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SYMPOSIUM – INTRODUCTION

BOOK SYMPOSIUM: Everyday Europe. Social transnationalism in an unsettled continent. Introduction.

Alberta Giorgi
University of Bergamo

Luca Raffini
University of Genoa

1. Situating the analysis

Everyday Europe. Social transnationalism in an unsettled continent is a book on Europe, through the lens of mobility. And, it is a book on mobility, through the lens of Europe. Also, it is a book on social and political changes, which explores how these changes impact upon our every-day life experience.

The analysis is situated in the broad *mobilities* perspective, which movement as a crucial feature of contemporary societies: people, objects, ideas are constantly circulating, as part of a wide network of transnational and moving relationships (Sheller 2017). Furthermore, digital portable technologies make everybody potentially ubiquitous – always here and somewhere else at the same time. However, the material and symbolical chances of moving show high degrees of variation (Creswell 2010). Mobility lens opens multiple avenues for empirical and theoretical research, ranging from the explo-

ration of societal reorganization and power structures to the unpacking of the practices, imaginaries and discourse related to mobility (for a recent overview, see Raffini and Giorgi 2020). In this direction, *mobilities* lens sheds light on how the movement, its presence, absence or potentiality, characterizes everybody – thus blurring any clear-cut difference between migration, mobility or tourism, for example. At the same time, and for the same reasons, *mobilities* lens allows rethinking analytical categories such as ‘nationalism’ or ‘cosmopolitanism’. From this perspective, *Everyday Europe* contributes to both the research on migration and the political sociology of Europe. Exploring the narratives and practices of European citizens through countries within and outside Europe, the research significantly contributed to establish the field of *social transnationalism* studies, which disentangle the practices of everyday transnationalism from belonging and national identity (see also Mau 2010; Kuhn 2015).

Everyday Europe results from the European funded research project EUCROSS - ‘The Europeanisation of Everyday Life: Cross-Border Practices and Transnational Identities among EU and Third-Country Citizens’ (2010-2014), which involved a network including Aarhus University (DK); GESIS, Mannheim (DE); Institut Barcelona d’Estudis Internacionals (SPA); the University of York (UK); the University of Bucharest (RO), coordinated by the University of Chieti-Pescara (IT). *Everyday Europe* is a collective effort, involving many scholars (in alphabetical order): Fulya Apaydin, Roxana Barbulescu, Michael Braun, Irina Ciornei, Niall Cunningham, Juan Diez Medrano, Deniz N. Duru, Adrian Favell, Laurie Hanquinet, Steffen Pötzschke, Ettore Recchi, David Reimer, Justyna Salamońska, Mike Savage, Janne Solgaard Jensen, Albert Varela. Combining qualitative and quantitative methods, *Everyday Europe* focuses on the analysis of social transnationalism in Europe. More specifically, attention is paid to transnationalised EU and European citizens and their characters, and to the involvement of EU residents in mobility across the borders and other practices of social transnationalism, to understand whether and how cross-border practices affect individuals’ identification with the EU.

Everyday Europe builds upon the outcomes of a research agenda which engaged the authors for over a decade, starting with *Eurostars and Eurocities: Free Movement and Mobility in an Integrating Europe* (Favell 2008) and *Pioneers of European Integration: Citizenship and Mobility in the EU* (Recchi and Favell 2009), to *Mobile Europe: The Theory and Practice of Free Movement in the EU* (Recchi 2015). Hence, *Everyday Europe* offers the chance of looking back and looking forward, to understand the changes in both mobility and Europe over time.

2. From Eurooptimism to Eurogloom

Going back today to *Pioneurs of European Integration* we can appreciate the consolidation and the transformations and solid outcomes of the research on transnationalism in Europe. At the same time, we can also appreciate the profound social, economic and political changes that occurred in Europe – from the "permissive consensus", and moderate optimism about the future of the integrative process, which were the background on the first books we live now in the "Eurogloom".

The opening of *Pioneurs of European Integration* reads:

The European Union stands as a unique economic, political, legal and social experiment in transnational regional integration. The world we live in may still be one primarily organized by and for territorial nation states, but if one empirical example is to be sought of how a post-national or cosmopolitan polity and society might be built, the EU is the only actually existing institutional example. Built on a regional territorial logic, its complex structures are also the best guide to the way a progressive and governable political order might be constructed from the economic free-for-all of globalisation. In no other part of the world have sovereign nation states bonded together to voluntarily relinquish large aspects of their sovereign control of economy and polity to a set of common supranational institutions. And in no other part of the world have such institutions created a form of post-national citizenship within a transnational regional political order (Recchi, Favell 2009, p 1).

