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Interaction, Communication, Cultural Construction

Coping with essentialism and stratifications:

Migrant women with tertiary education in local labour markets of France and Italy

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Abstract

Migrant women with tertiary education are significantly concerned with over-education, de-skilling and underemployment, as they primarily work in jobs that are not in line with their studies. The dissertation argues that analysing essentialism is crucial to understanding the stratifications of the labour market and comprehending why migrant women continue to be confined in jobs with low social recognition, despite their degrees.

The thesis puts into light that representations based on coloniality, global inequalities and also on conservative and eroticised models of femininity, affect the selection process and finally limit the access that these women have to employment. To explore the influence of essentialism in the assessment of skills, the thesis uses the concept of embodiness. It stresses that recruiters tend to value skills, according to who embodies them, and depending on how candidates are perceived in terms of class, gender, and racialisation. Assessment of skills appears to involve a high level of scrutiny over female candidates' body and *habitus*, leading to class selectivity and eroticisation of migrant women.

Moreover, the dissertation explores how migrant women with tertiary education are coping, resisting, and eventually challenging essentialism and stratifications. It analyses how they react to their position in the local labour markets, whether they feel downgraded or they have accessed satisfying jobs. In addition, motherhood emerged from fieldwork as a crucial factor that influences migrant women's trajectories. As a result, the dissertation analyses how the interplay of migration, welfare, care, and gender orders conditions access to employment, leading to frequent de-skilling

The local labour markets that were selected in which to conduct fieldwork are those of Veneto, in Italy and Alsace, in France. These two contexts are characterised by different models of care, and of addressing migrants' otherness. The social phenomenon is studied from a variety of perspectives. The dissertation crosses the gazes of migrant women with tertiary education, born in Sub-Saharan African and European non-EU countries, with those of recruiters and social workers. Overall, 52 narrative interviews were conducted and analysed using thematic analysis and biographical policy evaluation. In addition, the dissertation is one of the first studies that uses statistical data to highlight the differential access that migrants with tertiary education have to employment in Italy and France, according to their country of birth and gender.

By studying the challenges faced by migrant women with tertiary education, the dissertation highlights how access to resources and employment is gendered, classed, and racialised and how essentialist processes influence it. It argues that understanding the mechanisms that contribute to reproducing stratifications enables us to design paths towards more equal access to employment and resources.

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Introduction

> I repeated exactly, enunciating the syllables, what I had said: I wanted to practice my social work profession, and I did not want anything else.
>
> This time, the counsellor, who, I knew later, was a social worker herself, could not repress her irritation at what she perceived as naivety or, even worse, stubbornness:
>
> "But do you know at least what a social worker is? And what path must be followed? You might consider something more accessible to you. Look, since you seem to want to orient yourself in this area, you could become a home assistant, that's what will be suitable. You will have no difficulty in finding a place; you seem to be motivated to work, you are, you said, mother, you have a good command of French. These are assets that you will have to develop and showcase... "
>
> It was the first time I heard about a profession called "home assistant". After all, the social worker had home visits in her missions. So I took a conciliatory tone and asked the counsellor about the tasks assigned to this "home assistant". She explained with great patience in what they consisted. The home assistant profession was very similar to what I knew as a "housekeeper", that was called *naya* in Djibouti.
>
> I did not ask any more questions and politely waited for the end of the meeting.
>
> Scholastique Mukasonga, *Un si beau diplôme !*[1]

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[1] Mukasonga S. (2018), *Un si beau diplôme !*, Mesnil-sur-l'Estrée: Gallimard. Author's translation.

The experience of Mukasonga’s heroine could be that of one of my interviewees. After struggling to obtain her diploma in Burundi, the woman is faced with French social workers and recruiters that give no value to her "so beautiful diploma ". Moreover, the employment counsellor advices her to look for a job with low social recognition in the care sector, where the woman will make little use of her educational background and her prior professional experience. Scholastique Mukasonga gives a literary perspective on the struggle and challenges that migrant women face when looking for employment in their field, and that are at the core of the dissertation.

The literature has put into light that in Western Europe, migrant women with tertiary education tend to be confined at the bottom of the employment structure, namely in the care and domestic sector. These women are particularly exposed to over-qualification, underemployment, and de-skilling, especially if they were born in countries perceived as being of low or medium-income (Cuban 2013; Kofman 2012). With the same level of education, they tend to perform jobs with lower social recognition and income compared to non-migrant women and men.

Scholars have explored the impact of migration policies (Morris, 2001; Raghuram 2004; Liversage 2009), of low recognition of titles, skills gained abroad (Coccia and Pittau 2016; Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Kofman 2012), and of networks (Tognetti Bordogna, 2012; Ambrosini, 2005; Piselli, 1995) in confining migrant women at the bottom of the employment structure. However, the literature on migrant women with tertiary education, or so-called 'high-skilled migrations', has given little attention to the influence that essentialism has on limiting access to jobs.

Essentialism is a process through which people become defined as a group based on alleged common biological or cultural characteristics. It entails that those defined as a group, for instance in terms of gender, class, racialisation, country of birth, or religion, all share common " essential" characteristics which are fixed and ahistorical (Grosz 1990). Essentialism tends to be imposed by a dominant group on an oppressed group, to justify inequality in access to resources, including access to graduate jobs. Racialisation is a form of essentialisation, which uses body and physiognomy as a base to justify superiority and privilege (Quraishi and Philburn, 2015; Grosfoguel et al., 2015).

In Italy and France, the few publications that have tackled essentialism, and discrimination in the recruitment process (Scrinzi 2003 and 2013, Allasino 2004, Fullin 2016), have not specially taken into account migrant women's educational background. Conversely, scholars that have studied the paths of migrant women with tertiary education in these countries rarely analyse the impact of essentialism in limiting their access to employment (Brandi 2008, 2009, 2010; Killian and Manohar 2015).

Different factors have contributed to understudying the topic. In European countries, including France and Italy, scholars tend to be reluctant to refer to race and racialisation as a lens through which to analyse social relations (Lentin, 2014). In France, although debates concerning the racialisation of social relations are finding their way into academia (Balibar 2005, Fassin and Fassin 2006, Ndaye 2008, Dorlin 2014, Bentouhami-Molino 2015), analysts tend to follow a universalist and colour-blind Republican model. In this regard, until the 1990s, the strength of the Republican model pushed French public authorities to refuse any reference to racial discrimination. From their point of view, any mention of racial prejudices would implicitly give credit to the idea that races exist. However, the ban on the term "race" has not eliminated racism (Balibar 2005, Fassin and Fassin, 2006, Bonilla Silva, 2014). Moreover, by absolutely rejecting the notion of race in the name of anti-racism, it becomes impossible to develop a profound reflection on the discriminations that are precisely based on it (Ndiaye 2008). The controversy that emerged in France at the beginning of September 2019 on Lilian Thuram's interview to *Corriere della Sera*[2], and the recent debates on the use of terms such as "racialised " and "whiteness "[3], underline how sensitive, or even taboo, these issues continue to be in French society.

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[2] For details, see for instance the article of Durupt, F. (2019) "La polémique Thuram ou l'impossibilité de penser le racisme en tant que système", Libération, 6 September 2019, available at https://www.liberation.fr/france/2019/09/06/la-polemique-thuram-ou-l-impossibilite-de-penser-le-racisme-en-tant-que-systeme_1749639 (18/9/2019)

In Italy, Gaia Giuliani (2015), as well as Tatiana Petrovich Njegosh and Anna Scacchi (2012), argue that after the second world war and the collapse of fascism, Italians tend to perceive themselves as being "innocent " in racist terms. Racism was associated with the fascist regime, and racist terminology was removed from scientific and colloquial language. However, there was no process of deconstruction of the "figures of race" that had been central in the construction of the Italian national identity (Giuliani, 2015: 1). Following the narration of "Italians good people " (*Italiani brava gente)*, racism was until recently perceived as existing in other parts of the world but tended to be diminished and denied within Italy (Petrarca, 2015: 32). Meanwhile, colonisation was presented as having positive effects or at least as being less violent and racist compared to that of other colonial powers (Ibid: 33). Scholars argue that there is a need to look at the "unconfessed realities " and challenge the illusion of Italian's "presumption of innocence" in racial themes (Faso, 2012).

While academics and institutions tend to be reluctant to analyse the essentialist processes that condition the access to resources and jobs, essentialist and more specifically racialising discourses are far from being absent from the public debate. In France, since the middle of the 2000s, national debates, such as that on hijab-wearing, and those following the urban riots of 2005 and the 'terrorist attacks' of the 2010s, are saturated with racialized and often racist representations of the social world (Fassin and Fassin, 2006). In the same vein, scholars observe the trivialization and legitimization of the themes promoted by far-right parties such as the former *Front National*, particularly concerning migration, while media commentators have depoliticised the critic towards these radical right parties (Mahler and Salingue, 2014).

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[3] See for instance the tribune of Mélusine (2019), ""Blanchité", "racisé", "racisme d'Etat" : M. Blanquer, ces concepts sont légitimes dans le débat public", Libération, 23 November 2017, available at https://www.liberation.fr/debats/2017/11/23/blanchite-racise-racisme-d-etat-m-blanquer-ces-concepts-sont-legitimes-dans-le-debat-public_1612004 (18/9/2019)

Similarly, in Italy former *Lega Nord*'s gained media attention, especially from the 1990s precisely when the party started stigmatising migrants instead of targeting Southern Italians (Barcella, 2018). Since then, the party has grown exponentially, passing in a few years from two MPs in 1987 to over 180 MPs in 1994. Following the election of March 2018, the *Lega* obtained 124 seats in the Italian Chamber of Deputies, and its leader accessed the position of Ministry of Home Affairs for over a year. Meanwhile, essentialist and racist representations of migrants have proliferated in the Italian media during the last decades, especially around the so-called ‘migrant crisis’. Although scholars argue that there has not been a migration crisis in numbers (D'Angelo, 2018), the exclusion and short-term political responses can be interpreted as revealing an "unresolved racial crisis" that derives from the postcolonial condition of “Europe” as a whole (De Genova, 2018).

In the context of polarization of the political debate, it is more necessary than ever to study how essentialist processes condition the access to resources and jobs. In this regard, the dissertation argues that studying essentialism, including the phenomena that stem from it, such as racialisation, ethnicisation and essentialism based on gender and class, is crucial to understanding the stratifications of the labour market. These stratifications correspond to hierarchies among workers which result in differential salaries, working conditions, tasks, recognition, and all in all a differential of power and capabilities (Saunders, 1990; Yuval-Davis, 2015).

We propose to look at the phenomena by focusing on the specific challenges that migrant women with tertiary education face when accessing employment. In this regard, we believe that analysing the influence of essentialism in the recruitment process permits us to comprehend why migrant women continue to be confined in jobs with low social recognition, despite their degrees.

The dissertation studies these processes from the perspective of gender, class and racialisation. The analysis focuses on two local labour markets, that of Alsace in France, and Veneto in Italy. The contexts are characterised by different models of care and addressing migrants' otherness. The social phenomenon is studied from different perspectives. The core of the dissertation is fieldwork that represents a cross-section of the voices of participants with different positions in the labour market. The idea is that of putting into dialogue the perspectives of a variety of stakeholders that are involved in enabling migrant women with tertiary education to access employment. As a result, 52 people were interviewed, including 33 migrant women with tertiary education, 12 recruiters, four social workers and three informants. Twenty-three interviews concerned the local labour market in France, while 29 regarded that in Italy. Fieldwork is completed with the descriptive analysis of the statistical data made available by institutions.

The **first chapter** of the dissertation introduces the theoretical framework and presents the lenses through which the challenges that migrant women face in accessing employment are analysed. Racialisation, gender and class relations were identified as the most useful prism through which studying the social phenomena. The chapter defines these social relations and reviews on how they have been used in migration studies. Moreover, it defines terms and deconstructs categories that are adopted in the literature that focuses on migrant women with tertiary education. The chapter also reviews the literature through the prism of social relations based on racialisation, gender and class. This review permits bringing to light gaps in the literature. It is precisely on these ommissions that the research questions are built.

The **second chapter** focuses on the methodology. A first section highlights why multi-siting the research and focusing on local labour markets are the most appropriate options to analyse the phenomena. This analysis is completed by insights on the Alsatian and Veneto contexts, namely their histories of migration, and the models to which they are associated when it comes to addressing migrants' otherness. The second section of the chapter presents the methods, which includes a descriptive analysis of statistical data and interviews with participants in fieldwork. It gives details on how participants were selected and how interviews were conducted and analysed. The chapter also gives insights into the author’s *positionality* (Burawoy 2009) and closes with a timeline that summarises the different research stages.

When looking for background information on the employment positioning of migrant women with tertiary education, a striking issue is that there is almost no quantitative research in France and Italy that crosses gender, country of birth, level of education with the positioning in the labour market (Redien-Collot 2009, Fullin 2016). The **third chapter** aims at filling the gap by focusing on local labour markets in Alsace and Veneto. It makes a descriptive analysis of the employment data made available by local institutions. The section on Veneto is based on the hirings and ends of contracts of graduates from 2008 to 2017 (Veneto Lavoro, 2017), while that on Alsace is primarily built on a population census conducted in 2014 (Insee, 2017). As a result, the analysis gives insights from a statistical perspective on the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in local labour markets of France and Italy.

The **fourth chapter** also aims at studying the positioning of these women in local labour markets. However, it approaches the phenomena from a qualitative perspective. The chapter crosses the perspectives on the issue between migrant women with tertiary education, and stakeholders involved in providing access to employment, such as recruiters and social workers. The chapter opens with a section that analyses the difficulties that stakeholders have in naming and describing stratifications. After that, it analyses how migrant women, recruiters and social workers perceive stratifications of the local labour markets, and how essentialism influences access to employment. The chapter also introduces the sectors and specific jobs that are perceived as being accessible for migrant women. It closes with a reflection on the "variable geometry" of labour market stratifications, as they might vary according to the hiring company, recruiters and social workers practices.

The **fifth chapter** studies the mechanisms that lie beyond stratifications and essentialism in the recruitment process. More specifically, it analyses how knowledge, know-how, capacities, and skills are embodied and assessed depending on who holds them. It opens with an analysis of how the body of migrant women with tertiary education are socially constructed, and how essentialism based on racialisation, gender and class influences the process. The chapter then studies how recruiters assess embodied skills. More specifically, it analysis how education, experiences, as well as language and soft skills, are valued depending on who embodies them.

After studying the stratifications of the labour markets and how essentialism contributes to their reproduction, the **sixth chapter** studies how migrant women with tertiary education are facing these twin phenomena. The chapter focuses on how these women are coping, resisting, and challenging essentialism and stratifications. It studies their reaction to essentialism, as well as the strategies that they implement, based on their knowledge of labour market mechanisms, to access employment and eventually graduate positions. The chapter closes with a section that focuses on women's reaction to their positioning in the labour market. How are they coping with downgrading, or eventually for some interviewees, how are they explaining their success in accessing satisfying positions?

Motherhood emerged from the fieldwork as a crucial factor that influences the trajectories of migrant women with tertiary education but remains little studied in the literature (Riaño, 2012; Wong, 2014). As a result, the **seventh chapter** of the dissertation analyses how the interplay of migration, welfare, care, and gender orders leads to frequent de-skilling. More specifically, it studies how family reunification and child-care policies shape these women's access to employment. The chapter is divided into four portraits that emphasise different aspects of how mothering influences migrant women's trajectories. The first portrait studies how motherhood and migratory policies influence trajectories. The second analyses how motherhood shapes employment expectations. The third focuses on policies regarding maternity leave. The fourth identifies challenges in accessing child-care services. Last but not least, the fifth portrait focused on arrangements implemented by women to cope with service shortages.

By analysing the challenges faced by migrant women with tertiary education, the dissertation highlights how access to resources and employment is gendered, classed, and racialised and how essentialist processes influence it. Understanding the mechanisms that contribute to reproducing stratifications permits an unveiling of power relations and aids in designing paths towards more equal access to employment and resources.

Chapter 1. "I became a migrant from Eastern Europe". Theoretical framework.

When I first met Viola in Veneto, she was struggling to find a way to get employment in line with her studies. Viola graduated in Philology and had a rewarding position in Russia where she used to work as a lecturer for a prestigious State University and as a financial director for a well-known museum. After over a decade of being active in the labour market, she started to feel bored. Although Viola was still finding that her jobs were interesting, she wanted to experience new professional challenges and start a family at the same time. As a result, she decided to quit her jobs, abandon her social position, and join her partner with whom she had become acquainted a couple of years before. The result was a move to Veneto where her partner lived. During our exchange, Viola contrasted the respected position she had in Russia with the denigration she was facing in Veneto. She explained that she felt labelled and categorised as "a migrant from Eastern Europe" and as such, she felt devalued and disrespected.

Since the 1960s, the practice and consequences of labelling, categorising, and eventually discrediting others' capacities, have been the subject of a consistent body of the literature in sociology (Goffman, 1990 [1963]) as well as in social psychology (Moscovici, 2015 [1961]). Sociologists have highlighted the political implications of using specific categories to refer to groups of people. In this regard, Bourdieu (1993) estimates that one of the central powers of the state is to produce mental structures, or categories of thought, which predetermine and organise our representation of the world. From Sayad's perspective (2002), the notion of "immigrant" is one of these mental structures. On the other hand, categories and concepts are needed to analyse social phenomena. Therefore, when conducting research, it is necessary to have a critical awareness of the political implications of using a specific wording and conceptual framework.

To take into account these observations, the chapter introduces the theoretical lens that is used to study the access that migrant women with tertiary education have to local labour markets (1.). Racialisation, gender and class relations were identified as the more useful prism through which analysing the phenomenon and unveiling the power relations that are at stake (1.1.). The chapter defines social relations in terms of racialisation, gender, class, and their intersection, and reviews how they have been used in migration studies (1.2.). It deconstructs some of the categories that are frequently adopted by researchers whose work focuses on migrant women with tertiary education, namely the noun used to refer to "those who move" and that of "skilled" (1.3.). The first section closes with the definition of the key terms that are used throughout the dissertation (1.4.)

The second section of the chapter reviews the literature on the issue through the prism of racialisation, gender and class relations (2.). This exercise makes it easier to identify gaps in the literature. It is based on these omissions that the research questions are built and presented at the end of the chapter (Conclusions).

1. Definition of concepts and theoretical perspective

1.1. Unveiling power relations

When social scientists are asked about the role of intellectuals and the purpose of their research, they often mention the analysis of power relations as a critical feature. In a 1938 writing, Bertrand Russel stresses that "the fundamental concept of social science is Power". Like him, many of the researchers who have marked the social sciences have focused part of their work on the question of power. For instance, Michel

Foucault (1982) emphasises that for at least twenty years the goal of his work was to create a history of the different modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects.

Charles Wright Mills (2000), who is known for having coined the expression "sociological imagination", points out that social scientists have a twofold function of both analysing and transforming society: it is their job to connect individual problems with greater social issues to create changes that would solve the problems. He also stresses that researchers must have the capacity to unmask and to smash the stereotypes of vision and intellect with which modern communications swamp us (Mills, 1945).

The same idea of unmasking is also present in Bourdieu’s description of the social researcher’s work. Bourdieu (2001) believes that "the collective intellectual" can and must, first of all, fulfill "negative, critical functions by working to produce and disseminate defense tools against symbolic domination". Researchers must know how to discover where power is less visible, where it is less known and recognised. Their goal is to put into light the "symbolic power", that can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to acknowledge that they are subject to it or that they apply it (Bourdieu, 1977). This power constructs reality: it imposes or inculcates tools of knowledge and expressions (taxonomies) of social reality that are arbitrary (but ignored as such).

One of the main tasks of the social researcher is therefore to unveil power relations existing in society. This function implies deconstructing and questioning existing categories and revealing the symbolic power that lies beyond them. As stressed by black feminists (Combahee River 1977, Crenshaw 1989), power relations manifest themselves along multiple lines of oppression that intersect. For instance, colonial past (but not only) has led to the construction of what Bonilla Silva (2014) calls "racialized social systems" that award systemic privileges to those racialised as " whites" over those racialised as "non-whites". Accordingly, the analyst has the task to "uncover particular social, economic, political, social control, and ideological mechanisms responsible for the reproduction of racial privilege in society" (Bonilla Silva, 2014: 9).

In parallel, gender and class are axes along which relations of power and domination continue to be exercised. Kaufman and Raghuram (2015) highlight that the new imperatives driving global migrations are altering social hierarchies in complex ways. As a result, race and class differences as they intersect with gender require fresh thinking. It is precisely on these social relations that the present research concentrates. It seeks to unveil power relations in terms of gender, race and class, by focusing on the specific case of migrant women with tertiary education and their access to the labour market. It seeks to understand better how hierarchies in the labour market based on gender, race and class are being produced, reproduced and challenged.

The intention of unveiling power relations implies awareness about researchers' positionality. Social scientists do not live in a vacuum, nor they study society from a neutral/objective position (Berger and Luckmann, 1991). They are trapped in the very same power relations they pretend to analyse. In this regard, Edward W. Said stresses that:

> Politics is everywhere; there can be no escape into the realms of pure art and though or, for that matter, into the realm of disinterested objectivity or transcendental theory. Intellectuals are *of* their time, herded along by the mass politics of representations embodied by the information or media industry, capable of resisting those only by disputing the images, official narratives, justifications of power circulated by an increasingly powerful media - and not only media but whole trends of thought that maintain the status quo, keeps things within an acceptable and sanctioned perspective on actuality […].
>
> Said (1996: 22)

Post- and de-colonial scholars have highlighted that sociologists tend to analyse society from the perspective of the Western world, and more precisely from the position of white, heterosexual, male researchers who have the pretension to speak from a universal/neutral/objective standpoint (de Sousa Santos, 2018, 2014; Bhambra, G.K., 2007). They call for a de-colonisation of social sciences that would "provincialised" the West and give voice to the experiences and claims of non-European "others". Grosfoguel et al. (2015) invite scholars in migration studies to "take seriously and incorporate migrants' decolonial epistemologies into their knowledge production". In this respect, Lentin (2014) considers that analyses that place "race at the centre" of efforts to conceptualise the development of global hegemonies in both politics and scholarship are "essential".

1.2. Intersecting racialisation, gender and class relations

The concept of intersection introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) in continuity with *black feminism* has enabled to highlight specific forms of discrimination and oppression which are experienced by those who live at the crossroads between different social categories (Marchetti 2013). In the labour market, the intersectional perspective enables us to put into the light that job opportunities are defined by gender, class, racialisation, nationality and other social relations. (Browne and Misra 2003). The social belongings that are at the core of the intersectional perspective (Marchetti 2013) are fluid; historically and socially constructed to produce and maintain social hierarchies (Killian and Manohar 2015).

The success of the concept of intersectionality in academia and in social movements has been criticised by researchers who fear it leads to thinking only in terms of categories rather than in terms of social relations, that it focuses first and foremost on dominated social groups, and that it marginalises social classes (Fraser 2005, Dorlin 2009, Fassin 2015). In this dissertation, the author adopted an intersectional perspective that focused on social relations rather than on categories, and that took into account class relations.

The intersectional approach leads to paying specific attention to the multiple social relations in which individuals can be involved and on how the intersections among them translates into opportunities/disadvantages when accessing employment. The research mainly focuses on racialisation, gender and class relations. Although other social relations have a significant impact in facilitating or preventing access to employment, they are not explored in details. For instance, the thesis does not focus on social relations based on religion, sexual orientation, and disability. The research indirectly tackles age, but it does not focus on this dimension either. Last but not least, it is worth noting that the research specifically analyses access to the labour market. As a result, the analysis of working conditions is secondary.

Lutz et al. (2011) have argued that class, race, or ethnicity, associated in intersectionality with gender have different meanings and uses depending on the context. Bastia (2014) highlights that intersectionality needs to be combined with historically grounded and context-specific definitions of these terms. To take into account these observations, racialisation (1), gender (2) and class relations (3) are introduced and discussed below.

1.2.1. Racialisation and coloniality

In Europe (Lentin, 2014), and especially in Italy (Giuliani, 2015) and in France (Fassin, 2006), some migration scholars are still reluctant to refer to race and racialisation as a lens through which analysing social relations. However, as stressed by Pap Ndiaye (2008), by absolutely rejecting the notion of race in the name of anti-racism, it becomes impossible to develop a profound reflection on the discriminations that are precisely based on it. The ban on race has not eliminated racism (Bonilla Silva, 2014).

Race is a socially constructed category. It does not exist in itself, but it has a social reality, in the sense that it produces effects on those persons who are racialised. Race, as well as gender, are notions that are historically and politically created, recreated and challenged (Ndiaye 2008, Petrovich Njegosh 2012). They are underpinned by power relations that have changed over time. Petrovich Njegosh (2012:15) defines race as a symbolic category that needs to be analysed both in terms of its relational dynamics of construction, and in its "devastating ‘effects’ of reality".

Racialisation is a process through which people become defined as a group based on their biological and/or cultural characteristics (Quraishi and Philburn, 2015). It occurs through the making of bodies: some are racialised as superior, others as inferior (Grosfoguel et al., 2015). Researchers that have worked on the issue highlight that race was created as a scientific argument to justify material and symbolic domination (Bonilla Silva, 2014; Ndiaye, 2008; Fassin, 2006). For instance, it was instrumental to the development and perpetuation of the slave trade, the eradication of native peoples, and the expansion of white Europeans who perceived themselves as empowered "via divine guidance and endorsement" to civilise the world (Quraishi and Philburn, 2015). Fassin (2006) considers that racial justification was often constructed *a posteriori* and even abandoned when economic, demographic, or military objectives were at risk.

Racism is defined by Grosfoguel et al. (2015) as a global hierarchy of human superiority and inferiority, which has been politically, culturally, and economically produced and reproduced for centuries by the institutions of the capitalist and colonial world-system. From Fassin’s (2006: 32) perspective, racism is at stake when the difference of "others" is "both reified and radicalised: reified meaning that there are traits defined as an essence of otherness; radicalised meaning that it assumes there is an overdetermination of these traits with respect to any other possible form of characterisation". Although colour racism has been dominant, other markers of racism include language, culture, religion (Grosfoguel et al., 2015).

As mentioned, Bonilla Silva (2014) estimates that colonial past has lead to the creation of " racialized social systems" that award systemic privileges to those racialised as " whites" over those racialised as "non-whites". For post- and de-colonial researchers, the divide inherited from colonialism is still a matter of fact. Grosfoguel et al. (2015) stress that global hierarchies of power put in place by Western colonial administrations did not disappear with the end of colonial administration. The racism that emerged with colonialism continues to thrive. Nevertheless, both notions of whiteness and non-whiteness have evolved over space and time. They are influenced by gender, religion, class as well as other social relations, and their intersection. For instance, Irish and Italian were racialised as non-whites in the US until the beginning of the XXth century and have progressively been "whitened" in a process that will be further developed in chapter 2 (Roediger 1999; Petrovich Njegosh 2012).

Ndiaye (2008) highlights that "blacks" refers to an imaginary category, which includes different persons depending on the context, time and place. In the societies in which they are minorised, "blacks" includes a population who share the experience of being considered as such. The same person might be racialised as white in a specific context and as black in another. The researcher argues that the persons that are racialised do not have the choice to be seen (and racialised) as they are, but they can decide to reject the racialised identities or to transform it into a " political colour of opposition" as suggested by Les Back and John Solomos (2009). Ndiaye also stresses how racialisation intersects with class:

> Class position is a factor that exacerbates or softens the discriminatory experience. A black person at the bottom of the social ladder is subjected to harder racial discrimination when dealing with the police and accessing scarce goods (employment, housing) than a middle-class black person, whose

> experience of discrimination is usually more isolated and limited. [...] The higher the social position, the less the black appearance counts in social transactions. To put it another way, a sweeper is much more "negatively" black than a fashionable singer. This inclination does not mean, however, that black elites escape the discriminatory experience, but in its concrete materialisation, it is more fleeting, and its effects can be mitigated more easily.
>
> Ndiaye (2008: 63, author's translation)

As far as migration is concerned, Mains et al. (2013) have stressed that there is an explicit link between colonialism and patterns of mobility. They call for further exploring the myriad ways in which postcolonial theory could inform the study of migration. On the author's views, adopting a postcolonial approach is of particular relevance for analysing how migrants are being racialised in European societies.

Grosfoguel et al. (2015) interestingly stress that migrants who move to Europe do not arrive in neutral spaces, but to "metropolitan spaces that are already 'polluted' by racial power relations" inherited from coloniality. The group of researchers distinguish three types of "transnational migrants". The first group are the "colonial/racial subjects of the empire", which corresponds to minorities that were directly colonised and who are at the bottom of the urban racial/ethnic hierarchies in the metropole centre. The second group is that of "immigrants", who corresponds to those racialised as white or as "honorary whites", and are assimilated into dominant white metropolitan populations, due to skin colours or for geopolitical reasons. The third group are "colonial immigrants" who come from peripheral locations that were not directly colonised but that are racialised in similar ways to the "colonial/racial subject of empire". Grosfoguel et al. (2015) also specifically refer to Eastern European migrants in Western Europe, whose experience corresponds to "colonial immigrants". These researchers highlight that, even when Polish and Romanian migrants are of pale skin colours, they are racialised as inferior subjects relative to metropolitan whites.

Based on the colonial past (but not only) migrants are racialised in European societies depending on markers such as the colour of the skin, the country of birth, the culture or the religion, but also according to gender, class, religion, and other social relations that intersect. As a result, they might be labelled as immigrant, foreigner, expatriates and additional categories that are further developed under "Unpacking categories" (Section C).

1.2.2. Engendering migration

Although there has been increasing efforts especially since the 1980's to take into consideration gender in migration studies (Morokvasic, 1984), feminist scholars have pointed out that the notion is often equated to that of studying women, rather than analysing the power relations between women and men and the social construction around femininities and masculinities (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999; Kofman 1999; Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki, 2017). Indeed, research on women does not necessarily imply that a gender perspective is being adopted. Vianello (2013) argues that the fact that scholars who investigate gender relations are mainly women and that the concept continues to be equated to that of "women" indicates that the scientific community is still reluctant to consider gender as one of the most important organisational and explanatory principles of migration. Gender relations are a "constitutive element" of migration: they structure migration, and mobility transforms gender relations (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003). Therefore, engendering migration refers to a process, or several processes, which are still currently underway and that need further development (Abbatecola and Bimbi, 2013).

While sex refers to a biological distinction, gender is a social construction (Connell, 2014). It corresponds to the cultural expectations that are associated with a person of a specific sex. Gender is learned by individuals through socialisation, from childhood (Caldera, Huston and O'Brien, 1989). Candace West and Don Zimmermann

(1987) have highlighted that gender identity is not fixed, but it is created, recreated and eventually modified through interactions. It is not something one *is*; it is something one *does* (Butler, 1990). Connell (2005) argues that there is not a single way of being a woman or a man. There are several femininities and masculinities, which are context based and influenced by the intersection between gender, class and racialisation.

Gender involves power relations. Sexism and patriarchy have promoted the idea that characteristics associated with men are more desirable than those of women (Croteau and Hoynes, 2015). Although these features are socially constructed, they might erroneously be perceived as being natural and unalterable. They have led to the construction of gender stratifications, which have privileged men over women. These gender orders are context and historically based, and might change from one country/ region/area to another.

At the institutional level, the gender order creates and is re-created by policies, such as migration and welfare policies. For instance, in societies where women are expected to care for children, the lack of child-care services might prevent them from accessing the labour market, while men might be able to pursue their careers even after becoming fathers. On the other hand, migration policies on family reunification might penalise women, as the latter might lose their right to work if they enter the country as accompanying spouses (Kofman, and Raghuram, 2015).

The positioning of women in the labour market is also profoundly connected to the gender order. In this regard, Francesca Bettio, Janneke Plantenga and Mark Smith (2013) have recently stressed that gender gaps are still visible in almost all areas of economic life within the EU. Although some gaps are closing, they stress that new gaps are emerging and others persist, for example, in the job quality domain. Their publication highlights that women in the EU continue having a lower participation rate, less political power, and are more susceptible to poverty. Those who provide unpaid domestic and care work families are still mainly women. In addition, the contributors to the book highlight that far more women than men make use of flexible work arrangements. This trend creates a gender imbalance which harms women's position in the workplace and their economic independence.

Besides the imbalance in sharing domestic and care work, other factors contribute to gender inequalities (Collins, 2003; Tsing, 2009). For instance, gender ideologies convey the idea that women are less competent than men to work in the highest paid sectors of the labour market, while retribution in feminised areas such as reproductive work tends to be undervalued. On the other hand, women's earnings are only seen as supplemental to that of their male partner. Therefore, it becomes acceptable that their salaries are lower than that of men.

As mentioned, paid and unpaid reproductive work is still mainly performed by women. It is also in this field that migrant women primarily find employment in Western European societies. Researchers argue that, besides the globalisation of circuits of production, there has been a "new international division of reproductive labour" (Truong, 1996; Parrenas, 2000; Hochschild 2000). The literature on the issue has mainly focused on migrant women entering reproductive positions at the bottom of the employment structure, for instance as domestic and care workers, as well as sex workers (Tognetti Bordogna, 2012; Agustin, 2007; Anderson, 2001). Nevertheless, migrant women might also enter intermediary and top-positions connected to social reproduction, such as nurses, social workers and teachers (Kofman and Raghuram 2015).

Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram (2015: 7) stress that gender relations influence the "nature of social reproduction, how it is divided and performed and who pays for it and where". The researchers call for a broad understanding of social reproduction. It should include not only the array of activities and relationships in maintaining people both daily and intergenerationally (Glenn 1992) but also other aspects such as the systemic reproduction which enables a given social system to be recreated and sustained (Truong, 1996). Therefore, social reproduction includes care work, but it is not limited to it.

The institutional framework and the gender order influence the decision making of couples concerning whose career is to be privileged and who might care for dependents. Riaño (2012) has been working on migrant women with tertiary education. Her research emphasises that in countries such as Switzerland, the breadwinner model pushes couples to favour men's careers, as the latter receive better salaries than women. On the other hand, Raghuram (2004) has worked with migrant couples in the United Kingdom who have given priority to women's career. In her fieldwork, she observed that these women are perceived as being able to obtain better positions in the health sector than their male partners.

By moving from one context to another, migrant women navigate different gender orders. Gender orders of emigration countries are often looked at in racialised ways. Migrants might be perceived as requiring lessons on how to perform masculinity and feminity (Scrinzi 2005, 2014). Doing gender becomes a "mark of 'integration'" (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015: 170). However, migrating from the global South to global North does not necessarily imply that women are accessing more emancipatory societies (Toffanin, 2015; Vianello, 2009). Migration policies, as well as other factors that are further analysed below, might force migrant women to leave the labour market and/or access positions that are highly feminised, such as domestic and care work. These women might find that femininity and its associated characteristics, such as caring and responsibilities toward social reproduction " become reinscribed onto their bodies" (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015: 170).

Carling (2005) has stressed that migration changes gender relations both in departure and arrival societies. Mobility in itself might represent a transgression of the gender order. For instance, women might re-negotiate the gender norms of caring when they migrate. Mothers, who move for work and leave their children, transform the meanings of motherhood to accommodate this spatial and temporal separation (Hondagneu-Sotelo et al., 1997).

1.2.3. Class and (im)mobilities

Class appears as one of the critical analytical tools in Marx and Weber's writings. Although some scholars have claimed that class is in retreat and displaced, there has been a renewed interest on the concept over the past decade connected to the growing inequalities throughout the world (Savage et al. 2013; Dorling, 2014; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2008). Nonetheless, class has been underplayed in much of migration studies (Nicholas Van Hear, 2014; Crompton et al. 2000; Anthias 1998). From Kofman and Raghuram's perspective (2015), of race, class, and gender, it is class that has been "theorised the least in the context of migrant women".

The exact definition of class and its applicability to migration studies have been debated. Fresnoza-Flot and Shinozaki (2017) note that the concept tends to be equated to that of economic class. However, as these researchers highlight, having a high level of education or a profession is not the same as being wealthy. To broaden the analysis, they suggest taking into account the different schools of class analysis identified by Bottero (2014). The first school defines class as "collective, explicit and oppositional". It includes analysts of the "class in itself" and the "class for itself". The former groups together those who share a common situation, common interests, but who are not necessarily aware of common belonging. On the other hand, the members of the "class for itself" are aware of the shared belonging and struggle for their common interests (Marx, 1972). The other school of thought identified by Bottero (2014) includes those scholars who focus on the "processes of culture, lifestyle and taste", such as Bourdieu.

Kofman and Raghuram (2015) invite researchers to analyse class as a process rather than as a status or a position (Gibson et al. 2000). They also highlight that class is context based as there are global variations in the meaning and performance of class (Purkayastha, 2012). Moreover, other researchers have argued that class formation goes beyond economics and involves social relations such as gender, racialisation, nationality, religion, sexuality, age and citizenship status (Tsing, 2009; Ong, 1987). For instance, Roediger (1999) argues that in the XIXth century Irish workers in the US shaped themselves not only as working class but also as white and non-slaves.

This dissertation analyses class not only from the perspective of economic inequalities but also includes other forms of capital, which are defined as accumulable resources that are capable of becoming a base for power (Santoro, 2015). Bourdieu (1986) distinguishes three forms of capital:

- *Economic capital* relates to goods that are directly and immediately convertible into money.

- *Cultural capital* exists under three forms. The *embodied state* is linked to the body and presupposes a process of incorporation that starts from early domestic education. It is converted into an integral part of the person, into *habitus*. Its acquisition is more disguised and functions as symbolic capital, meaning that it tends to be unrecognised as a form of capital and it is seen as a legitimate competence. The *objective state* is for instance paintings and instruments. which are transmissible in their materiality, but their appraisal is embodied. To appropriate these cultural objects, individuals must have embodied cultural capital. The *institutionalised state* refers to the cultural capital objectified through academic qualifications which are recognised by institutions.

- *Social capital* relates to the network an individual can effectively mobilise and to the capital owned by each node. It has a multiplier effect on the capital that a person possesses. According to Bourdieu (1986), in modern societies, institutions are designed to "favour legitimate exchanges" by producing occasions, places or practices which bring together "individuals as homogeneous as possible". Social capital implies unceasing efforts of sociability, exchanges and mutual recognition which reproduces groups.

Bourdieu (1986) includes a note on *symbolic capital* which he defines as capital in "whatever form" insofar as it is recognised by others and might be a base of power. Other forms of capital analysed by Bourdieu are, for instance, *political capital* which corresponds to a variant of the social capital and *linguistic capital* which is a variant of cultural capital (Santoro, 2015).

Following on from Bourdieu's work, other forms of capital have been theorised in recent years. One of them is *emotional capital* which was identified and developed by Reay (2001) to understand mothers' involvement in their children's education. Another one is *erotic capital*. Hakim (2010) indicates that the latter is not only a "major asset in mating and marriage markets", it can also be important in "labour markets, the media, politics, advertising, sports, the arts, and in everyday social interaction".

Scholars have stressed that class needs to be taken into account for understanding migration. Firstly, researchers argue that mobility is a scarce and unequally distributed commodity (Bauman 1998). Those who migrate to Europe are not the ones in the poorest conditions. Terray (2008) highlights that migrants who move to France rather belong to the middle class, and they have a social and cultural capital that they often expect to enhance in the country of arrival. In their book, *The Age of Migration*, Castles and Miller (2009: 56) also highlight that international migration is selective: "only those with the financial capital to cover the high costs of mobility and the social capital to link up with opportunities abroad can make the move". Sklair (2012) considers mobility as the privilege of a global elite of the "transnational capital class", while governments see the migration of the working classes as something to be contained, monitored and stopped. This class selectivity relates not only to the economic capital but also to other forms of capital and to the way migration policies are shaped. Control of migration has become the basis for what Castles and Miller (2009: 57) call a "new type of transnational class structure".

If we look at it from an intersectional perspective, we could argue that class selectivity also has an impact on the racial segmentation of society. As stressed by Bonilla Silva (2014), in post-colonial societies, the colonial legacy has led those racialised as " whites" to be in privileged positions if compared to those racialised as " non-whites". Being more represented among the middle and the upper classes, "whites" are also privileged by migration policies compared to "non-whites". Therefore, the class selectivity of migration policies translates also into racial selectivity; that privileges the mobility of white middle and upper-class men.

A second reason why class seems fundamental in analysing mobility is that class considerations can be decisive in migration projects. Glick Schiller et al. (1992) argue that the desire to maintain one’s class position or to claim and valorise status and power is among the driving forces of transnational practices. The decision of staying or moving also relates to the wish of transferring class to children or improving the class position generationally (Vianello, 2009).

Thirdly, men and women alter class positions through migration (Gibson et al. 2001). The difficulties in transferring and converting forms of capital might result in downward mobility. For instance, Arnado (2007) studies the contradictory class mobility of Filipino women who are employed as domestic workers in the Global North. In the Philippines, "First World employment" augments their social standing, while in the Global North their social status declines because "dirty work" is associated with "lower class". Arnado (2007) also observes that these women are racialised because of their race/ethnicity, class, and nationality.

Therefore mobility modifies class relations simultaneously in the different contexts to which migrants are connected. Kofman and Raghuram (2015) highlight that women might compromise their class status with migration but can also simultaneously access higher incomes. The perception of migration as leading to upward or downward class mobility is highly subjective. It depends on migrants' points of departure as well as on their projects, strategies and expectations.

As far as education is concerned, Bourdieu and Passeron (1964) have stressed that school reproduces social inequalities. Students who have access to the university are mainly the children of privileged classes. This phenomenon does not only relates to the inheritance of economic capital but also the cultural and social capital. For instance, the number and quality of social relationships can facilitate or hamper access to training and employment. This contributes to the reproduction of social inequalities. According to recent research, school performance, access to university as well as individuals' income continue to be connected to the positioning of parents. More specifically, mobility in earnings, wages and education across generations is estimated to be relatively low in France and Italy (OECD 2010, Triventi, 2013).

Moreover, researchers have pointed out that inequalities in the Global North are growing (Atkinson et al. 2011, Piketty 2010). In France, Landais et al. (2011) observe that for the generations that were born during the two world wars, the capital accumulated throughout one's life often exceeded what one had inherited. For the generations born in the 1970s and afterwards, inheritance became the prime means of access to wealth. This has contributed to reinforcing "social immobility" and maintaining social inequalities (Council of Europe, 2013).

These observations have two main consequences on the group we aim to analyse with this dissertation. On the one hand, before migration, migrant women who had accessed tertiary education were probably placed in a privileged position compared to the whole population of the country of origin. The fact that many of these women have had positions of power in their country of birth and experience a loss or reduction of power in that of immigration leads Riaño (2016) to qualify them as "marginalised elites". On the other hand, we can wonder to what extent intermediary and top working positions might be accessible to outsiders in societies that are characterised by social immobility and in which inequalities are carried across generations.

Overall, the previous paragraphs highlighted that racialisation, gender and class relations and their intersection might result in providing specific and limited access to the labour market. They might also lead to particular labellings and forms of essentialisations. In the next section, we analyse how migrant women with tertiary education are being categorised.

1.3. Unpacking categories

As mentioned earlier, the wording that is used to refer to persons that were born in a different country than the one where they currently live appears to be highly political. As we will see, the categorisation as migrant, foreigner, immigrant or ex-patriate depends on racialisation, gender and class and its intersection (1). The same could be argued about the term "skilled" which also appears to have a blurry outline. Who are we referring to with this term? Is any migrant with tertiary education a "skilled" migrant (2)? This section aims at analysing the definitions and uses of both concepts.

1.3.1. Those who move: Migrants, foreigners, immigrants and expatriates

According to a glossary published by the International Organisation for Migration (2011), the United Nations defines migrant as "an individual who has resided in a foreign country for more than one year irrespective of the causes, voluntary or involuntary, and the means, regular or irregular, used to migrate". However, the organisation itself acknowledges that there is no universally accepted definition for “migrant”. Indeed, even amongst the UN and its agencies, the term has also been used in opposition to that of refugee. It therefore aimed at covering "all cases" where the decision to migrate was allegedly taken freely by the individual (UN Commission on Human Rights, 1998). This distinction brings to the thorny question of how freedom of leaving is being defined, as the motivations for departure might be multiple and intersect. However, in the context of the asylum applications, it is based on an absence of freedom of choice that states are recognising persons as being "in need of protection" or on the opposite as irregular migrants to be criminalised.

In France, the term "immigrant" (*immigré*) was officially defined in 1991 by the *Haut Conseil à l'intégration* (La Documentation française, 2016). It refers to persons that were foreigners at birth and that were born abroad. From the institutional perspective, being an immigrant is a permanent condition: an individual continues to be immigrant even when she or he acquires French citizenship. The notion is therefore distinguished from that of "foreigner", which corresponds to a person who does not have the French nationality. As a result, both categories do not fully overlap: a migrant might not be a foreigner if she or he was born abroad, but has obtained the French citizenship; conversely, a foreigner might not be a migrant if she or he was born in France but does not hold French citizenship.

In these two examples, official definitions do not take into account gender, class and racialisation. However, both in the media and in daily interactions, those who were born and grew up abroad are labelled differently depending on their positioning along the lines of oppression. In this regard, Fassin (2006) argues that, by including in the " immigrant" category both persons that were born in Sweden and in Mali or by labelling as "foreigners" persons of both German and Turkish nationality, researchers do not only equate "very different situations" but also risk to mask the phenomena that they pretend to analyze.

For instance, Ambrosini (2009) observes that only a subset of the persons that were born abroad are seen as immigrants (*immigrati*). He notes that French, German, as well as Japanese citizens who live in Italy, might not be called migrants, although they were born abroad with foreign citizenship. The researcher stresses that in Italy the word *extracomunitario* (non-EU citizen) has increasingly being used as a synonym of migrant, leading to a paradoxical consequence: US citizens are not being considered *extracomunitari* although their country of citizenship is not member of the EU, while Romanian citizens continue to be called in that way although they are EU citizens. He concludes that terms such as immigrants and *extracomunitari* are mainly used to refer to foreigners from countries which are perceived as being poor. In the same vein, Raimondi (2016) indicates that the difference between a foreigner and an immigrant depends on the balance of power between the state of emigration and that of immigration: on his views, every foreigner that was born in a country perceived as being poor and, above all, as being a country of emigration, is a potential immigrant.

Ambrosini (2009) also argues that those who were born in countries perceived as being poor but who have succeeded in areas such as business, sports or arts might not be labelled as migrants either. According to the Italian scholar, it is therefore the social and economic position of the individual, the way in which the colour of her or his skin is read and finally the positioning of the country of citizenship in the international arena that determine whether a person is to be called "immigrant" or "foreigner".

Kofman and Raghuman (2015) also highlight the impact that intersection between class and race has in classifying migrants. For instance, the two researchers indicate that the use of the term "expatriates" to refer to white migrants suggests that white migrants have more disposable wealth and pose no threat to destination countries. From their perspective, white migrants are often seen as belonging to the middle or upper class while racialised migrants are perceived as working class.

Being labelled migrant, immigrant, expatriate, *extracomunitari*, thus is strictly connected to racialisation, class, gender but also to status, religion and age, and depends on how these categorisations intersect. This research uses the generic term migrant to refer to any person who was born and grew up in another country than the one where she or he currently lives, regardless of class, racialisation and gender. The idea is not to consider migrants as a single and homogenous bloc, nor to deny the differentials of power and capabilities (Sen, 1985) between people that were born abroad. Conversely, this research aims to compare the pathways of persons that were born in different countries and that have different positioning in society, to better highlight how racialisation, class and gender condition their access to the labour market.

In this research, migrants include all persons that have moved from one country to another regardless of the status recognised by the State. Therefore, migrants could be refugees, asylum seekers, persons that hold a permit for study, for working, for family reasons or any person that does not have a regular permit. The notion of migrant is distinguished from that of foreigner, which corresponds to a person who does not have the citizenship of the country where she or he lives.

The intention is to take into account the whole trajectory of participants to the research, including their experience before, during and after they moved from one country (or several countries) to another (Roulleau-Berger 2010). The dissertation also pays attention to the transnational dimension of migration, as (trans)migrants participate in both poles of the migratory movements and might often move from one to the other (Ambrosini 2007). In order to take into account these multiple aspects, it was decided to use the term migrants - rather than immigrants - to refer to those who move across borders.

In this dissertation, the author also distinguishes migrants from children of migration. The latter refers to persons that were born in their country of residence but whose parents were born abroad. As proposed by the network *G2*, children of migration also include all those who were born abroad but who grew up in their country of residence. According to *G2*, although they are often labelled as migrants, children of migration who were born abroad "did not voluntarily emigrate, but they were brought to [the country where they live] by their parents or other relatives" (G2, 2017).

1.3.2. Who the skilled are

The main theoretical currents on migration studies have addressed the issue of "skilled" or "highly skilled" migrations. For instance, within the neoclassical school of thought, Chiswick (2000) argues that the more skilled are more likely to move because they obtain a higher return on their human capital. On the other hand, dual market theorists consider that migration is caused by structural demand within Global North economies for both "highly skilled" and "lowly skilled" workers. The former would be positively selected based on their human capital (Piore, 1979). Last but not least, globalisation theorists have analysed how differentiated migration regimes have been set up to encourage the "highly skilled" to be mobile, while "lowly skilled" workers tend to be excluded (Castles, Miller, 2009). Thus, "skilled" migration would have become the only "acceptable" form of migration into western European countries, such as the UK (Raghuram, 2004).

Although the concept is frequently used in academic research and by institutions, there is no shared definition of "skilled" nor "highly skilled" migration. In the framework of the United Nations (ICMPD 2005), the division of the population observes that the term “highly skilled migrant” remains a "hazy" and "ill-defined" concept. A further difficulty in defining these terms derives from the fact that researchers often use indifferently "highly skilled" and "skilled" within the same elaborate as if they were equivalent (Coccia and Pittau 2016, Killian and Manohar 2015, Riaño 2012).

The concepts "skilled" and "highly skilled" might be used to refer to individuals depending on their level of education, on their position in the labour market and/or on their income. Coccia and Pittau (2016) note that migrants are often considered as being "highly skilled" when they have tertiary education. Nevertheless, according to the researchers, it might also happen that "highly skilled" refer to persons that do not necessarily have tertiary education but that engage in a profession that is considered at the top of the employment structure such as managers and top-professionals in the health, banking, academic sectors. A third way of defining the concepts regards income. This is the case within the 2009 EU directive (European Union, 2009) which promotes the *Blue Card* residence permit system. The latter aims at regulating the access of non-EU citizens to "highly qualified" jobs in the EU Member States, including the eligibility criteria related to a salary threshold. To obtain this residence permit, candidates must prove they have a gross annual salary equivalent to a minimum salary threshold which "shall be at least 1,5 times the average gross annual salary in the Member State concerned".

Defining "skilled" and "highly skilled" migrants based on income has major implications in terms of gender, class and racialisation. From a gender perspective and as stressed earlier in the dissertation, women tend to earn less than men and have more difficulties in accessing top-management positions (Arulampalam et al., 2007). As a result, migration schemes such as the *Blue Card* system tend to privilege men over women (Kofman, 2012). From a class perspective, Coccia and Pittau (2016) argue that definitions based on income exclusively encompass "top-earners" and ignore "intellectuals" and "graduates". Indeed, economic capital is the main focus and other forms of capital, such as cultural capital, are underestimated by these definitions. As far as racialisation is concerned and as it was argued earlier, in post-colonial societies (Bonilla Silva, 2014) and segmented labour markets (Castles and Miller, 2009) whites have privileged positions compared to those racialised as non-whites. Overall, the terms "skilled" and "highly skilled" might predominantly refer to white men from top-income groups.

On the other hand, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) estimate that the traditional division of migration studies between skilled and unskilled labour needs to be rethought. On their views, the border between skilled and unskilled migration is "increasingly problematic" (Ibid: 137).

- Firstly and as it will be further developed in this dissertation, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) stress that individuals who have invested time and money to acquire labour skills, such as IT migrant workers, might be compelled to perform tasks that are usually considered unskilled. In this regard, feminist scholars (Kofman 2012, Cuban 2013) have also highlighted that migrant women are particularly exposed to de-skilling.

- Secondly, Mezzadra and Neilson (Ibid: 139) indicate that just-in-time and to-the-point migration shapes policies that correlate migration flows with "skills shortage" and result in point-system migration schemes. These procedures investigate educational qualifications and labour skills, but also go beyond as they take into consideration qualities such as linguistic abilities, family connections, health, age and religion. In this regard, it was stressed earlier that migration schemes such as the *Blue card* system end up being selective from a gender, class and racialisation's perspective.

- Thirdly, Mezzadra and Neilson (2013) highlight that the concept of skills is elusive and difficult to define. In this regard, we can observe that theories on human capital tend to focus on the "less-than-perfect international transferability" of specific skills such as linguistic skills, skills acquired through formal schooling and on-the-job (Chiswick and Miller, 2009). However, other skills need to be taken into account. For instance "soft skills" are becoming crucial within the production process. Mezzadra and Neilson (Ibid: 141) find that these "skills" might refer to "generic human qualities", such as sociability and adaptability, which assessment is highly subjective. Similarly, Kofman and Raghuram (2015) call for an expansion of the notion of skills.

For instance, these scholars find that they should include communication skills and other skills that are at stake in social reproduction.

Kofman (2012) identifies three types of knowledge that mobilise specific skills and are more or less transferable from one country to another. The first one is *embrained knowledge* which depends on conceptual skills and cognitive abilities. It often derives from scientific reasoning and is the most economically productive and mobile type of knowledge. The second is *encoded knowledge* which is embedded in signs and symbols. It relates to law, medicine and education, which are relatively less mobile, and often correspond to regulated professions. The third is *encultured knowledge* which refers to some form of shared culture and is embedded in contextual factors. Kofman and Raghuram (2015: 103) add a fourth type of knowledge: it is *embodied knowledg*e which relates to physical presence, practical thinking, and learning in doing. In this scheme, women are penalized because they are over-represented in the sectors that use the forms of knowledge that are less transferable.

Overall, the lack of recognition of skills is a crucial issue which has a double implication. On the one hand and as it was stressed earlier, the capacity for performing a specific task might not be conceptualised as a skill. For instance, emotional labour and the competencies that it involves tend to be disregarded (Hochschild, 2012). In this regard, it is worth noting that positions such as domestic workers, workers of the cleaning industry, ushers, porters and custodians are often labelled as being "unskilled" or "lowly skilled", although they involved a variety of know-how, knowledge and capacities. To echo this observation, we refer to these jobs at the bottom of the employment structure as occupations with low social recognition.

On the other hand, the person that embodies a skill might not be identified as being skilled. Indeed, skills are assessed differently depending on who performs them and on who assesses them. In capitalistic, post-colonial and patriarchal societies, recognition highly depends on gender, racialisation, class as well as religion, age and other dimensions. The connection between recognition of skills and embodiness is one of the central issues addressed with this dissertation, and it is further explored in chapter 4 and 5.

The lack of recognition of skills leads to two phenomena that have been studied in the literature and that have raised some institutional interest. The first one is *brain waste*, which is defined by the EU (2005) as "the non-recognition of the skills and qualifications acquired by migrants outside of the EU, which prevents them from fully using their potential". According to Batalova et al. (2016), brain waste leads to two "unfavorable labor market outcomes": "unemployment", which occurs when a person who is searching for employment is unable to find work; and "underemployment", which refers to work by the "highly skilled" in "low-skilled jobs" that require only moderate on-the-job training, a high school diploma or less.

Some researchers have gone beyond the concept of brain waste arguing that migrant skills are not only being under-used, but they are also exploited without any form of recognition, leading to *brain abuse* (Bauder, 2003). For instance, Cuban (2013) has worked with migrant domestic workers in the UK. Most of her participants had nursing degrees from the Philippines and India. She observes that in their daily work as care assistants, these women are using the skills acquired during their studies, but the latter are not formally recognised by employers. Cuban (2013: 51) argues that although care has turned into ‘dirty work’, the industry "needs skilled migrant labour".

1.4. Defining key concepts

To close the first section of chapter 1, we propose to define the key concepts that are used in the dissertation, namely those of essentialism, stratifications of the labour market, and tertiary education.

1.4.1. Essentialism

Essentialism is a process through which people become defined as a group based on alleged biological, or cultural characteristics. As such, racialisation is a form of essentialisation, which uses body and physiognomy as a base to justify superiority and privilege (Quraishi and Philburn, 2015; Grosfoguel et al., 2015). Essentialism can also encompass other social relations, including that based on gender, and class. In the dissertation, we refer to Grosz (1990) definition of essentialism.

> Essentialism […] refers to the attribution of a fixed essence to women, [which] is assumed to be given, universal, and is usually, though not necessarily, identified with women's biology and "natural " characteristics. […] Essentialism entails that those characteristics defined as women's essence are shared in common by all women at all times. […] Essentialism thus refers to the existence of fixed characteristics, given attributes, and ahistorical functions which limit the possibilities of change and thus of social reorganization.
>
> Grosz (1990: 334)

Although Grosz focuses on women, her definition highlights features that encompass forms of essentialism based on racialisation, the reification of cultural differences, and that associate specific traits and attitudes with specific nationalities. Broadening Grosz's definition, we can argue that essentialism entails that those defined as a group, in terms of gender, class, racialisation, country of birth, all share common "essential " characteristics. These characteristics are fixed, ahistorical, and cannot be changed since they define and limit the group.

Essentialism tends to be imposed by a dominant group on an oppressed group, to justify inequality in access to resources, including to graduate jobs. In this regard, Eide (2010) stresses that those essentialised can partially appropriate essentialism imposed by others (the elite, the powerful) to achieve specific goals. However, Eide (Ibid: 76) warns that, by doing so, they may be playing into the hands of those whose essentialism is more powerful than their own.

1.4.2. Labour market stratifications

Both in Italy (Fullin, 2012 and 2016, Reyneri, 2011) and in France (De Rudder et al., 2006), as well as in other countries of the Global North, researchers highlight that there are complex stratifications of the labour market based on gender, racialisation, nationality, status, age and other dimensions. Some of the migration scholars have conceptualized the *segmentation* of the labour market, based on enclave economies (Portes and Bach, 1985) and niches for ethnic entrepreneurs (Waldinger et al., 1990). Dual market theorists have also referred to the *segmentation* of the labour market into primary and secondary markets (Reich et al., 1973). Rather than analysing these *segmentations*, the author focus on *stratifications* to describe the hierarchies between workers which results in differential salaries, of working conditions, of tasks, of recognition, and all in all a differential of power and capabilities (Yuval-Davis, 2015; Saunders, 1990).

For instance, institutional and academic research has highlighted that migrants tend to find work at the bottom of the employment structure (OECD 2014, Istat, 2015; Idos, 2014; Insee 2012, Dell'Aringa et al. 2012). With the same level of education, migrant and especially those born in non-EU countries tend to perform less skilled jobs than non-migrant and are more concerned by over-education (Nieto et al., 2015; Piracha and Vadean, 2013; OECD, 2014). Moreover, they are particularly exposed to subcontracting, temporary work and casualisation, which results in low income, extreme working hours and poor working conditions (Castles and Miller, 2009). On the other hand and as stressed earlier, women continue to face a glass ceiling that prevents them from accessing top positions in the labour market, and they tend to be paid less than men (Arulampalam et al. 2007). Women remain the primary providers of unpaid reproductive work (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015), leading to what Balbo (1978) has called the *double presence* (*doppia presenza*), meaning that they are involved in both productive (or reproductive) work in the labour market, and unpaid reproductive work at home. Migrant women with tertiary are at the cross-road of the stratifications of the labour market that are based on gender and migratory status, as well as those based on racialisation and class.

1.4.3. Tertiary education

Rather than referring to "skilled migrants", the author of the dissertation prefers using the less misleading notion of "migrants with tertiary education". According to the Unesco (2012), tertiary education builds on secondary education, providing learning activities in specialised fields of education. It includes what is commonly understood as academic education but also advanced vocational or professional education. Therefore, the thesis focuses on women that have obtained a degree or certificate from academic institutions, such as universities and college, or/and advanced vocational or professional education, regardless of the country where it was acquired.

The previous section introduced the lenses through which social phenomena are analysed in the dissertation, namely the intersection between social relations in terms of racialisation, gender and class. It also discussed the implications of using specific terms to refer to "those who move" and underlined that referring to "high skilled migration" is somehow problematic. The section also defined the key terms of essentialism, stratifications and tertiary education. It is now possible to review the literature that regards migrant women with tertiary education, bearing in mind the theoretical framework introduced above.

2. Looking for gaps in the literature

The following section reviews the national and international literature on migrant women with tertiary education. It highlights that little research on the issue has focused on the Italian and French cases (2.1.). In addition, the section analyses the factors that have been identified by scholars to explain why it is more challenging for migrant women to access graduate positions (2.2). The author identifies a series of gaps in the literature and it is based on these lacunas that the research questions are built (see conclusions of the chapter).

2.1. Migrant women with tertiary education

2.1.1. A brief review of the international literature

Women in research on migration have long been relegated to the role of followers and not of instigators of their migration trajectory. Academic interest in migrant women in the labour market appeared in the 1980s (Morokvasic, 1984). In the 1990s, the so-called *feminisation of migration* (Castles and Miller, 2009) lead to a growing interest in the issue. This literature has focused primarily on questions related to transnational mothering (Hondagneu-Sotelo et al., 1997), care chains and care drain (Hochschild, 2012), on how migration changes gender relations both in the departing and arrival societies, (Carling, 2005) and on questions related to empowerment (Kofman et al., 2000). Various authors have pointed out that literature has often confined women to reproductive tasks in highly feminised and unskilled occupational positions such as in the domestic and care work sectors and the sex industry (Fresnoza-Flot and Shinosaki 2017, Tognetti Bordogna, 2012).

Although it has enabled to *engender* migration studies (see section B of this chapter), the phenomenon of *the feminisation of migration* has been contested in academia. For instance, Dumitru and Marfouk (2015) argue that the number of women involved in international mobility has not dramatically increased over the last decades. On her views, it is the share of women among migrants with tertiary education that has grown, but this "feminisation" has raised less interest. Indeed, the studies on "high skilled migrants" and more specifically those on transferability of human capital initially appeared as being a-gendered (Chiswick and Miller, 2009; Boucher, 2009; Slade, 2004). Kofman (2012) connects the lack of interest in migrant women with tertiary education to three main factors. Firstly, skills in feminised reproductive sectors tend to be disregarded, while those that relate to male-dominated areas in the productive sector are valued. Secondly, women who migrate in the context of family reunification are perceived as being unskilled, although they might have tertiary education. Thirdly, the lack of interest on the issue could be related to the limited available data.

Nevertheless, since the 2000s, there has been a growing number of publications that have focused on migrant women with tertiary education. This literature has covered a range of sectors and issues. For instance, the trajectories and challenges faced by migrant nurses have raised the attention of several scholars (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015; Likupe, 2015; Yeates 2009; Pittman et al. 2007; Kingma 2006; Larsen 2007; Brush et al. 2007). In the late 2000s, Raghuram (2008) argued that research tended to focus on feminised reproductive sectors while little had been written on migrant women with tertiary education in male-dominated areas. In these fields, recent publications have analysed the presence of these women in ICTs (Jungwirth 2010, Raghuram 2008), medicine (Wojczewski et al. 2015, Raghuram, 2004, Raghuram, Montiel 2003), academia (Shinozaki, 2017; Czarniawska and Sevon, 2008), business (Grigoleit 2010) and Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (Grigoleit-Richter 2017, González Ramos et al. 2013). Last but not least, Kofman and Raghuram (2015) analyse challenges faced in feminised sectors of the skilled labour market that had caught little attention, such as teaching and social work.

One of the main issues explored by this literature regards the downgrading that is experienced by these women when entering the labour markets of the Global North (Wojczewski et al. 2015; Kofman 2012; Roulleau-Berger, 2010; Rubin et al. 2008; Purkayastha 2005; Iredale, 2005). Indeed, researchers have stressed that these women, and more specifically those racialised from the Global South, tend to access positions at the bottom of the employment structure, especially in the care sector, and end up being de-skilled (Cuban 2013, Kofman 2012). This phenomena mainly affects women who move in the context of family reunification (Riaño, 2012, Kofman 2012, Aure, 2013) but also concerns those who enter the country as skilled migrants (Man, 2004). Researchers identified some of the strategies that are implemented by these migrant women to cope with de-skilling (Liversage, 2009; González Ramos et al., 2013). For instance, they might decide to return to their previous country of residence. Some researchers indeed perceive deskilling as a significant factor of return migration (Haour-Knipe and Davies 2008).

As stressed earlier, de-skilling has substantial implications from a class perspective. Women with tertiary education might have been in a privileged position in their country of birth and experienced downward class mobility in that of immigration (Riaño, 2012). Researchers have stressed that, beyond class, other social relations are also at stake. From a gender perspective, the literature has explored how migration might lead to a re-negotiation of roles within the couple and of femininities and masculinities (Seminario, 2018; Riaño, 2012; Raghuram 2008). In this field, publications have more specifically analysed issues such as family strategies (Raghuram 2004) and negotiation of care work within the couple (Wong 2014). Researchers have also highlighted that the trajectories of migrant women with tertiary education are highly dependent on the gender order that prevails both in the country of birth and in that (those) of immigration (Riaño, 2012; Jungwirth, 2010; Salaff and Greve, 2003). Moreover, scholars have argued that international mobility might result in a ‘feminisation’ of women's roles, as migrant women might leave the labour market and confine themselves in more traditional gender roles as mothers or wives (Ho, 2006).

As far as racialisation is concerned, scholars have analysed the impact of this phenomena on the trajectory of migrant women with tertiary education and how this intersects with other social relations such as gender (Killian and Manohar 2015; McGregor 2007; Ball, 2004; Allan and Larsen 2003). For instance, Smith et al. (2007) analyse the racialisation of migrant nurses in the UK and argue that black migrants face more barriers than white migrants when accessing this profession. On their views, nursing is marked by "racialized hierarchies of employment rights", that build on international hierarchies of disadvantage often with "strong historical roots in colonialism and empire".

