development practices; my third research dimension, I draw on the anthropological literature on development, especially the work of Chambers (2012), Eyben (2006, 2013) and Green (2011), who have focused in their work on relationship patterns within international development more broadly.

Lastly, for taking into account the ethnic, religious, gender and class positions within one cross-border setting – among migrants and the international development field – and between the two transnational fields, I back up my analysis with sociological and anthropological literature, which addresses these transnational concerns in other geographical contexts. For instance, I draw on literature that focuses on the micro-politics among associational members as well as relationship patterns, or 'broker-roles' between the migrants and their counterparts in their home countries (i.e. Lampert 2012; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009). These studies are key for a better understanding in regards to:

- forms of hierarchies occurring within transnational social formations, among the transnational migrant community and between migrants and elites at home, including aspects of trust and prestige (Goffman 1967; Luhmann 1968; Sztompka 1999);
- the nature of these linkages in regard to class alliances and generational aspects (e.g. Clark 2010);
- how migrant associations and networks can reproduce social inequalities and support concerns of elites, rather than the immediate concern of those living at home or in the host society (e.g. Lampert 2014; Mullings 2012).

### 2.3.2 Deconstructing the concept of 'good' and 'bad' migrant associations: from unitary social actors to transnational social practices

Although I opt in my research for the transnational concept as my key analytical category, I deem it important to briefly stress a few theoretical considerations in regard to the use of the descriptive category of 'diaspora'. Firstly, because the migrant research participants were frequently referring to 'diaspora' in their narratives on their transnational associational life. And secondly, transnational approaches have not yet found entry into the development policy debates to the same degree as diaspora. Furthermore, 'diaspora' and 'diaspora organisations' have become political notions, meaning that the term 'diaspora' is employed in development policy publications and in most of the academic literature on the topic of migrant association-led development (e.g. Newman 2010b). As there has been much theorising and disagreement about the term of 'diapsora', I will use it throughout my thesis in its descriptive sense, whilst acknowledging the contested notion of it (Brubaker 2005). Like migration is per se neither 'good', nor 'bad', I seek to unpack the categorisation of diaspora as either 'good' or 'bad', following Vertovec's (2006) concise title "Diaspora good? Diaspora bad?", in one of his papers.

For Brubaker (2005), a diaspora consists of three essential characteristics: dispersion from a territory of origin; homeland orientation, which might, or might not, involve the desire or feasibility of return; and boundary maintenance, by which the diaspora defines itself against others, particularly dominant groups or host societies. In recent years, however, there has been an important shift in the meaning of diaspora in the academic and policy context. Although diaspora refers to cross-border social processes, the concept has often been used to denote religious or national groups living outside an (imagined) 'homeland' (Cohen 1997). In the 'classical' way, diaspora has been applied to explain forced migration and violent dispersal, as in the case of the Jews or the Armenians. This usage of diaspora implied a return to an imagined or real homeland, while "adapting to the environment and institutions of its host society" (Esman 2009: 14). Furthermore, the long time-horizon distinguished diaspora from transnational communities, such that there had to be 'time to pass' before a migrant community became a diaspora (e.g. Dufoix 2008).

Today, the understanding of diaspora has drastically expanded to become a 'container-term' for concepts such as: diasporic communities, individual members of a diaspora, ethnic communities, migrant organisations, transnational social field, and so on (see King 2012a for a more nuanced description of these shifts of meaning). Not surprisingly, in the development policy discourse nearly every migrant belongs to a diaspora (e.g. IOM 2012). Thus, diaspora is often synonymously used with the notion of 'ethnic minority' or simply 'migrant community'

(Sheffer 1986). In Brubaker's opinion, this "universalisation of the diaspora, paradoxically, means the disappearance of the diaspora" (2005: 3).

Apart from being a migrant, however, there remain further conditions to be met in order to become a diaspora-actor of development policy. These include a capability to contribute to development in the country of origin, a willingness to act in economic and social terms, and a need for the migrants' ties to be beneficial for development (Weinar 2010). In Chapters 7 and 8, I explore how this notion of 'beneficial ties' for development is interpreted and negotiated among development actors and migrant leaders.

In sum, the development policy and development civil-society's broad understanding of diaspora includes communities of migrants outside their country of origin willing to contribute to development of the home country by their material and emotional commitment (Weinar 2010). Subsequently, this understanding of diaspora is applied to diaspora organisations and networks (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012). On a meta-level of analysis, these 'diaspora organisations' are commonly portrayed as 'unitary actors' or as a 'static social field' (Mavroudi 2007). This static social field is engaged as either 'good' or 'bad' depending on how the migration policy, the development policy, and academic scholars assess their activities directed towards their countries of origin. As 'bad' civil-society actors, they are often portrayed as pregnant with political implications in a rather negative way. They are seen as the 'Janus face of diaspora', engaged in particular political interests, and they are viewed as unbeneficial by and for their country of origin (Gamlen 2011). On the other hand, the majority of theorisation in the research context of transnational civil society hinges on a number of positive claims (Raghuram 2009). These claims commonly underpin the migrant association-led programmes of international aid-agencies. Among others these are:

- the equivalation of migrant associations with concepts such as 'social capital' 'social remittances' and 'participatory development', which leads to the assumption that the migrant associations are all 'good' civil-society actors contributing to a normatively 'good' development (Orozco and Rouse 2007);
- conceptualisations of migrant associations as democratic grassroots organisations representing all migrants from a certain community living in the receiving country (Ionescu 2006);
- expectations that migrants are closer to the beneficiaries than formal development organisations, and that the money channelled through them is more likely reach local communities with less bureaucracy (Mazzucato and Kabki 2009).

In the light of these positive theorisations on a meta-level of analysis, it is no surprise that a range of standardised 'one size fits all' diaspora programmes have been put in place across Western Europe, aimed at enrolling migrant associations in development efforts (Mazzucato and Kabki 2009). Yet, these rather shaky assumptions lead to politics which neglect the fact that ethnic communities themselves are divided by class, religion or politics among members of the 'same' group. Thus, it seems problematic to think of migrant associations as apolitical entities freed of internal divisions, power hierarchies and exclusions (Anthias 1998). This is particularly true in the case of Moldovan associations, given that a 'Moldovan identity' remains unsettled. Thus, I suggest that in the case of Moldova, a purely 'ethnic' or 'national' lens as a main category of analysis for the Moldovan migrants' collective social engagement is an inadequate approach. Another problem looms on the horizon in regard to the proper academic application of the definition of diaspora in the case of Moldovan migrants, namely, the specific characteristic of historical continuity across at least two generations (Dufoix 2008). It is rather unlikely that this characteristic applies to Moldovan migrants, bearing in mind the relatively recent Moldovan migration in the countries under study. In Chapter 7, I explore whether Moldovan migrant leaders consider themselves a diaspora, and if they label their associations 'diaspora organisations'.

Having stated these conceptual limitations, rather than viewing the Moldovan migrants and their development activities as the static entity of a 'development diaspora' (Brinkerhoff 2008), as commonly described in development policy, I opt in Chapter 7 for a more processual definition of the migrant transnational space as an instance of a mobilisation process of transnational practices (i.e. Anthias 1998; Mavroudi 2007, 2015; Sökefeld 2006). I emphasise migrants' estimates of power relations, inclusions and exclusions in the process of their 'diaspora formation' and their definitions of connectedness to Moldova. Borrowing Mavroudi's definition, I define diaspora as a "process in which space, place and time are not static but continuously used, imagined, and negotiated [by migrants] in the construction of both bounded and unbounded identities, communities, and nation-states" (2007: 473, 476). I draw on this definition because it overlaps with the concept of transnational field that similarly puts the emphasis on the social processes that cross international borders (Faist 2010).

Additionally, Page and Mercer (2012) suggest to emphasise theories of everyday life, so as to better understand the development politics of migrant associations and networks. In their opinion, "diasporas are better understood as 'communities of practice' in which actions are conceptualized as part of a wider social system based on embodied knowledge acquired through socialisation, technology and the habituation of particular lifestyles" (2012: 1). The common link of theories of practice is the goal of transcending the dualism between individuals and larger

social structures by treating the two in relational terms. Secondly, these theories emphasise the importance of the 'everyday' in understanding social life (particularly those of Bourdieu 1985, 1990; Lave and Wenger 1991). In the case of my research, the 'everyday' includes, for example, the everyday practice of social collective remittances, and the practices of negotiating and performing development engagements. The assessment of Moldovan migrant associations as a category of transnational social practice requires taking into account the fact that the migrants' economic and social behaviour is embedded in the social structures – the migrants' transnational field, the sites of migrants' development interventions in Moldova, and the transnational development field in which some of them act (Page and Mercer 2012). By drawing on theories of practice within the transnational field of Moldovan migrants, I seek to take into account these social structures which enable or constrain the 'discursive subject' of the migration–development nexus and influence its agency (Amelina and Faist 2012; Bourdieu 1990; de Certeau 1984). Using this approach enables me to shift the theorisation that engagement in development policy is a purely individual choice, neglecting possible political, economic and social constraints (Weinar 2010). Moreover, this theoretical perspective fits well with my methodological approach of ethnography, and allows me to reconcile the idea of the specific transnational field logic (Bourdieu 1985), and it offers potential to consider broader identities beyond 'naturally felt ethnic roots', including those which are regional, religious and positional (Anthias 1998).

Likewise, I conceptualise the transnational field of international development as a transnational field of practice, and I define the cross-border activities initiated and conducted by international development actors as transnational practices (Bourdieu 1990; Wenger 1991). I put the focus of my analysis on the deconstruction of the development practice of 'migrants' collective engagement' at the centre-stage. Because this policy category is still quite new, I am guided by authors who have undertaken a similar approach in their research on other key development aid-modalities, such as on 'participation' or 'civil society' (e.g. Chambers 2012; Cornwall 2002; and Mosse 2005, 2011). Similar to Sökefeld's idea of a 'life-time' or 'critical event' that can mobilise transnational practices (2006: 277), I follow in Chapter 6 the key moments in the social life of the development practice of 'Moldovan migrants as collective actors for development'. I illustrate how the development community of 'practice' sustains the social life of this category within its national and transnational practices, such as seminars, workshops, meetings, toolkits, handbooks and so on (Bourdieu 1990; Wenger 1998). Reflecting on this, and similar to my approach towards migration, transformation, and migrants' associative transnational social practices, as social processes, I view the development categories 'of involving migrants' as the result of aid-actors' transnational development practices and not as a

fait accompli (Arce and Long 2003). Given the spatial diffusion of innovation in the transnational field of development, conventional mainstream migration–development practices become delocalised and increasingly separated from original territorial bases. I illustrate how the globally defined development category of ‘migrant associations’ involvement in development’ leads in the Moldovan context to considerable mismatches between migrants’ needs to carry out their philanthropic initiatives and standardised top-down programmes.

Vice-versa, in order to assess how the input of international organisations (broad transnationalism) influences the practice of migrant associations (narrow transnationalism), and to get a better understanding of how the norms and initiatives created at the development policy level impact the collective developmental practices of migrants, I equally draw on Sökefeld’s social movement approach. He suggests turning towards social movement theory and a framework that concentrates on mobilising structures and practices (2006). In his opinion, “[...] specific processes of mobilisation have to take place for a diaspora to emerge” (2006: 265). By taking inspiration from this specific field within social sciences that is fundamentally concerned with the question of how people get mobilised for collective purposes and actions, I analyse in the Chapters 6 and 7 the Moldovan migrants’ aspirations and motivations to become involved in collective development initiatives, and I explore how the incentives of development agencies to ‘organise the Moldovan migrants for development’ impact upon migrant associations’ practices of ‘doing development’.

After this outline of the theoretical scaffold of my thesis, I turn now to the data collection. As we shall see, the next chapter provides a more concrete insight into the different life-worlds of migrants and development actors, which became most tangible through my multi-sited ethnographic approach.

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

This chapter discusses the methodological approach which I adopted to carry out the study. First, I set out the overall research design, focusing on my choice of a qualitative methodology, the fieldwork rationale, ethnography and multi-sided data collection. Second, I turn to a description of how the research was implemented, addressing the sample, access to research participants, and sites. Third, I discuss the main data collection tools and the data analysis. In the last section I reflect on the ethical dimensions of my research and on my multiple positionalities in the field. The specific challenges encountered in the course of this mobile, multi-sited research in relation to the complex research design – the multi-perspective analytical framework resulting in a wide variety of research participants, and the multiple fieldwork sites – will run as a central theme throughout the chapter. Since there is no room for an account of the numerous detailed descriptions of the variety of settings and activities in which I have been engaged during ethnographic inquiry, I accompany this chapter with photo-collages so that the notions of ‘being there, done that’ can be pictured by the reader from my viewpoint (cf. Hannerz 2003).

#### 3.1 Research Design

##### 3.1.1 Qualitative methodology

My research is designed as a multi-sited ethnography with a transnational approach, drawing on a set of qualitative research methods. Given the research aim of making the views of Moldovan migrants and policy actors seen and heard from a multi-perspective optic, I used in-depth data collection such as participant observation and in-depth interviews. The different qualitative methods I drew on were integrated through the approach of grounded theory, following Glaser and Strauss (1973), Strauss and Corbin (1996), and Clarke (2005).

Qualitative research generates a ‘thick description’ that moves beyond the kind of ‘facts’ that are collected through quantitative research methods, for instance using survey instruments (Marcus 1998). It allows the researcher to identify and comprehend relationships that emerge



from the web of specific events (O'Reilly 2009). This qualitative research technique of 'deep hanging out' was the primary tool for data collection to understand the webs connecting migrants to larger social and political worlds (i.e. the development world), and conversely, to understand how this world is imagined and shaped by migrants. Furthermore, qualitative research enabled me to go beyond the discursive analysis of policies and to explore migrants' and development actors' interpretations and ideas about transformation and migration, and to assess how they differ from one another. This understanding is pivotal to grasp the full meaning of transnational development practices performed by both sets of actors. In-line with Giddens who writes that "All social systems, no matter how grand or far-flung, both express and are expressed in the routines of daily social life" (Giddens 1984: 36), the ethnographic rationality revealed the messiness on the ground. It allowed me to explore how interpretations surrounding migrants and their transnational development interventions are shaped in development practice and how this practice deviates from official policy discourse. Moreover, it offered me the practical advantage of detecting temporal aspects of collective practices, such as processes of organisational change or individual life-changes (for instance changes in migrants' legal status or their length of stay in their countries of residence), which shape migrants' ways of 'doing development'.

In order to better understand migrants' transnational development practices in all its forms, I engaged with a transnational methodological framework. Given that the two main transnational social fields – the migrant civil society and the development establishment – encompass multiple locations and generate a multi-sited terrain of interactions and relations, the study is based on a multi-sited ethnography. Thus, in order to explore the practices within and between these transnational settings, I was following over a period of one year 'the discourse on migrants as development partners' in the international field of key-development actors and among migrant civil society representatives, applying Marcus' well-known theorisation (1995)<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Marcus' idea of multi-sited ethnography proposes to document and investigate a combination of flows of people, things, metaphors, plots, stories, allegories, lives, biographies and conflicts (1995).

### 3.1.2 Fieldwork rationale: from Berlin and London...to Chisinau and Tiraspol...to Paris and Rome

#### 3.1.2.1 Fieldwork phases

In the course of my fieldwork migrants often quipped that 'If you want to study Moldovan migrants, then you need to travel a lot!'. Indeed, *I travelled a lot* over a period of one year. I did not, however, travel to Africa or the Middle East, where migrants often referred to in their narratives on Moldovans as being scattered to the four winds. I stayed in Europe, but also followed the second group of 'travellers' in my research: the 'travelled rationalities' as Moss calls them, that is the development ideas and expertise travelling from the West to the East (2011: 5). That being said, I have embedded myself into the transnational space of migrants' civil society and the aid industry, in order to explore how and why actors within both social fields act, think and feel the way they do (Wacquant 2003).

As highlighted above, my empirical data draws on a set of qualitative research methods, chiefly on participant observation and in-depth interviews. I conducted interviews with 44 migrants, 30 aid-workers and civil servants, and with 10 key informants (84 in total). The data collection took place over a period of one year in the transnational field of the Moldovan migrant civil society and in the transnational social field of development across seven countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Moldova, Switzerland and the UK. The fieldwork was carried out in four main fieldwork stages:

1. The pilot interviews apart, I began my fieldwork in March 2013, by residing in migrants' communities living in Germany and the UK and among Swiss and German development agencies over a period of two months. This fieldwork phase informed my first and second research dimensions: the migrants' collective transnational development practices and their understanding of involving their organisations into aidland, and the aid-workers' view of migrant associations in international development policy and cooperation.
2. Emphasis during the second fieldwork stage, in Moldova, was put on aid-agencies and state institutions based in Moldova as well as on migrants' projects implemented there. Over a period of four months, I collected data in the international donor community in Chisinau and among civil servants of relevant state institutions. Fieldwork sites in Moldova represented the district of Chisinau, where the majority of IOs and NGOs are located, and migrants' communities of origin, where most of the migrant-led development projects are carried out,

across Moldova, including the frozen-conflict zone of Transnistria and the semi-autonomous region of Gagauzia<sup>14</sup>.

3. The third fieldwork stage (5 months) was carried out in the Moldovan migrant community in the Greater Paris area and in Italy, predominantly in the regions of Veneto and Emilia Romagna and in the wider Rome area. Simultaneously, while living in Paris I collected data in headquarters of IOs and international aid-agencies and in the migrant community in Geneva. This research stage informed all three research dimensions, including the third dimension: the aid-relationship dynamics between migrants and development actors.
4. The last short fieldwork phase (one month) consisted of a follow-up research among the most relevant European development actors in Brussels and migrant leaders in the UK.

### *3.1.2.2 Fieldwork breaks*

An important part of my mobile research consisted of ‘fieldwork breaks’ between the fieldwork phases and between the different geographical sites. Given that a key-principle of grounded theory is an on-going dialogue between theory and empirical research, I used these breaks to reflect on the collected data and to transcribe some of the interviews (Strübing 2004). Apart from the broad primary data analysis and writing-up in form of what I called ‘notes from in-between’, my reflections also included considerations as to whether or not I needed to conduct further fieldwork on a particular issue which I did not give sufficient attention, if I needed more time in one site, or if I should ‘move on’ to the next geographical site (Hannerz 2003; Strauss and Corbin 1996). The notes from ‘in-between’ and discussions with my supervisors helped me in making these decisions. Without entering into the wider discussion on diverse ethnographic styles ranging from ‘over-theorisation in contemporary ethnography’ (e.g. Marcus 1998: 19) to ‘too under-theorised’ work (e.g. Fitzgerald 2012), I found my solid theoretical framework a helpful orientation for navigating me through the sites across Europe. Figure 3.1 shows an overview of my fieldwork rationale, including the geographical distribution of my two main qualitative research techniques: semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observation. The map illustrates how the subjects and objects of my study unfolded like a mosaic of fragmented places scattered throughout Europe. Notwithstanding, the sites belonged to a relational concept of space, linked together by the discourse of migrants’ role in Moldova’s

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<sup>14</sup> See Figures 3.1 and 4.1 for a detailed map of Moldova.

transformation; or, according to Marcus, by “[...] an explicit, posited logic of association or connections among sites that in fact defines the argument of the ethnography” (1995: 105).

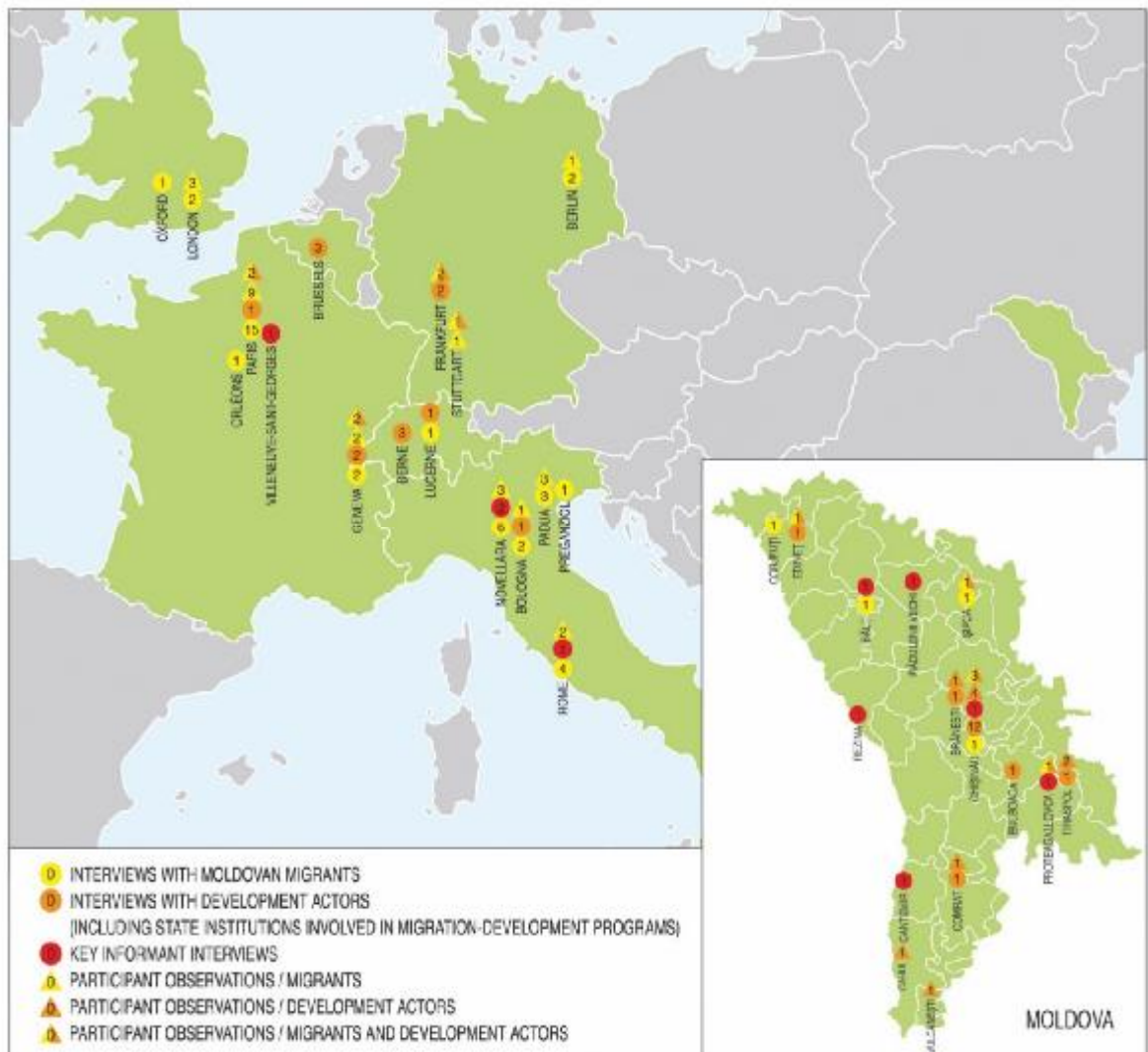


Figure 3.1: Geographical distinction of research sites on fieldwork activities

### 3.1.2.3 Mobilities

My multi-sited approach, encompassing several countries and several regions within some countries, required mobility. With the exception of Moldova, the sites were all within reachable distance by fast trains such as the Eurostar, train Italo, TGV or ICE, connecting cities within three hours: London-Paris, Paris-Brussels, Geneva-Paris, Bologna-Rome, or Frankfurt-Berlin<sup>15</sup>. All

<sup>15</sup> I received partial funding for my travel expenses from the University of North-Western Switzerland (FHNW).

through my fieldwork, my mobility was highly appreciated by research participants. The migrants, in particular, perceived it as a sincere effort and interest in them personally, and in their country of origin, especially when by chance I had talked to their friends or colleagues in other European countries or visited their communities of origin in Moldova.

On a more abstract level, the increase of multi-sited research spanning several localities provoked an awareness in me of the extant literature on specific concerns of this trend, particularly on the definition of a site (e.g. Gupta and Ferguson 1997), the handling and quality of relationships (e.g. Nadai and Maeder 2005), temporal aspects of multi-sited fieldwork (e.g. Marcus and Okely 2007), and more recently, on the challenges of team research undertaken simultaneously in different geographical sites (Shinozaki 2012; Vargas-Silva 2012). Understandably, the less exiting 'practicalities' of translocal and transnational studies are rarely mentioned in textbooks or research reports. Yet, the logistical challenges meant for me, a 'single researcher', significant extra effort. To constantly arrange accommodation, to do travel plans and to 'regain' local access to research participants was time-consuming. Moreover, the mobile research necessitated not only a physical mobility, but also an 'intercultural flexibility'. The geographical scope of the research involved interactions with a wide range of individuals and organisations across different cultural settings. In order to engage with research participants in an 'ethnographically sensible' way, I needed to develop the ability to switch and adapt to different social settings within the transnational topography of migrants and development actors. My personal advantage had been that I am a 'familiar stranger' in all of the seven geographical sites and contexts, and that I disposed the necessary degree of language and intercultural skills as well as an acquaintance with research participants, ensuring that the specific techniques of inquiry were appropriate to the social and cultural context in which they took place (cf. Kemp and Ellen 1995). The intercultural and practical challenges apart, the multi-sited and transnational approach presented several advantages for informing my overarching research topic. In the next section I address these advantages.

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Figure 3.2: Mobility

### 3.1.3 Transnational approach and multi-sited ethnography

Globalisation has catapulted sites across the world ever closer together through various economic, political and social pathways. Therefore, Marcus argues that we need to document world-wide networks in which linked sites are embedded in order to give voice to a wider range of actors, and to ensure that ethnographic projects have salience beyond anthropological circles (1998). According to this author, multi-sited ethnography involves documenting how large sets of forces impinge on local sites; it does not automatically mean doing fieldwork in multiple sites (Marcus 1998). The relations which constitute international development as a global project are situated within such world-wide networks. In Green's opinion, these aid and development relationships are: "[...] materialised through conventions and practices of networking, regional and international meetings, and organisational hierarchies which scale up from the sub-national, via the national and the regional, to the global apex" (2011: 22). In the light of this, multi-sited ethnography opens up space for moving beyond site-specific research and contextualising political responses to personal or collective experiences of 'doing development' across different

countries. A multi-sited research design enabled me to explore a variety of networking characteristics within these different geographical areas as one social field interacting with another transnational field; the migrants' collective practices.

Given my research aim, I equally engaged with the transnational methodological approach. The approach points exactly to the fact that my research participants are positioned in social fields of connections extended across nation-state borders (Vertovec 2009)<sup>16</sup>. Amelina and Faist (2012) have argued that this transnational approach has not always been taken very seriously. In my research field, for instance, the mandated research on Moldovan migrant associations highlighted in Chapter 1 are solely based on data collected in the migrant receiving countries (e.g. Cheianu-Andrei 2013). The activities carried out in Moldova have been left out so far. Thus, my emphasis on the multiple linkages within the transnational field of the migrant civil society sets my study apart from a purely comparative study on migrant associations in different destination countries; e.g. the study undertaken by Schwarz (2007) in the context of Italy, Russia and Israel. Although comparison is an integral dimension of my research design, it takes on "[...] the form of juxtapositions of phenomena that conventionally have appeared to be (or conceptually have been kept) 'worlds apart'" (Marcus 1995: 102). Furthermore, accentuating the relationships that unfold across several receiving countries, enabled me, on the one hand, to access and subsequently interview a core group of active migrant leaders living in different countries, who maintain strong transnational social networks across several migrant host countries and who are engaged in the political, economic and cultural life of Moldova. This group was also highly involved in the feeding into emigrant policy making, which I will discuss in Chapter 6. On the other hand, it also allowed me to access migrants who are less engaged in 'home politics' living in different places than the just-described migrant leaders; for instance, female low-skilled migrants. The interviews and comments by these migrants revealed interesting patterns of transnational development practices, which I would not have been able to detect by interviewing the transnational migrant leaders alone.

My study is rather 'located' than 'local' (Gupta and Ferguson 1997); I aimed to obtain a thick description of the processes and relationships in both trans-state social spaces and between them, and rather thin descriptions in regard to the cultural and social life of the geographical localities (Marcus 1998). My objective was not to achieve a full understanding of discrete actors and geographical bounded communities, such as for instance the 'entire culture and social life of Moldovan migrants living in Italy or France'. Even so, these aspects were taken into

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<sup>16</sup> Yet, as in most multi-sited studies, the multiple linkages in this study were not only transnational, but also translocal and local (cf. Hannerz 2003).



consideration whenever possible, because they endowed me with a clearer picture of the dynamics unfolding within cross-border social practices.

Lastly, following up on my discussion on *whose knowledge* I want to place on my research agenda in Chapters 1 and 2, I round up this section with a very brief epistemological consideration of *what knowledge* I wanted to gain. Emphasising multiple linkages meant that my research was attuned to relational rather than essential differences (Bourdieu 1990), and that is what dialogic and interpretative rather than objectivist (Geertz 1988). Furthermore, working on and in a country with frequent political changes, including a frozen-conflict zone, my research is not exclusively about human beings and their situations, but also about situations and their human beings (cf. Goffman 1967). Given the situational aspect of my study, I am aware that I arrive only at a partial, contextualised knowledge – a snapshot in time. The fact that this knowledge is by definition partial and incomplete, however, does not mean that it can never attain the status of real knowledge (Geertz 1973). To deny this and only adopt an extreme relativist position would run against my interest to engage with political power structures and to uncover *whose knowledge* and *what kind of knowledge* counts by means of the ethnographic bottom-up approach.



Figure 3.3: Transnational connections



### 3.2 Sample, Design and Sites

#### 3.2.1 Sample group and access

Ethnographic research involves careful access that is not something achieved once and for all, but has to be negotiated and renegotiated across the different groups for different topics (Strauss and Corbin 1996). As highlighted in Chapter 2, I emphasise the social dimension of migration in my study, by placing migrants and their experiences as knowledge producers at the centre of the debate. To this end, I engaged with a heterogeneous sample of collectively engaged migrants: variable ages, genders, family situations, migratory experiences and strategies as well as occupational backgrounds, ranging from low-skilled to high-skilled occupations. This allowed me to gain an understanding of migrants' views on my research topic from diversified perspectives; from female care-workers in rural Italy, politically active migrants working in the City of London, students in Paris, members of the transnational 'diaspora-council' in Rome and Geneva, and so on and so forth. Prior to my fieldwork, I had already identified and contacted via email and telephone migrants living in the UK, Switzerland, Rome and Bologna, through acquaintances from my former visits to Moldova, or through the internet. As I proceeded through my fieldwork, I used the snowball-sampling method to create new relationships by drawing on existing ones (Ritchie and Lewis 2003). Further contacts were made by attending church ceremonies or events carried out by migrant associations in France, Italy, Germany, Switzerland and the UK. This way of proceeding allowed me to encounter migrants in many different social settings and to reach the intended variety of research participants, including migrants who are not collectively engaged in activities directed towards Moldova<sup>17</sup>.

I negotiated my initial access to Moldovan associations through an association census. This census was commonly known among research participants as simply the 'migrant association list'. The list travelled with me for over a year. A Moldovan scholar introduced me to the list, while I was preparing my research outline. Later on in Moldova, I also met the author of the list. From the first contact with a migrant leader in London to the last interview conducted under Bologna's arcades, every research participant was referring to the 'association list'. Yet, as nearly all aspects of life in Moldova are politicised, so also is the list. It is not just a list, but filled with ideological and political implications, as we will see in more detail in Chapter 6. Therefore, in order to avoid the risk of sample limitations presented by means of contacting exclusively associations from this list, I also included associations that did not figure on the list through

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<sup>17</sup> For a detailed sample description see Appendix 1.

recommendations of key-informants from previous field-work stages, or through my own internet research. The main selection criteria for the Moldovan associations has been their involvement in any of the newly created formal association-led development programmes implemented by development agencies (e.g. the IOM, UNDP or EU-organisations), and logistical considerations (e.g. combining interviews with development actors and representatives of migrant associations who were located near one another). I identified further organisations through interviews with association members and programme managers of migrant association-led programmes, including those associations whose projects have been rejected by the donor-community. Doing so allowed me to see if migrants and aid-institutions have different understandings of development practices. Moreover, in order to assess the scope of transnational practices that prevail outside the formal development programmes, I had selected migrant associations and networks within close distance to the first group of migrant associations participating in development programmes and policies.

Through my professional activities in the social development sector in Moldova and my academic consultancy activities in the migration–development field, I already had secured contact to my second group of research participants: relevant key-experts in the development field: project managers of programmes carried out by the IOM, UNDP and the EU-UN joint office, key persons in migration-development-led policies of bilateral development agencies, and representatives of NGOs based in Moldova. I further identified members of this research group on relevant websites while doing my review of key-development programmes prior to my fieldwork. The first contact was usually established via email prior to sending the general information sheet and further information. I then recruited other aid-professionals chiefly through a ‘cross-border’ snowballing technique. In retrospect, to do my first initial fieldwork stage among the development actors in Germany and Switzerland turned out to be a good decision. They were extremely cooperative in informing their respective local counterparts in Moldova and their broader networks within headquarters of international organisations about my research, and in announcing my arrival in Moldova. Because of an increase in investment in new migration–development programmes in Moldova, there had been a dynamic process of setting up new infrastructures and office-spaces among various international aid-agencies and within governmental structures during my fieldwork. This also meant that some offices were not fully operating at that time (e.g. no internet addresses, no business phone-numbers). Therefore, it was crucial to have prior contacts and local gatekeepers, who provided me with the private mobile numbers of the heads of these offices. Moreover, access to representatives of Moldovan state institutions was generally only possible via their private mobile numbers.

For exploring the relationship patterns between migrants, their local Moldovan counterparts and the donor community in concrete development settings, I applied a matched sample approach developed by Mazzucato (2009)<sup>18</sup>. It consisted of four small-scale project settings: the support of a school, the installation of a sanitation system in a village, the provision of equipment to a local hospital, and the organisation of a food-festival promoting a healthy life-style. One project was implemented in Chisinau, the others in villages – one in the centre, one in the east and one in the north of Moldova<sup>19</sup>. I selected one project during the first fieldwork stage in the UK. The other three were selected in Moldova from where I followed the activities back to the associations that carried them out in Paris, Geneva and Berlin. The use of these in-depth ‘transnational case studies’ allowed me to “close-in on real life situations and test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice” (Flyvbjerg 2004: 58). The ‘matched samples’ offered a valued combination of the horizontal data analysis – mainly based on interviews and participant observation – with a vertical analysis of an in-depth ethnographic case, and thus fitted ideally in my overall body of ethnographic methodology (Charmaz 2006). The additional advantage of this method consisted of the triangulation of results and of the disclosure of complexities of transnational co-operation patterns that would not have emerged in interviewing one actor only; for instance, it provided me with the possibility to link up what has been said by one actor with the direct counterparts revealing what the research participants actually do (cf. Mazzucato 2009).

Lastly, in order to mitigate the concern of multi-sited field studies in regard to a too-narrow focus on the mobile subjects (Appadurai, 1996) – in this case the highly mobile migrants engaged in development projects, as they contribute most to turning the combinations of sites into coherent fields – I also included the ‘non-mobiles’ in my sample, such as key persons in Moldova and in the migrants’ destination countries: representatives of relevant local and national institutions and individuals involved in the four matched samples (e.g. teachers, a social worker, a mayor, and the beneficiaries of development projects).

In conclusion, getting in contact with Moldovan migrants was surprisingly easy and immediate, and facilitated by the fact that they were all highly interested in taking part in my research. Possibly, this can be explained with the lack of public and academic interest in Moldova in general and in Moldovan migrants in particular (see Chapter 1). My interest in migrants’

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<sup>18</sup> Mazzucato defines her method as the ‘simultaneous matched sample methodology’ (SMS) (2009: 216). Unable to do simultaneously research in different sites on my own, I reduced the method to a ‘matched sample approach’, and I included donor organisations in my units of analysis, which do not figure in the original version.

<sup>19</sup> In both cases, the selection was based on a geographical dispersion so as to see if there are regional factors influencing negotiations and arrangements between the actors involved, and on the thematic orientations of the activities carried out.

chiefly volunteer-run activities was highly appreciated, especially by participants who felt a lack of recognition for their efforts by the host society or by the Moldovan state, and by individuals who felt tired of being 'reduced' to objects in some of the deficit-oriented public discourses on integration, and to a lesser extent as transnationally active social subjects and actors. By and large, since my first encounter with Moldovan migrants – a charity event for deprived Children in Chisinau, held in a trendy wine-bar in London's city centre – I have been moved by their kindness and generosity, and by their openness and trust to share with me their personal viewpoints on Moldova's developmental transformation, as well as their often drastic stories: stories of separations, unfulfilled migration plans, homelessness upon arrival in their destination country and stories of exploitation. I am convinced that my privileged dialectic 'insider-outsider' role in relation to both research groups was an advantage in building up access and trust. The fact that I neither belonged to the Moldovan migrant community nor to the host society, for most of the time, was an advantage. For instance, my obvious 'double outsider role' vis-à-vis Moldovan migrants and the host society allowed me to generate honest accounts on Moldova's and the destination country's national or local structural context, which were both commonly described by migrants as constraining. Conversely, somehow detached from the cultural context, access and trust to development workers was considerably facilitated by my self-disclosure as having once belonged to the transnational community of aid-workers. Yet, contrary to what I had anticipated prior to my fieldwork, access to undocumented migrants living in Italy or France and to other migrants in vulnerable life-circumstances turned out to be much easier than access to busy development professionals in Brussels and Geneva. Despite my former 'insider role', I only succeed in meeting these research participants via personal contacts in both cities. All in all, throughout my research, programme-coordinators of international aid-institutions based outside Moldova were most reluctant to my research<sup>20</sup>.

### 3.2.2 Sites

The contours of the mosaic of places across Europe and in Moldova as illustrated at the beginning of this chapter emerged from my research design and the research process itself, as I traced informants across multiple sites that turned out as relevant in the light of the research questions (Marcus 1995).

Firstly, my fieldwork phase in Moldova was marked by the deductive approach of my thesis, pertaining from a lack of up-to date-research on Moldova's mass emigration as an integral part

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<sup>20</sup> The reasons for rejecting an interview were, among others, time constraints or an expressed lack of knowledge about Moldova and its development transformation, or reservations about the topic of migration.

of Moldova's transformation reality more broadly. The main objective of this approach was to get a better picture of how the phenomena of migration and transformation are revealed in today's Moldova, and to explore the specific challenges and issues raised by Moldova's mass emigration. It allowed me to get a better understanding of the structural context in which migrant associations' development efforts are supposed to be 'plugged in'. For investigating how Moldovans outside the capital experience transformation and migration, I left the 'aid-bubble' that often disconnects aid-workers from their beneficiaries living outside Chisinau. A big advantage in investigating migration as embedded in the societal structure of today's Moldova beyond the development actors' representations was that I had been offered free-of-charge support (personal driver and translator) by an international charity. This allowed me to gain time, because access to certain regions, i.e. Transnistria, is rather difficult. Meanwhile, some villages in the far north of the country or in the southeast have more frequent bus connections to Paris, Kiev, or Bologna than to Chisinau, where I was staying<sup>21</sup>.

Secondly, as highlighted earlier, I did fieldwork in the per se 'transnational field' of the built environment of development key-players outside Chisinau: in Brussels and Geneva, where the majority of international and Moldovan migrant association-led development programmes are based (for instance IOM, UNDP), while simultaneously focusing on German-speaking countries. Contrary to other European countries such as the UK, Spain or the Netherlands, the involvement of migrant organisations in development policy is less advanced in Germany and Switzerland, and they have just recently moved beyond the discursive political level (Hilber and Braulina 2012)<sup>22</sup>. Moreover, Switzerland is currently after the European Union the second largest provider of funds for migration–development programmes in Moldova (SDC 2013).

Thirdly, similar to my deductive approach of looking at Moldovan migration and transformation in Moldova, I first wanted to get a better understanding of the understudied contemporary Moldovan migration features and of migrants' daily lives. I conducted ethnographic research in the transnational field of migrants' civil society in Italy and France; more precisely, in the Greater Paris area and in Italy, predominantly in the regions of Veneto, Emilia Romagna and in Rome. In both countries, there has been a dynamic process of mobilising migrant associations in the last few years. According to the 'migrant association list' there are 55 associations in the Emilia-Romagna region, 21 associations in Rome, and 25 in the Greater Paris area. In both countries, there were at least four organisations involved in formal

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<sup>21</sup> There exist direct bus connections between rather small Italian cities, like Castelfranco (Veneto) or to small neighbouring communities of Geneva, but no direct connections to villages in Moldova.

<sup>22</sup> There are numerous factors determining the relatively late implementation of this policy field in Germany and Switzerland, for example the predominant emphasises on 'voluntary return programmes' by official development aid agencies (Hilber and Braulina 2012).

association-led development programmes. The main reason for having selected Italy as a research site was to analyse if there is a relationship between the size and concentration of the Moldovan migrant community and the intensity of migrants' collective transnational patterns, because the largest number of Moldovan migrants in Western Europe live in Italy; nearly half a million according to research participants, and 149,231 according to Caritas (UNAR 2013)<sup>23</sup>. The majority of them live in the region of Emilia-Romagna (17%), Veneto (21%) and in the Rome area (11%). On a national level, the Moldovans present the seventh largest migrant group in Italy and the second fastest growing migrant population after the Tunisians (UNAR 2013)<sup>24</sup>. I selected France because of an increase in associational activity of Moldovan migrants in the country. Similar to Italy, the Moldovan migrant population in France has considerably grown in the last five years. It is estimated that about 20,000 Moldovans live in the Greater Paris area alone, out of ca. 48,000 who are registered in France (Office National des Statistiques, January 2013<sup>25</sup>). In addition, I selected migrant associations in UK, Germany and Switzerland which participate in formal migrant-development programmes, or that carry out transnational philanthropic activities according to the selection criteria outlined above. According to the German Federal Office of Statistics, there are 51,521 officially registered Moldovans living in Germany (Ausländerzentralregister, 31.12.2012). Four Moldovan associations are taking part in a joint UN-EU programme on involving migrant associations in development efforts, and two more associations are engaged in other programmes. The UK is attractive, because most of the migrant associations in the wider London area (six according to the association census) are involved in transnational charity, and they also co-operated with British or international development agencies at the time of my fieldwork. The drawback was that the number of Moldovans living in the UK compared to Germany is lower (circa 31,000 according to Mosneaga 2012). The number of Moldovan migrants living in Switzerland is rather small, too, but constantly growing (ca. 10,000) (Bundesamt für Statistik 2012). The analysis of migrant associations based in Geneva presented, however, an excellent opportunity to explore the links between the migrants and the development actors. Furthermore, the two associations in Geneva maintain various connections to Swiss development NGOs.

Generally, in large cities like Rome, Berlin, Paris or London, Moldovan migrants live scattered across the city, mainly in the peripheries. In Paris, for instance they live at the *portes* (last

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<sup>23</sup> It is estimated that within the biggest migrant group in Italy (approximately 1 million Romanians), ca. 30% are migrants originally from Moldova. Because many migrants figure as Romanian citizens in official national statistics of foreign residents, the above-indicated numbers of Moldovans living in these countries are on average minimum three times higher.

<sup>24</sup> From 2010 to 2011 the number of Moldovan migrants rose on a national level by 24% and in Rome by 52%! (ISTAT 2012).

<sup>25</sup> Other estimates point to ca. 50,000 Moldovans living in the Paris area (IOM 2012a).

underground tube stations): Porte de Clignancourt, Bobigny, Porte de Bagnolet, etc. However, there is a concentration in some of the outskirts of these cities, such as for instance in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, where ca. 5,000 Moldovans live (Mosneaga 2012)<sup>26</sup>. Because the majority of studies on migrant associations and their responses to charity and donations are concentrated in urban centres, where the 'best and brightest' migrants live, I also included those who live in smaller cities, or rural areas of their destination countries, so as to avoid what I would call *methodological urbanism*. These sites emerged through snowball sampling and through contacts with friends who live in smaller cities, such as Novellara, Italy. My ethnographic inquiry in these locations offered me valuable information about transnational philanthropic practices carried out by chiefly 'low-skilled' migrants that have thus far escaped the attention of migration scholars and the development industry. Vice-versa, by including migrants from urban areas in Moldova, I tried to avoid what Meuss calls in the Romanian case *methodological ruralism* – a rural bias in the interpretation of Romanian migration mainly connected to the Romanian countryside, while neglecting urban areas of departure (2012: 1775).

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<sup>26</sup> The Moldovan village of Corjeuti is a not-untypical example. Out of its 8000 inhabitants, 5000 live in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges, outside Paris (Cheianu-Andrei 2013).



Figure 3.4: Fieldwork sites

### 3.3 Methods and Analysis

Migrant associations' involvement in development is a multifaceted topic, which is best researched through a mix of different methods. For this reason, I drew upon a range of qualitative data collection techniques, which I describe below.

#### 3.3.1 Primary data sources

##### 3.3.1.1 *Semi-structured in-depth interviews*

I used semi-structured in-depth interviews, following Witzel (1985). These problem-centred interviews consist of a general broad initial question, approximately five key-questions and then ad hoc questions<sup>27</sup>. I found this method very suitable for my research, because it allowed me to

<sup>27</sup> The sequence of the questions does not imply a hierarchisation of the questions (Witzel 1985).



focus on four or five particular key-aspects of my research topic in greater detail, and to apply open-ended questions that allowed participants to express what they could add to the overall topic. This enabled me to open up new perspectives and questions I had not thought to explore, and which I used in subsequent interviews. As mentioned earlier, I carried out 84 face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews: 44 with migrants (30 who were also representatives of associations, 8 who were not collectively engaged); 30 with civil servants and aid-workers, and 10 with key informants (e.g. representatives of local political administrations across the illustrated seven sites or of the social sector in Moldova). The interviews were conducted in English, German (including Swiss German), Italian, French, Romanian and Russian language. With the exception of 20 interviews in Italy and Moldova, for which I had a translator, I conducted all of the interviews myself. Drawing on my previous work-experience in the Eastern European development NGO-scene, I have been concerned with the different positioning of the research participants within both types of organisations – the migrant associations and development organisations. In some cases, I interviewed two representatives of the same organisation in the sense of triangulation, which revealed interesting insights in regard to intra-organisational power dynamics, such as gender relations and different viewpoints on my research topic. Moreover, I tried not to focus exclusively on presidents of NGOs, or local heads of aid-agencies in Chisinau, because of a potential risk of them seeking to impress outsiders in order to aspire to receive funding. This can result in gaining superficial data. Therefore, whenever possible, I preferred to conduct interviews with project co-ordinators, who yielded more information about concrete activities and possible challenges.

Most of the interviews (81) were recorded; in the three cases when this was not possible, detailed notes were taken during and after the interview<sup>28</sup>. Consistent with grounded theory, I have always engaged in ethnographic observation during the encounters with the interviewees. I supplemented the interviews with post-scripts, in which I described the interview-settings, the course and the atmosphere of the interview (flows in the narratives, disturbances) and the socio-demographic data of research participants (age, gender, professional occupation, migration status, duration of their stay in the host country, etc.; cf. Strauss and Corbin 1996). Sometimes, migrants brought other family members, mainly their adolescent children, to the interviews settings, which provided the interviews with a 'group-interview' character. This also enabled me to see if there are generational gaps between Moldovan migrants and their children in their representations on the researched topic.

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<sup>28</sup> Surprisingly, given the post-communist context of my study, most research participants immediately agreed to being recorded.

An average interview lasted about ninety minutes, and it was usually followed up by a further un-recorded discussion. In some cases, the informal follow-up exchanges with programme managers took on the form of a 'mini' consultations, in which participants referred to my disclosure as a former consultant in the field. I found these discussions usually very fruitful and rewarding, as they gave me the opportunity to show appreciation for the time given to an interview, and not take the research participants' contributions as granted. However, this also meant that the meetings took, on average, three hours. Vice-versa, the following-up of interviews at migrants' homes turned often into 'family happenings' with guests, subsequent dinner and joint photo-sessions. The number of migrant research participants declining to be interviewed was insignificant. Altogether, only three migrants refused to be interviewed, due to illness or because they were out of town. All other migrants immediately agreed to take part in the research<sup>29</sup>.

Dialogue with, listening to and learning from the research participants unavoidably involved meetings. These meetings took place in a variety of locations, always suggested by research participants themselves, as I found it important that they were familiar with the surroundings for sharing information with a stranger<sup>30</sup>. The interviews with migrants were usually carried out in cafés, premises of migrant associations, at migrants' workplaces, in local political or administrative locations, or in migrants' homes<sup>31</sup>. The different interview settings are a good illustration of the variety of research participants; for instance, the locations suggested by Moldovans in Paris ranged from typically urban bohemian-bourgeois cafés in the city's most trendy quartiers proposed by students, to hyper-modern offices of high-skilled migrants in the financial district of la Défense, to the migrant associations' locations in a typical *maison d'associations* (French community centres collectively hosting local associations), to migrants' homes in the outskirts of Paris, mostly suggested by low-skilled migrants. The same description applies to other localities; e.g. in London where I conducted interviews in the 'holy-halls' of international financial institutions in Canary Wharf and in migrants' homes in working-class North-East London (see Figure 3.5).

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<sup>29</sup> In some places in Italy and in Moldova people approached me for being interviewed, and I had to decline their offers because of time constraints.

<sup>30</sup> Prior to the interviews, I have always ensured that the proposed locations were suitable surroundings for the research participants, providing an atmosphere of confidentiality and trust.

<sup>31</sup> Four interviews with migrants were conducted on their return visits in Moldova (see Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.5: From centres to peripheries

The interviews with development actors were conducted on their project-sites (e.g. premises of local NGOs and community centres) or in a variety of different 'office worlds', depending on the international status of the aid-organisation and the functions of research participants within the organisations (e.g. premises of IOs, and programme offices in the donor countries – see Figure 3.6). Besides the often only partially furnished and functional 'office worlds' in the aid environment in Chisinau, I also carried out interviews in hotel lobbies, and in my landlady's kitchen in a Chisinau suburb. Further interview settings included soulless canteens of international or bilateral aid agencies and UN-Headquarters in Geneva, Brussels, Frankfurt or in old 'soviet-style' canteens of schools and an orphanage in Moldova's countryside supported by migrants or development agencies.



Figure 3.6: Office worlds

### 3.3.1.2 Participant observation

As in most ethnographic studies, participant observation played an important role in informing my research topic (Emerson et al. 1995). To explore the migrants' and aid-workers' development activities directed towards Moldova meant to find out where there is action, and to try to participate in these actions. On the whole, I engaged and observed in a wide variety of actions and events, ranging from official strategic policy-meetings, such as the UN international high-level dialogue, to street-level events, such as picnics organised by migrant associations (in total 48). As illustrated in Figure 3.1, I divided the activities in three groups. I participated in 13 event addresses to migrants and development actors; e.g. programme launches and international conferences (e.g. the GFMD-Civil society days, an IOM-Diaspora conference, etc.). In-line with Emerson et al. (1995), I paid special attention to the patterns of collaboration between the two sets of actors in the given setting; ways of expressing themselves, misunderstandings, silencing or suppressing alternative discourses and possible forms of contestation, division of tasks which organised these events, and the research participants' space for personal interpretations in

reporting these events. To this end, I confronted the participants with the final written activity reports, so as to crystallise the different viewpoints around outcomes of conferences, workshops and/or on a specific topic. Doing so allowed me in an ideal way to pursue my chosen multi-perspective approach. The joint-meetings also enabled me to observe the relationships between migrants and development actors more immediately, and to witness within these temporary sites if new relationships between development actors and migrants had been created.

With regard to migrant associations, I attended meetings of formal migrant associations and informal networks, such as board meetings of migrant associations, charity events, cultural and political activities carried out in the receiving countries, and project meetings between migrants and their counterparts in Moldova (in total 25). And lastly, because of my former contacts in the aid-industry and new contacts built-up in the course of fieldwork, I was able to access the development agencies' 'inner sanctum', to step into their 'black boxes' and to conduct participant observation in their strategic policy meetings, conferences, workshops and presentations of studies (in total 10). This allowed me to explore the actual policy-making process and to follow key moments of the social life of the development category 'migrants as partners for development', as highlighted in toolkits, handbooks and the like.

Additionally, I accompanied international aid-workers and their local counterparts on their fieldtrips to project-sites in remote areas of Moldova. This form of 'participant field trips' provided me with unique insights of how the topic of emigration is perceived among aid workers and their Moldovan counterparts, which I could not have generated through interviewing the aid workers alone. Further, in accordance with Eyben (2006) and Green (2011), I reflected on my own practice as a consultant for the German Bilateral-Development agencies' migrant association programme, in which I had taken the role of an 'observant participant', actively involved in two consultant-workshops in March 2013.

In general, apart from the efficient 'cross-border' snowball-sampling, which allowed me to proceed smoothly with my ethnographic inquiry, my engagement in these activities presented further ideal entry points to my new geographical fields. For instance, upon my arrival in Moldova, I attended a joint-workshop for a new migration-development programme-launch with migrant representatives, development actors, and state representatives, in which I could engage in conversations with potential new research participants. In a more advanced stage, I selected these 'temporary sites' according to their relevance for my research topic; e.g. specific social development activities directed towards Moldova, and/or according to logistical reasons; e.g. participation at a board meeting of a migrant association while being in Geneva for encountering development actors.





Figure 3.7: Participant observation

### 3.3.1.3 Ethnographic walks

A further method of inquiry consisted in ethnographic walks à la 'flâneur', alone or accompanied by research participants<sup>32</sup>. By systematically strolling the streets as a 'flâneur' I participated as an engaged observer in the life of a place. In these terms, walking is an act of discovery and exploration, a constant experiment to create our own personal maps of the places and pathways of the urban land scape that we stumble across (Hessel 2013). I applied these 'flâneries' or ethnographic walks as a means to get a better understanding of the life-worlds of Moldovans from variegated places across Moldova, of the life-worlds of migrants and of aid-workers situated in the humanitarian landscape, or in what Duffield (2006) calls the 'aid archipelago' in Brussels, Geneva and Chisinau. The walks in Moldova strengthened my ability to engage with Moldova's complex transformation as it is lived and experienced by a variety of individuals, allowing me to grasp the heterogeneity of my post-communist research field, and to understand

<sup>32</sup> The word 'flâneur' has developed through Baudelaire and Walter Benjamin and other writers in the sense of a philosophical response to the urban landscape (Hessel 2013).

how the past is present. Vice-versa, exploring the different landscapes of migrants' living environment provided me with a more nuanced insight into migrants' social realities, their life circumstances and the broader public perception and attitude towards Moldovan migrants<sup>33</sup>. And last of all, on a more personal level, the 'flâneries' were a welcome means for balancing out the fast rhythms of moving across my geographical sites. They offered me a change from the linear way of travelling with high-speed trains from city A to city B, subordinating the landscape with their speed, so that nothing is left out of it. The slow rhythm of walking permitted me to see the landscapes, and to take photographs. How I used these photographs for the exploration of my research topic is explained in the next subsection.



Figure 3.8: Ethnographic walks

### 3.3.1.4 Visual methods

In O'Ralley's understanding, visual methods relate to the study of visual media and material and using it as a way of incorporating 'a visual lens into mainstream ethnography' (2009: 221). I

<sup>33</sup> Some of these walks took place in sensitive environments; i.e. certain suburbs of Paris and in the surrounding forests, where migrants live in caravans or improvised sheds without electricity or running water, in deprived neighbourhoods in Chisinau and Rome, and in the frozen-conflict zone of Transnistria, where my walks got interrupted by the police.

included the study of visual methods (video footage, etc.) in my analysis of relevant documents, and I defined 'visual methods' as the proper use of visual media. I drew on these methods in order to understand how meanings are made in and through the visual within transnational practices (Pink 2007). For instance, I took pictures of key-events of migrant associations or of joint migrant-development actor-events. Furthermore, I used photographs in interviews as a means of documenting and enlarging my collected ethnographic statements and observations in post-communist Moldova (Ball and Gilligan 2010). For this purpose, I predominantly used the photographs of the contested and multifaceted identity politics in Moldova's public space (official billboards, signs, graffiti, reminiscences of the past, and so on), and those related to the visibility of emigration (e.g. advertising for emigration-programmes). Exploring the photographs with the research participants provided the interview setting with a less rigid atmosphere, and permitted more open expression.

I also drew on the participatory photography method (Pink 2007) to deepen my understanding of the migrants' self-reflections on their collective social engagement in Moldova. For instance, some members of associations took photographs of their projects during their visits in Moldova. This allowed me to 'see' their humanitarian engagement through their eyes, as a 'third' visual perspective along with the development actors' documentations, and my own personal impressions from the projects.

Given the legal and ethical issues to consider with the use of media and photography (for instance the respect of anonymity of the research participants, or copyright-issues), I used these methods only if full consent was provided by the research participants (Ball and Gilligan 2010). In retrospect, however, I completely underestimated my own visibility. In the course of fieldwork, I became myself increasingly visible on social media platforms, especially on websites run by migrant associations or on their Facebook pages. Because pictures of previous meetings circulated, this meant that I had to openly disclose, when directly asked, who else I had previously met and in which conference or meeting I had participated, without evoking what had been said in the best possible diplomatic way. In sum, the photographs supported me throughout my research:

- in conducting fieldwork, particularly in the orientation-phases, when I was confronted with a flow of new information, which I found difficult to record in detail;
- in the analysis of my data; for the design of the thesis structure;
- in the writing-up to evoke memories of different places, and of activities in which I participated



- and in visualising the different life-worlds and realities encountered on my fieldwork, difficult to express just with words.

### 3.3.2 Secondary data sources

#### 3.3.2.1 *Analysis of relevant documents*

For investigating how the involvement of migrant organisations in development is reflected in policy plans and activities, I conducted an inductive content-analysis of relevant development policy and programme documents, according to Mayring (2008): i.e. EU Council conclusions, the EU-Partnership framework, UN resolutions on international migration and development, the IOM's Small Grant Mechanism Programme, and diverse programmes implemented by bilateral development agencies. I also analysed the key-actors' main handbooks, manuals, toolkits, training-material, reports of workshops and visual and audio 'testimonies of migrants in action for development' (DVDs, CDs, audio-presentations, documentary films) produced by key-development actors. Likewise, I analysed the migrant associations under study according to Mayring (2008): the associations' key organisational characteristics, their degree of formation and form of creation, as well as their number of members. My analysis was also based on information derived from video-footage, media reports of conferences, photos, articles, and on accounts of the migrants' philanthropic engagement in the Moldovan national press (e.g. the printed diaspora-newspaper 'Gazeta Basarabiei').

Fieldwork also included searches in archives and libraries, such as for instance the 'Médiatheque Abdelmalek Sayad' in Paris, the library of the IOM headquarters in Geneva, or the 'l'osservatorio della immigrazione' in Bologna<sup>34</sup>. Yet, this archival data collection did not yield much, either because of a lack of data or because the relevant material was also published online. In contrast, the numerous unpublished secondary materials I collected throughout my fieldwork – sent or handed out by research participants – proved to be very relevant for informing my research topic. It consisted of working papers on official emigration policies, jointly produced by migrant representatives, and of the key-donors' unpublished material, such as staff working papers, and unpublished communication and policy briefs on new approaches of my research topic.

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<sup>34</sup> I collected relevant information such as statistics on migration and development, the migrants' legal status, use of remittances, the nature of their employment abroad and information on the broader associational or voluntary sector in the countries under study.

Furthermore, as the internet is a significant instrument for transnational migrant communities, used in what Kissau and Hunger call 'the construction of shared imagination' (2010: 246), I also spent some fieldwork time in the 'digital transnational field'. I have attempted to portray categories of practices emerging from the migrant community's morphology, by analysing 'face-to-interface relationships', thematic orientations, self-description or group boundaries on websites run by migrant associations or on specific 'Diaspora' internet platforms, such as 'diaspora.md' or 'Moldova.org', in social medias, blogs, etc.

### *3.3.3 Grounded-Theory and Reflexive Analysis*

As stated above, I started to analyse my data according to the principles of grounded theory during my fieldwork breaks (Glaser and Strauss 1973). Grounded theory reinforces the importance of understanding general theory in relation to empirical data. In these terms, I reflected on the data through the three theoretical lenses outlined in Chapter 2 (Clarke 2005). This approach suggested useful techniques for coding empirical data. To this end, I analysed the interview transcriptions and coded them with the Atlas. ti 6.2 Programme (similar to NVivo) to support my process of working out the general themes and categories that emerged from the semi-structured interviews. I found the open-coding techniques and structures (visual models to explore the interconnectedness of themes) useful in regard to easy access to the data using groupings and the possibility to attach notes to particular segments of texts. As it was essentially inductive, it yielded both expected and unexpected analytical categories (Charmaz 2006). This technique, however, was time consuming and limited to the analysis of what had been said in interviews<sup>35</sup>. Therefore, the information gathered through participant observation, my fieldwork notes and the earlier-highlighted four matched-samples, which I incorporated into the overall body of empirical data, gave me the opportunity to work out ideas more in-depth and to go beyond of what was said in the interviews (cf. Strübing 2004).