After ten years, the picture seems radically different. The brightness of the European dream, touched only by some grey streams of euroskepticism, has definitely turned into a dark anti-Europeism. EUCROSS research was carried out in the midst of the economic crisis: and the experience of the crisis strongly permeates the pages of *Everyday Europe*. The incipit of *Everyday Europe* goes straight to the heart of the shadows threatening European integration:

After more than fifty years of 'ever closer union', and thirty years on from the collapse of the Berlin Wall, Europe has become a continent of gloom. With the European Union and European political systems in crisis, the idea of further integration seems indefinitely stalled (Favell and Recchi 2019, p. 1).

We actually live a context in which the growing distrust of citizens toward EU institutions, and the increasing support for anti-European, nationalist and populist parties, seems to put into question the very future of the European Union. The (unlikely) end, or, more realistically, the downsizing of the integration project, would impact upon the economic and the political sphere, in relation to the interconnected and multilayered economic relations and the complex multilevel institutional architecture. More importantly for the EU citizens, it would impact of their everyday life and experience, un-

dermining the scope of Euro currency and limiting the right to free movement within the European borders. Migration processes and what has been called “the refugees’ crisis” tested the right to free movement and led to the suspension of the Schengen area, for the first time. Far-right extremism and nationalism are gaining traction in the last decades, fueled by political entrepreneurs who celebrate the virtues of local loyalties. At the same time, social inequalities are increasingly more visible, profoundly challenging European integration. It is unclear, as for now, how these processes intersect, and whether and how the political disaffection toward the EU would affect the everyday transnational practices investigated in the book.

3. Europe as a prism: the many faces of integration

The eight chapters included in the book offer interesting insights and useful instruments for tackling the “what now?” question. In the following, starting from what the contributions to the symposium commented on, we highlight three questions: the relationship between transnationalism and the political support for the EU; the relationship between inequalities and the political support for the EU; the relationship between the insider/outsider status and the political support for the EU.

One of the most important research outcomes that both the authors and the contributors point out is the disconnection between the political support for the EU and social transnationalism – which raises instead a taken-for-granted, banal, Europeism (see in particular King, Scalise, Van Ingelgom and Vila-Henninger in this Symposium). According to Deutsch’ transactional theory, an increase in cross-border European transactions would have led to a stronger integration, while also promoting a common identity at both the individual and the collective level (Deutsch 1957). And yet, research findings show that an increase in social transnationalism is quite compatible with an increase in nationalism and detachment from the European Union. As the authors say, in fact: “European integration has set in motion patterns of changed behaviours and practices, driven by widening and deepening cross-border connections at all levels of society and in all corners of Europe, that have their own evolution at least partly decoupled from politics” (Favell, Recchi 2019, p. 2). More specifically, they point out that “the transnationalism-Europeanism association is incontrovertible at the individual level”, and that cross-border practices, more than other factors like transnational background, are indeed the backbone of European legitimacy (see also Kuhn 2015). However, considering the collective level, intervening factors emerge. First of all, even though social transnationalism grew beyond the high class “Eurostars” (Favell 2008), and forms of

“middling transnationalism” are increasing (Conradson and Latham 2005), experienced by professionals, workers, students (Erasmus project), retired, romantic and life-style movers, cross-border practices still involve a minority of EU citizens. As the authors underline: “the rise in the volume of transnational activities is disproportionately due to being part of a privileged social strata, a group that also expresses strong support for the EU” (Favell and Recchi 2019, p. 12). Therefore, it is unclear whether social transnationalism impacted upon the support for the EU or the opposite. Second, supporting Europe does not necessarily mean supporting the EU: “in all EU national societies, transnationalism correlates more strongly with European identification than with EU support, which also may attest to the higher relevance of socio-psychological over utilitarian aspects of transnationalism” (ibidem). The authors of *Everyday Europe* conclude that, instead of a direct, positive relation, as expected by Deutch, we witness a clear and growing disconnection between European society and European politics. In other words, we are more Europeans, but we feel less Europeans.

