Diverse Ways of Thinking and Performing Return Migration:

Colombians and Romanians in Europe

ABSTRACT

A transnational-mobility approach helps us understand better the ways in which current migrants consider and experience return migration in the European context, taking into account how different factors enabling and constraining return intersect with each other to expose increasingly complex mobilities. We explore this by looking at the experiences of two migrant groups, Colombians and Romanians, considering socioeconomic and political contexts, family circumstances and sense of belonging in return perceptions and experiences. Based on in-depth studies using mostly qualitative data, the analysis focuses on three categories: migrant return considerations, experiences of return to the country of origin, and mixed mobilities involving return. We find that some migrants relate to, or engage in, return as part of open-ended mobilities based on both structural and emotional considerations, in the process disturbing notions of what is "home" or "host" in relation to the country of origin and settlement.

INTRODUCTION

While research and theory on international migration advanced to accommodate the growing diversity and complexity of current mobilities, studies of return tended to lag behind (Cassarino 2004). Nevertheless, research on return migration has expanded in the last few years, as Carling et al. (2011)'s review shows, with studies focusing primarily on return decision-making, reintegration experiences and national policies. In the European context, following the 2008 global financial crisis, there has been renewed interest in return migration, both academically and politically. Some research has focused on returnees from the Global North to the South or on East-West flows within the European Union (EU), with return combining diverse mobilities (both temporally and spatially) only beginning to be explored (Bermudez and Oso 2019; King and Christou 2011; Nadler et al. 2016; Vlase and Croitoru 2019; White 2013).

Our article adds to this latest European scholarship from a novel perspective. First, it explores the return intentions and actions of two migration flows, Colombian and Romanian migrants in Europe in the period following the 2008 Global financial crisis. Secondly, it adopts a holistic approach that takes into account return considerations and experiences looking at both individuals and families and considering economic, social and political factors, including processes of discrimination and belonging. This allows us to identify a broad range of mobilities going beyond classic portrayals of

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return as unidirectional and permanent or as a response to failure/success. Third, while highlighting the increased complexities of return migration, our article problematizes the concept of "home", based on the transnational perspective and recent critical uses of the mobilities paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006).

The analysis is based on two research projects. One carried out in 2013-2015 focusing on the impact of the economic crisis on Colombian migrants in Madrid, London and Brussels, which followed from prior research on Colombian migration to Europe (Bermudez 2016); the other a study of Romanian migrants in London and Paris during 2012-2016 looking at belonging in relation to sending and receiving contexts (Paraschivescu 2016). While both studies are not strictly comparable, using two cases helps clarify how socioeconomic and emotional factors become intertwined in participants' narratives and experiences of return in different contexts, highlighting similarities and differences within the growing diversity of return movements. The multi-contextual approach addresses the relational and context-specific nature of return determinants, offering a holistic view of how these are connected in participants' lives and their impact on reconsiderations of "home". The next section provides an overview of the theoretical framework, followed by a brief methodological section. The rest of the article presents our two studies, followed by discussion and conclusions.

RECONSIDERATIONS OF "RETURNING HOME" IN A CONTEXT OF DIVERSE MOBILITIES

Return used to be conceptualised as the final stage in the migration process, usually the result of economic failure or success (Gmelch 1980), thus obscuring other movements such as temporary and double return or onward migration. Nevertheless, since the 1970s there has been increased academic and policy concern about return coinciding with the end of migrant recruitment schemes in Europe, the emergence of new theoretical and empirical approaches to migration and development, and more recently in response to the 2008 Great Recession (Apsinte-Berina et.al. 2019; Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011; Cassarino 2004).

Recent literature suggests that return intentions and actions involve complex decision-making based on both sociocultural and structural factors (de Haas et al. 2015). Within this framework, the transnational approach to the study of migration highlights the "back-and-forth" movements of people across borders, including in return, thus contesting notions of integration, identity and belonging, and demonstrating the role of transnational ties in return considerations (Cassarino 2004; Fauser and Anghel 2019). This allowed studies like Taylor's (2015: 193) to establish how in return migration sometimes "home is never fully achieved".