Besides achieving a scientific saturation according to grounded theory, meaning no more relevant categories or insights were revealed, I also felt towards my fieldwork completion somehow a 'personal saturation' and fatigue. Being constantly on the move, having to respond creatively over a longer period of time to people's grounded concerns in numerous encounters<sup>36</sup>, and having to attentively observe my immediate surroundings in different geographical contexts, had drained a lot of my energy.

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<sup>35</sup> Due to time constraints, I limited the computer-based analysis to 40 interviews.

<sup>36</sup> These included fieldwork assistants and a web of fieldwork supporters consisting of friends and colleagues who hosted me in different fieldwork locations.

### 3.4 Ethical Considerations and Positionalities

I round off this chapter by sketching some reflections on the ethical dimensions of my research and on my multiple positionalities in relation to the research participants. Prior to entering the 'field', I had reflected on the linked issues of trust and encouraging participation, confidentiality, informed consent, and anonymity. My personal understanding of conducting ethical ethnography is premised within an ethics of trust. This means I understand ethnographic research as the establishment of reciprocal relationships built on mutual trust and rapport (Emerson et al. 1995). Building trust and confidence also consist of providing the research participants with relevant information in order to ensure their informed consent of my intrusion into their lives (Charmaz 2006). Because of my understanding of ethnography as a mode of reciprocal engagement, rather than looking at Moldovan migrants and development actors purely as 'informants' or 'subjects', I viewed them as research participants, which provides my research to some degrees with a participative research character. This practice required me to have an open attitude to unexpected perspectives, and to develop research approaches that minimise the extent to which I intrude my assumptions into the research process (Rubin and Rubin 1995). Indeed, some of the research participants took an active part, directly or indirectly, in contributing to the research process; for instance, through sharing their unpublished policy briefs or photographs of their development projects, and by keeping me up-dated via telephone, skype, email, and social media, about the evolution of their activities, and/or about the general political situation in Moldova more broadly, beyond my last fieldwork stage. Hannerz calls this form of participation in multi-sited research a 'polymorphous engagement' consisting of "interacting with research participants across a number of dispersed sites, keeping touch with some of them in person or per email over a certain period of time and collecting data from a disparate array of sources" (Hannerz 2003: 212)<sup>37</sup>. Vice-versa, the more I engaged with the communities under study, the more I became myself increasingly part of the transnational networks by linking aid-workers with one-another, putting in contact migrant associations with similar interests across different countries and migrants with donor organisations.

I ensured confidentiality of the research participants to the best of my ability in the research process and also in the course of the writing up. I only conducted interviews when full consent was given by the respondents. Yet, in my understanding, ethical research goes beyond signed

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<sup>37</sup> When designing my research project, I initially contemplated to return to Moldova at the end of my field work, in order to see how certain migration–development schemes had evolved in the meantime. Based on the quality and quantity of my data collected up to March 2014, and the fact that I stayed in frequent contact with several participants in Moldova, who kept me regularly updated, I decided that this last fieldwork stay was not necessary anymore.

consent forms and agreements of confidentiality. Rather, it is a matter of building up a relationship of trust in which the participants are given the feeling of being heard throughout the research process. For instance, some migrant leaders in Germany were reluctant to participate in my research, because of their previous negative experiences with a journalist who did not treat their data with confidentiality. This meant that I first needed to build up trust and to find the right tone for assuring them that I will treat the data in a professional manner.

As I did not want to rely exclusively on 'formal consent' interviews and participation, but on a range of information garnered throughout my research, I found it even more important that I conducted 'conscious ethnography' that is sensitive to the research participants throughout the entire research process in regard to respect and confidentiality (Clarke 2005). Because I was doing fieldwork in a politically charged environment consisting of dedicated and often charismatic individuals who had passionate and/or adversarial relationships with other groups or formal Moldovan policies, I found this responsible ethnographic attitude even more relevant. Besides the politically sensitive subject matter of the topic, and the post-communist context of 'distrust' among some participants, which I will describe in more detail in the next chapter, another challenge was the size of Moldova's development scene. The local and international development scene in Moldova is fairly small. Everybody knows everybody and everybody has worked for everybody. This is also true for the members of the small but dynamic migrant civil society who are in contact with one another across different host societies and who maintain strong ties with Moldova's political decision makers. Although the size of the community was an advantage in gaining access to research participants, it required a flair for dealing with delicate matters, such as 'personal politics' or the earlier highlighted inquiries of: who else have you met and talked to? The small size of the community also meant that, after having gained a sense of familiarity with migrant leaders, to a point at which I easily knew before meeting them in which direction the political discourse will take off, I had reached a satisfactory point of fieldwork completion. Given the sensitivity of the information collected, I always used pseudonyms in interviews to protect the participants' anonymity.

And last of all, before entering the 'field', I put a lot of thought into issues of positionality, arising from my multifaceted research design. I thoughtfully anticipated power dynamics between the research participants and me that might originate in national belonging, such as my privileged situation of being able to move freely within Europe, age, gender and social status (Shinozaki 2012). As I proceeded in my fieldwork, however, I came to understand that my multiple positionalities, pertaining from research participants as variegated as Moldovan taxi-drivers and artists in Paris, English 'expats' in Brussels, German aid-workers, female Moldovan care-workers, Russian Orthodox Priests, and Italian administration employees, among others,

were impossible to categorise and summarise. Thus, I concluded, with Anthias (2008), that I had multiple social positionalities, constituted in a situational manner. The only invariable constant within these fluidities was my dualistic 'insider-outsider' role, highlighted earlier in this chapter. Reflecting on this, I agree with Marcus who maintains that: "A resolute multi-sitedness in ethnographic terms tends to challenge and complicate in a positive way the hyper emphasis on situated subject positions by juxtaposition and dispersion through investigation in more complex social spaces than many recent varieties of poststructuralist theory on culture and identity have allowed" (1998: 19). In conclusion, I found the reflections and considerations of the complex construction of subjectivities an important part of my overall fieldwork preparation. They provided me with a certain self-confidence, less in regard to the actual positions as they emerged during fieldwork, but as a means to critically engage with a 'self-reflexive fieldwork practice' more broadly – "[...] a way of remaining mindful and accountable" (Haraway 1997 quoted in Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008: 359).

## CHAPTER 4

### Encounters at the Fringe of Europe: Moldova's Development Transition

In this long chapter I engage with the Republic of Moldova and its development transition. Drawing on the migrants' and development actors' perspective on the country's post-Soviet development path, I set the scene for Moldova's economic, social and political context in which migrant associations and development organisations engage, and under which current emigration occurs. The view of both research groups on Moldova's transition is central for further assessing their developmental engagement in the country as well as their mutual aid-relationships. Throughout the chapter, I refer at several points to two seemingly simple questions which I have already partly referred to in Chapter 1, namely: *Where is Moldova? And what is Moldova?* I use these two questions as a guideline for thinking in terms of spatial and temporal openness for investigating Moldova's development transition and its socio-spatial configurations within Europe.

I first provide an overview of the main economic, political and social challenges that Moldova is facing in its current development transition. The focus is put on three key interacting factors, which set Moldova's socio-political and economic development transition apart from other former Soviet countries: its slow social and economic development, its large-scale emigration, and its search for national identity. Further addressing my findings with the analytical optic of multi-perspectivity, I then introduce the migrants' perception of Moldova's post-Soviet transformation path up to now. This also includes migrants' considerations on the Socialist past and their thoughts on their home-country's place in today's Europe, which both shape migrants' collective transnational development practices. In the last section, I sketch Moldova's post-Soviet transformation and migrants' transnational practices from a wider geographical perspective of intra-European spatial configurations. I discuss my findings on the country's post-Soviet transformation and its intense migration through the lens of intra-European interconnectedness, an aspect that has particularly emerged from my multi-sited fieldwork across several different European countries, and that was already running as a central theme through Chapter 3.

## 4.1 Main Characteristics of Moldova's Transformation

### 4.1.1 Introducing Moldova: economic and political reforms

I now introduce Moldova and I map the country's most important and recent economic and institutional reforms.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, the Republic of Moldova is rather little-known, and few Western Europeans know about the country's existence or its geographical location. Some authors even call it 'the forgotten country' (e.g. Löwenhardt et al. 2001: 605). This fact was also commonly stressed by migrants. Below, Christina highlights a positive aspect of originating from a fairly unknown country:

Christina (housewife, 29, London): If I tell people where I come from they don't know where Moldova is. Some even think it's an imaginary country, a fantasy land like 'Syltavia' in the adventures of Titin [laughs]. Or, they think we are from Malta or the Maldives! And because people don't know anything about Moldova, they also don't have a negative picture about Moldovan migrants.

However, in the course of my research, the answer to the simple question of *Where is Moldova?* proved to be highly contested among research participants, especially with regard to the country's place in relation to Europe. As we shall see later, the various answers to this question impact upon migrants' interpretations of Moldova's development path, and upon their collective humanitarian practices.



Figure 4.1: Geographical location of Moldova

According to the latest national statistical report, Moldova has an estimated population of 4.2 million inhabitants, including the approximately 400,000 who live in the de facto Russian-controlled breakaway region of Transnistria (CBS-AXA 2011). The UNDP (2014) estimates Moldova's population, including Transnistria, as smaller, around 3.9 million. Over half of Moldova's population (59%) lives in rural areas, which makes Moldova the country with the lowest rate of urbanisation in Europe (UNDP 2011). The major ethnic groups in Moldova are Moldovans (35%), Ukrainians (25%), Russians (30%) and the Gagauzes, a Turkish ethnic group (5%) (ETF 2010).

In the Soviet era, Moldova's economy was strongly interlocked with the Soviet economic system. Unsurprisingly, after the country's independence in 1991, Moldova witnessed a sharp economic decline, especially in small rural towns and communities that were structurally dependent on a small number of enterprises during Soviet times (Marcu 2014). In the early 1990s, a number of economic reforms, implemented as part of Moldova's complex shift from a closed, centrally planned economy to a more open market economy, were undertaken – such as the mass privatisation of economic concerns, and land reforms in the agricultural sector (Ratzmann 2014). The creation of small private farms provided protection for workers from the now-closed industries. However, these measures have not arrested the deterioration of living conditions for the majority of the population, which still depends largely on subsistence farming (Ratzmann 2014).

Furthermore, the Russian economic crisis in 1998 hit Moldova especially hard, because the largest part of Moldova's exports was sent to Russia (Mungiu-Pippidi and Munteanu 2009). Even today, the country's economy still heavily relies on the Russian and CIS-market. Finding alternative markets is an economic and political necessity for Moldova; so, in November 2014, the country signed a free-trade association agreement with the European Union. Yet, the adoption of EU quality and technical standards of agricultural products poses a hurdle for Moldova, and the country's economic growth remains mainly based on the consumption of foreign goods, purchased with migrants' remittances. The IMF (2013) even reports that the economic situation has not improved in the last four years, due to the recession in the wider Euro zone, further hampering Moldova's small and weak economy. Especially the health, education and social protection systems have suffered from the recent economic troubles, which resulted in a decrease of living conditions for the already most vulnerable groups, such as disabled people or the elderly (World Bank 2014). In sum, Moldova's economy is far from being robust (Expert Group 2014b).



The Republic of Moldova is the poorest country in Europe, with a GDP per capita of 2,037 USD (World Bank 2014). In 1999, nearly half of the Moldovan population lived below the poverty line. In the following years, the country enjoyed steady growth and economic stability, and by 2012 the poverty level for the total population had decreased to a quarter of the population living on less than 2 US dollars a day (IMF 2014). Yet, this was again largely due to the inflows of remittances which underpinned both the macro-economy and many families' livelihoods. At the same time, the disparities between the rural and urban populations had been constantly increasing (IMF 2014)<sup>38</sup>.

A specific feature of Moldova's poverty is the fact that unemployment alone does not provide a full explanation for poverty, suggesting that the wages are often below subsistence level (UNDP 2014). The monthly average wage of 200 Euro is the lowest in Europe (BTI 2013). Considering that the living expenses are comparable to Italy, it is understandable that many Moldovans face difficulties in meeting their daily needs. Below, Angela narrates the challenges her daughter and son-in-law face:

Angela (NGO-worker, 52, Chisinau): My son-in-law is a policeman. He earns a 4000 lei a month (approximately 200 Euros). At the moment, he can't afford to rent a proper flat. So, they live together with his cousin in a tiny room, and they share the kitchen and toilet with other people. I always tell him to go abroad for a year, for instance to Russia, so at least they can save money for a flat. On the long term, I don't know what he can offer her.

Moldova's structural and economic constraints also impede migrant associations' development interventions in the country. The following example illustrates how migrants' development ideas and initiatives can be obstructed by the country's low economic and social development:

Svetlana (factory worker and artist, 55, Munich): The hardship of life decided our activities. We made our first return trip to Moldova in 2008. Ten years after the country hit rock bottom, but the situation was still very depressing. We wanted to start our activities – joint scientific exchange programmes between Germany and Moldova. But as I said, life decided. We realised that we needed to wait with our exchange projects. We needed to help the vulnerable people in the villages first.

Last of all, endemic corruption and bureaucracy remain other major concerns. Despite laws to promote governmental transparency, corruption is prevalent in almost all areas (BTI 2013). The improvement of rules for small and medium enterprises, for instance, comes up against some rent-seeking efforts connected to political parties (Parmentier 2010). Moldova's on-going unfavourable legal framework and investment climate, the administrative hurdles and the poor regulatory environment present barriers for migrants in several regards. For instance, for

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<sup>38</sup> For instance, in 2013, 38% of children from rural areas lived below the poverty line, compared to 13% in urban areas (UNDP 2014).

migrant associations' development interventions in the country, and especially for the creation of NGOs or the opening up of social-businesses. Three migrant leaders intended to create NGOs in Moldova for the implementation of their humanitarian projects, but failed, because of the costly and time-consuming hurdles. Likewise, Moldova's structural deficit obstructs migrants' contemplated return, or their private business investments (Marcu 2014)<sup>39</sup>.

Because of Moldova's low level of economic and social development, the country is the top recipient of EU financial support per capita in the EU-neighbourhood area, with a net total of 465 million Euro, equivalent to 10% of its GDP (Caritas 2013). The European Union is the most important development partner. Other key partners are Austria, the Bretton Woods institutions, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the USA, and the UN (Caritas 2013). The donor community's emphasis is put on the improvement of institutional capacities, structural adjustment, transitions to liberal market-economies and rapprochement to the EU (2013a). Other large-scale aid-programmes target agricultural reforms, the water and sanitation infrastructure<sup>40</sup>, healthcare shortcomings, social assistance reforms and the educational sector (Caritas 2013; LED 2013; SDC 2014).

While the reform process was painfully slow during the first decade of transition, since the mid-2000s, Moldova has come to be the 'darling' of the EU. On my fieldwork in Brussels, the country was heralded as a 'success story' in implementing its programmes, especially in the fulfilment of its requirements in the EU-Eastern Partnership Programmes that lead to the Association Agreement signed in November 2013 (EU 2013c). However, I argue that the country's reputation in the donor community has lately taken a knock. The 'official' rhetoric of Moldova's frenetic efforts in the progress towards transformation, and the references to Moldova as 'the model student' within the EUs merit-based approach, were still omnipresent in the narratives of participants engaged in the implementation of state policies, for instance in the EU-visa-liberalisation process launched in 2010, or in migration–development policies, as we shall see in Chapter 6. Vice-versa, the migrants' accounts and the estimates of participants working for international aid-agencies or for Moldovan NGOs were of a different tune – one of a growing disappointment with the Government's track record until today. In their view, Moldova's reforms were most progressive in the headlines of local newspapers and websites. Because of their discontentment with the Moldovan government's slow improvements in its economic, social and political reforms, some aid-workers are coming to doubt their engagement

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<sup>39</sup> This is one reason why some return migrants open up their small or medium businesses across the Romanian border, where legal frameworks are more favourable (Marcu 2014).

<sup>40</sup> Only 62% of Moldova's population has access to safe drinking water (UNDP 2014).

in the country. The quote from Pius, an aid-practitioner, exemplifies the growing unease within the international aid community about their engagement in Moldova:

Pius (aid-worker, 42, Chisinau): Moldova has always been poor, ok, but considering the sum of external funding and investment, the situation in this country should be far more improved by now. Sometimes I ask myself: What are we doing here? Is it right to support the education of young people so they can find jobs abroad? Is that really our duty? Maybe it is good to educate them, so they have at least an education when they go abroad, and they might be less exploited.

And Max refers to social inequalities that rose more sharply in Moldova than in any other post-communist country (Munteanu 2000):

Max (aid-worker, 63, Lucerne): In the past, I have worked in several African countries and in the Middle-East, but how can I say this: I find Moldova the most difficult country to work in. Ehm the poverty in the villages, especially the situation of people who don't receive any support from abroad, and the huge wealth-gaps gets to me more here than elsewhere. Maybe it is because I constantly think: Hey, this is Europe!

In conclusion, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Moldova's economy collapsed more severely than was the case in all other former Soviet republics, experiencing a loss of foreign markets, low labour productivity, inflation and an increase in the public deficit (Ratzmann 2014). This occurred despite the country implementing a range of economic reforms in order to meet the challenges posed by transition, especially in the areas of de-politisation of state institutions, and in combatting endemic corruption (EU 2013b). Moreover, since 2009, the global economic crisis has had negative effects on the country's small and open economy, highly vulnerable to external economic stress (UNDP 2014). Keeping in mind that a number of conditionalities need to be met in order for migrants' development engagements to positively impact on transformation in Moldova, I argue that migration-development programmes should not divert the attention of the government and external development actors from the country's institutional and structural deficits (cf. Skeldon 2008). As we shall see later, the current trend of placing the responsibilities for development firmly on migrants not only obstructs Moldova's development process but also migrants' contribution to Moldova's transformation.

In the next subsection, I document a second important factor that sets Moldova's post-communist transition apart from other countries of the former USSR, namely the socio-political division of the country, commonly referred to as the 'Moldova's identity dilemma'.



Figure 4.2: Moldova – a land full of contrasts

#### 4.1.2 Moldova's search for identity

##### 4.1.2.1 Multiple development orientations

The Republic of Moldova is a post-Communist country with distinctive regional divisions (King 2010). As a classic borderland, it has been moved back and forth between Russia and Romania in the past – while the western part of Moldova belonged several times to Romania, the East of the country always remained a part of Russia. In contrast to other CIS countries, Moldova had never been an independent state prior to the USSR. In 1991, at the beginning of the transition period, the existence of an ethnic or civic Moldovan nation was hotly disputed (King 2001). The dominant elite factions favoured 'reunification' with Romania and denied the existence of a separate Moldovan nation. The debate over the formation of a nation-state absorbed a lot of political energies and resulted in considerable polarisation of the population. Even today, the 'Moldovan identity' remains unsettled, and the country exists as "a strange twilight – politically

independent but culturally and socially tied to its Romanian and Russian neighbours” (Katchanovski 2004: 12). In Mihail’s words:

Mihail (entrepreneur, 55, Bologna): I don’t think we have a national identity, because there isn’t really a Moldovan nation. We are a population, not a nation, and this population is divided. It will be a very long process before we achieve the status of a nation with a common national identity.

Migrant leaders who were fighting for the reunification with Romania in the early 1990s, chiefly intellectuals, frequently used the allegory of Moldova as a branch of the ‘Romanian tree’ that had been violently cut-off by the Russians. For them, the Republic of Moldova is an uprooted population from Romania – an abstract political concept. Or, a nation that simply does not exist. As Dima explained:

(Dima, 47, taxi-driver, Paris): Moldova doesn’t exist. There are no Moldovan parties and there is no Moldovan politics – only geopolitics.

The issue of Moldova’s identity-building in relation to the Romanian identity is too complex to explore in depth<sup>41</sup>. Instead, I would like to address how the young country’s struggle for identity results in a strong socio-political division of the country, obstructing current reforms.

Moldova is administratively and socio-politically divided into three parts: the Romanian-speaking main part of Moldova<sup>42</sup>, the semi-autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia (GagauzYeri) in the South<sup>43</sup>, and the non-recognised independent territory of the Transdnistrie region (also called Transnistria), which is largely populated by ethnic Russians and Ukrainians (see Figure 4.1). The severity of Moldova’s economic downturn after its independence was strongly interlinked with the secession in 1992 of Transnistria, where most of the country’s industrial capacity was situated during Soviet times. Transnistria tried to secede from Moldova in 1991, as it did not want to belong to an independent nation of Moldova or to Romania. The political conflict became violent in 1992, when the Transdnistriean secessionists, supported by Russian troops, declared their region independent from Moldova. The separation of the province meant that the Chisinau government lost control over the country’s Eastern border, as well as its main energy and industrial production. Though the territory still belongs officially to the Republic of Moldova, some authors consider Transnistria already as a Russian protectorate, because of the heavy presence of Russian soldiers, and the fact that 75% of the budget derives

<sup>41</sup> For an overview of this highly politicised issue see Heintz 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Moldova’s official language changed from Moldovan to Romanian in 2013. Russian is the official language in Gagauzia and Transnistria.

<sup>43</sup> Semi-autonomous means that the Gagauz have for instance their own president (Başkan), police force and education system.

directly from Russian subsidies (Expert-Group 2014a). Despite numerous rounds of talks, coordinated by the OSCE and regional neighbours, Transnistria remains to this day a de facto non-recognised region by the international community.

Besides its status as a 'frozen conflict zone', Transnistria is also commonly known as the 'Soviet-Disneyland', the 'Open-air Lenin museum' or as "a black hole of the global economy, a hotspot of organized crime, trafficking and bootlegging" (Protsyk 2010: 36). Indeed, it is a geographical site of commemoration and symbolic representation of communism, ensconced in nostalgia. Tiraspol, the capital of the breakaway Republic, for instance, is the only place in Europe that still uses the hammer and sickle on its flag. On my trips into the territory I have noticed hardly any traffic on the colossal boulevards – framed by monumental Soviet architecture designed by party planners for a busy town. The oversized infrastructure reminded me of an empty façade in a historical play. My personal impression of emptiness has a good reason. More than half of Transnistria's population of approximately 800,000 has already left the small strip of land, mostly for the Ukraine, Russia or the Middle East (UNDP 2014). Given the high intensity of emigration, some participants ironically stressed that at some point migration will solve the 'frozen conflict', because sooner or later nobody will be left in the territory. However, during my fieldwork in 2013, tensions between Moldova, Russia and Transnistria were building up, and they reached a new peak in 2014. With the Russian annexion of Crimea in 2014, and with the on-going crisis in the Ukraine, Moldova feels Russia's doctrine of enlarging its territory towards the West to be stronger than ever.

A second obstacle to a 'united' Moldovan development transition is the tendency of Gagauzia to get closer to Russia. The Gagauz are christianised Turks, and they migrated to Moldova in the 19th century with the aid of the Russians, in order to avoid religiously motivated persecution by the Ottoman Empire. Since then, Gagauzia, demonstrates a strong pro-Russian political orientation (Katchanovski 2004). Two years ago, for instance, the Gagauzian assembly voted to join Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan in the Eurasian Economic Union (EurasiaNet.org 2014). Like Transnistria, Gagauzia is filled with Soviet relicts and nostalgic slogans, making it impossible to escape the reminiscences of the past. Out of a total population of approximately 160,000 inhabitants, an estimated 80% of the economically active population works abroad, predominantly in Turkey, Russia and the Ukraine (Parmentier 2010). Interestingly, when I visited development projects carried out by migrants in Gagauzia, some research participants were referring to social institutions, e.g. children's homes or infrastructure projects, as being supported by locals living in Transnistria. The participants' accounts of collective donations by Gagauz living in Transnistria as 'coming from abroad' is a good illustration of the complex and unsettled issue of Moldova's state territory. In these cases, I suggest opting for Pichler's (2009)

approach of *transterritoriality*, respectively of 'trans-territorial practices', which captures more adequately these forms of collective aid-giving, than the concept of *transnational practices*. The examples of Moldovans living in Transnistria and their support considered as 'coming from abroad' illustrates well the added complexity of these two territories on the compound understanding of *Moldovanness*. In the words of Antonia, a Gagauze:

Antonia (chairwoman of a local NGO, 58, Comrat): I can't say that I am Moldovan, but I would like to live in an independent Republic of Moldova. Yes. And why not a future EU-membership? But please without the help of Romania. I can't support this idea. I don't want us to belong to Romania, because we culturally rely on Turkey and Russia.

With the uncertain developments in neighbouring Ukraine, it is most likely that ambiguities about the Russian-speaking entities in and around Moldova will remain, and that these two regions, determined to follow the opposite direction of the official 'pro-European transformation path', will continue to absorb a considerable amount of political energies in Moldova's capital.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Gellner, who stresses that "nationalism is primarily a political principle that holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (1983: 1). In these terms, "the unsettled nature of the essentials of nationalism is at the crux of the Moldovan dilemma" (Katchanovski 2004: 32). The country remains a nation divided, and its search for identity continues to delay the much-needed social, political and economic reforms.

In the next subsection, I illustrate how Moldova's ongoing struggle for socio-political identity also slows down the development of a coherent structural and ideological engagement with its emigrants, and the creation of mechanisms to enhance migrant associations' capacities as development actors.



Figure 4.3: Emptiness and reminiscences of the past

#### 4.1.2.2 Moldova's fragile political equilibrium: emigrant engagement towards a contested notion of 'home country'

A crucial moment for Moldova's chosen transformation path towards the European Union and for its engagement with Moldovan citizens living in Western Europe has been the 'Twitter-Revolution' in November 2009. After disputed parliamentary elections and civil unrest in the capital, the Communist Party, in power since 2001, was replaced by a new coalition government, the Alliance for European Integration (AEI), a four-party coalition.

Migrant leaders frequently highlighted that migrants in Western and Southern Europe were a key vehicle in this political turnaround. They played a crucial role in mobilising votes for the 'Alliance', and in initiating public anti-government protests across Western Europe, including in the cities under study: Geneva, London, Bologna, Rome and Paris. The finding that migrants considerably contributed to the electoral outcomes by means of political transnationalism, such as distant voting and associational political activism, supports a quantitative study by Mahmoud and his colleagues (2013), in which the authors conclude that migrants in Western Europe were



a decisive factor in overthrowing the last ruling Communist government in Europe in 2009. Yet, as a result of the country's socio-political division, Moldova's political equilibrium remains fragile. My fieldwork in Moldova took place in spring 2013, at a politically sensitive time, when the pro-European government in Chisinau had collapsed due to internal disputes. The May 2013 public opinion poll, with 39% support for the Communists, suggested that the opposition needs only to be patient to turn the country's direction again towards 'Eurasia' (CIVIS/IPP 2014). Additionally, the last parliamentary elections in November 2014 were tightly won by the Pro-Western parties. The Socialists, seeking ties with Russia and the Russian-led Customs Union, however, stay the strongest party in the country (Expert Group 2014b). Although the political deadlock during my stay in Moldova could be solved, I argue that the country's political instability slows down the building-up of policies designed to engage with emigrants and to support and encourage their development projects. Below, Esperanta explains the lack of planning reliability in the creation of new migration–development programmes:

Esperanta (aid-worker, 35, Chisinau): At the moment, we are blocked with our projects, because nobody in the government feels responsible for us anymore. Nobody knows what will happen if we have early governmental elections, and certainly not if the Communists come back into power. No one will tell you what they will do, let's say in three months, because you can't predict or plan anything in this country.

Esperanta refers to the fact that recent emigration policies, for instance the newly created Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora of the State Chancellery (BRD), aimed at 'accessing' and 'mobilising' migrants, and migration–development programmes carried out by international aid-agencies within the framework of the EU-Mobility Partnership Programme, are financed by Western development institutions (e.g. EU 2013a). In 2012, the 'Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora' replaced the 'Bureau for Interethnic Relations' (BRI), chiefly oriented towards the migrant community east of Moldova, which until then was the government's formal body for emigrant engagement. Although the BRI is still functional, the development industry's focus of interest and funding is nowadays put on the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora<sup>44</sup>. According to research participants, a change in the country's direction towards the East would have resulted in the closing down of the Bureau or in a considerable re-organisation, and the Bureau for Interethnic Relations would have gained in importance. Igor explains the practical implications of the fragile political equilibrium in 2013:

Igor (programme manager, 39, Chisinau): If we are lucky, we will still be planning in a year. But if the political direction changes, we are not planning anymore, because there will be again less funding and less interest in migrants living west of Moldova. So, we just don't know.

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<sup>44</sup> I will henceforth refer to the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora simply as the Bureau.

In general, I have observed that the increasing enthusiasm with which state institutions have engaged with Moldova's absentees since 2009 is already somewhat dwindling. One reason for their early disenchantment is that the newly-built foundations for emigrant engagement are bound to give way at any time in Moldova's unpredictable political climate. The country's political instability can provoke abrupt changes of official diaspora policies, according to the swings of directions of the declared transformation path, either towards the 'East' or the 'West', and consequently on the migrants 'in sight', either living east or west of the country. For this reason, the majority of development participants involved in the building-up of state-led policies for emigrant engagement remain hesitant in their long-term strategic planning.

Furthermore, several authors maintain that, in order to build stronger and more sustainable links between migrant communities abroad and their 'homeland', a coherent state identity is an advantage (e.g. Collyer 2013). As I have highlighted earlier, the degree to which this identity resonates for Moldovans is quite critical. I argue, therefore, that Moldova's socio-political division of the country not only delays the country's social and economic development, but it also negatively impacts upon efforts to incite migrants around a coherent 'notion of homeland', and upon the inclusion of migrants' development efforts in formal 'nation-led' transformation programmes. Moreover, the changing orientations in the government's socio-political interests also impact on the migrants' and aid-organisations' trust in the government. Given that migrants' collective activities are most likely to succeed if trust is shared by migrants, aid-organisations and state institutions, the establishment of partnerships between the state and migrants is somewhat troubled, and migrants' aspirations to contribute to Moldova as their homeland is impaired. These considerations have not yet been taken into account in the academic literature, nor in consultancy reports on programmes aiming to leverage the migrant associations' engagement for Moldova's development (e.g. IASCI/Nexus 2014).

Lastly, in my view, politics is ideally not only about interests but also about the need for people to identify with a common project. I think it is precisely the lack of an identification with a 'common Moldovan project' that obstructs the institutional fostering of ties between migrants and their home country. A national narrative or ideology is a positive determinant for migrants' attachment to their home country that can encourage the creation of positive synergies between migrants and state institutions (e.g. Collyer 2013). The fluid definition of *what Moldova exactly is* and the missing common 'Moldovan project' obstructs migrants' ideological integration into a cohesive national narrative of Moldova. Unfortunately, I deem both the development industry and the emigrants badly equipped to deliver from the outside a common Moldovan national narrative. Moreover, disputes over *territorialities* and over *how many official*

*cultural and linguistic regions there actually exist* in this multicultural country further hamper an incorporation of emigrants into an additional symbolic Moldovan region. Such a symbolic Moldovan migrant region could strengthen emotional ties between the country and its citizens abroad. Like, for instance in the Swiss case, where the emigrant community is officially referred to as the 'Fifth Switzerland', in addition to the other four main linguistic and cultural regions: German, French, Italian and Romansh. In all these respects, bearing in mind that Moldova's survival is guaranteed to a large extent by external funding, either by remittances or foreign aid, and as long as the money flows towards Moldova, the government might actually not feel the need to define a 'common Moldovan project', nor to include its absentees into a common national narrative. Despite (or precisely because) of the fact that the poor Republic of Moldova will not be transformed through remittances alone, the current model 'of surviving', backed up by remittances, works perfectly well for the elites.

I now turn to the third reason for Moldova's difficult transition, namely the country's large-scale outmigration. I briefly illustrate how the substantial emigration manifests itself in today's Moldova and how it affects the country's entire social fabric.



Figure 4.4: Moldova's struggle for identity

#### 4.1.3 Migration as an integral part of development transition

In this section, I take up the theoretical discussion on migration as an integral part of Moldova's development transition outlined in Chapter 2, and I sketch the role of Moldovan emigration in the country's transformative societal change. Second, I discuss my findings on the impact of migration on the meso level – the migrant associations and aid-agencies active in the social field of Moldova. As there is to my knowledge no qualitative in-depth study on this issue in the Moldovan case, I primarily draw my analysis from the empirical data collected in Moldova. A more detailed account of the country's main emigration characteristics will be provided in the next chapter.

##### *4.1.3.1 The role of emigration in today's Moldova*

East-West migration flows are intrinsically linked with the post-communist political and economic transformations in Eastern Europe (Engbersen et al. 2010). This also applies to Moldova, where migration is a key factor of demographic transformation and social change. The quote below from Diana, a social worker in a rural village, illustrates the intensity of Moldova's post-1991 emigration:

Diana (social worker, 46, Șipca): I give you an example of our reality here: in my niece's class, there are eighteen children, and the parents of sixteen children work in Italy, Spain, France, Romania, the Ukraine and Russia. Ten children live with their grandparents, two with their elder siblings and the others are either with their fathers or their mothers, depending on who is still around.

The Russian financial crisis in 1998 marked the migration peak. As a result of the economic hardship a large fraction of the population migrated abroad in pursuit of better work and wealth opportunities (Mosneaga 2012). Although the country experienced one of the most significant emigrations proportionally to its total population in Europe, figures of the number of Moldovan migrants are extremely vague<sup>45</sup>. It is estimated that half of the economically active population has already left the country, or one third of the total population (see Chapter 1). This means that the number of Moldovans working and living abroad is between 800,000 and around 1.4 million (Mahmoud et al. 2013). Numerous surveys indicate that Moldova's emigrant population is not expected to decrease. To the contrary, a survey of residents in eleven CIS-states concludes that 35% of the remaining Moldovans is planning to migrate abroad (Gallup 2013). Moldova scored

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<sup>45</sup> Statistical data on Moldovan emigrants are not only problematic because many Moldovan migrants use their Romanian passports abroad, but also because a registration at the embassy is not compulsory, and third, Moldova has only limited control over its Eastern borders because of the unresolved conflict with Transnistria.

highest among the countries under study<sup>46</sup>. The results of other studies are even more alarming. A UNICEF survey (2013), for instance, shows that up to 90% of the high-school students want to emigrate after completing their education. Furthermore, the UNFPA (2012) estimates that within the period 2012-2050 the population aged 60 and above will increase by 20%, while simultaneously the total population will decrease by another 450,000 individuals, due to the shortfall of birth rate and continuing emigration. The exodus of labour force, mainly because of low salaries, is particularly evident in rural areas. A key-informant, member of the 'National Federation of Employers in Agriculture and Food Industry' stated:

Vitali (engineer and unionist, 34, Balti): In eight years, we will find ourselves in a situation with no qualified workers in most regions of Moldova.

According to a UNICEF study (2013), the absence of agricultural workers is also the main reason for a growth of child labour since 2008. This has been confirmed by research participants working in the educational sector who reported that children increasingly replace the missing workers as cheap agricultural day labourers. Furthermore, brain- and skills-drain affect both the public and the private sector. The number of Moldovans with an academic background, for example, has dropped from a total of 30,000 in the early 1990s to less than 2,500 in 2007 (ASM 2009).

More than two million people in Moldova live in households that receive remittances (IOM 2012a). For half of these households, the amount of received remittances represents at least 70% of their income (Görlich and Trebesch 2008). The remittances are mainly used for daily consumption, such as food, clothes, medicine and the education of children (48%), or directed to investments in buildings (Piracha and Saraogi 2012). As a consequence of the substantial emigration of Moldova's population, remittances have become the major source of external finance in Moldova – about eight times as high as foreign direct investment, which makes the country one of the world's top remittances recipients (see Chapter 1).

To conclude this brief summary, just as across Western Europe the arrival of immigrants has caused various political and social challenges, notably in terms of social cohesion, so too the departure of a significant number of Moldovans has triggered – in a reverse sense – significant challenges for the social fabric of the entire country. This 'reversed logic', compared to immigration nations, is also highly evident on a practical day-to-day basis, for instance in documents that were handed out to me by employees of social institutions or schools assisted by migrant organisations in Moldova. While in immigration nations documents list, for instance,

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<sup>46</sup> Other countries under study were Armenia, Georgia, Russia and the Ukraine.

*from where* beneficiaries of social schemes or parents of pupils originate, the lists in Moldova show *where to* beneficiaries have migrated after receiving assistance, and *in which countries* the parents of pupils live.

#### 4.1.3.2 *Emigration and development projects*

On my earlier trips to the Republic of Moldova, mainstream development agencies remained always ambivalent about the phenomenon of mass emigration, which I referred to in Chapter 1 as the ‘omnipresence of absence’. The first objective of my fieldwork in Moldova was, therefore, to investigate whether and how the aid workers’ perceptions and responses to the social and economic challenges of Moldova’s emigration had changed in the last few years. While my previous impression of the ‘omnipresence of absence’ was strongly confirmed, I have noticed a considerable shift in the responses of aid-practitioners to the omnipresent social reality of emigration – from disregard to openly faulting migration for all sorts of circumstances: development mismanagement, social and moral degradation, the weak economic situation, and so on. I see one reason for this change in the fact that, in the meantime, emigration impinges on every political, social and economic sphere of the country, including on the aid-practitioners’ daily work. Dora describes the implications of Moldova’s significant out-migration on her work:

Dora (consultant, 42, Chisinau): You can’t design and implement projects focusing on one pillar of the society anymore, for instance on the youth, because statistically around 8 out of 10 of these young people will leave the country after university. So, we need to adjust the architecture of our projects, and we ehm need to design multi-generational projects, otherwise there is no continuity in our work.

Other development IOs and NGOs and migrant associations have adapted their programmes and projects to the demographic change caused by migration. A volunteer network of teenagers, for instance, whose members I met in Transnistria, is a striking example of a micro ‘win-win-win’ situation for teenagers, beneficiaries and migrants alike. It is somewhat different from the well-known classical macro ‘triple win’ situations for migrants, countries of origin and destination countries, commonly cited in the literature on the migration–development nexus (e.g. Newland 2010b):

Marta (39, chairwoman of an NGO, Tiraspol): We don’t have an infrastructure for children or teenagers here, so we ehm created this volunteer network for teenagers, and we ehm, train them and give them meaningful occupations. For instance, they put on theatre for the remaining children in the villages, or they help the elderly. Their parents all live abroad, and they are happy to know that their children don’t just hang around while they are not here. And the children and elderly in the village are happy, too, because they are entertained or helped. And the teenagers like our training and the certificates they get.

As we saw earlier in the example of a village school class, migration also heavily affects the country's educational system. In the year 2012, more than 20,000 pupils left the education system, either to emigrate with their parents or for family reunification (UNDP 2014). Below, Anastasia, chair of a migrant association, explains how migration affected her project in the education field:

Anastasia (tour guide and translator, 46, Berlin): Last year, we visited the school we were supporting. All our sponsored equipment was still there: tables, books, everything. But there were few pupils and staff around. The director was happy to show us that nothing has been stolen. But it was so depressing to see that he was sitting there almost on his own, and that the material we financed was not used. So, how can I say this, the project didn't go well, because of the demographic catastrophe happening in this village.

While accompanying aid-workers and migrants to their project-visits in different parts of Moldova, one journey took us to a vocational school, in the far South of the country that is jointly supported by an international NGO and a migrant association. The director of the school, an elderly woman, guided us through the large, cold and mostly empty buildings. Later, while sitting behind her 'directorial desk' in a fur coat, she described to us the difficulties her school is facing; for instance, three young teachers had just recently left for African countries, because of the low salaries and the poor infrastructure in the area. Also, she had to reduce the curriculum of the sewing class, because the only remaining nearby Italian employer (a textile factory of a luxury fashion label) needs only one sewing-style. Given that the substantial emigration considerably challenges the country's demography, it is not a surprise that every social development project that I have visited, including interventions implemented by migrant associations, dealt directly or indirectly with the social phenomenon of migration:

- § in the choice of their activities, labelled as 'mitigating the negative impact of emigration', for instance by means of programmes addressed to 'children or elderly left behind', or by new 'Know before you go' services for potential migrants (see Figure 4.5)<sup>47</sup>;
- § in the high fluctuation or frequent loss of local staff or 'reliable counter-partners', reported by chairs of migrant associations and aid workers;

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<sup>47</sup> These programmes illustrate the shift from the development industry's sedentary bias to an acknowledgement of migration in the Moldovan case, discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. Bakewell 2007).

§ or by addressing vulnerable groups, especially young families in rural villages, who do not receive remittances from family members abroad and depend on financial support (e.g. Caritas 2013);

Because of the social effects of migration and the high number of 'potential migrants', a distinction between programmes labelled as 'migration–development programmes' and other social development projects carried out in the social field became in the course of my research often redundant.



Figure 4.5: 'Keep my world together!': Information campaign for parents planning to move abroad (TdH 2014)

To conclude, aid-practitioners working in Moldova, and not directly involved in migration–development programmes, view Moldova's large-scale emigration as increasingly problematic for the country's socio-political and economic development. The common bottom line of their narratives is what Augé describes as the 'black version of mobility': social and economic



instability (2012: 30). Even if nowadays the development industry widely recognises emigration as a constitutive fact of Moldovan life, and some agencies have adapted their programmes, Moldova's large-scale emigration remains a highly controversial issue in the headquarters of international development agencies and state institutions<sup>48</sup>. Although migration-induced social change in sending countries and regions tends to be more far-reaching than in receiving societies (Portes 2010), my main point of critique of the approach of the Moldovan government and its development partners to migration-development is the lack of understanding and emphasis on the amplitude of emigration, and the resulting scale of the social impact on the country's development. Reflecting on this, in order for migrants' collective social remittances to effect positive transformations in Moldova, more support for communities and authorities in mitigating the consequences of the large-scale migration should be provided; for instance, by setting up support structures for schools or communities. This would also benefit migrant associations' capacity to overcome structural constraints in their development projects or to potentially reshape structures. These remarks on Moldova's economic, social and political transformation form the starting-point for my investigation of migrants' views on their home country's development transition. With Kearney's statement that "the causes and consequences of continued internal as well as international migration lie at the heart of the contemporary development problems" (1986: 331), I now assess migrants' opinions on Moldova's development challenges.

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<sup>48</sup> With the exception of migrants' remittances as much-needed financial support on the individual and national level. Overall, the discomfort with emigration was most persistent in the headquarters of relevant aid-agencies outside Moldova (e.g. Brussels, Geneva).

#### 4.2 Stagnation and Degradation: Migrants' Visions and Revisions of Moldova's Development Transformation

There exists a number of regular surveys conducted by policy institutes on how residents of ex-soviet countries view the collapse of the Soviet Union (e.g. Gallup 2013). Yet, to my knowledge, little attention has been paid to the migrants' perception from post-communist societies on their home-countries' development transition in policy surveys or in the anthropological and sociological literature strand of post-socialist transformation. That being said, I now present my findings on migrants' perception of their home-country's development transformation from a subjective experience viewpoint. Further, in line with the conceptual framework, I draw on Verdery's (1999) understanding of the dissolution of the Soviet Union as a critical event viewed as refractions generated by the intersection of global/local processes, in which Moldovan citizens, living in or outside the country, are implicated in the transformation that takes place. With the assumption that migrants' perception of Moldova's post-communist reality underpins their collective transnational charity practices and their aid-relationship patterns with state or

development actors, I emphasise those categories which I deem particularly relevant for further investigating the aid-relationship between migrant associations and state or development actors in the chapters that follow.

#### 4.2.1 Degradation, the culture of distrust and the 'immature' Moldovan society

##### *4.2.1.1 Migrants' visions of Moldova's transformation*

The migrants' narratives on their home country's current situation are more or less consistent with the results of the latest opinion poll conducted by the Centre for Sociological, Political and Psychological Analysis (CIVIS) and the Institute of Public Policy (IPP). In this poll, 85% of the respondents are unhappy with government policies, especially in the fields of employment and salaries (95%), pensions (90%), living standards (88%) and corruption (87%) (CIVIS/IPP 2014). Consistent with this opinion poll, all migrants in my sample strongly expressed their discontent with the political life in the country. They narrated that the government, the judiciary and the business sector are too closely connected via personal loyalties, and that politicians are too preoccupied with internal political disputes, instead of promoting the country's further long-waiting reforms. As Diana told me:

Diana (care-worker, 45, Paris): Moldova after 1991 was like a book with white pages, and how did we fill these white pages? With nothing. We have achieved nothing. Look at the Baltic States, they also used to be part of the Soviet Union, but they have achieved something. Their politicians have done something for their people. Our politicians have done nothing for us. Nothing.

Along with migrants' frustration of originating from a country with no or few substantial accomplishments since its independence, compared to other former USSR republics, anger over Moldova's wide social inequalities, considered a result of the kleptocratic political system, proved to be another core issue. As Vitali recalled sadly:

Vitali (priest, 48, Paris): This summer, we wanted to go on a family holiday to Moldova. And as every year, our association collected together with another association toys for children, clothes and other material for vulnerable people in the villages. But this year, after three days I told my wife: let's leave. I could not handle the misery anymore. It was too sad to see how people become greedy and unfriendly because of all the misery. I can't see why these people need to live like that, except of corruption and mismanagement. Nothing has been done to change the situation. Nothing. So, ehm this year, I could not bear it any longer, and we spent the rest of our holidays in Romania. It was beautiful [smiles sadly].

Another finding consistent with the opinion poll conducted by CIVIS/IPP (2014) is that the majority of migrants consider that the economic situation of the country has worsened compared to the previous four years. Dana noted in this regard:

Dana (social worker, 46, Rome): Honestly, for my family back home the situation is worse than four years ago. The inflation and the prices are the problem. When I come back from Italy, I always complain how expensive the supermarkets here are...tomatoes, petrol, a lot of things are more expensive than in Europe. I don't know how people survive without families abroad.

All in all, fundamental divergences between the migrants' estimates on their home country's development transition and the above-mentioned positive official policy discourse on Moldova's transformation achievements were found. Even if some migrants recognise the government's latest efforts in undertaking reforms, their enthusiasm about the political change in 2009 has vanished, and they significantly recast their optimistic expectations of the country's future development, since in their opinion, a political change did not occur, nor did it lead to the expected 'positive transformative change'. Natasha expresses her frustration over the government's promised 'new path', by referring to migrants' collective efforts undertaken in the 'Twitter-revolution' in the year 2009:

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): We considerably influenced the political change in 2009, but there has been no change among the political elites so far. The only change I can see is that they all put their small EU-flags next to their office computers, but they still confuse politics with their private businesses.

Whilst the dissatisfaction with the Moldovan government is negatively related to the perception of the EU by Moldovan citizens living in the country (CIVIS/IPP 2014), the majority of migrants do not associate their frustration about the government with the EU or other Western development partners. On the contrary, their discontentment with the government's track record up to now positively enforces their identification with and their intention to approach the EU. Moreover, the geopolitical East-West divide is not significant within the migrant civil society in the countries under study. This finding is consistent with the latest voting polls of 2014, showing that the migrant community in Western and Southern Europe voted 92% for the pro-European party, while in the country itself it was 50% (Expert Group 2014b). It also echoes Marcu's (2014) observation that the migration experience in EU-countries enhances Moldovans' 'pro-European orientation', and their sense of belonging to Europe. Conversely, a strong promotion of 'the Slavic choice' is central to the organisation of the Moldovan migrant community in Russia (Schwartz 2007). This once more illustrates that the 'diaspora forming' is quite diverse in terms of its political stance towards Moldova, which addresses the very essence of the 'Moldovan national identity', and confirms the fact that migrant civil society organisations

and initiatives can be organised along different, often conflicting principles (see Chapter 2). Below, Vasili shares his viewpoint on the nearly consistent conception of transformation towards a 'European choice' within the migrant community in the countries under study:

Vasili (physicist, 39, Paris): The identity cleavage plays a less important role in the diaspora than in Moldova. I think that there is something like a common identity among migrants. Back home there exists no common identity, but among the migrants, I think, yes. Of course, there are exceptions. But, ehm in Moldova, it's very complicated at the moment to achieve a shared common identity that suits both camps.

Some migrants also cynically stressed that, regardless the outcomes of official EU-adhesion politics, Moldovan citizens will enter the EU anyhow through the 'back door', by means of acquisition of Romanian citizenship<sup>49</sup>. Yet, even if the 'pro-Russian' versus the 'pro-Western' orientation within the migrant community under study is not significant, different visions of Moldova's future still exist; either as an independent Republic (as a member, or non-member of the EU) or as a part of Romania. The first group of migrant leaders, chiefly composed of former communists, imagines Moldova's future as a 'neutral' state in Eastern Europe. Svetlana, president of a migrant association in Geneva, belongs to this group:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): I don't want Moldova to become a member of the European Union, and I don't want my country to join the Russian Union. Moldova should remain independent. Right now, I don't see any advantages in all of these EU-agreements. They don't change anything for us. The prices are still rising back home, and we don't depend on the EU. It's the Russians who deliver our gas, and they buy our goods. So, why do we need a membership?

The second group, composed of young migrants and former intellectuals who were fighting for the reunification with Romania in the early 1990s, wish for Moldova to become a full member of the European Union, either as an independent state or as a part of Romania. The following quote by Alina, a young migrant leader, reflects this logic:

Alina (student, 28, Paris): I hope that Moldova will one day become a member of the European Union, because then the country will finally change for better. Then, a hospital will be a hospital, a shop will be shop, and a court will be a court. Nothing more, and nothing less.

In my view, the voices of the one third of highly active migrant leaders supporting a reunification with Romania have not been seriously taken into consideration in the academic literature on Moldovan migration, nor in the development policy discourse (e.g. Cheianu-Andrei 2013; Mosneaga 2012). Also, their standpoint was never openly taken-up by representatives of IOs and state authorities in seminars and workshops addressed to the Moldovan diaspora. Most

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<sup>49</sup> Around 550,000 Moldovans possess a Romanian passport and further 150,000 applications are pending (IOM 2012a).

probably, this is because their ideas about their home-country's future do not fit into the 'official development path' of Moldova as an independent Republic and member of the EU, and consequently, they do not reinforce the "normative assumption about the teleology of development" (cf. Raghuram 2009: 112)<sup>50</sup>. Also, these migrants' aspirations to be reunited with Romania shows that development visions of migrants can be less inscribed in nationalistic thinking than those of governmental authorities and their development partners, who pursue a nation-state approach. The fact that migrants' imaginations of Moldova's future equally capture regional scenarios, beyond the national territory of Moldova, confirms Hörschelmann and Stenning's observation on post-socialist countries more broadly (2008). These authors highlight that new imaginations of place draw on plural histories, and that there is a need for temporal broad-mindedness in research on post-socialist change, which allows appreciation of competing interests with a longer time span than socialism and 'transition'. Because these migrants lost their battle in 1992, their attitudes towards Moldovan state institutions and their development partners are negative, and they prefer to improve the life of vulnerable individuals in Moldova by acting outside the official development establishment.

In conclusion, the main argument brought forward is that migrants' disenchantment with Moldova's difficult and slow development transition and its inefficient political system negatively affects their motivations and aspirations to contribute to the country's formal development by means of their associations. Moreover, as we shall see in Chapter 6, their disappointment with state authorities also negatively influences their expectations on state-led support structures for their transnational engagement. Hence, migrants' unfulfilled hopes for positive change in 2009, and their frustration over the government's lack of political commitment in improving the life of Moldovan citizens is anything but favourable for an optimistic outlook of migrants' engagement in state-led development.

#### *4.2.1.2 Degradation and distrust*

The majority of migrants regards Moldova's transition path not as a fast-forward track to positive change, but rather as a slippery slope of stagnation or even as degradation. In their opinion, some sectors, such as the outdated educational sector, is degrading in its quality because of corruption. This results in the creation of what some migrant leaders called a 'lost generation', characterised by a lack of values and of a comprehensive education, and instead motivated only to get anything for money. Migrants also referred to degradation in relation to

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<sup>50</sup> This also applies to pro-Russian migrant associations in CIS-countries, who are left out in the current official Moldovan migration–development debate.

the phenomenon of mass emigration. Some migrant leaders consider emigration as deteriorating the already non-favourable situation in most parts of the country, such as the emptying out of entire villages. In this context, all migrants highlighted the lack of political will to tackle the social and demographic challenges caused by emigration. This was expressed in each interview. Susanna succinctly summarised migrants' disappointment with domestic politics:

Susanna (au-pair, 28, Aarau): People were so hopeful in 2009 that something will change, but now everybody is disappointed. When I watch the news, it is like a thriller. Politicians are coming and going, and they don't do anything. There are villages where almost everybody has left for Italy. These people are working hard, because they want their families to have a future. But if you work hard in Moldova, it's not appreciated. It doesn't bring you any further.

In general, migrants regard Moldovan emigration as a necessary part of the transition, and some think it will even benefit the country in the long term. But, for the time being, the dominant view is that it chiefly allows elites to preserve their positions of privilege and to consolidate the existing class structure, rather than initiating positive transformative change. Thereby, migrant leaders commonly expressed their anger about the state's estimates on the size of the Moldovan emigrant population, which they deem much more substantial than the official statistics. In their view, the state authorities do not want to reveal the exact number of emigrants, because it would show that they failed in their efforts to provide positive change in Moldova<sup>51</sup>. Furthermore, the lack of political will to improve the country's situation was often underlined with examples of a missing recognition of Moldova's own human resources. These examples pointed out that prestige objects in Chisinau, such as the airport, or the 'mallDova' (a shopping centre), have been entirely built by Turkish workers, or that the main roads in Moldova are under construction by Italian workers, while Moldovans need to leave the country to work on construction sites in Italy or Israel. Migrants see a further reason for the political disinterest in providing public work opportunities to Moldovan citizens in the 'culture of distrust' (Sztompka 1996) – a Soviet cultural legacy, that undermines migrants' hopes of professional achievement in their home-country:

Kiril (trainee in a consultancy firm, 28, Geneva): If somebody has a good idea, another person with more money and power can stop you. That's why it is so difficult to realise your own ideas in Moldova. There is still a lot of communist thinking. For instance, you should not be better than others! And there is a lot of jealousy. If your neighbour has a bigger house here, people think ok,

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<sup>51</sup> These migrant leaders were often referring to the latest Civis/IASCI Report (2014) that quantifies the number of Moldovan migrants living in Italy at only 72,000. Indeed, this seems unrealistic, compared to other estimates of 600,000 (e.g. Mosneaga 2012).

so what. But in Moldova the motto is, if the neighbour's house is bigger than mine, I need to have a bigger house, too, even if the difference in height is one brick.

Sztompka (1996) claims, in the case of Poland, that many barriers on the road towards Western-style democracy are due to the deficiency of cultural resources, such as recognition of personal achievements or trust. The just-mentioned 'culture of distrust' pervades Moldovan society at all levels of social life. Especially the migrant leaders who had no other choice than to leave Moldova around the Russian crisis in the late 1990s, view the Moldovan authorities with a particular distrust. In their opinion, 'Moldova is a disaster'; or as Dima, a former senior manager of the national border guard, aptly describes their standpoints<sup>52</sup>:

Dima (taxi-driver, 47, Paris): I am a well-informed optimist, and that makes me a pessimist. Believe me, things will remain the same. There will be no change.

For these migrants, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the following years were a time of disillusion, and they feel particularly abandoned by the state. This was often expressed in the allegory of having needed to leave the 'Moldovan house', similar to Bachelar's (1981) metaphor of the 'house of childhood'. Like the house of childhood, these participants described the 'Moldovan house' as providing insufficient shelter and protection. It does not stand as a shelter in relation to the journey and the path, which seems insecure. This is expressed as a root cause of the inferiority complex of many Moldovans, regardless of where they live:

Alina (care-worker, 52, Novellara): Moldova is like, ehm, an empty and abandoned house. It's full of dust and moisture, because nobody takes care of it. That's why I needed to leave. I never wanted to abandon my homeland. But there was no other choice.

The migrants' impressions of having been abandoned by the state in the past results in a complete rejection of any relationship-building with state and development institutions. Moreover, their bad memory of Moldova's overall condition at the time of their departure around the Russian crisis, makes them generally pessimistic about their own role in initiating transformative change in Moldova:

Dragomir (construction worker, 48, Paris): If we needed to leave Moldova because the state didn't offer us anything in the past, then it is not logical that all of the sudden it cares about us, and that we should be patriotic like all these billboards tell us to be, and to send our money back. This is hypocritical. When a state ehm, gives something it will also receive something. If the state doesn't

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<sup>52</sup> I am aware of the fact that the most pronounced negative images of desperation and degradation in Moldova might also be personal justifications of some participants' decision to migrate, especially of those who's situation abroad is extremely difficult.



care about us, and we need to leave, then it can't expect unilaterally that we will send our money back. This is a little bit crazy.

For these reasons, I think it is crucial to take into account the economic, political and social situation of Eastern European societies at the time-point of migrants' departure in the aftermath of the Soviet era. It influences how migrants look back at their home country, their trust in state institutions and their aspirations to become part of formal development policies. Our attention should not be reduced to the critical moment of the dissolution of the USSR. This standpoint is still somewhat neglected in the broader academic literature on the Eastern European migration–development nexus.

In sum, the examples of specific events, such as the hardship of the Russian financial crisis in 1998, or the relative deprivation after the 'revolutionary elation' in 2009, show that Moldovan migrants' culture of distrust is not only a legacy of socialism. This finding endorses Sztompka's observation in the case of Poland in the mid-1990s, namely that distrust is equally related to the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, "as a result of widespread anomie, new risk environments and the inefficiency of political elites" (Sztompka 1996: 37). As we shall see in Chapter 6, distrust also plays an important role in the associational life of migrants, especially along the lines of new Moldovan post-communist class structures. Briefly put, and in-line with Luhmann's (1968) claim that a confident outlook is an important prerequisite for trust, migrants who are pessimistic about their home country's future do not trust the government.

#### *4.2.1.3 Moldova – an immature society*

A further strand of narratives that emerged from the interviews with migrants about their home country's transformation, independent of their socio-economic status, age, or length of migration experience, are considerations of their home country as an immature society:

Maria A. (care-worker, 46, Novellara): Look at all these diffuse messages you see everywhere on Moldova's streets. All of these billboards, telling us in big letters to love our country and to stay in the planet's most beautiful capital, Chisinau! And right next to it, there are posters for work-abroad programmes with the faces of Moldovan VIPs and politicians working for the same government. What should we think of all that?

These narratives were commonly accompanied with notions of temporalities, such as 'growing up', of 'becoming a mature society', or of 'achieving the status of a mature nation'. Further, the idea of 'growing up' was often mentioned together with a 'change of mentality', or with 'becoming more open-minded', in the sense of acquiring values understood as 'European':

Nicolai (unemployed, 31, Padova): I see two scenarios for change in Moldova. Either people change, or they don't. If they don't change we become a country without inhabitants, and we will face a big crisis. In that case, Moldova will be taken over by Romania, I mean not taken over, but asked to be taken [laughs]. But I think, if people will start to grow up, to behave like open-minded adults, respect one another's property and each-others' businesses like here, and if ehm we can eliminate the corruption, then, I see a small chance for medium-sized businesses to develop.

All in all, even if migrants stressed that their home-country still has a long way to go on its development path, they see light at the end of the tunnel. The most optimistic statements on Moldova's prospects are those pointing to a timeframe of one or two generations for positive changes to happen, and for the Moldovan society to 'grow up'. For the time being, they place their hopes on the new generation of the Moldovan elite, chiefly on the small number of returnees, trained and educated abroad. Time will tell if they can speed up the implementation of the country's needed reforms. Ion, however, laconically recognised:

Ion (translator, 34, Paris): The future Moldova will be a *European* country in all possible senses of the terminology. I think today is a very crucial moment in our history, because the new generation who has been educated after the URSS, ehm, starts to show their teeth. Today, the situation is already different from 10 years ago, because these young people were not around then. Unfortunately, the first round of these promising people, on which we had some much hope, has already been absorbed by the system, too.

Vice-versa, migrants' analogy of Moldova as an 'immature' state is also strongly present in the narratives of aid-practitioners and in the official European development discourse on Moldova. In these discourses, the country is branded as a 'less mature' political subject that can 'move closer' to Europe through acceptance of neo-liberal democracy with the aid of the 'more mature European member states' (e.g. EU 2013a). Reflecting on this, I think the notion of a 'mature' society or state needs to be revisited. As Walby maintains, "there are degrees of 'societalisation', never fully formed societies" (2009: 451). This suggests to replace the idea of a static society with a more process-oriented notion of 'societalisation'. Moreover, it invites us to abandon assumptions that the politics of 'societalisation' or change only saturate a given national territory. Rather, they coexist and cross-cut each other in cooperation and/or competition, as we will see in the next subsection.