Another relevant outcome of the book that the contributors of this Symposium focus on concerns the relationships between social citizenship and the political support for the EU (see in particular the contributions by Andreotti, Scalise). European countries are traditionally characterized by low levels of inequality in comparison to other countries, such as USA or Japan. However, the inequalities between member State are severe: “salaries are more than ten times larger, for example, in Denmark than they are in Bulgaria. If we were to take a full-blown ‘United States of Europe’ conception and make such a comparison, in comparative perspective, between-country inequality in Europe would be notably higher than among US states or Canadian provinces” (Favell and Recchi 2019, p. 14). This inequality affects the constellations of mobility of European citizens living in different member states and, as a consequence, it touches upon their European feelings, as it discriminates between those European citizens who live Europe as a transnational space of possibilities, and those for whom European integration mainly represents a threat to economic and existential security. In addition, inequalities interact with centre-periphery divide and the varieties of capitalism, which differently shaped European societies, building up complex profiles of intersectional inequalities, in which territorial belonging plays a relevant role. *Everyday Europe* shows that “indicators of international integration at a European scale are not evenly distributed socially, and there are very particular geographical patterns. Yet they have expanded exponentially” (Favell and Recchi 2019, p. 3; see also Raffini and Giorgi 2020). The volume of social transnationalism is much higher in northern and central countries (United Kingdom, Denmark, Germany), than in Southern and Eastern countries (Italy, Romania, Spain). The image of “two-speed Europe” seems to be proven by the exist-

ence of “two-speed Europeans”. Even though Southern and Eastern countries (and Romania and Italy in particular) show the highest number of people on the move, northern and central countries score higher in all the other indicators of social transnationalism, such as having friends or relatives abroad, watching tv programs or reading news in other languages, or travel for tourism in other countries. In other words, for Southern and Eastern Europeans, intra-European mobility is mostly conceived of as resettlement, in a traditional migration perspective, while Northern and Central Europeans experience Europe in many ways – beyond (and partially independently from) mere physical mobility. In comparison with PIONEUR (the research from which stemmed *Pioneurs of European Integration*), acknowledging the role of technologies EUCROSS research pays higher attention to virtual and imaginative mobility practices, while attenuating the focus on spatial mobility: “Internet and social media play a role here in creating a different kind of imagination, in which physical mobility and denationalised socialisation is not necessarily key” (Favell and Recchi 2019, p. 25). The social distribution of these different forms of mobility evokes the different bodily density of different European citizens: for Southern and Eastern Europeans, the mobility “of the body” is not necessarily coupled with the mobility “of the mind” – on the contrary, nationalist feelings can emerge from that.

The third element emerging from the book that inspired the contributors is in fact the complex identification of insiders and outsiders of the European project (see in particular Barwick, King, Van Ingelgom and Vila-Henninger in this Symposium). *Everyday Europe* replaces the traditional binary between EU movers/EU stayers with the more comprehensive transnationalized/non transnationalized, which fine tunes the relationship between mobility practices, social transnationalism, and feelings of belonging and affection. The same cross-bordering practice may in fact be experienced in profoundly divergent ways, as it may represent an involuntary job-seeking resettlement or the mobile experience of cosmopolitan global citizens. As Kuhn noticed, “social transnationalism may not translate directly or comfortably into identifications and attachments – to either the specified ‘identity’ of Europeanism and support for the EU project, or a more abstract, territorially unbounded cosmopolitanism” (Kuhn 2015). In her contribution, Barwick touches upon the fact that, almost paradoxically, the movers coming from outside of Europe feel more European than some European citizens – as the former hinge on the EU opportunities, while the latter are not participating in the benefits of the EU integration. While undermining the traditional categorization between migrants and mobile workers, the focus on the multilayered transnational practice shed light on the complex interconnections between practice and culture, shedding light on intersectional forms of inequalities otherwise invisible.

4. Europe, borders and the Brexit

The outcomes of the research reported in the book, and highlighted in the previous section, may be either “good” or “bad” news for the EU supporters. On the one side, they are bad news, if we consider political integration – which, as *Everyday Europe* shows, it is not backed up by increasing social transnationalism. In his contribution to this Symposium, Russel King analyses in depth the case of Brexit, which tests the research results, as the United Kingdom scores the highest level of anti-Europeanism and, at the same time, the highest level of social transnationalism. Symbolically, Brexit hit hard the EU, as it exposed the complexities of political integration and transnational solidarity.