Temporality has also been key in defining return. Gmelch (1980: 136) conceived return as "[t]he movement of emigrants back to their homelands to resettle", differentiating it from "re-emigration" and "circular migration". For Long and Oxfeld (2004: 4), by contrast, return can range "from short visits to permanent repatriation", encompassing "return migration", while spatially return can be to "one's original place… [or] to a reconstructed homeland (a particular site in the home country where one has actually never lived)". The latter can be interpreted figuratively, since return is often to a place that is not the same anymore. More recently, White (2013) has moved further from these debates, making visible the increasingly varied forms return can take, thus including remigration and double and multiple returns. This helps bring into question what is "home" and "host", and how these are not static categories.

Current critical developments on mobilities provide a new perspective through which return can be examined. The "mobility turn" or "new mobilities" paradigm (Sheller and Urry 2006) initially stressed people's growing ability to move, thus contesting "the fundamental 'territorial' and 'sedentary' precepts of twentieth-century social science" (Hannam et al. 2006: 2). Later research challenged this initial optimism, focusing on how socioeconomic, political and legal contexts create different options for people to move, thus producing multiple (im)mobilities. Authors have worked with the notion of mobility regimes to address "the disparities, inequalities, racialized representations and national mythscapes that facilitate and legitimate differential mobility and fixity" (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013: 183). King and Christou (2011: 454) recognise some of these tensions in return movements, especially "between mobility… and a search for a stable home(land) in which to settle and 'belong'", while Steinman (2019) focuses on the relevance of migration policies to understand return intentions.

Taking this as our starting point, we adopt a transnational-mobility approach to understand the diverse ways in which migrants in Europe become (im)mobile in relation to return. Some studies have started to explore this for third-country nationals, for example within African migration to Europe (Jolivet 2019; Schapendonk and Steel 2014). Others have focused on East-West return mobilities (Gherghina et al. 2020; Parutis 2013; White 2013). In this article we investigate the factors influencing return considerations and practices among Romanian migrants in London and Paris and Colombian nationals in London, Madrid and Brussels, as they experience hostile socioeconomic and political conditions following the 2008 crisis (Pratsinakis et al. 2019). As such we highlight the growing complexity of imagined and actual return among migrants and their families as their (im)mobility strategies diversify, focusing on two cases of "new Europeans" and different reception contexts. In the process we expose how more unstable and multiple moves disturb notions of home/host, traditionally associated with

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sending and receiving societies. This makes migrants' feelings of belonging increasingly complex and fluid, something which needs to be considered in return policies.

"Belonging" here is used as a synonym of "feeling at home", thus capturing place-belongingness (Antonsich 2010) and people-belongingness in reference to attachments which are rooted in a safe context. As Blunt and Dowling (2006: 197-198) argue, the transnational approach to home and mobility helps "unsettle the fixity and singularity of a place called home", whether we refer to an actual house/dwelling or going beyond to encompass a wider sense of security, familiarity and control (Boccagni 2017). Boccagni (2017) highlights the relevance of uncovering the broader meanings migrants attribute to the concept of home, as transnational mobility creates a bridge between sending and receiving societies materially, emotionally and relationally. This is important when considering return, particularly during multiple and mixed return mobilities. Accordingly, through participants' narratives of return mobilities, we investigate what they identify as home/host as a result of multiple factors in sending and receiving contexts.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

This article is based on data from two independent projects. The aim of bringing them together is empirical and conceptual, as we address similarities and differences in the ways in which sociocultural and economic factors are embedded in migrants' return considerations and practices from a temporal and spatial perspective, and how these mobilities disturb notions of "home" and "host". This enables us to expose empirical and conceptual contributions, which would not have been visible through the use of one case study. We do this by presenting the complex experiences of participants interviewed, following a cross-group perspective based on the analysis of Romanian and Colombian migrants in multiple national contexts in Europe (see Yalaz and Zapata-Barrero 2018).

The first project focused on the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on Colombian migrants in Madrid, London and Brussels[1]. It included 47 qualitative interviews and 600 questionnaires (200 in each city) as well as participant observation undertaken in 2014-2015. The survey was carried in various spaces (consulates, ethnic businesses, events and organisations, Facebook) to allow for a diverse (non-representative) sample and was administered to Colombian men and women over 18. Interviews involved key informants and migrants selected through the survey, previous contacts and fieldwork. The project explored integration and transnational experiences since the onset of the crisis. It is in this context that considerations and experiences of return came up in response to different factors not limited to the economic crisis.