2.1.2. Migrant women with tertiary education in France and in Italy

In France, Chaib (2004) points out that the research on the positioning of migrants women in the labour market has generated limited interest. Similarly, Redien-Collot (2009) estimates that, due to the lack of statistical data, French research that focuses on gender-based discrimination rarely compares the situation of migrants and their descendants with the rest of the female population. Nevertheless, over the last decade, a few publications have concerned the trajectories of these women. For instance, Ouali (2012) stresses that migrant women with tertiary education are particularly exposed to over-education in France, compared to non migrants.

Moreover, Roulleau-Berger (2010) analyses the paths of migrant women with different levels of education and notes that in France de-skilling and lack of language knowledge penalise both women with and without tertiary education. Cossée et al. (2012) also analyse the downgrading of migrant women with tertiary education, who are segregated in niches and feminised employments (mostly in the domestic, care and cleaning sectors) and other positions characterised by economic vulnerability (blue collar work and in the hospitality industry). Other publications have focused on graduated migrant women who find jobs that relate to their migrant identity, such as that of cultural mediators (Lemercier 2008). Last but not least, Killian and Manohar (2015) compare the trajectories of Indian women with tertiary education that live in the United States with those of North African women with tertiary education who live in France. They observe that colonialism has left an educational system and a language that should facilitate the transfer of skills from former colonies to the former centre of the Empire. However, colonisation has also left a hierarchy in the French labour market based on race and nationality, that constrains these women to work at the bottom of the employment structure, despite their education.

In Italy, although there has been some interest on migrants with tertiary education (Avenuto et al. 2004, Reyneri 2004), the number of available publications remains limited and rarely focus on women (Pelliccia, 2011). Nevertheless, there are publications based on official statistics (Fullin 2012, Fullin 2016, Brandi et al. 2008) and other available data (Coccia and Pittau 2016) that give some insights on the positioning of these women in the Italian labour market. Moreover, some works that do not specifically focus on migrant women with tertiary education give some insights into their experience and challenges. For instance, both Vianello (2009) and Toffanin (2015) included among their respondents, women with tertiary education that were respectively born or in Ukraine, or Latin America, giving room to useful observations on their experience in Italy. Other publications have focused on migrants (not specifically women) with tertiary education (Brandi 2010, Brandi 2008, Bussola e Pelliccia 2010, Brandi 2010b, Brandi 2009). However, the latter pay little attention to gender, class and racialisation. Overall, both in Italy and in France, there are only a few publications that precisely focus on the challenges faced by migrant women with tertiary education. The issue inspires further research to better understand their positioning in the labour market and the challenges they face in both contexts.

After briefly reviewing the literature on migrant women with tertiary education, the following section analyses the factors that have been identified by scholars to explain why it is more challenging for migrant women to access graduate employment.

2.2. A conditioned access to stratified labour markets

As it was mentioned earlier, substantial literature builds upon statistical data analysis and field work to stress that these women are particularly exposed to over-education and de-skilling, as they are often employed in the care and domestic work sectors that give little value to their qualifications. Why do migrant women with tertiary education find it so difficult to access positions in line with their education? What are the factors that condition their access to the labour market?

Researchers have developed different theories to explain why migrant women with tertiary education tend to experience downward mobility in the countries of immigration (Purkayastha, 2005; Man, 2005). The following paragraphs review this literature and identify seven dimensions or factors that have a role to play in confining migrant women at the bottom of the employment structure.

The first factors mentioned in the literature are those of macro-structural theorists who focus on the demand for low-paid position, especially in the care sector (2.2.1.). The second are theories that highlight the impact of migration regimes in conditioning access to employment (2.2.2.). The third concern theories at meso-level that focus on the influence of networks (2.2.3.). The fourth dimension that condition access to jobs relates to motherhood and its intersection with migration and care regimes (2.2.4). The fifth factor identified in the literature regards the lack of recognition of skills (2.2.5). The sixth dimension concerns essentialism in the recruitment process (2.2.6.). Last but not least, part of the literature has also focused on agency, strategies and expectations of migrant women (2.2.7).

In reviewing the literature, this section introduces explanatory factors at macro-, meso- and micro-level and points out some gaps in the literature that could be filled with this dissertation.

2.2.1. Labour demand in the Global North

In the literature, various theoretical approaches have tried to explain the inequalities between migrants and non-migrants that access the labour market. Macro-structural theories (Sassen, 1991) focus on the demand for labour: migrants would be forced to accept low-paid positions that the natives refuse. Castles and Miller (2009: 222) highlight that the *need* for "low-skilled labour" in economies of the Global North is socially constructed and based on poor wages, conditions and status in some sectors, which leads natives to avoid certain types of jobs. Rather than a *need* for migrant labour, Castles and Miller argue that it is the *demand* that is put forward by "powerful economic and political interests".

In Italy as well as in other Southern European countries, migrant women are over-represented in the domestic and care work sector. The Italian family welfare system (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Lyon, 2006) implies that there are few alternative options to informal family support for the care of dependents. In this context, families often appeal to a low-cost migrant female workforce to compensate for the lack of welfare facilities.

Through migration policies and new employment forms characterised by subcontracting, temporary work and casualisation, migrants continue to be transformed into a "subordinate, flexible labour force" (Castles and Miller, 2009: 234). Tsing (2009) argues that "difference" has a structural role in the mobilisation of capital, labour and resources. She especially analyses how economic, cultural and gender diversity plays a constitutive role in supply chain capitalism. It enables to cut labour costs and dictate (self)exploiting working conditions without endorsing any responsibility.

Through the case of migrant women with tertiary education, the dissertation further develops the argument of Tsing (2009): It illustrates how difference is perceived and used by employers as an asset to increase profits and analyse the impact of this mechanism on the trajectories of these women.

2.2.2. Migration regimes

Regimes refer to clusters of state policies, cultures and practices, discourses, relations of power and inequalities, and forms of contestations (Bonizzoni, 2014). *Migration regimes* relate to the policies that rule the entrance, settlement and naturalization rights as well as political, social, civil, cultural, and employment rights of migrants and their families, and norms that govern the relations between majority and minority groups.

Scholars have highlighted the multiple implications that migratory policies have in confining migrants at the bottom of the employment structure. For instance, as migrants' administrative status might rely on having an employment contract, they might look for any job as long as it enables them to access a residence permit (Morris 2001). As a result, migrants would more readily accept positions at the bottom of the employment market, which are unstable and poorly paid. In this regard, Terray (2008) estimates that migrants, and especially those undocumented, are particularly exposed to blackmail by employers. As a result, they are particularly exposed to exploitation at work.

Researchers estimate that policies have created a hierarchy based on nationality and migratory status that determines access to the labour market and rights. At the top of this hierarchy are nationals from the country of destination, followed by EU citizens from EU-25 and then by EU citizens from Bulgaria and Romania. Non-EU citizens are at the bottom of the structure, with undocumented migrants being those in a more precarious condition (Lendaro 2013, Council of Europe 2013, Rodier 2008).

When it comes to policies on skilled migration, it was stressed earlier that they are selective in terms of gender, racialisation and class. Schemes which define *skilled* based on income, such as the *EU Blue Card*, do not select intellectuals but rather top-income earners who tend to be white men from the Global North (Coccia and Pittau, 2015; Kofman, 2012).

Feminist researchers have pointed out that family reunification policies are guided by gender-stereotyped ideas (Raghuram 2004; Liversage 2009, Kofman 2012, Riaño 2012). For instance, women with tertiary education do not enter countries of destination only as workers but also as students, refugees and with other status. Many of them reunite in the context of family migration. However, family residence permits might provide limited access to the labour market preventing these women from achieving their aspiration or at least look for employment in their field.

Migratory status has other implications in terms of accessing the labour market. For instance, positions in the public sector might be closed to foreigners (Kofman 2012, Daadouch 2007) and in the private sector regulations might give priority to national or European workers (Riaño 2012). For instance, the so-called *Guéant circular*, adopted in France in 2011, indicated that employers who would like to hire a non-EU citizen were expected to prove they did not find a French or an EU candidate for the position. Although the text was revoked a few year later, norms continue to discourage the recruitment of non-EU citizens, as they need to pay a specific tax and have additional paperwork to fill in.

2.2.3. Networks and labour market positioning

The literature has highlighted the centrality of networks in defining the migration project and work placement (Portes and Bach 1985; Ambrosini, 2005; Piselli, 1995). Informal networks and social capital provide vital resources and cultural capital to individuals in their migratory process (Castles and Miller 2009). Useful cultural capital might include access to information, knowledge of the other countries and on how to organise travel. *Migratory chains* might be started by pioneers, who are joined by family, friends or acquaintances. The network that develops support newcomers in accessing shelter, work and assist in coping with bureaucratic procedures. Accordingly, migration becomes self-sustainable and creates *cumulative causation* which makes new movements more likely (Massey et al. 1993).

As a result, Tognetti Bordogna (2012) emphasises that skills and aspirations often become secondary while belonging to a specific nationality comes first. Indeed, in labour markets that are highly stratified on the base of gender, migratory status and citizenship, the use of national networks can limit access to positions at the bottom of the employment structure. For instance, migrant women with tertiary education might easily find more work in the same sector to that of their co-national friends. If the latter all work as care workers, newcomers might have access the same position, despite their level of education. As a result, the stratifications of the labour market tend to self-reproduce: Unless they can count on social capital outside of their national group, migrants access jobs depending on their nationality.

In France, Manohar and Killian (2015) observe similar dynamics. Colonialism has placed former subjects at the bottom of the employment structure. As a consequence, women with tertiary education that migrate from the former colonial space might primarily count on a network which has little access to middle and top positions. Their social capital might limit their access to positions at the bottom of the employment structure and to "ethnic economies" that offer small compensation to their human capital (Zhou and Logan 1998). Conversely, in other contexts, the national network might facilitate access to positions in line with their career histories. This seems to be the case for Indian women that work in ICTs in the United Kingdom (Raghuram 2008) and the United States (Killian and Manohar 2015).

Although it is not the main focus, this dissertation takes into account the social capital of the participants to the field-work and the way it might influence their trajectories.

2.2.4. Mothering, welfare and care regime

Childcare regimes are associated with three policy-related factors, which include the extent and nature of provisions, especially for under-school children; policies facilitating the combination between care work and paid work such as maternity, paternity and parental leaves; and cash benefits for child-care (Williams, Gavanas, 2016). These policies are combined with discourses and ideologies on what constitutes appropriate childcare, and expectations concerning mothers', fathers', and relatives' roles.

As stressed earlier, women continue to be the primary providers of unpaid care work and tend to have a double burden of being, on the one hand, active in the labour market and, on the other hand, ensure the social reproduction of the household. Caring for their children undoubtedly has consequences on the trajectories of migrant women with tertiary education. However, there is still little literature on the issue (Riaño, 2012; Shinozaki, 2014; Wong, 2014; Schaer, Dahinden and Toader, 2017).

The negotiation of care work between a couple highly depends on the expectations regarding femininities and masculinities, as well as on how the gender order is reflected in policies and on the labour market. For instance, the couple might decide to give priority to one or the other career, depending on who has the opportunity to earn a higher income and who have more chances to progress. Riaño (2012) argues that the breadwinner model in Switzerland privileges male over female partners, while Raghuram (2004) observes that migrant women's careers might also be prioritised if they have more chances to have a stable position.

Welfare policies and public daycare might be fundamental in enabling women to access employment, especially if they are migrant and rely on a more limited social network. If the public child care system is not accessible or underdeveloped, migrant women might rely on the combination of formal and informal resources to care for their children and be able to work. Partners, the network of family members, friends, neighbours, or co-nationals can become crucial to combine work and care for children. In this context, Bonizzoni (2014) argues that *family geographies* are essential in defining women's access to employment. This notion relates to whether there are family members in the country of arrival that can help in taking care of children and dependents. It also refers to the ease with which care holders (especially grand-mothers) in the country of departure and children in the country of arrival can move from one country to the other. For instance, children might spend the summer holidays with relatives in the country of origin. This capability (Sen, 1999) depends on travel costs but also migration policies. For instance, it can be easier for an Albanian grand-mother to move to Italy to help her daughter to care for her children rather than for a Cameroonian grand-mother, who has to face higher costs and more administrative procedures to travel.

The capability to combine paid work and unpaid care work also depends on class. Economic capital might facilitate access to private care, while the extent of social capital might enable one to mobilise potential carers and facilitate the access to useful cultural capital (such as information about care services and state financial support). These issues as well as the impact of mothering in trajectories of migrant women with tertiary education invite further research. They are addressed in chapter 7 of the dissertation.

2.2.5. Recognition of skills

Part of the literature on migration has focused on the "less-than-perfect international transferability" of skills (Chiswick and Miller, 2009). Different theories have been developed to explain the "educational mismatch" by occupation and over-education. For instance, *search and match theory* argues that the mismatch is related to imperfect information in the labour market that would mainly affect those entering the labour market for the first time (Groot and Maassen van den Brink, 2000). On the other hand, *human capital theory* observes that migrants have difficulties in transferring both formal schooling and labour market experience (Chiswick and Miller, 2009). It also argues that labour market entrants may take jobs that require less education with the intention of gaining experience. The last example is the theory of *screening hypothesis* according to which, whatever schooling acquired abroad has unclear meaning for employers. Therefore overeducation would be more prevalent for migrants from countries with labour markets and institutions "distant from the destination country" (Chiswick and Miller, 2009: 164).

All these theories claim that over-education declines with duration of residence. However, the literature on migrant women with tertiary education has emphasised that de-skilling is a lasting process and that as time passes, it might even become more difficult for women to access their previous field of work (Cuban, 2013). Another critical limit of this literature is that it does not take into essentialism nor gender, racialisation, and class. As has been stressed earlier in this chapter, the assessment of skills might significantly differ depending on who embodies them. For instance, skills associated with femininised reproductive sectors of the labour market tend to be overlooked, while representations left by the colonial history might lead to the depreciation of the skills of racialised migrants. The impact of representations in assessing skills also requires further research:

- The recognition of *tertiary education titles* is mentioned in several publications as one of the major obstacles that migrants face when attempting to access positions in line with their education (Coccia and Pittau 2016). The lack of recognition changes according to the place where the diploma was issued (Vianello 2014, Liversage 2009). For instance, in Italy there are specific procedures for the recognition of tertiary education degrees if they are to be used in the academic sphere, to access public competitions and regulated professions, but there is no official procedure for occupations that are not regulated by professional associations. In that case, recognition depends on employers (CIMEA, 2017). As a consequence, recognition of diplomas is also connected to the representations that employers and human resources managers have about the educational system where the qualification was obtained.

- The recognition of *experience gained abroad* tends also to be an issue when accessing employment (Liversage 2009, Killian and Manohar 2015). Foreign professional experience is not given the same value according to the country where it was gained, and to the way employers perceive this country. The construction of these representations of countries relates to the colonial past and the power relations in the international arena. Except for specific sectors and positions (such as in the international cooperation and human rights sectors), it is likely that more value will be given to experience gained in the United States or the UK rather than if it was acquired in Nigeria or Ghana, although they are all English-speaking countries.

- As far as *language skills* are concerned, research has stressed that not knowing the language of the country of arrival is problematic when accessing the labour market in Italy (ISTAT 2015) and France (Monso and Gleizes 2009). As mentioned, the colonial past might have left a common language in the countries of the former colonial empire. This commonality should at least, in theory, be an asset for migrants coming from former colonies. However and as it was stressed above, colonisation might have simultaneously built up a racialised social system that limits access to highly qualified positions for women coming from these areas (Killian and Manohar, 2015). Accents might also alter the decision of recruiters. Cuban (2013) has highlighted that because of accent the language knowledge of migrant women tends to be under-estimated by employers.

- On another hand, the knowledge of *specific languages* (that do not correspond to the official language in the country of destination) can be an asset when looking for employment. For instance, they might be valued when applying for positions that relate to the migrant identity (Liversage 2009), such as intercultural mediators or language teachers. Moreover, companies might see an interest in hiring native speakers for positions that imply trading with the mother tong linguistic area. For instance, in diversity management perspective (Fernandez 1991; Costa and Gianecchini 2013), it might be in a firm’s interest to hire a Russian native speaker to trade with countries of the former Soviet Union. Essentialism based on gender, class and racialisation has also their role to play in this field, as recruiters might prefer to hire candidates with specific accents and physical appearance, even when recruiting for positions connected with the migrant identity. Little research has been carried out on this issue as well.

2.2.6. Essentialism and Human Resources practices

As far as recruiters’ practices are concerned, the literature that analyses the impact of essentialism on the hiring of migrant women with tertiary education is still reduced. As mentioned, the impact that representations have on the assessment of skills gained through education and working experience, and language proficiency requires further research.

Existing literature has stressed that recruiters may select migrants according to the stereotypical views they have on national origins (Findlay et al. 2013, MacKenzie et al. 2009, Wills et al. 2009). According to this literature, citizenship or pretended country of origin are used as proxies to differentiate between migrant workers. To be considered "good workers" (Findlay et al. 2013, MacKenzie et al. 2009), candidates need to fit employers' national and racialised stereotypes. This practice contributes to reproducing a migrant division of labour and the stratifications of the labour market. The stereotypes based on nationality also interact with other stereotypes based on gender, age and class. The limited literature on the issue has mainly focused on access to jobs with low social recognition, namely in the care industry and in the hospitality sector.

Killian and Manohar (2015) are among the scholars that have raised the issue for accessing top-positions. They stress that essentialism can lead to different outcomes for migrant women with tertiary education, depending on the context. For instance, the racialisation of Indian women in the United States and North African women in France produce a "contingent benefit" for the first ones and a "categorical disadvantage" for the seconds. For both groups of women, racialisation mechanisms define access to intermediary and top positions.

In Italy publications that concern essentialism and discriminations in the labour market have mainly focused on intermediary positions (Allasino et al., 2004) or occupations at the bottom of the employment structure, such as in the domestic and care work sector (Scrinzi 2013, 2008 and 2003). Available publications that analyse discriminations in accessing high skilled employment and HR practices focus on Italian candidates and do not take into consideration migrants (Colombo, 2008). Nevertheless, various scholars (Fullin 2016, Allasino et al., 2004) have suggested that there is stronger discrimination against migrants in certain occupations that involve contact with customers (sales, hospitality) or working at clients’ home (domestic and care work).

Scrinzi (2013) has analysed the practices of employment centres for domestic workers in Italy and in France. In Italy, Scrinzi (2003) observes that the recruitment procedures are based on processes of essentialism, including racialisation, that associate specific "races" and "cultures of origin" with skills related to domestic and care work. For instance, she found that recruiters believe Peruvian women are better at providing care than Nigerian women, whereas women from Morocco have the reputation to enjoy cleaning. Scrinzi (2013) also observes different forms of essentialism, including racialisation, of migrant women in France. For instance, their migration might be seen as a positive opportunity to emancipate from a patriarchal culture.

Similarly, Lendaro and Imdorf (2012) have studied the use of ethnic and gender categories in recruiting domestic workers in France. Although the use of these categories might not always be explicit, they observe that migrant women tend to be associated with a cheap and readily available workforce, that is particularly suitable for domestic work because of their gender.

In France as well, De Rudder et al. (2006) have analysed essentialism along the recruitment chain: employers who used to explicitly ask employment agencies to find candidates with specific physical characteristics, are now aware of the potential legal consequences of discriminatory practices and prefer to use less explicit formulas that identify undesirable traits. Intermediaries echo these discriminations preferring not to present to employers candidates who risk being rejected. This "anticipatory rationalisation" can be strong enough to stop even potential candidates from applying for jobs to avoid humiliating situations.

2.2.7. Strategies and expectations

In parallel, it is necessary to take into consideration the strategies and expectations of migrant women workers and the way they define the access to the labour market. As stressed earlier, migrants have social and cultural capital that they often intend to value and enhance in the country of destination (Terray, 2008). Tognetti Bordogna (2012) points out that the migration projects are multiple and differentiated, based on gender, age, country of origin, networks, and also depend on the historical context. Among the new profiles of migrant women, literature (Vianello, 2009) identifies *migrants in transit* for whom life abroad is considered purely instrumental, *permanent migrants* who re-orientate the migration project and invest in their own future in the country of destination, and *suspended migrants* who have decided to stop the migration experience.

As far as women with tertiary education are concerned, Raghuram (2008) has highlighted that work always becomes more central in the identity of middle-class women. Many women with tertiary education intend to enhance their skills or enhance their careers with migration. Researchers have shown that the failure to find work in the field of education might lead to depression (Killian and Manohar 2015) and women might identify their migration with a loss of socio-professional status (Riaño 2012). Reyneri (2004) estimates that there is often a gap between the socio-professional identity before and after migration. Some women interviewed by Liversage (2009) claim that they did not feel like "full human beings" anymore and they fear to become "just housewives".

As mentioned, researchers have tried to identify some of the strategies that are implemented by migrant women with tertiary education to cope with downward mobility (González Ramos et al., 2013). For instance, de-skilling is perceived by some researchers as a major factor of return migration for migrants with tertiary education (Haour-Knipe and Davies 2008).

Furthermore, Liversage (2009) identifies different paths that are being undertaken by migrant women with tertiary education: some might be able to find work in their field; others might find work based on their migrant identity (working for example as cultural mediators). To cope with de-skilling, some women might decide to pursue additional education. Moreover, while some migrant women might accept entering positions that are not in line with their studies, others might prefer withdrawing from the labour market rather than working in positions for which they are overqualified. Last but not least, women might decide to return or move to other countries where they hope their skills will be valued. Throughout their lives, women may pass through several of these situations and might live them differently depending on their expectations, trajectories, and initial class positioning.

Vianello (2014b) focuses on the strategies of Ukrainian migrant women who used to be graduate professionals and are employed in Italy as domestic workers. She analyses how these women cope with downward mobility. Per Vianello's view, migrant women might see the migratory experience as "just an interlude in their lives ", which makes downward mobility more acceptable. They may also try to weaken the hierarchy with their employer by building a close and familiar relationship with them. Others might differentiate themselves from other migrant women that work in the domestic sector as a response to downward mobility. All of these strategies aim at partially recovering their previous social position and self-esteem.

Conclusions of chapter 1: Research questions

The review of the literature through the prism of gender, class and racialisation has put into light some of the main dimensions that condition the access of migrant women with tertiary education to employment. In doing so, the chapter brought out mechanisms that contribute to the reproduction of inequalities, and that explain why the labour market continues to be stratified according to gender and racialisation. The analysis also attempted to identify some gaps in the literature that would need further research. It is based on these gaps that the research questions of the dissertation are constructed. More specifically, the thesis aims at answering the questions listed above.

In the chapter, it was stressed that both in France and in Italy, there are only a few publications that specially focus on the employment positioning of migrant women with tertiary education. This dissertation proposes to partly cover these omissions. It analyses the issue based on a review and study of secondary data and by a comparative analysis of the views among migrant women with tertiary education, recruiters, and social workers.

- What does available institutional data tells about the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in local labour markets of France and Italy? (Chapter 3)
- How do migrant women with tertiary education, recruiters and social workers perceive the employment positioning of the women and the stratifications of the labour market? (Chapter 4)

The chapter also stressed that the concept of skills is elusive and difficult to define. The recognition of skills might vary considerably depending on who embodies them and who assesses them. Different forms of essentialism might interfere with the evaluation of skills, and contribute to the stratification of local labour markets.

- How do essentialism influence the assessment of skills? More specifically, how does the embodiness of skills interfere with the evaluation of diplomas, experience gained abroad, language, and soft skills? (Chapter 5)

According to the existing literature, migrant women, including those have obtained tertiary education, tend to mainly find employment in positions at the bottom of the employment structure. Scholars have stressed that these women might follow different paths to cope with de-skilling. Based on fieldwork, the dissertation aims at supplementing findings regarding this issue.

- What strategies are implemented by migrant women with tertiary education to cope with stratifications? How might these women take advantage of the embodiness of skills to improve their positioning in the labour market? (Chapter 6)

The chapter has also highlighted that unpaid care work within the family continues to be mainly carried out by women. As a result, the childcare arrangements that are found might have a significant impact on the professional career of migrant women with tertiary education.

- How does mothering affect the trajectories of migrant women with tertiary education? (Chapter 7)

Overall, this chapter introduced the theoretical lenses that are used to analyse the positioning and the challenges of migrant women with tertiary education. It also critically defined the terms that are used in the dissertation. Moreover, it reviewed the literature concerning migrant women with tertiary education and their access to employment, putting into light some of the gaps that need further research. It is based on these gaps that the research questions were constructed. Now that the objectives of the dissertation have been set, the following chapter describes and discusses the methodology adopted to explore the issues raised above.

Chapter 2. Methodology: multi-sitting and crossing gazes

I found Rosella's number on-line when looking for NGOs and associations that could put me in touch with potential participants. When I contacted her, she suggested that we could meet on a Sunday morning in a Church. I imagined a Mass would take place that day, but what I did not expect was that Rosella wanted me to attend the ceremony before having a chat together. I politely accepted, and we could talk about her experiences and impressions afterwards. I guess that, besides being a busy working woman with little time during week-days for a meeting, Rosella also wanted to introduce her faith to me, as it has a predominant role in her life. During the interview, she came back several times on how religion guides her way of looking at the world and interpreting the experiences she had in the past.

The experience I had with Rosella highlights the fact that interview settings are never neutral; they have specific meanings and implications regarding interactions with participants. They need to be taken into account by the researcher together with other methodological factors, as they all have an impact on what comes out of field based research.

The methodology adopted in the dissertation aims at answering the research questions from multiple perspectives. As argued by Fauser (2018), using different methods, methodologies and research subjects' perspectives provide different knowledge on the various aspects of a particular phenomenon. The idea is not that of obtaining more objective results, but rather to reveal a "more complex picture through complementary insights". Moreover, it was decided to multi-site the research to have inputs from multiple places and de-centre what could be taken for granted. Multi-siting also contributes to having more complex process-tracing as well as identification of causal mechanisms that explain how stratifications of the labour market are being produced, reproduced, and challenged at the local level.

The following chapter opens with a presentation of the contexts where the research was conducted, namely Alsace and Veneto. It also explains why multi-siting and focusing on regional labour markets were perceived as the best options to analyse the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education. The second section of the chapter introduces and discuses the specific methods used to answer the research questions.

1. A multi-sited research in Alsace and Veneto

Amapola moved to Alsace at the beginning of the 2000s. Her initial intention was to work for two years and then go back to Albania to continue her career. However, as she met her partner, she decided to quit her job and stay in the region to start a family. She mentions her first feelings when arriving in the area. From her point of view, the lifestyle was completely different from that of Tirana. Besides the cold weather, shops were closing way too early. She still remembers going to the bakery at 18h and being told that there was nothing left as the shop was about to close. Amapola felt she wanted to go back to Albania, but she endured for six months after which time everything started getting better.

In contrast, Rada remembers how fast she had to adapt when arriving in Veneto near the end of the 2000s. Although Rada had already studied Italian for three years at the university before moving, she found that the language she was listening to in classes was far different from the one she had learned in Cameroun. Rada first feared she would not manage to cope with this unexpected challenge, but then decided to start studying hard from seven in the morning until eight in the evening. "It took a while," she said "to get used to this rhythm", but then she was fine.

Amapola's and Rada's accounts stress that the arrival in a new context can be experienced in a significantly different way, depending on the reasons for moving, one's personal history and sensitivity, the projects and expectations, the networks, and other forms of capital that the person has at their disposal. What can be said about the contexts in which Amapola and Rada arrived? What are the similarities and differences between these two areas?

This section introduces the settings in which the research was conducted. It highlights the multiple advantages of multi-siting research (1) and explains why the region was perceived as a more appropriate geographical level to study access to the labour market (2). The chapter also introduces and compares the two areas in which the study takes place, namely Alsace and Veneto (3).

1.1. Multi-sites, multi-cases and comparison in migration studies

Scholars have highlighted that research on migration often involves comparison, although this is not always made explicit. For instance, academics have built their theories on prior research, and by doing so, they compare their findings with previous literature (Bloemraad, 2013). Consequently, even a single case might be comparative as long as it analyses a phenomenon in light of prior research. On the other hand, qualitative research based on biographical interviews tends to compare past and present experiences of participants. If interviewees are migrants who are asked to speak about their migration trajectories, their narrations can involve comparing not only past and present but also the country(ies) where they previously lived with those where they live now. Therefore time and place comparison is at stake even in single-sited research. These forms of contrast are often used but rarely made explicit (Bloemraad, 2013; Green, 1994).

The need to develop theories based on multi-sited fieldwork has especially flourished in the context of transnational research. Scholars have stressed the need to cross borders in order to account for the links that exist between countries of birth, transit, and final destinations. George E. Marcus has been one of the leading scholars in calling for multi-sited research on transnational migration. The anthropologist (Marcus, 1995) specifies that multi-sited research is designed around chains, paths, threads, conjunctions, and juxtapositions of locations. He invites researchers to develop their theories on field work that crosses borders and follows people, things, metaphors, plots, biographies or conflicts. Moreover, scholars have argued that sites cannot be considered as discrete units (Gatewood 2000). Mobility of people, ideas, goods as well as cultural differences within communities, and the postcolonial condition shows that cases are influencing one each other. Therefore, ties and identities have to be explored among multiple locales (Burawoy, 2009), and research needs to be comparative to account for the linkages between sites (Fitzgerald, 2012).

Researchers have specified that multi-site research does not necessarily involve studying multiple cases (Fauser, 2018). A single site may embrace several cases, and conversely, a single case can be transnational. For instance, a case can be that of a transnational family network which expands across borders. In this regard, instead of focusing on multi-siting, Burawoy (2009) calls for a multi-case method. He uses a series of theoretically-driven cases to highlight the connections between local processes and global structures that shape them. Burawoy highlights that "constituting distinct sites as cases of something leads us to thematize their difference rather than their connection, which, then, poses questions of how that difference is produced and reproduced" (Burawoy, 2009: 202).

Other migration scholars have stressed that conducting fieldwork in different places is also meaningful for research that does not focus on transnational ties. Already in the 1990s, Green (1994) introduced a "divergent model", which included multiple levels of comparisons. He argued that different comparative perspectives lead to different conclusions. To illustrate his argument, he stated that: "Studying West Indians in New York (and implicitly comparing them to African Americans) yields one result; comparing West Indians in New York to West Indians in London leads to another explanation". On his views, comparing the experience of similar groups of migrants in different places questions generalisations based on single case studies and leads to a higher level of generality. Similarly, Stanfield (1993) considered that arguments are more significant when we can bring to the table evidence drawn from more than one case.

Recent publications have called for further developing comparisons in migration research. Bloemraad (2013) argues that "detailed attention to a few cases" enables the researcher to de-centre factors that were taken for granted or seen as "natural" and helps to further contextualise a social phenomenon. Studying a similar group of migrant (for instance based on nationality, class, or gender) in different places enables us to "move beyond theories centred on the resources and motivations of migrants". On her views, this proceeding permits "more careful process-tracing" and the identification of "causal mechanisms". Overall, she finds that comparing enables researchers to deepen the analysis on how structures, processes, norms, and institutions shape the experience of migrants.

Both Bloemraad (2013) and Martiniello (2013) distinguished three main types of comparison. Firstly, research might compare people based on their nationality, migration status (migrant and non-migrant), gender, age, or "wave of migration". Both scholars warn against the cultural essentialism that lies beyond the comparison between groups of migrants based on their nationality. Their argument is further developed in the following sections of the dissertation. The second variant concerns the contrast between places. This practice includes the overwhelmed reference to country-to-country comparison, but also the less common distinction among regions, cities or continents. The third group of comparisons that are mentioned in these publications are that based on time periods, organisations and hybrid comparisons. Whatever type of contrast is to be chosen, Bloemraad (2013) invites the researcher to be careful and acknowledge the "inherent cognitive biases" when deciding what sort of cases to compare. Following the advice, the multiple comparisons and levels of contrast that are at stake in this dissertation, are explored and discussed in the following sections.

Echoing the literature mentioned above, the dissertation answers to the research questions based upon multi-sited fieldwork. It analyses the challenges that migrant women with tertiary education are experiencing in two local labour markets in Europe. As mentioned, having inputs from multiple places enable us to question generalisations based on single case studies and to de-centre what is taken for granted. It permits having a more complex process-tracing and identification of causal mechanisms that explain how stratifications of the labour market are being produced, reproduced, and challenged at the local level.

1.2. Focusing on regional level

The plea for multi-sited and/or multi-case research emerged in a context of growing criticism towards studies exclusively based on the national level. Scholars have highlighted that the concept of nation-state influences past and current thinking in social sciences. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) coined the concept of *methodological nationalism* to refer to the assumption that the nation-state is the "natural social and political form of the modern world". They identify three primary variants of methodological nationalism. Firstly, social sciences tend to be so captured along the lines of nation-states, that they are blind to it. Theories are often structured according to nation-state principles, which became so "banal", that they "vanished from sight". Secondly, national discourses, loyalties, and agendas are often taken for granted. Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002) observe *naturalization* of the nation-state in different disciplines. For instance, in International relations, nation-states are often perceived as "adequate entities" for studying the international world without questioning the legitimacy of focusing on them. The third variant of methodological nationalism consists of limiting the analysis of phenomena to the boundaries of the nation-state.