Figure 4.7: Contested public messages

#### 4.2.2 Unravelling the past and regaining confidence through transnational development practices

Another category that emerged from the interviews with migrants on their home country's transition is their negative memory and lived experiences of the Soviet past. According to Montanari (2001), a dominant national feature of Romania and Moldova is a resignation and passivity of not reacting against their destiny – a sort of suffering without rebellion, present in national myths and Romanian popular art. History taught Moldovans to be patient, because every saviour in the past turned out to be an exploiter; from the Hungarians and the Turks to the Russians (Ammassari 2001). The historical and cultural legacy of having been oppressed in the past is strongly present in the migrants' narratives on their personal experiences lived during the Soviet Republic of Moldova. Below, Laura expresses a typical view on this matter:

Laura (journalist, 37, Bologna): In the past, so many advisors have broken our nation apart, have oppressed and humiliated us. We are in need of optimism and confidence for the future, and we want to prove that we are able to do something, even if we live abroad.

The migrants' negative feelings about the Soviet past proved to be an important determinant for cultivating active transnational links with Moldova. For some migrant leaders, the transnational field of migrant civil society offers a space for rising up from their felt oppression by the Russians. Consequently, their transnational development practices are a means to let the past be the past, and for regaining confidence. The following quote illustrates that the feeling of having been oppressed in the past and the resulting low self-esteem is still deeply rooted in the personality of many Moldovan migrants, even if they consider themselves professionally successful and well-integrated:

Vasili (physicist, 39, Paris): My personal motivation for my associational engagement is to take a sort of revenge. Ehm, not a personal revenge, but ehm a revenge for my country, because Moldovans have been badly treated for a long time. We were always seen as second-class citizens, and I want to show that this is not true, that we are capable of doing things, and that we are capable of doing these things well.

These migrants not only stressed that Soviet Imperialism had diminished their self-esteem, but they also highlighted that some of their co-citizens compensate their negative experiences made in the past by means of their collective engagements, for instance through their own self-seeking practices:

(Oleg, 44, project-coordinator, Padova): We are like the typical character in Gogol's stories, the simple-minded peasant, the small man who wants to gain more dignity after years of oppression. I think this is the reason why so many organisations have been established. Migrants are engaged for gaining personal advantages over others, because of their inferiority complex vis-à-vis the Russians, who have stamped us as second-class citizens during Soviet times. Ehm, how can I say this, by having their own associations, and by calling themselves 'presidents', they boost their low self-esteem.

The memory of the Soviet past can also shape the forms of migrants' collective activities. It is, for instance an aspiration to move beyond cultural activities carried out in the host countries towards more transnational-oriented activities:

Dragomir (construction worker, 48, Paris): We need to show others that we are able to organise development activities back home, activities that go beyond festivals. We need to show them that we are not here to sing and dance the whole day. It would be catastrophic to only do that, because it would mean that those are right, who have put us down; those, who have withheld us from developing and from having a normal life for many years.

This interesting finding of migrants' transnational collective practices as an articulation of dealing with 'their' Soviet past, goes beyond the few well-known assumptions about collective practices of post-socialist migrant communities; e.g. their lack of institutional trust or the expected symbolic practices of 'Soviet nostalgia', which some migrant associations put on in CIS countries (Schwarz 2007). That being said, the participants' stances vis-à-vis 'Soviet nostalgia' are in sharp contrast to the associational life of the migrant community living east of Moldova.

Their vanishing point of history is all about 'Soviet nostalgia'. This finding resonates with Arce and Long's (2000) standpoint that an ethnography of development must be multi-vocal, multi-sited, but also increasingly concerned with people's counter-tendencies. My reflexive multi-perspective approach allowed me exactly to do that, and to see the dynamics of migrants' development engagement as forms of re-assembling practices from individually lived experiences of the Soviet past, and not just as a reaction to best-practice 'diaspora mobilisation programmes'.

In conclusion, the majority of migrants engaged in transnational social practices regard themselves as having been oppressed in three regards: by the Russians, by a kleptocratic Moldovan government throughout the transformation period, and most recently also by capitalist Europe, as we will see shortly. Migrants' negative interpretations of the distant past and the more recent past signifies for some of them a meaning-making resource for a transnational development engagement today. In that sense, the power of the past can be a driving motor for assisting Moldova in its development transition<sup>53</sup>. The top-down neo-liberal logic of Moldovan development policies neglects these aspects of time, as I have argued in Chapter 2. It disregards the importance of understanding the ways in which the past is culturally constructed and selectively applied in migrants' contemporary transnational social practices (cf. Verdery 2005). And lastly, migrants' aspirations to (re-)gain confidence by means of transnational development practices show that the development policy perception of the migrant 'shareholders' as confident self-entrepreneurs, who make predominantly rational choices for their future, is too restrictive (see Chapter 2).

#### 4.2.3 Migrants' perception of Moldova within Europe's socio-economic configurations

Along with the issue of migrants' personal experiences with 'Russian colonialism' came considerations of Moldova's role in contemporary Europe. A minority of migrants, chiefly those older interviewees who were partly socialised in the Soviet Republic of Moldova, view capitalism and its associated European or US institutions, such as the World Bank or the IMF, suspiciously. They question the development path of EU-rapprochement, and the EU's genuine interest in Moldova, which in their accounts lays solely in Moldova's unique asset of cheap labour 'just around the corner'. In Michael's opinion:

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<sup>53</sup> The ways the younger generation expressed the Soviet past considerably varied. Therefore, I find it difficult to determine the extent to which migrants' development engagement - as a means of unravelling the past - continues to be determinant in migrants' future associative life.

Michael (entrepreneur, 55, Bologna): The Italians want cheap labour in Moldova for their textile firms, and they can have that in Europe, in our country. They don't need to go to Bangladesh for that anymore. And honestly, I think it's basically the same if we get exploited here, in Italy, or in Moldova.

Thereby, many migrants highlighted that the 'West', and in particular the EU, is only interested in Moldova's low-wage workers, eager to work long hours in difficult and tiring jobs, which the local work-force in EU member-states is not willing to do. Romina expresses a typical view on this issue:

Romina (secretary, 49, Rome): Today, Moldova is not able to export anything to the West, except cheap labour. Is the EU really so interested in us? I am asking myself this question over and over again. I think the EU wants this visa liberalisation agreement because the member-states lack cheap labour. We don't have anything else [...]. I think for once it is not about geopolitics. It's about economics.

Migrants also openly questioned new migration policies by highlighting the fact that legal changes within Europe, such as the new visa regime, will not automatically remove the sociological reality of hierarchies and exploitation within Europe. Rather, they are further widening uneven national development. The prevalence in migrants' narratives of social inequalities generated by Europe's economics of labour demand stands in sharp contrast to the accounts of the second group of research participants, the representatives of IOs and government institutions, who rarely related Moldovan migration and transformation with wider issues of power, wealth and inequality within Europe<sup>54</sup>.

Furthermore, migrants who have a rather anti-stance towards the global present also have a negative attitude towards development organisations representing institutions of global or Western capitalism, including Western European bilateral development agencies. Consequently, their sceptical attitude towards these organisations impacts negatively upon their aspirations to integrate their development activities into mainstream migration–development programmes. They are simply not interested in teaming up with the development establishment. Yet, no aid-worker employed in international aid-agencies nor the civil servants were aware of some migrants' strong ideological stances, or even of their refusal to integrate their transnational activities into official aid-land.

To conclude in a scholarly interpretation, the overwhelming majority of migrants, including those who generally view the EU and other western institutions positively, consider Moldova's future economic prospects and its high outward migration with historical-structural models,

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<sup>54</sup> Out of 44 migrants, 38 referred to this issue, compared to two aid-workers, which shows the discredit of the structuralist approach in the second research group, resulting in a less negative interpretation of dependency, as discussed in Chapter 2 (cf. de Haas 2012).

more precisely with the dependency theory (cf. Morawska 2012). The common bottom-line in their narratives is that their home country has been historically subordinated and exploited by the Russians, or even uprooted from Romania, and it is currently incorporated in new macro-structural forces, namely in global or Western capitalist markets. This results once again in exploitation and not in co-operation, as migrants would wish for their home country.

The migrants' and development actors' often divergent notions of Moldova's transformative changes illustrate that post-communist 'transformation' is happening on a terrain on which multiple and heterogeneous visions of Moldova's place within capitalist Europe exist, and that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Moldovans, regardless of where they live, re-position themselves vis-à-vis various intervening parties, old and new solidarities and divisions (cf. Verdery 1999). Thus, taking migrants' accounts seriously also means to pay more attention to how Moldova's transformation and international migration are integrally related to the operation of the global capitalist market (Morawska 2012). Additionally, as outlined above, Moldova is a mainly rural country, and the common belonging of Moldovans is highly related with Moldova's rural villages. In Montanari's terms "the culture of the village is the ethnic and spiritual structure of the nation" (2001: 9). While this image is idyllic and pleasant, building on this ideological state narrative raises central questions about the 'survivability' of Moldova in a globalised world. Therefore, it seems to me that the small and young republic with its unsettled national identity will face considerable challenges ahead, especially considering that this global world is composed of competing states, and that nationalism has become a sociological and geopolitical necessity in the modern world to maintain a state's grip on its survival and progress (Gellner 1983). Migrant leaders who live in European metropolises (i.e. in Paris and London) were particularly sensitive about this issue. Hence, the analysis of Moldova's transformative change framed in terms of the dominant national development discourses is too narrow, and more considerations on the country's much-needed rediscovery of its place in an interlinked world would be necessary.

#### 4.3 Shifting Gazes: Moldova's Transformational Change from the Perspective of Intra European Interconnectedness

I round off this chapter with one topic that emerged directly from my transnational fieldwork across different European countries, namely Moldova's transformation and emigration beyond the national container space, as an integral part of Europe's social transformation. By shifting the gazes to looking at today's Europe as a fragmented space with the lens of

interconnectedness, I attempt to address Moldova's post-Soviet transformation and emigration beyond East-West typologies and topologies. Consistent with the above-applied perspective of looking at Moldova's transition beyond the socialist past, I now explore the dynamics of transformation of post-socialist Moldova with a greater spatial openness.

#### 4.3.1 Moldova's development transition as integral part of Europe's transformation

Schlögel (2005) maintains that, in post-Cold War Europe, once considered as the space of 'the East' and 'West', we nowadays find a territory of fragments, enclaves, and islands. These parts and pieces are fitting themselves together to form a new Europe. This renewal also implies forms of disintegration, and I think we should pay more attention to these very real fragments, and to accept these disintegrated localities as an intermediate stage of the European transformation. Because the ensemble is still a promise for many European citizens, our picture of Europe would be incomplete if we ignore the possibility or even the existence of European 'black holes', like Moldova or Belarus – places that have somewhat lost their time and power.

The degree to which a place is connected within the socio-spatial configuration of this unfinished Europe, and its likelihood for impacting on others globally, has particularly attracted my attention on my fieldwork across disparate places. Mobility and interconnections are a reality for the financial, political and cultural centres in Europe – the 'Eurocities' (Favell 2008). Or, as Augé (2012) maintains, today, the 'global' is perceived as the 'interior' of the world-spanning economic and communication system and the 'local' as its 'outside'. In these authors' view, cities are transforming according to an image provided for the outside world, by assuring the circulation of capital, investment and tourists. This vision is embodied in some of the fieldwork sites, the 'Hub-like' interconnected cities: London, Brussels, Paris, Frankfurt, Rome or Geneva – places with high inward and outward mobility of various types. Places that are oriented towards a different outer-world: the financial world, the diplomatic world, or the world of tourism.

Chisinau stands in sharp contrast to these busy Eurocities woven by international relations, attracting and hosting the world. With the exception of migrants' circular mobility, I have only noticed one-way mobility – outward mobility. Thus, when travelling to Moldova one follows automatically, according to Marcus (1998), the people – the migrants, as there are, with the exception of aid-professionals and a few businessmen, no other group of travellers moving back and forth to Moldova. The absence of a tourist information centre in the capital city speaks for itself. Another striking example of Moldova's image as an 'off the beaten path travel destination'



is the fact that the total number of visitors (including business travellers) to the entire country, over a period of one year, is equal to the number of visitors to the Eiffel Tower in two days (38,000) (National Bureau of Statistics 2013; tour-eiffel 2015). While the circulation of people is considered as a symbol of globalisation and contemporary capitalism (Augé 2012), the striking absence of mobility 'towards' Moldova emphasises once more Moldova's 'otherness'. Yet, bearing in mind the migrants' accounts on the relationship between their home country's transformation and capitalism, Moldova's one-way mobility is an expression of globalisation and (neo)liberal market economy, too. The country's 'otherness' is not simply a separate 'exotic' phenomenon, but an integral part of today's European socio-political and economic reality.

Lastly, a shift in the boundaries of the geographical understanding of Moldovan transformation and transnationalism also calls for more acceptance that places and spaces in Western and South Western Europe are transformed by Eastern European migrants, too. Moldovan migrants, for instance, play a transformative role in the life of European cities and in their *geography of encounters* (Valentine 2008). Such spaces of encounter include public places being part of my fieldwork: examples are the central bus station in Berlin (ZOB), the 'Giardino della Montagnola' in Bologna, the Piazza 'Unità d'Italia' in Novellara, or the outskirts of Villeneuve-Saint-Georges near Paris.

#### 4.3.2 Regaining space: (re-)connecting Moldova with Europe through transnational development engagements

I now investigate how Moldova's marginalised place in Europe influences migrants' transnational collective practices and their aspirations to get engaged in their home country's development. To this end I respond to the initial question: *Where is Moldova?*

Firstly, in the literature and in the majority of research participants' accounts, Moldova is located at Europe's Eastern periphery. Some parts of the country are even considered as the periphery of the periphery (e.g. Protsyk 2010). The document 'Rethink Moldova', an official government policy brief, describes in its introduction that Moldova is "a country with an antagonized society, isolated on the external arena [...]" (GoM 2010: 3). Further, in the light of the Ukraine crises, Moldova's commonly described location at the 'turbulent borders' of Eastern Europe – torn between the East and the West, has recently taken on a whole new meaning. Secondly, the image of Moldova as a remote and relatively non-descript place in the Eastern borderlands of Europe is contested by migrant leaders who consider their country of origin as a bridge between different European cultures and languages: Slavic, Latin and Turkish. In their opinion, Moldova is a melting-pot of European cultures – a crossroad where the East meets the

West. And thirdly, for some participants Moldova is neither the cultural heart of Europe nor its periphery, but rather 'an almost but not quite European other'. This viewpoint was articulated with statements such as 'the Moldovans have their own views and value systems', or that 'she has migrated to Europe'. Thus, while it is obvious where Moldovans migrate to in this study, namely to 'Europe', it is not very clear from where exactly they come. These different interpretations of Moldova's socio-spatial configuration within Europe can impact upon migrants' forms of transnational development engagement. Three narrative strands emerged from the interviews with migrants on this issue.

Firstly, migrants who perceive Moldova as a cultural crossroads of Europe are generally optimistic about the country's prospects and confident in their ability to contribute to positive change in Moldova by means of their transnational collective engagement:

Kiril (IT-engineer, 38, Paris): Even if we are not yet a member of the EU, I want to show the members that we have things to share, like ehm our rich cultural heritage and our multiculturalism. Our country is still left out in many European programmes for NGOs. But I want to show Europe that we exist. Yes, that's my aim. With our activities, I want to show that it's not only political or geo-political ideology that creates a country, but also culture, and ehm grassroots projects, like we do. And that we can move things together.

Secondly, the fact that Moldova is not exactly a press-darling in the migrant receiving countries under study, generates two trends. First, the little attention the country receives in the public discourse can foster specific forms of relationships between migrant associations and Western European NGOs. Liliana explains:

Liliana (34, freelancer, Paris): I don't exaggerate, but we have done consulting for French development NGOs who wanted to get engaged in Moldova, and they really don't know anything about our country. One was a big international NGO and people there knew everything about Africa, but when it came to Moldova, there was all of the sudden a big silence. Ehm, that's why I thought that our association could create more links, and connect NGOs here better with Moldova.

The quote shows that the unpopularity of the Republic of Moldova can motivate migrant leaders to become bridge-builders for development NGOs in their host countries and to bring Moldova to light. The role of migrant associations is, however, not restricted to connecting development NGOs with Moldova. For some migrant leaders, their collective development practices are also a means of *(re)-connecting* their home country with Europe more broadly. Their motivation for creating active transnational development links with Moldova is to belong to Europe, which is regarded by the majority of migrants as a territory of 'progress' or 'open-mindedness', as discussed earlier.

The second trend evident in the second narrative theme is that some migrant leaders were annoyed about Western Europeans' general disregard vis-à-vis Moldova. The perception of Moldova as 'isolated outsiders' at the territorial edge of the EU is considered as (re-)enforcing parochialism, rather than helping to improve the socio-economic situation in their home country. In their view, the public neglect of Moldova and its attributed backwardness preserves provincial practices in Moldova and within their migrant community. This impairs the capacity-building of migrant associations in promoting change and development in Moldova. Below, a migrant leader expresses her frustration with Europe's fixation of Moldova as a remote Eastern flank:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): We are a territory in Europe, but we are talking about a country that has never had a say, and as long as Europe treats us as some sort of province, without a genuine interest in us, the backward provincial practices in Moldova and in our diaspora, will continue. I don't think there will be positive changes like this. Some of our migrant leaders will just continue to create associations for their own self-seeking interests, like politicians pursue their own interests in Moldova, because nobody pays the country any real attention.

Thirdly, similar to migrants who emphasise Moldova's marginal location and who aim to create links between development NGOs in their host-countries and Moldova, participants who describe Moldova as a significant 'European otherness' engage in activities aimed at supporting development NGOs to better understand the 'Moldovan way of functioning'; for instance, in matching them with potential 'trustful' and 'ideal' Moldovan counterparts:

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): Most of the Western NGOs don't know how to judge our people, because they don't know the system. And sometimes, they don't even know that you need to check, double check and triple check with whom you want to work in Moldova. And we want to help them with that.

A small number of migrants consider the underestimation of Moldova's 'otherness' by mainstream development actors as unprofessional. Consequently, they reject their development interventions in the country, and they are not interested in teaming-up with such formal development actors. Svetlana expresses a typical view on this issue:

Svetlana (factory worker and artist, 55, Munich): We often visited German development programmes near the hospital that our organisation supports. One was a training seminar by the German ministry on how to write job applications. I was standing there and I thought: Do I see this right? This is very unprofessional. It doesn't work like that in Moldova at all. This is all nonsense! Please stop! You can't teach people how to apply 'European-style' there. It's a completely different system.

The different interpretations of Moldova's location and its cultural specificity can create specific forms of migrant transnational development efforts, or impede an engagement

altogether. These types of transnational practices can be understood as a mixture of migrants' compensation for an experienced 'backwardness' and a growing feeling of uneasy about their home country's image as an out-of-the-way place. That being said, besides the displayed motivation to (re-)gain confidence vis-à-vis the country's past by means of development engagements, these development forms are a means of (re-)gaining space. Moldova's marginalised place in Europe and its post-Soviet legacy are, therefore, both important determinants for migrants' transnational development practices.

The motivations of some migrant leaders to re-connect their home country with Europe through their transnational development practices, alludes to the need of paying more attention to issues of ideological and territorial fixations of this rural post-Soviet country. Migrants' perceptions of Moldova as being cut-off from contemporary Europe shows, that territorial and ideological fixations, other than the commonly known nationalistic resentments, are highly relevant in today's Europe. Although it is widely accepted that these fixations can play an important role in generating specific forms of emigration, for instance individualistic forms of student migration towards Western Europe (e.g. Engbersen and Snell 2013), the fact that ideological and territorial fixations can equally generate collective transnational development practices has not been addressed in research so far. Thus, I propose to situate Moldovan migrants' transnationalism and transformation within a broader intra-European research approach. Contrary to recent research on Ukrainian migration dynamics, in which the analysis is placed in a wider framework of regional integrations within the European Union and between the European Union and its Eastern neighbours<sup>55</sup>, the phenomenon of Moldovan migration has not been addressed with a similar broader intra-European perspective. It is within such interpretation that I see further research on the topic of transformation and migration in Moldova. Hence, I suggest to shift our way of looking at Moldovan migration in the geographical area under study – as an integral part of ongoing transformational change within Europe, instead of purely restricting it to an essential key-factor of Moldova's post-Soviet development transition.

These reflections take us now to two residual interlinked questions to which I have not yet found satisfactory answers. First, what role will Moldova and other countries play in the future? I refer here to countries that have somehow 'fallen out' of today's Europe, and where the ditches of opportunity structures are widening. And second, at a time of economic crisis and the fractioning of power structures in the 'Global North', can migrants and development actors play a role in contributing positive change in these somehow forgotten European landscapes in the

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<sup>55</sup> E.g. Vianello (2013b) on circular migration between the Ukraine and Italy, or Iglicka and Gmaj (2013) on circular migration patterns between the Ukraine and Poland.

first place? These questions point to the general role that development actors and migrants can play in fostering stability, prosperity, and solidarity within Europe. Doubtlessly, there is further scope for in-depth research on how the migration–transformation relationship takes shape in these disintegrated CIS-countries in today’s Europe.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This long chapter has mapped Moldova’s post-Soviet development transition from three different perspectives: the official development discourse and from the viewpoints of migrants and aid-workers.

Firstly, I have investigated Moldova’s main development characteristics, and how the country underwent radical changes in every sphere of social, economic and political life, by engaging with the three interacting key factors that set Moldova’s development transition apart from other former Soviet countries: its slow social and economic development, its complex national identity building, and its mass emigration. Additionally, I have demonstrated that the high expectations raised in 2009 of a fast-track EU-integration process turned out to be unrealistic, and that reforms aimed at the country’s transition to a market economy have been slowed down by persistent economic and financial difficulties, corruption, and by external factors, such as the growing tension in the region (EU 2013c). My concluding argument was that Moldova’s regulatory environment remains poor, offering both aid-organisations and migrant associations a rather unfavourable environment for their development activities. This brings us now to the first key-finding of this chapter:

*Official development policy to support the country in its attempts to gain more out of migrants’ initiatives and to mitigate its negative consequences, is bound to fail, if it ignores the country’s structural weakness – under which migrants are supposed to contribute to development by means of their associations.*

Therefore, migrants are unlikely to make a significant contribution to the development transition in Moldova unless the root causes of ‘underdevelopment’ are simultaneously addressed.

Secondly, I have illustrated that the lack of a true development process is further activated by the socio-political division of the country. I showed that in Moldova’s post-socialist era there is a need to reconsider the notion of ‘home-country’ when exploring migrants’ visions of development and their emotional and material ties with Moldova. While the development industry remains attached to a nation-state approach, assuming that its inhabitants are sharing a common set of values, norms and identity, we saw that Moldova as a ‘home nation’ in the

sense of a unifying entity is disputed among migrants. Although the country's socio-political division is less contested within the migrant community under study, it still hinders an efficient bundling of migrants' efforts into state-led development policies.

*Moldova's struggle for identity slows down Moldova's national reforms, the creation of a common future imagination of the country, and the building up of a coherent structural and ideological engagement with its absentees.*

Thirdly, I have provided an insight into the magnitude of Moldovan emigration as being itself an important obstacle for the country's development transition, affecting the country's entire social fabric, including development projects carried out by aid-agencies and migrant organisations.

*We saw that, although discourses on migration and development have moved back to the centre-stage of development policy in Moldova, there has not been a significant change in mainstream development actors' ambivalent perceptions of the country's mass emigration, and adequate structural policies to mitigate its negative effects are still missing.*

Fourthly, my findings brought to light that migrants' visions of Moldova's development transition can be different to the officially declared development path. Discrepancies were found between the official discourse of Moldova as being a 'success story' and the negative accounts of migrants and some of the aid-workers on the government's track-record up till now. Furthermore, some migrants' negative stances towards Western institutions and their distrust in the state – as a consequence of their negative experiences in the aftermath of the dissolution of the USSR – run counter to the mainstream development path of EU-rapprochement, and obstruct the relationship-building between migrants and state institutions.

*The migrants' frustration over the governments' achievements in its development transitions up to now, their dwindling expectations of positive change since the political turnaround in 2009, and their rather bleak visions of the country's future, negatively impacts on migrants' institutional trust in state institutions, and consequently on migrants' aspirations to integrate their development activities into mainstream migration–development programmes.*

Moreover, I showed how migrants' experiences of the Soviet era and the transformation period impact on their transnational activities. We saw that the Soviet era is not only still present in the landscape of some parts of the country, but also in migrants' collective development practices towards Moldova.

*Thus, another key finding of this chapter is that forms of migrant collective transnational engagements are shaped by Moldova's past – as a means to raise up from an expressed feeling of oppression during the Soviet era.*

Lastly, in addition to my suggestion to consider Moldova's transformation with a temporal openness, I have opened up the national container perspective of Moldova, and I have shared some broader reflections on Moldova's transformation and migration with the lens of spatial openness. By approaching Moldovan migration not only as an integral part of Moldova's post-Soviet development transition, but equally as a part of Europe's transformational change, I pointed to the need to reframe the geographical framework of studying contemporary dynamics of Moldova's transformation, its migration, and migrants' transnationalism.

*Not only is Moldova's past selectively applied in migrants' contemporary transnational collective practices, but so too is the country's social, political and economic marginalised place within Europe.*

Migrants' feelings of having been second-class citizens under 'Russian colonialism', the disappointment about the government's poor achievements in its post-Soviet transition, plus the growing feeling of capitalist exploitation within contemporary Europe are all important determinants for generating forms of migrant development engagement. *These three entangled factors* are neglected in both the academic literature on Moldovan migration and in the policy discourse on transformation. Therefore, the analysis of Moldovan migrants' development practices should not be limited to migrants' skills and their associations' capacities as defined by the development industry (e.g. IASCI/Nexus 2014). Such a limited approach would obscure the complex array of cultural and social determinants operating across different spatial and temporal scales.

With this thought in mind, I turn in the next chapter to the main characteristics of Moldova's recent but intense emigration since the country's independence in 1991, and to how the state portrays emigrants as development partners.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discontinuities within Continuities: Main Characteristics of Moldovan Migration

The present chapter addresses in more detail the main characteristics of current Moldovan emigration. I first provide the reader with an overview of the key features of Moldovan migration. I emphasise, according to the title of this chapter, the discontinuities of Moldovan migration that coexist with classical patterns and forms of Moldova's post-communist out-migration. As it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to analyse in depth the multi-faceted nature of Moldovan migration, I particularly investigate the increase in the diversification of migration types and destination countries. Secondly, drawing from my empirical data, I discuss new trends of current Moldovan emigration, which in my view are understudied and thus not sufficiently considered in the Moldovan migration–development policy discourse. I concentrate on four interrelated migration characteristics, which I argue, significantly impact on migrants' collective transnational development practices, either because they are considered as an impediment for migrants' aid-practices, or because they generate specific forms of transnational aid-giving. These are: actual or anticipated onward migration, lack of socio-cultural integration in the host-country, return migration and family reunification. That being said, the first two sections of this chapter provide the basis for my discussion in Chapter 7 on how past, present, and anticipated migration experiences unfold in migrants' transnational development practices. In the remainder of this chapter, I address the discursive subject of the 'key-migrant' of the Moldovan migration–development debate. Here again, I accentuate the discontinuities in the ways in which the Moldovan state and its key-development partners portray emigrants, shaping particular forms of emigrant policies and programmes.

As we shall see all throughout this chapter, not only is Moldova a country full of contrasts, but so too is its migration. In particular, the interpretations of aid workers, civil servants and scholars on migrants' realities and their capability to collectively contribute to Moldova's development are highly controversial.



### 5.1. From Sadova<sup>56</sup> to Padova: Key Features and Development of Moldovan Migration

I now address the most important characteristics of Moldova's intense emigration since the country's independence from the USSR in 1991. I focus mainly on those features which I consider particularly relevant for migrants' transnational development practices.

#### 5.1.1 Essential characteristics of Moldovan migration

The emigration of Moldovan citizens to neighbouring countries is not a phenomenon of the last 25 years. Before the end of the Second World War the whole of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe was characterised by migration movements (Engbersen et al. 2010). Yet, in contrast to other countries in the region, such as Poland or Romania, the territory of today's Republic of Moldova had always been a migration-sending area. A strong propensity of the population to move away was observed from the 1970s onwards. For instance, farmers of the Moldovan Kolkhoz left regularly as seasonal labourers to work in the fields of the Ukraine, or Moldovans migrated to Russian cities such as Moscow or St. Petersburg to pursue careers as academics or as functionaries within the Communist Party (Gigauri 2006). In the literature on Moldovan migration, this emigration of seasonal agricultural workers and the so-called 'inteligenzija' is usually referred to as the 'old diaspora' (Görlich and Trebesch 2009). In the majority of publications on Moldovan migration, however, this type of emigration is commonly left out (e.g. Borodak and Tichit 2014; Vanora et. al. 2015)<sup>57</sup>.

Emigration considerably intensified after the country's independence in 1991, and thus marks, in my view, a first discontinuity in Moldovan migration in terms of scale, structure and destination countries. In the immediate aftermath of the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Moldovan emigration, like that from other new East-European borderlands, was small and of an ethnic character (Schwartz 2007). The majority of Moldovans moved for family reunification to other states formerly belonging to the USSR, such as to the Ukraine or Russia. A large part of the country's Jewish community emigrated to Israel ('return of the Bessarabian Jews'), the United States, or to Germany within the so-called 'Spätaussiedler programmes' (Deutsches

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<sup>56</sup> Sadova is a small village in the Călărași district, located in the centre of Moldova. The name 'Sadova' derives from the Russian word сад (garden), which alludes to the former image of Moldova as 'the garden of the Soviet Union'. The inhabitants of Sadova migrate predominantly to Padova and the wider Veneto region.

<sup>57</sup> This is especially the case amongst non-Moldovan scholars and highlights how quickly one can jump at phenomena considered a novelty (e.g. large-scale post-communist emigrations) without embedding them within a historical approach (e.g. internal migration within the USSR).

Ausländerzentralregister 2012). Because Jewish migrants left permanently with their families and did not maintain strong ties with Moldova, their migration differs from the slightly later wave of labour migration that started in the mid and late 1990s (Mosneaga 2012).

Secondly, because approximately 85% of all migrants left the country in the mid to late 1990s, especially around the Russian economic crisis in 1998, the current literature on Moldovan migration almost exclusively deals with this economic migration wave (ETF 2007). At that time, Moldova's desolate situation and the lack of opportunities in the job market forced many Moldovans to leave their country (see Chapter 4). Since then, besides structural determinants (e.g. Moldova's unfavourable economic investment climate), Moldovans also migrate for a variety of other reasons, including more personal reasons (Marcu 2014). For the majority of migrants, including most of my migrant participants, however, to go abroad was not their own, individually-made decision, but a necessity to support their families. Even if there exists today a new wave of a more individual migration, the common goal that spurs many Moldovans to leave their country is the pursuit of better wealth and work opportunities in order to increase their incomes. As Anastasia briefly and concisely puts it:

Anastasia (tour-guide, 46, Berlin): Moldovan migrants are hard-working and good people. They just want to earn money, so they can solve their problems back home.

As highlighted in the previous chapter, one of the most outstanding characteristics of this post-socialist migration wave is its scale – to an extent that it has become a serious impediment to political, social and economic modernisation (IOM 2012a, among others)<sup>58</sup>. Furthermore, there has been an increase in Western European destination countries (mainly Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, UK). Romanian-speaking Moldovans still predominantly migrate to Italy, Spain, France or Romania (approximately 42%), while the Russian-speaking population mostly opts for the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (IOM 2012a). In 2011, 35% of all Moldovan migrants lived in Russia, and about 8 % lived in Belarus and the Ukraine (IOM 2012a). The Gagauz ethnic-minority are particularly drawn towards Russia and Turkey (IASCI/CIVIS 2010). An important reason why many Moldovans opt for CIS-countries as their destination is that the migration costs to reach these countries are relatively low (Rusnac et al. 2011). This explains why, besides the socio-cultural proximity, migrants in CIS-states are chiefly from the poorer rural regions, while those going to France, Italy and to other EU countries such as Spain or Portugal are mostly from urban areas and financially better off (IOM 2012a). The lowest share of migrants

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<sup>58</sup> Conversely, immigration is low. In 2011, 2% of the population were immigrants in Moldova; chiefly from Turkey, the Ukraine, Russia, Romania, Azerbaijan, the US and Belarus (IOM 2012a).

(9.3%) comes from the capital Chisinau, where people are usually wealthier and better educated (Mosneaga 2012).

Two further factors influenced the destination choice of the migrants who left Moldova at the end of the 1990s. The first factor is access to ethnic networks. For instance, ethnic Moldovans could draw on their Romanian ancestry and apply for a Romanian passport, which considerably eased their departure towards Western Europe (Marcu 2014). Consequently, these migrants figure as Romanian citizens in official national statistics of foreign residents, which makes it difficult to know the exact number of Moldovans living in these countries (see Chapter 3). For instance, it is estimated that 87% of Moldovans use their Romanian passports in the UK, 49% in France and 24% in Italy (Cheianu-Andrei 2013). Secondly, while the Romanian border had been closed during Soviet times, its re-opening in the early 1990s offered unprecedented opportunities for shuttle trade, and gave Moldovan merchants access to a growing network of Romanian migrants who were already working in Western Europe (Arambaşa 2009)<sup>59</sup>. In the meantime, the just-described classical two-fold migration patterns, resulting from socio-cultural and geographic proximity, as well as economic factors, have softened.

Internal migration has been significant all through Moldovan migration's development. The Moldovan Ministry of Internal Affairs (2013a) maintains that 10% of the population moved internally in the last ten years. Accordingly, several research participants reported having moved to one of Moldova's two major cities, Chisinau and Balti, before moving abroad<sup>60</sup>. Yet, internal migration is strikingly absent in the academic literature on Moldovan migration, or it is downplayed, especially by non-Moldovan authors who consider it as insignificant (e.g. Hagen-Zanker et al. 2009). Possibly foreigners do not consider the two cities as attractive migration destinations. Participants implementing migration-development programmes in Moldova, however, reported that internal migrants are confronted with the same challenges and engage in the same migration practices as international migrants (e.g. lack of Romanian language skills, sending remittances).

Typically, the men of my sample worked in sectors such as transport, construction, or retail trade, and the women are employed in the service sector, in the care sector, and in housekeeping (Marcu 2014). Approximately 300,000 Moldovans are seasonal migrants. The majority of them are men from rural areas, mainly from the North and South of the country.

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<sup>59</sup> The cross-border trade was halted when Romania joined the European Union in 2007, which resulted in stricter visa and customs regulations.

<sup>60</sup> This echoes King's general observation that: "Many migrants move both internally and internationally, one type of move followed by the other" (2012b: 8).

These migrants work on construction sites in Russia (72%), or as seasonal migrants in Italy, either in the agricultural sector or as construction workers (Mosneaga 2012).

Another distinctive feature of Moldova's emigration is that it continues to be significantly gendered. Women are more likely to migrate to Southern EU countries, whereas men are more likely to migrate to CIS-countries (Robila 2014). This gendered distribution is explained by the sectors in which migrants are employed. The construction sector in Russia or the Ukraine provides employment opportunities for men, whereas women are more likely to find employment in the service or care sector in Italy, Spain or France. In some villages, over 75% of women have left home to work in the domestic and care sectors in these countries (Lücke et al. 2007). That being said, a specific character of Moldovan migration is that the presence of dependents in a household does not influence the decision to migrate nor its duration. This implies, among other things, that many children grow up without one or both of their parents (Danzer and Dietz 2009). With at least half of the Moldovan migrants being women, concerns by NGOs have been raised with regard to the care of children and elderly left behind, as I discussed in Chapter 4<sup>61</sup>.

Furthermore, Moldovan migration still comprises a considerable share of undocumented migrants (Mosneaga 2012)<sup>62</sup>. For instance, a majority of migrants are engaged in irregular employment and live without proper documentation as 'tolerated' undocumented migrants in CIS-countries (EU Assessment Mission to the Republic of Moldova–EU Moldova Visa Dialogue 2013). At the same time, emigration towards the West significantly altered from a largely 'illegal migration' to a period where most Moldovans travelled with Romanian passports on 'free mobility' since the visa-liberalisation in April 2014. Prior to the year 2014, migration policies, such as intergovernmental agreements with Italy, helped to regularise migrants' status and to improve many migrants' lives<sup>63</sup> (Vietti 2010). While in theory the new visa-regime positively affects migrants because it facilitates their and their families' free movements, in practice many Moldovans still cannot afford an international passport for travelling visa-free to the Schengen-area. And for those who can afford it, administrative obstacles, for instance work restrictions in EU-member states, persist. Also, since the beginning of the 2008 financial crisis, migrants are

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<sup>61</sup> The considerable number of studies on the issue of children and the elderly left behind have produced highly diverse and controversial outcomes, ranging from positive or limited effects on the well-being of these individuals (e.g. Vanore et al 2015) to negative effects (e.g. negative psychosocial health outcomes, non-compensation of the financial remittances for the loss of physical proximity, e.g. Robila 2014; UNICEF 2008). The different results of these studies were frequently and publicly disputed by representatives of IOs and research institutions in workshops and meetings I attended in Chisinau.

<sup>62</sup> It is estimated that more than 40,000 undocumented Moldovan migrants live in Italy (Mosneaga 2012).

<sup>63</sup> Since 2007, especially with the 'Flussi Decree' in Italy, many undocumented Moldovan migrants could legalise their status, mostly women (Vianello 2013b).

faced with new challenges in finding work-opportunities in countries where generally employment opportunities have shrunk (e.g. in Italy or France). As Ivan puts it:

Ivan (factory worker, 41, Novellara): It has always been difficult for us. In the past we had problems with our papers and documents. Now we have problems in finding jobs.

Another discontinuity within the continuity of Moldovan emigration is the implementation of the new agreement on the EU-Visa-liberalisation, which reflects the broader global trend of instrumentalising migrants for political ends in a new intensified way. In the participants' opinion, Moldovan migrants have become a 'soft power tool' for Russia and the European Union alike, so as to keep the country on their respective normatively 'good' transformation paths. After Moldova had signed major agreements with the EU in spring 2013, which covers amongst other issues free trade, Russia increased its presence and pressure on Moldova. For instance, it put legal pressures on the presence of the approximately 450,000 Moldovan immigrants in Russia, making for a considerable share of the country's total remittances (Expert Group 2014a). Russia's announcement to expel them made Chisinau nervous about a large number of 'unwelcome' low-skilled returnees who do not fit into the governments' typology of the 'desired return of talents', as we shall see in the next chapter. According to research participants involved in the implementation of the EU-Visa-liberalisation Action Plan, the new visa-scheme was signed surprisingly fast. Given that 2014 was an election year, and that tensions in the neighbouring Ukraine were growing, I share the participants' common argument that the speeding up of this process had been a charm offensive by the European Union to keep Moldova on the right 'European path'.

Last of all, I would like to highlight one distinctive feature of Moldova's emigration more in detail, namely that a significant proportion of those leaving the country are relatively well educated. Prior to migration, a third of migrants were employed in the public sector – in the education or health systems, or in local government (IOM 2012a). This confirms the particular characteristic of Moldova's poverty highlighted in the previous chapter, namely that Moldovans usually do not lack employment opportunities in their own country, but the salaries are very low. Yet, the jobs migrants have in destination countries rarely correspond to their qualifications, and the majority of Moldovans abroad are employed in hard, low-skilled and low-paid sectors – usually referred to in the literature as 3D jobs: dirty, dangerous and demanding (Castles and Miller 2009)<sup>64</sup>. The phenomenon of de-skilling, understood as being highly qualified but employed in low-status and low-paid jobs, is always prominently emphasised in the

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<sup>64</sup> Approximately 8% of migrants work in the profession according to their education (Cheianu-Andrei 2013).

introductions of scientific articles and in consultancy reports on different aspects of Moldovan migration (e.g. Robila 2014)<sup>65</sup>. Yet, to my knowledge, it has never been scrutinised. Because de-skilling proved to be a vital determinant for migrants' collective development practices, I will briefly discuss some persisting myths on this issue.

Consistent with current research on Moldovan migration, the majority of migrants in this study have undergone de-qualification (e.g. Marcu 2014). Yet, in-line with Korobkov's and Zaionchkovskaia's (2012) findings on high-skilled Russian migrants, most of the well-educated participants had already experienced de-skilling in Moldova, especially in the immediate aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union, when a large number of Moldovans lost their jobs. For many of them the lack of job opportunities in their respective professional fields, or the low wages now on offer, provoked their decision to migrate in the first place. Hence, de-qualification is not 'something' that only occurs abroad, as often suggested in the academic literature (e.g. Borodak and Tichit 2014). Secondly, while it is not my intention to undermine the emotional effects that de-qualification can have on a person, I find it important to note that it is not a migration-specific issue. It is at present a reality for many inhabitants in some host-countries under study (e.g. in Italy). In Anna's words:

Anna (translator/writer, 45, Rome): Italy does not offer good job perspectives for young people and intellectuals. From this point of view, we are very well integrated (laughs)! Because all of my Italian friends are also unemployed, or in jobs not in-line with their qualifications.

Thirdly, participants also stressed the relationship between the phenomenon of de-skilling and cultural aspects, chiefly Moldovans low self-esteem, which is regarded as a form of 'new subordination' (see Chapter 4). In their view, one determinant for the widespread de-skilling amongst Moldovan migrants consists of their 'high adaptability' to any kind of jobs, as well as frequent professional reorientation, often without efforts to find employment prospects in their original professions or to negotiate better work conditions. And last of all, participants employed in international aid-agencies in Moldova considered the 'high return intentionality' of migrants as an impediment for migrants' up-skilling. They narrated that qualification programmes for the recognition of diplomas were in many cases unsuccessful. Evening courses addressed to Moldovan nurses in Paris, for instance, to validate their professional qualification were not sufficiently attended, because many women do not anticipate staying for long, even if in most cases they do extend their stays.

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<sup>65</sup> E.g. Moldovan medical doctors working as gardeners in France or Italy, or academics working on agricultural estates in Spain.

### 5.1.2 Diversification of destination countries and migration types

Although my sample is not statistically representative, I have found striking discrepancies between participants' accounts on current migration trends and the existing literature on Moldovan migration. While some of the typical established migration patterns of temporary or seasonal migration are still discernible, relatively new fragmented patterns of onward migration, permanent migration, or forms of individualistic migration, for instance student mobility, have also emerged in the Moldovan case, blurring classical typologies of migration. This development of Moldovan migration is somewhat missing in the 'classical patterns' emphasised in the majority of recent academic articles and consultancy reports on Moldovan migration related topics. These, I argue, are still in the grip of the 'Earn and Return rhetoric', based on what I call the 'typology of Moldovan migration of 2007', because most authors refer to the literature published around or before 2007 (e.g. Vanore et al. 2015).

Firstly, one important missing discontinuity in Moldovan migration patterns is the widening geographical spread of the destination countries. My findings on this topic endorse Marcu's estimation (2014) of a softening of the classical 'two-fold East-West migration pattern': poorer Moldovan men largely destined for low-skilled jobs in manual labour markets in Russia or the Ukraine, while wealthier and better educated men aim for medium-skilled jobs in Western Europe; women are mostly found in the care and home services sector in European Union countries. Even if these patterns still exist, I argue that in recent years the geographical landscape of destination countries has become more polycentric. The EU countries receiving the greatest numbers of Moldovans are Italy (22%) and Romania (18%), followed by France, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom, while at the same time the Balkans, Israel and the Middle East (particularly Saudi Arabia and Lebanon) have also gained ground (Cheianu-Andrei 2013)<sup>66</sup>. While in the '2007 migration typology', France, Spain and Italy still figure as classical destination countries for the wealthier Moldovans (e.g. Vanora et al. 2015), participants reported that nowadays high unemployment rates in these countries make them less attractive for this group of migrants, and therefore they try to migrate directly to Canada, the US, or to the UK. The following quote illustrates this trend.

Angela (care-worker, 32, Novellara): There are still many, many who leave the country, but now a lot of qualified Moldovans don't come to Italy anymore, they go where there is better work: to

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<sup>66</sup> Due to the large number of destination countries, several participants answered the question of *Where is Moldova?*, raised in the previous chapters as follows: Moldova is everywhere, because Moldovans are all over the world.

Canada, to the US, or the UK. There are still the ones who already have family here who come, but there are fewer and fewer who arrive, and there are also people who leave quite early.

The broad geographical spread of host-countries is related to the growth of a culture of migration, meaning that individuals follow in the path of others who previously migrated from Moldova to a common destination-country, by heavily depending on social networks. According to Cheianu-Andrei (2013), on average 60% of Moldovan migrants selected their migration destination according where they already knew friends and relatives. Drawing on my findings, I argue that the increase of Moldovan migrants in EU-member states has also enlarged the personal network of those individuals who formerly migrated to the East, and thus perpetuates on-going out-migration or circular and cross-border mobility towards previously atypical destination countries<sup>67</sup>. Although this trend has never been highlighted as such in the literature, I find that in the last few years, the growing migration networks promote a softening of the classical 'double-edged migration pattern'. A concise example is the growing number of men, who through personal networks, increasingly migrate to EU member-states (e.g. France, Germany) for the same jobs, having formerly worked on construction sites in Israel and Russia (Mosneaga 2012). Vice-versa, in-line with Mosneaga (2012), the analysis of participants' accounts on current migration trends shows an increase in the number of women working in the service sector in Russia, for instance in the hotel business.

A second important discontinuity within the on-going Moldovan migration is the diversification of migration patterns towards a mixed migration. My findings endorse Cheianu-Andrei's (2013) observation of an increase in processes of settlement. While emigration to Western Europe or to the United States out of communist Eastern Europe was normally one-way and permanent (Vianello 2013b), the post-1995 Moldovan migration wave is still predominantly described in the majority of academic literature as temporary or circular, sidelining processes of family reunification or 'delayed return' (e.g. Bordak and Tichit 2014; Varzari et al 2014). Within this '2007 typology of Moldovan migration', it is commonly stressed that temporary migrants represent a growing share of Moldovan migrants, at 70% (e.g. Piracha et al. 2012). Yet, most definitions of temporary migration are based on migrants' expressed wish to return one day to Moldova, mostly based on Lücke and his colleagues' findings of 2007, which showed that Moldovan migrants do not intend to settle permanently in their destination countries. As I will argue later in this chapter, in the meantime many migrants actually do want

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<sup>67</sup> In all of my fieldwork locations, research participants came from a variety of different places in Moldova often through their personal networks, including locations in the North and South of Moldova with a typical high share of migration towards CIS-countries.



to settle permanently abroad, and thus we need to characterise Moldovan migration as a mixed migration. I will argue that the dominant idea of temporary migration, understood as "resulting sooner or later in return migration, in contrast to permanent migrants who may make return visits [to Moldova] from time to time" (King 2012b: 7), needs to be revisited in the Moldovan case. Furthermore, a high share of undocumented migrants often overstayed their visa and thus were trapped in their destination countries, often for years, unable to move transnationally while hoping to be regularised. Their migration changed to permanent migration without the privilege of being able to return to Moldova on a regular basis or options of other forms of migration, for instance circular migration (e.g. Vianello 2013b). In sum, many Moldovan labour migrants extend their stays for undefined periods, due to various personal or structural reasons, thus disrupting the classical category of temporary migration.

Thirdly, a new group of migrants can be identified, composed of young migrants, mostly high-skilled professionals, students or graduates, unmarried and with no or fewer family obligations of sending remittances. Interestingly, while the current literature on new categories of migration in the research context of Central Eastern European (CEE) migration countries heavily concentrates on this relatively new type of young individualistic migrants, the young educated and mobile elites are mostly absent in the academic literature on Moldovan migration (for CEE migration see for instance Engbersen and Snel 2013). This second migration wave of Moldovan migrants in Western Europe is characterised by individuals in the 18-29 years-old age group (45.3% according to Cheinau-Andrei 2013). They are mostly young high-skilled adults, who work in different professional, academic and arts sectors, or they are students, who join their parents for University education abroad. Although this group of migrants is still smaller than the first wave of Moldovan migrants who migrated to Western Europe around the mid-1990s and many Moldovans still leave their country in order to escape poverty or to prevent their families from enduring poverty, this group of migrants is growing (Mosneaga 2012). Also, migrants belonging to this second migration wave always described themselves as somewhat different from the first wave of migrants who migrated to Western Europe, by stressing that they emigrated in average 15 years later than the members of the first wave, responding to the new post-communist social conditions, and that they start their migration careers with different aims and perspectives from the members of the first migration wave. All of the above-mentioned characteristics match well with Sayad's (1977) concept of the 'second age' of Algerian migrants in France (1977). Therefore, according to this author, I continue to refer in my thesis to this migration wave as 'the second wave of Moldovan migrants' in Western and South-Western Europe. Further drawing on Sayad's concepts of different ages of migration, migrants from the first wave, who migrated mostly for economic reasons, and the 'second wave' of migrants, not only differ in regard to their time of

arrival in the host-countries and their socio-economic characteristics, but they also rarely interact with one another, as we will see in the next chapter. Overall, then, I find that the scope of migration types has become broader. This diversification – reflecting a general global trend towards mixed migration (King 2012b) – is not yet sufficiently depicted in the academic literature on various aspects of the Moldovan migration, that reduces the description of Moldovan migration to the ‘first wave of Moldovan migrants’ within EU member-states. Therefore, like the spread of destination countries and migration patterns, I suggest that this second wave of migrants needs to be better considered in the literature on Moldovan migration.

In summary, this sketch of recent Moldovan migration to Western Europe since the mid-1990s shows that, like many other migration movements, there exists a wide variety of migration patterns and destination countries. Moldovan migration can best be described as ‘multi-faceted’: geographically polycentric and socio-economically varied, extremely intense, largely economically driven, and dynamically altering towards a mixed migration. Even if estimates about the further development of emigration are ambivalent regarding destination countries and their respective labour markets, emigration is still evolving in numbers, and not expected to decrease in volume (Mosneaga 2012). Lastly, my literature review has shown that the majority of scientific articles on Moldovan migration are still inscribed in what I call the ‘2007 migration typology’, emphasising the predominant migration type of Moldovan migrants as ‘temporary’, neglecting the recently started diversification of migration types, as well as the fairly new second wave of Moldovan migrants in Western Europe.

## 5.2 Moving Beyond ‘the Earn and Return Typology’: Four Current Moldovan Migration Realities

I now highlight in more detail four current features of post-communist Moldovan migration, each of which seems to significantly influence migrants’ associational life and their collective development practices. These four features are: actual or anticipated onward migration to other destination countries, lack of socio-cultural integration in the host countries under study, return migration, and family reunification. Because research on Moldovan migration has heavily concentrated on estimating the number of migrants, on remittances, and on the challenges of parental migration on Moldovan families and children left behind, there is a striking lack of qualitative, in-depth research on these current migration characteristics. Given the limited data available, the following investigation is mainly informed by my own primary data – the estimates

of research participants, including accounts from informal talks, in conjunction with their statements on migrants' transnational aid-giving.

#### 5.2.1 "I am 'here' only temporarily, but I don't want to go back 'there' forever": high (intentional) onward migration and constant reorientation

A first understudied migration trend that I argue significantly influences migrants' collective transnational development practices is actual or anticipated onward migration towards more economically successful countries, or return back to Moldova<sup>68</sup>. As outlined in Chapter 2, individual migration experiences are usually more complex than the classical understanding of Moldovan migration as an 'earn and return migration' in a linear, one-way movement from A to B, and then back to A. This is particularly the case if migrants move from one destination country to another, or if they anticipate future onward migration either direct to another country or after a period back in Moldova, like many research participants do. Though my sample cannot be claimed to be representative, I have found that there is a strong tendency of intentional onward migration, especially from South-Western Europe to other European countries or temporarily back to Moldova. Many participants had already lived in other countries than where I encountered them, notably in former CIS-countries like Russia, or in Central European countries where they replaced locals who had migrated westwards (i.e. Poland, the Czech Republic or Romania). The opposite trend was also mentioned, namely that Moldovan families living in crisis-ridden South-West Europe, where employment opportunities have shrunk, relocate to Russia (e.g. from Italy, Spain and Portugal)<sup>69</sup>. With the exceptions of student and marriage migration, every high skilled migrant in my sample, as well as every participant in the UK and in Switzerland<sup>70</sup>, previously had worked in other European destinations.

From a biographical perspective, onward migration results in what research participants, independent of their socio-economic status, age and gender, articulated as having had 'multiple lives': different places of residency, various professional occupations, and fluid family constellations, often accompanied by moments of rupture and disruption. This echoes Sennett's (1999) observation of the contemporary 'over modern flexibility' of individuals as having 'fluid lives'. Migrants' 'constant reorientation' in new and often complex life circumstances were most

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<sup>68</sup> I am informed by King's definition of onward migration "[...] when a move from A to B is succeeded by a move to country C" (2012b: 9).

<sup>69</sup> During my fieldwork in 2013, Russia was still an attractive alternative to South-Western Europe, because of a constant rise in Russian salaries (Iasci /CIVIS 2010). The Ukraine crises in 2014, however, drastically weakened the country's economy. Thus, it is unlikely that this trend will continue, because the social costs of migration to Russia might do not account for the economic advantages anymore.

<sup>70</sup> This is presumably an expression of higher initial migration costs to these two countries compared to other destination countries under study.

apparent when family members lived simultaneously in disparate places. Dragomir's trajectory, a former professor of mathematics, shows a not untypical migrant life-path biography.

Dragomir (construction worker, 48, Paris): I already had many lives (laughs)! I first went to Romania, where I was working in a supermarket together with my fiancée, and then she went back to Moldova. In the meantime, we got married and our son was born. That was the time when I was without them, working in Poland on a pony farm, for let's say two years, before I went to Mestre [Italy] to work in a hotel, for about five years [...] When I lost my job, I went back to Moldova for ehm only a short time, but by the will of destiny, I met my second wife there. And finally, a friend of mine told me that there is work in France, and that's why I am here now, and if everything goes well, my second wife will join me soon.

The trajectory of Marina, a social worker who lives in Rome, is another example of the fragmented character of many participants' life-stories. She migrated first internally with her husband from their village of origin to Chisinau. Whilst her husband later moved to Moscow and then to the Czech Republic, Marina stayed in Chisinau and worked full-time, while their daughter grew up with Marina's mother in the village. Twelve years later, she migrated to Rome, while her husband had migrated from the Czech Republic to Poland<sup>71</sup>.

The writer and intellectual Benjamin Fondane (1898-1944), known as the 'the Odysseus of Bessarabia', aptly summarised the potential effects that onward migration can have on migrants' lives. In the early-middle 20<sup>th</sup> century, he migrated to Paris together with many Romanian intellectuals and artists, mostly Jews. At that point Moldova was a part of Bessarbia (Greater Romania), and strong cultural affinities between Paris and Bucharest – the 'Paris of the East' – existed. Seventy-three years ago, he vividly described in his oeuvre, *'Le voyageur n' a pas fini de voyager'* (1943) (The traveller who has not finished travelling), the emotional state expressed by migrant participants: a feeling of constant departing without the prospect of arrival, integration or recognition. This state of mind is precisely one reason for the migrant leaders' quest for recognition within the local or transnational migrant community, rather than in the host-society, which consequently impacts on migrants' associative development engagement, as we shall see in Chapter 7.

Onward mobility, especially if it is only imagined, can cause sensations of being 'stuck in time' with no immediate plans to go somewhere else. In migrants' narratives, this 'stagnation' was commonly stressed together with worries about missing the right time to begin again.

Mihael (engineer, 29, Orléans): I am here only temporarily, but I don't want to go back there [Moldova] forever [...] I am often scared to miss the moment for moving on, or to get stuck here,

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<sup>71</sup> Four migrants living in Italy and France, with whom I stayed in contact during the writing-up, have in the meantime moved to another country.

although it is not too bad here. But I would like to go somewhere else, because I never imagined staying here forever, but at the moment I don't know where I would like to go [...]. I don't know, sometimes I think it has also to do with luck, and not only with choices, but then you feel responsible anyway, especially when you think that you should have moved on earlier.

The postponement of 'onward' movement disconcerts some migrants. Simmel described this feeling with the 'stranger', namely that: "[...] although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going" (1992: 764).

A significant distinction between onward or serial migration of middle or high-skilled migrants and the majority of Moldovan labour migrants, is that the latter do not regard their second migration as leading beyond the duality of their immigrant situation<sup>72</sup>. Ossman (2013) for instance maintains that: "Serial migrants' narratives indicate that they generally feel settling in a third country as a liberation from the double bind of immigration" (2013: 4). She goes on to say that subsequently serial migrants refer less to their home-country but more to their first migration experience. This is clearly not the case for Moldovan migrants, regardless of their socio-economic status. In contrary, my findings indicate that actual onward-migration, combined with the feeling of 'always departing and never arriving', reaffirms migrants' attachment and their sense of belongingness to Moldova.

This finding has implications for migrants' collective transnational aid-giving. Firstly, and consistent with authors who maintain that a strong sense of belonging to the country of origin is central for migrants' home-country engagement (e.g. Collyer 2013), migrants' strong feelings of attachment to Moldova positively affect their desire to engage in transnational aid-practices; for instance, to fulfil their needs to belong to the local or transnational migrant community, or for maintaining transnational links with individuals 'back home'. Conversely, their actual or anticipated onward migration can also hamper a long-term collective commitment, for example the creation of associations and umbrella-like schemes. In this respect, participants commented that it is rather unlikely that migrants create associations or that they strongly engage in collective charity giving, if they intend to stay somewhere only for a limited period of time.

### 5.2.2 "I am a lone wolf": socio-cultural integration and emotions of belonging(s)

The composition of the Moldovan migrant community varies by the host countries under study. As it would go beyond the scope of this thesis to assess in detail the migrant community in each

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<sup>72</sup> In general, I deem intra-European onward migration of low-skilled European labour migrants less considered in migration research than the onward migration of the European managerial class, the mobile elite, or however we want to name them (see Favell 2008 or Kreutzer and Roth 2006 on this topic).

of the countries, I emphasise those findings which I found to be determinant for migrants' collective humanitarian practices across all host-society contexts.

#### *5.2.2.1 The Moldovan migrant community – an invisible community discretely growing*

In general, migrants considered the attitude of the host-society towards them positively<sup>73</sup>. The traditional characteristics of Moldovans as being humble and adaptable also applies to Moldovan migrants, described as 'patient' and 'good cooperative workers'. In brief:

Dima (taxi driver, 47, Paris): Generally, we are seen as humble, skilled and hardworking labourers abroad. Voilà. We don't cause any problems.

Accordingly, migrants characterise themselves as a 'discrete' and 'invisible' migrant community in Western and South-Western Europe – visible as a migrant community, but invisible as Moldovans. The Moldovan migrant community can also be described as a discretely growing community in the countries under study. Partly, this is because the national statistics do not show the trend of an increase in numbers of Moldovan migrants, since many Moldovans use their Romanian passports in Western Europe<sup>74</sup>.

While some migrants revealed pride in the rather positive attitude towards Moldovan labour migrants, others are slightly weary of their image as calm and modest workers. They pointed to its downside, by stressing the cultural aspect of Moldovans' low self-esteem, considered as a result of Moldova's turbulent past, in which they needed to adopt to various invaders, as highlighted in Chapter 4. In these terms, migrants' 'high-adaptation' due to a lack of self-esteem is regarded as a negative virtue. Moreover, given the invisibility of the Moldovan migrant community as such<sup>75</sup>, participants narrated that their associative activities remain mostly unnoticed in the host-countries, too. In their view, their image as a migrant community of modest demeanour negatively affects their chances to receive institutional and financial support from local authorities for their associations:

Natalia (lecturer and businesswoman, 42, Rome): We will only be a diaspora and get more funding for our activities if we are recognised as a migrant group in the countries of residence. But like

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<sup>73</sup> With the exception of some Italian cities (e.g. Padova, Novellara), where female migrants described their image as negative: e.g. as threats to marriages and families, or as financially abusing Italian men.

<sup>74</sup> An illustrative example of this 'discrete growth' are bus connections between Geneva and Moldova. Three years ago, there existed one weekly bus connection between Geneva and Moldova via Bologna (in order to fill the empty seats). Today there are three weekly direct bus connections between Geneva to Moldova.