The second project explored Romanians' feelings of belonging towards the country of origin and two host countries, France and the UK[2], revolving around the topics of whiteness and social relations. It involved 64 in-depth interviews with low and high-skilled male and female respondents, as well as 12 key informants, contacted through Facebook groups, the church and snowballing methods. These were conducted also post-2008, between 2013 and 2014, in London and Paris, where most Romanians in these two countries concentrate. Respondents were over 18 years old and had lived in the two cities between two and 32 years.

Although not directly investigated in either project, return migration emerged as a future and imaginary strategy, or actual experience in the case of double and multiple return mobilities. In this sense, return was considered in order to shed light on migrants' complex mobilities and attachments, specifically how they create a new sense of "home" in the host society. In both studies we identified data on return considerations, return to the country of origin and mixed mobilities including return, as main categories emerging from the analysis. Based on this, the next two sections analyse how Colombian and Romanian migrants in Europe consider and perform return.

COLOMBIAN MIGRANTS AND RETURN IN THE MIDST OF CRISIS

Colombian migration abroad grew faster from the start of the 21st century, with destinations in Europe (particularly Spain) acquiring increased relevance. According to UN estimates, by mid-2019 there were close to 2.9 million Colombians abroad, over half a million of them in Europe (Spain 367,816; UK 26,877; Belgium 6,809). Colombians migrate mainly in search of economic opportunities or fleeing violence, being attracted to specific destinations by a mixture of structural, family and personal factors (Bermudez 2016). Return to Colombia was growing before the 2008 crisis, mostly motivated by personal circumstances and conditions in the home country (Mejía Ochoa 2010). However, these flows accelerated during the crisis in Europe and the US, due to the impact in labour markets and migration policies (Mejía and Castro 2012). Some work explores how Colombian families in Spain, after long processes of reunification, have gone through new separations as different members stay, return to Colombia or migrate to a third country in response to the crisis (Bermudez and Oso 2019). Still, the evidence shows that Colombian government return programmes have been largely inefficient (Bedoya Bedoya 2014), while Spain's policies encouraging unemployed immigrants to go back to their countries of origin registered little success as well, with a majority of returns happening outside official channels (Parella and Petroff 2014). Like for Romanians, many Colombians chose to remigrate within Europe rather than return in response to the economic crisis (Bermudez 2020; McIlwaine and Bunge 2016). Thus, for Colombians in Europe, the impact of the

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crisis and policies together with family and emotional factors, have been heterogeneous, and responses to it, including return, varied.

Return considerations

The survey in 2014 asked migrants if they wanted to return to Colombia or migrate to another country (against the option of staying in the place of residence). Over 60% in the three cities studied responded yes, with most choosing to go back to the country of origin, while the rest preferred other destinations in Europe and the Americas. The percentage of migrants not intending to remain in the host country was smaller, which suggests that intended return is less popular (or possible) than wished return. Responses indicate that the impact of the economic crisis, especially in Madrid, is a main factor for wanting to leave. However, it also shows that for many Colombians in the three cities, intentions to return (or remain) are often explained in terms of people- and place-belongingness, alluding to the desire to be with family and everyday experiences: "miss Colombia", "have three children in Spain", "living in London is stressful" (sample of responses from questionnaires).

For those in the survey wanting to return to Colombia rather than remigrate to a third country or return to the previous host country (mostly Spain), socioeconomic factors are also important, especially among migrants in Madrid severely affected by the crisis. Questionnaire answers suggest as well that migrants take into account wider socioeconomic and political factors from a transnational perspective when considering return, not always in response to feeling integrated (or not) as the literature portrays (Carling and Pettersen 2014). In London and Brussels migrants wanting to leave referred less to the crisis, but mentioned: "is too expensive to live [here]", "can't find work", "Brussels is too bureaucratic". Equally, return is not only considered in relation to Colombia, since survey respondents in London and Brussels also referred to their previous country of residence, using similar arguments about family, quality of life, belonging and socioeconomic factors. Finally, others thought of return in the long term, for instance after retirement. However, even this classic type of return can assume alternative forms, with some migrants opting (or wishing) to divide their time in old age between the home and host countries, what Bolzman et al. (2006) call the "third option", as the "'here' and 'there' need not be in opposition with each other" (Boccagni 2017: xxiii).

Experiences of return to Colombia

Despite significant levels of wished and intended return, the common view among key informants is that few migrants returned to Colombia during the crisis, with some opting instead for remigration.