In addition to the triad identified by Wimmer and Glick Shiller (2002), Bloemraad (2013) adds that national models tend to view all places in a country as homogeneous. Narratives about particular cities are often generalised to entire nation-states (Glick Schiller and Caglar, 2009). For instance, the experience of migrants in cities such as Sidney, are expected to represent that of migrants in the whole country (FitzGerald, 2012). Indeed, cross-national comparisons often rest on inter-city comparison. Overall and despite growing criticism, Bloemraad (2013) observes that nation-state comparison continues to prevail in migration research, specially in Europe.

On the other hand, since the 1990s, cities - specifically those identified as being global (Sassen, 1991) - have raised growing interest in migration studies. In these approaches, the focus is on types of cities, such as those considered to be global. However, global cities are rarely compared to non-global cities. In this regard, Bloemraad (2013) estimates that cities have become a "generalisable case" that represents either the entire nation or a type of towns. In addition, and as far as migration research in Europe is concerned, Martiniello (2013) estimates that studies mainly focused on metropolitan areas such as London, Paris, Amsterdam, Berlin or Barcelona. While taking note of the limits mentioned above, migration scholars have stressed the importance of locality in analysing migrants' experience. For instance, Glick Schiller and Caglar (2009) call for a "comparative theory of locality" and Bloemraad (2013) estimates that a new frontier in migration research lies at the sub-national level, in studying not only cities but also regions, provinces, and neighbourhoods.

Meanwhile, since the 1980s, labour market scholars have also called for a reconceptualisation of labour markets at the local level. For instance, Clark (1986: 416) considers that local labour markets are "the *best* analytical lens" to analyse the structure of the "contemporary spatial system". In this sense, Jamie Peck (1989) estimates that labour markets, although they are constituted of wider structures, are actually "constructed" at the local level. Although he acknowledges that the notion of the local labour market is somewhat ambiguous, Peck finds that labour market segmentation must be understood at the local level. Indeed, labour markets may be segmented in locally specific ways. Peck (1989) gives examples of local factors that condition the parameters under which labour markets operate. The latter include, amongst others, housing market conditions, childcare facilities, unionism, and participation of married women to the labour market.

Similarly, scholars have argued that gender orders are also local. Accordingly, there are local patterns of gender relations and spatial variations on the way men are involved in childcare (Jenkins, 2018). At the meso-level, social relations which are locally based are influential in enabling women to access employment. At macro-level, gender stratifications of the labour market (in terms of access to top-positions, wages and working conditions as well as feminised/male-dominated sectors) and welfare policies (specifically those connected to care) are also locally based. As far as policies are concerned, Barbulescu (2019: 15) analysed policies toward migrants in Spain and in Italy. The researcher stressed that regions and cities rather than countries are the settings where most legal rights are implemented. According to her views, it is at local level that so-call "integration" takes place.

In addition, specialisation of local labour markets, such as in manufacturing, services or other industries, also has an impact on women’s work (Jones, Rosenfeld, 1989). In parallel, recent publications have also stressed that the level of education of the workforce, as well as over-education, varies across countries (Davia, McGuiness, O’Connell, 2017).

All these factors and phenomenon, which are locally specific, influence the access that migrant women, and especially those with tertiary education, have to employment. Therefore, it is at the local level that the positioning and experience of these women need to be analysed. Located halfway between cities and national level, regions have been argued to be the most appropriate level from which analysing local labour markets in Europe (Vega, Elhorst, 2014; Decressin, Fatas, 1995).

The author of this dissertation does not claim that regions are homogeneous spaces. Indeed, even within the same region, there are significant differences in the way migration is experienced depending on class, gender, and racialisation, but also between rural and urban areas. As far as local labour markets are concerned, Peck (1989) already stressed that the delimitation of travel-to-work areas is highly problematic. More recently, studies on local labour market areas (LMAs) in Europe found that there was no single definition of the concept and its boundaries, although it is assumed that it corresponds to "clusters of commuters flows" that are less extensive than regions (Coombes et al., 2012)). Moreover, regional labour markets are not isolated entities, but they are connected the one with the others (Vega, Elhorst, 2014). However, regions share common features, in terms of the history of migration and racialisation, gender order, stratification of the labour market and welfare. These factors make it an appropriate level at which to analyse the experience of migrant women with tertiary education. Nonetheless, the national level is not entirely ignored. Indeed, national policies (together with local regulations) continue to shape local labour markets. The literature and data that focuses on the local level are reviewed, along with that regarding the national level, to introduce the contexts.

1.3. Introducing the Alsatian and Veneto contexts

The two areas that were selected to conduct field-work are Alsace, in France, and Veneto, in Italy. In her book on migrant women employed as domestic workers, Francesca Scrinzi (2013) highlights that in France and in Italy migrants presence, the histories and policies of migration, the registers used to construct ethnic otherness are significantly different. The following section analyses part of these differences, stressing some of the specificities of the Veneto region and the Alsace area. The section introduces the history of migration and the construction of otherness in Alsace and Veneto (1.3.1). It continues with a reflection on the Italian and French models of relationship among cultural diversity, migration, and citizenship policies (1.3.2).

1.3.1. Two histories of migration and racialisation

The following section gives insights on the local migration and racialisation histories. It does not pretend to be exhaustive, but it gives insights that enable the reader to better understand the current stratifications of the local labour markets. Both local histories are analysed in parallel and are divided in two main periods of time which covers the migratory movements and relation to otherness before 1945 (1.3.1.1.) and after the Second World War (1.3.1.2.).

1.3.1.1. Before 1945: Migratory movements and colonialism

Muller (2009) has pointed out that Alsace has been crossed by migratory movements since Antiquity. Located in a border area, the historical region was alternatively attached to the Holy Roman Empire and Germany, or the Kingdom and then the Republic of France. Until the modern historical period, the mobility in the area mainly concerned populations that inhabited along the Rhine river. Nevertheless, it also involved migrants from Switzerland, Flanders, and in a lower proportion some rare English, Scandinavians, Italians, Polish and Russians. From the 1750s to the beginning of the 20th century, significant flows of emigrants left the region, escaping war, religious persecution, as well as starvation (ORIV, 2006). Over that period, Alsatians were moving to the Russian and Austria-Hungarian Empires, the Americas, the French colonised territories of Northern African (mainly Algeria), and they were also migrating to inner France, especially after the union of the region to the German Empire in the 19th century.

At the end of the First World War, Alsace was reunited to France. In the early 1920s, the ratio of foreigners to natives in the local population was lower than in the rest of the country. Nevertheless, they represented close to 4% of the population (ORIV, 2006). Migrants were mainly Germans and to a lesser extent Swiss, Poles, Italians, Luxembourgers and Belgians. As early as 1919, a Franco-Polish convention established the recruitment of several thousand of miners that were expected to move from Poland with their families and settle in the Alsatian potassic basin (Niss, 1997). After the attachment to France, Alsace was also concerned by the movement of those perceived as colonial subjects, who were mainly coming from Northern Africa.

Meanwhile, the process of racialisation of the French identity was under development. Ndiaye (2006) highlights that in France the Republican ideology was set as being theoretically blind to skin color and other physical characteristics. However, the French Empire was built on the oppression of colonial subjects which were perceived as non whites and non-civilised. As a result, colonialised populations were not granted citizenship. The distinction between citizens and subjects was political and racial (Ndiaye, 2006: 46).

Since the 19th century, colonial propaganda was spreading to justify the territorial expansion and the oppression of colonial subjects as well as to affirm the whiteness of the French identity. On Ndiaye's view (2006: 47), the racialisation of Frenchness went hand in hand with the celebration of colonial exoticism. However, according to Ndiaye (2006), until the First World War the black population in the metropole was not that large, so that the French working class did not need to define itself in racial terms. This need mainly emerged during the Great War when half a million black soldiers and workers entered the territory. New rules were set to avoid mixed marriages. The fear of mixing races, or *métissage*, which already existed in the colonies spread in the metropole. In this context, an exhibition was inaugurated in Strasbourg in 1924 and staged a stigmatising representation of the oppressed colonialised populations (Amougou, 2002).

Researchers have highlighted that the construction of racial models was/is also gendered. One of the trends was that of sexualizing colonialised women (Blanchard et al., 2018; Dorlin, 2008). In parallel, colonised men, especially in the Algerian context, were trapped in images of masculinity that depict them as being violent and oppressors toward women (Vergès, 2019). As it is further developed below, these images constructed under colonialism continue to mark the collective imagination.

Later on, the crisis of the 1930s resulted in the introduction of quotas for foreign workers, while racism gained visibility in the Alsatian local press (ORIV, 2006). During the Second World War, Alsace was annexed to the Third Reich. In that period, foreigners were overrepresented in the local concentration camp of Natzwiller. Meanwhile, colonial troops were mobilised by the French government in exile and participated in the liberation of the country, suffering heavy casualties. However, before the end of the war, the French army committed to "whitewashing" the troops (Ndiaye, 2008: 185). The colonial soldiers were first sent to the South of France and then quickly repatriated. According to Ndiaye (2008: 186), rulers did not want France to be freed by "men of colour".

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Like Alsace, Veneto also has a long history of migration. Sanfilippo and Colucci (2010) highlight that, since the Middle Ages, wars, famines, seasonal work, natural transformations, economic expansion, and depressions have generated continuous movements in the area. Already in the Middle Ages, Northern Italy was one of the first sending areas, from where part of the population was emigrating outside of the peninsula. These mobilities were different in terms of length and destination, depending on whether migrants were originating from mountain or plain areas. After the unification of Italy, in 1861, and until the beginning of the 20th century, Veneto was one of the Italian regions with the highest number of emigrants (more than Piemonte, Campania, and Sicily). From 1876 to 1913, over 1.822.000 persons left the region for other European countries or the Americas (Sanfilippo et al., 2010). Between the two world wars, the percentage of Venetians leaving the area fell below that of other Italian regions. Nonetheless, emigration flows continued to be steady until the beginning of the 1960s.

Meanwhile, colonialism was also constructing "figures of race" (Giuliani, 2013: 1) and looking towards the whitening of the national identity. According to Petrovich Njegosh (2012: 28), the well-known statement "Italy is made, Italians are to be done", retaken by Martini in 1896, did refer to the virilizing and "whitening" effect of ongoing colonialism, on a newly united population which had an ambiguous racial status. In this regard, it is relevant to take into account how Italians that were migrating to the United States by the end of the XIX century were being racialised. Although there were differences according to class, there were also distinctions made depending on whether they were moving from the north or the south of the country (Gabaccia, 2003) - Italians tending to be categorised as non-whites or in an intermediary position between whites and blacks (Luconi, 2012).

Petrovich Njegosh (2012: 21) stresses that colonialism stood as a symbolic and concrete space to prove the "whiteness" of Italians. While the colonial power initially authorised the mix-marriage between "black" and "white" persons, fascim marked a turning point and mixed marriage became illegal from 1933. To obtain citizenship, children of Italians and colonialised women had to pass a race test that proved their membership to an hypothetical "white race". Petrovich Njegash (2012) estimates that this regulation shaped a rigid line of colour, which continued to be in place after the Second World War and the fall of the fascist regime. As in the case of France, racialisation was also gendered in the Italian construction of otherness. While white

Italian women were considered a victim, black women tended to be depicted as hyper-sexualised preys (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012 : 44).

1.3.2.2. Migration from 1945

By 1946 the foreign population in Alsace had fallen to 2.4% (Muller, 2009). It was only in the 1950s that new waves of migration arrived to the region. Newcomers were mainly from Southern Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal), Northern Africa (Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco), Yugoslavia as well as migrants and commuters from Germany. If compared to the rest of France, in the 1960s-70s a significant number of migrants arrived in Alsace directly from Turkey. These citizens mainly found employment as blue collar workers. Over that period, researchers observe that there was a gradual stratification of the labour market based on nationality. Post-colonial migrants mostly found work at the bottom of the employment structure and were positioned slightly below nationals from European emigration countries such as Italy and Spain (De Rudder and Vourc'h, 2006; Linhart, 1981).

Scholars argue that 1974 marked a turning point in the French migration policies. The economic crisis resulted in a gradual closure of borders. The aim was not to block immigration but to reduce the immigrant population in France through return assistance and the non-renewal of work permits. It is interesting to note that while France was closing its borders, Alsatian companies, which were less affected by the crisis, kept demanding low-skilled labour (Muller, 2009). As a result, Alsatian employers obtained from the Prefect a regional derogation for hiring Turkish workers. Meanwhile, in the 1980s, irregular residency in France became a motive for expulsion. On Ndaye’s views (2014), this watershed favored the conflation between immigration and clandestinity.

The fieldwork conducted by Beaud and Pialoux (2006) with blue-collar workers working in Sochaux, in the neighboring region of Franche-Conté, gives relevant insights on the evolution of the migrant/non-migrant relations in the working class. They note that in the 1970s, companies like Peugeot were alternating French and migrant workers with the aim of breaking the strong solidarity between workers following the 1968 movements. Despite the enactment of this strategy, solidarity between workers developed regardless country of origin. Tensions still existed, but they were partly pacified thanks to the social and political context of the 1970s. In Beaud and Pialoux's (2006) view, the progressive destructuring of the working class was decisive in creating a division between foreign and local-borns. This phenomenon became visible in the 1980s and partly resulted from the closure of factories, the crisis of political representativity, and identities.

While migration flows of the 1960s and 1970s are primarily perceived as being economically driven, those from the 1980s are considered to be mainly related to family reunification and asylum-seeking (Muller, 2008, ORIV, 2006). Although women were always present in migratory flows towards Alsace, their weight in the migrant population steadily increased from the 1970s. Scrinzi (2013: 54) cautions regarding the stereotype of considering working migration as being mainly that of men, while women tend to be associated with family reunion. She indicates that this representation that emerged in France back in the 1970s overestimates the presence of working migrant women before the closure of the borders. This gendered construction of otherness served to depict migrant women as oppressed and external to the labor market. Scrinzi (2013: 56) estimates that this representation of migrant women emerged in contrast with that of European women who were valued for being active. In this stereotyped perspective, work is seen as an indicator of emancipation and adaptation, which continue to prevailed in the late 2010s.

In parallel, it is worth noting that since the end of the Second World War, Alsace and more specifically Strasbourg hosts international organisations, including the

Council of Europe which employs several thousand of workers, including migrant women with tertiary education. The existence of these institutions has a double implication for our research. On the one hand, they attract and might become potential employers for migrant women with tertiary education, especially those born in member states of the Council of Europe outside of the EU, such as Albania, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, and Turkey. On the other hand, the presence of diplomats and top-professionals from non-EU countries leads to differentiated visibility of migrants in the city (Muller, 2009). The representation of the upper-class diplomats contrasts with that of low-class migrants living in the suburbs *banlieue*. Although they might be born in the same countries, class distinctions can lead the former to be considered expats and foreigners while the latter might be referred to as being immigrants. Keeping in mind this duality, it could raise the question how non-EU diplomats and staff of the Council of Europe, especially those from the former Soviet Union and from Subsaharan Africa, are being perceived and racialised in the Alsacian context.

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The 1970s also correspond to a period of change in the Veneto region but not for the same reasons. In Veneto, as well as in other Italian regions, emigration gradually decreased from the 1960s and Italian emigrants even started to move back. From the perspective of Sanfilippo et al. (2010), the destination countries started to look "closer" to Italy, not only because it was easier to reach them but also for cultural reasons. In the 1970s, new experiences of mobility arose, including that of young Italian people going to European capitals to study.

Although there was already a significant movement of refugees, students, domestic workers and other migrants coming from former colonies since 1945 (Colucci, 2018), it is mainly from the 1970s that immigration flows towards Italy became more consistent. Sacchetto (2013) mentions the arrival of Tunisians working in the fishing industry and in agriculture, and that of migrant women mainly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Green Cape and the Philippines who are hired through Catholic channels in the domestic sectors. The researchers indicate that migrants, who were often undocumented, tend to find employment in the domestic, hospitality and industrial sector as well as in logistics, agriculture and construction. However, throughout the seventies and at least until the mid-eighties, foreign immigration in Italy was considered a minor phenomenon and was granted little interest by the media and academia (Sacchetto, 2013).

In the 1980s, migrants arriving to Italy were often struggling to get a residence permit, and in order to obtain that document applicants needed to have a regular working contract. Sacchetto (2013) stresses that until the mid-eighties the normative framework concerning migration was still extremely fragmented. The researcher estimates that this precarious administrative status exposed migrant workers to informal and low paid jobs. Migrants were faced with a job demand which was no longer concentrated in large companies, but fragmented into a multiplicity of small industrial and service companies, which made a large use of irregular work (Luciano, 1993). Meanwhile the number of migrants in the country grew, reaching over a million persons. At the end of the 1980s, following the murder in Caserta of Jerry Essan Masslo, a South African worker and political activist, over 200 000 people demonstrated in Rome against racism. As a result, a new law was adopted to extend the refugee status to non Europeans.

From the 1990s, there was a significant increase in the number of migrants getting to Italy, mostly from Albania, former-Yugoslavia and other Eastern European countries. In this decade, migrants gained attention both in the media and in academic research (Sacchetto, 2013). After the 2000s and the so-called crisis period, the share of resident permits for work reasons decreased, while the requests for asylum and humanitarian protection grew (Colucci, 2018). These trends are also visible in Veneto. The number of foreign residents in the region has been increasing since the 2000s, rising from about 5% of the population in the early 2000s to 11% in 2017 (Veneto

Lavoro, 2017b). However, this progression is not linear. According to the official data, the number of foreign residents increased up to 2014 (514,000 people) and then registered a progressive decline. In 2017, foreign residents in the region were around 485,000. In the last twenty years, the composition of migrant groups based on gender and nationality has also undergone significant developments that are described in the following section.

As far as migrant women are concerned, we have seen that there were already present in the migration flows that followed the Second World War. Migrant women were mainly arriving through Catholic channels to access positions as domestic workers. From the 1990s the number of women entering through family reunification has significantly increased, while from the 2000s a consistent number has reached Italy in search of international protection. Research that focuses on migrants women's access to the labor market is quite recent and mainly developed from the 1990s. They have mainly focused on feminized tasks, such as domestic and care work, and the sex industry. For Tognetti Bordogna (2012) the focus on these topics has contributed to feeding migrant stereotyping and labeling mechanisms.

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Meanwhile, it is worth stressing that both in Alsace and Veneto there has been a polarisation of the political debates around migration issues. This trend accelerated in the 1980s-90s, which correspond to a period of weakening of the 1960-70s social movements and progressive questioning of the welfare state. In parallel, researchers observe the normalisation of radical right parties in Europe which promote the idea that they are not that different from other ruling parties (Camus, 2011).

In Veneto, while some migrant groups gained visibility in claiming their rights, political parties such as *Lega Nord* started obtaining both media attention and votes. It is precisely by the end of the 1980s that *Lega Nord* supporters evolved from targeting

Southern Italians to stigmatising migrants (Barcella, 2018). Xenophobia, and especially criticism towards Albanian migrants that were arriving in Italy during that period, became their forte. Since then, the party has grown exponentially, passing in a few years from two MPs in 1987 to over 180 MPs in 1994. Since 2010, the President of the Veneto region is a member of *Lega Nord* and party members are part of the Italian government formed in 2018.

A similar trend can be observed in Alsace, where political parties with anti-migration programs, such as the *Rassemblement National* (previously *Front National*), have been gaining electoral support. From the 1990s, the *FN* has emerged as one of the main political forces in Alsace (Kleinschmager, 2014; Dorandeu, 1997). However, unlike the *Lega* in Veneto, the *Rassemblement National* has so far neither obtained the presidency of the former Alsace region, nor that of *départements* Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin*,* nor seats as that of Major in the main cities of the region (Strasbourg, Mulhouse, Colmar). Nonetheless, its success at national and local level has contributed to a trivialization and legitimization of the themes promoted by the former *Front National*, particularly with regard to migration, while media commentators have depoliticised the criticism towards this radical right party (Maler and Salingue, 2014).

1.3.2. Two models of conceiving and addressing migrants' otherness?

When it comes to policies on migration and citizenship, and recognition of cultural diversity by the State, France and Italy tend to be classified in two different categories. In this regard, Barbulescu (2019: 13) stresses that the studies on "national models" usually focus on two specific national policies, namely the type of citizenship regime and the extension of cultural rights. As a result, countries tend to be positioned along two axes. The first one is the ethnic-civic dimension, depending on whether citizenship is passed on from parents to children (ius sanguinis), or it is easily accessible for migrants and their children born in the country (ius soli). Barbulescu (2019: 13) points out that this distinction has been contested as countries adopt a combination of the two principles.

The other axis along which countries are classified is that of assimilationist-multiculturalist, depending on the extent to which state and public institutions recognise the cultural rights of migrants and minorities. Barbulescu (2019: 14) considers that other dimensions and set of rights need to be taken into consideration when constructing these typologies. For instance, social rights tend to be disregarded. The researcher suggests focusing on the mandatory tests and integration contracts that are wide-spread in EU countries. In her view (Barbulescu 2019: 19), "mandatory integration" was implemented in EU countries mainly from the 2000s in two formats: integration contracts or agreements, and integration examinations. The researcher indicates that there has been a replacement in most European countries of voluntary with mandatory programs, marking a restrictionist turn, as migrants have to do more "just to have access to the same rights they had before" (Barbulescu 2019: 202).

Barbulescu (2019: 19) stresses that failing to participate or complete the requirements has severe consequences for reuniting family members, renewal of permits, access to social benefits, permanent residence, and acquiring citizenship. As a result, mandatory integration strategy has become a means to make immigration more selective, not at the border but inside the country. Indeed, tests might have significant implications in terms of class, as the most educated might be more likely to succeed than the less educated migrants. Barbulescu (2019: 25) also stresses that tests are selective from a national point of view, as countries might discharge migrants with specific nationalities from passing the exam. Based on Barbulescu's reasoning, we can conclude that such policies are also selective from both class and racial/national point of view.

Although debates concerning the racialization of social relations are finding their way into academia, France is traditionally perceived as following a Republican model. The recognition of diversity is seen with suspicion and universalism is considered fundamental for granting equality among citizens. However, Eric Fassin (2006) points out that it is necessary to reflect on what idea of Culture, with a capital letter, and which representation of citizenship is conveyed on behalf of universalism and colour blindness. The sociologist analyses the writings of 20th-century French intellectuals. The sociologist (Fassin E., 2006: 113) estimates that universalism in France is nationalised, meaning that it is based on a specific national reference framework and is conveyed by privileged cultural and intellectual milieu. As a result, universalism leads to an ethnocentric interpretation of Culture. White high Culture is seen as legitimate and absolute, while that of migrants and minorities is seen as a particularism which potentially endangers the national unity.

At the same time, the French republican model is characterised by assimilationist access to citizenship. Thus, the civil code established that "no one can be naturalised if he[/she] does not justify his[/her] assimilation to the French community" (French Civil Code, Article 21-24). French citizenship is only awarded after evaluation of assimilation, which includes language knowledge, knowledge of French history, culture and society as well as adherence to the "essential principles and values of the French Republic". Besides and as mentioned earlier, the evaluation of assimilation in France also relies on the employment status (circulaire n° NOR INTK1207286C of 16 October 2012). As stressed by Scrinzi (2013: 56), work is seen as an indicator of emancipation and adaptation, especially for migrant women who are depicted as oppressed and external to the labour market.

Until the 1990s, the strength of the Republican model in France pushed public authorities to refuse any reference to racial discrimination. From their point of view, any mention of racial prejudices would implicitly give credit to the idea that races exist. Didier Fassin (2006: 137-138) defines this phenomenon as a "denial of reality". This process involves that "facts are well represented (there are inequalities of treatment based on the origin of the person)", but we refuse to "interpret them for what they are (they are not discriminatory and do not have a racial character)". Since the 2000s, racial discrimination has gained visibility in the French media, but this has mainly contributed to reaffirm the whiteness of the French identity. For instance, Eric Fassin (2006: 123) analyses the debates regarding "anti-white" racism in the middle-2000s and observes how they implicitly depict whiteness as being a characteristic of Frenchness. On the other hand, Didier Fassin (2006) considers that in the 2000s, racial discrimination passed from "denial" to "de-negation": discriminations are diminished, and victims are delegitimised, insofar as it is believed that they exaggerate the impact of prejudices. Didier Fassin (2006: 147) observes that in public institutions providing support in accessing employment, discriminations are only sporadically and partially recognised since they are too obvious to be entirely denied but too unethical to be named.

When it comes to classifying the Italian model, researchers are more puzzled. For instance, Rivera (2010) considers that the country has not chosen its "model of integration" yet, and its policies on migration and citizenship vacillate between the French, German and British paradigms. The anthropologist estimates that this uncertainty is connected to the fact that policies on migration are still relatively recent in Italy and international mobility was until recently perceived as a temporary phenomenon. On the other hand, Ambrosini (2010: 27) estimates that Italy has a model of "subaltern integration". From his perspective, migrants are accepted only as long as they take the most humble and tiring jobs, without pretending to disrupt the social hierarchies nor claiming working positions and benefits that the locals consider theirs. The definition of Ambrosini is nuanced by that of Claudia Mantovan (2013). She finds that the separation between migrants and Italians co-exist with significant levels of "socioeconomic integration" for many migrants and their children. She estimates that migrants, their children and Italians are constructing new forms of social cohesion through everyday social interactions, which provide a potential alternative, long-term path to the reconstruction of Italian social cohesion from the 'bottom-up'.

As far as Italy is concerned, relevant inputs are also given by Barbulescu (2019). She observes that from the 2000s, Italy, which had a little trial-and-error history of integration policies, switched to mandatory, sanction-based integration (Barbulescu, 2019: 21). Italy introduced mandatory, sanctioned-based measures from the late 2000s, namely an integration agreement, and a language test. Like other EU countries, Italy pursues two main strategies towards migrants: the first one is assimilationist in character and targets non-EU citizens; the second targets "old EU-citizens" (Eu-25) who have more generous access to rights and are less requested to "integrate". Barbulescu (2019: 211) estimates that EU citizens from Romania and Bulgaria, as well as non-EU citizens with Italian ancestors, are in-between. Additionally, integration tests require significant language skills, and knowledge in history, geography and public institutions. As stressed earlier, the high level requested in tests, and the differentiation of strategies according to nationality end up being selective from both class and racial/national points of view.

As far as the comparison between the French and Italian models is concerned, precious insights are given by Francesca Scrinzi (2013) who conducted fieldwork in both contexts. Her work focuses on the employment of migrant women in the domestic sector. She analysed employers' and intermediaries' practices and observed that in both settings, these women were being racialised. She finds that in France this process takes place in a universalist context which aims at erasing cultural differences, while in Italy cultural difference is highlighted but seen as radically divergent. In the French training for domestic workers, Scrinzi (2013: 166-167) observes that the republican model compel migrant women to erasure any "cultural specificity" in the workplace. Their migration is seen as a positive opportunity to be emancipated from a patriarchal culture.

Conversely, in the Italian intermediary structures that relate to the Catholic church, Scrinzi observes that volunteers have a positive image of some groups of migrant women, namely of South American women, who are perceived as being more attached than Italians to traditional female roles. Therefore these groups of candidates are called upon to preserve their so-called cultural authenticity. Scrinzi (2013: 169) concludes that the French and Italian recruitment, training, and managing practices of domestic workers represent two faces of racialisation: otherness is validated and censured in the context of French republican universalism, while it is idealised and stigmatised under Italian differentialism.

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The previous section introduced the two contexts in which research was conducted. It highlighted that multi-sitting enables researchers to have a more complex view on the phenomena that it is being studied. Moreover, it was stressed that regional labour markets present a series of characteristics that makes it the best territorial level for studying stratifications. The last part of the section analysed the policy models towards migrants, stressing similarities and differences between the two areas. Now that the settings where research was conducted have been presented, the following chapter describes and discusses the methodology and methods used for answering the research questions.

2. Crossing gazes

As stressed in the introduction of the chapter, the methodology adopted in the dissertation aims to answer the research questions from multiple perspectives. As argued by Fauser (2018), using different methods, methodologies, and research subjects' perspectives provide distinct knowledge regarding the various aspects of a particular phenomenon. The idea is not that of achieving an "objective truth" (Fauser, 2018), but rather to grasp multiple perspectives and subjective realities. As argued by Fauser

(2018), I am convinced that different approaches can complement one another and permit studing the phenomena from different angles, so that light is shed on its various dimensions.

Timans et al. (2019) argue that using one method implies referring to a single way of viewing and knowing the world. The researchers compare this process with that of "blending two gradations of the same colour paint". Following the metaphor, the dissertation aims at crossing methods and gazes to obtain a wider variety of colours.

The core of the dissertation is based on fieldwork that crosses the voices of different participants. The idea is one of putting in dialogue the perspectives of different stakeholders that are involved in enabling migrant women with tertiary education to access the labour market, namely the women themselves, recruiters, and social workers. Fieldwork is completed with the descriptive analysis of the data made available by institutions.

The chapter opens with general observations concerning the methodological choices (2.1). It then continues with a reflexion on the author's *positionality* (Burawoy, 2009) (2.2). The following paragraph gives details about the methods used in fieldwork (2.3). The chapter closes with a timeline that encompasses the different phases of research (2.4.).

2.1. General observations on the methodology

2.1.1. Comparing people

As argued in chapter 1, using categories have substantial implications in terms of power relations. It was mentioned that Bourdieu (1993) has highlighted that one of the central powers of the state is to produce mental structures, categories of thought, which predetermine and organise our representation of the world. Nonetheless, sociological analysis involves using and referring to categories critically, underlining the limits and the reasons for using one or the other type.

As far as comparison is concerned, both Bloemraad (2013) and Martiniello (2013) refer to the idea of comparing groups of people, and more specifically, groups of migrants. Both researchers are critical of the common practice of contrasting groups based on nationality. Bloemraad (2013) stresses that "migration research overwhelmingly assumes that national origin matters", and that it pretends it has some "inherent meaning for migrants, or for others". On the other hand, although Martiniello (2013) estimates that comparisons based on nationality or country of birth can be of relevance, he argues that it can be misleading. He considers that comparing national groups means that cultural differences are being perceived as a major explanatory dimension.

In this dissertation, I refer to countries of birth both in the descriptive analysis of secondary institutional data and in the sampling of participants to the fieldwork. In contrast with Martiniello (2013) and echoing Bloemraad's (2013) observation, my supposition is that the country to which a person might be associated with has an "inherent meaning" for others, namely for those who look at migrant women and might eventually racialise them. Following the discussion on essentialism, including racialisation, and on the definition of "migrant" that was developed in chapter 1, I predict that the national group to which a person is associated intersects with gender, class, colour of the skin and physiognomy, and contributes to essentialism and racialisation of individuals. In a single context, based on colonial past and on the "figures of race" that circulate (Giuliani, 2013), a single person might be essentialised and racialised differently by interlocutors depending on whether she or he introduces her/himself as a Western European, a Latin American, or an African.

On the other hand, scholars who work on large secondary databases are also referring to nationality or country of birth as a proxy for race or racialisation (Fullin, 2016). In this literature, citizenship appears as the only thorny variable available in the data sets, that can be used to tackle discriminations based on race. As mentioned, although nationality is relevant in the process of racialisation, persons from the same country can be racialised in different ways depending on their class, gender, skin colour and physiognomy, but also religion. Therefore, quantitative secondary data analysis that aims at tackling racial discrimination needs to be combined with fieldwork, as connections between processes of racialisation and nationality might only come to light through the study of the narrations produced by the actors involved in the process (the racialiseds and the racialisers). To follow this observation this observation, it was decided to combine quantitative and qualitative methods in this dissertation.

Another argument for taking into account nationality concerns the fact that migration policies and access to rights vary depending on the specific country of citizenship. In this regard, Rodier (2008) has argued that in the European Union, there is a hierarchy based on nationality and migratory status that determines access to the labour market and rights. In 2008, she found that that at the top of this hierarchy were nationals from the country of reference, who were followed by EU citizens from western Europe and EU-25, and then by EU citizens from Bulgaria and Romania. Her point of view is that non-EU citizens were by then at the bottom of the structure, with undocumented migrants being those in the most precarious position (Rodier 2008).

Both in the parts that focus on secondary data analysis and in those areas based on fieldwork, other variables/categories are used to compare groups or sampling participants. For instance, the statistical analysis, as well as the fieldwork, focuses on persons that have tertiary education, which was obtained either on the current country of residence, in that of birth, or in a third country. Gender is another variable taken into account to compare groups. For instance, in the chapter based on secondary data analysis, the positioning of women with tertiary education is compared with that of men with the same level of education. Positioning in the employment structure is another variable that is taken into account both for analysing the secondary data and creating the sample of participants. Last but not least, sampling for the fieldwork also takes into account mothering, and more specifically whether interviewees have children or not, and eventually whether they move to Alsace/Veneto with a child or gave birth afterwards.