<sup>75</sup> With the exception of Novellara, Italy, with a proportionally larger number of Moldovan inhabitants than in other locations under study, where locals refer to 'Moldoveni' as *pars pro toto* for all Eastern European migrants, even if they are aware that many of them are originally from other Eastern European countries.

here in Italy, where many Moldovans live, local administrations often don't even know the difference between Romanians and Moldovans. That's why it's difficult for us to get any support.

Comparable observations were recorded in other locations, in which participants referred to other migrant communities as being more self-confident, and thus more successful in their fundraising activities than the Moldovans. Natasha shares her experience from Paris:

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): Take the Romanians for example. They are more courageous, and they know better their rights and how to stand up for themselves. They talk in a different tone and they are better heard. They are not as shy as we are. I see that all the time here, when I look at their associations. They are more present and they get better funding.

Furthermore, in Villeneuve-Saint-Georges (near Paris), local authorities and migrant associations jointly aimed to improve migrants' living conditions (e.g. language courses, improvement of their housing situations). For this reason, several meetings were held, but no follow-up actions were taken. As I have been told by all parties involved, the postponement of this collaboration had to do with the image of Moldovan migrants as calm and patient, putting the more 'visible migrant communities' on top of the community's agenda, instead.

And last of all, the atmosphere within the migrant community is far from being harmonious, and intra-group tensions exist. Very broadly, migrants' collective experiences abroad are narrated as double-edged: on the one side as a pleasant experience of belonging to a 'loyal flock', and on the other side as being part of a competitive environment, where everybody tries to take advantage of each other<sup>76</sup>. Interestingly, these intra-group tensions are less related to intra-ethnic divisions, for instance between Romanian and Russian speaking Moldovans, as one would assume. Rather, they are a result of new class-formations that have emerged in post-communist Moldova, spilling over to the migrant community, either among migrants of the same migration wave or between the different waves of emigrants, as noted earlier. As I will discuss in more detail in the next chapter, migrants of different classes have little in common besides their shared Socialist past and their personal migration experiences, and they generally do not mix in the same host-country, nor in the transnational space of migrant civil society. However, I find it important to note that the reasons for the lack of inner solidarity within the migrant community should not be reduced to new post-socialist class structures, but should equally take into account the class structures that already existed during Socialism. A commonly neglected aspect in academic research on post-socialist migrant communities is the fact that

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<sup>76</sup> A common mentioned example in this respect was that female migrants claim high commission fees from their co-citizens for work places in the care and home services sector.

lack of solidarity is not a new phenomenon that appeared after the fall of the Soviet Union. As Boian (2001) maintains in the Romanian case, a coherent solidarity during Socialism is a myth. There has always been a lack of inner national and social solidarity during Socialism, which according to the author was built on a fragile societal system that had cracks and flaws.

On the other hand, in line with Jenkins' distinction between an 'inner' and an 'external' definition of identity (2004: 23), the identity of the Moldovan migrant community, and its image in the receiving countries, has always been stressed in differentiation to the Romanian identity in general, and to the Romanian migrant community in particular. During my fieldwork, strong negative media reports in the countries under study on Eastern European migrants, often mixed with an anti-Roma discourse, were omnipresent. Eastern European migrants, and particularly Romanians, were repeatedly associated with criminality, and collectively accused of anti-social behaviour, for instance of social benefit fraud (e.g. Le Point 2013<sup>77</sup>). Surprisingly, the hostile environment towards Romanians does not influence migrants' aspirations to join Romania, nor does it negatively affect migrants' willingness to carry out joint development activities with Romanian associations.<sup>78</sup>

In conclusion, the quote below illustratively shows the unequal images of Romanian and Moldovan migrants in the host-countries, and how participants experience these stereotypes in their daily lives:

Laura (journalist, 37, Bologna): How can I say this: When I am telling people that I am Moldovan then that's ok, even fine. But if I tell them that I speak Romanian, then that's not good, because people here have a very bad image about Romanians. They associate Romanian with Roma, and they turn around if they think you are Romanian. But I would like us to be again part of Romania. [...] And ok, we have a lot of Russian things because of the Soviet Union, but if we join Romania, we would be more developed, both the country as such and also our associations here.

#### 5.2.2.2 *"From the prisons of paradise": low socio-cultural integration of Moldovan migrants*

Although my key interest is the integration of Moldovan migrants into transnational development processes by means of their collective development interventions, and not their integration into the host societies under study, I deem it important to sketch some aspects of migrants' integration in more detail. Firstly, because it impacts on migrants' transnational development practices, and secondly, because contemporary research on Moldovan migration

<sup>77</sup> A typical title I came across during my fieldwork was: *'Elles viennent de l'Est - Ces mafias qui pillent la France'* (They are coming from the East - this mafia that pillages France).

<sup>78</sup> With the exception of Italy, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter.



has neglected aspects of migrants' integration, including the challenges migrants face abroad (Mosneaga 2012)<sup>79</sup>.

As suggested in Chapter 2, I find the distinction between structural integration and socio-cultural integration useful for the analysis of migrants' own reflections on their integration. My findings in this regard can be broadly summarised as consistent with Mosneaga (2012), namely that the majority of migrants are rather well integrated into the societal structures of their respective destination countries (e.g. education, labour market)<sup>80</sup>:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): If you give Moldovans a flat and work, they are integrated. They just want to work. That's all.

From a more scholarly perspective, Moldovans are in general structurally well integrated, but they expressed a lack of socio-cultural integration in the host society; for example, they do not consider themselves as emotionally belonging to that society. The reasons for migrants' lack of socio-cultural integration were frequently associated with their anticipated onward migration and/or return migration. Below, Dragomir and Jure narrate their lack of socio-cultural integration, which in their cases leads to loneliness and a feeling of 'isolation':

Dragomir (construction worker, 48, Paris): Most of us are isolated here. I work all day long and come back in the evening. I feel very lonely here, very lonely. I would like to go back, because I feel so lonely. But I am not going because of my job. But believe me, if I could have work in Moldova, which would allow me a decent life, I would immediately pack my bags and leave.

Jure (electrician and poet, 52, Preganzol): I am not integrated here. I am like a lone wolf, and a lone wolf is not happy. I have never asked anybody for support, neither within the Moldovan community, nor from the state here. Also, when I was living in Poland, I have always tried to manage on my own, by working hard all day long.

Chairpersons of migrant organisations who provide support services for migrants commented that many Moldovans do not put much effort into their integration, simply because they do not envisage staying for very long, even if their consecutive onward mobility or return to Moldova is often delayed. That being said, migrants maintained that 'temporary residency abroad' combined with feelings of 'isolation' generates specific forms of migrants' associative engagements and transnational aid-giving, as we shall see in Chapter 7.

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<sup>79</sup> Apart from two commissioned studies by the IOM (Cheianu-Andrei 2013; IOM 2012a) and one article by Mosneaga (2012), I have not come across any further study on this issue.

<sup>80</sup> Many low-skilled migrants are also not well structurally integrated, especially in the UK, where lack of language skills was mentioned as one of the biggest challenges for many migrants (e.g. 73% of migrants living in the UK reported insufficient language skills, see Cheianu-Andrei (2013)).

Lastly, my findings indicate that the lack of socio-cultural integration in the host countries relates positively with migrants' sustained attachment to Moldova. Despite Moldova's complex and contested identity as a nation-state, the binding element of the migrant community is its strong sense of belonging to Moldova. Even if migrants have been living abroad for several years, the pronounced home-land attachment was strongly present in every interview. With the important exceptions of complaints about endemic corruption, poverty and inequality, all migrants referred positively to Moldova, some even affectionately. Below, Anna, who has been living in Paris for fifteen years, narrates:

Anna (housewife and cleaner, 37, Paris): For me, it is like having two mothers: France and Moldova. But the world still turns around Moldova. It is still the centre of my universe.

Keeping in mind that the majority of migrants still have family members in Moldova, the strong attachment to their country of origin should not come as a surprise. Besides migrants' transnational development practices, their close ties with Moldova are particularly expressed in return visits (on average twice a year or more), long-distance communication – such as daily conversations via Skype or telephone calls with relatives and families 'back home' – as well as the fact that Moldovan migrants remit to their families the highest share of their earnings, compared to other European migrant communities (Piracha and Saraogi 2012).

As I have highlighted in Chapter 4, the social construction of Moldova as a migrants' place of belonging is rooted in the narrative of the 'rural Moldova' and/or the 'village'. In Bachelard's (1957) opinion, a place is a construct of space, time and memory. The place 'home', and the category of 'leaving home' or 'or being gone' is entangled with narratives of 'leaving the village' – often remembered as an idyllic place full of human warmth. Even the urban migrants refer to the image of the village. This is partly because of the maintenance of strong family networks between the only two urban areas (Chisinau and Bălți) and the villages, where many migrants originate from, and where their parents and grandparents live. The local community as the main point of reference of migrants' place of belonging – their way of referring to their place of origin – also shapes the social space of migrants' collective transnational development interventions. Hence, 'the typical site' of migrants' transnational development interventions is precisely their local community. This is one important reason for migrants' low aspirations to integrate their development projects into the abstract transnational space of aidland, beyond the community level, as we shall see in more detail in Chapter 7.

### 5.2.3 “You cannot jump twice into the same river”: delayed return and return visits

My observation on migrants’ ‘high anticipation’ of onward migration also implies considerations of return migration, which proved to significantly impact upon migrants’ collective volunteer-run development interventions. Therefore, I summarise my findings on both migrants’ anticipated return and their physical relocation to Moldova.

For Carling and Pettersen (2014), return intentions are shaped by migrants’ attachment to their country of origin, relative to that of their country of residence. Moldovan migrants remain strongly attached to their country of origin, but they are rather weakly integrated into the host society; these are two interrelated factors, which can favour contemplated return. Yet, this observation clashes with return migration as an acceptable alternative to a life abroad, which involves information and imagination about Moldova as a potential place for fulfilling migrants’ life plans. As we saw in Chapter 4, the migrants’ evaluation of their home country’s future is pessimistic, and they do not consider Moldova as a place to return to yet. Although all migrants in my sample, independent of their gender, age, migration history, and degree of socio-cultural integration, anticipate return, the majority of them extend their stays abroad for undefined periods, often involuntarily<sup>81</sup>. The reasons why migrants do not relocate to Moldova include personal reasons (e.g. to escape from family or relationship problems), better wealth level and work opportunities abroad; also, various structural motives, such as the political instability, the low income and the adequate infrastructure, or the relatively new and growing phenomenon of family reunification abroad can be reasons for non-return. For these reasons, migrants often described Moldova as a place of purely ‘being’ and not ‘becoming’. In Illa’s words:

Illa (care-worker, 36, Novellara): Moldova is the end of the street not the beginning, so if you want to achieve something in life, you can’t stay in Moldova. You need to leave. It’s, you know, as if life passes you by like a river. You need to move on.

Another frequently mentioned issue was the country’s poor investment climate, often paraphrased as a ‘wall’:

Nicolai (unemployed, 31, Padova): I know people who have returned, but after six months they are all back in Italy again, because of this wall! Everybody I know has lost their money, while trying to run against this wall, and then they come back to Italy with nothing.

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<sup>81</sup> This observation is also backed up by an unpublished survey conducted by a migrant association in Germany, which found that, out of 150 migrants, only two envisage a permanent return to Moldova in the next five years.

This 'wall', endemic corruption and unfavourable cultural factors – notably the 'culture of distrust' (see Chapter 4) – complicates the creation of new and viable livelihoods upon migrants' return. Susanna told me a typical migrant story of a failed investment plan upon return to Moldova, often described as being a disorganised country with lack of opportunity structures<sup>82</sup>:

Susanna (au-pair, 28, Aarau): My uncle lived for 10 years in Italy and had saved money. Two years ago, he went back to open up a factory for wood processing. He found a place, workers, everything, but he could not start his business. There were too many rules, too many papers to do, and ehm, all his savings were lost in bureaucracy and bribes. So, he went back to Italy, after having spent all his money just for trying to open up the business.

And Carmen adds:

Carmen (member of a volunteer network, 16, Tiraspol): I would like to stay in Moldova and to become an influential person. But it is hard here, because Moldova is a very poor and corrupted country. My generation needs to work hard so we become richer, and our parents can come back.

Contrary to Carmen's hope that the Moldovan parents will one day return to Moldova, there is a growing public awareness in Moldova that some family member might never return, especially when their children who stayed in Moldova, have grown up in their absence:

Carmen (member of a volunteer network, 16, Tiraspol): 13 years ago, our mother left for Italy. I am 20 now and grown up. It was hard when she left, especially for our father. But we got used to it. Today we all think that she is probably not coming back. Or, let's say, we don't know for sure.

Another frequently stressed reason for delayed return were concerns that migrants would feel like 'strangers at home', meaning that during a migrant's absence, places and people might have changed in a way that would make it impossible for them to readapt. Svetlana narrates, using the same allegory of the river as Illa above:

Svetlana (factory worker and artist, 55, Munich): Those who have lived fifteen years abroad, they have missed out fifteen years. I mean you cannot jump twice into the same river, right? Too much water has been running down in the meantime. The river has continued to flow. It's not the same anymore, and anyhow, why should people come back and swim in that river, if the waters are deeper where they are?

Migrants' obstacles to a potential return and to readapt to Moldova's degrading socio-political environment are also recognised by some aid workers:

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<sup>82</sup> This finding endorses Tejada and her colleagues' results on the main obstacles for the return of high-skilled migrants (Tejada et al. 2013).

William (Director of an International NGO, 56, Chisinau): Politicians still think that the young people who have left Moldova will all come back with another mentality and change the country for good. The problem is that they don't come back. Some of them have not succeeded abroad. Ok, they might actually like to return, but because they think their human value, their human potential is not sufficiently recognised, they stay abroad.

As William mentioned, the lack of recognition of human capital, highlighted in the previous chapter, proved to be another key determinant for migrants' decision to stay abroad. Some participants do not want to return to a context of nepotism and 'recommendations' in which one's social capital is more validated than one's human capital, for instance in the distribution of jobs. So, all in all, it can be said that the reasons why Moldovans do not envisage return migration in the near future are the same as for their departure in the first place. As Natalia summarised:

Natalia (lecturer and businesswoman, 42, Rome): If you want to understand why Moldovans don't want to come back, you need to look within the country, because the reasons why people don't return are the same as why people left in the first place. It's the lack of decently paid jobs, lack of stability, and lack of security for the future. It is not something specific to us, migrants. It is something the country needs to solve for everybody.

Conversely, some civil servants within government ministries and NGOs provided me with an overly optimistic and romanticised picture of current and future trends of return migration, inscribed in the earlier-mentioned 'Earn and Return' rhetoric. In their accounts – often swollen with patriotic connotations – migrants are 'up-rooted' from their lives in Moldova, nobody wants to leave the country for good, and everybody will return sooner or later. Moreover, they think that the emigration peak has passed, meaning that 'those who wanted to leave the country have already left', although the statistics tell another story (see Chapter 1):

Viorica (deputy director of a bilateral aid-agency, 41, Chisinau): I think nobody wants to leave Moldova, and nowadays people also leave less. I mean, those who absolutely wanted to leave, they have already left. And today many people also want to come back. So, no, I don't think emigration is going to be that big an issue any more in the future, not as it used to be.

While these participants are waiting and hoping for the 'good Moldovan spirits' to return, it seems to me that they have somewhat lost sight of reality. Despite the on-going European economic crisis and recession in the wider Eurozone, the 'great return' has not taken place (personal communication with Valeriu Mosneaga, May 2013)<sup>83</sup>.

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<sup>83</sup> At the beginning of the global financial crisis in the year 2008, a similar 'big return' of thousands of 'low-skilled' migrants had been expected. Aid-agencies and the Moldovan authorities were already assessing the likely social impacts and recommended concrete measures (e.g. Expert-Group 2009). Yet, this 'big return' never happened.

Though potential return varies by host country, most migrant participants consider it unlikely that somebody who has a stable life and a job in Western Europe will soon return to Moldova. Although the current crisis affects migrants' lives, for instance they send less remittances to their families, or they have lost their jobs, it does not (yet) catalyse their return in large numbers (Marcu 2014). Instead, migrants who are at risk of falling into vulnerable situations in their host countries are more likely to search for other work options within Western European countries before returning to Moldova. Or, they temporarily return to organise new employment opportunities outside Moldova through friends and families. This type of temporary return migration à la 'stop and go' is, however, not accompanied with the desired 'development return components' imagined by the state and development actors (e.g. investment boosts).

Migrants' collective development interventions are usually initiated abroad, but their implementation requires contacts with a variety of people 'back home' and/or home visits. Return visits play a central role in migrants' transnational development practices, alongside visiting friends or relatives, holidays and other functions. For instance, migrants use their return visits, ranging from a couple of days to two or three months, to prepare, implement or follow-up their humanitarian projects<sup>84</sup>. The following situations, in which the implementation of development projects was an important part of migrants' return visits, were reported: getting in contact or meeting with present or potential counterparts, donor organisations based in Chisinau, local drivers such as local authorities, as well as with migrant leaders living in other destination countries; the delivery of collected material remittances (e.g. books, clothes, toys); and fact-finding missions to evaluate specific needs for future interventions. In addition to these rather obvious reasons, some proved to be rather surprising. The members of a Paris-based association, all female care-workers, for instance, hold their annual assembly in Chisinau. Diana, the president of the association, told me that while being on their summer holidays in Moldova, the members also meet up with their partner organisation, a school for handicapped children, and they have a kick-off meeting for the organisation of their Christmas Charity event in Paris<sup>85</sup>. To my surprise, Diana does not organise these meetings because the members of the association have more time available during their holidays, compared to their long working-days in Paris. Rather, they meet up in Chisinau because of the scattered spatial distribution of the association's members, living in different and often geographically highly dispersed outskirts of Paris (see Chapter 3). From an organisational point of view, it is more complicated for these

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<sup>84</sup> While the functions of such return visits, involving career or investment opportunities, have been the subject of a number of studies, I argue that the synergies between return visits and migrants' development interventions have not been considered with empirical scrutiny (e.g. King and Christou 2011 on various functions of return visits).

<sup>85</sup> This also indicates that the members of this association might not meet on a regular basis in Paris.

migrants to meet up in Paris, with higher travel expenses involved, than in the smaller city of Chisinau, including the surrounding villages, where many of them originate from.

The key conclusion of this section is that Moldova is not yet a place to return to. Although the majority of Moldovan migrants anticipate return, they do not envisage return migration in the near future, due to the country's difficult development transition, its lack of opportunity structures and cultural aspects – such as the lack of recognition of human capital. This exemplifies de Haas's statement that development in migrant-sending regions is a prerequisite for return and/or investment rather than a consequence of migration (2012).

Furthermore, migrants' personal experiences of reintegration in Moldova upon their return have not been studied in depth, and there is still scope for further qualitative research on issues such as temporary return, and the broader relationship between return migration and effective transformative change<sup>86</sup>. This is surprising, given that return-programmes represent a considerable share of bilateral agencies' financial contribution to Moldova's migration–development policies, which I turn to in the next chapter. And last of all, similar to other migrant communities with a longer migration history, the fact that many Moldovan migrants delay their return also means that their intended temporary migration becomes a permanent settlement. Therefore, the distinction between the migration types of 'temporary' and 'permanent' are in reality more overlapping than some researchers and the development industry assume (e.g. Piracha et al. 2012). I suggest, thus, to revisit studies which argue that the more time spent abroad, the more prone Moldovans are to return (e.g. Borodak and Tichit 2014). This is especially so if it is taken into account that one possible consequence of delayed return is migrants' decision to reunify with their families in the host countries, plus the fact that a large percentage of migrants have spent on average 15-20 years abroad. It will be interesting to see if these migrants will one day return to Moldova or not. But for now, only time will tell.

#### 5.2.4 Family reunification

A fairly new discontinuity in Moldovan migration is the processes of family reunification, and the growth of the so-called second generation of Moldovan migrants born abroad. Both research participants and a few scholars maintain that these issues will become more relevant in the future, especially in France, Italy or Portugal, where migration processes are nowadays culturally and institutionally embedded (e.g. Marcu 2014). With an increase in the number of pre-school children, family reunification is regarded as an important determinant for the current increase

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<sup>86</sup> With the exception of Marcu's (2014) study that partially covers some of these aspects.

in Moldovan migration<sup>87</sup>. Furthermore, teenagers and young adults join their parents who have been abroad since they were little. In fact, it was found that a high share of the earlier discussed second Moldovan post-communist migration wave in Europe is composed of the commonly described 'children left behind', who have become young adults in the meantime. These youngsters move mostly after completing high school or their university studies. They migrate either to continue their university education or to work. For instance, the majority of Moldovan students in Italy were born in Moldova and moved to Italy in the process of family reunification (Mosneaga 2012). Furthermore, participants stressed specific understudied characteristics of family reunification related to the high share of female migration. Family reunification often happens without the husbands or fathers of the children, and there are specific challenges for live-in care-workers, which relates to their housing situation (see Vianello 2013a, on female Ukrainian migrants in Italy). More importantly, with regard to migrants' collective transnational aid-practices, several chairmen of associations pointed to family reunification as not being taken seriously into account by the Moldovan state. The complete lack of interest in the family perspective in institutional migration-led programs was frequently criticised. To this end, migrant leaders are now putting pressure on the Moldovan government to put this issue on the migration policy agenda:

Oleg (project manager, 44, Padova): Family reunification is a good example of how little the state knows about us migrants. Or let's say, that they don't know much about our reality here at all. It is a huge topic at the moment, but we needed to come up with it, we had to put it on the agenda.

One reason for the lack of interest in family reunification is that it clashes with the opinion of some researchers and employees of state institutions and aid-agencies who believe that migrants do not want to settle permanently in their destination countries (e.g. Lücke et al. 2007; Piracha et al. 2012). It also goes hand-in-hand with the alarming demographic indications of the country, and a fear of a shortfall of remittances with fewer and diminishing transnational family obligations. Indeed, should family reunification continue to grow, Moldova would be financially very negatively affected, bearing in mind the high share of remittances in the country's budget.

While migrants reported in their interviews that the children of Moldovan migrants who were born and raised in host countries are generally well integrated in society, migrant associations reported a high demand for assistance in social support to parents<sup>88</sup>. The requests

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<sup>87</sup> Approximately 20,000 children moved abroad for family reunification in 2013 (IASCI/NEXUS 2014).

<sup>88</sup> Very briefly, the narratives on this topic can be summarised according to Colombo and his colleagues (2009) as 'different but not stranger'.



for information and support on family-related issues were considered by chairpersons as a major impediment for the building-up of transnational development-oriented activities:

Laura (journalist, 37, Bologna): We are very busy at the moment in supporting migrants with questions related to family reunification, such as where should my child go to school, how does the school system work here, and so on and so forth. Right now, all of these matters take up a lot of our time and resources. And unfortunately, we needed to postpone our umbrella-organisation project and other development initiatives we had in the pipeline.

Given that, to my knowledge, there is no in-depth research on the issues of Moldovan family reunification and the second generation of Moldovan migrants in these countries, I find it difficult to gauge potential generational changes in patterns of migrants' collective transnational aid-giving; e.g. if the second generation's ties with Moldova become less significant than those retained by the first generation. On the whole, it is probably too early to draw conclusions on any genealogical variations on the passing-on of transnational development practices from the first generation to the second, because the second generation of Moldovan migrants born abroad is still quite young (mostly children or teenagers). Hence, there is doubtlessly scope for future qualitative research on the specificity of Moldovan family reunification migration, and on the so-called 'second generation' of Moldovan migrants.

Summing up my findings on the four interrelated migration features – onward migration, low-socio-cultural integration, anticipated return, and family reunification – I see considerable research gaps. Hence, I suggest it is time to shift the dominant research focus from remittances and 'children and elderly left behind' to the everyday life of migrants. I encourage these fairly new migration realities to be considered as key factors worth thinking about in future migration-led development policy-making. A shift of the research focus towards aspects of migrants' integration is central for a better knowledge of the morphology of the migrant community and its capacity to carry out transnational practices. It is also crucial for providing adequate support services for migrant associations and their development contributions, and for preventing unrealistic expectations and costly mismatches. Given the closeness of some migrant associations to migrants' everyday life and the challenges they face abroad, they could play an important role in addressing these knowledge gaps on the current realities of Moldovan migrants, by providing policy makers and researchers with first-hand information. This opportunity, however, has not been taken up by the state, nor by migration–development actors or researchers. In lieu of partners, the role of migrant associations remains largely restricted to 'contact points' and cheap 'service providers' for researchers, consultants and development workers alike, as we shall see in the next chapter.

### 5.3. "Misery is in Italy, Poverty in Moldova": Ideological and Normative Shifts of How the Moldovan State and its Key Development Actors Portrays its Absentees

In the remainder of this chapter, I would like to address the viewpoint of the state and its key development actors on the Moldovan migrant community, so as to better understand their expectations on migrant associations' integration into the development of Moldova.

There have been substantial discontinuities and fractures in recent years in how the Moldovan government portrays emigrants on an institutional level. Firstly, the states' interest to engage with its citizens, especially those living West of Moldova, roughly started around the 'Twitter-Revolution' in 2009, when the Communist Party was replaced by the new pro-European coalition government. Prior to this, the government regarded the exodus of labour emigrants towards Western Europe as unproblematic, because they had not voted for them (Salah 2008). Another reason for the government's complacent position towards its emigrants was that migration was regarded as a safety valve for unemployment in Moldova's difficult economic situation throughout the 1990s (Salah 2008). Therefore, the most common response of Moldova's state institutions was to ignore those who had left, according to the saying 'out of sight, out of mind'.

Secondly, like in other countries with comparable migration characteristics, migrants were chiefly regarded by the state as traitors (e.g. Vullnetari 2013 on Albania). My analysis of the secondary data shows that even today we find a negative picture of emigrants, especially in NGO and consultancy reports, which is an expression of the overall discomfort with Moldova's mass emigration among development actors (e.g. SDC 2014). The negative image is fuelled by the high share of female migrants, provoking an additional negative normative public discourse on migrants, associated with the topic of 'family and children left behind' (e.g. Robila 2014). Consistent with Tyldum's (2015) observation on Ukrainian female care-workers, there is a special widespread stigmata produced in the popular discourse and in some of the studies on high-qualified Moldovan women experiencing de-skilling abroad (e.g. Cheianu-Andrei 2013). Also, migrants in London, Switzerland and Germany who pursue high-skilled jobs have negatively commented on the decision of these women to migrate in order to pursue low-skilled jobs, as purely 'a means for achieving an improved lifestyle at the cost of their families'<sup>89</sup>:

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<sup>89</sup> The high-skilled men's decision to migrate, even if they also experienced de-skilling, has been considered more rational.

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): I know very well educated and intelligent women who leave their families just for buying new curtains. And when they are back, they invite their neighbours for tea to show them around the house, to show them the new curtains. And of course, they won't tell anybody that they are living in absolute misery abroad. Really, in absolute misery.

I have also observed a shift of 'disloyalty' towards migrant families, especially towards the children of migrants, born abroad. Some participants, chiefly employees of state institutions, consider children who have grown up without or few Romanian language skills as the new 'lost souls of Moldova', and thus they become a blunt pejorative. While migrant leaders highlighted a general lack of interest by state authorities and consultants in the issue of family reunification, a special growing attention is given to these 'lost souls' in reports and recommendations for Moldova's diaspora policy (e.g. Cheianu-Andrei 2013). Recommendations for public authorities with regard to migrant associations highlight in a prominent way the importance of culturally oriented activities for the children of Moldovan migrants. They suggest to migrant associations the promotion of national culture, the donation of books in the Romanian language, or Romanian language courses (e.g. Bureau 2014; Cheianu-Andrei 2013). This interest differs from the one requested by the chairs of migrant associations, and exemplifies one paradoxical approach of state and development institutions on current migration trends and support to migrant associations.

Thirdly, alongside portraying emigrants as 'disloyal compatriots', a second narrative of the development community in Moldova is the 'migrant victim', omnipresent in promotional material of aid-agencies, but highly criticised by migrant leaders (e.g. in videos and leaflets)<sup>90</sup>. A concise example of an evocative portrait of the daily lives of migrants, according to the title of this section – 'Misery is in Italy, poverty in Moldova' – is a theatre play, which caused high emotions among migrant leaders. The play '*Oameni Ai Nimanui*' (Nobody's People), created on behalf of the IOM, the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, and the Moldovan Ministry of Social Protection and Family, was performed in 2012 in different Italian towns in cooperation with migrant associations and local cultural authorities (e.g. in Mestre, Padova, Rome and Reggio Emilia). Some migrant leaders in these regions, with whom I had watched the play on DVD, commented on the play as an unrealistic portrait of migrants' extreme suffering and exploitation

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<sup>90</sup> As Foucault (2004) maintains, in most cases, different discourses influence or establish the same social field. Furthermore, the discourse of the 'migrant victim' is not limited to migrants' reality abroad, but equally encompasses children and the elderly left behind (e.g. SDC 2014).

– a ‘humiliation’ of Moldovan migrants altogether, and as a personal affront<sup>91</sup>. Therefore, they refused to take part in its distribution<sup>92</sup>.

Fourthly, the global shift in the conceptual framing of the ‘key-figure’ migrant partner in the international migration–development debate, namely the migrant self-entrepreneur, is also brought into the Moldovan migration–development context (see Chapter 2). The import of this international discursive subject required a considerable shift away from the diametrically opposed portrait of the Moldovan ‘migrant traitor’ and vulnerable ‘migrant victim’ of human trafficking and other forms of exploitation, exemplified in the theatre play. Tellingly, Vasile said:

Vasile (IT-engineer, 45, London): Certainly, the majority of migrants are not criminals, and just because they are illegal, they are not criminals. All of this criminalisation and victimisation was a big issue up to recently in Moldova. But now, this discussion has changed, because the state can’t criminalise people anymore if they expect money from them. You can’t ask criminals for financial support, can you?

Subsequently, the shift in the discursive subject from the migrant traitor and victim to the migrant partner for development provoked a change in migration-led programmes:

Viorica (deputy director of a bilateral aid-agency, 41, Chisinau): Until now, we have concentrated our work on issues such as fighting illegal migration and trafficking. But together with our partners, we are now getting involved in migration–development programmes.

These migration–development programmes are heavily inscribed in the neo-classical economic paradigm, based on rational-choice principles of utility maximisation, personified in the discursive subject of the migrant as a self-motivating, ‘responsibilised’ subject and private sector actor (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012). This means that the main migration driver is usually limited to the improvement of a migrant’s income and savings. The idea of the ‘migrant saver’ and ‘depositor’ is overly present in programme components of large migration–development interventions, for instance in a platform of various support services for migrants (IASCI/Nexus 2014). In this programme, migration is conceptualised as a business field. It is assumed that the Moldovan state does not fully leverage the potential of ‘the economic sector of migration’, and Moldova’s dealing with emigrants is seen as a business failure. The solution is thus to fill gaps in this market with products for the migrant ‘saver’ and ‘depositor’ to accumulate as much capital as possible in order to return and invest it in Moldova (e.g. IASCI/Nexus 2014; PARE 1+1 2013).

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<sup>91</sup> E.g. the play shows scenes of violence against female care-workers or sex-workers.

<sup>92</sup> This negative portrait does not come as a surprise, bearing in mind that local employees of international aid-agencies in Chisinau, mainly responsible for the promotion of migration-led programmes, are themselves highly-skilled Moldovans, or even former highly-skilled migrants.

Lastly, the current way of how the Moldovan state and the development industry constructs its absentees is not only a result of international development expertise and best-practice mechanisms spilling over to the national context of Moldova. It is also the result of a new interpretation by aid-workers and state employees of a 'transformed diaspora' or 'a transformed migrant community'. In Portes' view, the ability of migration to trigger social change in a sending or a receiving country depends on three factors: the numbers of migrants involved, the duration of the movement and its class composition (2010: 1545). Considering Moldovan migration towards Western and South-Western Europe, the factors of class composition and the numbers relative to Moldova's population have been given since the mid-1990s. But its duration is quite short compared to other countries. The growing duration of Moldovan post-communist migration was frequently taken up by employees of the development industry and state institutions. They stressed that Moldovan migration has turned into a 'transformed Moldovan migrant community', based on beliefs that the situation of migrants has considerably improved since the mid-late 1990s. Therefore, they are now ready to be integrated into state-led development efforts. This view is expressed in the following two quotes:

Viorica (deputy director of a bilateral aid-agency, 41, Chisinau): Now they [the Government] treats the migrants not as a vulnerable category anymore, because they are very skilled now, and many of them are very courageous and have good lives now. The most vulnerable people are those who are left behind here, without any support from abroad.

Ionela (project officer for a governmental organisation, 34, Chisinau): We have like a new diaspora, a new migrant class. These are smart people. Most of our best people have left the country, and I think they start to transform the diaspora now, and the image of our diaspora. They also create more associations for doing good things here now. And I really think we can now start to work with them.

Accordingly, narratives on the 'transformed diaspora' were articulated with assumptions that migrant associations have improved their professional skills, which allows them to respond better to the development interests of the government. Dora's statement is inscribed within this logic:

Dora (consultant, 42, Chisinau): When somebody leaves the country, he is not very interested to participate in the decision process of the country. At the beginning, migrants focus on their personal interests, to find jobs and to make money. Now the struggle of migrants is not a big concern anymore, and they think, ok, now I can participate in the political processes, or maybe in an association, where I can use my knowledge. And I think that's why their associations are also more professional now and more consulted by the government.

Reflecting on this, the development industry's and state's perception of the Moldovan

migrant community can be compared to Sayad's concept of the 'third age' of the Algerian migrant community in France – as a 'a true Moldovan colony', which constitutes itself as a 'micro-society', relatively autonomous with respect to both Moldova and the host-countries (1977: 59). Similar to the Algerian case, this 'Moldovan colony' is assumed to be largely composed of the 'first generation' of economic migrants. They are regarded as well-settled with an improved standard of living compared to their time of departure, or they are considered as well-off members of the second Moldovan post-communist migration wave in Western Europe, the high-skilled migrants and students. To this end, some participants assert that nowadays, as time has passed, the potential of migrants' economic and human capital for Moldova's development is enhanced.

Undoubtedly, as signalled in Chapter 2, migration is a situational process. The fact that many migrants obtained in the course of their migration Romanian citizenship or legal status in their countries of residences, has certainly enhanced migrants' capability to engage in transnational development practices. Due to the long processes of regularisation of migrants' status, for instance, return visits to promote development interventions in Moldova were not possible for many migrants for a number of years. Yet, as we shall see in Chapter 7, there is a substantial discrepancy between the idea of the 'transformed diaspora' or the 'third age of Moldovan migration' and migrant leaders' self-reflection on the morphological transformation of their development community, which they regard as in-the-making, rather than as accomplished. Moreover, migrants narrated that the idea of a new 'transformed Moldovan diaspora' needs to be put in perspective, as it hinges on a number of claims, such as unrealistic expectations about migrants' capacities to contribute to development by means of investments or collective development practices. The belief of a 'transformed Moldovan diaspora', composed of the 'settled and rather well-off migrants' belonging to both migration waves, masks the reality of a relatively large number of migrants who still face difficult challenges in their daily lives<sup>93</sup>. Migrant leaders often stressed these challenges as obstacles for their collective transnational development contributions:

Oleg (project manager, 44, Padova): At the moment, we are still very occupied with some urgent challenges of migrants here, and also with their close families back in Moldova. It absorbs almost all of our time and energy, and you have to understand that with 1000 Euro or 1200 Euro salary a month, and a family back home, you can't invest money in charity projects.

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<sup>93</sup> E.g. challenges related to labour discrimination or family reunification, lack of choice to migrate in the first place and/or the fact that many migrants are forced to extend their stays by compromising their private lives.

Although this new interpretation of a 'transformed Moldovan diaspora' is a handy working-concept for the development community and the state, and less fraught with complexity than the concept of migration as a social phenomenon, that elides easy categorisation, the abstract use of the term 'transformed diaspora' in the headquarters of governmental organisations conceals the real-life challenges of many migrants who are still struggling<sup>94</sup>. Further, given the lack of research on Moldovan migrants' everyday lives, the idea of a 'transformed migrant community' is to a large extent based on assumptions, rather than on evidence.

Lastly, as discussed in Chapter 2, on a broader geographical scale, the 'discursive subject' of the migration–development debate is mostly portrayed as “a hard-working international male migrant living in the Global North who retains active and meaningful connections to a home place in the Global South” (Page and Mercer 2012: 2). This ideal type features in promotional videos and in testimonies of 'migrants in action for development'. In these, the person usually wears a business-suit and carries a business-suitcase, while travelling back and forth between his own newly opened business in the country of origin and his workplace in the host country (e.g. Flüglein 2012). As such, the 'ideal Moldovan migrant development partner' is likewise described as a dynamic and mobile male travelling frequently between his country of residence and Moldova (e.g. Tjeda 2013). The perspective of participants and researchers on the 'active member of the transformed Moldovan diaspora' is often a synonym for the *transmigrant* who belongs to “a new class of immigrants, economic entrepreneurs or political activists who conduct cross-border activities on a regular basis” (Guarnizo et al. 2003: 1212). However, the majority of research participants who are engaged in collective development contributions have no similarity with this young mobile entrepreneur, or the *transmigrant*. Most Moldovan migrants do not correspond with the ideal type of a transnationally engaged migrant, because they are less mobile, less high-skilled, or because they experienced de-skilling. Instead, they resemble more the description of aid-workers and employees of state institutions of the *migrants*, who are narrated as less mobile, less collectively engaged for development, and also include women.

In sum, despite a considerable shift in the perception of migrants as traitors and victims, to investors and partners for Moldova's development, the perspectives of the second group of research participants on migrants' realities and their capability to collectively contribute to the country's development remain somewhat paradoxical. Similar to my finding on the state's and mainstream development actors' ambivalent dealing with the country's large-scale emigration in Chapter 4, there exists a controversial normative public discourse on Moldovan emigrants,

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<sup>94</sup> See Düvell and Vogel (2006) on the tensions between sociological typologies and state categories in the Polish case.

which can be best summarised with the famous quote of the Swiss writer Max Frisch (1911-1991). Referring to Italian guest-workers in Switzerland, he proclaimed almost 50 years ago: “We asked for manpower, and people came” (1967: 100). Frisch criticised Switzerland’s attitude of welcoming migrants as workers, but not as humans. Still accurate in many ways, Frisch’s statement applies in a reversed logic to the description of Moldovan emigrants by aid-workers and civil servants – it is commonly accepted for Moldovans to leave their home country as labourers to provide for their families’ daily needs, or as remitters to alleviate national poverty, and to guarantee the country’s survival. But as human beings, especially as parents, it is still inopportune to leave the family and the country behind. Thus, even if the magnitude of Moldovan migration is tangible in the public discourse, it does not (yet) fully bring about the acceptance of migration as a strategy for achieving social and economic mobility, or an improved life-style. And migration is certainly not (yet) recognised in the public discourse to the same degree as the notion of the ‘transformed diaspora’ applied by aid-agencies and state authorities in the sense of Sayad’s ‘third age’ of Moldovan migration (1977).

#### 5.4 Conclusion

In the first two sections of this chapter, I mapped the main trends of Moldova’s substantial post-socialist migration. We saw that Moldovan migration is multi-faceted in all of its aspects. It is geographically polycentric and socio-economically varied, extremely intense, largely economically driven, and dynamic. Further, I have argued that it is currently altering towards a mixed migration, and that there is an emerging new second wave of Moldovan post-communist migration towards Western Europe, which is not reflected in the academic literature on Moldovan migration. I then introduced my findings on four interrelated features of current Moldovan migration, which I deem of growing relevance, but which have not been sufficiently considered in research on current Moldovan migration, nor in the Moldovan migration–development policy discourse. These are:

- § onward migration, accompanied by various challenges for migrants, such as constant reorientations in new life circumstances, which I have argued enhance migrants’ sense of belongingness and attachment to Moldova;
- § lack of socio-cultural integration in the host countries under study, frequently expressed as ‘isolation’;
- § delayed anticipated return migration, meaning that many migrants involuntarily extend their stays abroad for undefined periods due to the country’s difficult development transition and



its lack of opportunity structures, which turns a planned temporary migration into a longer or permanent stay;

- § and lastly, processes of settlement, such as family reunification that, like the migrants' delayed return, do not fit into the common description of Moldovan migration as the 'Earn and Return' reality, which I have argued is mainly based on the '2007 Moldovan migration typology'.

*This leads us to the first key finding of this chapter, namely that there are considerable research gaps on current Moldovan migration trends, including the often-complex individual migration experiences of many Moldovans. This encompasses issues of integration and new forms of migration pattern, such as actual or anticipated onward mobility, and family reunification. Thus, the findings of this chapter shed light on current understudied migration realities that impact upon migrants' collective transnational development practices, either because they are perceived by participants as an impediment for migrants' capacity to carry out transnational development interventions, or because they generate specific patterns of transnational help-practices.*

Secondly, we saw that, in a fairly short period of time, there has been a quite radical shift from one extreme to the other in how the Moldovan state and its key development partners reflect on the migrant 'absentees' since Moldova's independence in 1991.

*The second finding of this chapter is that there has been a rapid swing in how the Moldovan state and its key development partners portrays migrants, from ignoring them, to then viewing them as traitors and scapegoats for the country's demographic and social distress, to seeing them as victims, and most recently, to constructing them as economic partners and sponsors for the country's positive change.*

This fast and multi-stage discursive shift, catalysed by a large number of international migration–development interventions in Moldova, necessitated an adjustment of the perception of the 'Moldovan diaspora' at large, which I found expressed in the widespread idea of a 'transformed diaspora'. While in the published migration research these fairly new patterns of Moldovan migration and integration aspects have not yet been seriously scrutinised, the state and its key development actors' understanding of the new Moldovan migrant civil society is built on the assumption that changes in migration patterns toward a more long-term migration have already occurred. It is believed that this 'new Moldovan diaspora' is now composed of the settled and more well-off transmigrants belonging to the first post-communist migration wave, or to the second, who have undergone less de-skilling than the first group of migrants. In my view, the idea of this new 'transformed diaspora' is based on assumptions rather than on

evidence, and leads to politics which neglect the everyday practices and economic relations in which migrants' transnational humanitarian practices unfold.

*The third key finding of this chapter is that the state and development policy makers regard the transformation of the Moldovan migrant community as a fait accompli, in the sense of an established Moldovan migrant community according to Sayad (1977), ready to be integrated into the country's development. But research on the daily lives of migrants is still in the grip of the somewhat outdated typology of temporary migration inscribed in the logic of the 'Earn and Return' model.*

Even if gaps between migration realities and policies are common in almost every country, I find the Moldovan case a particularly striking example in this regard.

*To this end, the fourth main conclusion is that it is important to introduce the missing present – the current various aspects of migrants' every-day lives, experiences and challenges.*

As highlighted in Chapter 2, some authors maintain that the current international debate on migration and development has evolved rather separately from general migration theory, which according to them leads to the present one-dimensional economic viewpoint on the global macro discourse (e.g. de Haas 2010; Skeldon 2012). In the Moldovan case, I assert, migration–development policies evolved not only separately from research on Moldovan migration, but research on Moldovan migrants simply lags behind the highly active international migration–development scene in Moldova. This leads to unrealistic expectations on migrants' impact on the country's developmental transformation by means of return, investments and migrant associations, and can cause costly mismatches in services and programmes provided to migrants and their associations.

*The fifth key finding of this chapter is that in discussions surrounding the enhancement of links between Moldova and the migrants, the fact that Moldovan migration patterns are currently transforming, too, has been side-lined. This leads to irritation among all actors involved, and fuels the existing contested views on Moldovan migration in general, and on the migrants' world in particular.*

These remarks on the how the state depicts its absentees form the starting point for my investigation into how Moldova and its development partners encourage migrants to get organised for development. As we shall see, not only is Moldova's transformation and migration ambivalent, but so is the newly created support structure to engage with migrants and their associations.

## CHAPTER 6

### **'Channelling the Good Spirits': Moldova's Engagement with its Emigrants and Migrant Associations**

This empirical chapter tells the story of Moldova's evolving policy strategies towards its absentees, the role of migrant associations as transnational actors in promoting positive change in the country and their involvement in the process of emigrant policy making. The foundation and activities of migrant associations can be analysed from a variety of perspectives. Whilst much of the current research on migrant associations explains migrants' collective practices by highlighting their cultural characteristics, the political opportunity structures in migrant host countries and migrants' political participation in the destination countries (e.g. Pirkkalainen et al. 2013), less attention has been paid to the structural support for migrant associations provided by the countries of origin and their international development partners. This chapter focuses on migrant associations' transnational development interventions with specific reference to Moldova's new opportunity structures for emigrant engagement.

The chapter starts with a schematic overview of Moldova's evolving migration–development policies towards its emigrants, applying the analytical template of the macro policy rhetoric of migration as a positive contribution to development, as explored in the Chapters 2 and 5. Special focus is given to the creation of institutionalised forms of migrant association-led policies and programmes. This will be followed by an overview of the characteristics of Moldovan migrant associations and their capacity to carry out transnational development projects. The last section discusses migrants' views of Moldova's efforts to engage with migrants, and on their personal experiences of participating in emigrant policy making. The main emphasis is put on the discrepancies between migrants' aspirations and their needs to carry out collective transnational development efforts and the newly set up state-support structures.

## 6.1 Moldova's Creation of Policy Mechanisms for Migrants' Involvement in Development

In the first part of this section, I provide an overview of Moldova's evolving migration–development programmes and policies. Secondly, I explore in more detail the institutional mechanisms aimed at supporting migrant associations' development engagement.

### 6.1.1 Reaching out to migrants for Moldova's development

Although Moldova has experienced one of the most significant emigrations in proportion to its population in Europe, its migration policies lagged for a long time far behind. The country's laissez-faire attitude to migration policy changed around 12 years ago due to external pressure from the country's key development partners. Since then, the legislative and executive powers reviewed their policy and reorganised the government institutions responsible for its implementation. In 2003, the government adopted a decree concerning the migration policy concept of Moldova, with the main objective to strengthen control mechanisms of migration and to optimise its management (IOM 2012). The new legal framework also included a number of bilateral migration-policy agreements in the field of social protection and flexible citizenship laws between Moldova and countries with a high share of Moldovan migrants – such as Portugal, Italy and Romania (Mosneaga 2012). Further advances in the migration domain were made with the launch of the visa action plan in 2010. Since then, the government has passed an impressive 42 bills for the Bureau for Asylum and Migration to fight illegal immigration and to improve border security and asylum policy, which currently present the largest share of Moldova's official aid-assistance in the migration field (EU 2013d). Participants from relevant state authorities and IOs frequently cited these new bills as a big success story. However, only 92 refugees and 76 asylum seekers were registered in Moldova in the year 2013, which suggests that these migrant groups do not present a major social challenge for the country (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova 2013b)<sup>95</sup>.

In contrast, though emigrants currently represent at least 30% of the country's population and have long and firmly contributed to the socio-economic expansion of Moldova, important knowledge-gaps on the Moldovan migrant community persist (see Chapter 5). For instance, there are still significant variations in estimates of the number of Moldovan emigrants, despite

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<sup>95</sup> The number of immigrants has even decreased (Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova 2013b). The number of refugees figured constantly between 80 and 90 in the last few years. According to participants working for the Bureau of Asylum the sharp rise in refugees within wider Europe throughout the year 2015 did not affect Moldova.

large foreign-aid investments in commissioned research on 'Diaspora mappings' (e.g. Cheianu-Andrei 2013; Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Moldova 2013b)<sup>96</sup>:

Viorica (deputy director of a bilateral aid-agency, 41, Chisinau): We don't know the number of emigrants. Maybe 850,000 to more than 1 million? This is a concern. How many emigrants do we have? How many have returned? We don't have valuable statistics for that. We don't know these things.

Despite limited information on Moldovan migrants, state institutions gradually started to consider migrants as actors for promoting positive change in Moldova. Initial attempts to court the migrant community were launched at the policy seminar 'Diaspora and Homeland Development' in 2008, organised by the IOM, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the EU Department of European Integration (MFAEI) (IOM 2008). Since then, Moldovan migration–development policies have followed the trends of the global help-industry, outlined in Chapters 2 and 5. They aim to create political, legal and social conditions to allow emigration to have the largest possible impact on Moldova, and they revolve around the 'development mantra' consisting of the three main themes: economic aspects of remittances for poverty alleviation, the improvement of linkages between the government and its diaspora, and the return of skilled migrants.

The first priority area of migration–development programmes was stimulating return migration. Various return and investment schemes financed by the Swedish Public Employment Service (2014) and other international aid-agencies as well as the government programme PARE 1+1, a programme for attracting remittances into Moldova's economy, were established (e.g. Hilfswerk Austria 2013; IASCI/Nexus 2014; PARE 1+1 2013; SDC 2013). All research participants prominently highlighted 'return and investments' as a way of enhancing migrants' contribution to Moldova's development. Yet efforts to motivate migrants to return were in most cases unsuccessful, either because migrants were not interested in permanent return, or because the small businesses set up by migrants with the support of 'return and investment programmes' often failed (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the argument that migrants return with 'enhanced' human capital, prominently stressed in the development policy literature, proved to be illusory in the Moldovan case, partly because the majority of migrants experienced de-skilling abroad. Participants leading programmes on this topic observed very little 'up-skilling' or 'brain gaining',

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<sup>96</sup> The improvement of statistical data is part of the 'Strategy on Migration and Asylum within the EU Action plan' (EU Assessment-mission to the Republic of Moldova-EU Moldova Visa Dialogue 2013).

and they estimated migrants' accumulated human and social capital upon return as being rather limited<sup>97</sup>.

Another central issue regarding return migration and expected positive change, commonly pointed out by migrants, is that while the political elite maintains a strong official policy discourse to incite migrants to return, they are not genuinely interested in the actual social process of the return of Moldovan citizens. In migrants' views, the state's interest in its 'absentees' lays solely in the prompt delivery of remittances. More broadly, migrants' standpoint on return migration echoes that of scholars on economic remittances and their impact on social change in migrants' countries of origin, namely that remittances can help to maintain a certain elite in place, while return makes them more vulnerable (e.g. Glick Schiller 2012). As Dima half-jokingly commented:

Dima (taxi driver, 47, Paris): Return will only bring change if we all come back in masses. We need to come back in thousands, all entering the country at the same time. Only then, something will change in our Moldova, because then our politicians will need to do something.

By all accounts, programmes for attracting remittances into economic investments have yielded few concrete results. Partly, this is because the Moldovan government and its development partners have perpetuated the dominant international policy-category of 'return' without considering the country's weak socio-political and economic situation and migrants' reluctance to return.

Secondly, since the state authorities have recognised that " [...] return not necessarily is the end product of the migration cycle" (Nyberg-Soerensen et al. 2003: 297), and since they have accepted that migrants can also contribute to development via transnational modes of development efforts, the focus of migration–development policies has significantly shifted and is not exclusively tied to the 'return and investment' component anymore. Ionela narrates this shift:

Ionela (project officer for a governmental organisation, 34, Chisinau): Since the government realised that you can't force migrants who earn money for their families abroad to come back and invest here, policies became more diversified. Today, we even have programs on how to use the linkages between migrant associations and Moldova. This is a big evolution for us, because before that, let's say in 2009, the Government's policy was limited to import our people back.

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<sup>97</sup> Additionally, it was found that migrants most likely to return in the near future, are those with a short migration history up to five years. Because their families usually stayed in Moldova, and because of the difficult economic situation in some of the host-countries under study, they are rarely able to accumulate sufficient financial capital to enrol in investment-led 'return for development programmes'.

Indeed, the situation has drastically changed. Moldova is currently the country with the most implemented and experienced migration–development initiatives by the European Commission in the EU-neighbourhood area (EU 2013c). Further, my secondary data-analysis of aid-agencies, the IOM, and different UN-agencies reveals that, in the year 2013 alone, an impressive number of 46 multifaceted migration–development interventions with a total budget of around 26 million Euros were carried out in the small country. The large amount of donor funding confirms my argument brought forward in Chapter 2, that the boom of migration–development programmes is by far not over, at least not in Moldova<sup>98</sup>.

Eyben maintains that development policymaking calls for "functional and mostly 'over-used' but 'under-theorised' concepts" designed by the international donor community (2000: 15). A concise example of such an 'over-used' concept is the strong focus on high-skilled migrants, while the diversity of the multi-faceted Moldovan migrant community in all of its aspects is not reflected in Moldova's second round of migration–development policies. Large-scale schemes mainly provide services for the discursive subject of the 'entrepreneurial-self migrant' to release financial capital via migration-related financial products (e.g. saving schemes or insurance policies), migrants' access to funds, or by hosting conferences, job-fairs, and business forums in and outside Moldova (e.g. IASCI/Nexus 2014)<sup>99</sup>. That being said, the majority of migration–development programmes are tailored for the small group of elite movers, who represent a dwindling minority among Moldovan migrants (e.g. Academy of Sciences of Moldova 2009; CIM 2013; Varzari et al. 2014). An illustrative example of such imported 'talent-programmes', aiming at bringing the 'smart diaspora' back to Moldova – symbolically called 'home' – is the Student Gala (see Figure 6.1). It addresses high-achieving international students and promising young academics, and awards successful candidates with a prize in a festive ceremony in the Parliament building. However, the chairwoman of a student association in Paris involved in the recruitment process of candidates, explained to me that these programmes did not yield the expected results of attracting the candidates' interests in a future work-place in Moldova. The young talents were primarily interested in the symbolic capital of honour and in the free flight to Moldova, rather than in a return to Moldova in the near future<sup>100</sup> (Student GALA 2015).

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<sup>98</sup> Not included in this analysis are programmes targeting symptoms of migration-related challenges to which I referred in Chapter 4. These address the discursive subject of the migrant victim; children with both parents living abroad, also called 'Euro-orphans', the elderly left behind (the 'orphan pensioners', King and Vullnetari 2006) and victims of human trafficking.

<sup>99</sup> These programs are in most cases implemented by bilateral agencies within the EU-Mobility Partnership agreement.

<sup>100</sup> Lack of recognition of human capital in a professional context of clientelism and the kleptocratic and inefficient political system which has been governing Moldova for decades, as well as hostility of the local society towards successful migrants, were the main reasons for not returning to Moldova.

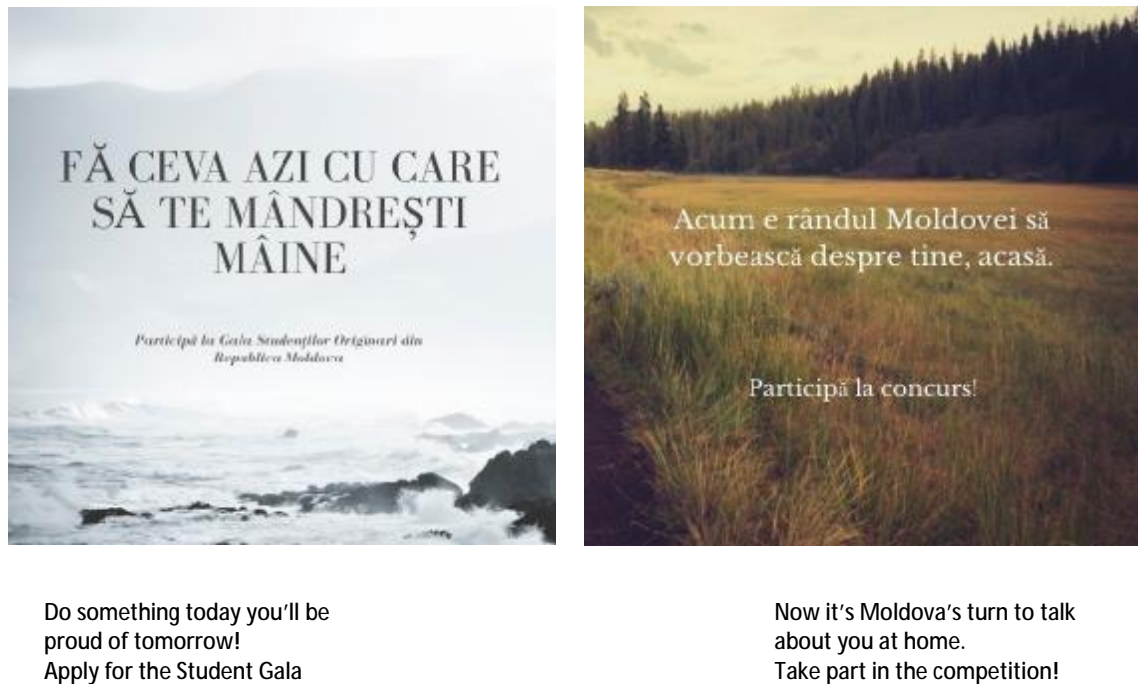


Figure 6.1: Talent-programmes

Thirdly, on a structural level, a federal institutional approach was created in 2012, aimed at coordinating migrant-led programmes and policies in the form of the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora (BRD), to which I have already referred in Chapter 4. The Bureau is directly subordinated to the prime minister and partially financed by the IOM, the EU and the SDC (SDC 2014). Its strategy entails, among others, the improvement of linkages between Moldova and the diaspora, the enhancement of migrants' role as development actors through support and coordination of migrants' activities, and the extension of initiatives for migrants' integration into national development strategies (BRD 2014)<sup>101</sup>. Concurrently, a year later, a second approach of mainstreaming migration into national development planning was launched, in which every ministry appointed a deputy minister responsible for diaspora issues (EU 2013a). The programme is financially and technically supported by the same development agencies as the Bureau (GPMD 2014, IOM 2014). It seems perfectly reasonable to include migration into local and national sector policy strategies, for instance into the labour market or social security policies, given the magnitude of Moldovan migration and its impact on the social fabric of the

<sup>101</sup> Among the first actions carried out by the Bureau was a festival for migrant families in Chisinau and the establishment of an interactive internet platform providing information for Moldovans living abroad (e.g. on pension funds, on how to open up a business in Moldova) (<http://din.md> [last accessed: January 2016]).



entire society. However, mainstreaming-programmes are ambitious and demand governance. Keeping in mind the limited capacity of Moldova's public and private institutions and the lack of harmonisation between ministries, discussed in Chapter 4, I personally remain sceptical about the outcomes of this programme. Furthermore, as a consequence of the sudden boost of the state's interest in its absentees and the high priority given to migration–development issues on the political agenda of all major parties since 2010, the just-described programmes and policies were developed in somewhat a rush. The hectic atmosphere was ever-present in Chisinau, where I observed a dynamic positioning around 'diaspora-building activities' among the second research group, the civil servants and aid-workers. Everybody was busy in mobilising migrants, opening new offices, and hiring new staff. The busy catch-up and the large amount of foreign aid, I assert, led to an over-competitive donor-driven environment, characterised by a large number of competing individual projects and complex overlapping co-financing structures, rather than to a joint advancement resulting in a simple and clear support-structure for migrants' engagement in Moldova's development<sup>102</sup>.

To summarise this sketch of Moldova's main development–migration policies, a large number of actions aimed at stimulating migrants' social and financial capital through official channels between Moldova and migrants' host-countries were launched over a very short period of time. Furthermore, the two co-existing over-arching visions of diaspora-policy – the institutional approach and the migration mainstreaming approach – resulted in an ambiguous structure. Therefore, I argue that efforts of national institutional capacity-building in the migration-development domain got off on the wrong foot, despite vast sums of donor funding. Or, as Vullnetari (2013: 25) aptly describes Albania's efforts to engage its emigrants, it is about "big policies and small outcomes".

#### 6.1.2 Getting organised: overview of migrant association-led policies and programmes

Migrant associations and networks are not new phenomena<sup>103</sup>. Transnational activities and solidarity with sending countries have always existed, and migrants' role in development strategies for their home countries has been the subject of reflection for some time. Nonetheless, the firmly positivist discourse on migration and development around the turn of the millennium has provoked a renewed academic and policy interest in migrant associations and in their potential to deliver development in their countries of origin (Page and Mercer 2012).

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<sup>102</sup> E.g. in form of a 'one-stop shop' that manages all of migrants' requests in one place.

<sup>103</sup> On my fieldwork in London, I discovered by chance a book about the history of Swiss migrant associations around Leicester Square, whose creation dates back to 1685 (Barber 2011).

As Faist puts it: "transnational networks and associations of migrants have come to stand at the centre of the optimistic visions of national and international economic development policy establishments" (2008: 22). This section explores the role attributed to Moldovan migrant associations in promoting development by Moldova's policy establishment and its key development partners.