The qualitative interviews with migrants offer clues as to the factors driving these diverse (im)mobility strategies.

One aspect that emerged is that, as during migration, return is often a family selective strategy, thus contributing to new separations. This is the situation of Gabino[3], 44 years old and unemployed, who after 18 years in Madrid lost everything with the crisis. As a result of their socioeconomic situation and his wife's depression, she and the four children are now in Colombia. Although this could be a temporary strategy facilitated by the fact that they all have Spanish nationality, and therefore could return to Spain any time, there is no clear end to their current situation. Gabino's family want him to join them in Colombia, but he plans to stay in Spain: "I wouldn't like to throw in the towel, I wouldn't want to say 'I'm leaving'". Thus, staying in Spain or returning to Colombia can be linked to socioeconomic considerations but also emotional factors and what is considered home, which can be experienced differently according to age and gender (Schapendonk and Steel 2014). The return of Gabino's wife and children is facilitated by structural conditions (having Spanish nationality) and transnational resources (family support in Colombia), while what keeps him in Spain involves his attachment to the place where he has lived for a number of years and where his children were born, as well as perceptions of return as failure.

How migrants experience others' return can also discourage their own. Emilio, a 35-year-old single man, has been in Madrid for eight years and feels settled. Life is not as easy as it used to be, but he is accustomed: "in Colombia… there have been many crises too". However, his mother and aunt returned to Colombia after becoming unemployed and are encouraging him to follow suit. Emilio believes that for them it was difficult to remain in Spain because at their age it was harder to find work, but he does not want to return. The situation in the home country is important: "[in Colombia] the economy seems to be improving… but in relation to security, I can't [go back]". Although he does not rule out future return, Emilio is confused by what is home and host anymore: "there are things one likes about here, but also things we like about there... all the people that have gone back, later they miss Spain. I call my mother, and she is now saying that she is getting bored… my aunt, she goes and comes back a lot. Every time she goes, she wants to return here."

This is why Emilio, like his mother and aunt, obtained Spanish nationality, to be able to move backwards and forwards. Such a state of "in-between" is then not only a question of belonging; from a transnational-mobilities perspective is important to consider a framework that includes both facilities (dual nationality) and barriers (economic in Spain, security in Colombia) regarding settlement/return. Moreover, Emilio is young and single, with no family responsibilities, making it easier to stay or go.

It is this mixture of factors that can determine how migrants engage in different (im)mobilities, including multiple or mixed returns as explored next.

Mixed mobilities involving return

Return can also lead to family reunification, as in the case of Emma, a 52-year-old Colombian woman. However, Emma's return has not been straight forward. Her first mobility involved joining her sister in Spain in 2008, leaving behind her husband and daughter. Emma found employment in the care sector, but as the crisis progressed she became unemployed. Before returning to Colombia temporarily, she negotiated with her brother in Brussels to move there next. This third mobility was possible because Emma has Spanish nationality, facilitating travelling between Colombia and different destinations. However, the new migration proved once again unsatisfactory. In Brussels it was easier to find work, but her health became fragile: working many hours, not being treated well by employers, and finding the language barrier and living with her brother difficult. Compared to her experience of everyday life in Spain, Brussels feels "very hard".

This is why Emma decides to return to Colombia. However, this second return is seen as conditional. She needs to earn enough money in Brussels to pay debts and wait for her husband in Colombia to receive his pension. If in Colombia things do not work out, she has another plan: "My husband has a friend in Madrid, who has a restaurant... that is the option I have". For some migrants like Emma, within a transnational framework that allows it, return can involve multiple comings and goings between the country of origin and several host countries, depending on where they find the right material and emotional conditions, spatially next to or apart from their families. Thus, "neither mobility nor immobility should be considered inherently positive or negative" (Schapendonk and Steel 2014: 267) point out. This case and others, like Gabino's, show how material and emotional motivations for return vary across gender and age, with women more likely to engage in return mobilities for family reasons.