2.1.2. Including a descriptive data analysis

A striking issue when looking for background information on Alsace and Veneto, it is that there is almost no data available that crosses gender, country of birth, and level of education with the positioning in the labour market. Therefore, there is no quantitative data readily available that gives an insight into the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in local labour markets. In both areas, qualitative research has highlighted the existence of a widespread phenomenon of over-education of migrant graduates. However, there are no quantitative studies that address the issue at the national or regional level using labour market data. None of the publications compare the positioning in the local labour market of graduates depending on gender and country of birth.

As a result and to partly fill the research gap, the third chapter of the dissertation is dedicated to the descriptive analysis of the data made available by public institutions. The chapter offers an insight into the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in the local labour markets. It works as a background for the following chapters that are based on fieldwork and qualitative methods. It brings a specific insight that deserves to be cross referenced with the perspective of the actors involved in enabling migrant women with tertiary education to access the labour market. Moreover, the outcome of the descriptive data analysis contributed to the construction of the sampling of participants to the field-work. Indeed, participants were born in Subsaharan

Africa and non-EU Europe; two of the groups that face more challenges to access graduate positions both in Veneto and in Alsace.

2.2. Positionality

Feminist geographers have emphasised that the position of the researcher in terms of class, gender, racialisation, but also age, and other characteristics, have an impact on the representations and information that emerge from the fieldwork (Madge, 1993). In this regard, Riaño (2015) suggests that it is necessary to take into account both the similarities and the differences in the process of negotiating relationships with the research participants. Similarly, Burawoy (2009: 204) highlights that researchers do not have access to "some Archimedean standpoint". In his view, scholars are always "inserted somewhere in the site", which has "grave consequences" for what they can see. He refers to the researcher's standpoint as *positionality*, which corresponds in his view to a "first constructivist dimension". In parallel, Burawoy estimates that a "second constructivist moment" refers to the theoretical suppositions and frameworks. He finds that researchers "carry around lenses that are so much a part of us that we don't notice we have them" (Burawoy, 2009: 205). His comment echoes that of post/de-colonial researchers who were mentioned at the beginning of chapter 1 and who call for a de-colonisation of social sciences.

To begin the reflection on positionality, I should say a few words on my affective relation to the research topic. The whole story begins with my mother, a migrant woman with tertiary education who had to deal with the stratifications of local labour markets in France. My mother was born in Colombia in the mid-1950s. In the 1970s, she started studying psychology at a public university of her home town, Bogota. However, she had to stop her career abruptly, as she was arrested together with peers for political reasons. By the beginning of the 1980s, she managed to be released and moved to France, where she was granted political asylum. She first arrived in Paris and then moved to Strasbourg in Alsace. Thanks to public support, she could retake her abandoned studies. However, once she graduated, she struggled to find employment in her field. She received many negative answers, and other requests remained without any response. As a result, she started working occasionally with refugees and migrants but felt it would be hard to find employment as a psychologist. Thus, she decided to change fields and, after taking an exam, started nursing studies. After divorcing, and as she was finding it challenging to combine working-hours at the hospital with care for her children, my mother decided to move back to Colombia, where she felt she would have better opportunities and broader family support.

My story is simpler. Being French at birth, I could claim since my tenderest age a passport that would enable me to cross borders much easier than if I were (only) Colombian. When I arrived in Veneto, I already had a French university diploma in my resume. Therefore, some of my characteristics in the Italian context make me fit in the social group that I intend to study. In Italy, I am a migrant woman with university degrees. My gender, my level of education, and my otherness as a migrant are commonalities. However, as I also hold a French passport, the administrative challenges I had to face when moving to Veneto were far more straightforward than those of my interviewees.

Besides, the way I am racialised in both contexts might also differ from my participants. Although I tend to be perceived as a French white looking woman, I have also been told that I look Colombian or mixed. In this respect, it is interesting to stress that in Veneto, one of the participants identified me as being Italian. This interviewee was Rosalie, who was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she used to work as a laboratory assistant. Since she moved to Veneto, she has mainly worked as a blue-collar and a healthcare worker (operatrice sociosanitaria). While we were speaking, Rosalie indicated that if we were to apply for the same position, it would be more likely that employers would select me than her, as "I" was Italian. Other participants in Veneto associated me with "we" foreigners, which was contrasted with "them" Italians. In

France, two of the participants highlighted that I was "mixed", as I was not only French but also Colombian. For instance, Callaia used to work in Western Africa as a midwife and has struggled to have her previous experience and education recognised in Alsace. She indicated that I was *métisse* like her, but she also stressed that it was different for her because in my case, my mixing was not visible ("*ça se voit pas*").

Another dimension of commonality/difference that needs attention concerns the language in which interviews were conducted. With the participant women born in Eastern Europe, I mainly communicated in the local official language, namely Italian and French, and used English only twice. Therefore, women were mainly communicating in a language that was not their mother tongue. When it comes to women born in Sub-Saharan Africa, it also happened that we spoke in the local official language. However, once I introduced my country of birth, francophone participants in Veneto tended to switch to French, or to navigate between French and Italian. Interestingly, few interviewees that were born in Francophone African countries indicated that they preferred speaking in Italian, rather than communicating in French.

Other commonalities that might have influenced the interaction concerns my status as a mother. The women I interviewed appeared especially willing to speak about their experience as mothers or their wish to become or not to become mothers, once they knew I have a son. Furthermore, interviewees who had studied in one of my universities in Veneto or Alsace, enjoyed speaking about their experience as students and asked me questions or made comments about professors they had by that time. I assume they enjoyed bringing back memories with someone that has also experienced those places.

The commonalities with interviewees facilitated, to a certain extent, the building of relationships of trust with the participant women. On the other hand, my position might have reinforced the management impression (Hester and Francis, 1994) by recruiters, as they might have identified me with the group I was studying. Both in Italy and France, the interactions and my positioning could also vary, depending on whether I was perceived as a Colombian or as French, and therefore as a citizen of two countries that have a different positions in the international arena and whose nationals are being racialised differently.

As far as Burawoy's (2009: 204) "second constructivist moment" is concerned, which regards the cognitive lenses that researchers have, I acknowledge that my way of seeing the world is shaped by western mainstream thinking. Indeed, most of my education has been carried out in western European countries, such as France and Italy, and in institutions of the Global South - in Colombia and Brazil - that are influenced by Western views. Two paths are undertaken in the dissertation to mitigate this limitation. From a theoretical perspective, and as stressed in chapter 1, the thesis takes into consideration the post-/de-colonial critics and focuses on power relations and dominations based on gender, class, and racialisation. It analyses how the colonial past continues to mark the imaginations and the stratification of the local labour markets. From a methodological perspective, this research intends to incorporate migrants' representation and decolonial epistemologies (Grosfoguel et al., 2015), by using biographical narrative interviews, as well as by coding and using analysis that adheres as much as possible to the participants' wording and views.

2.3. Fieldwork

The following section describes the methods that were used in the fieldwork (2.3.1). It also introduces the sampling of participants (2.3.2.) and gives details about the development of the fieldwork (2.3.3.). Last but not least, it also offers insights on how the data was analysed (2.3.4.).

2.3.1. Narrative interviews

The fieldwork consisted of *biographical narrative interviews* (Collet and Veith, 2013) conducted in both Alsace and Veneto, which involved migrant women with tertiary education, human resources managers, and other key informants. The interviews were composed of three phases. The first one focused on life-telling by participants and started with one open question asking for the telling of one's own trajectory since childhood. Narrative follow-up questions completed this phase. The second phase of the interviews corresponded to *episodic interviews* (Flick 2009), while in the third phase participants were asked to give their opinion and views on the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in the labour market and on the challenges they might face.

Although the same structure was adopted for interviewing all participants, it is worth noting that emphasis was given to different phases according to the person. More specifically, interviews with migrant women gave broader space to the first phase, namely their life-telling. Conversely, when interacting with recruiters and social workers, life-telling was more of an introduction that aimed at putting the narrators in the mood to describe events and feelings (La Mendola, 2009). Recruiters and social workers were requested to give more details about the recruitment process and to describe their interactions with migrant women with tertiary education.

As mentioned, in the second phase of the interviews, participants were asked to narrate and describe a specific experience. For instance, both migrant women and human resources managers were asked to describe job interviews. For their part, migrant women had to describe positions to which they had applied regardless of its outcome, namely if they were hired afterwards. On the other hand, human resources managers were asked to narrate different job interviews they have conducted, including the first interview they had with an applicant. In the following part of the interview, recruiters were asked to describe job interviews with applicants that were migrant women, and eventually migrant women with tertiary education. The intent was to invite the second group of participants to describe situations and refer to representations and feelings, rather than listing ready prepared answers. Indeed, before entering the field, a concern was that human resources managers, as well as social workers and other institutional actors, would tend to control their answers, resulting in a high level of *management impression* (Hester and Francis, 1994). The notion refers to the process by which individuals, in this case, participants to the research, attempt to control the impressions on others (Brennan et al., 2009).

Although migrant women were also expected to control their answers so to give a positive impression or please the interviewer, it was foreseen that human resources managers would be less likely to disclose their representations and feelings. This hypothesis resulted from a set of reasons that mainly related to the specific job they perform, the setting of the interview, the positionality of the interviewer, and last but not least their awareness of the current debates on discrimination in the labour market. When it comes to the functions of human resources manager, it worth noticing that in their daily work, these professionals are asked to represent the company for which they work, at least when interviewing candidates. As a result, they already have in mind a set of prepared answers. More importantly, and as it will be further developed in the following sections, some of the participants were contacted using their official e-mail addresses and LinkedIn profiles.

Moreover, in a few cases, interviews were conducted at their workplace, during working hours. Consequently, human resources managers could feel that the conversation was mainly an extension of their work and that they should continue representing their company. It is for this reason that interviews were conducted following a narrative style which is further developed in the following paragraph.

As far as interviews are concerned, the intent was that of conducting *dialogical interviews* (La Mendola, 2009). The method aims at collecting representations of experiences, relationships, and forms of reflection. Moreover, it points at breaking the mask (in Goffman's sense) by formulating questions that seek to obtain neither information, nor evaluations or typifications. Following La Mendola's (2009) indications, interviewees were asked to describe or narrate events. Questions that could be answered with one or only a few words were avoided, and a narrative style was adopted throughout the exchange. Therefore, participants were mainly asked to describe or narrate situations or persons. As mentioned, the request for participants to give their opinion only emerged at the end of the interviews. The idea was also that of leaving room to the interviewees' wording and representation. As a result, silence and continuators such as "Mmm", "Ah" were used to give time to participants to formulate or reformulate their thinking.

An outline was prepared before the interviews. Interviews usually started with an introduction which included a brief presentation of myself, of the research and the interview, a guarantee of anonymity, and a request for recording. Following that introduction, participants were asked to confirm their agreement to take part in the research. Afterwards, the second part of the outline included narrative questions and subquestions. Additional questions or topics that could be eventually raised were also included. The outline closes with a question asking whether the participant had anything to add on the issue. A sample of the outline is reported in the box below. It worth noting that the interviewer did not necessarily stick to it when interacting with participants. Because part of the purpose included giving room to participants' narration, the discussion went back and forth from one question to the other, partly following participants' thoughts, and partly following the outline. More details on interviews are provided in the following sections.

Outline - Interview with Varda, born in Albania, graduated in statistics, Veneto

With this interview, I kindly ask you to tell me about your life, your career path and your job search experience in Italy but also abroad. What interests me is your story, so I don't have a list of fixed questions, and there are no right or

wrong answers. The interview is anonymous and I will modify all the references to make sure that you cannot be recognizable. The interview lasts about an hour. I register. Are you ok with proceeding in this way?
Then, thank you…

1. To begin with, can you tell me your life since your childhood…
- your family

(Eventually: **can you tell me more about your studies in A. -name of country-?** what was the path that brought you to study B -field of study-?)

(Eventually: **can you tell me more about your job search and working experience in A. -name of country-?**)

2. And then, how was the process of getting to Italy...

3. And once in Italy, can you tell me about your first experience in Italy… people you met… studies… the place where you lived…

4. Can you tell me more about your job search in Italy...

4.1. your first job in Italy...
- your first contact with the employer...
- **and the interview... Can you describe the scene...**
- and once you started...
- and colleagues...

4.2. and other jobs...
- your first contact with the employer...
- **and the interview... Can you describe the scene...**
- and once you started...
- and colleagues...

4.3. and jobs in your field of study, can you tell me about your search…
- **and the interviews..**

5. Changing the subject, can you tell me about your family...
- your children
- your partner

6. To conclude, I would like to ask you a question somehow different from the others, I will ask your opinion: **On your view, what are the challenges that graduated women who were born abroad face when looking for a job in Italy?**

> Before finishing, is there anything else that comes to your mind concerning this issue? Thanks!

2.3.2. Participants to the research

The fieldwork includes 52 narrative interviews with migrant women with tertiary education, human resources managers, social workers, NGOs activists and key informants. 29 of the interviewees had experience in Veneto, while 23 were living or had previously lived in Alsace. Thirty-three migrant women with tertiary education participated in the research. To further provide a cross-section of views and perspectives, these female participants had different trajectories. Firstly, they were born and had completed at least their secondary school in countries either of Subsaharan Africa or European countries outside of the EU[4]. As mentioned, it emerged from the analysis of statistical data that both in Alsace and Veneto women born in these two macro-geographical areas are among those who face more challenges to access positions at the top of the employment structure. Moreover, scholars have called for further research on "skilled" African women to challenge the dominant tropes that see these women as being uneducated, "unskilled", "immiserated", and disempowered (Wong, 2014: 41).

When it comes to education, twenty-five of the interviewees already had tertiary education before migrating to Veneto and Alsace. After migrating, 15 of them had been or were enrolled at the moment of the interview in a university course or training. They were, therefore, re-studying. As far as studies are concerned, the participant women were graduated in various fields such as literature and pedagogy (13), economics and statistics (10), social sciences (5), health careers such as medicine, nursing and midwifery (4), as well as law, human resources, communication, theology, and history.

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[4] European non-EU countries of birth of participants were Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Russia, Turkey and Ukraine. Countries of birth from Subsaharan Africa were Cameroon, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and South Africa.

Overall, these women had over 69 experiences of accessing the local labour markets. In 28 cases they obtained a position or looked for a job with a diploma obtained abroad, whereas in 33 cases they looked for employment after having (re-)studied or obtained a certificate in Italy or France. Their experiences in accessing the local labour market in Alsace and Veneto are summarised in table 1. For the purpose of understanding and to highlight the variety of trajectories, these experiences have been split depending on where they were obtained, on the macro-area of birth of participants and on where the last degree was received. Experiences are also divided according to the positioning in the labour market. Jobs were clustered in three groups which correspond to graduate positions, for which tertiary education can be requested; intermediate occupations; and positions with low social recognition. The distinction was based on the interviewees' comments, on that of human resources managers and the official definition of posts by the French and Italian institutes of statistics (Istat 2013, Insee 2003). Holding a position that requires a graduate degree does not necessarily imply that the job corresponds to workers' education or previous experience. Indeed, two of the interviewees considered they were over-educated for the job they were performing, although human resources managers had judged that tertiary education was needed.

At the time of the interviews, these women were between 23 and 63 years old and had lived in Alsace or Veneto from 2 to 36 years. Four of the interviewees were not living anymore in these regions, but had had the experience of looking for employment in the areas as graduates. One of the interviewees was a *frontalière* worker, living in Germany and working in Alsace. The migrant women with tertiary education that were involved in the research also had different experiences as mothers or non-mothers. Ten of them already had a child when arriving in Alsace or Veneto, 16 gave birth to their first child in one of these two areas, whereas seven did not have children yet. Table 2 summarises their status with regards to motherhood.

The fieldwork also included interviews with 12 recruiters, both men and women, that work in Alsace and Veneto. Five of them work or had worked for intermediary agencies that specialise in the selections of staff. Seven of them worked for private companies. Additionally, a member of the staff of the human resources department at an international organisation in Alsace was also interviewed. The interviews with managers were complemented by those of four social workers; one of them worked for a public institution specialising in providing access to the labour market, while three of them were employed in NGOs which support migrants in accessing employment. In addition, the fieldwork also included the interview of an NGO activist who has accompanied migrants in the process of recognising titles gained abroad. Last but not least, two children of migrants were also interviewed. They were women with tertiary education who were respectively born in Subsaharan Africa and Eastern Europe, but had migrated when they were under 18.

Table 2.1 - 33 interviewees and 69 experiences of accessing or intending to access the labor market

		Alsace		**Veneto**		
		Last degree abroad	**Last degree in France**	**Last degree abroad**	**Last degree in Italy**	
	Graduate positions		Administrative assistant (Carmel), Language teacher (Colombine), Nurse (Callaia), Bilingual secretary (Carmel), Consultant for international org. (Carmel)		Physiotherapist (Rosamel), Doctor (Rosella). Social worker* (Rada)	8

Subsaharan Africa	**Intermediate occupations**	Nurse assistant (Callaia), Language tutor (Colombine, Carmel), Hostess (Carmel),	Waitress (Camellia),		Cultural mediator (Raisa, Rada), Care assistant (Rosana, Rosalie),	9
	Positions with low social recognition	Chambermaid (Cliantha, Carmel), Grape picker (Carmel)		Blue-collar (Rosalie), Cleaning operative (Rada)	In-home carer (Rosanna), Cleaning operative (Rose), Caretaker (Rose), Cook assistant (Rose),	9
	Looking for work	(Cassia)	(Clemensia)		(Rose)	3
Europe (non EU)	**Graduated positions**	Administrative assistant (Azalea, Amapola)**, Diplomat (Amapola), Consultant (Aster), Language teacher (Araluen)	Librarian (Acacia, Abelia), University professor (Alexandra), Local authority officer (Acantha)	Business manager (Violet)	Business manager (Yasmin, Veronica), Project manager (Veronica)	13
	Intermediate occupations	Shop assistant (Abelia)	Cultural mediator (Amaryllis), Translator (Amaryllis), Tutor (Acacia, Amaryllis), Leader at community center (Acacia), Receptionist (Acacia),	Language teacher (Viola, Veronica), Waitress (Winika), Pizzaiola (Winika), Sales assistant (Winika), Cultural mediator (Yasmin), Tutor (Yasmin), Translator (Veronica)	Waitress (Varda), Call-center employee (Zinnia), Sales assistant (Zinnia), Coach (Veronica)	19
	Positions with low social recognition	Flyer distributor (Azalea),	Flyer distributor (Amaryllis)	Hostess (Yasmin), In-home carer (Winika)		4
	Looking for work	(Anemone, Azami)		(Verbena)	(Zinnia)	4
		17	18	14	20	***69***

Although hired as operatrice socio assistenziale

*** positions that requires tertiary education, but for which interviewees considered they were over qualified*

Table 2.2 - Experiences of mothering

		Alsace			**Veneto**			
		No child	**Children before arriving to Alsace**	**Children after arriving to Alsace**	**No child**	**Children before arriving to Veneto**	**Children after arriving to Veneto**	
Has accessed a graduated position	**Subsaharan Africa**		Callaia	Camellia, Carmel, Colombine	Rosamel		Rosella	7
	Europe (non EU)	Acacia, Azalea	Abelia, Araluen Alexandra, Aster, Acanta	Amapola		Violet	Yasmin, Veronica,	11
Has not accessed a graduated position yet	**Subsaharan Africa**	Cassia, Clemensia, Cliantha				Rosalie	Raisa, Rosanna, Rose, Rada	7
	Europe (non EU)		Azami	Amaryllis, Anemone	Viola	Winika	Varda, Verbena. Zinnia	8
		5	7	6	2	3	10	**33**

2.3.3. Researching in the field

As mentioned by Collet and Veith (2013), a life story is the reconstruction of a personal and collective narrative, a series of lived experiences, which narration, selection, and organisation vary according to the moment and the setting for the narration. At the same time, how the interviewees represent their experience changes over time, and as a consequence, the narration might change as well. For these reasons, interviews need to be contextualised. This section aims at presenting the setting of the interviews and gives details about their development.

To get in touch with migrant women with tertiary education over 37 NGOs, networks and associations were contacted in Veneto and Alsace[5]. Most of these NGOs carry on activities that aim to give voice to specific groups of migrants -including women from particular areas- and their descendants, and work for promoting cultural events related to a specific country, territory or cultural group. Other NGOs that work on issues related to migration were also contacted, as well as networks of professionals or students that identify with specific countries, regions or cultural groups from Subsaharan Africa or non-EU Europe. A significant number of details of female participants were procured through a snowball technique, thanks to the support of women that were previously interviewed. Personal networks and scholars with experience in my field of research were also helpful with my getting in touch with potential interviewees[6].

When it comes to human resources managers, social workers and other institutional actors, specific tools were used to get in touch with these groups. In addition to snowball and personal networks, a significant percentage of these participants were contacted using their official e-mails found on the webpage of their employer, or using specific professional social media, such as LinkedIn. One of the challenges of using this medium to contact participants was to mitigate the effects of management impression. As mentioned earlier, being approached through their professional e-mails and profiles meant that my interviews could be perceived as a prolongation of work, namely that participants had to represent and give a positive image of their employer. Narrative interviews were used as a strategy to reduce the interference of readily prepared answers.

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[5] I would like to specially thanks to the members of Arising Africans and Associazione Ebene in Veneto, as well as association Plurielles and association Rhin-Volga in Alsace for their support.

[6] I would like to specially thanks the following scholars for their support: Aby Faye, Ru Gao, Paolo Gusmeroli, Sandra Agyei Kyeremeh, Abdoulaye Ngom, David Primo, Francesca Alice Vianello, Isabelle Wilhelm, as well as Fabienne Bretin, Ligia Camargo, Tsara Hilbold, Alessandra Siino, Stéphanie Specht.

Interviews with migrant women with tertiary education lasted from half an hour to one hour and forty minutes. They were all recorded after obtaining the consent of participants. Interviews took place in different settings. Participants were always asked about the site where they preferred to meet, suggesting this could be at their place, in an open or closed public space (namely a square or a café), or wherever they would prefer. Ten interviews were carried out at participants' home, six at their workplace, six more at a café, four in squares, two at the universities where they used to study, and one was carried out in a church after a Mass. The places undoubtedly had an impact on narrations. Speaking about oneself, one's trajectory and the challenges that had been faced is not the same when being at home or workplace. It is also relevant to stress that in five cases, children, partners or other relatives passed by, while the interaction was on-going. These presences might also have influenced narrations.

Moreover, it is interesting to stress that two interviewees preferred to meet at their former university. Interestingly, one of them who has struggled to find employment in her field stressed that the university setting brings her memories of a positive period of her life. The last singular setting to mention regards a participant who wished to meet after a Mass, in the courtyard of a church. This symbolic choice was echoed during the interview by the woman who referred in several occasions to her faith and the role the Lord had in supporting her throughout her life.

Additionally, and as mentioned earlier, it worth noticing that four women had moved from Alsace or Veneto, but they had had relevant experience in these areas prior to their moving. As a result, interviews were conducted using Skype and WhatsApp. In this regard, recent literature has highlighted the potential of using Skype and other communication programs in qualitative research. Sullivan (2012) stresses that data collected using this medium is not that different from that obtained in face-to-face interaction. She argues that "just as an interviewee in-person can portray a rosier picture of their life, an Internet interviewee can do the same on the Internet". Moreover, the scholar highlights that the widespread and daily use of communication technology makes Internet interactions "more closely aligned with our in-person interactions than some might believe " (Sullivan, 2012).

As far as human resources managers, social workers and other institutional actors are concerned, interviews also involved different types of settings. Most interviews (nine) were conducted at participants' workplaces during working hours. Three took place in public space, namely in squares, and cafés. Three others were carried out at participants' homes. One interview was conducted at the university, upon request of the participant. The remaining participant asked to be contacted by phone. As mentioned earlier, each of these settings has implications in terms of management impression. Moreover, it is also relevant to stress that in two of the interviews carried out at participants' home, children, partners or relatives were present at a specific moment of the interaction. Most of these interviews were recorded after obtaining the consent of participants. Only one interviewee explicitly asked me not to record. As a result, notes were taken during the interview and completed right after greeting the participant. Four pilots interviews were conducted with this group and lasted between 10 and 20 minutes. The remaining interviews all lasted between 40 minutes and one hour and 15 minutes.

The interactions with participants were mainly in the local national language, namely Italian and French. However, and as suggested by the literature (La Mendola, 2009), participants were also invited to express themselves in other languages with which they felt more comfortable. For instance, in Veneto part of the interviews were conducted in French, while in Alsace English and Spanish were also used. As far as interaction with participants is concerned, the last feature that deserves to be mentioned is that biscuits or sweets were offered to participants, including human resources managers, before starting the interviews. These gifts were given as a sign of recognition for accepting to share their experience and for the time that was dedicated to the research.

2.3.4. Analysis of data collected in the field

After the fieldwork, interviews were transcribed using the programme *Transana*. As stressed by Cardano (2011: 190), retranscription is a "simplifying exercise", which already involves analysis in itself. The analysis of the fieldwork did not aim at primarily studying the interaction between interviewee and interviewer. The objective was rather that of gathering narrations and representations. As a result, critical discourse analysis was left aside, and the retranscription concentrated on the linguistic level of communication. Paralinguistic and extralinguistic communications are mainly mentioned when they help with understanding the meaning of specific sentences or words, or when they were perceived as translating emotions that deserved to be taken into consideration in the analysis.

For the purpose of preserving the anonymity of participants, their names were changed as well as the name of their employers, and other information that could make them recognisable. In Veneto, interviewees that were born in countries of Subsaharan Africa were renamed with flower names that start with an R., while that born in non-EU Europe were given one that begins with a V., W., Y. and Z. and other actors including human resources managers from that area have a name that starts with an S. Similarly, the name of interviews in Alsace were changed with flower or plant names. Those of women born in Subsaharan Africa begin with a C., those of women born in non-EU Europe start with an A., and other actors have names that start with D. or E. Only one participant explicitly indicated the alias she wanted to have in the dissertation.

The analysis of interviews mainly follows a thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006), although some aspects of the grounded theory were also introduced, especially for coding. Charmaz (2006: 43) specifies that coding means "naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorises, summarises, and accounts for each piece of data". As suggested by the theorist, initial coding tended to stick to the data, using words that reflect action rather than topics, as well as the specific wording used by participants. The second stage of coding involved merging codes with similar significance, and the third stage consisted of collating codes into potential themes (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Overall, the analysis implied three levels of coding. To facilitate the process of coding, the programme *Maxqda* was used.

After the coding, the following phase consisted of organising the themes identified and creating relations between them, bearing in mind the research questions. Afterwards, findings were put into dialogue with the literature and the structure of the dissertation was drafted. At the same time, to facilitate the analysis of life trajectories, the biographies of migrant women with tertiary education were synthesised in diagrams. These timelines focus on professional experience and training, but also include information on social networks, family, and other relevant events that have marked the lives of these women. The addendum of the dissertation includes one of the trajectory schemes, that of Winika (Addendum 2).

An additional method that was used is that of biographical policy evaluation (Apitzsch, 2008). More specifically, it served to draft chapter 7 of the dissertation, which focuses on mothering, policies and trajectories. Through a detailed analysis of trajectories, biographical policy evaluation permits to highlight how policies impact migrants' life and how they react to it.

2.4. Timeline

Overall, the length dedicated to the research, from its design to the writing of the final dissertation, covers 36 months. The time devoted to each phase of the study is summarised in the table below. To simplify the understanding, the different stages were clustered in six steps, which partly overlap. For instance, the fieldwork and the secondary data analysis were conducted in parallel, while the transcription and analysis of interviews started while interviews were still being carried out.

	2016			2017												2018												2019								
	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S
Research design	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨																												
Literature review	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨															▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨
Secondary data analysis												Veneto	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨														
																	Alsace	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨												
Field work						Pilot						Veneto	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨															
																		Alsace	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨												
Transcription and analysis of fieldwork																▨	▨					▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨						
Writing																														▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨	▨

Conclusions of chapter 2

The chapter has presented and justified the methodological path that was undertaken to conduct the research. The first section introduced the contexts where fieldwork was conducted, and argued that the local level is the best option to analyse the stratifications of the labour market. The chapter provided insights into the commonalities and differences between Alsace and Veneto. The brief historical analysis emphasises that both regions have been the scene of complex inward and outward migratory movements. It highlighted how this history, as well as colonialism and construction of otherness, have influenced the national-ethnic-racial stratifications of the local labour markets. The first section also gave insights into the different policy models regarding migrants that are implemented in Alsace and Veneto.

The second section of the chapter introduced the methodology, highlighting the advantages of crossing gazes and including a descriptive data analysis. After introducing the author's positionality, the chapter presented the methods used in fieldwork. Overall, 52 persons were interviewed in Alsace and Veneto, including migrant women with tertiary education, human resources managers, social workers, and other relevant actors. Interaction with participants mainly consisted of narrative interviews, most of which were recorded, transcribed and then analysed using a thematic analysis. It is based on this work that chapters four, five and six were written, while the outcomes of the descriptive data analysis are presented in chapter three.

Chapter 3. "First the Europeans, then maybe the Filipinas, then you". Secondary data analysis: A differentiated access to employment.

Rosella was studying medicine in the Democratic Republic of Congo when she left because students were being targeted by the military regime. It was becoming impossible for her to finish academic years as her university was frequently forced to shut down. Rosella arrived in Veneto at the beginning of the 1980s, through a Catholic Church channel, to continue her studies. Despite her motivation, it took her several years to obtain her final degree, as she had to combine her studies with work and care for her newly born son. Before starting to work in her field of studies, she had several jobs in the cleaning and care industries. Rosella, who has lived in the region for almost forty years, believes that there was a turning point in migrants' access to employment in the 1990s. From that period, she feels that Africans started feeling "skin diversity". Rosella describes the progressive stratification of the labour market, indicating that workers, and especially migrant women, had priority in hiring depending on their nationality. "First them, first the Europeans", she said, "then maybe the Filipinas, then you".

What do available institutional statistics tell us about the stratifications perceived by Rosella? More specifically, what do these data say about the access that migrants have to employment, depending on their country of birth, their gender. and their level of studies?

As mentioned in chapter 1, qualitative research has highlighted that in Italy and France, as well as in other Western European countries (Kofman 2012), it is more challenging for migrant women to access top positions than for locals. Both in Italy (Brandi 2008 and 2010, Vianello 2009) and in France (Killian and Manohar, 2015, Roulleau-Berger 2010), publications have analysed some of the challenges that these women face when trying to access employment in line with their studies. However, despite the growing interest, both at national and local levels, the issue has rarely been approached from a quantitative perspective. Indeed, there are only a few publications that analyse employment data crossing gender, migratory status, and level of education (Fullin 2016, Redien-Collot 2009).

The following chapter aims at filling in part of the gap in the literature, focusing at the local level. It makes a descriptive analysis of employment data in order to gain insights on the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in the labour markets of Alsace and Veneto. The descriptive analysis is based on two main data-sets. The study on Veneto is mainly based on the data made available by the local institution Veneto Lavoro, namely the hirings and end of contract of graduates from 2008 to 2017 (Veneto Lavoro, 2017). When it comes to Alsace, the analysis is primarily built on the 2014 population census, and more specifically on the data set that focuses on individuals identified at the regional level (Insee, 2017).

Chapter 3 is divided into three main parts. The first one introduces the data sets and their limits (1). Thereafter, the institutional data available for Veneto (2) and Alsace (3) are analysed separately. These sections are structured as it follows: after introducing the positioning of migrants in local labour markets, the analysis mainly focuses on the type of jobs that migrant women with tertiary education access as compared to non-migrant women and men. Each section ends with an overview of the position of migrant women with tertiary education in the respective local labour markets. The conclusion of the chapter includes an analysis of the commonalities and differences between the two regions.

1. Insights from institutional data sets

The following section introduces the data sets used to analyse the positioning of graduates in Alsace and Veneto. It gives details about the different variables and highlights some of the limits of using such data.

1.1. Veneto Lavoro and Istat

The analysis of the positioning of migrant women with tertiary education in the Veneto labour market is based on the study of the data made available by the Italian Institute of Statistics (Istat) and the regional institution Veneto Lavoro. The employment data on which scholars usually base their analysis of the Italian labour market is the *Rilevazione della forza lavoro* (RFL - Labor Force Detection). The data is collected every year on a sample basis. It involves nearly 250 thousand families throughout the national territory. As pointed out by Anastasia et al. (2009, 2013), the sampling nature of the RFL does not allow a high level of analysis at the local level, especially if the intent is to focus on a specific part of the population such as migrant women with tertiary education.

If the intent is to study local labour markets, the occupational flow data made available by Veneto Lavoro is more accurate. This regional institution has made public the databases of *Sistema informativo lavoro Veneto* (The Veneto Employment Information System). More specifically, it publishes on its website the data regarding hirings and contract ends, for all the positions in the region as a dependent, a parasubordinate, and domestic work. The data is based on the mandatory information that employers have to communicate to the public institutions such as *Istituto Nazionale della Previdenza Sociale* (INPS). The earlier set of data which is available concerns the year 2008. Thanks to the dissemination work of Veneto Lavoro, it is possible to have a precise look at the flow of workers, meaning the entrances and exits to the regional labour market. Although the data focus on workers flow, Anastasia et al. (2013: 32) argue that it also gives some insight into the stock of migrants in the labour market, as the majority of these workers had entered the local labour market in the 2000s.