On the other side, the research outcomes are good news, as they suggest that social transnationalisation is partly independent from institutional and political dynamics, and integration – practical, banal, everyday integration – is in fact constantly increasing, and it bears consequences in the lives of societies and individuals. In different ways and at different speeds, European citizens are experiencing transnational lives. It is still open the question of how it will impact upon behaviors and attitudes in the long run, considering opportunities and constraints. As Ettore Recchi states in the conclusion, the existence of a common, EU-wide, template of social inequality is one of the constitutive conditions of society, along with, first, external borders that are uncontroversial and symbolically more important than internal borders, second, a widespread object of self-identification, and, third, a set of standard social practices and norms enforced everywhere (Recchi 2019, p. 258). These constitutive features are not matched by the European project:

“Europe would need a strong sense of we-ness; which is exactly the subjective facet of commonality that remains particularly weak. And here lies perhaps the real conundrum that looms large in the future of the EU: increasing structural inequality between societies distances their nationals’ interests, which in turn discourages mutual trust and solidarity, and thereby damages integration. Social transnationalism is hardly a remedy for such disruptive forces. Cross-border contacts can make people physically and virtually closer, but it does not necessarily make them more equal” (ibidem).

5. Borders, risks, and Covid-19

As we write, the Covid-19 outbreak profoundly impacted upon the practices of mobility and transnationalism, offering yet another test and perspective for the analysis of Everyday Europe. In a few months, the virus spread from China to Europe to the entire globe – the World Health Organization declared it a “pandemic” on March 11th, 2020¹. Governments adopted different measures, ranging from severe limitations to movement, to quarantine citizens’ GPS tracking (such as in South Korea), to borders’ closing. Economic actors also implemented various solutions, from smart-working (where possible) to incentives to daily cross-border workers to blunt firing redundant workers. Airline companies are limiting their flights, also refraining from travelling to those countries where the outbreak is more devastating, like Italy or China. Some economic sectors are more hit than others – travel industry, for example, is experiencing high loss, while digital platforms are growing.

From the Italian observatory, we can see how the outbreak exposed the harsh inequalities that characterize European citizens: while cosmopolitan and privileged professionals can work from home, other workers cannot. Freelance workers, also, are particularly vulnerable to work restrictions. Homeless people are like ghosts in empty towns. Also, the outbreak triggered national feelings, as well as the attention and care for the local community. At the same time, though, social transnationalism is showing in the constant digital networks connecting Europe. And, solidarity is showing too, at both the individual and the collective level (including economic actors offering their products for free, such as digital movie platforms). The importance of the “public”, meaning the level of collective decisions that impact upon everybody, is also showing, mobilized for examples in the debates about the health system, supported by taxation, or in the appeals to social and collective responsibility.

Of course, it is too soon for any kind of analysis: however, seen from there, the impact of Covid-19 surely show how much we got used to move, and to social transnationalism, in this unsettled jigsaw puzzle.

¹ <https://www.who.int/dg/speeches/detail/who-director-general-s-opening-remarks-at-the-media-briefing-on-covid-19---11-march-2020>

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AUTHORS' INFORMATION:

Alberta Giorgi *University of Bergamo,*

Alberta Giorgi is assistant professor at the University of Bergamo, she mainly works on secularism, gender and religion (research groups GRASSROOTSMOBILISE, GSRL, CRAFT, and POLICREDOS). Vice-chair of the research network Political Sociology (ESA), co-convenor of the standing group Participation and Social Movement (SISP), board of Sociology of Religion (AIS), co-founder of the podcast Intervistatori. Among her latest publications: *Mobilità e Migrazioni*, with Luca Raffini (Mondadori 2020).

Email: alberta.giorgi@unibg.it

Luca Raffini is assistant professor at the University of Genoa. His main field of research are social and political participation, social innovation, youth condition, mobility. He collaborates with the "Osservatorio sulla città globale" of the Istituto di Studi Politici S. Pio V, and the Moca Future Designers. Among his latest contributions: *Il tramonto della città. La metropoli globale tra nuovi modelli produttivi e crisi della cittadinanza* (with A. Barile and L. Alteri, 2019) and *Mobilità e migrazioni* (con A. Giorgi, 2020).

Email: luca.raffini@edu.unige.it