Other Colombian migrants interviewed, like Emma, have experiences of remigrating to another EU country. Although these moves are facilitated by EU citizenship and transnational connections, everyday experiences in the new host country can be harder than expected and contribute to actual or imagined return (to Colombia or Spain). For some interviewees in London, remigration represents an opportunity to start again in a more promising context, thus envisioning a long stay. For others, it equals going back to low-skilled employment and poor housing in a more hostile environment (owing to language, weather, culture, policy). During a trade union workshop in London for Spanish-speaking migrants (including Colombians), they complained about how tough life in the UK is becoming: "they

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are telling you very diplomatically, go, we don't want you". This encourages return thoughts and plans in the medium or long term, for instance after children finish their studies. In these cases, return is often thought of in emotional terms in relation to Colombia, and to Spain based on attachment and socioeconomic factors. Many prefer returning to Spain if economic conditions improve there despite having felt more discriminated in Spain than in the new host country, showing how belonging and perceptions of discrimination do not always go together. All in all, the quantitative-qualitative data explored here shows differences and similarities with the Romanian case.

STRUCTURAL AND EMOTIONAL FACTORS EXPLAINING ROMANIAN RETURN

The vast majority of Romanian migrants reside within the EU, mainly in Italy (1 million), Germany (707,000), Spain (596,600), the UK (439,000) and France (136,800) (OECD/Eurostat data 2018-2019). Migration to Western Europe increased after the fall of communism and especially following EU enlargement. Studies often portray Eastern European migrants in Europe as "regional free movers" (Favell 2008: 703) more likely to engage in circular and transnational mobility than in permanent migration, capturing their transient character through concepts like "liquid migration" (Engbersen 2018). However, the temporality of these flows might be partly explained by precarious employment and discrimination in the host country (Paraschivescu 2020), triggering a desire for sporadic or permanent return. In a recent study, Anghel and Coșciug (2017) differentiate between three patterns among Romanian returnees: returnees who became entrepreneurs, those who took up jobs in the local market and temporary movers whose families live in Romania. Similarly to the Colombian case, research suggests that the 2008 economic crisis did not contribute significantly to Romanian returns, rather it encouraged onward migration to other European countries, although some studies find evidence of return among low-skilled migrants (Apsinte-Berina et al. 2019). This could be because Romania experienced economic downturn, and due to the slow adoption of return programmes, with Romania's Diaspora Start-Up entrepreneurial initiative launched only in 2016. However, our study finds that native anti-immigrant attitudes in host countries (which have increased since the crisis), and feelings of belonging towards home/host can influence return migration or remigration (see also Gherghina et al. 2020), either as temporary or permanent strategies.

Return considerations

Although not all Romanian interviewees demonstrated intentions to return, for many who did, as in the Colombian case, "home calling" was often a key motivation, expressed through idealisations of social relations in Romania, as Mia's response illustrates: "[in Romania] you leave [the children] with grandma or a cousin. You have got some help. And it is different, (…) Romania, is your home (…)

Why would I go back? Because here many times I feel alone (…) You are in a foreign country at the end of the day." For Mia, a 30-year-old married mother of two who owns a coffee shop in London, where she has lived for seven years, the loneliness experienced is partly due to the lack of a support network she would otherwise have in Romania. These networks are especially important at a time in life when help with childcare is needed. Romania is also idealised as a place where respondents feel part of a community on the basis of a shared nationality, as opposed to London, experienced as "foreign" due to difficulties forging strong social connections. Moreover, sociocultural integration in London is undermined by racism and discrimination, which can also influence decisions to return, as Mia elaborates: "Here there are many racists. They come, 'wow, [the café] is so pretty, the food is so good (…) but where is your accent from?' And when I tell them I am Romanian, they change."

Thus, return can be related to personal and emotional reasons, and not only economic opportunities, especially for women with children. It is also framed by politics and inequality in relation to different (im)mobility regimes (Glick-Schiller and Salazar 2013), in this case placing Romanian migrants at a disadvantage notwithstanding their EU citizenship. In Mia's case, despite secure migrant status, employment and housing in London, feeling at home relies on the presence of extended family and community relations in Romania, in contrast with less-satisfactory interactions in the UK that make her aware of the racialized context experienced daily. Belonging for some Romanian interviewees then is experienced through connections to people rather than through socioeconomic achievements, while discrimination in the host context reaffirms feelings of being an outsider. This could fit Carling and Pettersen's (2014) idea that migrants displaying weak sociocultural integration and strong transnational links with the country of origin are more likely to return. However, for other Romanians, as seen next, experiences of return are more complex.