The analysis of secondary data for the Veneto region is based on these data sets. The dissertation studies the hirings and end of contracts in the area, crossing gender with the country of birth, level of education, and positioning in the labour market. As a result, it becomes possible to have insight into the positioning that migrant women with tertiary education are accessing in the region. This data also enables the researcher to compare the positioning of these women with that of women born in Italy, and with men born in Italy and abroad.

However, one of the main limitations of referring to these data sets is that they record only declared positions. Therefore, the analysis does not take into account the informal economy, in which a significant part of the migrant workforce is employed. Indeed, scholars have highlighted that in Italy, migrants are overrepresented in the informal economy (Arango, Baldwin-Edwards, 2014; Castells and Portes, 1989). Moreover, migrant women are particularly concentrated in positions in the care and domestic sectors, which show a significant level of informality (Tognetti Bordogna, 2012; Fullin, 2012).

At the same time, it is worth noticing that Veneto Lavoro datasets mainly give information on the country of citizenship of workers and not on that of birth. Therefore the analysis on the region focuses on foreigners and not on migrants. Those born abroad who obtained their Italian citizenship are counted as Italians, while those who were born in Italy but have another citizenship are counted as foreigners. Countries of citizenship were clustered in nine groups which correspond to those used by Veneto Lavoro. Namely, these countries or macro-areas are: Italy; Western Europe, which encompass EU-15, Switzerland and the UK; Eastern EU, which includes countries that have joined the EU after 2004, including Romania and Bulgaria; other OECD countries; non-EU Europe; North African and Middle-East countries; Subsaharan Africa; Asia; Central and South America as well as Oceania[7].

The analysis focuses on the hiring of workers with tertiary education. The level of study taken into consideration is the university degree *Laurea,* which corresponds to a bachelor's degree. As mentioned, the data is based on the information communicated to public institutions by employers. Consequently, the level of study of workers might be underestimated in some cases, as both employers and workers can consider it unimportant to declare a university degree for accessing positions at the bottom of the employment structure or that do not require any specific education. It is also worth noticing that the data sets do not distinguish where the last educational title was obtained, specifically whether it was received in Italy or abroad.

When it comes to employment positions, Veneto Lavoro divides them into nine groups. To facilitate the analysis and understanding, these positions (*qualifica*) were clustered in five groups. The first group corresponds to that of "managers and CEOs". The second type of posts includes intellectual as well as technical professions. According to Istat (2013), these are the jobs for which employers potentially request the possession of a university degree. Therefore, they were renamed "graduated positions". It worth noticing that these positions can be accessed by workers that do not have a university degree. On the other hand, recruitment at these levels does not exclude over-education. For instance, a graduate in medicine who is hired as a nurse might feel over-qualified as her/his university title is higher than that required to perform the task. Therefore, "graduated positions" might also involve brain waste or brain abuse (Bauder, 2003).

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[7] Two differences were introduced if compared to the clusters used by Veneto Lavoro. Firstly, the "countries with advanced development" (*paesi a sviluppo avanzato*) were relabeled "other OECD countries", as they mainly correspond to member states of this organisation. Mexico and Chile are the only missing countries on the list. Secondly, "other African countries" have been renamed "Sub-Saharan African countries" as they correspond to this macro-geographical area, that goes from Mauritania to Eritrea and South Africa.

The third group of positions corresponds to "intermediate occupations" and encompasses jobs as employees and qualified professions providing services. The fourth group is that of "blue-collars and drivers", which includes specialised and semi-specialised workers. The fifth and last group corresponds to that of so-called unskilled professions (*professioni non qualificate*) and includes positions such as domestic workers (*Collaboratori domestici*), workers of the cleaning industry, travelling salespersons, ushers, porters and custodians. As argued in the first chapter of the thesis, performing these positions involve a range of skills that are not socially recognised. Therefore, rather than referring to these jobs as being unskilled, we label them "professions with low social recognition". Last but not least, it is worth noticing that positions in the armed forces were excluded from the analysis.

The period of reference extends from the first quarter of 2008 to the third quarter of 2017, which corresponds to the last period for which data was available when the analysis was conducted. It worth noting that the number of hirings per year does not correspond to that of persons hired over the year. Indeed, a single person can be hired several times in the same year and for different positions. Consequently, focusing only on hirings can lead to overestimating recruitment in low-skilled jobs, as very short term contracts are concentrated at the bottom of the employment structure. To take account of this bias, we suggest that one complete the analysis of hirings and contract ends with the data-sets that count workers only once a year - for every single individual, only the last contract signed in the year is taken into account. Consequently, two other sets of data were studied, which corresponded to hirings and contracts counting single persons only once a year. The years of reference for these last data-sets are 2008 and 2016.

1.2. The census and Insee’s data for Alsace

As mentioned, in order to study the access of migrant women graduates to the labour market, it is necessary to cross reference data on countries of birth, gender, educational level, and employment position. For the Alsace area, the only recent data that intersects this type of information is that of the 2014 population census, and more specifically the data set that focuses on individuals identified at the regional level (Insee, 2017). This data is the outcome of a sample survey that does not include the entire population. In 2014, 22,685 people responded to the survey, representing nearly 1.2% of the Alsatian population. 9% of respondent were foreigners and 12% migrants.

Some of the limits of sample surveys were raised on the previous section. As mentioned, this technique is limited when the intent is to focus on a specific group at the local level. When it comes to using the above mention data set, the French Institute of Statistics (Insee, 2016) warns that groups sizing over 500 persons can "normally be used with confidence", while those with less than 200 individuals need to be handled "cautiously" as numbers might not be representative. In the 2014 census, both female and male participants with tertiary education reached the threshold of 200 persons. However, when the data is split into macro-areas of birth, the national groups of migrant women with tertiary education falls below the threshold. Nonetheless, the 2014 census is the main available data that enables the researcher to approach the issue. Although the analysis presented for Alsace in this chapter is not representative of the situation in the region, it still gives a relevant and unique insight on the question.

Other limits of using the 2014 Census correspond to that identified for the Veneto region. Firstly, this data mainly focuses on declared positions. In France, the domestic and care sector where a significant number of migrant women find employment are more representative by informality than other segments of the labour market (Scrinzi, 2013). Nonetheless, it is worth noting that overall, the extension of the grey economy is estimated to be reduced in France when compared to Italy (Andrews et al., 2011). A second shared limitation concerns the underestimation of the participant level of education. In the Census, this variable is based on participants' statements. Therefore, it should be considered that a respondent with a diploma gained abroad that is not recognised in France might decide not to mention it.

As far as employment positions are concerned, the analysis refers to the *Professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles* (Occupations and socio-professional categories) created by the French Institute for Statistics (Insee, 2003). More specifically, jobs are clustered in six groups. The first group corresponds to farmers; the second to artisans, traders and entrepreneurs; the third to senior managers and intellectual professions (*cadres*); the fourth to intermediate occupations; the fifth to employees; and last but not least, the sixth group is that of blue-collar workers. According to the French Institute of Statistics (Insee, 2003), the positions that might request tertiary education are mainly concentrated in the third group, that of *cadres*. However, the institute also expects that tertiary education would be required to access some of the intermediate occupations. Indeed, the fourth group of professions also includes positions such as midwives, nurses, and physiotherapists. As mentioned in the Italian case, the typology does not imply that either *cadre* position cannot be accessed without tertiary education, nor that workers employed in this type of posts are performing a job in line with their studies and experience.

When it comes to countries of birth, the analysis carried out in this dissertation clusters participants in six groups, namely those born in France (and French that were born abroad), in the EU, in non-Eu Europe, in Northern Africa, in Subsaharan Africa and those born in other countries of the world. On the other hand, it worth noticing that since the study focuses on those with a university degree, we exclude from the analysis respondents under 14 years old.

Overall, the previous sections introduced the data sets that are used in this dissertation to analyse the position of migrant women with tertiary education in the local labour markets of Alsace and Veneto. It also highlighted some of the main limitations and critically presented the variables and categorisations that are at stake in conducting such an analysis. Using institutional data is only one of the multiple approaches that can be adopted to understand migrant women positioning in the labour market. To have a more in-depth view of the issue and tackle questions related to gender, racialisation and class relations, it is necessary to complete the analysis with fieldwork and qualitative methods.

2. Graduate foreign women in Veneto[8][9]

This section analyses the positioning of graduates in the Veneto labour market, according to gender and nationality. The first part (2.1) introduces the positioning of migrants in the Veneot labour market. Thereafter, the section examines the jobs for which both Italian and foreign graduate women were hired from 2008 to 2017 and compares the position (*qualifica*) of these women depending on their nationality (2.2.). The third part (2.3.) provides a closer look at the presence of graduate foreign women in feminised jobs, such as nurses, midwives, teachers, domestic workers and cleaning professionals. The following part (2.4.) compares the positioning of graduate women with that of men. Last but not least, the fifth part (2.5.) offers a longitudinal analysis that provides insights regarding the trends with respect to access to top positions by foreign women.

2.1. Migrants in the Veneto labour market

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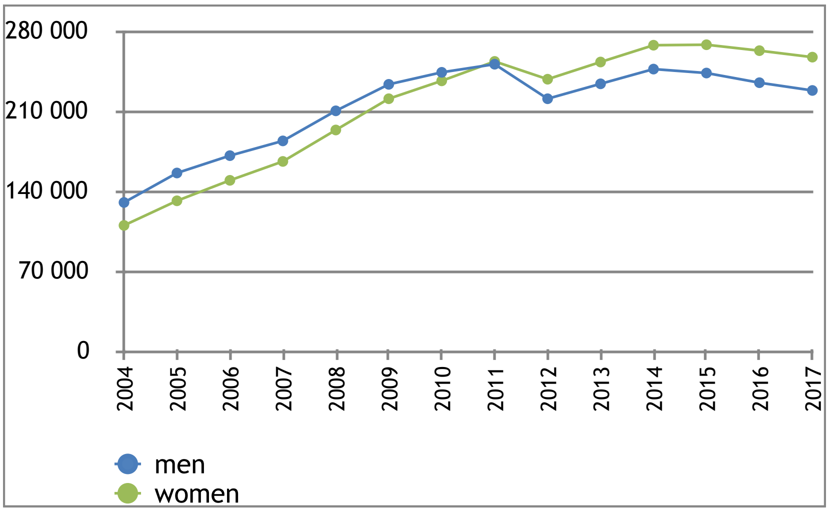
[8] This section is based on the analysis presented in the following article for the journal Mondi Migranti, which has been reviewed and accepted for publication: Romens A. (upcoming), *Accesso a un mercato del lavoro segmentato: Laureate migranti in Veneto*. Mondi Migranti.

[9] I would like to kindly thanks Maurizio Rasera from *Veneto Lavoro* for his support in analysing the data made available by his institution.

Although the estimated share of migrants in Veneto was above 5% by the end of the 1990s, it has significantly increased over the last two decades. The figures that refer to the percentage of migrants among the local population and the gender compositions of the migrant group are similar to that of Alsace. The number of foreign residents in Veneto has been growing steadily since the 2000s and amounted to 11% of the local population in 2017 (Veneto Lavoro, 2017b). In the last twenty years, the composition based on gender and nationality has undergone significant evolutions. While foreign residents in Veneto used to be mainly men, from 2011, the trend was inverted, and women became more represented among this group (Graph 3.1.). These transformations are connected to recent migratory flows in which the component was mainly female.

Graph. 3.1. - Foreign residents in Veneto from 2004 to 2017



Source: Elaboration on Veneto Lavoro data (2017b)

Note: The 2012 decrease is due to the adjustment of the statistics following the 2011 Census.

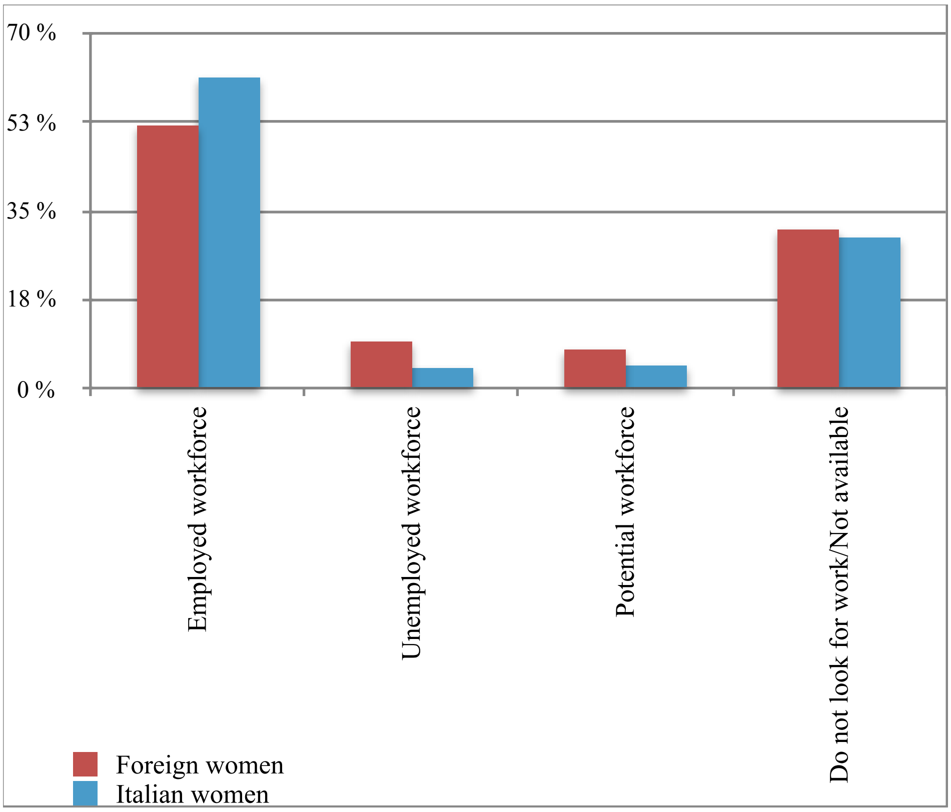
As far as countries of birth and nationality of migrants are concerned, Moroccan and Albanian citizens were the most important group of migrants in the region at the beginning of the 2000s. Since then the share of both national groups among the migrant population has decreased, while the number of Romanian residents has grown steadily (especially after the access of Romania to the EU). In 2017, Romanians represented the largest group of foreign residents, with approximately 120,000 individuals and corresponded to around a quarter of the migrant population in the region. At the same time, from the territorial point of view, foreign residents are widespread in all the Veneto *provinces*, with some densification in the central and piedmont territories that concentrate specific productive areas (Anastasia et al., 2013).

As far as education is concerned, the percentage of graduates in the North-East population has been increasing over the last fifteen years. According to available data, the percentage of graduate women - both migrant and non-migrant - is higher than that of men. The gender gap is more significant among the migrant population: in 2017, 15% of Italian men and 20% of Italian women between 15 and 64 years old had tertiary education; while 7% of foreign men and 14% of foreign women of that age had an equivalent degree (Istat, 2018b).

Compared to other Italian regions, job opportunities in Veneto remain plentiful. Indeed, the unemployment rate is among the lowest in the country, with an average of 5.6% in 2016 (Istat, 2018c); which is lower than the level of unemployment in Alsace. As mentioned, migrants tend to be mainly hired for positions at the bottom of the employment structure. Job opportunities for migrants are concentrated primarily in the manufacturing sector, which is widespread in the territory and carried on by small and medium enterprises (Anastasia et al., 2013). In Veneto as in other Italian regions, a significant number of migrant women find employment in the care and domestic sectors.

As far as employment of migrant women is concerned, the data of the 2017 Labor Force Survey for the North East area indicates that the level of labour market participation of foreign women is close to that of Italian women, although it is slightly lower (61% compared to 65% for Italian women). In comparison with Italian women, foreign women are also more affected by unemployment: in 2017, 9% of foreign women were actively looking for a job; among the Italians, only 4% were in this situation.

Graph. 3.2. - Professional status of foreign and Italian women, between 15 and 64 years old, in Veneto, in 2017



Source: Based on Istat (2018d)

In the past ten years, the regional labour market has experienced several phases of contraction characterised by a reduction in the number of hirings and an increase in the number of temporary contracts that were not renewed. From 2008 to 2017, there were mainly two periods of crisis, which followed a "double V" evolution (Anastasia et al., 2013b: 221). More specifically, the number of positions decreased in 2009 and 2012-2014.

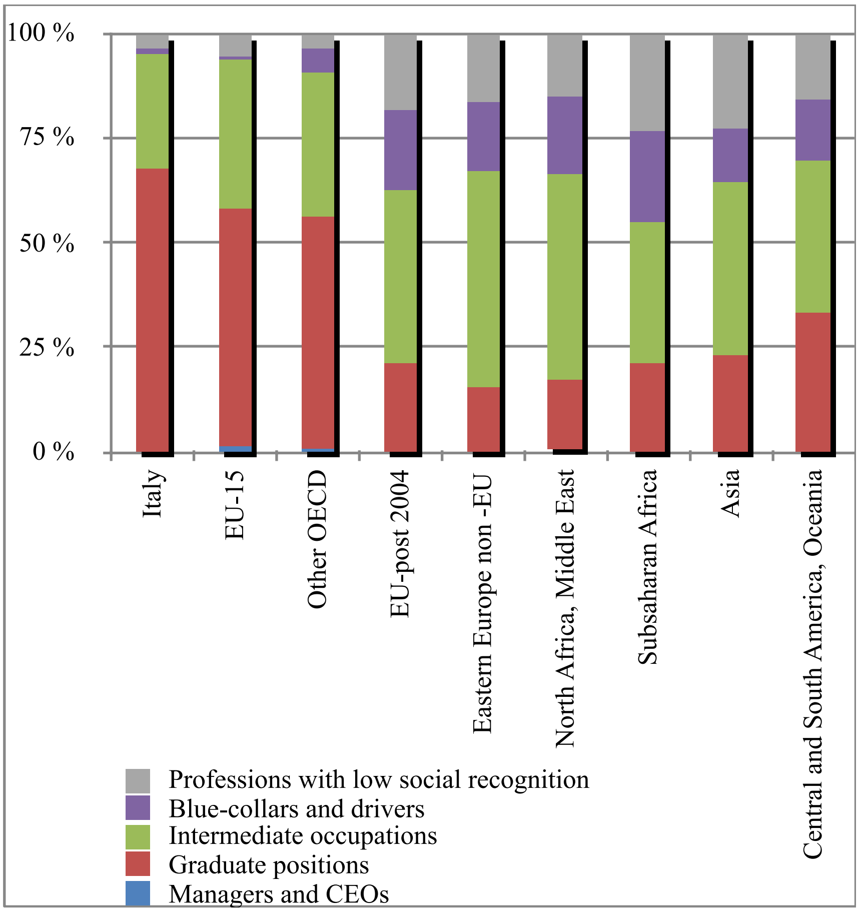
Recent publications have emphasised that migrant workers were among the first to be hit by the so-called crisis, especially men employed in sectors such as construction and manufacturing. According to this literature, migrant women were less affected than men by the contraction of the labour market because a significant percentage of them were working in sectors which have experienced a lower reduction in jobs, such as the care sector (Fullin, 2012). Similarly, the loss of work by the partner would have led many migrant women, who were previously inactive, to seek employment. Scholars (Sacchetto and Vianello, 2013) have identified other consequences of the "crisis" in-migrants working condition: the share of working poor among migrants have increased significantly; positions which involve generic tasks have grown dramatically; migrants increasingly have to count on support networks, to counterbalance the tightening of the welfare state.

2.2. Hiring of graduates in the region

The analysis of the hirings of graduate women in Veneto shows that a substantial part of both Italian and foreigners are recruited for positions for which they are over-educated. As mentioned in the previous section, the Italian Institute of Statistics (Istat, 2013) estimates that intellectual and technical professions are the ones for which a university or equivalent level of study might be required by employers. To facilitate the analysis, we have renamed the jobs that comprise this cluster "graduate positions". When it comes to the hirings in the region, more than a third of the contracts that included graduated women between 2008 and 2017 involved intermediate positions or jobs that have low social recognition. Following Istat's (2013) definitions, we can assume that these women were performing tasks that did not take advantage of their education.

In both 2008 and 2016, the majority of graduates hired in Veneto were women. In 2016, around 5% of these women were foreigners, mainly citizens from countries that joined the European Union after 2004 (such as Romania) and non-EU Europe (mainly Albania, Moldova, and Ukraine). The analysis of contracts reveals two groups. On the one hand, the Italian graduate women, and those from Western European countries and other OECD countries (non-EU), such as Canada and the United States, were hired in over half of the cases for graduated positions. On the other hand, graduate women from Eastern European (EU and non-EU) countries, from Asia, Africa and Latin America were hired in less than a third of cases for positions that require tertiary education (see Graph 3.3.).

Graph. 3.3. - Hiring of graduate women according to nationality and position from 2008 to 2017, in Veneto



Source: Elaboration on Veneto Lavoro (2017) data

Note: details about the professions included in each cluster are given in section 1 of the chapter

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of hirings is limited by the data that counts workers only once and which focuses on two specific years, namely 2008 and 2016. Indeed, a single person can be hired several times in the same year and for different positions. Consequently, the analysis of hirings and contract ends is completed with the study of data sets that count workers only once a year - for every single individual; only the last contract signed in the year is taken into account. This data reflects the distinction based on nationality that was introduced above. On the one hand, in both years, graduate women from Italy, Western Europe, and of specific OECD countries (Australia, Canada, United States) were hired in more than half of the cases for graduate positions. On the other hand, graduate women with nationalities from other countries, such as Eastern Europe and non-OECD countries, were mainly hired for intermediate occupations and professions with low social recognition.

The data that counts individuals only once a year reveals some variations compared to the analysis based on contracts. For instance, the privileged position of graduate women from Western EU and the OECD is strengthened. In 2008 and 2016, around two-thirds of these women were hired for graduate positions. Conversely, graduate women from Latin America, Asia and the post-2004 EU seem to have slightly better access to top-positions, compared to other datasets: in both reference years, over a third of these graduate women were hired for graduate positions. Nonetheless, the difference between the two groups remains substantial.

According to this data, if compared to graduate women from the first group, graduate women from Eastern Europe (EU and non-EU) and from outside of the OECD have been recruited in a much more significant proportion for positions at the lower levels of the labour market. For instance, less than 5% of Italian, Western European, and OECD graduate women were hired for jobs as blue-collars, drivers, and professions with low social recognition, such as domestic workers and cleaning professionals. In contrast, these positions represented more than 15% of the hirings of graduate women from Latin America, Asia and EU post-2004. Moreover, both in 2008 and in 2016, graduate women from Eastern non-EU Europe, North Africa and Subsaharan Africa were hired in over three-quarter of the cases for positions that were either intermediate or with low social recognition. Overall, the analysis of recruitments, which counts workers only once a year, confirms the existence of two groups of nationalities which have differentiated access to the local labour market.

The stratification based on the nationality of graduate women does not distinguish on the one hand the Italians and on the other the foreigners, or on the other hand, European citizens and on the other hand non-Europeans. The group of graduate women who have the most significant access to graduate positions includes women from OECD countries that are outside of the EU. Therefore, these non-EU citizens also seem to be privileged. In contrast, in the group of graduate women who have encountered more difficulties in gaining access to graduate positions, there are also European citizens from Eastern European countries (post-2004), such as Romania.

This differentiation is symptomatic of the inequalities within the European Union. Although they are European citizens and have studied in European countries, Eastern Europeans do not have equivalent access to the labour market to that of Italians. Moreover, graduates who are not European citizens, but who come from privileged OECD countries manage to be recruited for graduate positions more often than Eastern EU citizens. Therefore, the line that separates the graduate women that have easier access to jobs at the top of the occupational structure from those who face more challenges is not defined based on being an EU citizen. It rather follows a division between countries considered to be of high income on the one hand, and those perceived as middle and low-income countries, on the other.

If these results are viewed in the context with the literature that was analysed in the first chapter of the dissertation, it becomes apparent that the women of the first group are those who tend to be racialised as white or honorary whites, while those of the second group are those racialised as non whites (Grosfoguel et al., 2015). As it has been stressed previously, persons from the same country can be racialised in different ways depending on their class, gender, skin colour and physiognomy. Therefore, analysis based on nationality does not fully account for how racialisation defines access to employment. Nevertheless, it is striking that graduate women from the Global South, including from countries that experienced European colonisation and subjugation, are those who face more challenges to access graduate positions. In the group that finds more difficulties are also women that Grosfoguel et al. (Ibid) identify as "colonial immigrants", meaning that they were born in peripheral locations that were not directly colonised but whose citizens are racialised in similar ways to the "colonial/racial subjects of the empire".

It is worth noting that there are significant differences within the group that encounters more challenges in accessing graduate positions. These variations concern above all the specific intermediate and lowly recognised occupations for which they are being hired. For instance, a large group of graduate women from Sub-Saharan Africa have found employment (over 40% of contracts started from 2008 to 2017) for jobs as blue collar workers or positions with low social recognition, such as domestic workers, cleaners, travelling salespersons, ushers, porters and custodians. This trend can also be observed in the data that counts workers only once a year in 2008 and 2016. As a result, it could be argued that graduate women from Sub-Saharan Africa are especially segregated at the bottom of the occupational structure, compared to graduates from other countries.

The data made available by Veneto Lavoro make it possible to contrast the type of contracts that graduate women signed throughout the period of reference. According to this data, between 2008 and 2017, over three-quarters of hirings in Veneto concerned temporary and short-term contracts. For all graduate women, except for those from Sub-Saharan Africa, permanent contracts involve, to a large extent, the professions at the top of the employment structure. There are differences between contract types depending on nationality, but these differences do not distinguish high-income countries on the one hand and other countries on the other. However, even in this regard, graduates from Sub-Saharan Africa seem to be those who find it more challenging to access permanent positions at the top of the employment structure. Conversely, they are among the national groups for which the possibility of having a permanent contract increases while descending the occupational structure (See table 1).

Table 3.1 - Hiring of graduate women, according to nationality, position and type of contract, from 2008 to 2017

Positions	*Graduate positions, managers and CEOs*			*Intermediate occupations*			*Blue collars, drivers and positions with low social recognition*		
Type of contract	*Permanent*	*Temporary/ Short-term*	*Other*	*Permanent*	*Temporary/ Short-term*	*Other*	*Permanent*	*Temporary/ Short-term*	*Other*
Italy	13	85	2	14	75	11	5	92	3
EU - 15	18	79	3	16	78	6	4	96	0
Other OECD	18	81	1	21	74	5	8	92	0
EU - post 2004	20	77	3	9	84	7	8	91	1
East Europe, non EU	18	76	6	9	83	8	11	88	1
North Africa, Midd. East	21	68	11	12	85	3	8	86	6
Subsaharan Africa	9	91	0	9	88	3	11	88	1
Asia	17	81	2	18	75	7	19	80	1
Central and South America, Oceania	17	83	0	14	79	7	8	90	2

Source: Elaboration on Veneto Lavoro (2017) data

2.3. Graduate foreign women in feminised positions[10]

As stressed earlier, the Italian welfare system is characterised by explicit familyism as there are few alternative options to informal family support for the care of children and other dependents, (Lyon, 2006) and care work is mainly performed by women (Bettio and Plantenga, 2004). As mentioned, families tend to rely on a low-cost migrant female workforce to compensate for the lack of welfare facilities. This pattern leads Kofman and Raghuram (2015: 84) to consider that Italy has a "migrant in the family welfare model".

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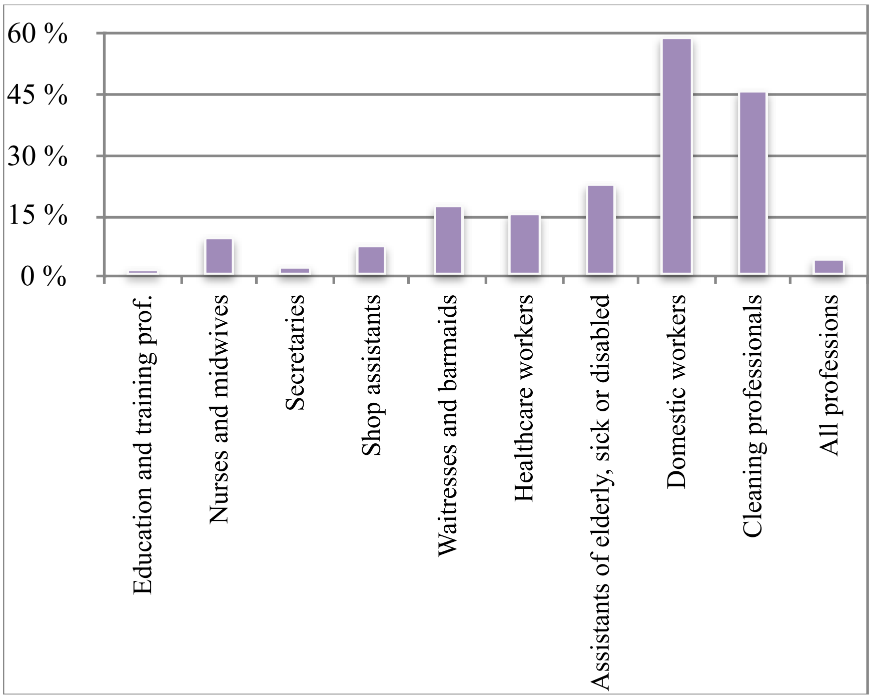
[10] Feminised positions refer to jobs in which women are over-represented.

In order to take into account this trend, the section focuses on five positions (*qualifica*) that involve care work and that are placed at different levels in the occupational structure. The first and second type of jobs are those of domestic workers (*collaboratrice domestica*) -1- and cleaning professionals -2-, which are consider as being at the bottom of the employment structure and have low social recognition. Intermediate occupations that involve care are that of assistants of elderly, sick or disabled -3-, as well as healthcare workers (*ausiliare socio-sanitaria*) -4-. A fifth group which benefits from higher recognition and fits in our definition of graduate positions is that of nurses and midwives -5-. In our analysis, these care positions are undertaken by other feminised jobs, most of which also involve social reproduction, such as teaching and cleaning (see Graph 3.4.).

Graph 3.4. - Percentage of foreigners among the graduate women hired for feminised positions, in 2016



Source: Elaboration on Veneto Lavoro (2017d) data

In 2016, foreign graduate women were over-represented in the jobs that involved care and that were either intermediate or that were perceived as having low social recognition. Nearly 60% of the graduate women hired as domestic workers were foreigners, as well as over 20% of that recruited as assistants of elderly, sick, or disabled. In 2016, the foreign graduates that accessed these positions were mainly Romanians, Ukrainians, Moldavians and Albanians. Although they are numerically less represented, it is relevant to stress that Moroccan graduate women also found a significant job outlet in these positions, as over 25% of them were hired to work in these fields. Conversely, the percentage of Italian, Western Europeans and OECD graduate women employed as domestic workers, as assistants to elderly, sick or disabled, or as healthcare workers is proportionately reduced. Indeed, in 2016, less than 5% of this second group of graduates were hired for these positions.

At the top of the employment structure, female graduates found employment opportunities mainly in the education and health sectors. However, their inclusion in these areas also differs according to their nationality. Italian graduates, as well as graduates from Western Europe and the OECD, were mainly hired for positions in education and training. More than a third of these foreign graduates have accessed jobs in this sector. On the other hand, graduates with nationalities from countries outside of the OECD or Eastern Europeans found it more difficult to enter these professions. At the top of the employment structure, this second group of graduates found more significant opportunities in the health care sector, namely as nurses and midwives. These foreign graduates were mainly Romanians, along with Albanians, Poles and Moldavians. Although they are numerically less represented, it also worth mentioning that in 2016, a significant group of Indian graduate women were hired as nurses and midwives. The relatively higher presence of foreign graduates, among health technicians, is in line with what the literature has identified in the past as a lack of nursing staff and the consequent hiring of foreign workers to fill the gap (Vianello, 2014).

Scholars have hypothesised that in Italy, there is stronger discrimination against migrants in specific occupations that involve contact with customers, for instance, in the sales and hospitality industries (Allasino et al., 2004). In these particular sectors, positions as sales assistants and waitresses, are also characterised for being feminised. Interestingly, these jobs are also those in which foreign graduates are over-represented if compared to Italian graduates. In 2016, foreigners corresponded to 18% of the graduate women hired as waitresses and bartenders and 7% of those employed as sales assistants. These foreign graduate women were mainly from Eastern Europe (EU and non-Eu countries). Other groups of women that had significant access to positions in the sales and hospitality sectors were Chinese graduates who were hired in over one-third of the cases as waitresses, bartenders and sales assistants. Therefore, the obstacles and discriminations in the hiring process that were identified by Allasino et al. (2004) do not seem to preclude access to these positions for Eastern Europeans and Chinese women. Nonetheless, graduate women from Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa are almost absent in these jobs. A question that remains unanswered and that would need fieldwork, is whether these women face specific challenges to access positions in these sectors.