Because of the above-stated pressure from Moldova's key development partners around the Twitter Revolution in 2009, the government increasingly supported migrant groups and associations. The importance of building a 'mutual partnership' between the state and Moldovan migrant associations was explicitly stressed at the 2010 conference 'Rethinking Moldova', where efforts towards engaging migrants' collective activities were considered as directly relevant to the country's national development plans (Government of Moldova 2010; Sainciuc and Cretu 2010). A first step in building a so-called 'mutual partnership' between migrants and Moldova involved gaining access to migrant associations and networks. And so, the story of Moldova's engagement with migrant associations began with a list of migrant associations made on behalf of the government. As Umberto Eco (2012) proclaimed, the list is the origin of culture; it confers value and guarantees existence. Similarly, migrant leaders frequently mentioned the association list as the beginning of their engagement with state authorities and their development partners. Below, the author of the migrant association list explains the beginning of the government's interest in migrant associations:

Dora (consultant, 42, Chisinau): My responsibility in 2010 was to find these associations, not only in the East, but also in the West, and to make a proper list. Before that, there was no systematic knowledge, no ideas about who they are and what they do, and no contacts. It was not organised. The Interethnic Bureau had a list of associations, but it wasn't really about Moldovan migrants, but more about promoting Moldovan culture in Russia and the Ukraine by former inhabitants of the Soviet Republic Moldova. These people left during the Soviet time, and they are not even Moldovan migrants<sup>104</sup>.

In the same year, 2010, the government and its multinational partners launched programmes aimed at 'accessing', 'mobilising' and 'grouping' migrant associations for Moldova's development. This was enacted through technical assistance and financial support for migrants' collective activities. For instance, from 2010 to 2012, 35 migrant associations from France, Italy, Portugal and the UK took part in IOM's Small Grant Mechanism Programme (IOM 2012b). Or, 15 associations jointly implemented with local partners in the host-countries social development

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<sup>104</sup> The shift of the state authority's attention from the 'old diaspora', located to the east of Moldova to the 'new diaspora', west of Moldova (see Chapter 4) created an open conflict about the definition of 'diaspora' between the two Bureaus, carried out in workshops and seminars I attended on my fieldwork in Chisinau.

projects in Moldova within the framework of the EC-UN Joint Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI 2014). Moreover, in 2012, 15 migrant leaders from Italy, the UK, Germany and France were part of the UNDP's 'Mainstreaming migration into strategic policy development' programme (UNDP 2012). Others participated in programmes of national aid-agencies, such as the 'Programme on engaging migrant organisations for their home-country's development' in Germany (CIM/GIZ 2012), or the migrant-association-led programme by the Hilfswerk Austria (2012). Besides the 'diaspora association component' of the Bureau, other institutionalised forms for migrant associations have been set-up. These include the Diaspora Congresses, held every other year which I will address shortly, and the Diaspora Coordination Council, created in 2012, which has a consultative role in advising the government on migration-related issues. It is composed of 50 chairpersons of migrant associations and is divided into thematic working-groups – for instance return migration, economic transformation of Moldova, human rights (Diaspora Coordination Council 2012). And last of all, a transnational virtual space of associations is slowly in the making. As a form of social collective action, new web-sites were set up by and for migrant associations in Moldova and in the countries under study (IOM 2013; Hilfswerk Austria 2013), and migrants increasingly disseminate their collective activities on European Diaspora web-platforms, such as the EUNOMAD (2015).

Overall, the launch of association-led programs provoked a drive in Moldovan migrants' collective engagement for development in what Sökefeld calls a 'critical event' that mobilises transnational practices (2006: 277). As Liliana puts it:

Liliana (34, freelancer, Paris): My exact entry into the diaspora was the IOM meeting in Paris in 2009, to which all migrants were invited to discuss the topic of Moldova's development. There, I met other migrant leaders and I became interested in the activities of other Moldovans in Paris, and ehm later I then decided to create an association.

Migrant leaders particularly considered the IOM Small Grant Mechanism as a catalyst for their formal and non-formal networks. My mapping of associations shows a surge in the creation of associations and an array of informal groupings around the invitation to tender in 2009, of which the association chaired by Rosa is one example:

Rosa (entrepreneur, 45, London): Before they launched the small grant program in 2010, we were already sort of thinking for a couple of years of creating an association, and then with this happening, I mean when the announcement for the programme came, we created an association, so we could apply for the grant. And look now, we are still here!



## 6.2 'We Are Not Yet Developed as the Africans': State-of-the-Art on Moldovan Migrant Associations

### 6.2.1 General characteristics of the associational landscape

The large emigration of Moldovans towards various destination countries around the world has been accompanied by a rise in formal and non-formal networks in most of the host-countries (Cheianu-Andrei 2013). At the time of writing, the Bureau lists contact with 244 associations registered in 39 countries (BRD 2014)<sup>105</sup>. The most active migrant community in both spaces of interventions – Moldova and the host countries under study – is found in Italy, with the highest number of Moldovan migrants in Western Europe. In general, the community can be described as an 'emerging diaspora', made up of small associations with weak organisational capacities. Across all host-countries under study, the organisations were established on average six years ago and memberships range from 1 to 150 (see above). The vast majority of organisations are volunteer-run, and they face typical challenges of voluntary organisations, such as lack of time and commitment since active members often run these associations in their free time<sup>106</sup>. The weak capacity of migrant associations is mirrored in their planning strategies and democratic decision-making processes. Firstly, only a few associations have a strategic approach to their self-help initiatives, except for organisations that implement medium-scale projects over a longer time-span (e.g. those that support vocational schools or infrastructure projects in different Moldovan districts). This is not surprising, as informal transnational humanitarian practices – unlike professional organisations – are by definition more 'spontaneous' and more 'unorganised' (Beck 2011). Secondly, chairpersons of associations narrated that intra-organisational decisions on migrants' transnational aid-giving are made jointly with board-members, according to their interests and fields of expertise. However, the accounts from other board members from the same associations revealed that decision-making regarding migrants' humanitarian interventions is a privilege reserved only for chairpersons.

Consistent with Cheianu-Andrei's observations (2013), most of the associations under study simultaneously engage in the country of residence and in Moldova. The associations' substantial orientation towards transnational social practices is interesting, given the low socio-cultural integration of Moldovan migrants' and the short-term aspect of Moldovan migration in Western

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<sup>105</sup> It is difficult to determine the exact number of functioning associations because it is continuously changing and some associations exist only 'on paper'. Furthermore, the number of associations is higher because not every association figures on the list of the Bureau.

<sup>106</sup> Only five associations out of 30 organisations in my sample hire full-time employees, which indicates that the organisations' overall degree of professionalism is generally low.

and South-Western Europe<sup>107</sup>. This distinguishes the Moldovan associational landscape from those of other migrant communities with a lower cross-border engagement (cf. Boccagni 2013 on Ecuadorian migrants in Italy), or those that took longer to transnationalise their volunteer efforts (cf. Laxcroix 2011 on Polish and Indian associations in the UK). I argue that the main reasons for Moldovan migrants' high interest in transnational-oriented activities are: migrants' strong emotional attachment to Moldova, their estimates of great hardship of co-citizens who remained in their villages of origin, and their relatively low socio-cultural integration, partly because of high anticipated onward or return migration (see Chapter 5).

### 6.2.2 Main activities

The Moldovan migrant community is characterised by a high diversity of activities, ranging from sport and cultural events to development-oriented activities. The majority of the organisations under study carry out a mixture of activities. The associations' interventions in the host countries revolve around assisting migrants' needs in the areas of housing, administrative matters, work, and language courses; cultural and sports events; lobbying governments on migrant issues, for instance in the domain of pension schemes; and publishing information guides for the social integration of migrants (e.g. Budevici et. al. 2013) and diaspora newspapers (e.g. the 'Gazeta Basarabiei', 'Moldbrixia', or the 'Pro-Diaspora Kids magazine'). Transnational activities are directed towards transnational humanitarian interventions and political engagement. Similar to other migrant groups, Moldovans' development contributions are chiefly small-scale initiatives (see Lampert 2014 on the Nigerian community). Besides donations of collective financial remittances<sup>108</sup>, for instance for vulnerable families, they centre around the construction and renovation of physical infrastructure (e.g. churches, youth centres, bridges, streets, water-sanitation installations); the support of social and health institutions (e.g. vocational schools for vulnerable youth, local hospitals, health-care centres); contributions to communal 'self-help' initiatives through social activities and awareness campaigns for vulnerable groups as well as around the creation of livelihood opportunities for locals in the agricultural domain (e.g. micro-enterprises, professional training). Migrant associations also collect and send material goods to Moldova; i.e. books for school libraries, clothes, toys, medicines, construction material and equipment for hospitals and orphanages.

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<sup>107</sup> Although some migrant leaders view the communal needs 'here' as a constraint towards an enhanced transnational collective engagement in Moldova, as we shall see in the next chapter.

<sup>108</sup> The term 'collective remittances' means in this context "money raised by a group that is used to benefit a group or a community with which it is affiliated" (Goldring 2004: 808).

Whilst there exists a transnational group of migrant leaders spanning different host countries that maintains strong links with Moldova, and transnational co-operations between migrant associations are emerging across host countries, for instance between French and Italian based associations, the space of migrants' development interventions in Moldova remains mostly bound to the local community level. My mapping of associations shows that initiatives are rarely carried out on a regional or national level, and that only a few associations run activities in several communities or districts across the country. In most instances, therefore, migrants engage in 'translocal development' (Grillo and Riccio 2004), and the project settings can be described as 'translocal spaces', encompassing the migrants' locality abroad and their communities of origin (Brickell and Datta 2011).

The associations are funded by membership fees or donations. In order to finance their projects, some apply to calls for tenders by institutions in host countries, for instance by municipalities or foundations. Others apply for funds within the framework of the above-mentioned migration–development programmes implemented by international aid-agencies (e.g. the EU/UNDP Joint Migration Development Initiative 2011; IOM 2012b). Apart from the unfavourable socio-economic situation in Moldova affecting migrants' field of development-interventions, as outlined in Chapter 4, and their often restricted organisational capacity, limiting their field of interventions, humanitarian projects are chiefly initiated in response to requests made by development NGOs in both contexts, Moldova and the host countries or individuals (e.g. potential beneficiaries, friends and relatives who know of specific needs). Therefore, in most cases, migrants' transnational charity engagement is built on personal and close relationships such as friendships, neighbourhood relations or kinship within the migrant community, the host society or Moldova<sup>109</sup>. This also explains why migrants' humanitarian interventions are mostly 'translocal engagements' and more often a random decision than a strategic choice. As Romina explained during a charity event in Rome for an orphanage in her community or origin:

Romina (secretary, 49, Rome): Very often migrant associations support different institutions: schools or orphanages, mostly in villages where they come from, and where they know people who ask them for help, like we do here. If I come from a village, and I can organise something for this village that benefits people, then that's great, isn't it?

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<sup>109</sup> It is important to note that the local professional aid workers employed in aid-agencies in Moldova also heavily rely on personal contacts in their daily project work. Therefore, I argue that the variable 'personal contacts' should not be viewed as a major determinant of migrant associations' degree of professionalism compared to Moldovan-based mainstream development institutions, as frequently implied in the broader academic literature on migrant associations and professionalism (e.g. Page and Mercer 2012).

Lastly, the politicised public atmosphere in Moldova, discussed in chapter 4, also spills over into the Moldovan associational landscape. The sensitive political terrain in which migrant associations are embedded was the subject of an emotional debate among migrant leaders. Vasile, president of an association that offers an online discussion platform for Moldovan migrants in the UK, narrates how Moldovan politics interfere in migrants' associative life:

Vasile (IT-engineer, 45, London): In 2008, we started to delete topics related to politics and how to get a visa in the UK, in order to direct the discussion more towards our development projects in Moldova. But our members accused us of censorship, and of collaborating with the Communists. So, we kept the comments. And then later in 2009, after the political change, everything was reversed. Then, the embassy told us to remove some of the comments. Even today, we still get requests from Moldovan officials to remove topics, which is annoying, because it stops us from doing our activities.

In fact, the Twitter Revolution in 2009 did not only provoked a state interest in migrant associations located in Western Europe, but it also led to political interference in migrants' associational life in the countries under study. As a direct result of migrant leaders' involvement in the political turnaround of 2009, the pro-Western Alliance parties selected their representatives abroad among chairpersons of migrant associations. Consequently, some associations not only engage in 'solidarity', but are simultaneously involved in Moldova's domestic politics. They organise meetings with political leaders, promote activities for specific parties and collect votes and donations. These activities are an essential part of the associations' activities, and are not only run during the election periods. Yet, they are seldom openly declared on the associations' web-pages and social media-groups.

### 6.2.3 Teaming up for development: inter-associational relationships

All in all, there are no significant differences in the Moldovan associational landscape and in the forms of migrants' collective aid-giving across the countries under study, although there are some slight variations. For instance, the second wave of Moldovan immigrants generated socio-professional diversity, and the newcomers, such as middle or upper-class youngsters, established new associations especially in Paris and in London. Furthermore, a somewhat lower interest in transnational development activities was observed in France. Presumably this is due to the high concentration of student associations, whose activities mainly address the large number of some 18,000 Moldovan students<sup>110</sup>. Interestingly, apart from an increase in the

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<sup>110</sup> Moldova is member of the '*International Organization of La Francophonie*' (IOF) and strong links between Moldova and France in the educational sector exist (e.g. various student-mobility programs, mostly implemented by the



number of newly-created associations, the new wave of Moldovan migration only moderately transformed the organisational field.

Participants also highlighted the associational structures in the host countries as having an influence on their associations. Especially in local environments that are distinctly favourable in terms of opportunities for teaming-up with local actors such as development NGOs, trade unions and other civil society organisations have strengthened association members' skills in carrying out development efforts. Such favourable contexts for joint aid-giving were found in Italian communities, where Moldovan migrant leaders are also members of consultative migrant structures (e.g. Novellara, Padova), or locations where development NGOs show an interest in Moldova (e.g. in Germany and Switzerland).

It is well-known that solid transnational networks of migrant communities are fundamental to maximise migrant associations' role as partners in development transition. This is also widely recognised in the Moldovan case (Dusciac 2011)<sup>111</sup>. All research participants stressed a need in setting-up umbrella organisations to combine migrants' experiences and to create strategic alliances between the small associations. An example of such efforts is a national network of 12 associations (Assomoldova) in different Italian regions, established within the framework of the IOM Small Grant Programme. Other migrants started their own initiatives to build up networks without the support of the donor community. For instance, in 2012, Italian-based associations started an umbrella organisation sponsored by small and medium-sized enterprises owned by Moldovan migrants. Yet, despite an interest in establishing umbrella associations, the community's networking capacities remain weak, and participants stated that there is scope for improvement, citing other migrant groups, for example African diasporas and the Kosovo Albanians, as their role models. Nicolai, who is a member of the regional committee on immigration in Padova and president of an association explains:

Nicolai (unemployed, 31, Padova): We are not yet as developed as the Africans with their big umbrella organisations. They are much more organised than we are, and they have large projects with their authorities back home. We wish to become like them, because in their countries, the importance of the diaspora is well recognised. Our community has not yet reached this stage.

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Alliance Française). The activities run by these associations are mostly related to student life in France (e.g. seminars on how to integrate at university, organisational and administrative matters).

<sup>111</sup> To my knowledge, the international donor community does not support an all-encompassing 'Eastern European Diaspora-Platform for Development' as in other parts of the world, for instance in the case of African migrant communities, spanning members of several host and receiving countries (EU 2013b). Possibly, the absence of an Eastern-European pendant is due to the lack of common identity among post-Soviet migrants in Western and South-Western Europe and to the European Union's Neighbourhood policy priorities.

In general, when working towards Moldova's development, migrant associations are more likely to team-up with civic organisations in their host society than with other migrant associations. This negatively affects the creation of umbrella-like schemes and migrants' inter-organisational relationships. Migrants' limited desire to interact with other migrant associations is linked to three main aspects: cultural aspects, post-Soviet class structures, and divided opinions about the migrant community's engagement in 'home' politics. The internal fragmentation within the migrant community can be summarised as follows. First, there is a strong association between social trust and volunteering (e.g. Uslaner 2002). Because of cultural aspects of distrust, especially when funding needs to be jointly managed, and Moldovans' ambivalent collective experiences abroad, migrants only sporadically create inter-associational partnerships (see Chapters 4 and 5).

Second, as already indicated in Chapter 5, fragmentation along class lines exists, especially between the members of the two post-Soviet Moldovan migration waves, which I conceptualised in Chapter 5; migrants who arrived in the mid-1990s and those belonging to the second Moldovan migration wave made up of a higher share of people working in the professional, academic and arts sectors. Across all host countries under study, classes and age-groups do not mix within the same migration wave nor between the two, and inter-associational relationships happen mainly between the same age or class groups<sup>112</sup>. This happens in France between students and young professionals who belong to the second migration wave, and in Italy between low-skilled migrants from the first economic migration wave. If associations do team-up for development it is mostly for fundraising initiatives, for example for Christmas charities, events around Mărțișor<sup>113</sup> or for small one-off solidarity actions<sup>114</sup>. Moreover, some migrant leaders per se reject the concept of partnership-building. Without exception, they were all socialised during the Soviet time, in which teaming-up was regarded as a personal weakness and failure (Boian 2001):

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): I don't trust them [the migrant leaders], and I often ask myself who they actually represent. Themselves? Moldovans? Or the migrants? It is not very clear to me. And I don't know what they really want when they contact us. Can't they do their things on their own?<sup>115</sup>

<sup>112</sup> For instance, members of a Geneva-based association, mostly female high-skilled migrants, told me in a board meeting that they would never team-up with organisations run by low-skilled female migrants.

<sup>113</sup> Mărțișor is a Romanian celebration on 1 March to honour the coming spring, friendship and love.

<sup>114</sup> An example of this type of solidarity is '*Un visto per una vista*' (a visa for a vision), organised by three Rome-based associations to sponsor an expensive eye-surgery for a Moldovan boy in Italy.

<sup>115</sup> A highly disputed subject among migrant leaders, which I cannot further explore here, is the associations' legitimacy to represent migrants, ranging from associations as important representatives of all Moldovans abroad, to no legitimacy at all.

And third, migrants' involvement in Moldovan politics has been criticised by those who are not involved in politics as 'absorbing too much of their collective energies', to the extent that it obstructs the building of collective efforts towards a more development-oriented engagement of their community. In their accounts, the political interference impinges too strongly upon migrants' associative life, and unnecessarily polarises the migrant community. Unsurprisingly, a particular negative stance towards this 'political infiltration' was observed among those migrants who view the political elites as the main culprit for Moldova's slow development transformation<sup>116</sup>. This observation confirms the argument I put forward in Chapter 2, namely that it is much too simplistic to state that migrant associations represent the interests of the community from which they are drawn. Bear in mind that 'common origins' do not automatically produce 'common individuals' (Brubaker 2005), especially in Moldova, where a common national origin and unity is contested. Yet, contrary to what one would expect in a 'politically divided Moldova', it was found that the fragmentation of the Moldovan migrant community along the lines of migrants' political visions of Moldova's future – either as a 'neutral' state, as a member of the European Union, as a member of the Eurasian Economic Union or even as part of Romania – is less significant than the divisions between associations that are involved in politics and those that explicitly withdraw from political activities.

#### 6.2.4 Towards more 'professionalism': the importance of capacity building

The associations' limited budgets are the main challenge for migrants, restricting their capacity to involve transnational development efforts in their aspirations. Furthermore, migrants saw scope for improvements in the professionalisation of the associational landscape in terms of long-term functionality and organisational capacity-building. Migrant leaders all clearly articulated aspirations and emotional commitment to contribute to Moldova's development, and in their view, small gestures of encouragement, recognition and financial incentives provided by Moldova's authorities would stimulate their aspiration to engage in development efforts. This finding contradicts policy documents and commissioned research, highlighting that Moldovan migrants do not dispose a strong aspiration to contribute to development of the home country by material and emotional commitment according to Weiner's (2010) understanding of a 'diaspora-development community' (e.g. Cheianu-Andrei 2013; IASCI/Nexus 2014). As Ion noted:

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<sup>116</sup> This includes the small number of migrant leaders who were strongly involved in the independence battle in 1991 to join Romania (see Chapter 4). They believe that the majority of presidents of associations belong to a sponsored 'core-diaspora group', initiated by the state to rule and control migrants' activities, and thus are solely engaged in collective activities because they get paid for their efforts.

Ion (translator and writer, 34, Paris): Our contribution to Moldova's development could be bigger. Because our initiatives have never been welcomed or supported by the Moldovan state or the embassies, they are still small. We have always been kept in this logic of cultural festivity, and we have never been encouraged to go beyond that. This is really a pity, because it would only need a small shock to activate the large quantity of positive energy that exists in our diaspora.

The most commonly mentioned 'small shocks' or incentives, which are believed to increase migrants' associations' trajectories towards more sustainable engagement, are the facilitation of management skills, for instance trainings in operational and strategic project planning, and financial allocations. Contrary to the concern of the development industry that migrants lack information on how to get involved in formal development initiatives and the need to 'educate' them, chairpersons generally possess the relevant information and knowledge for decision-making regarding their development interventions (see Chapter 2; cf. Varzari et al. 2014). They considered that more recognition for their cross-border humanitarian engagements by the Moldovan state authorities and their development partners to be far more relevant than information on how to 'engage in development'. Oleg commented in this regard:

Oleg (project-coordinator, 44, Padova): We are an active community, and we are highly motivated to contribute to Moldova's transformation. But we are not very well structured. There is a lack of substance in our actions. For example, for me an engagement is a process, it is not just one project, but a process of consecutive activities. As a consequence of our activities, the diaspora should be empowered, in the sense that we have gained new skills to organise the same project better the next time. But for this we would need more recognition and funding.

A last issue associated with migrants' quest to overcome their associations' short-termism is the need for more funding in the domain of communication and PR-activities. The improvements of competences in communication were regarded as an important step towards promoting their activities beyond the Moldovan associational landscape. So far, this has been constrained by the financial viability of migrant associations, limiting their visibility and positioning within the local civil society in migrants' host countries, in Moldova or within the transnational development establishment:

Dora (consultant, 42, Chisinau): Associations don't need to report to anybody what they do, so I am sure that they do much more than we know, but the weakness of their communication skills is the problem. This could easily be improved with more funding.

The following conclusion can be drawn from Moldovan migrant associations' general characteristics and their capacity to carry out transnational development projects. The majority of associations are small and mainly volunteer-run, and their role in Moldova's development is

still modest due to shortcomings in their organisational and financial capacities. The associations are, however, engaged in a variety of transnational aid practices, covering a wide range of areas of intervention. Furthermore, a dynamic process of grouping for development within the transnational diaspora space can be found, even if internal fractures along the lines of cultural aspects, class-formations and political engagement exists. The most surprising finding in my view is the high share of transnational-oriented activities run by Moldovan migrant associations, despite the relatively short-term aspect of Moldovan migration, compared to other migrant groups which took longer to develop transnational activities, and that are generally less committed in the domain of transnational philanthropy. Ultimately, migrants stressed that small financial and organisational incentives would suffice to enhance their volunteer-run development contributions towards a more sustainable development engagement. These incentives were expected to be provided by Moldova's novel institutional support-structures. Yet, as announced earlier, the new opportunity structures only partially meet migrants' needs and aspirations of organisational capacity-building. This begs the question of why are migrants' needs not met, despite their involvement in the creation of the new institutions and policies? In order to answer this question, it is time to address migrants' viewpoints on the issue.

### 6.3 "No Interest is Better than Fake Interest": Migrants' Views on State and Development Emigration Policies

In this last section, I investigate migrants' viewpoints on Moldova's institutional mechanisms for emigrant engagement and their participation in its creation. That being said, I examine the third research dimension of this thesis, in which I aim to get a better understanding of the degree of migrant associations' participation in state-led development efforts. Drawing on Tilly's definition of opportunity structures (1978), I explore how migrant associations' actions are part of a larger political process of opportunities and constraints offered by the political environment in Moldova. I use migrants' narratives on the Bureau and the Diaspora Congresses to revisit migrants' perspectives on their participatory involvement in the institutional setting up of policy mechanisms. Both of these institutionalised bodies were a crucial momentum for mobilising the migrant community, and they are the central mechanisms for the management of relationships with the migrant community.

### 6.3.1 Migrants' viewpoints on the Bureau for Relations with the Diaspora

#### 6.3.1.1 A 'fuzzy' and 'top-down' structure

In January 2012, the Bureau started to implement its 'diaspora association component', which encompasses, among others, the creation of relationships with migrant associations and an increase of their involvement in the development process of the country via facilitation and financial support for innovative projects (BRD 2014). A number of migrant leaders fed into this new policy-making. The associations' voluntary engagement included drafting policy recommendations, forming working-groups and attending planning workshops organised by the international donor community. For instance, in June 2012 migrant leaders took part in several workshops for implementing migration mainstreaming into national development policy. However, in the meantime, even those migrants who were highly involved in the establishment of the Bureau and in other association-led development programmes lost track of who is responsible for what. Svetlana highlighted the lack of strategic planning and the uncoordinated setting-up of policy mechanisms:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): Today, the government and its partners want to do too many things, and I don't see much coherence. The problem is that the Bureau has started with no clear strategy. Everything was done very fast, and because things were not done in a correct way, we are finding ourselves now in the midst of this general chaos.

In the migrants' opinion, the Moldovan authorities and development agencies have missed the opportunity to create a comprehensive structure for migrants' development efforts. They criticise the lack of a clear overarching structure, which would allow them to fully understand the synergies between the Bureau and other relevant state institutions dealing with migration-development issues, for example with the foreign ministry, or the ministry of social protection and its new migration units:

Rosa (entrepreneur, 45, London): It's all very fuzzy. We don't really know what's going on. The Bureau is not formalised in a way that would allow us to know exactly what they do. Ok, their aim is to support the diaspora, but if you want to draw a diagram of where the Bureau is, where we are, where the other structures dealing with migrants are, you will find it difficult. Because, I guess, we don't have one.

Another central issue raised in interviews and on internet-platforms is that migrants' participation did not go beyond the planning stage of the Bureau's activities. Some migrant leaders are deeply disappointed that they are not involved in the implementation of the 'diaspora association component' anymore, for example as consultants or as members of an advisory board. Some migrants' narratives on this issue were particularly negative, because they

were not assigned the jobs or positions in the Bureau they were hoping for, highlighting that the young staff lack expertise on the topic of migration and/or personal migration experiences, and are thus unable to fully understand the challenges migrants face abroad. As Vasili narrates:

Vasili (researcher, 39, Paris): They need to understand what the diaspora needs. But how can they do that if they don't consult them anymore? This is a big weakness, and they have this manner to act Soviet style. They think they are the masters in Chisinau who know what people abroad need, even if they have never been migrants. They are going to implement what they think we need, and they will bring their ideas to life, regardless of what we think.

Furthermore, the Bureau's top-down approach in implementing programmes is described as 'made Moldovan-style', meaning it is one-sided with sporadic communication and a lack of common planning with migrants:

Laura (journalist, 37, Bologna): Our communication with the Bureau is very unilateral. If we plan something and we invite them to participate, we don't get a reply. But then we get invitations to their projects which they have planned without consulting us. There is no communication or planning between the authorities and us.

Following on from this, even if the authorities and the development agencies made efforts in opening up spaces for migrants' participation by enrolling them into the planning stage of the Bureau and in other migrant association-led schemes, it is the elites and bureaucrats of IOs who make decisions without further consulting or involving migrants. Therefore, the current form of migrants' participation in the creation of the Bureau and in other diaspora-association components can be described in Oser's and Biederman's (2008) words as an 'alibi participation', where only a low degree of participation is possible, or as an 'invited space' – a space where migrants are invited to participate but where decisions are made by the inviting elite. That being said, there are clear discrepancies between migrant leaders' aspirations to be engaged in development efforts and the new institutional arrangements.

#### *6.3.1.2 "The idea is to search for ideas": a reversed asymmetrical relationship between migrants and state institutions*

A second central category that emerged from migrants' narratives on the new support structures is the notion that 'the idea is to search for ideas'. This means that migrants support the state and its key development partners in finding inspirations for their future migration-development initiatives. Svetlana touches on this very point:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): The Bureau has started its activities without us. But now, I don't mind it anymore, because I finally understand. The idea of the Bureau is to search for ideas, and that's pointless, because we already know what we want to do.

Migrants often considered their associations as 'service providers' for state institutions and affiliated aid-agencies, meaning that their associations are at the service of the new institutionalised bodies and not the other way around:

Vasili (physicist, 39, Paris): Things will change the moment they understand that the Bureau should be at the service of the diaspora, and not the other way around. Until then, it remains Soviet-style: the party or the Bureau leads and imposes its attitudes upon everybody, and we are supposed to give and give and to provide and provide as usual.

In general, migrants perceive their associations as 'contact points' for state institutions, providing them with the contacts for potential beneficiaries for free. This attitude towards migrant associations as cheap and convenient service providers has been roundly criticised by the chairpersons, because their associations receive no financial rewards whilst the state institutions do. The following example illustrates this point. Two migrant associations in Italy initiated, without any financial support, the programme 'DOR', a return visit programme for Moldovan teenagers living abroad. This concept was consecutively adopted by the Bureau, who received funding for the same events, but without further involving the migrant association, for instance in the recruitment process of suitable candidates. Ion articulates his disappointment about this asymmetrical relationship with state authorities:

Ion (translator and writer, 34, Paris): I am tired of providing ideas and information for free. The government should not only take advantage of us but also support us. We are tired of giving and providing all the time without receiving anything. Our story is similar to other development programmes in this country. The money goes to ministerial migration managers in Chisinau, where it usually disappears for good, and it does not come through to us.

Vice-versa, using metaphorical language, Igor gives his explanation on the current status of the relationship between migrants and state authorities:

Igor (aid-worker, 39, Chisinau): The government decides what to share and with whom. Right? There is authority, and we respect authority. So, who are these people leading associations? These are ordinary people from the streets, right? They are the constituency. They are the parish members, and the prime minister is the priest. We don't deal with the parish. We deal with the priest, right? This is the way [name of the organisation] is structured. Ok, we can informally consult the associations from time to time, but formally it's the government's decision how to deal with its constituency.



Nevertheless, a small number of members of new associations established by young migrants, with no or few contacts in their Moldovan counterparts, found that some good decisions have indeed been made towards the diaspora in terms of joint cooperation. They reported positive experiences with the Bureau in the domain of facilitating contacts between their associations and potential beneficiaries in Moldova. One migrant association, for instance, collected school facilities from a closed-down school in Geneva and the Bureau matched them with a school in Moldova in need of the collected material (e.g. chairs, tables, books). While these chairpersons are eager to continue their collaboration with the Bureau in the future, the majority of middle-aged migrants with long-lasting relationships in Moldova, and who were engaged in the policy-making process, remain sceptical of the Bureau's ability to improve their associations' functioning and their planned or ongoing development interventions. Partly, this is because they do not need the Bureau for creating partnerships with Moldovan counterparts. Also, in their opinion, the Bureau has become a PR office for promoting the Republic of Moldova abroad to enhance the visibility of the little-known country in 'Europe's hinterland' through migrants' activities around the globe, instead of a support body for migrants' self-help initiatives:

Laura (journalist, 37, Bologna): They don't facilitate anything, and they don't pay anything. But they profit more and more from a positive image of Moldova gained through our activities around the world. I think this is unfair. It's a PR office for the Republic of Moldova. But we, the diaspora, didn't ask for that.

Indeed, the Bureau's attention is strongly turned to superficial events, prominently visible on social media platforms, such as flashmobs for the Eurovision Song Contest, the 'celebration of the Moldovan flag around the world', or on the 'National Day of the Traditional Moldovan blouse'<sup>117</sup>. Tellingly, this confirms migrants' opinions on the establishment of the Bureau and of other diaspora-led policies as a wasted opportunity for building a solid support structure for their humanitarian engagement in Moldova, for which they volunteered their time and energy.

And last of all, because the research focus on migrant associations is primarily put on the opportunity structures in migrant host-societies (e.g. Lacroix 2011; Pirkkalainen et al. 2013), the role of official state representations in migrants' countries of origin in supporting migrants' collective aid-efforts is often overlooked in the academic literature. Although I cannot fully explore my findings in this regard, the following observation is put forward.

Migrants' description of their relationship with the state authorities in Moldova as a 'reversed asymmetrical relationship', in which migrants see themselves as cheap service

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<sup>117</sup> See for instance: <https://www.facebook.com/BiroulPentruRelatiiCuDiaspora/?fref=ts> [last accessed: September 2016].

providers, and joint initiatives are mainly initiated by migrant associations, equally applies to migrants' relationships with official Moldovan representatives in the host countries under study. Though experiences of partnerships with consular services and embassies strongly depend on the individuals running these institutions, migrants frequently highlighted a one-sided interest from diplomatic missions in partnerships and limited regard for their transnational aid-giving. The analysis of interviews by migrants shows that diplomatic missions have not yet reached out to migrant associations and that they have, instead, in some cases incorporated migrants' voluntary-run services into their own work – often without the associations' consent (e.g. information campaigns addressed to potential migrants). Consequently, migrants who made efforts in initiating joint-projects with state representatives expressed resignation and frustration<sup>118</sup>, and their unsatisfactory relationships with Moldova's federal state representatives impacts negatively on their motivation to volunteer their time and resources for their home country's development. Generally, it can be said that there is a lack of support from Moldova's diplomatic representations in the host countries under study for migrants' transnational development engagement. I suggest that this consideration be taken into account when designing further state-led programmes aimed at increasing the development capital of migrant associations for Moldova.

In conclusion, the majority of migrants recast their expectations vis-à-vis the new emigrant policy mechanisms, because their objectives do not overlap. As Ion noted:

Ion (translator and writer, 34, Paris): The way the Bureau is currently functioning doesn't help to increase our relationship with the government. Most of our hopes to receive support for our projects have already evaporated.

This finding is consistent with Lampert's (2014) observation on Nigerian migrant associations, whose leaders are equally frustrated at their insufficient access to power and resources in the local and national polity, because of lack of financial strength. It needs to be seen if this current modality of migrant engagement for development – as a 'reversed asymmetrical relationship' between migrants and the state with regard to the outlined international development policy rhetoric, in which migrants are supposed to be supported – is just a temporary stage in the process of building a relationship with the migrant community, or whether it is already entrenched as Moldova's new reality of emigrant engagement.

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<sup>118</sup> This reflects migrants' dissatisfaction with Moldova's general consular practices. Furthermore, four migrants were particularly frustrated, because their associations lost money in joint co-operations with embassies.

### 6.3.1.3 “The bureau for manipulation of the diaspora”: the category of political control

Different aspects of direct and indirect political control proved to be a central issue in migrants’ narratives on the new state-led support structures.

Migrants who were involved in the making of the institutional framework were concerned that they might increasingly be associated with the government, which in their opinion would undermine their impact and role as transnational civil society organisations in Moldova, and their ability to create beneficial alliances with the Moldovan development NGO scene. The following quote illustrates the dilemma faced by some migrant leaders:

Oleg (project-coordinator, 44, Padova): We are sort of feeling a political pressure now. We all have our views and non-views, but we don’t want to get instrumentalised. We are part of the civil society and not of a specific party, but it has become complicated, because if you have once swum in somebody’s pool, you need to swim like them. Even if we don’t want to engage in politics, our relationship with the authorities became strange, ehm too politicised.

Secondly, migrants who were engaged in the setting-up of support structures strongly advocated a diaspora ministry, for example via policy briefs and agreements with the Diaspora Council. They were unpleasantly surprised by the decision to create a Bureau which is subordinated directly to the prime minister within the state chancellery, arguing that this form of dealing with ‘diaspora affairs’ allowed for more government control than a diaspora ministry (Diaspora Coordination Council 2012). For this reason, migrants sometimes named the ‘Bureau for *Relations* with the Diaspora’ the ‘Bureau for *Manipulation* of the Diaspora’ – a state body for the direct control of the diaspora space to influence and harness migrants’ activities for political interests.

Thirdly, another commonly stressed example of a direct means of state control of the migrants’ transnational space was the migrant association list highlighted earlier. In some migrant leaders’ views, the simple listing of associations became a tool of political control of migrant civil society – and an attempt to discipline migrants’ collective activities<sup>119</sup>. Therefore, they want their associations’ names to be removed from the list.

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): I feel like our organisation is a contact point. Everybody wants contacts all the time, and the other day the Bureau wanted the list of our high-skilled members. I don’t want our organisation on that association list anymore. I think they just want names. It’s not correct what they do with that list. It feels like they want to control us.

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<sup>119</sup> Generally, the category of ‘political control’ has been more determined among migrant leaders who migrated around the Russian crisis in 1998 than among migrants belonging to the second Moldovan migration wave. This confirms my argument put forward in Chapter 4, namely the importance of the time point of migrants’ departure after the collapse of the Soviet Union for the relationship building with the state and development actors.

The migrants' comments on the association list illustrates some aspects of the global macro-policy discourse on migration. The list is a concise example of how the macro-policy discourse of controlling migrants is put in practice, and reflects the shifts and dynamics in the Moldovan state's attitude towards its emigrants; from an initial period of institutionalised contempt to an interest in controlling the state's 'absentees'. Additionally, the expressed exclusive interests in high-skilled members of migrant associations exemplifies how the Bureau follows international recommendations and prominent best-practices templates, which suggest, among others, to collaborate with 'educated members of the diaspora' (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012: 132). As argued above, this approach when applied in Moldova leads to considerable mismatches between migrants' needs to carry out their transnational engagement and standardised top-down programmes and policies.

Lastly, migrants pointed to a central fact that has never been openly expressed in the narratives of civil servants within government ministries and IOs, namely that their remittances contribute to almost half of Moldova's households, preventing the country from collapse. Migrants interpret this well-known 'open secret' as a political statement: the elite does not want social change. Natalia narrates her frustration in claiming greater recognition as social actors promoting positive change in Moldova:

Natalia (lecturer and businesswoman, 42, Rome): We remit more than 40% of the GDP, so we should also have more decision-making power. We need to affirm more political will, because we definitively don't want to be reduced to percentages of the GDP anymore. We want to be accepted as actors of social change, but there is no comprehension of this. For instance, some consultants are afraid to say that we are active, or that we can be a motor of social change, because they know that the authorities don't want to read that.

Migrants' belief that their active associational life is deliberately undermined so as not to disturb the 'order' by questioning the effectiveness of the political elite, reflects their viewpoints on the interplay between return migration and social change highlighted earlier. Consequently, these migrants deem it to be unlikely that the authorities aim to genuinely increase the associations' engagement in Moldova's development process (e.g. BRD 2014; EU 2013a). Rather, the state's interest in its 'absentees' as social actors and their structural involvement in Moldova's development is regarded as a way of wooing them for economic interests. In Diana's account:

Diana (care-worker, 45, Paris): The state has a responsibility towards us, because we are Moldovan citizens. The problem is that politicians don't do anything for us citizens. So, in practice, it's another story. They don't want the system to change, because they have decided that we pay, so they don't need to work.

More generally, migrants' viewpoints on this issue refer us back to the very essence of the discursive subject of the global mainstream migration–development policies, that is, the high interest in migrants as economic actors and to a lesser extent as socio-political actors (Raghuram 2009). This is also mirrored in the dominance of the 'financial migration–development programmes' discussed above. For migrants to play an important role in Moldova's development transformation as social actors, beyond private remitters, more political will would be required. Furthermore, the fact that Moldovan migrants are all but immune to contextual factors in Moldova for carrying out transnational development efforts brings to the fore the importance of not losing sight of the continuing significance of national and local factors in understanding transnational phenomena. Or, as Levitt and Jaworsky (2007) maintain, the state, in this case Moldova and its official state representatives in migrants' countries of residence, remains an important factor in conditioning and shaping migrants' motivations to engage in transnational practices.

### 6.3.2 'From talk-shops to work-shops': the evolution of the Diaspora Congresses

After this rather pessimistic account of the migrants' viewpoints on the newly created BRD, I end this chapter by briefly addressing migrants' narratives on another institutionalised body of emigrant engagement, the Diaspora Congresses<sup>120</sup>.

In contrast to migrants' rather negative attitude towards the BRD, the migrants' narratives on the Congresses are somewhat more positive. This is partly because of a major shift in the reporting of the events that were carried out over the last six years. It can be characterised as a shift from 'migrants having been invited' to 'migrants actively participating', or as a shift from 'talk-shops to work-shops'. On one hand, migrants described the first three congresses as platforms for political parties to reach out to migrants for upcoming elections, and therefore as a waste of time and resources. Additionally, their experiences of attending these events were narrated as an invitation to 'applaud the political parties' in settings portrayed as 'fake happenings' or 'surreal events', in which certain obviously active migrant leaders were awarded medals by the party leaders. On the other hand, migrants positively commented on the 2012 Congress, because they took part in its organisation, which gave them the opportunity to make

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<sup>120</sup> The first congress was held in 2004. Since then, the number of participants has doubled each year: 150 chairpersons participated in the 5th Congress in 2012, organised by the IOM and financed by the SDC and the EU (EU 2013a).

acquaintance with other presidents of associations from different host countries and to discuss potential collaborations. Below, Oleg and Vasile share their experiences of attending the Congresses:

Oleg (project-coordinator, 44, Padova): The first congresses were 'election rallies', first for the Communists, then for the pro-European Alliance. And I think these congresses were all about applauding. We were there to applaud the politicians and the organisers. Applauding and applauding [applauds]. Only in 2012, could we actually participate.

Vasile (IT engineer, 48, London): The money for the congress in 2008 could have been spent on more urgent things. The politicians were talking way too much. Everything was surreal and out of time and reality. They tried to influence us in the last congress, too, but at least in 2012 these attempts happened in the hallways and not during the official conference programme. And I think that's how it should be, because we are part of the civil society and not of a specific party.

Nonetheless, the nature of the Diaspora Congress per se remains controversial. For instance, research participants criticise the strong focal point of tediously honouring migrant associations' achievements, a performance that is similar in style to the above-described Student Gala, instead of being awarded greater recognition as social actors and more sustainable support. Furthermore, the nature of the Congresses exhibits features of "the mechanisms by which people either in the country of origin itself or in the diaspora contribute to 'development' are complex and subject to lively debate stretched out over space" (Mercer et al. 2009: 156). Indeed, participants' lively debates on the costs of the events, including migrants' travel expenses, highlight a belief that the government and the donor community should not waste its funding on migrants. Rather, international financial aid should be allocated to vulnerable groups 'there' in Moldova, regarded by some migrants as less privileged than themselves, living 'here'. Below, Anna shares her opinion on who 'deserves' humanitarian assistance:

Anna (housewife and cleaner, 37, Paris): I didn't go to the one in 2012. They wanted to pay me the flight, but I didn't want to waste their money and my time. There are people in Moldova who need that money much more than we do. I am really ashamed of all this, and I feel ashamed of our government. These events make me angry, so much money is wasted to shake hands with the prime minister, and there are so many vulnerable people in villages who need this money.

Lastly, participants criticised the narrow focus on the topic of 'promoting Moldovan culture abroad', which they deem unsuitable for the format of the Congresses in particular, and for channelling migrants' community efforts towards the benefit of Moldova, in general. As Svetlana noted:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): We don't need a conference on how to promote Moldovan culture. Those who want promote Moldovan culture, they do that already in the UK, in Germany or wherever they are. That's no use to us. We just want to be able to continue our humanitarian activities and get more recognition and funds for that.

In conclusion, participants missed an outcome-oriented dialogue with state authorities that would establish defined commitments vis-à-vis their associations in terms of financial and administrative support, as outlined in the strategy of the Bureau. The Congresses, therefore, simply do not meet migrant leaders' needs to empower their associations towards a greater and more sustainable development-oriented engagement. Instead, they are increasingly viewed as a new context for elite-building, for which many migrant leaders were invited, but few chosen to get financial or structural support. Or, as Lampert maintains in the Nigerian case: "The focus has extended little beyond attempting to co-opt a select elite of 'diasporic professionals' into federal-level government programmes" (2014: 842).

To conclude, in migrants' viewpoints new policies and support structures had a positive impact on the migrant associations' transnational activities at the time of their launch. However, today the majority of migrant leaders do not see them as an added-value for their collective transnational development interventions. Migrants do not feel *Enabled, Engaged or Empowered* in their capacity to carry out collective development activities, according to the 'three E's of diaspora engagement', suggested in handbooks of governmental institutions (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012). Despite that they participated in the policy-making of emigrant engagement, mostly on a voluntary basis.

#### 6.4 Conclusion and Key Findings

After my discussion on how Moldovan migrants are imagined and construed as development policy agents in the last chapter, I identified in this chapter how the Moldovan authorities and official development actors seek to translate into action the policy idea of migrants' engagement for development. Firstly, in keeping with the macro-policy discourse on migrants' engagement for development, I reviewed how interlinkages between migrants and Moldova's transformation are currently practised in policy strategies and large-scale programmes. My findings on how the Moldovan state engages with its 'absentees' and mobilises migrant associations for its development transformation can be summarised as follows.

After Moldova's authorities revisited their assumption that emigration only makes sense for the country's development and the migrants alike once its citizens are back in Moldova, the last

six years have been crucial for Moldova in building and extending a variety of initiatives to maximise the development impact of migrants and to integrate migrant associations into national development strategies (e.g. EU 2013a). However, similar to studies in other countries, the programmes and policies overly emphasise economic and financial aspects, and the expensive programmes are not very visible in Moldova (cf. Vullnetari 2013 in the case of Albania). Thus, the two first key findings of this chapter on Moldova's formalised emigration policies are:

*The creation of two overarching parallel structures – ‘the mainstreaming migration into national development approach’ and the institutional approach in form of the Bureau, and the complex and over-competitive donor-driven environment with a large number of overlapping individual projects, resulted in a structure in which competences and accountability towards migrants’ transnational development efforts are blurred. Keeping Moldova’s political instability in mind, I argue that when new institutional mechanisms are built on too many weak foundations, placed in an incoherent way, they are bound to fail in the unpredictable political climate.*

In section two, I discussed the general features of Moldovan migrant associations and their current state of ‘professionalism’. It was found that their capacity is still in the making, and their contribution to local development in Moldova is marginal. Furthermore, the mostly small and volunteer-run associations have organisational shortcomings, for instance in their decision-making processes. However, the associations are active in a wide range of transnational aid-practices, covering a wide range of areas of interventions.

*The third and fourth key-findings of this chapter are that, despite the relative short-term aspect of Moldovan migration, a high share of transnational-oriented development activities was found among migrant associations, compared to other migrant groups, which took longer to develop transnational activities, and which are generally less committed in the domain of transnational philanthropy. However, internal constraints consisting of fractures along the lines of class formations, political engagement and first and second migration wave, negatively impact on migrants’ aspirations to team-up with other associations for development.*

This dual finding illustrates that is worth looking at smaller migrant communities, as their associational landscape can also show dynamic patterns of transnational philanthropic efforts towards their home countries. Additionally, it alludes to the need to revisit general assumptions about post-Socialist migrant communities and about Moldovans as less active compared to other migrant communities, as is commonly assumed in NGO reports and in the academic literature (e.g. Schwartz 2007).

Furthermore, few capacity-building measures would suffice to take migrant associations’ projects to a new level of their associational capacities and to ensure that their development



ideas and plans can be implemented. Yet, despite considerable efforts made by the state and its international development partners in extending their initiatives towards migrant associations shortly after the Twitter Revolution in 2009, Moldova's formalised emigration policies have only very sporadically fostered structural or financial support for migrant associations, which would allow them to fulfil their transnational engagements.

*Thus, alongside constraints within the migrant community, external constraints, such as the relatively poor structural support provided by Moldova and its development partners, negatively affects migrant associations' ability to carry out transnational development efforts.*

The structural support launched by the Moldovan Government has so far largely failed to support migrant associations in their development efforts, and the large sums of donor investment have not yet found their way to migrant associations. In this respect, the meta policy discourses on 'diaspora involvement for development', for instance the flagship theme 'Taking action on Migration and Development – *Coherence, Capacity and Cooperation*' by the Global Forum on Migration and Development (GFMD 2011: 1), does not apply here.

*The novel state-led structures do not contribute to more policy coherence on migration-development issues on a federal level, nor do they considerably strengthen the capacity of migrant civil society.*

Thus, it is going to be a difficult task to bundle and channel 'the good spirits' into Moldova's development transition, and to maintain and convey the complex structure in an understandable way to migrants, so as to keep up their motivation to invest their time and energy for their home-country's development transition.

Thirdly, I opted for a perspective that emphasised migrants' participation experiences in the setting-up of formalised emigration policies. Given the large aid budget and migrants' motivation to offer their time and ideas in the making of institutional structures, key-actors could have paved the way for creating a favourable environment that would allow migrants to engage in Moldova's transformation efforts in a participative and sustainable way. The snapshot of migrants' view of their participation in policy and programme mechanisms explains why they have only partially succeeded. First, the global macro-policy discourse of 'diaspora involvement for development' applied in Moldova in the form of standardised top-down policies and its efforts to control migrants and/or courting only high-skilled migrants, among others, has led to considerable mismatches between migrants' expressed desire to carry out their development-oriented activities and the need to improve their long-term functionality.

*Furthermore, the migrant leaders' involvement in state-led development programmes and policies was carried out in form of an 'alibi-participation' – migrants were invited to participate at the launch of programmes without any actual influence on decision-making processes over*

*institutional forms and programmes of their engagement on a long-term. Entangled with this finding, migrants' experience with the novel policy and programme structures has been described as an 'asymmetrical relationship', in which migrant associations provided ideas and contacts, but have not yet received any recognition as professional development actors, nor as social actors within the Moldovan civil society.*

In general, I think that the state agencies' constant request for contacts and for reaching out to migrants is a direct result of Moldova's late but sudden interest in its migrants and the busy catch-up in initiating migration–development programmes, harnessing migrant associations' activities for their newly-created programmes. This modality of an asymmetrical relationship strongly determines the current collaborations between the state and its development partners on the one hand and migrant associations on the other hand, and obstructs the migrant organisations' scope for a more qualified development provision. As we shall see in Chapter 8, the finding of this asymmetrical relationship also applies to relationship patterns between migrants and IOs more broadly. This leads to the next central finding of this chapter.

*At the present state-of-the-art of Moldovan migrant associations, migrant leaders consider a supportive institutional context in Moldova more relevant for carrying out their development-oriented efforts, than the local or national associative context in their host countries.*

Although the local associative community level in the host countries matters to some extent, for instance in terms of attractive opportunities for teaming up with local development NGOs in order to gain more skills in carrying out development efforts, migrant leaders consider the recognition of their transnational engagement by the Moldovan authorities and the international aid-agencies to be more important. This finding can be explained by specific Moldovan migration features, which I identified in Chapter 5 – namely migrants' strong emotional commitment to their home country, the high intentionality of return migration, and the focus of this thesis on migrants' collective development practices *towards* Moldova.

And last of all, migrants' motivation to stay engaged in volunteer-run development contributions and state-led development efforts is dwindling, and frustration and resignation have set in, especially among those migrants who have volunteered their time and energy in the design of migrant association-led policies.

*The support or non-support by Moldova's state authorities and its consideration or non-consideration of migrants' voluntary efforts in the creation of its policies and programmes reflects migrants' general frustration and resignation with the political institutions' development achievements up to now, and leaves little room for trust and mutual co-operation with authorities at 'home'.*

After this exploration of the institutional framework of Moldova's engagement with its 'absentees', the two remaining empirical chapters look at patterns of migrants' transnational development practices, the aid-workers' view on the subject of study and the relationship dynamics between migrants and aid-agencies more broadly.

## CHAPTER 7

### **‘Solidarity Not Charity’: Collective Transnational Development Practices of Moldovan Migrants**

This chapter informs the first dimension of my thesis, in which I seek to assess how migrants’ development efforts are negotiated among migrants, who is engaged in transnational development practices, and how collective development interventions are performed in practice.

I first take up the subject of the state-of-the-art on Moldovan migrant associations from Chapter 6, providing the reader this time with the migrants’ perspective on their capacity to carry out development-oriented projects. In line with Page and Mercer’s (2012) proposition to engage with Bourdieu’s ‘theories of practice’ and what the authors call ‘diaspora as a community of practice and everyday lives’, I discuss the social process of creating a ‘Moldovan diaspora’ or a ‘Moldovan community of collective practice’. I particularly emphasise the ‘construction’ of practices, which enable ‘here’ and ‘there’ to merge (Mavroudi 2015). In the main section of this chapter I identify different types of migrants’ transnational development practices aimed at supporting positive change in Moldova. Besides transnational engagements shaped by Moldova’s past, and the country’s marginal place within Europe, discussed in Chapter 4, I introduce forms of aid-practices that emerged from migrants’ everyday lives. I assess how these practices are performed within the transnational field of the migrant civil society and how they are governed by different logics and behaviour, whether strategic or habitual (Bourdieu 1990). Given that migrants’ border-crossing development practices refer to multiple social spaces and reflect different senses of belonging (Glick Schiller et al. 1999), I explore how ‘ways of being’ and ‘ways of belonging’ affect ways of ‘collectively practising development’ in a reciprocal process. In the last section, I discuss in more detail migrants’ interpretations of ‘professional development practices’, and how they differ from those performed by the mainstream development establishment. And lastly, I briefly highlight some aspects of the complexities of relationship patterns between migrants and their non-migrant counterparts.

## 7.1. The Social Formation of a Community of Collective Practice

According to Schatski et al. (2001: 89), practices consist of both doing and saying and thus entail that the analysis be concerned with both practical activities and their representations. Therefore, I first explore migrants' self-reflections on the nature of their transnational civil society. Drawing on Mavroudi's conceptualisation of 'diaspora' as a process (2007, 2015), I emphasise migrants' estimates of power relations, inclusions and exclusions in the process of their 'diaspora' formation and their definitions of connectedness to Moldova.

### 7.1.1 "From doing picnics in Italy and France to transnational-oriented development activities": migrants' self-reflections on their community of practice

#### 7.1.1.1 *The viewpoints of non-members of migrant associations on collective activities*

The viewpoint of migrants, who are not active members of formal or informal collective helping practices, on migrant associations is generally positive. They are all familiar with activities carried out by migrant associations, contrary to some social NGOs and beneficiaries in Moldova, who have no or very little knowledge of migrant associations and their activities<sup>121</sup>. Migrants commonly underlined their affirmative portrait of migrant organisations with positive examples of development-oriented projects, helpful services in solving migrants' manifold administrative problems, and their usefulness for creating new social networks in the host countries. Moreover, most of them expressed an interest in getting involved in migrant association-led development activities, but they lacked time or the opportunity to engage in a nearby association<sup>122</sup>.

In contrast, opinions about the members of associations were mixed. On one hand, associations are perceived as a means to alleviate nostalgia and to 'keep the Moldovan spirits' alive in migrants' hearts. This is considered more common for migrants with a relatively long migration history, than for the 'newcomers'. 'Members of the diaspora' are, therefore, predominantly perceived as migrants from the first post-Soviet Moldovan migration wave of the mid-late 1990s:

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<sup>121</sup> Cheianu-Andrei (2013) maintains that on average 20% of migrants are in regular contact with migrant associations.

<sup>122</sup> The main reasons for Moldovan migrants' high interest in associative activities are further explained below (see also Chapters 5 and 6)

Dana (economist, 28, Paris): I think these are people who have lived here for many, many years, and they miss their Moldova. They are homesick, and I think the associations provide them with a good opportunity to meet other Moldovans and to quell their nostalgia.

However, migrants' nostalgia, often wrongly reduced in the literature on post-communist countries to a longing for the Soviet past, does not entirely capture the emotions of these migrants (e.g. Mitja 2009). Therefore, I suggest opting for the German word *Sehnsucht* (*longing*) – a specific kind of longing that captures the articulated emotions more appropriately. Like the Portuguese expression *saudade*, *Sehnsucht* has a romantic and mystical connotation. It is the longing for 'something' we know not what – an 'inconsolable longing', which also describes a kind of loneliness. *Sehnsucht* can imply nostalgia – the longing for the past, or even for the Soviet past<sup>123</sup>, but it is not reduced to it.

Contrary to the assumption that migrants' collective practices are shaped by the *Sehnsucht* of the middle-aged or elderly migrants', members of migrant associations are perceived as dynamic young migrants.

Susanna (au-pair, 28, Aarau): The elderly people are less socially involved in the diaspora, because they used to work a lot in Moldova, even on the weekends. They are not used to this kind of associative activities. That's why I think younger people are more involved in associations, because they had more time to be active in Moldova than the generation of my parents, and they are generally more dynamic.

Susanna's estimate on socially active Moldovans takes us now to the 'ideal type' of a collectively engaged Moldovan migrant.

Migrant leaders exhibit similar characteristics across all countries under study. They have a high level of education – most chairpersons of associations have university-level education – and a high level of networking capacities. They are further described by non-members of associations as a 'specific type of leader personality' who maintains strong ties with Moldova.

In contrast to other migrant groups, a specific feature of Moldovan leaders is that only a few of them pursue high-skilled or medium-skilled jobs abroad (cf. Pirkallainen et al. 2013 on Somali associations in Finland). Thus, the majority of Moldovan migrant leaders are high-skilled migrants pursuing low-skilled jobs<sup>124</sup>. A further particularity compared to other migrant communities, is that the chairpersons of Moldovan migrant associations are not necessarily highly integrated in their host societies (cf. Lacroix 2011 on Polish migrant organisations in the UK).

<sup>123</sup> It was found that Moldovan migrants' nostalgia for the Soviet past is chiefly a criticism of the current authorities.

<sup>124</sup> For instance, they work in the care sector, in factories or in the building industry.

The most significant common feature of the Moldovan migrant leaders is that they were all engaged in self-help groups or NGOs prior to emigration, either as professionals or as volunteers. Or, they expressed an interest in a volunteer engagement outside family obligations in Moldova, but lacked opportunities, time or resources. They exhibit specific personal qualities, often with a long-standing history of civic engagement enabling the formation of corporate interests in the civil society. They feel at home in the context of helping practices because of their *habitus* – their ability to use their educational provision and the social capital required for an introduction into the transnational space of migrant civil society (cf. Bourdieu 1990). The most determinant factors for taking up a transnational development engagement are, therefore, the migrants' personal characteristics, interests and biographical aspects<sup>125</sup>. That being said, apart from the leaders' strong orientations towards Moldova, any other type of reciprocal relationship between different degrees of integration and forms of transnationalism is less significant than the just-described personal characteristics<sup>126</sup>. Being locally integrated in order to become transnationally engaged, for instance, is not by itself a determining factor for Moldovan migrants' collective aid-practices.

#### 7.1.1.2 *"I have been in the diaspora for four years": migrants' self-reflections on being a 'diaspora' with the analytical template of the migration–development discourse*

In this sub-section I explore how migrants reflect on their 'diaspora' from a collective point of view as a community of practice by adapting the analytical approaches of the migration–development nexus, outlined in Chapter 2. As stated above, I opt for a processual conceptualisation of diaspora according to the definition of Mavroudi: "[...] a process in which space, place and time are not static but continuously used, imagined, and negotiated in the construction of both bounded and unbounded identities, communities, and nation-states" (2007: 473, 476).

Firstly, migrants define diaspora as their 'space of associative life'. Liliana, who has been living in Paris for eight years, explains:

Liliana (freelancer, 34, Paris): I have been in the diaspora for four years now, and I have realised that being active in the diaspora gives me confidence. I gain confidence by organising events for deprived people back home. And in my experience, when you have more confidence in yourself

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<sup>125</sup> Possibly, this explains why there are no significant gender variations among the members of the core-group of engaged migrants in this study.

<sup>126</sup> See for instance Carling and Hoelscher (2013) on different degrees of transnationalism (remittance-sending practices) and integration.

and in the country where you come from, and where you are active – people here are also more open towards you.

This definition of diaspora fits into Brah's (1996) understanding of a 'diaspora space' – a lived experience of collective and associational activities. Being in the diaspora means being an active member of migrants' associational life. That being said, migrants' first definition of the diaspora as being their community of collective practice is narrower than the notion of 'migrant community' often synonymously used with diaspora in the migration policy discourse (see Chapter 2). Moreover, the space of collective engagement provides migrants with room to change their views towards other possible realities of migrants and/or beneficiaries in Moldova:

Alina (student, 28, Paris): Before being in the diaspora, I only knew some students here, but through our activities in the diaspora, I have learned about the hard realities of other migrants.

Romina (secretary, 49, Rome): Before I became a member of the diaspora, I already knew that the life of many Moldovans in the villages is hard. But I only realised how desperate their situation is today when I met our beneficiaries in the villages.