Experiences of return to Romania

Some interviewees had experiences of returning to Romania, but had since migrated again, thus performing "double returns" (White 2013). After spending one year in Scotland to complete a master's degree, Beatrice, a 29-year-old accountant, went back to Bucharest, hoping her British credentials would facilitate her labour market integration. Nevertheless, this proved challenging due to labour market constraints and during a visit to her sister in London, Beatrice accepted a well-paid and interesting job, thus remigrating back to the UK. Interviewed in London, she recalls the difficulties experienced during her return to Romania: "I was very depressed for a period because (…) [employers] weren't even looking at my CV". This case highlights the flexibility with which some migrants respond to a hostile economic environment by reconsidering their intra-European mobilities,

partly due to being young and unattached (like Emilio above), which makes decisions about staying or returning easier.

Still, other respondents experienced double return as a family, deciding to return from Romania to the previous host country for emotional and financial reasons. This is the case of Loredana (a cleaner in her 40s) and her family. They first returned to Romania after several years in Paris, but found that re-adaptation required considerable effort. Her sons underwent initial difficulties in the Romanian education system, while her husband decided to go back to France as the money he earned in Romania seemed inadequate. Consequently, the rest of the family returned to France, which in the process became infused with homely attachments due to daily routines (school, work, etc.). Home becomes therefore rooted in routine activities which supersede the familiarity initially attributed to the country of birth, leading to "an extended detachment from what used to be home" (Boccagni 2017: 2). However, while back-and-forth travel between Romania and France is facilitated by their EU citizenship, back in France they had no residence permits and were working illegally, at a time when Romanians had limited residency and labour rights in some EU countries. Thus reintegration in France was not without its challenges either, although this time they feel committed to stay given the emotional impact of return mobilities on the children: "[When we decided to go back to France, my son] started to cry, because [he missed] all his friends [in Romania] (…) We realised we need to stay [in Paris]".

Hence, for many migrants, particularly those with family responsibilities, return decisions (to either the country of origin or the former host country) are not taken or experienced lightly. Aspects such as the reintegration of school-age children in the education system as well as difficulties in finding accommodation and good jobs can be particularly problematic, especially if they have limited citizenship rights. Thus for some Romanian migrants, the lack of full EU citizenship rights intersected with limited job security and the inability or difficulty in accessing social services, a situation that can lead to further returns, not so much as a symptom of "intentional unpredictability" (Engbersen 2018), but as a result of unequal mobility regimes. This indicates that, while returnee experiences can be analysed through an attachment lens, economic factors and citizenship rights should not be underestimated as contributing factors leading to further mobilities.

Mixed mobilities involving return

Despite the cases explored above, high-skilled Romanian respondents, both in London and Paris, tend to consider themselves at home in the world, and are more willing to engage in onward migration as well as repeated returns, facilitated by legal documents and cultural capital. For Mihai, 32 years old

and living in the UK for three years, mobility is experienced as a lifestyle. Prior to coming to London, he studied for a year in Germany and afterwards returned to Romania. His disillusion with the Romanian economic and political context made him migrate once again. This time he followed his girlfriend to London, where he found a job as an online editor. In the meantime, he and his then girlfriend broke up and at the time of his interview in London he was in a new relationship. Mihai explains his openness to future mobilities: "I see myself as both nomadic and settled. Everything depends on whether I will have children or not (…) I have started from scratch three times, why wouldn't I start again (…)?" However, like other cases above, Mihai's future mobilities seem to depend on family considerations. Family, largely represented by marriage and children, is often cited by participants as one of the main constituents of home, and in that sense it affects mobility decisions. In 2015, Mihai returned to Romania to be with his (new) girlfriend with whom he was expecting a child. This confirms that return is considered in relation to meaningful encounters and when family needs such as relationships or parenthood arise.

Rather than conceptualising home as fixed (pertaining to the country of origin or settlement), a focus on migrants' everyday lives and considerations of future mobilities reflects its deterritorialisation. Mihai, like Loredana before, returned abroad from Romania due to structural factors such as economic and political conditions there. Home can thus be experienced pragmatically, through the harsh reality of everyday constraints, rather than emotionally. The security of what the next day brings is paramount to emotional fulfilment. Nevertheless, they engage with further mobilities differently. A possible explanation might be the presence of family, and consequently their stage of life. While Mihai connected his future mobilities (second return to Romania) to the idea of forming a family, Loredana is married with two children and considers staying in France (after double return) to help the family settle and achieve a better life. Both stories capture the tense relationship between mobility and the need to belong (King and Christou 2011), in this case anchored in perceptions of family needs. The cases above suggest that while thoughts of return and multiple returns to Romania are considered mainly for emotional reasons (people and place-attachments), double return (to the host country) tends to respond primarily to structural conditions in the country of origin, stressing the need to devise return policies that address different types of mobility and the diversity of factors behind them.