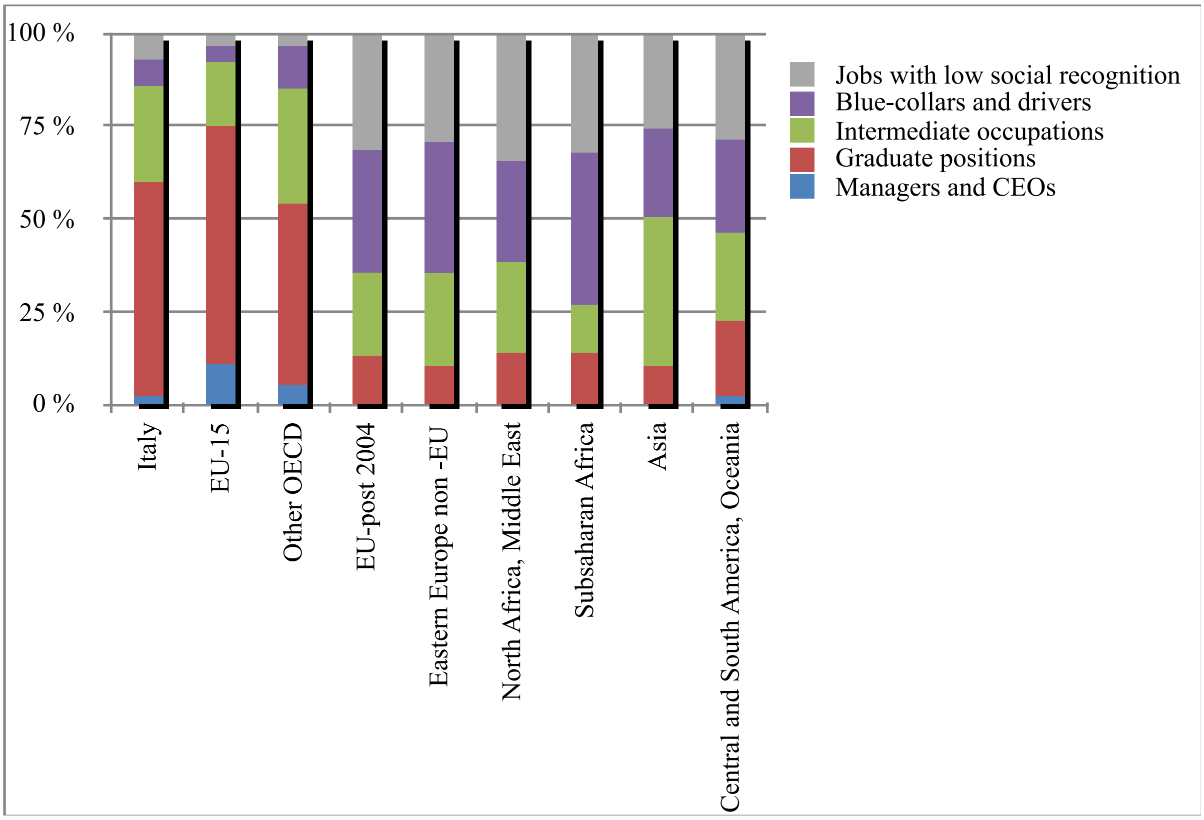
2.4. Graduate women and graduate men

The comparison between the relative positions of women and men shows that graduate men have better access to CEO and managerial positions. The hirings for these jobs concern mainly graduate men from both Italy and other high-income countries, principally from Western EU. This observation supports the idea that men racially perceived as being white are favoured in Italian society and that they have privileged access to positions of power (Giuliani, 2015). However, and as it is further developed below, the comparison with other qualifications does not reveal the same asymmetry based on gender.

The data that concerns the hiring of graduate men reveal a distinction similar to that of women. On the one hand, the positions at the top of the employment structure are more accessible to graduate men from Italy and high-income countries. On the other hand, graduate men with a nationality from Eastern Europe, Africa, Asia and Latin America were mainly recruited for jobs at the bottom of the employment structure. Graduates from Italy and high-income countries were hired for positions as blue collars, drivers, and jobs with low social recognition in less than 20% of the cases. Conversely, these positions concerned more than half of the recruitments of graduate men from Eastern Europe (EU and non-EU), Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

It is worth noting that the percentage of men of the second group that were hired for positions at the bottom of the employment structure, is greater to that of women from the same areas. Consequently, it seems easier for graduate women than for men from middle- and low-income countries, to access intermediate and top positions. This observation contrasts the idea that it is more challenging for graduate migrant women than for men, to obtain rewarding jobs in the labour market.

Graph 3.5. - Hiring of graduate men according to nationality and qualifica, from 2008 to 2017, in Veneto



Source: Veneto Lavoro (2017) data

The analysis of the employment data counting workers only once a year seems to confirm these findings. On the one hand, in 2016 graduate men from Italy, Western Europe and the OECD found more job opportunities at the top of the employment structure than graduate women from the same areas. Foreign graduate men from Western Europe and the OECD were mainly hired in feminised positions, especially as teachers and training specialists. On the other hand, graduate men from Eastern Europe (EU and non-EU), Africa, Asia, Central and South America found it more challenging to access positions at the top of the employment structure than graduate men from the first group of nationalities. Moreover, men from the middle and low-income countries were hired for graduate positions at a lower percentage than graduate women from the same areas. At the top of the employment structure this second group of graduate men, more specifically those with Romanian and Polish citizenship, mainly found employment in feminised occupations, such as nurses and obstetricians. Overall, it is interesting to note that at the top of the occupational structure, foreign graduate men both from high, medium and low-income countries, are employed in a more significant proportion than Italians in feminised positions, such as teachers, training specialists, as well as nurses and obstetricians.

Compared to men, in 2016, graduate women from all countries tended to be hired in a higher proportion for intermediate occupations. Conversely, male graduates, especially those with citizenship from Eastern Europe (EU and non-EU), Africa and Asia, found more employment than women as blue-collar workers, drivers, and jobs with low social recognition. At the bottom of the employment structure, one of the main outlets for graduate men with these nationalities is the position of staff of merchandise warehouses.

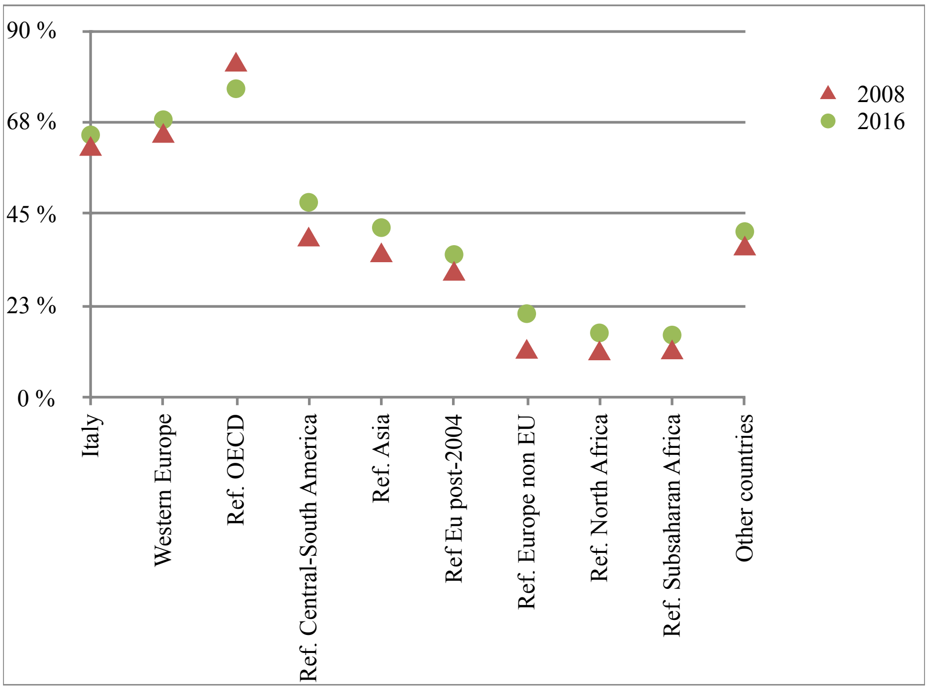
Despite having more significant access to top-positions, graduate women from Eastern Europe and non-OECD countries are more concerned with part-time jobs than graduate men from these areas. As a result, these women access positions that incur more instability if compared to graduate men. Graduate women, including those with Italian nationality, were hired in more than a third of the cases with part-time contracts — conversely, part-time jobs involved less than a third of the recruitments of graduate men. Once again, graduate women from Sub-Saharan Africa are those who are more concerned with part-time contracts. Between 2008 and 2017, more than half of their hirings were for part-time jobs. Therefore, besides being more segregated at the bottom of the employment structure, these graduate women seem to access contracts that provide less income than those of men and women from other areas.

2.5. Evolving positions

The balance between hirings and contract which end makes it possible to take a look at the creation of jobs. From 2008 to 2017, the employment balance of graduate women was positive, suggesting that despite the crisis, new posts continued to be created for graduate women. However, there are significant differences according to nationality. Three-quarter of the job created for graduate women from Italy and high-income countries, corresponded to graduate positions. The jobs created for graduate women from other countries also mainly concerned graduate positions. However, the proportion for the second group of nationalities is lower, meaning that job creation for these women are significantly concentrated in positions that are intermediate or that benefit from only low social recognition.

The comparison between hirings in 2008 and 2016 shows that regardless country of citizenship, graduate women have been recruited in a growing proportion for CEO, managerial, and graduate positions (Graph 3.6.). Australian, Canadian, and US graduate women are the only ones for which recruitment at the top of the employment structure has slightly decreased. However, this group of women retain privileged access to top positions, compared to graduates of other nationalities, including Italians. Overall, the data seems to indicate that foreign graduate women, including those from non-OECD countries, are progressively getting better access to top level positions. This evolution is partly due to the economic recovery which started in 2015 and the increase in employment in Veneto in 2016 (Veneto Lavoro, 2017c). Further longitudinal studies are needed to understand whether this is a lasting or only a temporary trend.

Graph. 3.6. - Graduate women hired for managerial and graduate positions in 2008 and 2016



Source: Elaboration on Veneto Lavoro data (2017d)

Note: The countries of reference correspond to: Western Europe (EU-15 and Switzerland), OECD countries (United States, Canada, Australia), Central-South Amercia (Argentina, Venezuela), Asia (Bangladesh, China, India), European Union post-2004 (Poland, Romania), Eastern Europe non-EU (Albania, Moldova, Ukraine), North Africa (Libya, Morocco) and Subsaharan Africa (Ghana, Senegal).

2.6. Conclusions on the data available for Veneto

The analysis of the hirings of graduates in Veneto highlights that the regional labour market is marked by stratifications based on gender and nationality. These stratifications are significantly different from those identified by previous research, which tended to be divided between Italian and foreign workers, or between Europeans and non-Europeans (Ministry of Labor and Social Policies, 2016). As we have seen in this section, access to graduate positions follows a line that divides, on the one hand, graduates from Italy and other high-income countries, and on the other hand, graduates from middle and low-income countries. The former have privileged access to graduate and top-positions, while the latter are mainly hired for intermediate positions or jobs that have only low social recognition. Therefore, graduate women with citizenship from Eastern Europe (both EU and non-EU citizens) or non-OECD countries seem to be particularly struggling to find employment in line with their studies.

Furthermore, graduate women with citizenship from Eastern EU countries are among those who find it more challenging to access graduate and top level positions. Being European citizens and having studied in a European country does not enable them to have access to the labour market equivalent to that of Italians, Western Europeans, and citizens from other high-income countries. At the same time, the analysis stresses that graduate women from Subsaharan Africa are those who are more concentrated in positions at the bottom of the employment structure.

In addition, the analysis stresses that the country of citizenship also defines the access that graduate men have to the labour market. Although there are more managers and CEOs among men than women, graduates from countries considered to be middle and lower-income are more segregated at the bottom of the employment structure, even compared to their female co-national graduates. Nonetheless, regardless of the country of citizenship, men have more privileged access to full-time jobsas compared to women.

Last but not least, the longitudinal analysis shows signs of improvement for graduate foreign women. Graduate women from non-OECD countries seemed to have slightly greater access to top-positions in 2016 when compared to 2008. Further studies are needed to understand whether it is durable or only a temporary phenomenon.

3. Graduate migrant women in Alsace

This section aims at studying what the available data tells us concerning the position of graduate migrant women in the labour market in Alsace. The analysis mainly relies on a survey conducted by the French Institute of Statistics in the context of the 2014 Census. Unfortunately, the data for Alsace is less detailed than the data for Veneto. It does not permit development of an analysis as rich as that presented in the previous section. Moreover, it does not allow generalisation of the results. Overall, graduate participants in the departments of Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin were 3960, 627 of whom were migrants. Although this number of participants is quite significant, it does not enable the researcher to have an analysis that accurately reflects the situation of a relatively small group in the entire population, such as that of female migrant graduates. Nevertheless, the 2014 Census was the main dataset available that crossed gender, country of birth, level of education, and it provides relevant insights concerning the labour market positioning of graduate migrant women in Alsace.

The first part of this section introduces the positioning of migrants in the local labour market (2.1). The second part gives information on the gender, country of birth and migratory status of the graduates that participate in the survey (2.2.). The second part focuses on the employment status of respondents (2.3.). The section closes with an analysis of the positions that were accessed by graduates, according to gender and country of birth (2.4.).

3.1. Migrants in the Alsatian labour market

According to official statistics, the percentage of migrants in the local population is higher in Alsace than in the rest of the country. In 2015, migrants represented nearly 11% of the Alsatian population, compared to 9% on average in France (Insee, 2018). The migrant population in Alsace is also slightly more feminine:

in 2015, nearly 52% of the foreign-born were women (Insee, 2018). If historically, women tended to arrive in Alsace mainly through family reunification, several of them also entered the country with residence permits for studies, work, or in the context of an asylum application (ORIV, 2006).

As far as countries of birth are concerned, in 2013, migrants living in Alsace were mainly born in Turkey, Germany, Morocco and Algeria. Since the 2000s, the share of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa has also increased in the region, together with that of migrants born in Eastern Europe and post-Soviet countries (Insee 2012). According to regional statistics, both groups are slightly more feminine than in other regions of France (ORIV, 2006).

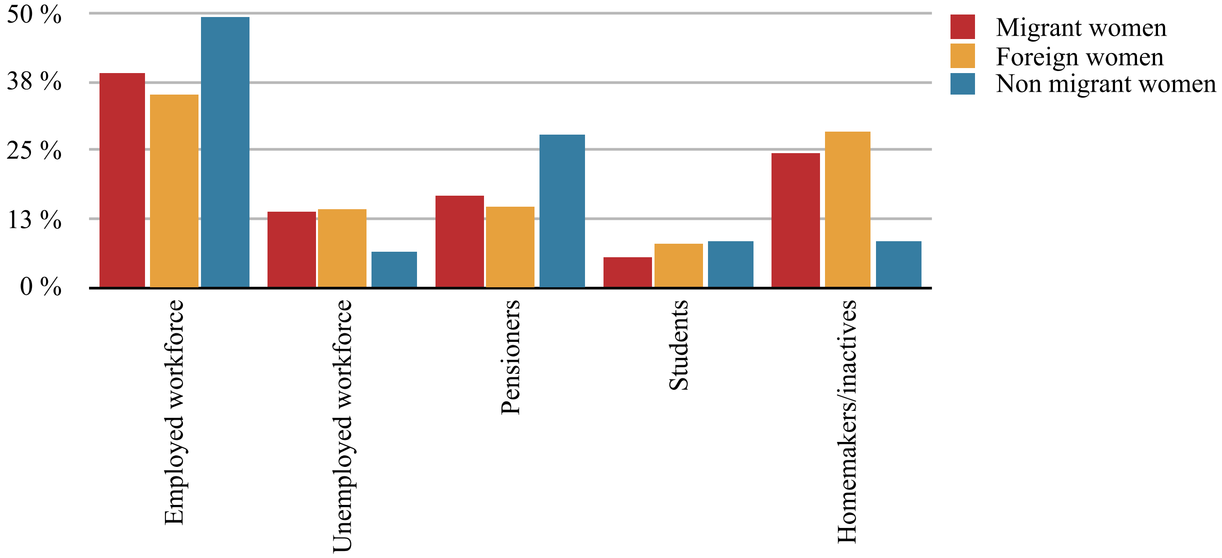
The number of women among national groups varies depending on the country of birth. Thus, in 2013, women were more present among migrants from EU countries (such as Germany, Romania and Poland), Europe outside of the EU (such as Russia) and certain sub-Saharan African countries (such as Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon). On the other hand, men were the majority in older migratory flows such as those from Italy, Portugal, Tunisia, Algeria and Turkey (Insee, 2016a).

As far as the local labour market is concerned, it is relevant to stress that unemployment in Alsace is slightly lower than in other French areas. In 2018, unemployment rate was 7,5% in Bas-Rhin and 8,4% in Haut-Rhin, while in Grand Est the average was 8,6%, and approximately 9,1% of the workforce was unemployed in France (Insee, 2018c). The participation of women in the workforce is also slightly higher in Alsace than in the rest of France. For instance, in 2016, both in Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin, more than 71% of the women between 15 and 64 years old were active in the labour force (Insee, 2016d).

It is also interesting to note that, when compared to other regions in France, Alsace has neither a high percentage of graduates in the overall population nor a high proportion of *cadre* (managers and executives) among its workforce. The available statistics emphasise that in France, there are significant inequalities in this regard. For instance, Paris has a concentration of both graduated workforce and *cadre* positions: in 2016, 60% of the over 15-year-old Parisians had tertiary education, while the average in France corresponded to nearly 29% of the population (Insee, 2016c); 35% of the positions in Paris were *cadres* and similar jobs, while the national average was 18% (Insee, 2016e). Alsace stands in the average with slight differences between Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin: in the former, nearly 30% of the over 15s have tertiary education, while in the latter the percentage corresponds to almost 25% of the local population (Insee, 2016c). At the same time, the number of *cadre* in the region is below the national average and stands at 17% of jobs in Bas-Rhin and fell at 13% in Haut-Rhin (Insee, 2016e).

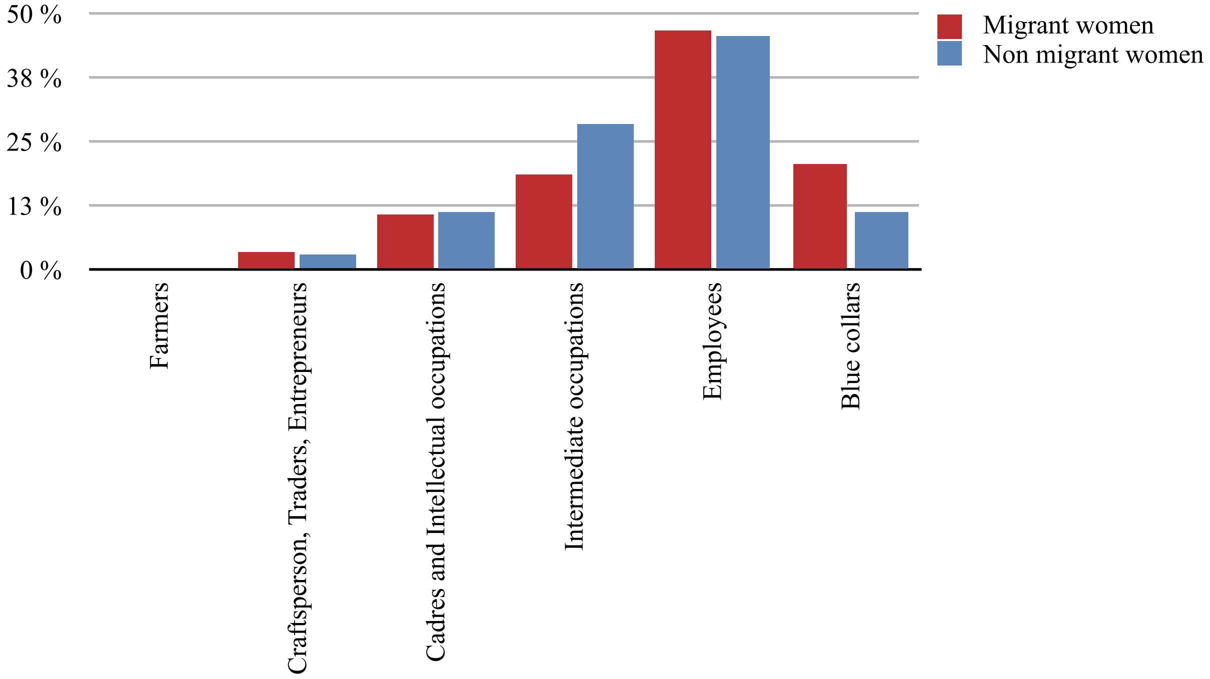
The available data concerning migrants in the local labour market indicates that migrant men and women are much more likely to be unemployed, than non migrants (Insee, 2016b). Migrants women had significantly higher rates of unemployment than women born in France (Graph 3.7.). In 2015, unemployment affected nearly 26% of the active migrant women in Bas-Rhin and 28% in Haut-Rhin, while it affected respectively 11% and 13% of the non-migrant women (Insee, 2018a and 2018b). Last but not least, research conducted in Alsace (ORIV, 2012) has stressed that migrant women principally access positions at the bottom of the employment structure. For instance, they are more concentrated in jobs as blue collar workers and employees (*employées*) than non-migrant women, while a higher percentage of non-migrant women work in intermediate occupations (Graph 3.8.).

Graph. 3.7. - Activity of migrant, foreign and non-migrant women of more than 15 years old, in Alsace, in 2013.



Source : IMG2A V2 and NAT2; Région Alsace; Insee, RP2013 exploitation principale, available at: https://www.Insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2106113?geo=REG-42 (30/08/2019)

Graph. 3.8. - Socio-professional category of migrant and non migrant women, in Alsace, in 2013



Source : IMG3A; Région de Alsace; Insee, RP2013 exploitation principale, available at: https://www.Insee.fr/fr/statistiques/2106113?geo=REG-42 (30/08/2019)

Note: Pensioners and inactive women are excluded from the graph.

3.2. Graduate migrants

As mentioned in the previous sections, compared to other regions in France, Alsace is not one of the areas with the highest percentage of graduates in the entire population. The available statistics emphasise that in France there are significant inequalities in this regard. For instance, the graduated workforce is concentrated in Paris: in 2016, 60% of the over 15-year-old Parisians had tertiary education, while the average in France corresponded to nearly 29% of the population (Insee, 2016c). Alsace is close to the average with slight differences between Bas-Rhin and Haut-Rhin: in the former, almost 30% of the over 15s had tertiary education, while in the latter the percentage corresponded to nearly 25% of the local population (Insee, 2016c).

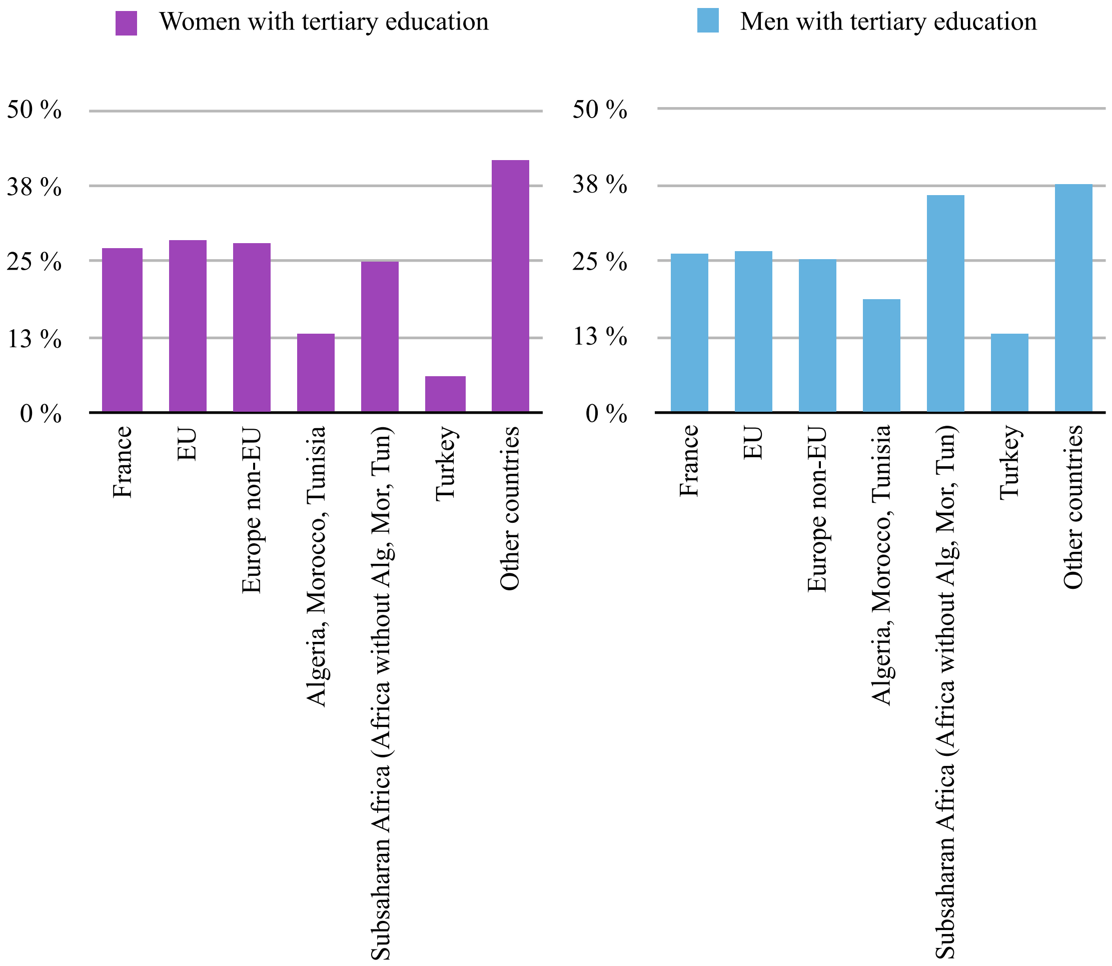
In the context of the 2014 Census, more than a quarter (26%) of participants who were over 14 years of age had tertiary education. The share of graduates among respondents was slightly higher for non-migrants, if compared to those born abroad. More specifically, 24% of migrants over 14 were graduates, compared to 27% of non-migrants. The share of graduates among respondents varies considerably depending on the country of birth and gender. For instance, statistics suggest that a relatively lower percentage of migrants born in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Turkey were graduates, compared to non-migrants. Conversely, the share of graduates was higher for participants from European countries (inside and outside of the EU), compared to non-migrants. For instance, 27,5% of migrants born in EU countries and 26,9% of those born in non-EU Europe were graduates, compared to 26,5% of non-migrants.

The proportion of graduates was even higher among respondents born in Sub-Saharan Africa, Oceania, and the Americas, compared to non-migrants or migrants born in other areas. More specifically, 30% of participants born in Sub-Saharan Africa were graduates, and 40% of those born in Oceania, the Americas, and Asian countries (excluding Turkey) had tertiary education. It is worth noting that migrants born in Sub-

Saharan Africa and Eastern Europe, were among those with a higher percentage of graduates. These migrant groups also correspond to those who have experienced a significant increase in numbers in the past three decades. As mentioned previously, since the 1990s, there has been a growing number of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa and non-EU Eastern Europe arriving in the Alsace (ORIV, 2006). Therefore, it could be concluded that there is a relatively high percentage of graduates in these recent waves of migration. This hypothesis echoes Ndiaye (2008)'s observations. He indicates that until the 1970s, one of the main groups of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa was that of proletarians from the Senegal River area. These migrants were progressively joined by individuals that were born in Congo-Brazzaville, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, and Madagascar, many of whom were graduates.

When it comes to gender, the percentage of women with tertiary education who took part in the Census is slightly higher than that of men. More specifically, graduates corresponded to 27% of the women respondents and 26% of men. The share of graduates among respondents varied significantly according to the country of birth. If compared to men from the same countries, there was a lower percentage of women born in Turkey and African countries who had tertiary education. Conversely, women born in European countries (EU and non-EU) tended to be slightly more highly educated than their male counterparts (See Graph 3.9. and 3.10.).

Graph. 3.9. and 3.10. - Share of participants over 14 with tertiary education, according to gender and country of birth



Source: developed from Insee (2017) data

3.3. Insights on the employment status of graduate migrants

As mentioned previously, migrants in Alsace are significantly more concerned with unemployment than non-migrants. The divergence between migrants and non-migrants is just as striking if we focus on women. For instance, in 2015 unemployment affected nearly 26% of the active migrant women in Bas-Rhin and 28% in Haut-Rhin, while it affected respectively 11% and 13% of the non-migrant women (Insee, 2018a and 2018b). Based on this data, one could speculate if holding a university diploma increases the chances of finding a job. Are graduates less concerned with unemployment? How does the gap based on gender and migration status change when we focus on graduates?

The 2014 Census suggests that having a tertiary education can reduce the chances of being unemployed. However, the gap between migrants and non-migrants remains significant. Indeed, the graduate migrants that participated in the survey were considerably more affected by unemployment than non-migrants. More specifically, while only 6% of non-migrant graduates were looking for employment, over 20% of the migrant graduates were concerned about unemployment.

The unemployment rate among graduates differs considerably according to gender and nationality. In the context of the 2014 Census, the gender gap was higher among migrants, compared to non-migrants. For instance, 22% of graduate migrant women were looking for employment, compared to 18% of graduate migrant men. Conversely, graduate women and men born in France had unemployment rates that were lower and close to each other. More specifically, 7% of graduate non-migrant men were unemployed, and only 6% of graduate non-migrant women.

When it comes to differences based on country of birth, the 2014 Census suggests that graduate migrant women born in EU countries are among those with the unemployment rate that comes closer to that of non-migrants (9%). Similarly, graduate women from Sub-Saharan Africa who participated in the survey are also less impacted by unemployment, compared to other groups (8%). Conversely, graduate women from European countries outside the EU (namely Russia and Serbia) and the Maghreb (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) were the most affected by unemployment, as over 30% of these participants were looking for employment. After reviewing the employment status of respondents, based on gender, level of education and migratory status, one could ask for what positions are these graduates being hired?

3.4. An unequal access to graduate positions

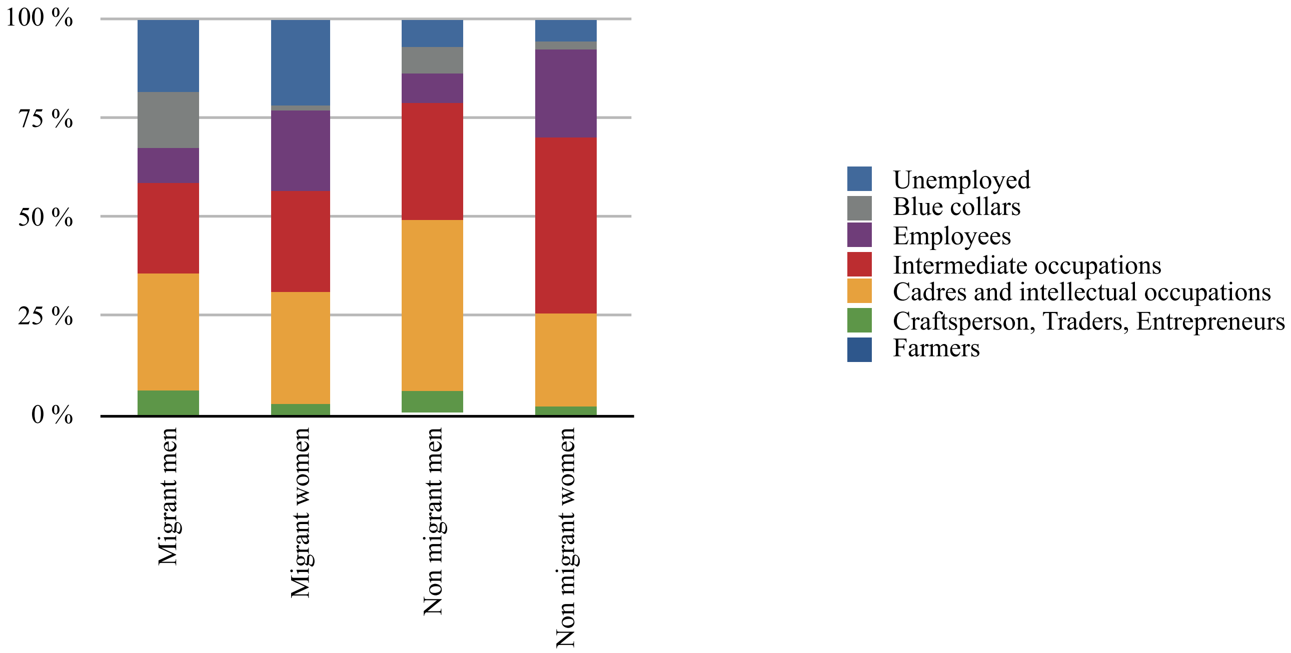
The data of the 2014 Census highlights that over-education is a phenomenon that affects migrants as well as non-migrants, women and men. However, brain waste or brain abuse does not hit these groups with the same intensity. According to the French Institute of Statistics (Insee, 2003), the positions that might request tertiary education are mainly concentrated in the group of cadres and intellectual professions. The institute also expects that tertiary education could be required to access some intermediate occupations, such as midwives, nurses and physiotherapists.