A second strong focus of migrants' self-assessment on their own 'diaspora' and of their definition of a 'diaspora' more broadly is the 'transnational' character of their community. The migrants' strong emphasis on their capacity to cultivate links with Moldova is influenced by the development policy's definition of 'requirements' for migrant communities to become 'diaspora-actors for development'. These include the capability to contribute to development in the countries of origin and a need for migrants' ties to be beneficial for development (e.g. Brinkerhoff 2008; IOM 2012b). Accordingly, the core-group of migrant leaders wish to shift their objectives in orientation towards the country of origin, once they have attained more stability as a migrant community. Kiril's definition of a diaspora is inscribed in this logic:

Kiril (internee and consultant, 28, Geneva): Diaspora is a good word, but we are not a diaspora yet. First we need to become a proper community, with a community spirit – a real soul, and only then we can become a diaspora. What I have just learned at the Diaspora Conference in Geneva is that a diaspora has links to the home country, and does activities there. So, first we need to form a community here, and then we can do our diaspora activities in Moldova.

The majority of migrant leaders considers their community morphology as still being too inward-oriented, despite the fact that migrant associations are already engaged in a variety of transnational aid practices (see Chapter 6). This is partly because of an on-going identity construction processes towards a 'united Moldovan community' in terms of a space of common



belonging. In this context, cultural activities are perceived as too dominant in relation to other activities (e.g. festivals, concerts). The relevance of the leisure side of migrant associations is well-recognised, and cultural activities can provide migrants with a welcome distraction from the everyday hardships many of them face abroad (e.g. Boccagni 2013). They can also generate much-needed emotional support, which most migrants do not receive in the local social environments of their domiciles – a means to escape from their loneliness and isolation, described in Chapter 5<sup>127</sup>:

Christina (housewife, 29, London): We would like to have more events for us, like the Russian-speaking community has – receptions or concerts. Events where we can dress up nicely. Real evenings out, where we can forget about our everyday worries. Something nice for us, our community, not only charity happenings for people in Moldova. We are missing these kinds of events, because we are not fully integrated into the British society, and we don't yet have our Moldovan society here.

However, for the core-group of migrant leaders, communal activities like the ones described by Christina are a serious impediment for becoming a diaspora in the migrants' second definition of the term: a community of transnational development practices. Community-related activities that create a 'cosy space' for meeting other co-citizens, for spending quality time or for stilling migrants' *Sehnsucht* are in their view unacceptable collective practices. They do not fit into the common shared understanding of transnational development performances, and they are perceived as an 'ethnic mobility trap' that hinders a moving on towards transnational humanitarian practices (cf. Breton 1964)<sup>128</sup>. In these terms, narratives surrounding cultural activities are concise examples of struggles within the migrant space over shared commitments to the value of their common associative practices (cf. Schatski et al. 2001):

Ion (translator and writer, 34, Paris): Most migrants are not well-integrated, because they think they will go back one day, and they feel lonely. That's why they create associations, so they feel less isolated. But they have not yet understood that you don't need to create an association for organising a barbeque or a picnic [laughs]! That's ridiculous, and that's why our activities remain so communal, and we don't develop in a professional way.

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): If migrants have problems, or if they feel lonely they should go to local NGOs where people are paid for providing services to them. They shouldn't create associations just for meeting up. It clearly hampers the development of our diaspora.

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<sup>127</sup> This function of associations is comparable to the so-called 'expat bubbles' of medium and high-skilled migrants, underlining the artificial nature and detached space from their host countries in which their social life can take place (e.g. Fechter 2012).

<sup>128</sup> Prior to the transnational turn in the 1990s, the term 'ethnic mobility trap' mainly referred to the transnational engagements of migrants as a barrier to their integration into the host society.

Thirdly, migrants' definition of a Moldovan diaspora as disposing a certain ethnic boundary maintenance, by which the diaspora defines itself, is contested (cf. Brubaker 2005). Some migrants do not consider the Moldovan ethnic identity as 'distinct enough' from the Romanian, because of their close cultural and historical links. Hence, they do not label themselves as a 'diaspora'. Despite migrants' frequent references to the Romanian identity, however, the organisational relationship dynamics between Moldovans and Romanians are far from being self-evident in practice. In France and Switzerland, for example, both migrant communities frequently create partnerships or even mixed Romanian and Moldovan associations<sup>129</sup>, while in Italy and the UK, the two communities do not interact with one another. Migrant leaders in Italy strictly refuse to collaborate with Romanian associations, because of the negative public image of Romanians in the country<sup>130</sup>. In the UK and in Germany, the 'too-official nature' of Romanian associations was given as the main obstacle for joint collaborations.

And last of all, participants' self-reflections on becoming a diaspora involve considerations about time. Most migrant leaders find it still too early to say if a shared identity of a 'diaspora' has fully passed on to the next generation. Given the rather short time of Moldovan migration in Western Europe compared to more historically embedded migrations, the core argument for not attributing the essential feature of a 'diaspora' is the lack of a historical continuity across at least two generations to their own community (cf. Dufoix et al. 2010):

Lauren (journalist, 37, Bologna): I agree with our ambassador: we are not yet a diaspora. I think there really needs more time to pass before our migrant community becomes a diaspora.

Practices developed over time by individuals engaged in that practice further implies that migrants recognise and refer to a contingent history of development of their activities to perform, improve and legitimate it (cf. Bourdieu 1990). It is precisely the lack of such a history of 'common development practices', and concerns that it might be already too late to create a shared agenda of transnational practices, that distresses some migrants:

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<sup>129</sup> Three Moldovan migrant associations implement joint humanitarian projects with Romanian associations in Romania and Moldova.

<sup>130</sup> Another possible reason for this observation is the relative large size of both migrant communities in Italy, each disposing a considerable number of associations compared to Switzerland and Germany, where partnerships were also built due to the lack of co-national associations in the immediate vicinity.

Oleg (project-coordinator, 44, Padova): Today, we are at a crossroad, either we continue to follow the road of cultural activities, or we take a turn towards a more charitable direction in our engagement. But if we don't do anything now, it will be too late!

Natalia (lecturer and businesswoman, 42, Rome): It is not going to be easy to teach migrants how to do proper development activities, because some associations which were created – let's say up to four years ago – don't understand the idea of development, and those who do understand it are tired, because they never received supported or encouraged. The new generation, born here, or brought here by their parents, is usually not interested in our activities. Neither group alone has a future. So, maybe it will never happen?

In conclusion, migrants are strongly preoccupied with the social process of creating a community of practice, which implies a common shared understanding of collective practices and a common definition of the nature of their relationship with Moldova. Similar to the academic literature on the concept of diaspora, reviewed in Chapter 2, migrants have different understandings of what exactly a 'diaspora' is, ranging from 'an associative space' to a 'transnational-oriented community' as well as whether they should label themselves with the contested term 'diaspora' at all. Most importantly, in the migrants' opinion, the morphological transformation of their community towards becoming a 'community of transnational development practices' is 'in-the-making' or at 'a crossroad'. The capacity to attract newcomers and the second generation of Moldovan migrants, and to motivate them for a transnational development engagement will be crucial for perpetuating and increasing migrants' collective development efforts. This finding shows that there exists a substantial divergence between migrants' accounts on the cohesiveness of their 'diaspora-development community' and the perceptions of the aid-workers and civil servants within government ministries, who view the Moldovan diaspora as already 'transformed' in Sayad's sense (1977) of a 'third age of Moldovan migration' (see Chapter 5).

## 7.2 The Underling Logics of Collective Development Practices across Time and Space

Following up my discussion on the building up of a 'diaspora' understood as a community of practice, I now identify in more detail forms of migrants' transnational aid-practices, and how, within the field logics (nomos), specific categories of practice arise (cf. Bourdieu 1985). In line with Amelina and Faist (2012), I emphasise different temporalities, cultural aspects, and field-specific symbolic, organisational and economic resources. And I draw on Page and Mercer (2012) who maintain that an analysis of migrants' homeland-oriented development activities should take better account of migrants' everyday lives and identities when analysing their propensity to support their country of origin. In these terms, I discuss the most significant underlining motivations of migrants to engage in transnational aid-practices, integrated into their biographical projects and generated by migrants' everyday practices (Lave and Wenger 1991).

### 7.2.1 Regaining a name – online and offline

#### 7.2.1.1 *On becoming a person again: development practices shaped by migrants' professional skills*

As announced in Chapter 5, the phenomenon of de-skilling proved to be a determining motive for participants to engage in development-oriented practices. For many high-skilled migrants working in low-skilled jobs, transnational volunteer efforts towards Moldova present a welcome opportunity to employ their individual skills and resources, which they cannot use in their down-graded professional occupations – a freedom to share their passions. The underlining mission of this category of development practice is to overcome discrepancies between migrants' competences and social positions in the host countries as well as a temporal restoration of their professional skills and identities:

Anna (translator/writer, 45, Rome): We are not only doing our activities for people in Moldova, but also for us. For all of us who are not able to draw on our full professional and individual potentials and our passions, because all of these resources are not in demand in our jobs.

This finding is consistent with the broader literature on volunteerism, in which the opportunity to use one's professional skills is found to play an important role in individuals' choices for a volunteer engagement (e.g. Beck 2011). Further, numerous writers and scholars have referred to the importance of the restoration of migrants' identity by means of exercising their professional skills, by drawing either on their own biographies or on their scientific concepts. Consider, for instance, Musil's (1934) *'Man without qualities'*, who steps up from his dependence on the outer world and his adaptability to form his character, which became his most typical attitude. Or, Simmel (1992b), who postulated that the more the 'stranger' is perceived as an individual and not as a stranger of a certain type, the lesser the risk he gets to be generalised or standardised as such.

Migrants' use of social and human capital in their development projects is not restricted to a transnational commitment within the migrant community. Professional skills and interests are also determinant reasons for migrants' choices to volunteer in development NGOs in their host countries, alongside or in lieu of an involvement in migrant-run development practices<sup>131</sup>. This form of engagement is often overlooked in the discussion surrounding migrants' contribution to the development of their home countries, possibly because migrants' participation in the local

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<sup>131</sup> Another frequently mentioned motivation to volunteer in local self-help groups and NGOs is the aspect of bridging with the host society (e.g. getting acquainted with 'locals').

or national voluntary sector of their domiciles, beyond their immediate migrant community, is less studied<sup>132</sup>. Vladimir, a member of a local law association in Turin, which provides free legal online-counselling for vulnerable groups in Moldova and Romania, explained how his activity makes up for his status-loss:

Vladimir (car washer, 41, Turin): Ok, I am a car washer, that's my job in Italy. But in Moldova I used to work as a lawyer for some years, and I want to keep a link with my profession. It's good to be around lawyers in Italy. I enjoy it. It gives me the feeling to be a person again.

Likewise, professional interests are also determinant reasons for migrants' choices to continue their engagement in Moldovan-based development NGOs, instead of taking up a new engagement within the migrant civil society or in the local development sector of the host country<sup>133</sup>. Mihail explains his decision to continue his activities for a Moldovan NGO:

Mihail (engineer, 29, Orléans): I didn't find a migrant association nearby whose activities I would truly enjoy, which would fit me. That's why I continue my voluntary work in our youth NGO that we created three years ago in Moldova, and for which I develop an interactive web page. I really enjoy doing this. Maybe later, I will do something for a migrant association.

Whilst an involvement in development NGOs in the countries of residence might have escaped the broader discussion on migrants' development efforts because it is not considered as a transnational practice per se, it surprises me that migrants' continuing engagements in home-country-based NGOs, equally requiring transnational ties, are widely absent, too. The main point is that a non-engagement in migrant-run collective development interventions does not necessarily mean that migrants are not involved in development efforts towards Moldova. Thus, migrants generally, and Moldovan migrants particularly, might be more engaged in development practices than is commonly assumed.

#### *7.2.1.2 To see and to be seen: belonging and self-representation*

In Chapter 4, I explored how migrants aspire to regain the 'geographical centre of Europe' by (re-)connecting their marginalised home-country via transnational development practices. In a similar way, but this time on a more personal level, some participants desire to regain the 'centre' of the transnational space of the migrant community via humanitarian practices. While

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<sup>132</sup> E.g. the first time the Swiss-national volunteer survey included migrants in its annual survey was in 2012 (Stadelmann-Steffen 2015).

<sup>133</sup> One third of the migrant participants simultaneously engages in migrant-led development activities and in NGOs located in their countries of residence or in Moldova. This points to the earlier discussed specific personality type of a highly engaged migrant.

living physically isolated in the spatial and material peripheries of European centres, in Paris, London or Rome, they aspire to claim a place in the heart of the transnational migrant civil society. The participants' overriding motivation to engage in this type of collective transnational development practices is, thus, a 'performative act of belonging' (cf. Fortier 2000), or a form of 're-grounding' to the local or transnational migrant community (cf. Ahmed et al. 2003). That being said, the field logics (nomos) of these practices is the quest to belong to the migrants' transnational field.

This motive strongly relates to two findings on Moldovan migration in the countries under study, discussed in Chapter 5. Firstly, for many Moldovan migrants their primary social connections and identifications are the transnational Moldovan community and less the social groups in the host-society context. This reflects Snel and his colleagues' (2006) observation on Moroccan and Antillean migrant groups in the Netherlands, who have similar weak labour market positions as the Moldovans in Western European countries, and who identify more strongly with their country of origin and with their compatriots living elsewhere, than other migrant groups with slightly better socio-professional positions in the same country. Secondly, the majority of migrants anticipates return migration, which increases their tendency towards an engagement in activities reaffirming migrants' collective identity (e.g. Faist 2010a). Thus, migrants' pronounced 'transnational ways of being', for instance their high anticipated onward or return mobility, and their 'transnational ways of belonging', articulated in their desire to belong to the transnational migrant community, are both a prerequisite and simultaneously an expression of their 'ways of doing' transnational aid practices (cf. Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004).

Related to this logic of getting engaged in collective development practices is the quest for self-positioning and self-affirmation. In the Moldovan cultural context of 'recommendations' and 'clientelism', one's reputation is of outmost importance to pursue professional goals. The personality cult in terms of 'having a name' also unfolds within the transnational migrant community. An engagement in the 'diaspora' provides some participants with a space for self-performance and publicity, which most of them cannot achieve in the host society, because of their geographically and socially marginalised positions. The recognition of a personal engagement, which requires time and often a financial investment, is undoubtedly a legitimate request and important for keeping migrants' motivations alive; pursuing a model of relentless self-promotion, however, is different. Anna explains:

Anna (translator/writer, 45, Rome): Every charity activity, even the smallest events, make very quickly the round in our diaspora and on the internet. Everybody is always extremely keen that

the other leaders see the pictures of their events and of the celebrities they invite in the Moldovan media.

This observation also applies to the virtual world. Transnational flows of migrants' aid do not occur in a vacuum, but they require trans-border networks along which to travel. In the Moldovan case, I found them strongly present and visible in the virtual world. The observed attitude of self-interested online-posturing and the importance of face-to-interface relationships, I argue, is further encouraged by the online-communication and PR-hype of the Bureau, discussed in Chapter 6. In Goffman's (1967) terminology, the main function of these practices is 'actions within interaction' – the possibility to gain through development actions the 'centre' of attention in the migrant space and in the Moldovan media. Thus, it is no surprise that migrants whose engagement is guided by staging how they appear online and offline are usually presidents and board members of several associations. This allows them to maximise the use of associations for shaping their access to social capital within the migrant space or in Moldova<sup>134</sup>:

Laura (journalist, 37, Bologna): I often think that the associations are made for the presidents. That's why they only do what they want to do. Their associations and development projects are micro-businesses for self-publicity and for staying connected to important people in the diaspora or back home. They don't actually care about the projects.

Needless to say, Lauren's described leader-type is not able to create trust among other chairpersons of associations, and that the presidents of associations painted a more negative picture of migrant leaders than non-collectively engaged migrants, with fewer insights into the intra-associative social dynamics at play. In their opinion, personal idiosyncrasies, 'the cult of self-positioning' and parochial loyalties, are good examples that the mentality and practices of Moldovans do not much change abroad. Natasha, who collaborates with a French NGO, refers to some of these habitual behaviours that govern the associative practices:

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): Our community is like Moldova. There are many bosses and very few workers. Everybody wants to be a leader and appear in the media, and nobody wants to actually do something. Moldovans can't get rid of that mentality, not even here. They make the same mistakes as back home. I don't work with Moldovans anymore. It doesn't get you anywhere.

I argue that the migrant leaders' personal characteristics and their interpersonal relationships are accentuated by the fact that Moldovan migrant associations are not centralised

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<sup>134</sup> This practice is facilitated in France where the creation of an association does not require members.



around big associations, as other migrant communities are (cf. Lacroix 2011 on the Polish migrant associations in the UK). However, my empirical data also indicates that the organisational field is actually less fragmented and fraught with distrust and personal animosities, as commonly conveyed in mandated research, and thus must be put in a relative perspective (e.g. Cheianu-Andrey 2013). Especially given that personal idiosyncrasies were also found among the members of the second research group – the employees of development institutions in Moldova.

### 7.2.2 Compassion and moral compensation

A third significant category of transnational development practices is shaped by altruistic and religious reasons. For instance, migrants' compassion toward 'poor people' in migrants' communities of origin encourages a volunteer development engagement. Moral reasoning also plays a significant role in the associative support of recent migrants, often marked by migrants' own past difficult migration experiences. In particular, established migrants assist 'newcomers' with fewer migration experiences in administrative matters or with 'moral support'<sup>135</sup>.

Sandu (factory worker and actor, 42, Paris): Eleven years ago, I arrived with about 20 Euro at the Gare du Nord. I know how it feels. I just got a phone call from Chisinau before coming here [the interview venue]. Tomorrow, somebody from Moldova will arrive in Paris and needs help, so I will help, even if I don't know the person.

Anna (translator/writer, 45, Rome): We see our cultural activities as a moral support for the struggle and hardship many Moldovans face in Italy. We want to brighten their lives, to cheer them up, so they can forget about their difficult situations.

Contrary to Werbner's notion of 'moral co-responsibility' (2002) observed among the British-Pakistani networks, this form of collective solidarity is not related to moral obligations or compulsion within the migrant community which reflects badly on migrants or renders them liable to social disapproval if not carried out. Moldovan migrants' practices of social collective remittances addressed beyond their immediate families and friends are decoupled from any

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<sup>135</sup> Vice-versa, other migrants do not want to support migrants in need, because they do not want to be reminded of their own exceedingly difficult experiences upon their arrival and, therefore, are more likely to support people in need in Moldova.

social obligations and are based on personal altruistic or religious motivations in the sense of 'we are just people who care':

Angela (care-worker, 32, Novellara): Lately, I was thinking why do I do that? Why do I spend my free afternoons with my friends in front of the Esselunga [supermarket] to organise help for poor families back home? And then I came to understand: We, the Moldovans, are Orthodox people, so we have this mentality to help. It's normal. It's like my personal moral duty to help.

Although my sample is not representative, this form of transnational solidarity practice involves more women than men, and more middle-aged migrants in low-skilled jobs than their younger counterparts pursuing high-skilled jobs<sup>136</sup>. This observation brings us now to the low-skilled migrants, which are generally absent in the overall debate surrounding migrants' collective contributions to development.

On the one hand, migration scholars often undermine the engagement of low-skilled migrants in civic organisations in a fairly protective way, assuming that in most instances their tiring and insecure low-wage jobs and vulnerable life-circumstances do not allow time and resources for volunteer engagement<sup>137</sup>. Or, it could be that their mostly informal nature of helping practices organised in loose networks are not framed by the local or national associational structural context and thus escape research focusing on the structural opportunity contexts of host countries (e.g. Pirkkalainen et al. 2013). On the other hand, the development industry has neglected low-skilled migrants for fairly different reasons. Firstly, because these migrants are not considered as qualified enough for being an ideal 'delivery oriented' partner (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012). And secondly, the low-skilled migrants' development activities necessitate less physical mobility than the development performances of the high-skilled transmigrant – constantly 'on the move' for successful business-oriented projects in promotional videos of aid-agencies (see Chapter 6)<sup>138</sup>.

An interesting case of low-skilled migrants' humanitarian activities is given by a group of female care-workers in the Emilia Romagna region, whose volunteer-run humanitarian projects revolve around the support of vulnerable families and social institutions in their communities of origin. They initiate their small-scale projects without the mediation of formal associations,

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<sup>136</sup>Although my qualitative data do not allow for robust generalisations on the issue of gender relations, I found a consistency with patterns of the volunteer sector of most European countries (e.g. Stadelmann-Steffen 2015). With the exception of migrants belonging to the core group of transnationally engaged migrant leaders, a clear gender-division between men, typically engaged in political engagement, and women – more prone to engage in social activities, was found.

<sup>137</sup> I am aware that any type of volunteer engagement demands time, resources and energy, and that in many cases these are not available due to various reasons, such as abusive work conditions.

<sup>138</sup> E.g. collecting donations or sending material remittances does not require frequent border-crossing.

partly because they do not trust the chairmen of the nearby associations. Every Wednesday afternoon they meet in front of a supermarket in the district town to chat, exchange books and to discuss their humanitarian interventions<sup>139</sup>. Maria A., a former fulltime teacher explains:

Maria A. (factory worker and live-in care-worker, 46, Novellara): My engagement for vulnerable people gives me strength to resist my hard life here. Yes, my job is hard, but I have more freedom than back home where I needed to take care of my children, my parents, neighbours, in-laws [...] and of course of my husband [smiles]. Here, I can meet my friends in the evenings, and we discuss who is in need back home and how we can help. Last week, we collected money for a funeral of the father of a very poor family [...]. But this is not work, because we are all friends and we discuss things over a cup of coffee. Back home, I did not even have time to drink coffee.

As Tyldum (2015) maintains in the case of female Ukrainian migrants, “Studies that frame female migrants as mothers tend to reproduce a narrative of an act of sacrifice at the cost of understanding female migration where women go abroad to improve their own lives. As a result, the focus is shifted from the women’s agency and reasons for leaving, to the consequences of their absence” (2015: 56). In the example of Maria A. and her colleagues, the women’s agency is invested in their informal helping practices, which are an example of their newly gained personal space and time opened-up by the migration experience.

Interestingly, while low-skilled migrants reported a positive correlation between their migration experience and time for collective social engagement, the high-skilled migrants pursuing qualified jobs have more difficulties in finding space for volunteering over time<sup>140</sup>. This observation points to the importance of temporality in the social process of migration. In line with Vertovec’s observation (2009) that, on a personal level, time spent in the destination country, financial stability and educational level are positively related with a transnational engagement, the Moldovan migrants’ development efforts vary over time, as they respond to a range of life- course, social and economic factors<sup>141</sup>. The greater stability migrants attain in the social fabric of the host-society and in the labour market, the greater their capabilities to engage in transnational development practices.

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<sup>139</sup> Similar observations were made in Geneva, Bologna and Padova. Vice-versa, in bigger cities (e.g. London, Rome) low-skilled migrants reported more time restrictions due to longer commutes.

<sup>140</sup> In cases where high-skilled jobs were insecure, time resources were regarded as the biggest challenge for taking up a humanitarian engagement (e.g. migrants feel less secure financially and work harder to protect their jobs).

<sup>141</sup> This finding is not specific to migrants, but also applies to the broader volunteer sector in the countries under study. Research on volunteerism has found, for instance that, mostly the middle class is involved in volunteer engagements and not the most deprived population with less time and financial resources available (e.g. Beck 2011). Considering the migrants’ volunteer engagement, this points to the importance of migration-policy frameworks that are not tied to a specific development goal (e.g. flexible citizenship laws, residency requirements and labour rights) (see Chapter 6).

Maria A. and Dragomir's migration trajectories illustrate well the importance of temporal aspects for migrants' capability to engage in collective development activities. Both participants were undocumented migrants upon their arrival in the destination countries without a permanent residency. Maria A. worked as a carer and stayed overnight with her colleagues in a Catholic Church in Padova. Dragomir, with no permanent job upon his arrival, resided in a disused hangar in the outskirts of Paris. Tellingly, their personal economic hardship upon their immediate arrival made a volunteer engagement impossible. Over time, Dragomir and Maria A.'s life-conditions changed – for instance their legal status and housing situation – and they became engaged in collective humanitarian projects. In fact, they were among the most active migrants I encountered. However, because of the unchanged nature of their low-skilled jobs – Dragomir still works in construction and Maria A. as care-worker – they remain positioned outside the category of the migration–development actors' target of high-skilled migrants, constituting the 'diaspora–development community', as discussed in Chapter 6. Subsequently, their personal development efforts remain invisible in the migration-development policy discourse. Keeping in mind that most Moldovan migrant leaders have experienced de-skilling, I argue that in the Moldovan case, the temporality of the social process of migration is more significant for migrants' capabilities and choices to take up a development engagement than the dominant dual approach of low-skilled and high-skilled migrants, applied in migration–development policies.

Lastly, though an in-depth elaboration of my findings on the role of the church is beyond the remit of this thesis, I would like to briefly stress that the Romanian Orthodox Church is an important social actor. The church members provide support for migrants and individuals in need in Moldova alike, mostly on a volunteer basis. Migrants turn often to the Romanian Orthodox church for assistance in housing, work possibilities, or for legal advice. The members of church-led humanitarian associations are highly active in Moldova and their engagement is chiefly driven by altruistic and religious motivations. On the other hand, the Russian-Orthodox Church concentrates entirely on the provision of religious services and is not involved in transnational solidarity towards Moldova<sup>142</sup>.

Religious motives also play a role in the next form of volunteer-run development practices, which does not involve a Moldovan counterpart in the classical understanding, and solely unfolds in a metaphoric way across time and space.

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<sup>142</sup> The church is highly politicised in Moldova and in the Moldovan migrant community. The interference of the Russian Orthodox Church into political elections in favour of a pro-Russian orientation of the country, for instance, caused a loss of popularity among the mostly pro-European oriented Moldovan migrants.



Figure 7.2: The church

### 7.2.2.1 Metaphoric forms of transnational development practices

Some participants who are engaged in development NGOs and civic groups in their host countries – often alongside their engagement in migrant-run activities – view their local engagement as a ‘moral compensation’ for having left children or other family members back ‘home’<sup>143</sup>. The underlying logic of this category of practice is that “if migrants help ‘here’, their families back home are helped, too”. Put differently, the logic of “if I do good here then good things come to those who remain back home” points to religious components. In Illa’s words:

<sup>143</sup> To find out whether development practices generated by migrants’ compensation for their absence is gender-specific, in the sense that women feel guiltier for being separated from their families than men, would require a larger sample.

Illa (care-worker, 36, Novellara): [...] I strongly believe that if I do something good here, like my voluntary work as an ambulance driver at the Red Cross, my family back home will receive help, too. When I am absent, my daughter and parents need support from our neighbours, even for small things, for instance to use their computer. I am convinced that it is more likely that they continue to support my family, if I also do good things here.

I propose to conceptualise this type of social engagement as a metaphoric mode of transnational practice, because it unfolds in a figurative sense across time and space. The socio-spatial unit of migrants' engagement is fully located in the host society and neither physically nor materialistically linked to the home country. Yet, the desired impact of migrants' engagement is 'there', in Moldova, but without a logical consequence of migrants' efforts 'here'. The migrants' reaching out beyond their immediate localised migrant-community through moral performances of volunteering is based on pure expectations which might or might not be fulfilled.

This metaphorically unfolding cross-border practice warrants remarks on two issues that I find usually sidelined in the broader migration–development debate. Firstly, migrants' accentuation on the temporal dimension of migration – commonly paraphrased with 'while we are gone' – marks an individually lived spectrum of migration temporalities. Further, it implicates a personal feeling of guilt for being 'gone' or 'absent' for longer than anticipated. This alludes to the need to move towards a more nuanced approach of temporality, that takes better account of migrants' individually experienced time-span of being 'absent' – beyond the reduced and static duality of temporary versus permanent migration. Secondly, migrants are embedded in multi-layered, multi-sited transnational social fields encompassing both those who move and those who do not (Levitt 2007). The relationships between migrants and those who do not move can change over time. As shown above, some migrants depend on the 'goodwill' and favours from their relatives, friends or neighbours 'back home'. The various types of assistance provided by non-migrants – such as taking care of migrants' children or parents, might stretch over a long period of time. I propose, therefore, to pay more attention in future research to how these everyday life relations between migrants and non-migrants can generate specific forms of transnational development practices, and how they might influence migrants' choices to engage in a certain type of aid-practice.

In summary, cross-border aid-practices performed by low-skilled migrants, who are often marginalised in their destination countries, reveal a remarkable local and transnational solidarity for their co-citizens and vulnerable individuals in Moldova. Their forms of solidarity, chiefly driven by altruistic motivations, enact like a transnational civil society in migrants' micro-space of everyday life, rather than on some putative national or global stage. I personally think that

the development efforts of these migrants – enfolded in their exhausting everyday life – merit more research and policy attention.

### 7.2.3 Transnational development practices and anticipated return migration

After the exploration of development practices that emanate from migrants' past and present migration experiences, I now address three interrelated categories of collective practices that emerged from migrants' desire to return to Moldova. Migrants' anticipated return as the underpinning motivation of these practices points to interlinkages between two habitually distinct subjects in the migration literature: anticipated return migration and transnational collective development practices.

#### *7.2.3.1 Re-establishing personal support-networks in prospect of return*

Firstly, the 'culture of recommendation' discussed earlier – the high importance of social ties for finding new employment in Moldova – is one reason why many Moldovans prefer to stay in Moldova, instead of migrating. In a similar way, the present category of practices emerges from migrants' concerns that they might lose their social positions in Moldova, because they are absent for long periods of time and unable to participate in important socio-cultural events (cf. Dannecker 2009). Because participants' life-goal orientations upon their return were narrated rather vaguely, I propose to conceptualise this development practice as a 'general making up of the loss of migrants' social position and status in Moldova'. In this context, development projects initiated abroad serve migrants as a platform for gaining or re-establishing personal contacts to various important local drivers in Moldova (e.g. with political and administrative office-holders) for generating economic investments or career opportunities in prospect of return.

Rosa's humanitarian engagement is a good example how migrants aspire to (re)build personal support networks via development efforts. She holds an MBA in business management from the USA and is the president of an active London-based migrant association that regularly implements development projects in Moldova. One of the association's currently running projects is a food-festival in a suburb of Chisinau promoting a healthy life-style, in which Angela is her main partner. While Rosa provided me in London with a highly professional account of their project implementation, Angela presented another picture. When we were discussing Rosa's implementation plan in Chisinau, Angela expressed her frustration over its 'unprofessionalism'. Indeed, a closer look at the project disclosed interesting patterns of

transnational aid-practices heavily inscribed in Rosa's return scenario – a concealment of her self-interest in the development transaction, rather than a logic operational strategy.

Angela (project manager for NGOs, 52, Chisinau): Her approach doesn't make sense at all. Look, I am supposed to buy these things here, in this village, and that thing there, in another village. But these villages are far away from each other, and it goes on like this. Even here [in Chisinau] she wants me to print out the flyers at this place, and the T-Shirts at the other end of town, and that is definitively not professional. I think Rosa just wants people to remember her, because she wants to come back [...]. I will not follow her plan, because I have other things to do, and at end of the day - like last year, they will show her, and only her on TV.

No doubt, Rosa wants to be remembered in the localities of her development intervention for her future career plan in Moldova, which is to work on 'projects and other things' during extended visits in Moldova once or twice a year for about three months. Her development engagement is a way to prepare her temporary return and to create a presence in Moldova while still being physically absent. This transnational case study shows that migrants' arrangements for their temporary or permanent return to Moldova can become the field logics within the transnational space of migrants' development engagement (nomos). This observation has implications for the development industry's expectations on migrants' collective behavioural practices, and for the relationship dynamics between migrants and their non-migrant counterparts in Moldova, as we will see shortly.

#### *7.2.3.2 Humanitarian projects as a stepping-stone for future self-employment*

Secondly, some migrants use their development project as a stepping-stone for a future self-employment upon their return. The underling function of this practice is to overcome discrepancies between migrants' competences and social position in the host countries and strongly relates to the phenomenon of de-skilling (see Chapter 5). Like development practices guided by migrants' professional skills, humanitarian inventions in this context are an opportunity to quit a low-skilled job abroad for a more fulfilling professional activity back in Moldova.

Ion initiated with his association a community development project in Estonia which he now intends to implement as a freelancer in two districts of Chisinau. For this reason, he makes regular short-term visits to Chisinau to meet local political drivers. On one of his visits he explained to me:



Ion (barman, 29, Tallinn): Yesterday, I had a meeting with the local authorities, and I showed them how such projects work in Estonia. They are interested, but I still need to do a lot of networking. But if everything goes well, I will come back for some time, or even for good, and try to make a living from the project.

Ion seeks proximity via his humanitarian engagement to create a new viable livelihood in Moldova with potentially greater self-realisation. His civic engagement reflects de Certeau's (1984) notion of 'tactics', which social actors use in a context of unequal social interaction to maintain levels of personal and social autonomy over social resources or meanings of action. This interpretation also fits neatly with the international migration–development debate and its 'key-migrant', who makes rational choices in response to specific motivations – such as business interests (see Chapter 2). Vice-versa, this type of practice is highly disapproved of as being too 'business-oriented' by migrants whose humanitarian interventions are driven by altruism, as we will see below.

#### *7.2.3.3 Addressing gaps in temporary return and employment programmes*

Thirdly, migrants with different professional backgrounds expressed high interest in temporary return employment schemes, which would allow them to return to Moldova for a period of 1-4 months a year. So far, such temporary return and employment programmes, implemented by international donor agencies, exclusively address the small number of 'elite' movers, chiefly academics or entrepreneurs pursuing high-skilled jobs abroad (e.g. ASM 2009; CIM/GIZ 2012)<sup>144</sup>. To this end, participants who do not fit into this target group aspire to create their own, individually shaped temporary employment schemes through their abroad-initiated humanitarian projects. Natasha, president of an association that supports a local hospital narrated:

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): It would be really helpful to have more possibilities to return for a short period of time – let's say for two or three months a year, and to get paid for our projects. I was lucky to receive financial support by a foundation for the hospital project last year, which allowed me to return for two months and to work fulltime on the project. I was not feeling well then, because I lost my job in Paris, and the project work in Moldova was good for me. I am

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<sup>144</sup> I am referring to temporary employment programmes, which co-finance a salary or an investment grant for a certain period of time (e.g. temporary return of representatives of Moldovan scientific diaspora, IOM 2012b). I am not referring to 'voluntary' return programmes aiming at migrants' permanent return, and which are often 'imposed' upon migrants, rather than related to migrants' actual wishes to return (e.g. other IOM programmes).

sure that other migrants would be interested to return for some time and to do different social activities if they had the chance.

By and at large, many migrants perceived the restricted offer of temporary return schemes as an expression of a general lack of the Moldovan authorities' response to migrants' needs and individual migration plans. This calls for policy recommendations. Firstly, considering the estimates of both research groups that circular migration will increase with the new free travel treaties of 2014, due to fewer obstacles to mobility for Moldovans to EU countries, I see a need to create more adequate policies addressing circular migrants, beyond the target of high-skilled migrants. Secondly, a greater support and enrolment of migrant associations' humanitarian projects in these programmes could be more beneficial for migrants and Moldova than the common practice of aid-actors, consisting of creating employment positions in Moldova with predefined candidate profiles. These, I argue, are often determined in a rather artificial way with questionable benefits for the wider society and the migrants alike (e.g. IOM 2012b; Varzari et al. 2014).

In conclusion to this second section, migrants' decisions to engage in transnational aid-practices are multi-faceted and overlapping, ranging from communal belonging to the migrant space, to altruistic motivations, and to social-status maintenance 'here' and 'there'. Collective aid-practices have different functions and purposes for migrants, which are influenced by changes in migrants' social experiences – their daily cultural practices and the meanings attributed to such. Consequently, migrants' motives to engage in development practices may also change over time, for instance from altruistic motivations to arrangements for return migration. The latter motivation shows that transnationally engaged Moldovan migrants do not necessarily follow a migration strategy of 'long-term residence', as observed in the majority of other studies on the subject (e.g. Düvell and Vogel 2006).

Lastly, migrants' individual migration experiences can generate a wide range of transnational development performances, which do not all easily fit into the values and logic of the development establishment. This invites us to revisit one of the core assumptions underpinning migrant association-led development policies, namely that migrants' newly gained knowledge, ideas and experiences abroad automatically lead to a 'behavioural' change in migrants' practices (e.g. Orozco and Rouse 2007). The assumption of the 'homeland dissimulation' (Fitzgerald 2012: 1733) – in this case the process of groups and individuals becoming more 'democratic' or 'professional' than those whom they left behind – is not necessarily applied in migrants' collective practices to advance development in migrants' home countries. In some cases where the functions of migrants' practices are, for instance, a quest for self-publicity in the migrant

space or a preparation for return, it is in the migrants' best interests not to use their newly-gained skills, because it could work against their personal interests. Thus, despite the finding that some migrants remoulded their development practices abroad, the claim that migrants stimulate the development of their home-countries by their contribution of 'social remittances' is not always a given (cf. Levitt 1998). Subsequently, migrants' social practices might not always lead to the expected positive change in Moldova, as proclaimed in the policy discourse.



Figure 7.3. Migrants' collective development interventions

### 7.3. "We Want to Keep It Human": Migrants' Understanding of Development Practices in Relation to Mainstream Aid-Giving

This section sets the scene for the last empirical chapter – the exploration of aid-relationship dynamics between migrants and development actors in joint project settings. Meanwhile, here and now I discuss migrants' perspectives on the aid-industry and on its mainstream aid-practices, by focusing on migrants' self-reflections on their development practices in relation to the development establishment's 'ways of doing development'.

### 7.3.1 Migrants' perception of mainstream development practices

#### 7.3.1.1 *The positive portrait of the aid-industry*

The migrants rarely mentioned aid-agencies as important players for Moldova's future development, despite the fact that numerous development institutions try to advance the country's transformation (see Chapter 4). This is surprising, because most migrants have a positive attitude towards foreign aid investments in Moldova<sup>145</sup>. Projects aiming to improve the living conditions of people in villages, for instance, were particularly positively received. Migrants also highlighted that any kind of improvements in the living conditions of Moldovans are always achieved with the support of international development institutions. Moreover, the activities of the donor community were also frequently commented on in migrants' online-discussion forums and social network websites. On a Facebook discussion group operated by a Geneva-based migrant association, for instance, the engagement of a Western European volunteer NGO in a Moldovan village received extremely positive resonance and was praised as a role model for the remaining local population<sup>146</sup>:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): It is very good to see how people come to our villages to help. It's good that they don't only go to Africa, because we have very poor families and children, too. Some of these children are unhealthy, because they don't have running water at home, and they work in the fields without shoes [...]. I saw that one foreign NGO created a health centre for them. Our association helped to renovate the school in the same village. But a big project like the health centre is too expensive for us, so we are very happy that foreign NGOs help.

The participants not only welcome international development projects, but they also closely follow their implementation, especially those carried out in their home towns and communities where their families live. Maria B. describes how the members of a network of care-workers follow the activities of aid-agencies:

Maria B. (live-in care-worker, 52, Novellara): If there is something good and new in our village, it is always done with foreign aid. For instance, in our village, we didn't have light. So, this NGO installed street lights, and they constructed a bus station, so people don't need to wait under the tree anymore when it's raining. There are pictures on the internet, and we follow these activities

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<sup>145</sup> Presumably this is related to the dominance of migrants' statements on the government's default in its political commitments of positive change (see Chapter 4).

<sup>146</sup> From <http://play.md/256837> [last accessed March 2016].

together, when we have a couple of hours off, usually on Sunday afternoons at my place, because not all of us have internet access.

### *7.3.1.2 The negative stances towards 'professional' aid-practices*

Migrants' appreciation of the development industry's valuable investments in Moldova does not necessarily mean that they also endorse the latter's development practices. Similar to the finding that migrants' development visions of Moldova can hold opposite views from those of the official aid industry, discussed in Chapter 4, migrants' approaches to aid-practices differ from the ones performed by the development establishment. In fact, many migrant leaders expressed a rather negative stance towards mainstream development mechanisms and questioned the development establishment's contemporary practices. They portrayed the 'development set' as being too bright and noble, highlighting that aid workers travel too much, use 'posh' words and spend the funds on fancy hotels, instead of on people in need. Consequently, these migrants clearly distance themselves from the help industry and its 'professional' practices:

Anastasia (tour guide and translator, 46, Berlin): In Chisinau, you see the development people driving around in their expensive jeeps. That's what they call charity. That's not what we do. We don't do charity. I don't even like the word charity. We do real things, the most natural things, we help the poor and vulnerable. It's more, ehm, solidarity.

Vasile (IT engineer, 48, London): I don't believe in charity, and I don't believe in charities as organisations. I don't believe in any organisation that spends money without producing something and that lives only from donations. I have a Moldovan friend here in London who works for an international NGO and she is always flying. Absolutely, always! She is in Geneva and Bangkok, and in this and that fancy hotel. She is working for a charity! I don't believe in all of this! Don't these people know how to do online-media conferences?

In addition, the majority of the migrants think that too much donor funding is allocated to overarching political structures where it disappears into the pockets of corrupt government officials – a system of which they don't want to be part of. The criticism that the donor community too strongly focuses on structural support echoes migrants' general disappointment about the absence of funding for their own associative activities, which they expected to receive from the newly-created state-support structures (see Chapter 6):

Oleg (project-coordinator, 44, Padova): A lot of charity money goes into the overall structures like the ministries, and only a small amount reaches the beneficiaries – the vulnerable people in the villages. That's why our human solidarity, the grassroots level, which actually reaches the individuals in need, is so important to us, and should receive more share of all this foreign aid.

As we see from the quotes above, some participants associate the concept of 'charity' with the development industry's practices, while their own practices are regarded as 'solidarity'. Most migrant leaders interpreted in a rather limited way 'charity practices' performed by development actors as top-down structural support, while the main function of their 'solidarity practices' lays in a bottom-up approach of aid-provision. Thus, one of the main issues that emerged as crucial in terms of migrants' dissociation from mainstream development practices are the migrants' self-reflections on their development interventions as 'doing real things', understood as 'people-to-people solidarity' as opposed to doing 'charity'.

Additionally, some of the migrant leaders do not agree with the contemporary practice of 'professional charity' because of their 'professional' nature. Professionally run practices do not fit into the migrants' understanding of 'loyalty' towards Moldova as 'coming from the migrants' hearts', or as an engagement that should be 'kept human'. In particular migrants whose main motivation for humanitarian interventions is driven by altruism are reluctant towards professionally-run organisations, be it development organisations or migrant associations. And they do not aspire to a developing professionalisation of their own associations; instead they wish to keep their collective activities voluntary-run. In Vasile's and Ion's words:

Vasile (IT-engineer, 45, London): My interest in projects and charity activities for beneficiaries in Moldova is a personal interest. I am myself interested in the Moldovan community here, that's why it is a personal interest. There are people who do it professionally, and they get grants. I don't believe in this kind of people, because they are not genuinely interested in the migrant community or the beneficiaries in Moldova. They just want to earn money.

Ion (translator, 34, Paris): I don't want our association to become professional, because it would mean that I would do my activities just for money.

These quotes reflect the opinion of migrant leaders who see the development professionals or the migrants as solely pursuing their self-interests by earning their living with development interventions, or by operating according to the *modus operandi* of 'seen and being seen', which is not considered as a genuine interest in the development cause. Like other non-migrant alternative development NGOs, they aim to pursue their associative activities as independent NGOs outside the official development field. This finding shows that migrants' debate surrounding professionally-run activities is a concise example of struggles within the migrant space over a shared understanding of their 'right transnational development practices', similar to the earlier mentioned cultural practices, which are contested in migrants' understanding of their 'diaspora' as a community of practice.

Furthermore, migrants' transnational charity engagement is mostly built on personal and close relationships, such as neighbourhood relations or kinship within the migrant space. The fact that personal contacts ensure a degree of trust is another significant reason why some migrants do not aspire to partnerships with mainstream development institutions. Diana, whose association helps to improve the roads in a Moldovan village, narrates:

Diana (care-worker, 45, Paris): In Moldova, you need to have strict control over the money you send, otherwise you will never see any results. Because we only trust people we already know, we only cooperate with people we know. I don't know any aid-workers, but I know the mayor of the village for years, and that's why we work with him and not with the foreign NGOs in the village.

In a positive light, the migrants' local counterparts are mostly considered trustworthy. For that reason, the expectation of the development industry that through migrants' personal contacts their support is more likely reach the beneficiaries than formal development organisations, got somewhat confirmed (e.g. Mazzucato and Kabki 2009 on this issue). On a more negative note, migrants' strong emphasis on personal contacts as a guarantor of trust and quality means that they are less eager to team up with 'unknown' aid-workers. Other key criteria of development policy – such as the consistency of migrants' projects with national development strategies – are irrelevant for these migrants (e.g. EU 2013b).

In sum, the practices and projects, imaginary or real, of these migrants demonstrate strong similarities among the group of migrants of the first Moldovan migration wave, in contrast to the migrants of the second Moldovan migration wave, who expressed more interest in integrating their activities into the transnational field of aidland. Possibly, this is due to the fact that they have more trust in institutions back 'home' than the migrants of the first migration wave who left Moldova around the Russian financial crisis in 1998, when Moldova hit rock bottom (see Chapter 4). Furthermore, migrants' belonging to the second wave might have fewer personal ties to Moldovan villages and vulnerable people in need, and they do not share the same sense of obligation and identification towards the origin community as the first group of migrants. I therefore conclude that in the Moldovan case, migrants' belonging to either the first or second Moldovan migration wave significantly influences their propensity to team-up with mainstream development organisations. It will be interesting to closely follow if recent migrants will shift the strong emphasis on the aspect of 'personal trust' towards a more thematic focus of interventions according to the preferences of development policy.

### 7.3.2. "I am bored of pure idealism": migrants' development interventions as self-help practices

In this sub-section I briefly summarise narratives surrounding objects of aid. I explore migrant leaders' struggles over definitions of the 'collective productive use' of material, social and economic remittances by taking into account the diverse motives of migrants to get involved in development-shaped engagements, explored in section 2.

Firstly, migrants reported that the practice of sending material goods to partner institutions, such as medicine or toys, is often complicated. Obstacles encountered included above all, the actual journey of the goods themselves, which is often hampered by bureaucratic hurdles (e.g. restrictive border controls and legal import restrictions)<sup>147</sup>. Secondly, besides their immediate local NGO counterparts in Moldova, experiences of migrants with the recipients of objects of aid back home were often negative. Migrants criticised the passive attitude of 'aid consumption' by locals, and they illustrated misuse of sent goods. An often-mentioned example in this regard was that clothes, books or toys were resold by villagers for their own financial benefits. For this reason, some migrants no longer trust the inhabitants of rural communities who have become in their opinion jealous and greedy due to poverty. This echoes migrants' perceptions of deteriorating values among Moldovans and their estimate of a general degrading social situation in their home country, discussed in Chapter 4.

Vitali (priest, 48, Paris): The problem is not our partner organisation but the wider society. Whatever is being sent to Moldova is misused. That's why we don't send things directly back to the communities anymore. It's not ending up in the right hands. I think we should enhance more business relationships with Moldova. This would benefit Moldovans much more than sending second-hand clothes and charity stuff to Moldova.

Because of these negative experiences, some participants prefer to carry out object and project-bound development practices according to the principle of 'help for self-help'. Diana and Sandra explain their conceptions of 'helping people help themselves'.

Diana (care-worker, 45, Paris): I always think it is nicer to make people realise what they can achieve from their own efforts. For example, in our project children develop their creativity. This is a form of aid that I am very passionate about, because I strongly believe that it should come from both parts, reciprocally. You know, with so many aid institutions working in the country and so many relatives abroad, I see somehow a risk that people start to think that they don't need to do anything anymore. This also has to do with our migrant associations who just dump their second-hand clothes and toys in Moldova, assuming that they make children happy like this.

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<sup>148</sup> One UK-based migrant association and a London NGO are currently lobbying for the improvement of customs politics (e.g. facilitating the import of collected material goods, such as soft toys).



Sandra (factory worker and artist, 55, Munich): I am bored of pure idealism – of the idea to just give. People should be helped, yes. But they also should do something in return, like they do in our micro-credit projects.

The same participants who encountered an attitude of 'aid consumption' in Moldova reported similar experience in the migrant community. In this context, 'the passive Moldovan mentality' is considered as negatively influencing their humanitarian efforts performed in the host countries:

Dana (social worker, 46, Rome): I want them [the migrants] to stop thinking that somebody will organise everything for them. I want people to do it themselves: To participate or to do it together! Our association is like a framework. Other migrants don't need to create new associations or a new website, if they want to do a development project. It's all there. But they need to learn how to use these opportunities, rather than somebody else doing things for them, which is typical for Moldovans.

Vice-versa, some migrant leaders reported that beneficiaries in Moldova were not used to receive something for nothing, and that partner organisations and beneficiaries have often found it difficult to accept aid. The reluctance of some Moldovan counterparts to accept aid was commonly narrated as a result of a historically embedded distrust towards free services. This refers back to the Moldovan social character of having been exploited in history by different players, highlighted in Chapter 4:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): We wanted to build a playground for kids in a village because they stay at home in front of their TVs all the time. But no one supported our initiative at the beginning. The mayor was very suspicious and didn't except any gift, because he was afraid that we want something in return, as it was always the case in the past.

A last significant aspect is that migrants have often different or even antagonistic motivations to engage in transnational development than their Moldovan counterparts. A shared underlining function of a performed development practice was mostly missing in joint development settings. For instance, migrants' altruistic and religious motivations are certainly a noble cause, and helping others in need is admirable, but it can be problematic in relationship dynamics with non-migrant counterparts. Larissa, for example, who implements a migrant association-led project in Moldova told me that she cannot afford to be a 'do-gooder' like her project partner in Germany:

Larissa (state agricultural minister, 56, Cantemir): A. always wants me to do things for almost free. But some time ago, I told her very clearly that I don't have a German husband like her. It's a luxury to do things for almost free in this country. I need to survive with two jobs and little spare time. So, I told her that I need more funding than just the coverage of the admin costs.

Larissa's reference to altruistic motivations being an unaffordable luxury in Moldova points to uneven socio-economic conditions and time-resources, which can arise between migrants and their non-migrant counterparts back 'home' in border-crossing development practices (e.g. Lampert 2014). In most of the cases, Moldovan migrants have more time and resources available than their counterparts, despite their time-consuming jobs abroad. This can create an imbalance between migrants' altruistic motivations and the counterparts' needs for financial compensation of their time and effort<sup>148</sup>.

To round off this last section, many migrant leaders do not want to become integrated into the field of professional development, because they have negative stances towards professional organisations. Moreover, some migrants' definition of their own development interventions as an act of solidarity at distance – 'from people to people', according to the principle of 'help for self-help' – is perceived as the opposite practice to top-down official 'professional charity practices'. That being said, the most pronounced struggles within the migrant space over shared commitments to the value of their transnational development practices and with regard to the professional development community are relational aspects of the binaries: 'official' and 'unofficial' aid practices, and 'professional' practices versus 'volunteer' intentions. As we will see in the next chapter, due to the fact that migrant associations are predominantly viewed as 'formal' development players in international migration-development-led programmes, the aid-workers in charge of migrant association-led programmes are mostly unaware of their negative image attributed by migrants and of their diverging ideas about development practices (e.g. CIM/GIZ 2012). Also, I find the fact that some development-oriented migrant associations simply do not want to be part of the development industry – neither as volunteer associations nor as professional actors – as well as the fact that not all of them want to become professionally organised is somewhat tabooed in the broader migration–development debate.

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<sup>148</sup> The reverse scenario also occurred, as we saw in the example of Angela and Rosa's project, in which the migrants' counterparts disregarded migrants' intentions of self-seeking interests via development efforts, while they stay out of the spotlight.

## 7.4 Conclusion

This chapter discussed Moldovan migrants' manifold aspirations and motivations to engage in chiefly voluntary development practices.

In section one, I explored migrants' community building as a social practice, emphasising the importance of the 'everyday' in understanding social life (Bourdieu 1985; Lave and Wenger 1991). The main findings here can be summarised as follows:

*Migrants have different understandings of what exactly a 'diaspora' is, and on whether they should label themselves with the contested term 'diaspora' at all. The majority of migrant leaders view the state of Moldovan migrant civil society as still rather weak, due to considerable inward-oriented efforts to create a common Moldovan migrant identity. The social process of building up a community of collective practice is itself considered as an important constraint for migrants' desired development engagement at distance, alongside Moldova's deficient infrastructure and the lack of structural support from the Moldovan authorities. Migrants' definition of a 'Moldovan development diaspora', based on the analytical template of the migration–development approach, is perceived as 'in-the-making' or at a 'crossroad'. This stands in sharp contrast to the perception of the development industry that views the 'Moldovan diaspora' as an already transformed 'diaspora–development community', set to be integrated into national development strategies. Thus, not only is Moldova 'in transition' but the Moldovan 'diaspora', too. And there exists not only a dynamic process of building up institutional structures to engage with migrants for development in Moldova, but also a lively process of defining within the migrant community shared commitments to the value of migrants' common collective practices, including struggles over ways of how to engage with Moldova.*

In the second section, I discussed migrants' collective aid-practices as transnational social practices. I focused on the *complex array of determinants operating across different social, spatial and temporal scales*. Summing up the findings of section two:

*Migration processes not only reconstruct migrants' development visions and ideas of Moldova, but they also shape development practices in a dynamic way. Migrants' collective practices of social remittances emerge from a complex interplay of mostly understudied past, present and anticipated migration experiences, such as migrants' rather weak socio-cultural integration in the host societies or their anticipated return migration. Aid practices are, thus, framed by both Moldova's socialist past and new post-socialist realities – such as the country's marginal place within Europe, and migration experiences, be they temporary or permanent.*

*Furthermore, by stressing how the relational nature of how 'here' and 'there' are linked, my findings shed light on a variety of transnational development practices, including forms which have escaped the attention of the development industry and research – such as types of collective aid-giving performed by low-skilled migrants based on feelings of guilt for being 'absent'.*

*By all, it was found that migrants' transnational development practices are a complex of understandings, commitments and competences with different purposes and functions. These include moral satisfaction, self-esteem, personal development, social interactions and self-interest in terms of gaining different types of capital in different socio-spatial contexts.*

This finding confirms Ward's (2004: 21) interpretation of Bourdieu's theory of practice: "Practices can account for aspects of everyday life and the conduct of a full range of activities and can delineate activity as a coordinated entity which is temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed".

*Therefore, individual experiences of migrants can generate a wide range of transnational development performances which do not necessarily fit into the values and logic of the specialised transnational field of the development industry.*

The core assumptions underpinning migrant association-led development policies, which are that migrants' newly gained knowledge, ideas and experiences abroad are naturally displayed in migrants' transnationally spanning development practices, thus need to be reconsidered (e.g. Orozco and Rouse 2007).

*As shown, in cases where collective practices are closely linked to migrants' self-interests or multi-sited everyday life, for instance to their belonging to the transnational migrant community or to a preparation for return migration, their ways of doing collective development might not change much.*

This observation has implications for Moldova and its development partners' intentions to integrate migrants' development efforts into home-land development, as the creation of a transnationally active Moldovan community might prove more difficult than expected.

*Because migrants' lives and multi-sited identities are fluid and in constant transformation, individual functions of collective practices can also change over time, for instance from an altruistic motivation to arrangements for future return migration. Thus, migrants' development practices are not a straightforward process, because the norms and values on which they are based on can be themselves subject to change and local adaptation in migrants' everyday lives, embedded in changing interaction processes between various actors. They are a combination of individual qualities and processes influenced by situational human agency. The fact that migrants' situation abroad might evolve over time, alludes to the need for a more sophisticated insight into the nexus between different temporalities of Moldovans' migration and collective*

*practices of social remittances. Given that many Moldovan migrant leaders experienced de-skilling abroad, I argue that migrants' life-situations, for instance their legal stability as well as their personal characteristics and biographical aspects, are more significant for migrants to take up a development engagement than the common dichotomy of high-skilled versus low-skilled migrants.*

That being said, it is time to better account for the temporal dynamics of cross-border development practices in the Moldovan migration–development discourse.

*In section three, we saw that different understandings of aid-practices exist between migrant leaders and mainstream development actors; for instance, between migrants' self-reflections on their practices as 'bottom-up solidarity' and the 'top-down professional charity practices' performed by aid-agencies. I showed that migrants are generally rather reluctant towards professional development efforts. Consequently, they do not want to be associated with mainstream aid-practices nor do they aspire to integrate their development efforts into the aid-establishment. Thus, some of the migrants' understanding of their volunteer-run development practices based on the value of 'solidarity', do not per se easily fit into the 'formal' professional field of 'charity'.*

A second important aspect impacting upon migrants' integration into formal development is the distinction I made between migrants belonging to the first wave of Moldovan migration and those belonging to the second wave, as they have different degrees of trust towards institutions 'back home'.

*Hence, alongside temporal aspects, more attention should be paid to the time point of migrants' departure, which can impact upon Moldovan migrants' aspiration to integrate their humanitarian projects into the professional development field.*

And last of all, I explored some of the complexities of transnational co-operation patterns between migrants and their non-migrant counterparts.

*I showed that migrants' underlying motivations to engage in transnational development projects can be antagonistic to those of their Moldovan counterparts – for instance migrants' entrepreneurial-minded motivations can contradict their counterparts' practices driven by altruism, which negatively impacts upon aid-relationship dynamics.*

In sum, the results obtained in this chapter reflect the importance of the fact that migrants' collective space of development practices towards Moldova is socially constituted by relational positions of all actors involved; migrants, non-migrants and development players (cf. Bourdieu 1985).

*Thus, I see a need to move towards a more nuanced approach of migrants' understandings of home-country development contributions and their propensity to team up with development*

*actors that also entails social-relational dynamics. For this reason, I propose to move beyond the dominant dichotomies of low-skilled and high-skilled migrants, temporary and permanent migrants, and the socio-political orientation of migrants either eastwards or westwards, as commonly postulated in policy documents and in the academic literature on the Moldovan migration–development nexus (e.g. IOM and MPI 2012: 132).*

## CHAPTER 8

### Discomfort: Aid-Relationship Dynamics between Migrants and Development Actors

This last empirical chapter debates the second and third dimension of my overall research rationale: how different interests and objectives are negotiated and performed between migrants and development agencies in practice. It aims to 'capture' the social processes of involving migrants as partners in formal development as well as processes of acceptance and exclusion of migrants' collective development efforts 'in the centre' of the professional development field.

The chapter is structured as follows. I first discuss the viewpoint of the aid-workers on migrant associations as agents of change. Their absent views – most studies mention aid-workers only *en passant* – present the basis for my analysis of the micro-relationships between migrants and development professionals in joint co-operations. Further, despite the development policy rhetoric of positive synergies between the migrants and the development establishment, I demonstrate how double standards apply for migrants in aidland. In section two, I engage with current mainstream aid-practices and struggles over the 'right practices' within the development field. I examine how the current conventional delivery-oriented and results-based practices shape the aid-workers' relationships with migrants, and how they compromise the relationship building with migrants. Consistent with my conceptualisation of 'diaspora' as a social practice in Chapter 7, I draw on Bourdieu's field theory to better understand the internal logic of interpretations, negotiations and performances around the involvement of migrants' humanitarian engagement within the social field of development (1985; 1990). I emphasise ways in which social relationships between migrants and development actors are structured by power and agency. I also draw on Levitt and Glick Schiller's definition of a transnational social field "[...]as a set of multiple interlocking networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices, and resources are unequally exchanged, organized, and transformed" (2004: 605).

In the remaining section, I discuss my findings on the smallest element of transnational social formations – the interaction patterns between the two social agents, the migrants and

development actors, in joint development settings. Given that paradoxically the micro-relationship between migrant organisations and international development actors, who commission and publish most of the migration–development studies, has fallen short, I assess in more detail their mutual relations in development projects<sup>149</sup>.

## 8.1 The Pure Versus the Selfish Altruists: Double Standards in Aidland

### 8.1.1 The positive view of aid-workers on migrants' humanitarian interventions

In this first subsection, I address how the second research group, the aid-practitioners and civil servants working in the headquarters of development agencies and government ministries, portray migrants as their partners for positive change. To begin with, I find it crucial to illustrate that the discomfort of aid-workers with Moldova's mass emigration, discussed in Chapter 4, is also strongly present in their day-to-day development practice:

Martin (programme manager, 55, Berne): My colleagues of the Moldova country programme are uncomfortable with the topic of migration. They always tell me: please don't turn my project into a migration programme! They had gender mainstreaming, the conflict-sensitive approach, and now migration mainstreaming. It's like they have to wear several glasses one on top of the other, to a point where they go blind and become frustrated.

Marco (programme manager, 55, Brussels): In Moldova migration has an impact on every sector, and that's the way it should be an integral part of development thinking. But there is still a long way to go before the topic is present in all aspects of transformation. The problem is that our colleagues in Moldova are discouraged by the complexity of migration, and they are somewhat at unease with it. Because we still don't know how to deal with it. For example: is migration positive or negative? Basically, we are still trying to find good indicators in our work.