LESSONS FROM THE COLOMBIAN AND ROMANIAN CASES

The Colombian and Romanian cases can provide pointers for wider research and policy on return. The first is that migrants consider return in response to multiple factors including socioeconomic and political contexts, everyday experiences and sense of belonging from a transnational perspective. Some Colombian and Romanian participants think about return mainly in relation to people and

place-belongingness, based on where family is (or should be) and idealisations of social life in the country of origin or previous host country. Feelings of integration and discrimination are also important, especially for Romanians, given the negative stereotypes they face. In contrast, Colombians value everyday experiences related to weather, language and social life. This interpretation differs from the emphasis put by some studies on economic or policy factors, highlighting how improving economies in Central and Eastern Europe can stimulate return (Pollard et al. 2008) or the impact of the 2008 economic crisis on return among Latin American migrants in southern Europe (Boccagni and Lagomarsino 2011).

Belonging, both in relation to pull (family values and social connections) and push factors (discrimination), is one of the main determinants of return for Romanian interviewees (see also Gherghina et al. 2020). However, once back in Romania, these factors can be superseded by economic challenges, especially in relation to access to well-paid jobs. These situations can prompt a second return, this time to the previous host country. Thus, although we agree with Snel et al. (2015) in that Romanian migrants' decisions to return to the country of origin are not necessarily an indication of poor labour market integration, socioeconomic factors can explain double returns. Thus return can be irrespective of the traditional success/failure dichotomy or a response to wider conceptions of what is success or failure, such as achieving a good work-life balance (Vlase and Croitoru 2019). In the Colombian case, and the specific context of the 2008 global financial crisis, socioeconomic and political considerations can assume greater relevance. Intentions and actual return among Colombians interviewed can be a direct response to unemployment, deteriorating lifestyles and perceptions of having no future in the host country. In this case, return can be a family-selective strategy, which could make it temporary or permanent (if the rest of the family returns) (Bermudez and Oso 2019). Many of these considerations relate not only to imagined and actual return to the country of origin, but also to double returns, as seen for Colombian and Romanian migrants.

This takes us to our second finding, related to the increasingly complex nature of return mobilities. Under certain conditions, such as for migrants with an EU passport, people can move backwards and forwards between countries of settlement and origin, or migrate to a second country and from there return to the country of origin or previous host society based on a complex mixture of attachments (sometimes feeling "in between") and socioeconomic opportunities. This applies to both the Colombian and Romanian migrants interviewed, with caveats: geographical distance makes it more expensive and logistically difficult for Colombians to move between the country of origin and Europe; and the limited residency and labour rights for Romanians in some EU countries at the time of the research (that have since been lifted). These strategies can be individual or family wide. In this context, return (and remigration) can become open-ended mobilities, making it harder to characterise

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them as temporary or permanent, with some migrants dividing their time between the sending and receiving countries or engaging in "restless mobilities" (Schapendonk and Steel 2014). Although these more complex mobilities have been documented in Europe for intra-regional flows, similar patterns exist in Latin American-European migrations. Socioeconomic and emotional and family considerations can guide different types of return and remigration for Romanians and Colombians. However, the first type of factors tended to predominate in remigration (or return to the previous host country), while the latter defined ideas of return to the country of birth.

Thirdly, some variables play a key role in facilitating more fluid and less permanent return mobilities, such as migrant or citizenship status. Almost all Colombian migrants in our study engaging in single and multiple returns and remigration have Spanish nationality, thus being able to travel backwards and forwards across regions and intra-regionally. Still, having an EU passport does not mean being able to remain legally in the host country and access different services, as the political climate in Europe turns against intra-EU flows, particularly in the UK post-Brexit (Bermudez 2020; Paraschivescu 2020). Transnational relations are also important, with Romanian and Colombian migrants making use of connections with relatives and friends in countries of origin and host societies to facilitate their diverse mobilities. Studies have looked at return migration from a transnational perspective, but generally referring to the country of origin. However, in the Colombian case there is evidence of the importance of links between migrant communities in different European destinations (Bermudez 2016). For Romanians, return considerations can be affected by transnational ties with Romania and perceptions of traditional family values and lives. Finally, gender, age and class also play a role, with younger, unattached professionals more likely to be open to multiple mobilities in search of better socioeconomic opportunities or to create a family, while families with children and especially women, consider diverse return mobilities alongside family needs (Duda-Mikulin 2018).