The same malaise in how to deal with migration in daily development practice applies to migrant associations, as we shall see later in this chapter. But first, I address the development practitioners' viewpoints on the positive aspects of collaborating with Moldovan migrants. These can be divided into two main domains.

The first pattern of aid-giving is dictated by political and strategic considerations. As Morrissey reminds us: "Aid works in good policy environments and good policy is a prerequisite for aid to be effective" (2000: 371). Due to this inner logic of the development industry, external

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<sup>149</sup> Despite their references in the titles, development manuals and handbooks seldom directly address the practical aspects of migrant–development actor relationships (e.g. 'Developing a Road Map for Engaging Diasporas in Development: A Handbook for Policymakers and Practitioners in Home and Host Countries', IOM and MPI 2012).



aid actors do not or very rarely intervene in Transnistria and in the semi-autonomous territory of Gagauzia. Both territories are considered difficult operating environments for international aid-organisations, because of their fragile and corrupt political structures<sup>150</sup> (USAID 2013). Instead, they focus their activities on the already better-off and more favourable centre of Moldova, and thereby somewhat exacerbate structural gaps (see Chapter 4). Even if migrants' remittances also flow to areas that involve neither the poorest areas nor the poorest people within those areas, the migrants' projects carried out in these less favourable territories are considered as a welcome contribution to mitigating forms of inequality in post-communist Moldova. The migrants' translocal engagements towards these areas are, therefore, perceived as an essential added value to official aid-interventions, worthy of attention and support.

A second positive aspect of migrants' interventions in Moldova is their long-term commitment. Because migrants' development engagements are usually based on family ties and responsibilities vis-à-vis their communities of origin, their development efforts are believed to be more sustainable than those implemented by aid-agencies:

Markus (programme manager, 34, Brussels): The power gap between migrants and locals is smaller than between aid-workers and the local population, because in many cases the community invested in migrants and people expect a return of investment. Their mutual commitment is based on a longer time-frame. And because of strong family ties, sometimes over generations, migrants' development projects risk less a sudden phasing out than those of international aid-organisations.

In general, aid-practitioners, especially those who do not yet collaborate with migrants, are open minded and positive towards the integration of migrants' collective activities into their work. Max provides an illustrative example of how migrants' potential involvement into their programmes is imagined:

Max (aid-worker, 63, Lucerne): I observe a growing interest from both sides. Considering our organisation, migrant associations could, for instance, send skilled migrants to Moldova to coach our local staff in the social field. In this case, we would think of how to remunerate such an engagement, and in what kind of concrete framework we want to put it.

Participants who already worked with migrant associations maintained that, over the last few years, migrants made good progress in their 'integration process' into 'formal development', chiefly in adapting the technical language and management skills required in the professional development field:

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<sup>150</sup> E.g. obstacles include restricted access for employees of Western aid organisations to the territory, no access to work facilities and no money transfers.

Simone (programme manager, 41, Brussels): The trend in strengthening migrant associations for development is very positive. Things have changed a lot since 2008. Over the years, we could establish a 'real' policy dialogue between donor organisations and the migrant leaders. Migrants are now using the same vocabulary as we do, and their ability has tremendously developed. These days they know much better what a pragmatic engagement looks like and how to formulate policy making. Yes, we are talking the same language now, which we would not have expected a few years back. And I think that clearly shows the progress we made.

However, to speak fluently the 'official aid-jargon' is not a guarantor for a smooth integration into aidland. For this reason, some associations include non-migrant members on their boards to widen their outreach with funding bodies and to enhance their chances to receive support. Sandra, president of an association that creates health centres and vocational schools, narrates the advantages of having a mixed board of Moldovans and non-Moldovans:

Svetlana (factory worker and artist, 55, Munich): You need to have somebody on the board with the right name. Without Dr Schmidt and his very German name on our board, we would have never obtained funds from the Schmitz-Hille Foundation for our vocational school. I am convinced that with only my signature on the proposal we would have gotten nowhere.

Further advances made by migrants were reported in the quality of tenders, especially on innovation-related issues. As Juriza, programme manager of a training scheme for migrant associations told me:

Juriza (programme manager, 38, Frankfurt): We are very pleased to see that the associations are making huge progress and that they are much more innovative now. At the beginning, everybody wanted to implement education programmes, but now their projects are getting more diverse and innovative. We can really select the best now. And today, we, ehm, see ourselves a little bit like an academy for migrant associations.

The allusions of aid-practitioners to migrants' language skills and other 'integration indicators' show similarities with debates surrounding migrants' integration into a given geographical context. It also demonstrates that social dispositions, for example the 'right language', are deeply internalised and embodied by development actors and evident in their social practices (cf. Bourdieu 1990). As we will see shortly, migrants' lack of these dispositions – such as for instance their management skills – puts them in a somewhat weak position within the transnational field of development.

### 8.1.2 Double standards in aidland

#### 8.1.2.1 *The pure versus the selfish altruists*

In this sub-section, I argue that, despite the growing open-minded attitude towards migrants and the stated improvements in their 'assimilation' process, double standards apply for migrants in aidland.

A first double standard applies to migrants regarding their genuine interest in the development cause. Some aid-workers firmly doubt the migrants' collective intentions to make a positive difference in Moldova and their role as 'effective altruists'<sup>151</sup>. As I discussed in Chapters 2 and 6, in the simplistic version of the top-down policy discourse, an engaged individual migrant is described as a male rational actor with a small range of economic behaviour, and often without social obligations towards his family or friends back home. Conversely, chairpersons of migrant associations are described with a different, more human note. Alongside the migrants' status or business interests, presidents of migrant associations have personal charisma, are driven by their own hidden agendas – chiefly by benefits for friends and families back home, and they even have personal feelings:

Ionela (project officer, 34, Chisinau): In our collaboration with migrant organisations we are still trying to figure out what kind of hidden behaviours and agendas we are confronted with. The migrant leaders are just humans, they have their feelings and interests, and they might not match our goals.

Oxana (project officer, 28, Chisinau): So, ehm the biggest challenges we had were the selection criteria: what kind of selection criteria should we apply? Which organisations should we choose? We weren't really sure if the associations are what they claimed to be, because as I said, they have people, persons behind, with their own interests and the interests of their families.

Broadly speaking, the majority of aid-workers and civil servants depicted a less 'harmony ideology' of migrant associations than the dominant development discourse (e.g. Newland 2010a). Similar to the majority of the academic literature on the topic, they were rather sceptical about migrants being development actors from 'below' and seldom viewed them as democratic grassroots organisations doing 'pro-poor transnational aid' (e.g. Anthias 1998; Orozco and Rouse 2007). More importantly, the aid-workers' views on migrant leaders as pursuing chiefly their

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<sup>151</sup> As alluded to in Chapter 7, migrants made the same remarks about professional aid-practitioners, suggesting that there is a mutual discomfort among the two actors.

self-interests somewhat contradict the development idea that collective remittances have a wider impact on the transformation of origin countries than the 'altruistic' individual remittances spent on their families back 'home' (see Chapter 2; also e.g. IOM and MPI 2012). Hereafter, large discrepancies between the development discourse and daily development practice exist:

Martin (programme manager, 55, Berne): Development efforts of migrants are always linked to personal interests. A businessman who chairs an association in his spare time does not become all of a sudden an NGO. He remains a businessman. He sees a market in his home country and he wants to earn money, create employment and boost the local economy, also for his family. The international development scene still has a problem in accepting this. We still view them as NGOs, but they are not. We think that the migrant community is composed of *do-gooders*, whose money we can invest in their home countries in our *good way*, but we still fail to see the real character of migrant associations.

Secondly, double standards apply for migrant associations with regard to the control mechanisms over the origin and spending of their assets. The aid-practitioners commonly questioned the origin of the associations' financial resources supposed to be fed into the formal channels of development. And some insisted on stricter accountability of migrants' spending compared to more 'traditional' development actors:

Martin (programme manager, 55, Berne): Important moral questions remain, especially on the associations' financial resources, which we should strictly control. For instance, should we provide our links and contacts to migrant leaders who got rich here with criminal activities, for instance in the drug business, and help them do meaningful things in their country of origin?

Ivan (aid-worker, 42, Chisinau): Other development NGOs need to show three-year plans. Yes, that's right, but my feeling tells me that it is fair that migrants need to show a five-year project plan in our programme. Even if there is much insecurity in Moldova and there are always new legal frameworks for everything. I don't know why. It's just a feeling.

Further, I argue that the donor community has two different benchmarks for allocating funds to migrants' projects as opposed to projects carried out by development NGOs. That being said, I think we have in mainstream development practice a policy of one sauce for the goose and another for the gander. When reading through the descriptions of the country-programmes of donor organisations, I could not make out any significant differences between funded projects of development NGOs and migrants' project plans described to me by aid-workers (e.g. SDC 2014). The latter seem to have, however, fewer chances to receive funds. The following quote by a participant who regularly allocates funds to a range of social NGOs in Moldova exemplifies the reluctant attitude to support migrants' requests:

Max (aid-worker, 63, Lucerne): We don't give them [the migrant associations] just money. I don't want them to present us with poor children in villages or social centres with the expectation that we will support them. We don't want to be donors for their concerns. No, they shouldn't just collect money from us. I would like to collaborate in a more equal development-oriented model, where we also get something back from them. Especially now that Moldova is one of the SDC's focus countries, they could become our partners in large-scale projects. Or, we could train them, so they can do their own projects in the future – straightforward settings, but not just funding.

In part, the distrustful attitude towards migrant associations needs to be considered in an atmosphere of wariness in the development field. In Eyben's view (2006), the prevailing neo-liberal ideology of everyone supposed to be pursuing their own self-interests has created a development environment of suspicion, reflected in the desire for quantitative data. This is also one of the reasons why a broad range of literature on trust has emerged in the development sector, especially on accountability, whose demand typically arises when there is lack of trust. Though control mechanisms certainly are important, the atmosphere I encountered vis-à-vis migrants in the development field reminded me of Luhmann's statement on trust, namely "needing to mention trust already implies some degree of distrust" (1968: 99).

#### *8.1.2.2 The malaise with the diversity of migrant associations*

Entangled with the first two double standards regarding control mechanisms and migrants' genuine interest in the development cause, a malaise was found in accepting migrant associations' diversity.

Migrants' chiefly voluntary development practices are personal commitments, based on individual world-views and on a variety of practical and emotional motivations (Chapter 7). Their manifold collective practices are carried out by means of different organisational forms, which is to some extent recognised on a discursive level. For example, the website of the EU and UNDP's Joint Migration and Development Initiative states that: "Large communities of migrants have formed across countries and continents. These have materialized into umbrella organizations, development NGOs, community associations, welfare refugee groups, arts/cultural groups, etc." (EU/UNDP 2014: 1). Civil servants and aid-workers depicted a similarly nuanced picture of migrant associations' diversity. Their approach went beyond the narrow conceptualisation of migrant associations as transnational grassroots organisations or social movements – which we typically find in the majority of theorisation of the development discourse, equating migrant development organisations often with concepts of 'participatory development' (cf. Raghuram 2009). Yet, it is precisely this very diversity of migrants'

development practices and the plurality of organisational forms that seem to cause aid-practitioners unease in their work:

Simone (programme manager, 41, Brussels): The diversity of associations is a real challenge – from one country to the other you can have very different associations, or even among migrant associations from the same country. [...] To put migrants on the same level, we tried to improve their technical competences. But not every migrant association should become professional. Like with other NGOs, there is an organic or natural selection process.

As I argued above, the selection criteria for receiving donor funds for projects and capacity building are far less 'naturally' applied to migrant organisations than to 'more conventional' development actors, as the following interview extract with the organiser of a training workshop for migrants confirms:

Igor (programme manager, 39, Chisinau): We organised a training workshop to improve the professionalism of migrant associations, which was very much appreciated by migrant leaders. We had about three times more applications than places //How did you select the participants? //We won't tell you. //Would you mind if I ask you again how they were selected? //Ok I would not call it a selection it was more like ehm a hand-picking. You, you and you. //By whom? // I can't tell you. //Maybe by the government? //Ok by the government, let's say they wanted more constructive and less critical associations – include more associations rather than exclude them.

Apart from delicate aspects of 'emigration politics', a particular unease was found in how to deal with less professional migrant associations (e.g. informal self-help and advocacy groups, networks, etc.), and vice-versa with profit-oriented associations and hybrid forms of organisations (e.g. social firms, cooperative social development schemes)<sup>152</sup>. While the donor agencies foster a variety of organisational forms of development NGOs, some of which are even considered as promising and innovative new models in mainstream development practices (e.g. social business models), other standards seem to apply to migrant associations of the same type, size and/or professional degree. Considering migrant volunteer groups, the majority of the development literature suggests working with professional migrant organisations and does not provide much guidance on how to collaborate with volunteer associations (e.g. IOM/UNDP 201). Only a few aid-agencies encourage co-operation with voluntary-run migrant groups and networks – for example DEVCO states that: "[...] we call for stronger involvement of voluntary diaspora members in the development of their countries of origin" (EC/DEVCO 2011: 4). In general, any deviations from the 'organisational norm' of a professional NGO – such as a volunteer group or a profit organisation – seem to discomfort aid-workers in practice. This might

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<sup>152</sup> This observation also applies to other informal networks and groups in development more broadly.

also explain why all Western development practitioners in this study assume that migrant organisations naturally aspire to become professional development actors:

Juriza (programme manager, 38, Frankfurt): We now also provide structural support to migrant associations. We finance work space and fulltime employees, because we strongly aim to liberate migrants from their voluntary commitments and to put them into more professional settings. That's our new goal now.

As we saw in Chapter 7, some migrant leaders have a negative stance towards professional aid-practices. They perceive them as being too 'top-down' or as too 'blown up', and thus do not want to be associated with the Western models of development. The main argument put forward is that, like other development organisations, migrants should decide themselves if they want to become actors of the development establishment, and how they want to be organised – as voluntary-based grassroots organisations or profit-run organisations. And migrants who wish to evolve from a volunteering engagement towards professional activities ought to have the same, fair chances for support as other 'more conventional' development-oriented associations.

#### *8.1.2.3 'Savoir and savoir faire': migrants' expertise and practical competences*

A last set of double standards relates to aspects of migrants' 'professionalism', which I suggest summarising with the binary of migrants' 'savoir' versus migrants' 'savoir faire', according to Lyotard's terminology (1979: 16). In other words, migrants' attributed know-how versus their practical competences in the development field.

The aid-workers consider migrants' savoir – their main fields of expertise – in two domains. First, as expected, migrants have a country-specific expertise – the competence to understand 'the social, political and cultural complexities of Moldova'. This echoes with descriptions of migrants' roles as cultural brokers and bridge builders, frequently emphasised in the development literature (e.g. EU/UNDP 2011). The IOM, for example, highlights: "They [the migrants] act as 'ambassadors' of their society of origin and facilitators of cultural exchange, and they can build bridges between states and between societies" (IOM 2013: 3). Migrants' roles as providers of first-hand information from their countries of origin also neatly fits with Tvedt's understanding of the role of NGOs in the contemporary development field more broadly. He maintains that: "NGOs in a donor-created and donor-led system have become a transmission belt of a powerful language and of Western concepts of development, carrying resources and

authority from the core to the periphery, and information and legitimisation from periphery to core" (2006: 681).

The second domain of migrants' expertise is economics. The aid-workers characterised Moldovan migrant leaders as gifted entrepreneurs with proven business know-how. Even so, the majority of them are ordinary people with different socio-occupational profiles, and a combination of specific personality traits and agency enables them to make changes in Moldova, as described in Chapter 7:

Martin (programme manager, 55, Berne): Let's be honest, most of us development workers have very limited knowledge of economics. We know how to account for our project funds. That's about it. But most of the migrants have expertise in economics. Many of them are entrepreneurs, and some are even very successful. So, we could gain from their business know-how and their free market spirit.

Considering migrants' *savoir faire* – their practical development competence – no causality between the declared positive attitudes towards migrants in the development policy discourse and aid-workers' narratives and practices of involving migrants was found. To me, the situation in the development field resembles the phenomenon displayed in society more broadly, when people claim tolerance towards migrants, but still engage in discriminatory practices. In Valentine's words, it is "the paradox relationship between values [that people declare having vis-à-vis other people] and [their actual] practices [vis-à-vis others]" (2008: 325). This is well-captured in the next quote by a development professional who earlier on in the interview demonstrated openness towards migrants in his work environment:

Herbert (head of department, 55, Frankfurt): We made negative experiences in our collaborations with migrant associations, especially with the quality of reports. So, we prefer to work with Germans, because in our sector reports need to be delivered on time, and that never happened with migrant associations [...] and often, migrants don't know how to correctly plan big projects early on.

Though some aid-professionals stressed that migrants have made progress in the incorporation of 'professional practices', large gaps between aid-practitioners' rather negative evaluations of migrants' practical development '*savoir faire*' and migrants' expertise, their '*savoir*', persist:

Viorica (deputy director of a bilateral aid-agency, 41, Chisinau): I experience a lot of mutual incomprehension in my daily work. Migrant leaders see our projects and they think: Wow that's great! And then they come to us with their ideas, which are often business-related. But their expectations are quickly dashed when they see our bureaucratic procedures, because they don't know much about the practical side of the development work.



To round off this sub-section, the divergences highlighted in aid-workers' narratives of the positively attributed 'savoir' – their cultural understanding of the 'Moldovan way' and their personal experiences of actual Socialism – does not compensate their shortcomings in their professional development 'savoir faire'. This observation invites us to rethink the development policy rhetoric of migrants, bringing their familiarity of their home place into the relationship, and the development actors the technical expertise and project-management skills. To reduce migrants' role to cultural 'brokers' and 'bridge builders' with economic know-how – while simultaneously denying other forms of practical know-how, and to accentuate migrants' differences, rather than their similarities with other development organisations – falls in my opinion too short. Especially if we consider that the notion of 'culture' is often used by development professionals as a proxy for 'race'. That being said, I conclude that despite a mutual attraction between migrants and development actors, there remain substantial challenges in their daily relationship.

## 8.2 Too Close for Comfort? Migrant Associations and Conventional Aid-Practices

As I have highlighted in Chapter 2, ideas and practices of development are subject to the kinds of managerial and financial dictates that have long been characteristic of much of the private sector (Mooney 2009). Or, in Long's words, "As a conceptual construct economics strives to subordinate to its rule and to subsume under its logic every other form of social interaction in every professional field it invades" (1992: 18). In these terms, I now discuss how conventional aid-practices, taken over by economic rules, compromise a satisfactory degree of migrants' involvement in the development field. I show, with the examples of results-based and delivery-oriented practices, how aid-workers position themselves in complex power structures and utilise their ability to mobilise social, cultural and economic resources in order to sustain their status and influence their collaborations with migrants (cf. Bourdieu 1990). I also draw on the broader framework of 'civic engagement', which started in the late 80s and 90s, in addition to the strand of studies that occurred with the discovery of migrants as 'partners' for development in the mid-1990s, which seeks to determine forms of relationships between states and migrant associations – often in a state-regulatory and 'educational' way (see Chapter 2; and also e.g. Newland 2010a).

### 8.2.1. The confusion over migrant associations' role and the search for the ideal migrant partner

There is a continuous struggle over the theoretical framing of migrants in development on the macro level. Such struggles include debates regarding different approaches to migrants between institutions, for instance between the World Bank and the IMF, that opt for a narrower financial aspect of the nexus; and other institutions, such as the UN, opting for a broader participatory and rights-based approach by focusing on collective remittances (Laveneux and Kunz 2008). The discourse of 'partnerships' became 'mainstream' with the 'rights-based approach' (RBA), which overlaid earlier approaches rooted in 'needs' (Mosse 2011). It is in this discursive construction that migrants are considered partners of change in conventional aid-practices, and that they are recast as neither passive beneficiaries nor consumers but as agents: "the makers and shapers of their own development" (Cornwall 2002: 27). This practice is applied, for example, in the migrant-centred approach, a cross-cutting priority of EU actions on migration and development (EU 2013b), or in the EU's "more ambitious and forward-looking broadened approach to migration and development" (EU 2013b: 3), which also includes the 'local-to-local' approach. It emphasises development planning by local authorities and actions based on the 'multi-stakeholder approach', by bringing together relevant non-state actors, such as migrants (EU 2011).

As Mosse states, "Perhaps never before has so much been made of the power of ideas in solving the problems of poverty, and an emphasis on partnership" (2011: 5). He goes on by saying that relationship building is not only essential to the constitution of development practices, but has become itself a 'key idea' of development. Below, Marco and Esperanta narrate this semantic change from the *migrant beneficiary* to the *migrant partner* in aid-practices:

Esperanta (aid-worker, 35, Chisinau): The traditional development cooperation is paternalistic, and partnership is a relatively new concept in international development cooperation. We still see migrants mainly as beneficiaries, but depending on the context, they are also increasingly partners. Unfortunately, we don't yet have best-practice models for strategic alliances with migrants as partners.

Marco (programme manager, 55, Brussels): The trend of dealing with migrants as a partner category is recent – that we are talking with them about development is very new, maybe two years now. Migrants understand that they are still beneficiaries of concrete projects, but they are willing to become partners, for instance in drafting policies in the migration–development field. They want to be involved and consulted when the ministers are planning new action plans in the field of migration.

Practices and the mind-sets, contrasting concepts, language, and values that go with these in collective spaces are always provisional, and they need to be reinvented from time to time (Bourdieu 1989). The development practice of teaming up with migrants as partners for positive change does not occur in a strategic and linear way, but results from social processes of learning-by-doing (cf. Grabowska 2016). Two participants working for operatively active donor agencies narrate their practice of experimenting their partnerships with migrants:

Martin (programme manager, 55, Berne): In our cooperation with migrant associations it's irrelevant if a project is successful or not. We just want to gain more experiences, so we can define at a later stage which questions we need to ask and what steps we want to take.

Markus (programme manager, 34, Brussels): The question is how to get beyond an individual story to an approach that is more systematic and that includes other institutions, so that migrants see a real benefit for their integration, too. This demands a strong engagement from both sides. But I don't think we always need to wait a hundred years in order to build up something new with migrants. We could steer such processes now, but first we need to figure out how we want to do that.

By and large, it was found that aid-workers are still strongly preoccupied with identifying good practices and sharing information on how to create partnerships with migrants in their work. This observation stands in sharp contrast to the impression I got when reading migration-development roadmaps and policy prescriptions of 'best practices' suggesting that the right formula has already been discovered (e.g. IOM/MPI 2012). Moreover, confusion over terminologies and migrants' roles was particularly widespread in large aid institutions that simultaneously implement programmes for and with migrants. This confusion, I assert, results from the tension between top-down standardised practices that come along with the 'result-based' and 'delivery paradigm', and the partnership approach (c.f. Eyben 2013). This can create conflict within the same institution and/or departments over migrants' respective positions. For instance, a department implements a migrant association-led programme in which the migrants are beneficiaries. The underlining *migrant beneficiary* narrative – deeply embedded in the top-down development paradigm – implies migrants do benefit. This may exclude equality, respect, listening and learning from the *migrant partners*<sup>153</sup>. That being said, participants who felt the greatest unease with migrants' different roles were the ones working in the headquarters of donor agencies and IOs implementing programmes based on different aid-practices<sup>154</sup>. For these

<sup>153</sup> These challenges are not specific to migrants but might also occur with other development NGOs and volunteer groups (Fowler 2005).

<sup>154</sup> The discomfort vis-à-vis migrants' positions was less observed among employees of smaller Moldovan NGOs or development NGOs in migrants' host countries, because migrants' roles were clearly defined as partners or donors.

participants, it is not only vital to clearly define migrants' roles, but also to have the flexibility to adapt to migrants' different positions, and to switch between them in their daily practice.

Max (aid-worker, 63, Lucerne): In our migration department, migrants are called clients and beneficiaries, and in the department of international development co-operation they are actors and partners. Somehow we need to manage to fuse these different perceptions, but this is not easy, because of institutional barriers and inhibitions.

And last of all, aid workers commonly raised the vital question of who exactly is an ideal migrant partner. The three main questions addressed were: Who is a good migrant partner? Who is a good diaspora? And do we have quality labels for diasporas? Even if these queries preoccupy project managers, I personally do not think that we need to find definitive answers to these questions, because the profile of the ideal migrant partner highly depends on the geographical context and on the development objectives. However, in conventional result-based and multi-stakeholder practices, it seems that the ideal migrant partner has already been found. It is a migrant collective that is on good terms with the government of its home country and preferably with other members of the diaspora, too. Besides, a migrant collective is normatively 'good' if it contributes to the home countries' official transformation policies, delivers results, and possesses the linguistic and technical development 'savoir faire':

Simone (programme manager, 41, Brussels): You need to work with those migrant associations who want to become autonomous, but not in the sense that they can decide on their own. When they try to do things without being plugged in to the official policy of their home, then you have the wrong partners.

Markus (programme manager, 34, Brussels): The most important aspect in our multi-stakeholder approach with migrants is the attitudes of the governments towards their migrants, how they control migrants, and how the migrants are linked to the government. If a migrant community is completely disconnected from the government, then it's difficult to integrate migrants' activities into national development frames. So, it is necessary that they complement the national strategic development achievements. Otherwise, we don't work with them, because there is no outlook for good results.

In sum, just as the Moldovan 'development diaspora' is a social product, which is not simply 'there', aid-workers' spatial practices of relationships with migrants constitute a dynamic, humanly constructed social process shaped by dominance and power. The underlying broader practices and/or struggles over these practices in diaspora-programmes can result for development practitioners in a balancing act of coping with different interpretations of migrants' roles and/or switching between roles in their daily development practice. This can create discomfort in their daily work. A last fundamental element that adds to the ambiguity of

migrants' roles in aid-relationships are the state's and development agencies' versatile approaches to the spatial distance stretching between migrants and Moldova. Thus, I propose to have a closer look at migrants and distance.

### 8.2.2 A closer look at migrants and distance

Spatial relations are not only important determining conditions of relationships among people, but are also symbolic of those relationships (Simmel 1992b). A particular relationship of nearness and distance is found in every relationship, including the development actor's relationships with migrants. In part, their perception of migrants' spatial and symbolic distance to Moldova depends on whether migrant associations are their partners, beneficiaries or policy consultants.

First, I argue that there is a fine line between empowering migrants as beneficiaries for development efforts and steering or controlling them from a distance. In the first implementation round of diaspora programmes on an international level, migrant associations were chiefly *beneficiaries* of IOs and donor agencies – for instance as implementing partners of Western development NGOs in co-development programmes<sup>155</sup>. In this framework migrants' transnational ties were emphasised. This meant a novel situation for many donor and aid-agencies in terms of having the migrant beneficiaries outside the territory of their implementing bodies and traditional development interventions. Some aid professionals maintained that they found the transnational civil society space of migrants hard to grasp and more challenging to control than assumed. It is therefore not surprising that in the newest migration–development aid practices, for example in the earlier-mentioned decentralised approach, the focus of donor attention shifted from migrants' transnational ties back to the local context of migrant home countries. Development's 'romance' with migrants' transnational social and symbolic ties is slowly dying out and the donor community's attention has shifted towards the less fuzzy local synergies between migrants, non-governmental, state and development actors in the migrant home countries (EU/DEVCO 2011). Thus, *migrant beneficiaries* are preferably back in Moldova, partly because migrants' activities can be monitored more closely, once the focus of their development-oriented activities is back in the home-country. Possibly, this is also one reason for the aid-industry's sustained interest in return-programmes in Moldova, despite their modest results (see Chapter 6). In this respect, the development actors' excursion into the transnational diasporic space of migrants' humanitarian practices has been rather short.

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<sup>155</sup> For an overview of these programmes see Østergaard-Nielson 2011.

Simultaneous to the slow 'death of distance' with migrant beneficiaries, policies and programmes addressing *migrant partners* emphasise the geographical and symbolic distance stretching between migrants and Moldova. A concise example of a programme that accentuates distance is a high-skilled programme of the Moldovan government and the Academy of Sciences of Moldova (ASM 2009). It aims to foster co-operation between the scientific community abroad and Moldovan-based scientists. In order to tackle corruption in academia, the scholar-migrants and their associations are considered as 'external advisors', or 'neutral examiners' for awarding research funds in Moldova. The programme manager told me that this policy is understood as a form of 'international civic diplomacy' to enhance Moldova's transparency in science. In that regard, the migrants' distance and otherness from their co-citizens in Moldova is accentuated – similar to Simmel's (1992b) concept of the stranger (see Chapter 2).

Vice-versa, migrants are regarded as 'insiders' in development settings in which they act as *policy consultants*. In this type of relationship, the migrants' proximity to Moldova is emphasised. Consequently, migrants' development ideas are considered 'insider suggestions', prompted by Moldovan citizens. Migrants maintained that the IOs and the Moldovan governments' perception of their development expertise as 'insider knowledge' is one reason why their initiatives and ideas are little noticed, including policy initiatives in the host-society context (e.g. propositions for bilateral agreements in the social security field). As Svetlana disconcertedly explains:

Svetlana (journalist, 54, Geneva): Because of Moldovans' low self-esteem, an idea or an expertise still needs to come from outside. But even if we live outside the country, our ideas are not seriously considered. For instance, we proposed to involve migrants as policy consultants in the new migration mainstreaming programme, but this was rejected. And then, what a surprise, an expat from Geneva proposed the same idea and now the UNDP does exactly our project.

Other than pointing to culturally coined perceptions of distance, these examples also suggest a general lack of communication and knowledge-sharing between the two social actors in practice and struggles for positions regarding who's 'professional' knowledge counts within the aid establishment (cf. Bourdieu 1985). Paraphrasing another migrant leader on the issue:

Vasili (researcher, 39, Paris): Migrants should express more often their opinions on different aspects of Moldova's transformation process, especially on social issues. We live in European countries where gender equality, tolerance or solidarity towards minorities are more advanced than in Moldova, where these topics are not understood at all. So, there are good practices to learn from. But we want to be taken more seriously when we express ourselves on these issues, better heard in a way.

The last important aspect of migrants' role in relation to their distance to Moldova relates to patterns of aid practices performed in the Moldovan aid sector. In general, I find that the literature on migrants' collective remittances has paid little attention to the development sector in countries of origin, despite numerous scholars repeatedly stressing the importance of power dynamics in the wider local context of migrants' interventions for shaping the nature and outcomes of transnational connections (e.g. Lampert 2012).

Moldovan migrant associations do not (yet) have direct influence on local development agendas and the resources allocated to their villages of origin in a way that other migrant communities have (e.g. Nigerian migrants, see Lampert 2014). Their role is mostly to assist public and private non-governmental actors, which do not receive any financial or technical support by the donor community, nor from the government. During a project visit in a remote village in the South of Moldova, an NGO worker told me about a typical case of this aid-modality. He wanted to improve the infrastructure of the community administration to carry out a community project in a sustainable way. To this end he applied for funding to administrative office holders in Chisinau. But his quest for technical support got repeatedly rejected with the argument that there is no need for technical equipment, like a computer, in a village. Thereupon he contacted migrant associations, and a UK-based association came forward to provide support. Similar cases were reported in informal talks with migrant leaders and/or key informants in the education and health sector. Generally speaking, development professionals of rural NGOs consider their colleagues in the headquarters of donor and/ or umbrella organisations in Chisinau physically and emotionally far away from their beneficiaries in other parts of the country. They are described as being caught in what is called 'the capital trap', where they are 'held' by important meetings and the like. Moreover, aid-practitioners outside of Chisinau deem their colleagues, especially the Moldovan development professionals, as being primarily interested in their own professional careers and indifferent to challenges they face in their development work in the countryside. Vice-versa, they perceived migrants as being 'closer' and more responsive to the needs of the rural population in general and of their work in particular. They reported more face-to-face contact and communication with migrants than with aid-workers based in Chisinau, which allowed them to build close and trustworthy relationships:

Antonia (chairwoman of a local NGO, 58, Comrat): The local employees of umbrella organisations in Chisinau have no idea about our situation here. Nobody from Chisinau has ever turned up in person, and I don't think they will ever come, because they don't think it's profitable for their careers to visit villages. [...] Vasili from Paris with his colleagues from the migrant association was already here twice this year, and we feel that they are really interested in our work.

This observation sheds a somewhat different light on the geographical proximity of development agencies based in Moldova and questions their distinct advantage in 'home' development engagement compared to migrants' spatial and symbolic distance to the development scene in their home countries (e.g. Mercer et al. 2009). I argue that the perception of NGO workers outside the capital on migrants as being 'closer' in their daily work than their colleagues in Chisinau is not really about physical distance. Rather, it is a consequence of post-socialist class formations, generational aspects<sup>156</sup> and socio-cultural urban-rural gaps between 'Chisinau and the rest'. Hence, in the Moldovan case, migrants' physical distance to Moldova is not as significant in concrete development practice as claimed in the broader debate surrounding the migration–development nexus. This finding possibly relates to the relatively frequent home visits of Moldovan migrants, and thus might be specific to the mostly understudied European migration–transformation nexus, compared to the diffusion of development practices between Western European countries and less developed African, Caribbean or Asian countries with greater spatial distances between migrants' host and home countries (cf. Grabowska and Garapich 2016).

In conclusion, I found that migrants' distance to Moldova and their corresponding attributed role is more contested in development practices than commonly assumed in the migration–development policy literature (e.g. UNDP 2012). Further, like in any other human relationships, striking the right balance between proximity and distance is crucial for both partners. Migrants felt their role as policy consultants was compromised through them being seen as too close to Moldova, to a point where their ideas were not taken seriously, while the aid-workers' discomfort with the 'migrant partners' gradually grows with migrants' growing spatial distance to their home-country. Yet, no matter from which angle one approaches the relationship, it is always the dominant partner – 'official Moldova' and its key development agents – that defines it. Their conception of distance and proximity vis-à-vis migrants varies according to a complex interplay of socio-cultural dimensions and interests. Put briefly, migrants as partners, sponsors or contributors to Moldova's transformation are preferably abroad, but as beneficiaries they are ideally back in Moldova. This leaves migrants with little room to shape their relationships with development agents on their own terms.

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<sup>156</sup> Especially between the the career-oriented young professionals in the head offices of IOs and NGOs in Chisinau, some of whom are educated abroad, and the mostly older rural NGO workers.



### 8.2.3 History repeating: Strengthening the migrant civil society with low degree of migrant involvement

I see an interesting parallel between the initial aim of building up a civil society in Eastern Europe and the promotion of a migrant civil society in the region. This is particularly the case in the context of delivery-oriented development practice, which I argue significantly shapes migrants' access to the transnational development field.

Linked to the development policy agendas of 'good governance', the period around the fall of the USSR in 1989-90 was seen as the zenith of civil society in Eastern Europe (Fowler 2005). The general claim that development practitioners and theorists made, was that civil society, particularly a certain type of NGOs, positively contributes to the transformation process from authoritarian to democratic regimes, for instance through stimulating participation in public affairs and creating space for the development of democratic attributes, such as respect for opposing views (Celichowski 2004). Likewise, the development policy rhetoric of the migrant civil society transferring tolerance and open-mindedness towards their home countries was, at least initially, emphasised on what 'aid providers' considered to be socio-political issues – advocacy, civic education and human rights (Celichowski 2004). It is not my aim to analyse if NGOs in Eastern Europe have fulfilled the hopes attached to them in the 90s, nor if migrant associations have so today. Instead, I emphasise the critiques, which have argued that in lieu of fostering grassroots activism and involving people, the practice of 'strengthening civil society' has created a class of NGO professionals much more attentive to donors' wishes than to the opinions and involvement of their fellow-citizens (Fowler 2005). The role of NGOs was mainly limited to "act as incremental improvers within a technocratic, logical and linear framework allied to a 'partnership' or 'harmony model' of change employed by most official agencies" (Fowler 2005: 16). On these grounds, the Western business-models required for implementing civil-society projects strengthened primarily the management capacity of full-time employees, rather than the basic democratic inclusion and participation of volunteers, informal groups and beneficiaries (e.g. the European Union programmes on 'promoting civil society') (Celichowski 2004). I argue that in the delivery-oriented development practices, some Western donor agencies unnecessarily replicated their failures of building up the Eastern European civil society in the creation of the migrant civil society. For instance, the Western donor community also prefers to collaborate with a small number of low-membership elite migrant associations – familiar with the development industry's 'rules of the game', but is unable to mobilise migrants or people in Moldova. This type of collaboration was particularly well illustrated during an information evening on diverse services for migrants in Villeneuve Saint-George, near Paris, in

which I participated on my fieldwork. The event was organised by the Swedish Public Employment Service, the GIZ, and a migrant association, which was responsible for reaching out to the migrants. Out of approximately 150 expected participants only 7 migrants attended the event, albeit that the migrant organisation involved in the event was the 'right' collective migrant partner: its chairperson is fluent in the technical development language, knows how to write project proposals and shows commitment to working in the interests of the development establishment as a service deliverer. However, the association is not genuinely rooted in the migrant civil society and lacks relevant contacts. As this example shows, the earlier-stated economic and interventionist mechanisms are arguments why some of the professionally-run migrant associations involved in international development assistance remain relatively isolated, and not at the forefront of relation-building with migrants or beneficiaries back 'home'. Therefore, I argue that, due to the negative consequence of the paradigm shift in the 2000s, which turned the focus from the 'people' to the 'things' by using a vocabulary of 'delivery', and the managerial dictates within the 'development field', the development actors' preferred type of migrant partners are rarely close to the migrants or their beneficiaries (cf. Chambers 2012).

The strengthening of civil-society actors, including migrant associations, also requires, at least initially, a long-term commitment from donors:

Viorica (deputy director of a bilateral aid-agency, 41, Chisinau): Migration is surely not a topic that will disappear in our field, but our problem is that we have not yet managed to build sustainable synergies between our work and the migrants' initiatives. We will see what happens in the post-2015 development agenda, if we will move towards a more sustainable cooperation or not.

A sustainable involvement of migrants' development efforts is often compromised in the name of the inner mechanism of result-based practices. The Joint EU-UN Migration and Development Initiative (JMDI) launched in 2008 presents a concise example in this respect. The programme gradually increased the organisational capacity of Moldovan migrant associations through joint large-scale projects with international NGOs over a period of three years. In the first two programme rounds, a substantial 18% of the overall budget assigned to 27 countries was allocated to Moldova and its migrant community (EU/UNDP 2014)<sup>157</sup>. Moldovan migrant associations, however, will not be eligible in the next programme round, despite their achieved good project results, their strengthened capacity and Moldova's high ongoing emigration rate. According to the programme manager, the political instability in Moldova eliminates the country

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<sup>157</sup> The programme had four priority areas: migrant remittances, migrant communities, migrant capacities and migrant rights (UNDP/EU 2014).

from the selective group of migrants' home-states with the most promising outlooks for good results. This confirms once more the earlier statement that patterns of aid modalities are dictated by political and strategic considerations, which can mutate into coercive practices that reduce the space for migrants' sustainable involvement in the development field.

Summing up this sub-section, under the guise of economic efficiency and its associated mechanisms, the emphasis of the donor community on promoting and strengthening Moldovan migrant associations has been chiefly put on 'professional' low-membership migrant associations. From a more radical perspective, in the delivery-oriented practice, the migrants' narrowly predefined role as service providers also means that migrants' increased involvement in formal development can compromise migrant associations' performance in key areas, like their legitimacy as non-governmental actors from 'below', in the sense of co-optation. In this respect, migrants and aid-agencies might be too close for comfort. Hence, a strengthened enrolment of migrants into official development can come with both opportunities and threats. In order to breach the asymmetrical power relations between the two actors and to enhance migrants' engagement in development in a sustainable way, more openness to a multiplicity of outcomes, more acceptance of a non-linear interpretation of social processes and an acknowledgement of diversity would be essential. Long maintained 24 years ago, when writing on the issue of NGOs and interest groups, that donors and recipient bureaucracies are ill-equipped to improve such a "flexible, experimental, action-based, capacity-building style of development effort" (1992: 19). I think this is still true today.

#### 8.2.4 Worlds apart: the migrant civil society and the Moldovan civil society

The last practice which, I assert, compromises migrants' access to the Moldovan development landscape, is that members of the Moldovan civil society firmly associate migrant associations with government structures and not with the national civil-society scene. This negatively undermines the acceptance of development-oriented migrant associations as social civil-society organisations and affects the subject of my study in terms of relationship dynamics between migrants and the national development NGO sector. The new institutional dilemma or vicious circle that Moldovan migrants face is well reflected with migrant leaders' personal experiences of participating in the National Moldovan NGO Participation Council<sup>158</sup>. A delegation of six

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<sup>158</sup> The National NGO Participation Council is composed of 40 NGOs, including the 10 largest and most influential umbrella organisations of the Moldovan social sector.

migrant leaders from Canada, France, Italy and the UK participated in the 7th annual congress of the National NGO Participation Council in 2013, with the long-term objective of becoming members. However, the migrant representatives were not welcomed among the members, because of their perceived strong affiliation with the government. Vice-versa, the Bureau did not support migrants' membership, because it is in the nature of the Council to criticise the government. Vasile shares his impressions on the members' attitudes towards migrants:

Vasile (IT engineer, 48, London): There are very influential associations and important personalities in this forum, and they present somehow a control mechanism vis-à-vis the government, which explains why they are not interested in us. Basically, they think we are part of the government. So, when we joined the forum to lobby for our projects, we first wanted to see if they bring up their positions towards us, or at least an interest in our activities. But no, not at all. Nobody brought up the topic of diaspora. They are clearly not interested in our projects.

Contrary to my assumption prior to fieldwork, the reluctance of the Council's members towards migrants does not result from fear of competition for donor funds from the migrant actors. The third sector is one of the sparsely growing sectors in Moldova. The NGOs operating on a national level are financially fairly well-off, and they do not need migrant associations for financial gains (USAID 2013). In contrast, smaller NGOs expressed a strong interest in partnership building with migrants, because of the potential financial benefit. In this respect, thus, migrant associations and Moldovan civil society actors are not too close for comfort.

Furthermore, on an institutional level, the local civil-society sector in migrants' home countries has been somewhat neglected in migration-related development programmes and policies. Only a few collaborations between Moldovan NGOs operating on a national level and the migrant civil society took place so far. This is also recognised by participants working in the headquarters of IOs and relevant donor agencies in Brussels and Geneva. The BRD (2014) states that it aims to change this situation by bridging the two apparent separate worlds. But the governments' interest in maintaining 'friendly' ties with migrants for political interest compromises migrants' entry into the institutional development scene (Chapter 6). Oleg, a participant in the NGO congress, expresses his view on the Bureau's position vis-à-vis alliances between migrants and members of the national development sector:

Oleg (project-coordinator, 44, Padova): The Bureau wants to keep the civil society here and there apart to better control us. I realised this when I saw their reaction about our interest in the NGO congress. They were not pleased at all, because the Bureau represents the government, and in that conference the government is criticised. So they refused to pay for our travel costs. But I found this rather, ehm, strange. The Bureau always publicly declares that they want to improve

our connections with the Moldovan NGO scene, but when there are opportunities like this, they back off.

Ultimately, a prominent element of migrants' access to the development establishment is the static and nationally-bound geography of international aid. The Moldovan migrants' access to development funds is compromised, for instance, by inflexible country-strategy frameworks, in which aid organisations are supposed to forge alliances with local Moldovan NGOs and not with associations based in Paris, Moscow or Rome. An interesting exception is a co-financed programme by the European Union, the Social ministries of Italy and Moldova and the IOM, pictured in Figure 8.1. It was carried out by a migrant association in 12 Italian regions and in Moldova. In its migration–development component, it provided migrant leaders with a first 'insight' into Moldova's development scene on their return visits. Unfortunately, such measures are in most cases insufficient for an institutional anchorage of migrant associations into the local development scene.

Uniunea Europeană
 Ministerul Muncii și Politicilor Sociale al Italiei
 Ministerul Muncii, Protecției Sociale și Familiei al Republicii Moldova
 IOM • OIM  
Organizația Internațională pentru Migrație, Misiunea în Moldova

**CAMPANIA DE INFORMARE ȘI SENSIBILIZARE A MIGRANȚILOR MOLDOVENI ÎN ITALIA**  
**"NIMENI NU E SINGUR PE PĂMÎNT"**

**Serviciul de consiliere psihosocială și juridică pentru migranți moldoveni**

**VĂ AJUTĂ ÎN:**

- Informarea despre drepturile și obligațiile muncitorilor migranți
- Reînnoirea actelor de ședere legală în Italia
- Întegrarea în societatea italiană în urma reîntregirii familiei
- Suport pentru depășirea dificultăților psihologice legate de efectele negative ale emigrării
- Susținerea la rezolvarea conflictelor familiale, cazurilor de violență, abuz, etc
- Informații despre posibilitățile de reîntoarcere acasă, repatriere voluntară, investiția productivă a remitențelor

**INFORMAȚII DESPRE SERVICIUL:**

- E gratuit și confidențial
- Se oferă de către o echipă multidisciplinară (psiholog, jurist, asistent social, mediator cultural)
- Se oferă pe perioada martie – august 2013

**PENTRU A BENEFICIA DE SERVICIUL, CONTACTAȚI:**

Oleg Josanu  
 Centrul Diaspora Moldova  
 tel. 00 39 3807321603  
 email: centromoldavo@yahoo.it

Figure 8.1: The donor community's support of migrants

With this in mind, practices that aim to bring migrant associations closer to other regional non-state actors, for example the earlier-mentioned local-to-local approach, seem more promising. To focus on local actors as key actors and on locally-based migration–development initiatives could effectively increase strategic synergies between migrants, the national civil society and the local authorities, central for the impact of migrants' interventions and their recognition in formal development (e.g. EU 2013b; EU/DEVCO 2011):

Marco (programme manager, 55, Brussels): There are still only few co-operations between migrants and development NGOs. We would like to change that. We want the NGOs to be more

interested in migrants and their associations. With our new local approach, we hope that more local NGOs will get in touch with migrant associations.

Another advantage commonly pointed out by project managers of migrant association-led programmes, is that an engagement with the diaspora on the local or regional level is considered 'less politically loaded' than an involvement with migrants in the capital. Though this approach seems somewhat promising, I see challenges ahead. First, a reduction in migrants' influence to the regional level might be less attractive for migrants who seek more national political and development impact and an enhanced involvement in the national civil-society scene. Second, some aid-workers expressed concerns that donor agencies may pay less attention in the future to the cross-border professional nexus between migrants and Moldova's NGO scene. They stated that professional connections between migrants and their formal employers in the civil society sector, prior to their migration, are mostly inactivate or even abruptly 'cut-off', although they would be particularly 'beneficial' for Moldova's transformation. This observation leads aid-workers to think that external players should foster professional links:

Max (aid-worker, 63, Lucerne): It's a real loss. I often observe that our counterparts are not interested how their former colleagues are doing abroad and their contacts with migrants are abruptly cut off. Maybe this is like a reflex, they don't want to know that migrants are better off – they are jealous. But professional links with their former colleagues could be very beneficial for the NGOs, because some migrants do small projects where they are now, and they could also become private funders for the NGOs.

I conclude that the Moldovan migrant associations have succeeded in establishing themselves to some extent as agents for development vis-à-vis the policy makers and donors, but not within the national civil society. The members of the 'established Moldovan civil society' do not share the discursive construction of migrant associations as non-profit organisations or as civil-society actors. Consequently, the integration of migrant associations aspiring to be part of the national NGO scene is obstructed. Moreover, it puts migrant development organisations which do not want to be affiliated with 'official' Moldova in a double outsider position. Hence, as long as migrants are not fully recognised as competent social partners within the professional national development sector, new synergies with other development associations might not happen naturally, and migrant organisations are caught in a vicious circle that compromises the transfer of their transnational development efforts into Moldova's third sector. One possible way to leave this vicious circle and to enhance migrants' recognition as development actors, I propose, is to strengthen the visibility of migrants' development interventions in the national and international development sector. Therefore, I find it vital to briefly address two relevant

questions, which I deem neglected in the debate surrounding migrant associations' development contributions; namely *where* should migrants' development contributions be visible and for *whom*?

In Moldova, there is a striking lack of visibility of migrants' development efforts. I did not come across one single visible reference to projects implemented by migrant associations in my fieldwork. Yet migrants' collective interventions are overly visible in some communities of African countries, for example with oversized billboards (e.g. Lampert 2014; Mazzucato and Kabki 2009 on the Nigerian and Ghanaian cases). The visible development drivers in Moldova are international aid organisations. Participants of social NGOs and local key informants could hardly name a specific migrant association, albeit they highlighted some significant diaspora contributions to Moldova's transformation process (see Chapter 6). Related to the lack of visibility of migrants' aid-interventions is the observation that NGO workers outside Moldova's capital frequently referred to diaspora activities as 'something that happens chiefly in Chisinau'; even if migrants' local interventions are nationwide, due to the fact that Moldovans emigrate from all parts of the country. The rather surprising reference to 'the local' as the capital city contradicts the common rhetoric of the development and migration literature of the 'local' as being migrants' micro-spaces of their communities of origin (e.g. Brickell and Datta 2011; IASCI/Nexus 2014).

Besides, current aid-practices of international development institutions strongly emphasise strengthening the visibility of migrants' development engagement in the host-country context (e.g. CIM/GIZ 2012). It is certainly true that migrants' development efforts are rarely visible and recognised in the host countries under study, and that there is a need to "give development-oriented migrant associations a face in the UK, in Germany or France", as one participant put it. To the best of my knowledge, however, there are no programmes that explicitly address the visibility of migrants' interventions in the development sector in migrants' home-countries in general and in Moldova in particular. In my view, migrants' recognition as local or international professional development partners can only be achieved if the impacts of migrants' development efforts are also visible within the professional aid-community. Therefore, I suggest it is time that donor agencies also support the visibility of migrants' development projects in the professional international aid-community and in the national development scene in migrants' home countries. In the Moldovan case, this could be easily done by improving the Bureau's PR activities. These, I argued in Chapter 6, are currently mostly addressed to promote the Republic of Moldova via migrants' activities abroad, rather than to enhance the visibility of migrants' humanitarian interventions in Moldova within the professional national and international development field.



To conclude section two, I argue that the current inner logics of the transnational development field can compromise a full recognition of migrants as social partners for change. Additionally, struggles over these practices can further obstruct migrants' contribution to development. Struggles exist between the top-down paradigm of things, with practices of standardisation and upward accountability (Eyben 2013), and the 'rights-based approach', with more downward accountability and diversity (Mosse 2011). Ultimately, in my view, the empowerment of migrant associations as development agents would require a more 'open-minded' donor attention and a generally more flexible form of development practices, which cannot be without serious rethinking of practices that undermine the dynamic and sometimes unpredictable nature of the relatively 'new' migrant agents, less familiar with the rules and practices of the development field. Realistically, though, it is rather unlikely that these practices will occur in the current atmosphere of security concerns and financial cuts in Western Europe.

### 8.3 "With the Russians it's either a 'Yes' or a 'No'": Dynamics of Migrant–Development Actor Relationships in Joint Development Settings

In this last section, I demonstrate the initial experiences migrants and aid-practitioners made in joint development settings. I discuss the micro-politics involved in mutual collaborations by accentuating this time the migrants' different types of aid-partners: IOs, government-related institutions, and development NGOs in Moldova and in the migrant host countries.

#### 8.3.1 Collaborations between migrants and IOs and government-related institutions

The most controversial narratives from both social actors on their aid-relationship emerged in development settings with IOs and government-related organisations and migrants.

On the one hand, a number of participants in head offices in Brussels, Geneva or in Chisinau said that they had positive experiences in working together with migrant associations:

Valeriu (project coordinator, 44, Chisinau): The associations are more professional now, and they do a lot of things. They cooperated very effectively with us in our return-programmes and in some projects within the EU-partnership framework. For example, they organised job-fairs in Italy and Moldova. Our collaboration with migrants worked well. It's worth continuing. We really had some success stories.

Ionela (project officer, 34, Chisinau): There is this list of migrant associations. And as I already said, some of these associations are always willing to participate in all kind of activities, and we made very positive experiences with them. And you know, the interesting thing is that some of them do it for free, on a voluntary basis.

It goes without saying that the stated advantage of migrant associations as cheap and handy service providers was roundly criticised by migrant leaders. They stated that for the same services and ideas, the IOs receive financial rewards, while they go away empty-handed. This is similar to their experiences with state institutions in the building-up of emigrant policies, discussed in Chapter 6. The initiator of the just-mentioned job-fair explains:

Ion (translator, 34, Paris): Seriously, they get all the money and we do everything for free, even if they can't do their projects without us, because they need our contacts. I get so many emails from the WHO all the time, asking for contacts, but I have never obtained any financial reward [...]. And the job fair was our idea in the first place. We even worked for free on our trips back home, but then the development organisation received all the grants.

A similar example is provided by Dragomir, who organised a series of seminars for return migrants in a programme implemented by an international aid-agency:

Dragomir (construction worker, 48, Paris): I have been constantly doing small things for IOs back home, but it adds up, and then the development institutions get hundreds of Euros for their migration–development programmes. And we received 200 in our last collaboration.

The aid-workers also positively evaluated their joint collaborations in which migrants acted as policy consultants, especially within migration–development policy frameworks and in post-2015 consultations (e.g. within the UNDP's 'Mainstreaming migration into strategic policy development' programme, 2012). Yet, once again, migrant leaders view these collaborations differently. They made rather negative experiences and felt uncomfortable in joint meetings with government representatives. This points to a fundamentally unequal power distribution and the limits of the partnership concept in multi-stakeholder settings in concrete practice. For example, in a project meeting organised by the Bureau, five grant applicants for a migration-development programme presented their proposals; two consortia of migrant associations, a government ministry and two international NGOs. Rosa, who represented the migrant consortium, recalled:

Rosa (entrepreneur, 45, London): The whole event was a big struggle. And honestly, I wasn't feeling very well. The government was one of the grant tenants but its representative immediately wanted to chair the whole event without even asking us. We then all rejected this, because we didn't think this was fair. The government is one of us, so why should they chair the meeting? And it went on like this.

On the other hand, aid-practitioners narrated that working with migrant associations was demanding. The three quotes below provide an insight into the most pronounced challenges of employees of IOs in their collaboration with migrants, chiefly relating to issues of ownership and reliability:

Martin (programme manager, 55, Berne): The most important thing is to let migrants have their ownership, but this is very tricky. I am not sure how much directive we should provide [...]. We had negative experiences in the past, because we interfered too much. At the end of our programme migrants had projects which fulfilled our criteria, but they had lost ownership. That was not good.

Markus (programme manager, 34, Brussels): Our collaborations have been difficult, not only with Moldovan migrants but with all migrants. We had difficulties on the capacity level. The implementation of large-scale EU projects overstretches most of the migrant associations' capacity [...]. In general, the platform of African diaspora was one of the most difficult projects we ever had, with lots of delays.

Beth (head of conference management, 59, Geneva): The diaspora conference was one of the most difficult conferences I have ever organised in my entire career. We invited 44 delegates of diaspora ministries and we ended up with 500 participants. Apparently, everybody is responsible for the diaspora. Some delegations had 21 representatives, and there were many representatives of migrant associations we didn't invite. It got really complicated and chaotic.

Further negative feedback was reported on technical aspects, mostly on financial reports:

Oxana (project officer, 28, Chisinau): In our grant programme, we were very pleased to notice a strong collaboration between the migrant associations. And overall, there were no negative aspects, except maybe of some legal issues related to migrant associations' registrations and some small technical issues of financial accountability in the final reports.

Moreover, the transparency of migrant associations is generally disputed, as the statements of aid-workers on migrant organisations' 'hidden agendas' at the beginning of this chapter showed. Interestingly, in co-operations with IOs and bilateral development agencies, the migrant associations' transparency is not a necessary prerequisite. This is partly because development institutions rely on migrant associations for implementing their migration programmes and policies (e.g. to request contacts to migrants for reaching out to beneficiaries living abroad). Dora explains the somewhat 'asymmetrical relationship' between the two actors in this domain:

Dora (consultant, 42, Chisinau): A big problem in our collaboration with migrant associations was their transparency. Six years ago, there existed only a limited number of well-functioning

organisations, so they didn't need to fulfil the usual transparency requirements. They could basically do whatever they wanted to do, because the international organisations needed them for their programmes.

A last fundamental element of the relationship between migrants and donor agencies, which I find particularly interesting, is the preference of many migrant leaders to work with Russian donor agencies instead of Western development institutions. Contrary to what one would assume in the case of the politically divided Republic of Moldova, the migrants' preference to engage with Russian donor organisations – outside the mainstream international development establishment – is not related to migrants' personal political stances. It is a purely pragmatic choice, based on the criteria of the 'simplest' and most 'uncomplicated' ways to receive project support:

Natasha (shop-assistant, 48, Paris): The EU always wants to see complicated and elaborated needs- and risk-assessments and this and that plan. And even if you do all these assessments, it is not clear what exactly they decide. And then they get back to you after a long time and tell you that they will not fund the project. With the Russians it's different. They come and tell you straight away [...] With the Russians it's either a 'yes' or a 'no'.

Migrants' preferences for these 'more pragmatic', or 'more down-to-earth partners' compared to Western mainstream development agencies makes sense. Especially bearing in mind that most associations are volunteer-run with limited financial and time resources available, and that many of them want to hold onto 'simple' and 'human' development interventions (see Chapter 7).

Migrant leaders also have a flair for teaming up with the fairly new development agencies of Central European countries, for example with the Czech, Polish or Bulgarian development agencies and their respective branches of international charities (e.g. the Czech Caritas). Their growing engagement in the migration-development domain in Moldova indicates that the transnational field of development is all but static, and that the donor landscape in the region has become more polycentric (cf. USAID 2013). While these actors have been widely ignored in the migration–development literature so far, all migrant leaders positively referred to them as being more receptive to their ideas and needs, compared to the more established Western European actors<sup>159</sup>.

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<sup>159</sup> Another reason why some of the migrant leaders seek alternative support from these actors is their frustration about domestic politics of the pro-Western government with its associated Western development alliance (see Chapter 4).

Ion (barman, 29, Tallinn): The Polish and Czech bilateral agencies are much more easy-going. They are less rigorous than the Western European aid-agencies, and they are more flexible. I mean they are also more open to learn from us. It's more eh, reciprocal. When we have a choice, we always collaborate with them.

In contrast, Western European aid-practitioners pointed to Central European development actors as a part of 'Moldova's problem' – its slow and politically turbulent development transition. They criticised the EU-experts and consultants from Central Europe for being too tolerant towards the 'post-socialist laissez faire mentality' – as some of them pejoratively described the project handling of their Moldovan counterparts. Rightly, this points out that the question of who is the ideal partner to team up with for development activities applies not only to migrants and their associations.

To conclude, the narratives of both aid-workers and migrants show that the optimistic development policy rhetoric of teaming up with migrant associations for fruitful collaboration proved often to be challenging in real-life situations, especially when the 'real lives' of both actors are challenging and unequal power geometries are at work, obstructing an equal relationship in practice. While the majority of representatives of IOs positively narrated their experiences of collaborating with migrants, migrants' accounts were mixed. They do not perceive themselves as equal partners of IOs and government-affiliated aid-institutions in migration–development programmes, but rather as cheap service-providers. This negatively impacts upon migrants' integration into the official development field, and upon their motivation to stay engaged in formal development activities.

### 8.3.2 Relationships between migrants and development NGOs in Moldova and in host countries

Collaborations between migrant associations and development organisations in migrant host countries or in Moldova happened in most cases 'spontaneously', without strategic planning:

Svetlana (factory worker and artist, 55, Munich): Our collaboration with Dr Müller from the German foundation started by pure coincidence one morning in the lift of the factory. Dr Müller asked me where I come from. And when I told him that I am from Moldova, he was immediately interested in my country. Later we met for coffee and then we started to work together.

The participants' descriptions of their collaborations as something that 'just happened' – often in a random and variable way – suggests that development NGOs do not necessarily think of

migrant associations as potential partners when designing their projects, despite their earlier highlighted openness towards migrants and their willingness to experiment in forms of joint collaboration. Where collaborations between migrants and development NGOs, trade unions or other civil- society organisations in both geographical contexts happened, they were always positively narrated by all research participants. Migrants, especially, benefited from these collaborations for the improvement of their organisational capacities and management skills (see also Chapter 6). This finding is consistent with the results of the majority of research on the earlier mentioned 'co-development programmes', that look at relationship patterns between migrant associations and local or national governmental or development actors in the receiving contexts (e.g. Østergaard-Nielson 2011).