Finally, taken together, these results provide new insights into the growing complexity of return. Since return cannot be considered finite or unidirectional, Parutis (2013) suggests that a better conceptualisation would be "returns'. An alternative is to frame return migration within the mobility regimes approach developed by Glick-Schiller and Salazar (2013), which allows for different global power relations to be taken into account within specific local and national contexts. In this process, the distinction between home and host becomes disturbed by everyday experiences and different senses of belonging. The cases above show how return is not always to the country of birth as, in a transnational context, feelings of belonging towards sending and receiving societies are challenged and renegotiated. This applies to family considerations but also to wider environmental and structural factors helping migrants feel at "home", as the weather, language and lifestyle for Colombian

migrants thinking of return to Spain from London and Brussels, or the absence of discrimination for Romanian migrants.

Although this article is not primarily focused on policy, such findings are crucial for remodelling return policies, still rooted in the idea of return as a single, permanent move from the country of settlement to the country of origin despite calls for innovative approaches (Battistella 2018). Thus, Spain's programmes aimed to encourage return among immigrants partly failed because of time limits on people being able to return to Spain, or because immigrants feared losing their residency status. In the case of Romania, lack of reliable statistics makes it difficult to assess the success of policies for returned migrants, which focus almost exclusively on labour market integration. Such innovations should take into account the growing open-ended and multiple-mobilities nature of current return practices, as well as the diverse factors facilitating/inhibiting return going beyond socioeconomic conditions.

CONCLUSIONS

Contemporary return migration can be better understood as another open-ended phase or mobility strategy assuming varied forms and in which belonging is renegotiated. Following on from transnational-mobility approaches to research on return, our study chooses two cases of "new Europeans" to show how current return mobilities include not only return to the country of birth, but also double and multiple returns (between home and host countries) and return after remigration (to the country of birth or previous host country). It also focuses on how, as a result of these increasingly complex return mobilities, the notion of "home" becomes denaturalised, as feelings of belonging towards home and host countries become more fluid.

There are differences in the ways Romanian and Colombian migrants in our studies consider and perform return. The article also evidences how socioeconomic and politico-legal contexts combine with emotional and everyday experiences, resulting in varied considerations and experiences of return for individuals and families. Within the time frame following the 2008 Great Recession and its differentiated impacts in Europe, when thinking about return, Romanian migrants in London and Paris react to discrimination in the host country, as well as place and people-attachments in the country of origin. Such attachments are also important for Colombian migrants in Madrid, London and Brussels, but in their case, the negative impact of the economic crisis on employment in Spain is a main determinant for return and remigration. However, as people engage in (or reflect on) more complex forms of return involving double and multiple return mobilities, both studies share some elements. Among these, migrant and citizenship status comes up as key in that it allows some Romanians and

(dual national) Colombians to move backwards and forwards or in step mobilities, taking advantage of their transnational connections, in the search for work and life opportunities. Linked to this, gender, age and socio-professional status can explain different types of return, with women with children being more constrained by family needs and young professional childless men freer to consider their options. In both cases, complex return mobilities further complicate feelings of belonging towards home and host contexts. For these migrants, home can refer to the country of origin, where they do not feel "foreign" and experience a stronger sense of family and community. However, home can also be in the host country, where one has formed a family or conducts routine activities, depending on wider factors. For some Colombian migrants, despite the impact of the crisis, Spain has become a new home, either to stay in or to return to after remigration. While for Romanian respondents, home can be where one finds the right job or the family needs to settle, despite cultural and legal barriers.

Further research needs to take into account these findings when looking at other migrant groups or contexts in Europe, especially in the current conditions. As a new crisis, sanitary but with economic repercussions, unfolds, migrants will be caught in-between new options and barriers to further (im)mobility as they strive to survive. Migration and return policy, as well as other policies designed to help cope with the latest crisis, will have to consider the different factors influencing return and how they intersect to be able to offer better solutions to migrants' increasingly uncertain positions.

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NOTES

[3] All participants were assigned pseudonyms.

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