Another fundamental element in the micro-relationship between migrants and aid-agencies, which I deem overlooked in the top-down approach in much research on the role of migrant associations in the migration–development nexus, is that the majority of large-scale diaspora-led programmes in Moldova are implemented by local employees. This means that individual interactions between the two research groups occur mostly between migrants and their co-citizens, employed in local or international aid-organisations, or with civil servants. The majority of migrants' narratives on negative experiences in aid-relationships were precisely linked to their co-citizens' general work ethos and the functioning of institutions headed by Moldovans. The negative portrait included complaints about clientelism in the allocation of funds, lack of genuine interest in their work and a 'general unprofessionalism' in their functioning (e.g. shortcomings in communication skills, delays, unreliability). In a nutshell, migrants criticise their Moldovan counterparts for the same reasons as the Western development professionals find fault with migrants. The quote below, referring to a fundraising event of a migrant association and a Moldovan branch of an international child organisation, exemplifies migrants' descriptions of their communication with aid-agencies headed by local employees as being unnecessarily difficult and slow:

Rosa (entrepreneur, 45, London): The woman who was sending us the handicrafts made by children for the charity event failed to tell us more about these children. We only knew that they were autistic children and orphans. It was once more a communication problem. I begged her to give us more information, because we wanted to better describe these children at the event, but she kept forgetting. Communication and information is always the biggest challenge we have with our partners in Moldova, although it would be very easy to improve.

On the same note, migrants criticised the bureaucratic and administrative work culture of Moldovan-based counterparts, which is believed to be a central obstacle obstructing positive change in Moldova (see Chapter 4):

Dana (social worker, 46, Rome): They were very bureaucratic and slow. I understand that it's not something they do on purpose, it's just they are still slow, and communication via email is almost impossible, because some people back home don't yet have the culture of emails.

Natalia (lecturer and businesswoman, 42, Rome): At the end, the financial papers got ridiculous to the point that we were disputing over 17 cents, no, 18 cents in their favour actually [laughs], but I had to change the whole report. I was in Moldova at that time, and I just couldn't believe it.

In summary, co-operation between development NGOs in migrant host-countries and Moldova happened in most cases spontaneously. Notwithstanding, all research participants estimated these collaborations positively – with the exception of migrants' 'difficult' experiences in work relationships with their co-citizens, mostly resulting from cultural aspects and/or discrepancies between migrants and Moldovans who have never migrated.

#### 8.4 Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter I have critically examined dispositions, attitudes and practices that migrants and aid-workers display as processes in the complex system of power relations in the transnational field of development. Informed by the 'social field approach', I analysed the dynamics within the development field according to Bourdieu (1989) – as more or less differentiated institutional complexes that addressed both the discursive level and the level of everyday development practice. And I traced the discrepancies between the dominant policy discourse and the practices of integrating migrants' development efforts into the professional field of aid-establishment. In the first section, I introduced the development practitioners' viewpoint on the topic.

*It was revealed that, despite Moldovan migrants' development efforts in general and their feeding into emigrant policy-making in particular, their role as legitimate development partners remains controversial. I illustrated this argument by highlighting the double standards applied to migrant organisations in the professional development establishment in several regards: to their genuine interests in the development cause, to their attributed development 'savoir faire', and to the allocation of funding and technical support.*

The future will show whether these double standards are just one step in the learning-by-doing process of migrants' integration into the formal development establishment. For now, they can serve as a reminder of the importance of being critically aware of how power sustains and reinforces practices of migrants' involvement in the development field (cf. Bourdieu 1990). *Along these lines, a particular discomfort was found among aid-workers in how to cope with the heterogeneity of migrant organisations, be they professional NGOs, voluntary-run or profit-oriented organisations – inside or outside mainstream development establishment. Although most aid-workers do recognise the diversity of migrant associations, they find it difficult to accept in practice.*

As a self-criticism of my own theoretical framework, I agree with research participants that the conceptualisation of migrant associations as non-profit organisations or civil-society actors is too narrow and inaccurate to explain the diversity of migrant associations. In my view, the approach of migrant organisations as transnational grassroots organisations representing local communities (Smith and Guranizo 1998), or as a 'diasporic civil society' (Mullings 2012) adds to the uncertainty of how exactly to deal with migrants and their associations as newcomers in aidland.

*Hence, more recognition of the variety of types of migrant associations could provide for greater clarity of their role on the micro-level of the development establishment, especially in regard to alternative migrant associations outside official mainstream development, and/or of voluntary-run or for-profit organisations.*

Furthermore, throughout Chapters 7 and 8 we saw that both transnational social fields – the migrant civil society and the formal development establishment – are created by relational positions of organisations which are involved in the struggle over the definition of their respective powers.

*The most common struggles between the two fields regarding standards and competences in development efforts occur between professional development practices versus migrants' chiefly voluntary mode of development practices.* Although this observation is not new, I personally find it insufficiently addressed in the literature on migrant associations.

*In contrast to other volunteer development NGOs, informal networks and groups, which seem to have somehow found their place within or around aidland, development practitioners still need to socially constitute a similar approach to migrant associations.*

In section 2, I showed the importance of critically examining currently dominant aid-practices in order to better understand the practice of involving migrants in development. I pointed to the limits of participatory spaces for migrants in the formal development field by examining how



mainstream results and evidence-based practices shape the development practitioners' working practices with migrants.

*The key argument put forward is that current conventional development practices and struggles over the right practices – for example between top-down measurements versus accountability-to-people approaches emphasising relationships – are good to think with when analysing the relationship-building between aid workers and migrants, as they influence practices aimed at incorporating migrants' development efforts into the professional development field.*

Furthermore, these practices can create an additional uneasiness with migrants' roles and expectations about their contribution to development. And they can also lead to a repetition of mistakes previously made in other development contexts, for instance in earlier attempts to build up a civil society in Eastern Europe.

*The current dominant development practice of supporting only programmes and organisations claiming to deliver quick wins and easily measurable results can undermine a sustainable integration of migrants and their collective efforts in the transnational development field. Hence, despite the development establishment's efforts put into relationship practices, the transnational space of the mainstream development community is far from being a community of solidarity, and questions of power and definitions over what is a 'good aid-practice' with migrants remain open.*

An additional element contributing to the malaise of aid-workers with migrants' role in the development establishment is their controversial approach to migrants' spatial distance to Moldova.

*Moldovan migrants are considered by rural NGOs in Moldova closer than the umbrella organisations and funding organisations in the capital, which I have argued points to understudied intra-European specificities of the migration–transformation nexus. I found that different development practices and socio-cultural perceptions of migrants' distance to Moldova can shape migrants' manifold roles in development practices. A more relaxed handling of the distance and nearness of migrants to their home countries and to development actors would be crucial for improving the relationship between migrants and aid actors.*

And last of all, I showed that in the newest round of aid-practices, for example in the local-to-local approach, a shift from fostering transnational ties to supporting local ties in the migrants' countries of origin is currently ongoing (e.g. EU 2013b; EU/UNDP 2014). The strategic partnerships between donor organisations and local civil-society actors, including migrants and governments at a decentralised level, might be a chance for enhancing the sustainability of migrants' projects, and for including the often-neglected structural context of migrants' engagement in the migration–development debate (cf. de Haas 2012). Yet, it will be important

to find a compromise between the near and far and not to lose sight of the transnational component of the migration–development nexus – the space of migrant actors and their connections. Otherwise, these aid-practices might result in a relatively short excursion into the transnational Moldovan migrant space. Furthermore, I remain sceptical that the practice will increase the migrant civil society's recognition as a valid member of the national Moldovan development scene, which in my opinion can only be achieved with a broader recognition of the associations' development efforts by the professional development community. And it will certainly not solve the vital issue of political legitimacy in the allocation of development funds to migrant association-led programmes in Europe, given current shifts to the right in European politics that puts aid flows at risk in general.

*The findings of this section reveal that the engagement of migrant associations in development cooperation turned out to be in many cases difficult to implement, and there is a profound uncertainty in how to deal with migrant associations in concrete development practice. Keeping in mind the complexity of transnational co-operation patterns of both migrants and development actors, there exists no single 'best practice' to engage, enable and empower migrants' collective development engagement.*

Thus, I fully agree with Page and Tanyi (2015) who maintain that migrants' development engagement is a craft for all actors involved, a skill that is learnt over time, through practice, and without a simple recipe.

In section three I discussed the micro-relationship between migrants and development actors in concrete project settings.

*A particular mixed picture of joint collaborations was presented by participants working in the head offices of donor institutions, IOs and bilateral development agencies. Vice-versa, experiences between migrant associations and Moldovan NGOs as well as development NGOs in the migrants' countries of residence were narrated positively.* This finding sheds light on the importance of migrants' different aid-partners when analysing migrants' working relationships with aid-agencies.

Moreover, the majority of migrant leaders do not yet regard themselves as bridge-builders or brokers between the East and the West in co-operations with mainstream aid-agencies, as commonly assumed in the broader literature. Similar to migrants' experiences with the building-up of state support structures, discussed in Chapter 6, they rather consider themselves as contact points and cheap service providers for IOs and bilateral agencies. That being said, the assumed advantage of migrants' direct links to their home communities as less bureaucratic channels of aid – highlighted in the development industry's theorisations – is also strongly used

by international aid-agencies for reaching out to Moldovan migrants for their migration–development programmes.

And last of all, we saw that migrants' relationships with co-citizens, the employees of local and international organisations in Moldova, were challenging.

*The key-finding of this section is that migrants' and aid-workers' mutual experiences in aid-relationships proved to be often challenging in real-life development settings. Especially, when the 'real lives' of both actors are characterised by despair and unequal power geometries are at work obstructing an equal relationship in practice.*

Hence, it certainly remains a challenging task to match these life-worlds in concrete real-life situations.

## CHAPTER 9

### Conclusion and Discussion

This thesis has explored how Moldovan migrant associations are involved in the social development of their home country from a multi-perspective, transnational approach. In this final chapter, I first give an overview of the main findings on each of the three main research dimensions introduced in Chapter 1, before I summarise the results garnered throughout the thesis across all research dimensions. I then share some general reflections on the overall thesis, and I discuss the findings in the light of the broader theoretical debates on migration–development, social remittances and state–emigrant relationships. I conclude with a discussion of avenues for further research and policy recommendations.

#### 9.1 Synthesis and Discussion

##### 9.1.1 Findings obtained on each research dimension

In this section I summarise the main findings of the thesis according to the three research dimensions and their respective research questions as set out in Chapter 1 and briefly set out again below for easy reference. A detailed summary of the findings can be found in the conclusions of the Chapters 4-8.

##### **Dimension 1: the transnational field of Moldovan migrants**

How is the development policy and practice of actively involving migrants in development efforts perceived and negotiated among Moldovan migrants?

The sub-questions in this first research dimension are:

- *What are migrants' visions of Moldova's transformation?*
- *Who is engaged on a voluntary basis in collective transnational social practices regarding age, education and gender?*
- *How do migrants define their role as agents of transformative change in Moldova?*
- *What forms of collective transnational engagements do migrant associations implement, and how are these forms shaped by migrants' everyday lives?*
- *If the associations and networks are involved in development initiatives, how do they decide about strategic and organisational matters with regard to their concrete involvement in development donor programmes?*

First, I examined migrants' perceptions of Moldova's transformation process. I showed in Chapter 4 that the majority of migrant leaders have a bleak vision of their home country's future. For them, Moldova is politically and economically unstable and governed by corruption. Their

distrust in the political elite negatively impacts upon their development efforts towards Moldova, despite a strong emotional attachment to their home country.

I then marked, through a broadly deductive approach, the importance of a fresh perspective on Moldovan migration beyond remittances and 'children left behind' to understand the migrants' transnational aid practices. I identified understudied current Moldovan migration features that significantly shape migrants' transnational development practices: actual or anticipated onward migration towards North-Western Europe, lack of socio-cultural integration in the host society, delayed return migration and family reunification. Besides impacting upon migrants' collective commitments towards Moldova, these migration features all show typical characteristics of the current complex and dynamic intra-European East-West migration, which have largely escaped the attention of the majority of studies on Moldovan migration.

Further, I explored *who* is involved in collective development practices and *why*. Firstly, we saw that the common feature of migrant leaders is that they were all engaged in self-help groups or NGOs prior to emigration, either as professionals or as volunteers, or they showed a great interest in such activities. The group of collectively involved migrants is heterogeneous and gender-balanced, consisting of migrants with different socio-professional backgrounds. Many of them have a higher education background and experienced de-skilling either in Moldova or in their Western European destination countries. Secondly, I demonstrated that a variety of underlying motivations, individual meanings and attitudes account for migrants' engagement in transnational aid-practices, which are strongly interwoven with their multi-sited social lives and can change over time. These are moral satisfaction, self-esteem, belonging, compassion, feelings of guilt for 'being absent', and personal development in terms of gaining different types of capital in different social and spatial contexts (Chapter 7).

The majority of migrant leaders welcomes policies and programmes to involve their initiatives into the formal development establishment. With the exception of a central group of migrant leaders, migrants' motivations to engage in such initiatives are, however, chiefly linked to personal interests and individual life plans (e.g. to prepare for return migration), rather than to policies aimed at integrating migrants into homeland development. This resonates with the broader pleas made by scholars to 'ground' migrant communities in everyday acts and to unravel the repercussions of migrants' many connections on their lives and identities (e.g. Christou and Mavroudi 2015; Page and Tanyi 2015). Hence, opportunity structures provided by international development agencies and the Moldovan authorities are not sufficient to explain the full reality of migrants' collective development efforts.

Most migrant associations are small and volunteer-run, and their role in Moldova's development is still modest, due to shortcomings in their organisational and financial capacities.

Whether their influence on Moldova's local development agendas will increase once they dispose more financial resources, remains to be seen. In most instances, the presidents of associations decide upon migrants' development activities, rather than the members.

Overall, the organisations engage in a variety of aid practices, covering a wide range of areas of intervention – from charity events in their places of residence to large-scale social projects of several years (see Chapter 6). Apart from a small number of migrant associations whose development activities span various host countries and regions in Moldova, development interventions in Moldova are chiefly carried out on a local level. Interestingly, despite the relative short time of Moldovan migration towards Western and South-Western Europe, Moldovan migrant associations dispose of a higher share of transnational-oriented development activities, compared to other migrant groups, who took longer to develop transnational activities (see Chapter 6).

In the course of the research, interesting forms of migrants' collective development practices emerged that have largely escaped the attention of the migration–development debate. These include, for example, patterns of aid-giving shaped by Moldova's socialist history, by the country's marginalised place within the socio-spatial configuration of Europe or by the migrants' individual past, present and anticipated migration experiences, and forms of aid-giving motivated by compassion and guilt for 'being absent' (see Chapters 4 and 7). These findings reflect Christou and Mavroudi's statement that: "Development itself is a contested, expansive and a holistic process, which we see as part of everyday life, and which may be empowering for those involved in creating positive changes" (2015: 3). The aspect of empowerment applies in particular to migrants who excel their talents and skills in their development activities, which they cannot use in their professional occupations, to migrants who create employment opportunities via development projects in Moldova or abroad, and to female care-workers, who invest their increased agency gained from their own migration in transnational aid-giving (see Chapter 7).

Furthermore, despite the migrants' critique of the Moldovan government, most migrant leaders regard a supportive institutional structure and a culture of recognition for their development efforts by 'official Moldova' and its development partners as more important for their development engagements than the local or national associative context in their host countries. Moreover, even if a national associational culture of self-help groups rubs off on Moldovan associations in some cases, the local support structures of their host countries were found more pertinent for their transnational engagement than national associative structures. The most favourable context for migrant associations are localities with a high civic organisational infrastructure and a receptive environment to migrants (e.g. migrant

participation in local political structures and decentralised integration policies), met for instance in Novellara, Padova and in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Bigger cities like London, Paris and Rome are less favourable for migrants' development-oriented activities due to practical reasons (e.g. to find affordable premises, high spatial dispersion of their members).

Lastly, migrants' various motivations to engage in Moldova's development efforts generate a wide range of transnational development performances, which do not necessarily easily fit into the values and logic of the transnational field of the development industry. I see, therefore, important challenges ahead for state and development actors' efforts to bundle and channel all the 'good spirits' towards national development strategies. We have to bear in mind that in migrants' views a Moldovan transnational 'development community' is still in the making, and is presently obstructed by the creation of an 'ethnic Moldovan diaspora' in Western Europe itself. Thus, according to migrants, the role of their diaspora in Moldova's development transition still needs to be defined. This takes us now to aid-workers' perspective on the issue.

#### Dimension 2: the transnational field of development actors

How is the 'policy idea' of involving migrants and their organisations imagined within the transnational field of development?

- *How do development actors (including local NGOs and the Moldovan state) view migrants and their associations; their activities, members and their role as development actors?*
- *Are they seen as partners or beneficiaries?*
- *How is the policy category of migrants' involvement negotiated and sustained among development policy makers and practitioners?*

Firstly, the thesis showed that, despite a large amount of international donor funding allocated to Moldova's national migration–development programmes, the country's fragile political climate and its complex search for national identity hinder a sustainable structural and ideological engagement with its absentees.

Secondly, I identified the rapid successive changes of how the Moldovan state and its key development partners pictured Moldovan migrants since the country's independence in 1991 – from purely ignoring them, to the main cause of the country's demographic and social distress, to victims of human trafficking and exploitation, and most recently as economic partners and 'sponsors' for the country's transformation. These shifts were accompanied by respective policy changes – from return policies to programmes addressing the 'migrant victims' to a wide range of migration–development policies. That being said, in a relatively short period of time, discourses on migration and development have moved to the centre stage of development policy in Moldova, and emigration is no longer a 'Cinderella issue'.

My engagement with the lens of development policy makers and aid-practitioners reveals, however, that their perception of migrants' life-worlds and of migrants' roles in the country's development transition remains controversial. For instance, the latest trend of the discursive subject of 'the migrant self-entrepreneur' – sustained by the macro-development policy discourse on diaspora engagement and subsequently adapted to the Moldovan context – reveals considerable gaps between the image of aid-workers and civil servants on the 'ideal transnationally engaged Moldovan migrant' and the most active migrants in practice. This discursive subject does not apply to the majority of Moldovan migrant leaders. It masks the reality of a relatively large number of migrants who still face difficult challenges in their daily lives (e.g. labour discrimination or challenges in family reunification) and raises unrealistic expectations about the migrants' capacities to contribute to development. Consequently, at the meso level, the core assumption of development actors about a 'new transformed Moldovan diaspora', composed of 'settled and well-off migrants', ready to contribute to Moldova's transformation, needs to be reconfigured, too. As shown, like the country, Moldovan migration is currently undergoing fundamental transformations (Chapter 5). The discrepancy between discourse and reality distorts the already contested views on Moldova's mass emigration in general, and on the migrants' realities in particular.

Not only do the interpretations surrounding the engagement of the migrant community for Moldova's transformation remain controversial, but also the modalities of integrating migrants in the setting up of structural support mechanisms addressed to them. Even if the emergence of a migrant associational dynamic has taken shape, and some migrants were involved in the creation of state-led support structures, a certain reluctance of development actors to financially support migrant associations has thus far constrained migrant organisations' development capacity (Chapter 6). This shows that there is not only a considerable gap between development policy rhetoric and practice, but also a practical uneasiness in empowering migrants as autonomous partners for Moldova's development efforts and steering them from a distance. In order to avoid future costly mismatches between migrants' expressed needs and services put in place – which I argued are rather complex and incoherent – the support structures need to be simplified and better adjusted to migrants' needs.

Additionally, I demonstrated that some aid-workers are not yet equipped with the necessary attitudes and practices in dealing with migrants as their new development partners. The discomfort in the handling of migrants' relatively new role as partners was particularly pertinent among aid-workers who implement both programmes with and for migrants. Moreover, their malaise is also expressed in double standards applied to migrants in aidland compared to more



established development actors, for instance over the allocation of funds for migrant associations' projects or their organisational forms (Chapter 8).

Lastly, the multi-perspective approach allowed me to see that migrants' physical and ideological distance to Moldova is contested in practice. Aid-workers' perception of the distance stretching between the migrants and Moldova is not only culturally coined, but also varies according to migrants' attributed roles in their development programmes. For instance, we saw that, as policy consultants, migrants are perceived as too close to Moldova to be consulted as experts, while as partners their distance is valued (see Chapter 8).

To conclude, the Moldovan authorities and their development partners have not yet succeeded in creating an enabling environment for collaborating with migrant associations, despite large aid-investments, aid-workers' declared open-minded attitudes towards migrants and a diversification of migration–development policies. Similar to the malaise in dealing with Moldova's mass emigration and the country's uncertain future, engaging Moldovan migrants as their partners provokes unease. It will be interesting to monitor whether the situation improves in the years to come, once the programmes have been implemented over a longer period of time, and whether there will be a 'new normal' in how to deal with migrants in Moldova's formal development policies.

### Dimension 3: the aid-relationship dynamics

How are the aid-relationships between migrants and development actors shaped in practice?

- *How are migrants integrated into the field of transnational development policy?*
- *How do migrants and development actors experience their collaborations?*
- *Are migrants and their associations just 'invited' to participate or do they have influence on the decision-making processes of development policies and initiatives?*

My final objective was to focus on the existing connections between development actors and migrants within the transnational field of aidland. I showed that the field in which development practitioners and migrants operate exists in a context of complex power relationships. I pointed to the limits of participatory spaces for migrants in the formal development field by examining how mainstream aid-practice, based on a discourse of impact, results and evidence-based practice, shapes the development practitioners' working practices with migrants. I argued that the politico-bureaucratic international development field often results in giving migrants voices without providing them with actual decision-making capacity. Further, I showed in Chapter 8 that, in delivery-oriented practices, some of the Western donor agencies unnecessarily replicated mistakes in the support of the migrant civil society made in the building up of an

'Eastern European civil society' and its embedding into the formal development establishment. Additionally, struggles over conventional aid-practices can further obstruct migrants' contribution to development, especially between the 'paradigm of things' – which is top-down with practices of standardisation and upward accountability (Eyben 2013) – and the 'rights-based approach', with more downward accountability and acknowledgment of diversity (Mosse 2011). As long as there are tensions between flexible and responsive development practices that support truly empowering migrants and the obligation to demonstrate pre-defined results, the space for new creative relationships with migrants in official development is limited.

The majority of migrant leaders regard their involvement in state-led development programmes and policies as an 'alibi-participation' with little room for flexible and creative support. Their experiences in collaborating with Moldova's key development partners are narrated as an 'asymmetrical relationship', in which they are cheap service providers of ideas and contacts, but have not yet received the recognition as professional social development actors they were hoping for. This rather unexpected reversed asymmetrical relationship between migrants and the development industry originates from the attempted fast catch-up by the Moldovan government and its development partners in creating migration–development policies and programmes. In doing so, they relied upon migrant associations' inputs and contacts with the migrant community. The migrant associations provided these services mostly for free. To this end, the assumed advantage of migrants' direct links to their home-country as forming less bureaucratic channels of aid – highlighted in the development industry's theorisations – are not only used for migrants' home communities but also by international aid-agencies for their new programmes. Additionally, despite the fact that migrant associations could to some extent establish themselves as agents for development vis-à-vis the development policy makers and international donors in Moldova, the migrant civil society and the local Moldovan civil society scene remain in practice worlds apart (Chapter 8). This makes migrants' integration into Moldova's development field only a partial one.

On the other hand, the development actors' working experiences with migrants were narrated positively, chiefly by representatives of IOs based in Chisinau. A somewhat more mixed picture was presented by participants working in the head offices of donor institutions, IOs and bilateral development agencies outside Moldova. These participants also pointed to negative aspects of their collaborations with migrant associations, such as migrants' poor management skills, reliability and transparency. Vice-versa, collaborations between migrant associations and Moldovan NGOs and development NGOs in the migrants' countries of residence were also described positively. These findings shed light on the importance of a more nuanced approach to migrants' different types of aid-partners when examining migrants' integration into aidland.

In sum, despite the development establishment's improved efforts put on practices emphasising relationships, the migrants' role as legitimate new partners in concrete development practice is not just fraught with complexity, but full of substantial contradictions, as shown with the example of migrants' attributed 'savoir', their expertise, and their 'savoir faire', their practical development competences (Chapter 8).

#### 9.1.2 Summary of findings obtained across all research dimensions

In this sub-section I summarise the overarching results and observations obtained across all three research dimensions. They all point to aspects of the broader Moldovan migration–development debate to which I think we should pay more attention in research and policy-making.

Throughout the thesis, I have deconstructed the development policy discourse on migrant associations' engagement by introducing social and cultural dimensions including the migrant's own perspectives on the migration–development discourse, the various social relational dynamics between migrants, their Moldovan counterparts and development players. I showed that, if development means improved living standards for everyone, the multidimensional perspectives of the migrants have to be considered much more carefully within the development concern under the label of 'Diaspora'. The advantage of this multi-sited, multi-layered approach was the interesting contributions I was able to make to the theoretical discussions surrounding the Moldovan migration–development debate. It allowed, for instance, the different underlining perceptions of development practices and values among migrants and non-migrant aid professionals, which thus far have not been explicitly materialised in the academic debate, to emerge. Notable here are migrants' reluctance towards top-down approaches and professional 'charity'. By including Moldovan migrants' rationalities and values, which have been missed out in the debate so far, I demonstrated that *migrants have different interpretations from the mainstream development agencies* on Moldova's political transformation process, either as an independent state or as a part of Romania. And lastly, we saw that diverging opinions about the 'ideal' development partners exist among migrants and aid professionals (i.e. migrants' preferences to team up with partners from EEA states). Hence, I see a need to move towards a more diversified approach of what transformation(s) and transformative practice(s) might be, and towards acceptance of pluralistic understanding as a legitimate form of development knowledge formation (cf. Hettne 2009).

A similar issue that emerged across all three research dimensions is *to shift gazes*: towards researching Moldovan migration and migrants' transnational ties as a part of intra-European migration; towards the broader research agenda on intra-European inequalities; and towards supporting the visibility of migrants' development engagement from the West to the East – from migrant host countries towards Moldova and the transnational professional aid-community.

Furthermore, I identified *a mix of factors obstructing the integration of migrants' collective 'development potential' into the aid world*, which have not been adequately addressed in the migration–development debate. These are: Moldova's fragile political and structural context, including the migrants' bleak vision of Moldova's future; the still relatively poor structural support provided by Moldova and its development partners to migrant associations; current mainstream aid-mechanisms (e.g. the delivery-oriented development approach); the lack of migrants' recognition as social development actors within the Moldovan development scene; the controversial cultural interpretations of migrants' distance to their home-country, and internal fractures within the migrant community along the lines of new class structures; political and non-political engagement of migrants; and finally struggles over the building up of a (transnational) development diaspora.

In this context, *diverse types of 'temporalities'* emerged as crucial for migrants' forms of aid-giving and for their relationships with development actors: the time for 'making' a community of collective practice; the overall situation of Moldova at the time-point of migrants' departure impacting upon migrants ways of looking back at Moldova and on migrants' institutional trust; the individual time dimension of the migration process influencing migrants' agency to engage with Moldova; and migrants' individually perceived present and anticipated duration of their 'absence'. In this respect, the political or ideological stances of migrant leaders regarding the disputed future of Moldova, either towards the East or West, prominently highlighted in previous research as fundamental for migrants' associative activities (e.g. Cheianu-Andrey 2013; Schwarz 2007), are found to be less significant than the differences between my suggested distinction of migrant leaders belonging to the first migration wave (those who migrated in the late 1990s) and migrants belonging to the second migration wave (those who left the country at a later stage). The assignation of migrants to either one of these waves impacts more significantly upon migrants' disposition to cooperate with development actors in state-led development programmes than pure politics at 'home'. In sum, the migrants' collective development practices are shaped by an interesting and complex interplay of socialist-past and new post-socialist realities (e.g. emerging new class formations and past, present and anticipated migration experiences). Hence, even though some forms of migrants' aid-practices emerged from migrants' experiences of socialism, we should approach more sophisticatedly the

nexus between temporalities and collective practices of social remittances. This entails adopting an approach that goes beyond the perspective of a pure continuity of socialist legacy adopted by traditional studies on migrant formations in the Eastern European context, that mostly neglect change.

The results obtained also reflect *the importance of processes* for the subject of study: the process of transformation and identity-building in Moldova; the dynamic process of creating structures to engage with the Moldovan community; the process of defining ways of involvement with the home country among the migrant community, including struggles over shared commitments to the value of their common associative practices; and the process of building up relationships with migrants from development actors' perspectives. As shown across all three research dimensions, processes of defining the 'right way of development practices' and struggles over the power of definition and symbolic resources exist between the two social fields and within both social fields (cf. Bourdieu 1985). Furthermore, the relationships within both social fields and between them evolve over time, as they are learned processes. Hence, the question of how dispositions, attitudes and development practices that migrants and aid-workers display as processes across their transnational networks, should be more carefully considered in migration–development discourses and policies.

Finally, throughout the whole research, migrants expressed *a great deal of frustration* about their involvement in formal development policies and the concrete outcomes of their engagement. More broadly, they are deeply disappointed about the Moldovan government's achievement in its development transitions since the political turnaround in 2009, which negatively impacts upon their ongoing engagement and on the expectations of institutional support. And last of all, migrants are highly sceptical about the usefulness of costly state-led migration–development programmes implemented by the international aid-community (i.e. investment and return schemes). In short, migrants' initial enthusiasm about migration–development policies, and their chiefly volunteer-run efforts in initiating collaborations with development actors and the state, are dwindling, due to lack of financial rewards and recognition as social actors.

Despite this rather negative picture, my concluding argument of this summary is that it is truly insightful to also look at small and relatively young migrant communities, like the Moldovan one, when exploring the migration–transformation nexus. Similar to larger and more established migrant communities, they can display interesting social processes of collective development practices and knowledge, and they can have dynamic relationships with their home states and development actors.

## 9.2 Discussion and Recommendations

In this last sub-section, I sketch the wider theoretical contributions of the thesis, and I indicate some avenues for further research and policy recommendations. I start by sharing some general reflections on the research process.

In the course of my data analysis and in the writing-up stage, interesting findings emerged, which proved that the ambitious research design – consisting of three research dimensions, two research groups and a multi-sited approach bringing together international and local development actors and migrants in a single analytical framework – was worth the effort. It allowed me to examine the correspondence of discourse and everyday life, and to trace the limits of the policy discourse of migrants' enrolment into the development establishment. In retrospect, however, the choice for a multi-perspective research design entailed some difficulties. Firstly, constantly switching between the perspectives of the two seemingly disparate research groups across several different geographical contexts was intellectually challenging. Secondly, even if the thesis is quite long, the scaffolding of three research dimensions, two research groups, seven countries, including a frozen conflict zone, as well as Moldova's complex socio-political situation and the lack of up-to date research on Moldovan migrants meant little space for a fuller and more personal discussion of my empirical material. Consequently, I was not able to present a 'personal story' or an account of the subject matter in a more creative and exciting narrative style.

Another challenge I faced – and which I find insufficiently addressed in the literature on multi-sited research – is that it proved far more challenging to write up a multi-sited thesis with a transnational angle, than doing the actual multi-sited fieldwork. My analysis bore the risk of falling into the trap of becoming too 'comparativist' in the sense of comparing the geographical sites of migrant host-countries, rather than to focus on the transnational links. To strike the right balance between the transnational aspects of the research subject (e.g. migrants' transnational links and transnational development policies) and to simultaneously consider the data collected in the different sites (e.g. structural conditions for migrant associations, or migrants' everyday challenges) was more difficult than anticipated. With these general remarks, I now round off the thesis with references to the wider theoretical contributions of my results and with a more policy-oriented discussion of the main findings.

Firstly, the results obtained on how the phenomenon of mass emigration reveals itself in today's Moldova contributes *to the wider research field on the impact of mass emigration on transformative social change in countries with high outward migration*. The ethnographic approach to the unfolding of migration–development relationships at different social scales

illustrated that Moldova's substantial post-socialist migration is both an important cause of the country's difficult post-socialist development transition and a vital resource for the young country. Today, the migrants are the key providers of foreign investments in Moldova, and not official aid assistance or traded goods. The high amounts remitted by migrants to their families and their collective aid-giving show a great solidarity towards the deprived economic and social situation of their communities of origin. These observations show that migrants have already taken initiative into 'their own hands'. However, as long as the country's survival depends essentially on external funding, either from migrants' private remittances or from foreign aid-investments, and endemic corruption in Moldova persists, migrants' transnational development contributions have realistically little prospect to effect structural change in Moldova. Moreover, the country's current official approach towards 'Europe' implies a process of establishing a new relationship with Europe. This involves a political act. It entails, among other aspects, a common new vision of the country – which takes time. Thus, as I argued in Chapter 4, a 'transformed Moldova' requires a new shared story, and a crucial minimum of shared values, both necessary steps for a real social and political transformation. The Moldovan authorities are somehow still in the grip of old stories featuring the idyllic Moldovan village, but they have missed out the chances of a 'new definition' of Moldova in terms of a future common vision – as altering the very nature of something, both radically and sustainably. Transformation does not mean to neglect the mystical and historical image of a rural country, but it should equally feature notions of modernity and/or connections to the global world. The missing intention to create such a 'new common Moldovan national narrative', supported by the elites and Moldovan civil society alike, confirms Moldovan citizens' distrust in the genuine interest of Moldova's authorities in positive change and in synergies with migrants beyond their financial contributions. Hence, in light of the new visa-free regime for EU member-states, which seems to provoke a new increase of emigration towards the West<sup>160</sup>, Moldova's 'unofficial' national strategy, heavily based on migrants' financial remittances, needs to be altered. An imminent danger is that otherwise the country will soon have no more working population.

In this context, I suggest more in-depth research on the impact of emigration on the social cohesion of Moldova's society, especially on the adaptation of public policies to the rising socio-economic effects of its large-scale emigration, including the role of the relatively new EEA actors in Moldova's migration–development field, and on the impact of migrant-run projects in Moldova itself.

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<sup>160</sup> This is solely a first non-confirmed estimate by key informants. Presently, to my knowledge, no reliable data exists.

Secondly, considering *Moldova's migratory patterns and migrants' everyday lives*, I see a need for future investigations on aspects which have largely escaped the attention of studies on Moldovan migration. These include, for instance, circular migration, which will most likely increase with the new visa-scheme, and the creation of adequate policies addressing circular migrants, beyond targeting high-skilled migrants. A further important step for progressing Moldova's emigrant policies is to improve the data on Moldovan emigrants, including understudied aspects of emigrating from the de facto unrecognised territory of Transnistria, and on generational aspects – such as on the transnational ties of the second generation, especially if we keep in mind migrants' estimates on their 'development diaspora' as being at a 'crucial point' (Chapter 7).

Thirdly, the thesis contributes to the broad realm of *discussions on state-diaspora relationships*. The long-overdue calling-in of migrants' views on the relationship with their home country to the dominant policy and theoretical focus in this research field generated original findings on migrants' perceptions of relationship-building with their home state and on their experiences of participating in the implementation of emigration policies at different moments (see my earlier discussions on the unexpected reversed asymmetrical relationship). In this context, the thesis clearly shows the important role of international organisations and Western donor countries in building up diaspora-state relationships. As I illustrated in Chapters 5 and 6, international aid-agencies were the main drivers for Moldova's state interest in creating new relationships with emigrants and in shaping them according to their norms and best-practice models. It is also the international development community that defines who belongs to the entity of the Moldovan 'development diaspora'. The so-called low-skilled migrants with less mobile capital, for instance female migrants and their development efforts, do not belong to this category. Yet, I was personally much more impressed by the success stories of development projects carried out by the mostly excluded low-skilled migrants with often difficult life circumstances, than by the well-documented success stories of high-skilled migrants. I think the informal aid-efforts and networks of low-skilled migrants in general and female migrants in particular, merit, therefore, more public recognition, research and policy attention.

Additionally, the internationally defined rules of competition/collaborations and patterns of inclusion/exclusion in emigration policies do not do enough justice to the complexity and variations of social remittances practices - often embedded in migrants' everyday lives, nor do they pay sufficient attention to migrants' specific motives to engage in development practices, such as religious incentives. Besides, the stated historical, geographic, ideological and political components at play in the Moldovan context are neglected, too. One explanation for the lack of policy and research attention to these aspects is that transnational research approaches have



not been applied in the development policy debates to the same degree as the concept of the static entity of 'diaspora', used as a policy tool for policy-makers to co-opt (e.g. Newland 2010b). Hence, international standards and best-practice models of how to engage with emigrants for development seem problematic, and better tailored 'diaspora' policies are needed.

Fourthly, the results of this first in-depth study of Moldovan migrants' patterns of collective development practices offer interesting insights into *the mapping of migrants' social remittance practices*. The results show that migrants' aspirations to get involved in transnational development practices and to use their social and human capital reflects different socio-spatial units and different senses of belonging. The processes by which these transnational development practices – be they volunteer-run or on a professional basis – can enable migrants to create a combination of belonging to different social spheres and to a multi-sited process of integration warrant more research, in my opinion. As shown, a variety of underlying motivations, individual meanings and attitudes account for migrants' engagement in transnational aid-practices, which are strongly interwoven with their multi-sited social lives and can change over time. Moreover, social remittances are also embedded into a *complex array of cultural and social determinants operating across different spatial and temporal scales, for instance the national historical context of the country of origin and broader geographical core-periphery dynamics*. Also, the subjectivities and identities we typically find in the literature on volunteerism and civic participation of non-migrants in Western Europe are equally important for shaping migrants' transnational development engagement (e.g. specific personal characteristics and professional identities). Despite a growing academic interest in migrants' transnational linkages, these findings challenge the still dominant binary theoretical approach of transnationalism and integration applied in the analysis of migrants' social remittance practices (see for instance Marini 2014; Triandafyllidou 2016). As I demonstrated throughout the thesis, viewing migrants' attachments from the perspective of the places they create – the transnational migrant space of development engagement – allows for an understanding of transnational development engagements with the host society as processes with their own dynamics, rather than reducing them to purely complementary, contradictory or simultaneous aspects of their integration process into one host society. The fact that the reciprocal relationship between different degrees of integration and forms of transnationalism is not always significant means that there is much more to the story of migrants' social remittance practices than what commonly fits into the binary interplay of integration and transnationalism. In part, one explanation for the lack of research on how migrants' collective aid-giving is interwoven with their 'multi-sited social lives', is that transnational research approaches have not been applied in the migration policy debates to the same degree as the concept of integration. Thus, I suggest it is time to widen up the

limited conceptual prism of migrants' integration into a host-society context when examining patterns of social remittance practices.

Additionally, parallels can be drawn between the policy discourse on migrants' social remittance practices and the policy rhetoric of financial remittances. Both discourses prominently highlight in neat models how migrants are urged to practice in a 'productive way' their financial and social remittances, and how they are supposed to show their loyalty towards their families and communities back home (see Chapter 2). In each case, the prescriptive policy discourse, based on normative assumptions, does not do enough justice to migrants' transnational lives and the private nature of their collective financial or social investments. Undoubtedly, additional parallels and interactions between economic transfers and social remittances in the context of Moldova present a fruitful area for future research - see for instance Meseguer, Lavezzolo and Aparicio's (2016) comparison of the impact of financial remittances with that of social remittances in Latin America, or Mata-Codesal (2011) on material and social remittances in highland Ecuador.

Furthermore, it would be interesting to see if the heterogeneity of collectively engaged Moldovan migrants regarding gender, education and professional backgrounds also applies to other Eastern European migrant communities. In the same vein, some of my findings point to possible intra-European specificities of the migration-transformation nexus: the migrants' motivation to engage in development activities to connect their marginalised country with 'Europe', patterns of collective practices that emerged from migrants' experiences of socialism, or the fact that migrants are perceived as 'closer' to the needs of the rural population and of smaller development NGOs than the aid-agencies in Chisinau (Chapters 4 and 8). That being said, the broader area of linkages between transnational practices of other Eastern European migrants in Western Europe and the transition of their home countries, and migrants' roles in balancing out the structural inequalities between the different European regions remains open for future research. Or, in Meeus' words: "Scholars only hardly emphasised the connectivity between the 'East' and the 'West'" (2016: 87).

Lastly, turning once more to the *wider debate on the migration-development nexus*, my novel bottom-up approach, with the lens of the aid workers' viewpoints on migrant associations as their development partners, generated interesting insights into the substantial struggles between migrants and development actors over the authority to be a genuine 'do-gooder' in development issues, or over what could be called 'moral capital'. That being said, one of the key issues is to take on board more ethnographic-driven research on the micro-relationships between migrants and development professionals, and on the reciprocal image both social actors have of one another. Particularly the interactions between migrants and their co-citizens

– the employees of local and international aid-agencies – warrants more academic attention. Issues of power and legitimation between the two social actors were most prominent in these aid-relationships. How migrants' experiences abroad influence the quality of aid-cooperation with their co-citizens in Moldova, who might not have experienced migration, could be further researched, as these aspects have not been adequately taken into account in the mainstream academic migration–development debates.

In all, it certainly remains a challenging task to match the life-worlds of both actors in concrete real-life situations, particularly when the 'real lives' of both actors are disparate, and unequal power geometries obstruct the teaming up with migrant associations for successful win-win collaborations in practice. For this reason, I concur with de Haas (2012) who stresses that, after the peak of the 'high hopes' period of migrants' transnational engagements by international development agencies and governments on a discursive level, overly positive expectations need to be adjusted. Even if there has been a slight shift of donor attention back to the countries of origin, the migration–development boom is not over yet. In this respect, a better mutual understanding of both actors will remain essential for an enhanced insight into the different socially mediated ways in which development is imagined and/or enacted and for the clarification of migrants' roles in the transnational development industry. Yet, 'comprehensive' formal and informal dialogues and forums with migrant leaders – highlighted in the contemporary policy discourse as important prerequisites for future collaborations between migrants and development actors – are not only rare in practice but also often inefficient (e.g. EU 2013b; IOM 2013). As we saw in Chapter 6, a development policy based on genuine dialogue with the migrants, funders and aid-agencies at 'home' was put forward in Moldova. But it proved to be insufficient, partly because not all discussants were fully willing to convert the outcomes of this dialogue into practice. Hence, I see not only a need for more outreach to migrants in order to gain more knowledge about the Moldovan migrants' understudied lives and for adjusting migration–development practices, but also more willingness to support migrants' collective development activities by all actors involved.

Gamlen (2011) maintains that diaspora engagement is increasingly common and should be normalised in both contexts – the home and host countries. In my opinion, a first step of such a 'normalisation' of migrants' development contributions needs most of all recognition in the transnational professional aid-community. More concrete support actions for migrants – beyond empty rhetoric – will only occur if there is a 'normalisation' in recognising the migrant development actors as professional partners with development 'savoir faire'.

Furthermore, the migrant-centred approach, a cross-cutting priority of EU actions on migration and development emphasising more strongly the micro-dimension of migrants (e.g.

migrants' rights, see EU 2013b), should also take into account that migrants' chiefly voluntary engagements are always personal commitments, based on individual worldviews and a variety of personal, practical and emotional motivations in different social spheres. Similarly, the other current mainstream development practice of the 'broadened approach to migration and development of the EU', the local-to-local approach addressing regional development policies (EU/DEVCO 2011), should be reconfigured, too. Even if this approach seems promising for increasing the links between migrants and the local political, economic or civil-society actors in Moldova, and for improving the sustainability of migrants' development impact, it remains crucial not to lose sight of the transnational component in the migration–development nexus – the transnational space of the migrants' connections. In the light of these aid-modalities, struggles over the 'right' development concepts of dealing with migrants and their physical and symbolic distance to their home-countries will certainly not vanish into thin air.

Furthermore, we saw that a stronger engagement of migrants in official development can come with both opportunities and threats in terms of 'becoming too close' to official development actors and state authorities (Chapter 8). Thus, I find it is also time to address more openly the potential negative aspects of migrants' enrolment into the development establishment, and mainstream aid-mechanisms that might fuel potential negative aspects. In this context, I see a need to allow a more realistic approach to migrant associations' manifold roles in development, and a greater recognition of their diversity and different degrees of professionalism, especially of collectives who do not want to be associated with formal development and who do not anticipate to become 'native' in the 'help industry'. Consequently, the narrow conceptualisation of migrant associations as non-profit organisations or as civil-society actors also needs to be broadened out and include different types of organisation, such as business associations, social economy organisations, etc. In all, 'migrant association' is still a catch-all category for various types of organisations with diverging degrees of impact potential on the development of migrant home countries. As an auto-critique of my own research design, I conclude that these classifications are inaccurate to explore the diversity of migrants' networks and associations, and they add to the unease of aid-workers and scholars (including myself) about how to approach migrants as newcomers in formal development. Thus, I suggest that future studies should achieve a more nuanced approach to migrants' actual collective development practices and a finer distinction of the varied professional degrees of their associations – be they voluntary-based and/or professional. In this respect, the intersection of migrants' development efforts, embedded in their everyday practices, with the work of development professionals, is ripe for further investigation. Such investigations, I suggest, should employ a stronger relational thinking by emphasising the social relations that bind

professional aid-workers and migrant associations of different types in one transnational field of thoughts and actions. This logical next step on the research agenda might also help in finding a more nuanced use of terminologies employed in the academic literature on migrants' collective development engagement (including this thesis). Currently, the terminologies to describe migrants' collective development efforts are highly variegated: transnational philanthropic efforts, transnational aid-giving, collective humanitarian practices, transnational charity practices and so on. Taking into account the earlier-stated finding that some migrant leaders do not want to label their development efforts as 'charity' engagements or charity organisations (see Chapter 7), these research investigations might offer a new terminology based more strongly on the criterion of migrants' perceptions on their engagement.

The transnational, ethnographic approach to the broader policy-oriented discussion on migration–development also revealed that different actors relate migrant associations to different fields. We saw, for instance, that Moldovan NGOs associate migrant associations with government policies, rather than recognising them as professional local civil-society actors. Meantime, the international donor community tries to fit migrants' mostly volunteer development engagement into mainstream development practices. In the light of these observations, migrant associations are often caught between different roles; as civil society actors and as allies of the government of their home countries. This means that they need to fulfil requirements of emigration policies on the one hand, and of development policies on the other. This can obstruct their overall development engagement (Chapter 8).

Lastly, the recognition of the simultaneous existence of different cultural concepts of 'doing development' in or outside the mainstream development field involves putting aside the historical baggage that assumes that good development ideas and expertise travel from the 'West' to the 'East'. And I think that is exactly the crux of the matter. To work towards such a cultural transformation is perhaps the biggest challenge of all in transforming 'development' into a new era of global development partnerships in which migrants can play a role, if they want to. I personally remain sceptical about an easy way on how to agree upon such flexible development approaches, including aid practices addressing migrants. We have on one side a persistent push from migrants' home countries to steer emigrant communities for political and economic interests, and on the other side the development industry's urge to match migrants' aid-efforts with their own development practices in order to get tangible and quick results for further funding. In spite of the rather unsuccessful experience in the Moldovan case until now, I still think a next step to a more diversified global landscape of the aid-industry is that both subjects become more engaged in discussions with their funders and they enquire into their

own practices, for instance how they present themselves to the public and enhance reflexive practice.

Ultimately, a necessary advancement in broadening the research focus of the migration–development debate should be to approach more strongly the issue of how migrant associations as transnational formations change other transnational development organisations. This question can only be addressed if transnational approaches not only look at migrants' transnational networks and practices *per se*, but if they also gauge how they challenge the local, national and international development institutions and their 'epistemology' of transformation in migrants' home countries (cf. Faist 2010). This might also lead to more attention to migrants' continuing engagements in development organisations in their home countries or to their new involvements in development NGOs in the host countries, both absent in the current debate (see Chapter 7). Presently, the associative capacity of the Moldovan migrant community is, however, too weak to influence the development community's dominant aid-practices and to set their own agenda in state-led development policies. In the Moldovan case, therefore, the question of how the development actors are being reconstituted through the field of migrants' engagements is too early to evaluate. A much more realistic approach is the issue of how to create convergent goals and alliances, starting from the disparate and asymmetric power positions of the two subjects at stake. Either way, it will be interesting to follow if and how migrants on a global scale can trigger a shift towards more tolerance for cultural diversity within aidland, and whether their relationship with mainstream development actors will grow into a more stable long-term synergy.

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## APPENDIX 1: Profiles of Principal Informants

A: List of migrant participants interviewed in each site

| UK: London and Oxford (n=3) |           |     |     |   |                                  |  |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|---|----------------------------------|--|
| No                          | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Employment in Country of Residence/Education  | Time of Residence <sup>161</sup> | Function in Migrant Association/ Migrant network   |
| 1                           | Rosa      | f   | 45  | Entrepreneur and consultant   | 15                               | Founder and president of an association, member of the Diaspora Council  |
| 2                           | Christina | f   | 29  | Housewife and mother, 29 (unemployed, searching for a job as shop assistant, former banker) | 4                                | Non-member   |
| 3                           | Vasile    | m   | 48  | IT-Engineer   | 7                                | Founder and president of an association, member of the Diaspora Council  |
| France: (n=16)              |           |     |     |   |                                  |  |
| No                          | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Employment in Country of Residence/Education  | Time of Residence                | Function in Migrant Association/ Migrant Network   |
| 4                           | Mihail    | m   | 29  | Civil Engineer  | 3                                | Non-member, but takes regularly part in activities organised by migrant associations                             |
| 5                           | Dragomir  | m   | 48  | Construction worker, former professor of mathematics  | 6                                | President of one association, co-president of a second association and member of a third association             |
| 6                           | Vitali    | m   | 48  | Real estate agent, Romanian Orthodox priest   | 16                               | President of one association   |
| 7                           | Vasili    | m   | 39  | Physician, researcher   | 15                               | Founder and president of two migrant associations, member of a third association, member of the Diaspora Council |
| 8                           | Alina     | f   | 28  | Master student in International Relations   | 2                                | Founder and president of a migrant association, member of the Diaspora Council                                   |
| 9                           | Liliana   | f   | 34  | Intercultural communication specialist, freelance journalist                                | 8                                | Founder and president of a migrant association   |
| 10                          | Diana     | f   | 45  | Care-worker   | 4                                | President of a migrant association   |
| 11                          | Sandu     | m   | 42  | Actor and factory worker (unemployed at the time of the interview)                          | 11                               | Member of an association   |
| 12                          | Natasha   | f   | 48  | Shoe shop assistant (unemployed at the time of the interview), former linguist              | 12                               | Co-president of one association, member of a second association  |
| 13                          | Dima      | m   | 47  | Taxi driver, former senior manager of the national border guard                             | 10                               | Non-member of an association   |
| 14                          | Dana      | f   | 28  | Economist   | 3                                | Non-member of an association   |
| 15                          | Ion       | m   | 34  | Freelance translator and writer   |                                  | Founder and president of a migrant association, member of the Diaspora Council                                   |
| 16                          | Alex      | m   | 42  | Professor for political sciences  | 6                                | Co-president of an association   |

<sup>161</sup> Years spent abroad in total, not necessarily in the indicated place.

| 17          | Anna      | f   | 38  | Housewife and part-time cleaner  | 16                | Co-president of a migrant association                                    |
|-------------|-----------|-----|-----|--|-------------------|--|
| 18          | Kiril     | m   | 38  | IT-engineer  | 6                 | President of a migrant association                                       |
| 19          | Magdalena | f   | 34  | Care-worker, former teacher  | 2                 | Member of an informal network of care-workers                            |
| Germany     |           |     |     |  |                   |  |
| No          | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Employment in Country of Residence/Education                             | Time of Residence | Function in Migrant Association/ Migrant Network                         |
| 20          | Anastasia | f   | 46  | Tour-guide and translator  | 17                | Founder and President of an association                                  |
| 21          | Svetlana  | f   | 55  | Factory worker and Artist  | 16                | President of an association  |
| Italy       |           |     |     |  |                   |  |
| No          | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Employment in Country of Residence/Education                             | Time of Residence | Function in Migrant Association /Migrant Network                         |
| 22          | Angela    | f   | 32  | Care-worker  | 2                 | Non-member   |
| 23          | Natalia   | f   | 42  | Lecturer and business woman  | 9                 | President of a migrant association                                       |
| 24          | Anna      | f   | 45  | Translator/writer, linguist and philosopher                              | 13                | Board member of an association   |
| 25          | Ilia      | m   | 48  | Russian Orthodox priest  | 16                | Board member of an association   |
| 26          | Laura     | f   | 37  | Journalist and freelance project coordinator of migration-led programmes | 11                | Founder and president of an association, member of the Diaspora Council  |
| 27          | Oleg      | m   | 44  | Project manager of migration-led programmes                              | 8                 | President of an association, member of the Diaspora Council              |
| 28          | Nicolai   | m   | 31  | Unemployed/ former import-export logistic employee                       | 2                 | Member of an association and member of the local migrant assembly        |
| 29          | Mihail    | m   | 55  | Owner of a transport firm and entrepreneur in retail trade               | 17                | President of a migrant association, co-president of a second association |
| 30          | Ivan      | m   | 41  | Factory worker   | 4                 | Non-member   |
| 31          | Dana      | f   | 46  | Social worker, translator and mediator                                   | 17                | President of a migrant association                                       |
| 32          | Jure      | m   | 52  | Electrician, writer and poet   | 18                | President of an association  |
| 33          | Romina    | f   | 49  | Secretary  | 16                | President of an association  |
| 34          | Maria A.  | f   | 46  | Factory worker and care-worker   | 12                | Active in an informal transnational helping network                      |
| 35          | Maria B.  | f   | 52  | Care-worker  | 10                | Member of an informal network  |
| 36          | Alina     | f   | 52  | Care-worker  | 13                | Non-member   |
| 37          | Illa      | f   | 36  | Care-worker  | 13                | Member of an informal network  |
| Moldova     |           |     |     |  |                   |  |
| No          | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Employment in Country of Residence/Education                             | Time of Residence | Function in Migrant Association/Migrant Network                          |
| 38          | Ion       | m   | 29  | MA in international relations, currently barkeeper, Estonia              | 7                 | President of a migrant association                                       |
| 39          | Vladimir  | m   | 41  | Car washer, Turin, former lawyer   | 8                 | Non-member of a migrant association                                      |
| 40          | Flurin    | m   | 48  | Owner of a small car repair shop, Rome                                   | 15                | Member of a migrant association  |
| 41          | Stefan    | m   | 33  | Entrepreneur, London   | 4                 | Member of a migrant association  |
| Switzerland |           |     |     |  |                   |  |
| No          | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Employment in Country of Residence/Education                             | Time of Residence | Function in Migrant Association/Migrant Network                          |

|    |          |   |    |  |    |   |
|----|----------|---|----|--|----|---|
| 42 | Kiril    | m | 28 | Internee and consultant, MA in International law   | 5  | Founder and president of an association, board member of a second association |
| 43 | Svetlana | f | 54 | Journalist   | 19 | Founder and president of a migrant association                                |
| 44 | Susanna  | f | 28 | Au pair, formal employee in a mobile phone company | 2  | Non-member  |

B: List of development participants interviewed in each site

| Belgium: Brussels  |           |     |     |   |  |
|--------------------|-----------|-----|-----|---|--|
| No                 | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Organisation                            | Function   |
| 1                  | Simone    | f   | 41  | UNDP                                    | Programme manager EU/UNDP, Migration and Development Initiative              |
| 2                  | Markus    | m   | 34  | European Commission, DEVCO              | International cooperation officer migration, DG                              |
| 3                  | Marco     | m   | 55  | European External Action Service (EEAS) | Head of Department Eastern Europe  |
| Germany: Frankfurt |           |     |     |   |  |
| No                 | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Organisation                            | Function   |
| 4                  | Juriza    | m   | 38  | CIM                                     | Programme manager: fostering migrant associations' potential for development |
| 5                  | Herbert   | m   | 55  | GIZ                                     | Migration–Development senior consultant                                      |

| Moldova including Transnistria              |           |     |     |   |   |
|---|-----------|-----|-----|---|---|
| No  | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Organisation  | Function  |
| 6   | Valeriu   | m   | 44  | Hilfswerk Austria   | Project coordinator large-scale migration–development programmes  |
| 7   | Viorica   | f   | 41  | Swiss Development Cooperation Office (SDC)                    | Deputy Director of Cooperation, programme manager migration–development programmes  |
| 8   | Natascha  | f   | 48  | Pestalozzi Children's Foundation                              | Country representative Moldova, independent consultant in the educational field   |
| 9   | Pius      | m   | 42  | LED (Liechtenstein Development Service)                       | Head of country Office, Chisinau  |
| 10  | Oxana     | f   | 28  | IOM   | Programme manager 'Small Grant Diaspora Programme'  |
| 11  | Dora      | f   | 42  | East-West Foundation  | Consultant for IOM, author of the Diaspora list, and principal organiser of the Diaspora Congresses in 2012                           |
| 12  | Ionela    | f   | 34  | ICMPD (International Centre for Migration Policy Development) | Project officer   |
| 13  | William   | m   | 56  | International Agency for Source Country Information (IASCI)   | Director, project manager of 'Nexus' (a migration-development programme)  |
| 14  | Antonia   | f   | 58  | Social NGO VESTA  | Director  |
| 15  | Esperanta | f   | 35  | Delegation of the European Union                              | Project Manager migration–development programmes  |
| 16  | Marta     | f   | 39  | NGO Interaction   | Chairwoman, Implementing partner of different migration-development–programmes  |
| 17  | Victor    | m   | 45  | Public Association 'Demos'                                    | Social worker and legal expert, responsible for the department of victims of human trafficking, vulnerable children and Youth         |
| 18  | Vitalie   | m   | 35  | Academy of Sciences of Moldova                                | Senior project manager of 'high skilled diaspora programmes', department for European Integration and International Cooperation(DECI) |
| 19  | Olesea    | f   | 30  | Bureau for Migration and Asylum                               | Head of department policy and legalisation  |
| 20  | Ghenadie  | m   | 32  | Bureau for Relation with the Diaspora                         | Principal consultant for migrant associations   |
| 21  | Igor      | m   | 39  | IOM, Moldova  | Head of migration–development programmes  |
| 22  | Ivan      | f   | 42  | Hilfswerk Austria   | Programme manager 'diaspora programme'  |
| Switzerland: Berne, Lucerne, Geneva, Zürich |           |     |     |   |   |
| No  | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Organisation  | Function  |
| 23  | Max       | m   | 63  | Caritas Switzerland   | Europe/CIS Desk Programme coordinator   |
| 24  | Martin    | m   | 55  | SDC   | Migration expert, Programme manager 'Global Programme Migration and Development'  |
| 25  | Beth      | f   | 59  | IOM Head Office Geneva  | Organiser of an international diaspora conference (held in Geneva, June 2013)   |
| 26  | Brigitte  | f   | 39  | Alliance Sud  | Responsible for the migration topic within the umbrella organisation of Swiss development NGOs  |
| 27  | Camille   | f   | 45  | Cinfo   | Headhunter for aid workers  |
| 28  | Jean      | m   | 61  | Protéstants Swiss   | Counterpart in development project with a Moldovan association  |
| France: Paris                               |           |     |     |   |   |
| 29  | Françoise | f   | 42  | Médecins du monde   | Programme manager Moldova   |

| Italy: Bologna |            |   |    |       |  |
|----------------|------------|---|----|-------|--|
| 30             | Margaritha | f | 32 | Donna | In charge of programmes for care-workers and anti-human trafficking programmes |

## C: List of key participants

| Moldova                          |           |     |     |  |   |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----|--|---|
| No                               | Pseudonym | Sex | Age | Profession   | Function  |
| 1                                | Diana     | f   | 46  | Social worker  | Counterpart of a matched sample project, collaborates with different NGOs from Germany, the Netherlands, and the UK in the social field |
| 2                                | Larissa   | f   | 56  | State agricultural minister and teacher                | Counterpart of matched sample project   |
| 3                                | Vitali    | m   | 34  | Unionist 'Moldovan Agricultural Trade Union', engineer | Project manager 'transformation of agricultural sector', counterpart of a matched sample project  |
| 4                                | Nicolai   | m   | 52  | City mayor   | Counterpart of matched sample project   |
| 5                                | Angela    | f   | 52  | Freelance project coordinator and NGO-worker           | Counterpart of matched sample project   |
| 6                                | Carmen    | f   | 16  | Pupil  | Beneficiary of a volunteer programme  |
| Italy: Novellara and Rome        |           |     |     |  |   |
| No                               | Name      | Sex | Age | Profession   | Function  |
| 7                                | Dimitri   | m   | 41  | Agricultural worker, care-worker                       | Intercultural mediator for the city council for Russian, Ukrainian and Moldovan migrants  |
| 8                                | Pia       | f   | 51  | Municipal employee                                     | Responsible for intercultural activities and integration  |
| 9                                | Oleg      | m   | 55  | Ambassador   | Moldovan ambassador in Italy  |
| France: Villeneuve-Saint-Georges |           |     |     |  |   |
| No                               | Name      | Sex | Age | Profession   | Function  |
| 10                               | Sandra    | f   | 46  | Municipal employee                                     | Collaborates with migrant associations  |