In the 2014 Census, over two-thirds of the graduate men and women who were born in France, or French at birth, were hired as cadres for intellectual or intermediate positions (See Graph 3.11.). As in Veneto, graduate men who were born in France seem to be the ones that have better access to employment and top-positions. Besides being relatively less affected by unemployment than other groups, these men are also those who are the best represented among CEOs. In the context of the 2014 Census, almost 45% of the active participants with these attributes (men, graduated, born in France) were working as CEOs, managers, or in intellectual occupations.

On the other hand, migrant graduate men were in the second position in terms of access to jobs at the top of the employment structure. Among the migrant male respondents who were working or looking for employment, nearly 30% had a position of CEO, manager, or perform an intellectual job. However, this group of men were significantly more concerned with unemployment (18%) and positions as employees or blue collar workers (28%), compared to French-born graduate men.

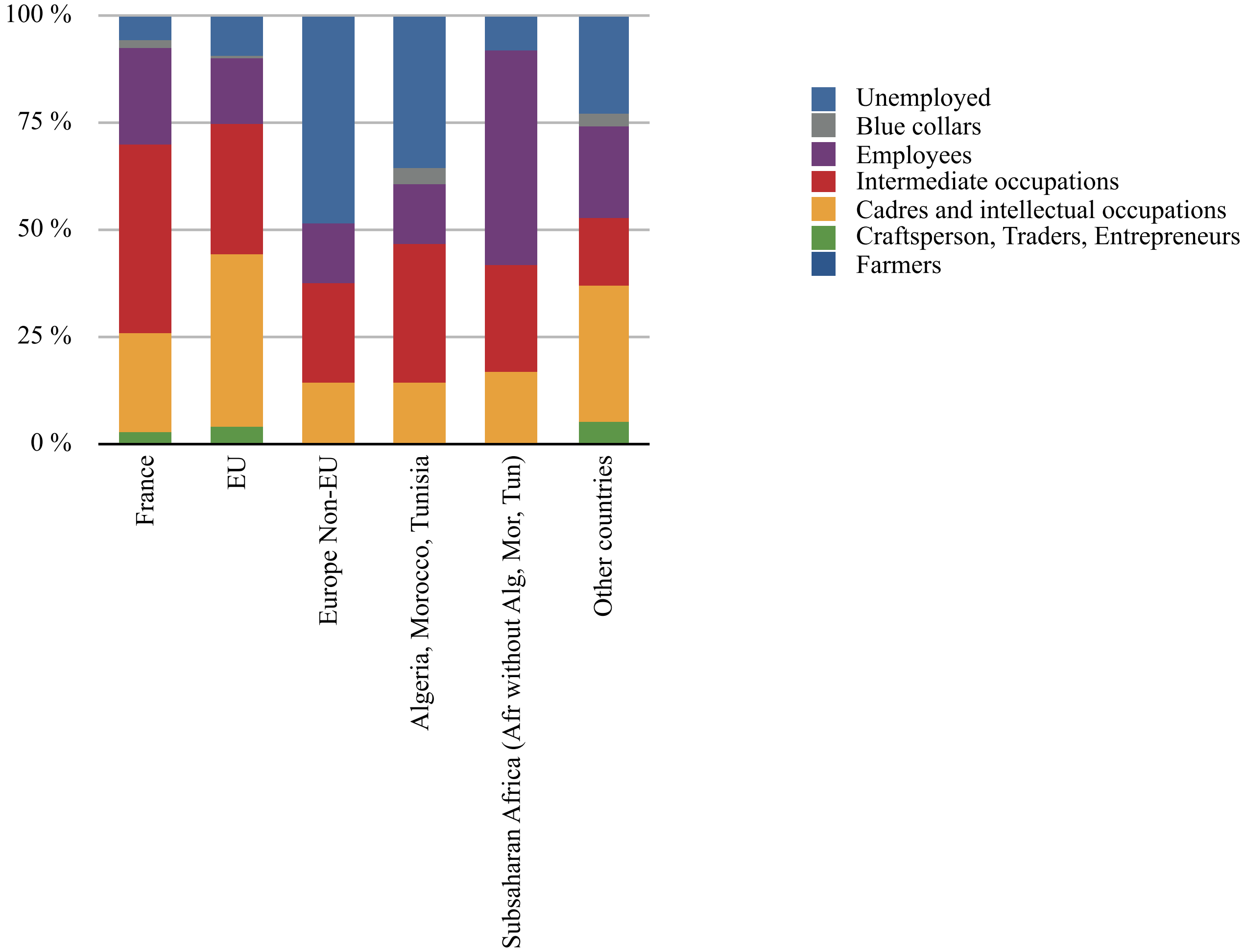
In the context of the survey, graduate migrant women who were working or looking for employment were only slightly less concerned with top-positions, compared to their male counterpart. More specifically, 28% of them had a position as cadres or performed an intellectual job. Compared to their male counterparts, these women were more concentrated in positions as employees but less so by those of blue collar workers. More surprisingly, the share of graduate migrant women in top-positions was higher than that of graduates born in France. Indeed, only 23% of the graduate non-migrant women were working as cadres or in intellectual positions. This gap suggests the idea that graduate migrant women had better access to top-positions, compared to non-migrants. However, the hypothesis needs to be nuanced, compared to non-migrants, as graduate migrant women are significantly more affected by unemployment and less present in intermediate occupations. More specifically, only a quarter of these migrant female respondents were working in these positions, compared to 44% of the graduate women born in France. Moreover, there are significant differences in the access that these women have to graduate positions according to their country of birth (See Graph 3.12.).

Graph. 3.11. - Employment status and position of graduate participants according to migratory status and gender



Source: developed from Insee (2017) data

Graph. 3.12. - Employment status and position of female graduate participants according to country of birth



Source: developed from Insee (2017) data

As far as countries of birth of graduate women are concerned, it is worth noting that women born in other EU countries are those who seem to have the best access to positions at the top of the employment structure. In the context of the 2014 Census, these respondents had an unemployment rate only slightly higher than that of French-born graduate women (9%), and they were the ones with the highest share of cadres and intellectual professionals. More specifically, over 40% of them were working in these positions, compared to 23% of the active graduate women who were born in France.

Overall, these two groups of women, the French-born graduates and the ones born in other EU countries, were working in top- or intermediate occupations in over two-thirds of the cases.

Conversely, only a fifth of graduate women that were born in Africa or non-EU Europe were working as cadres or in intellectual occupations. Among these women, those born in European countries outside of the EU were particularly affected by unemployment (49%), while a significant percentage of graduate respondents from Sub-Saharan Africa was working as employees, including as care assistants, sales assistants, and domestic workers.

Moreover, it is also interesting to look at the specific cadres occupations for which respondents to the 2014 Census were hired (Table 1). The French-born graduate men, who are the ones with the best access to these positions, are particularly concentrated in jobs as corporate and commercial executives, (10%) as well as engineers and technical executives (16%). Although migrant graduate men are also being hired as engineers (9%), positions as professors, and scientists, (9%) those are also among the top occupations in which they find employment. On the other hand and as mentioned earlier, regardless of the country of birth, women have more limited access to these positions, compared to men. Nevertheless, a significant number of graduate migrant women work as professors and scientists as well (11%), while French-born graduates are also to be found among the corporate and commercial executives (6%).

Table 3.2. Occupation of graduate workers hired as a CEOs, cadres or in intellectual occupations, by gender and migration status (as % of the active population)

	Migrant men	*Migrant women*	*Non-migrant men*	*Non-migrant women*
CEOs	1 %	0 %	2 %	0 %
Independent professions	2 %	5 %	4 %	3 %
Public service Managers	3 %	3 %	4 %	3 %
Professors, scientific professionals	9 %	11 %	8 %	6 %
Information, arts and entertainment professionals	1 %	3 %	1 %	1 %
Corporate and commercial executives	5 %	3 %	10 %	6 %
Engineers and technical executives	9 %	3 %	16 %	4 %
Total	30 %	28 %	45 %	23 %

Source: developed from Insee (2017) data

3.5. Conclusions on the data available for Alsace

The analysis of the 2014 census data highlights that, far from conventional wisdom (Oriv, 2012), both men and women migrants who live in Alsace are graduates in a proportion close to that of non-migrants. The study suggests that graduates are concerned by the fact that access to the labour market is differentiated. For instance, graduate migrants, and particularly women, are affected by unemployment in a more significant proportion than graduates that were born in France or that were French at birth. Having a higher education qualification does not allow migrant men and women to escape unemployment.

The analysis of the available statistical data suggests that there is differentiated access to the labour market according to gender. For instance, graduate men, and more specifically, those born in France have significantly better chances of being hired for top-positions, compared to both migrant and non-migrant women.

The country of birth also seems to influence the employment outcome. Like in Veneto, the data suggests that there are two groups which have different access to the labour market according to the country of birth. More specifically, women born in France or other EU countries are significantly less affected with unemployment than women from other areas. Among those active in the labour market, over two-thirds of these women are working as cadres or in intellectual and intermediate occupations, while these professions comprise less than half of the graduate women born in other areas. Moreover, graduates from Africa and European countries that are not EU members seem to be particularly penalised, since less than a fifth of these survey participants are working in top-positions, as cadres, or in intellectual occupations.

Conclusions of chapter 3: comparing Alsace and Veneto

The chapter provided insights into the commonalities and differences between the two contexts in which research is conducted. If compared to the other regions of Italy and France, both Veneto and Alsace are characterised by a low level of unemployment and a relatively high number of migrants in the entire population. In both regions, migrants are mainly women. By the end of the 2010s, nearly 11% of inhabitants in Alsace were born abroad, while the same percentage of the Veneto population were foreigners. As far as access to the labor market is concerned, both regions shows stratifications indicating that migrant women are more often finding employment at the bottom of the employment structure than non-migrant women. When comparing the data between both regions, a significant difference affects the unemployment rate of migrant women. In Alsace, by 2015, more than one quarter of the migrant women were unemployed, while this situation officially impacted less than 9% of the migrant women in the Veneto region.

Both in Veneto and in Alsace, holding a tertiary education degree does not guarantee an equal access to graduate positions. Graduates are also concerned by the stratifications of the local labour markets according to gender and country of birth or nationality. For instance, local graduate men seem to have privileged access to top-position in both Alsace and Veneto, compared to male migrant graduates, but mainly in comparison with both migrant and non-migrant women.

As far as graduate women are concerned, access to graduate positions significantly varies depending on their nationality (in Veneto) and country of birth (in Alsace). In both regions, the study of the available data puts into light that there are two groups of nationalities/countries of birth, which have significantly different access to the labour market. In Veneto, access to graduate positions follows a line that divides, on the one hand, graduates from Italy and other high-income countries, and on the other hand, graduates from middle and low-income countries. The former have privileged access to graduate and top-positions, while the latter are mainly hired for intermediate occupations or jobs that benefit from only low social recognition. As a result, graduate women with citizenship from Eastern Europe (both EU and non-EU citizens) or non-OECD countries seem to be particularly struggling to find employment in line with their studies.

The data available for Alsace does not permit distinguishing between graduates from EU-15 and from countries that accessed the EU after 2004, nor analysing the position of graduates from other OECD countries (non-EU) accurately. This limitation is due to the limited number of participants involved in the 2014 Census. Nevertheless, like in Veneto, it is possible to hypothesise that there are two groups of graduate women who have differentiated access to employment according to the country of birth. On the one hand, graduates from France and other EU countries are less affected by unemployment and have better access to top positions. Indeed, they are working in over two-thirds of the cases as *cadres* or in intellectual and intermediate occupations. On the other hand, active women born in non-EU countries were working in less than half of the cases in these occupations. Moreover, this second group of women is also significantly more affected by unemployment, than French- and EU- born graduate women. Like in Veneto, graduate women that were born in countries of Eastern Europe (non-EU) and Sub-Saharan Africa are among those more concerned by the divide, as they seem to specially struggle to access top positions.

Overall, the stratifications identified in both regions recall the distinction made by Grosfoguel et al. (2015) and mentioned in chapter 1. The paper distinguishes, on the one hand, migrants racialised as whites or "honorary whites" who have similar access to resources than the dominant non-migrant group, and on the other hand, those racialised as non-whites, who include minorities that were directly colonised and migrants from peripheral locations who are racialised in similar ways. Fieldwork is needed to understand to what extent essentialism, and more specifically racialisation, has a role to play in providing or preventing these women from accessing employment.

The following chapters are precisely based on the fieldwork, which includes 51 narrative interviews that were collected both in Alsace and Veneto. The aim was that of cross analysing the views between migrant women with tertiary education, human resources managers and other actors, in order to better understand the stratifications and challenges that these women are facing when accessing local labour markets. Graduate women who were involved in the fieldwork were born in countries of Eastern Europe (non-EU) and Sub-Saharan Africa. Both in Alsace and Veneto they were identified as the groups of graduates who particularly struggle to access top-positions.

Chapter 4. "This is what they believe we can do". Experiencing stratifications.

Rosanna did not want to study at the University of Yaoundé in Cameroon; she wanted to go abroad. As a result, once she got her high-school diploma, she started taking Italian lessons and was successful in passing the exam that would enable her to study in Italy. After that, she registered at the university of a medium sized city in Veneto and started studying international economics.

It took her five years to become a graduate, as she had to combine her studies with working as a shelf-stacker, a cleaning operative, and an inventory assistant. One year before graduating, she decided to follow a training course as a care assistant (*operatrice socio-sanitaria)*. Indeed, many of her co-national friends that graduated with degrees in economics were struggling to find employment in their area. "I better have an extra card to play", she thought, "and so if I can't find work with my degree, maybe with this diploma [I will]". Successive events seem to prove that her knowledge of the labour market mechanisms was right.

Since she graduated, Rosanna has mainly found employment as a care assistant and was never selected nor called for a job interview in her field of studies. When we met, five years after graduating, she was enrolled in a master's programme in economics, but she had stopped looking for work in her field. "As a graduate, they will never hire me", she feels, "because they believe I am not capable. Instead, as a care assistant, a cleaner, yes… you see". She concludes saying that "this is what they believe we can do".

In her narration, Rosanna expresses her disappointment with a local labour market that does not value her education. She feels that graduate positions are inaccessible, while despite her degree, she is being confined at the bottom of the employment structure, in the care and cleaning sectors. Rosanna makes implicit reference to the stratifications and racialisation of the labour market. Indeed, the woman stresses that it is because of her African origin that her chances are limited and that she remains underemployed.

Following Rosanna's observations, we can wonder how essentialisation based on country of birth, racialisation, gender and class influence the decisions of recruiters, and finally define the access that these women have to employment. Chapter 1 highlighted that scholars have identified a series of factors that contribute to confining migrant women at the bottom of the employment structure, and reproduce the stratifications of the labour market. As mentioned, macro-structural theories focus on the demand for labour, that forces migrants to accept low-skilled and low-paid jobs that natives refuse (Castles and Miller, 2009). Scholars have highlighted the multiple implications that migratory policies also have in confining migrants at the bottom of the employment structure (Morris 2001; Raghuram 2004; Liversage 2009, Kofman 2012, Riaño 2012). The literature have also stressed the centrality of networks in defining the migration project and work placement (Portes and Bach 1985; Ambrosini, 2005; Piselli, 1995). The difficulty to transfer human capital from one country to another has also been at the core of several research (Kofman, 2012; Chiswick and Miller, 2009).

Although scholars have explored multiple factors that contribute to defining the access that migrants have to employment, we stressed in chapter 1 that the impact of essentialisation and racialisation in the recruitment process needs further research. This chapter aims at exploring the issue by cross referencing the perspectives gaze among migrant women with tertiary education, recruiters, and social workers.

Essentialism was defined in chapter 1 as a process through which people become defined as a group based on alleged biological, and cultural characteristics. Essentialism can also encompass other social relations, including that based on gender and class. It entails that those defined as a group, in terms of gender, racialisation, country of birth, class, all share common "essential " characteristics. These characteristics are fixed, ahistorical, and cannot be changed, since they define and establish limits as to who is concidered a member of the group. In Italian and French local labour markets, how do stakeholders feel that migrant women with tertiary education are being essentialised? Moreover, what perception do they have of the positioning of these women in the labour market, and of the stratifications mentioned in the previous chapter?

The chapter opens with a section that analyses the difficulties that stakeholders have in naming and describing stratifications (1). It is followed by a section that studies how recruiters perceive stratifications and the essentialisation processes that concern migrant women with tertiary education (2). The third section focuses on how these women feel essentialised in the local context, and what influence they think this process has in limiting their access to employment (3). The fourth section studies the sectors and specific jobs that are perceived as being accessible by migrant women (4). The last section highlights the "variable geometry" of labour market stratifications, as they might vary according to the hiring company, and to recruiters and social workers practices (5).

1. The challenge of speaking about stratifications

Departing from their experience and that of friends and acquaintances, migrant women who participated in the fieldwork described how they feel employers, colleagues and eventually customers perceive them. They also indicated how these varying perspectives might influence their chances to get employment in line with their studies. Interviewees had different positions in this regard. Some felt that employers' representations and stereotypes prevented them from accessing graduate positions. Others considered they were not disregarded, although additional factors could negatively influence their access to employment. A third position was that of women who felt there were significant stratifications according to nationality or racialisation, but that this structuring was not directly penalising them.

Both in Veneto and Alsace, the migrant women that participated in the research expressed different levels of disclosure. During the interviews, some of them quickly spoke about how they feel judged according to their gender, skin colour, appearance, country of birth and maternity status. They also stressed how these representations have an impact, from their point of view, on the outcome of selection processes. Conversely, other interviewees seemed initially more reserved but, in a second phase, stressed that the way they are looked at, and eventually essentialised and racialised, probably has a role to play in preventing them from accessing graduate employment. For instance, this is what happened when talking with Rosalie. The woman worked for over six years as a laboratory assistant in the Democratic Republic of Congo. After moving to Veneto in the 2000s, she first worked as a bluecollar worker. Then, as she obtained an Italian certificate, she started working as a care assistant (*operatrice sociosanitaria*). During the interview, Rosalie first indicated that she wanted to "put aside the problem of racism". However, while we continued talking about her experience, Rosalie stressed that the way Africans and foreigners are looked at has a "strong influence" in accessing employment. "It is a matter of fact", she finally said, "you pretend not to see it, not to feel it, you try to live it, to live with that reality and to move forward".

The different levels of disclosure and the initial unwillingness to talk about the issues mentioned above could be connected to this author's positionality. As developed in chapter 2, in both contexts, I could be associated with the dominant majority, namely with white locals. As a result, migrant women could initially feel not that confident to share their experience and thoughts with a stranger, who would probably suffer less from being racialised by employers, and that overall could seem to face lower challenges to find graduate employment. For that reason, it was particularly important to adopt a methodology that would leave room to participants' narrations and interpretations. Chapter 2 has already tackled the issue.

As mentioned in chapter 2, interviewees were expected to control their speech during the exchanges with the researcher. Although migrant women were also controlling the image they were projecting of themselves, the author expected that recruiters would have a higher level of reserve. On the one hand, recruiters were probably aware of the social and legal condemnation of racism and other forms of discrimination (Fassin D., 2006: 143). On the other hand, they could feel that the interview was part of their work, and as such, they had to give a positive image of their enterprise. As a result, they could significantly manage impressions (Hester and Francis, 1994), depicting themselves and their companies as being more inclined to hire migrant women than they are in practice.

Although comments by human resources managers and social workers varied, fieldwork partially confirmed the preview's hypothesis. Recruiters' statements can be arrayed along a continuum that goes from denying any form of discrimination to emphasising that nationality and gender matters when accessing employment. Both in Alsace and Veneto, recruiters tended to emphasise their openness by introducing themselves as being born abroad, or by referring to previous training or other details of their private life. The author interpreted this tendency as a strategy to present themselves as external to the eventually racialising and gendered dynamics of the labour market.

For instance, Drake works for an intermediary structure in Alsace,that recruits graduate professional for top-positions. During the interview, he asked me not to record and was concerned about the outcome of my research. Drake introduced himself as an "open recruiter" in contrast with those that have prejudices. To prove his openness towards migrants or migrant-looking candidates he referred to personal ties, stressing for instance, that his wife was a foreigner and that he has African friends. Although Drake acknowledges that "some" recruiters have prejudices and "some" companies in Alsace are "racist", Drake sees these practices as being isolated. He estimates that victims of discriminations tend to exaggerate. More specifically, Drake uses the noun "victimisation" to refer to the fact that, from his perspective, some candidates confine themselves to the role of "victims", and believe they are not being recruited because of their sexual orientation, disability, or for other reasons. Furthermore, Drake indicates that the key to success is not to pose as a victim. The recruiter gives the example of *banlieue's* youth stressing that, from his perspective, those who succeed are those who accept that some companies have prejudices and look for more open-minded employers.

The comments of Drake echo Didier Fassin (2006) 's analysis of the French Republican model and the trend since the 2000s to "de-negate" discriminations. According to the researcher, prejudices are too present to be denied entirely but too unethical to be named. As a result, discrimination tends to be diminished, and victims are delegitimised, insofar as it is believed that they exaggerate the impact of prejudices. Drake's example goes beyond that as victims are also those who are expected to act to overcome discriminations. Indeed, they are the ones who have to look for companies that are "open" and willing to hire them.

Recruiters in Veneto also made divergent comments on the issue, but none of them adopted Drake's position nor "de-negated" discriminations (Fassin D., 2006). Their observations spread along a continuum from simple denial to the recognition of complex stratifications according to gender and nationality. For instance, Shamrock's comments and impressions can be placed in the first extreme of the continuum. This recruiter works for the HR department of a private company based in Veneto. From his perspective, there are "no preclusions" that would prevent foreign graduate women from accessing employment. Despite his denial, Shamrock found it necessary to prove his openness towards migrants and foreigners, pointing out that he had taken courses in intercultural management.

> We are an international company, so we also have one factory in Romania and one in Germany. And secondly... I have a master's degree in cultural intermediation, so I really believe in this aspect. Thirdly, in our company, we already have, in the Italian factory, several foreign figures. Let's say that out of 170, a good 10%, yeah, is a foreigner. So we also have… in relevant positions such as the industrialization manager, for example, is French... no preclusions. It is clear that in terms of communication and cultural impact it is never easy to find synergy, starting from the selection as well as from a perspective of sharing the values of the company, no, because coming from different cultures, there is not always... the same way of seeing things. So no kind of preclusions, this needs to be clear.
>
> Shamrock, recruiter in an HR department of a private company, Veneto

Despite indicating that migratory background does not count in the selection process, both Drake and Shamrock referred to "culture" as an eligibility criteria. In both cases the term had an ambiguous connotation. For instance, Drake referred to specific "company cultures ", indicating that he would not hire an "outgoing" person in an "introverted" business context. Meanwhile, he also referred to the African culture indicating that there are more "outgoing" and focused on collectivity. We can wonder to what extent his perception of African culture interfere in the selection process. At the same time, Shamrock in Veneto indicated that foreign candidates "come from a different culture ", and as such, he cannot be sure that they will "share the company's values ". In this case also, we can wonder to what extent his perception of foreigners' otherness interferes in recruitment. The following section will further develop the issue.

Another example is that of Senna, who expressed a less decided position. She also works in Veneto as a recruiter for a private company. Although she considers that some employers might have prejudices against migrants, she refrained from developing the question by stating that she was not sure about it. Senna added that this attitude was probably more frequent in small and medium-sized businesses, and she emphasised that her company "had a different approach".

In Veneto, recruiters in intermediary agencies had a more critical view. In this regard, De Rudder and Vourc'h (2006: 180) point out that employment intermediaries occupy a privileged position from which they can observe discriminations in the labour market. Moreover, before conducting fieldwork, it was hypothesised that these actors would be more keen to speak about discriminatory practices, as they could put the blame on their clients and present themselves as being external to such dynamics. The hypothesis was not confirmed in Alsace, where, as mentioned earlier, Drake preferred to diminish the importance of stratifications. However, the assumption worked out in Veneto, where intermediary recruiters described different forms of stratification. The contrast between intermediary recruiters in Alsace and Veneto could also be connected to the differences identified by Scrinzi (2013: 169) and presented in chapter 2. Focusing on the domestic sector, the author estimates that recruitment, training, and managing practices in France censure otherness, while in Italy, they tend to enlarge and stigmatise differences.

Both in Alsace and Veneto, social workers were more eager than recruiters to speak about the challenges that migrant women face when accessing the labour market. As it will be further developed below, they also highlighted that these women tend to be confined in positions at the bottom of the employment structure, regardless of their education level. Interestingly, two of these interviewees were children of migrats and had faced essentialisation or racialisation in their careers. Selena, whose parents are from Ghana, was born in Veneto and works now as a social worker. She stresses that when she started working, her colleagues believed she was a cultural mediator. "It is difficult also for me, although I was born here and I am coloured", she says, "so imagine for women that do not properly speak Italian, and do not know how to answer to these comments".

In Alsace, Daphne was born in Morocco and, when she was still a newborn, moved to Alsace with her parents. She works now for a public institution which is in charge of providing support to unemployed workers. Daphne emphasises that she is one of the few in the region that accurately follow migrant workers who are looking for employment. When she tells me about her trajectory, Daphne indicates that she experienced discrimination once in her professional career. Before being a social worker, Daphne was working as a sales representative for a private company, until she was encouraged by her supervisor to quit her job. Daphne described me how it went: "I had a manager who told me 'I encourage you to leave, you are better in the job market, leave, here you will not go far'". Daphne finds that the advice was connected to the fact that the manager at the regional level was reluctant to let a woman, with a migratory background, advancein the company. "I saw that the doors were closed", she says, "but I have overcome that".

2. Essentialism in the recruitment process: recruiters' and social workers' perspectives

The following section studies how recruiters and social workers perceive stratifications and the impact that essentialism has in the selection of candidates. The first part analyses what emerges from the field in Alsace, while the second focuses on Veneto.

2.1. "Origins" and appearance in the French context

As far as recruiters in Alsace are concerned, we previously stressed that that they adopt a "de-negation" strategy. This was the case of Drake. He acknowledges that "some" recruiters have prejudices and "some" companies in Alsace are "racist". However, Drake sees these practices as being isolated and finds that victims tend to exaggerate the impact of stereotyping. Drake mentioned the practice of using *BBR, Bleu-Blanc-Rouge,* as an eligibility criteria. The term refers to the French flag, and indicates that selected candidates need to be not only French, but more specifically that they have to look "white" (Fassin, D., 2006: 142). Although Drake mentioned this practice, he argued that it existed in the past but was no longer in practice.

Dianella also works as a recruiter in Alsace, but she works for the HR department of a private company. During the interview, she was more eager to speak about stratifications based on nationality and gender. For instance, she finds that the country of birth matters but that the perception of third countries has evolved over the last decades. "Italy does not frighten anymore", she observes, "I do not remember when Italians came to France, and scared everyone because they were taking jobs, 70 or 50 years ago". Nowadays, Dianella finds that women candidates continue to be seen differently according to nationality. She refers to a Colombian candidate that was recently hired for a graduate position in her company. Dianella finds that it is easier for Colombian females to be recruited as they are perceived as "exotic"[11]. Conversely, she finds it can be more challenging to get accepted for women from Northern Africa or the Middle East.

> And concerning some origins, well, I think that managers will invent pretexts, that they will not always be open. Colombia, it went well, because Colombia, it's a little... exotic. If the girl, she had come from... well, Algeria, the Maghreb, a Maghreb country, or the Middle East, something like that, would it have been perceived... a Turkish... would it have been perceived in the same way? I don't know.
>
> Dianella, recruiter in an HR department of a private company, Alsace

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[11] The perception of migrant women as being 'exotic' also involves essentialism as it will be stressed in the following chapter.

Social workers in Alsace underlined the challenges that graduate migrants face to access positions in line with their studies. For instance, Dalia works in Alsace for an NGO that supports migrants in their access to employment. From her perspective, a crucial issue concerns the lack of recognition of diplomas. Besides, many graduate migrant women with whom she gets in touch are in urgent need to find employment to support their families. As a result, most of the graduate women that are supported by her NGO have to take jobs at the bottom of the employment structure, mostly in the hospitality sector, as maids and cleaners.

Daphne, whose background was presented above, also highlights that the positions in the hospitality sector, cleaning and eventually cooking are among the jobs that migrant women tend to access, including those with tertiary education. However, she indicates that there are distinctions according to nationality or pretended country of origin. Daphne also makes more explicit reference to essentialism in the labour market. The social worker finds that Chechen, in particular, are perceived as being "elegant", "coquette", "submissive", while women from Subsaharan Africa tend to be seen as having a "strong personality". As a result, Daphne finds that Chechen women are more likely to find employment as a cook, a dressmaker, or including a salesperson, compared to women from Subsaharan Africa. Moreover, she finds that these women are less interested in positions as cleaners, compared to migrant women from other areas.

As far as graduates are concerned, Daphne feels that stigmatisation has a role to play in preventing migrants from accessing manager positions (cadres). Starting from her own experience as a child of Moroccan migrants, she stresses that she has faced obstacles in her career because of being "tanned" (*basané*). In Daphne's view, Eastern Europeans have an advantage because "physically", they correspond to the "French standards".

> I grew up in France; I did all my studies in France and even myself, I have faced challenges. Because we are tanned... more tanned than the Chechen

> woman. So, for us, it is already visible in our face, that we are not... typical European. The advantage that those of Eastern Europe have is that their profile well... physically, they already correspond to French standards. They are blond, they might be avowed Muslims, or of a different culture, but physically they already answer the call. So it goes. And then, Subsaharan Africa, women are also going to be famous for having a strong character. So, at the manager level, we can say that it is harder because we will imagine that they will fit less easily into a mould.
>
> Daphne, social worker, Alsace

Furthermore, Daphne highlights that stereotyping might prevent women from Subsaharan Africa from accessing managerial positions. From her perspective, these women have to "work twice as hard" compared to locals to prove they are suitable for a job. Daphne also refers to African friends and acquaintances who have moved to other countries, such as Canada, Australia, and Dubai, because they were not finding employment in line with their studies. "And this is how France loses its skills", she concludes, "it's a pity".

2.2. Explicit preferences in the Italian context

As mentioned earlier, recruiters in Veneto and especially those working for intermediary agencies were more willing to speak about labour market stratifications. For instance, Sirelli has worked as a recruiter in Veneto for both an intermediary agency and an HR department in a private company. Sirelli was only requested in a few occasions to find graduate candidates. Most of her recruitments concerned intermediary positions or jobs with low social recognition. Nonetheless, she stresses that including for this second type of jobs, it came out that migrant female candidates were frequently graduates. Departing from her experience, Sirelli describes the stratifications of the local labour market, giving the example of the hospitality industry. More specifically, the recruiter explains that depending on the position that opens, some nationalities might be excluded while others might be prioritised. For each specific job "there is a trend", she says, "to maintain the same nationalities".

From Sirelli's perspective, several reasons contribute to this strict stratification of the labour market. A critical factor regards the fact that the means for searching candidates frequently involves word-of-mouth. Workers tend to inform their co-nationals about the job opportunity. As a result, the labour market stratifications reproduce themselves, and each type of positions ends up being attributed to persons that were born in the same country or have the same migratory background. This phenomenon has been studied in the literature (Portes and Bach 1985; Ambrosini, 2005; Castles and Miller 2009; Tognetti Bordogna 2012; Manohar and Killian, 2015) and was mentioned in the first chapter of the dissertation.

In parallel, Sirelli referred to forms of stereotyping and essentialisation, which connect specific nationalities/countries of birth/racialised groups to characteristics that are appreciated or discredited by employers. Sirelli gave the example of Filipino men who are perceived as being "docile" and "kind", while Ukrainian women are seen as being "authoritative, strong, almost grouchy". Depending on the stereotype, candidates might have or not access to the position.

> Maybe there are also stereotypes, in the sense that a particular type of nationality... maybe a certain kind of... how to say, nationality is considered to have, I don't know, people with a more dominant personality, others more submissive. The classic example is that of the Filipino who is described as docile... and kind, and so on. If you think about it, for example at the opposite extreme, the Ukrainian woman, is generally seen as a woman that is… authoritative, strong, almost grouchy... No... yeah, in the collective imagination, in the labour imagination, that is, according to the context, there are, in short, there are stereotypes.

Sirelli, previously recruiter in an intermediary agency,
now recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

Sirelli also gave details on how, in practice, nationality/country of birth/ racialisation becomes an eligibility criterion. She indicates that this criterion can be explicitly mentioned by clients, who give specific instructions on the nationalities they want or do not want to hire. When nationality exclusion is not explicitly stated, Sirelli explains that colleagues who know the client indicate which nationalities have to be prioritised.

> The colleagues let you know, the ones that have been working for a long time with clients, and the customers themselves tell you that. They tell you 'I don't want it, I don't want Moroccans', there are those who don't want people of colour, in general, yeah, there are those who do not want women from the East, and so on. Of course, we know that all these things cannot be published. But then it is a job that gets done, precisely, in the process of skimming the curriculum. In short, one learns to do it, because you are told to do it, that's really something... often explicit, very explicit.

Sirelli, previously recruiter in an intermediary agency,
now recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

Sirelli's observations are supported by that of other recruiters who have worked in different sectors. One is Sorrel, who works for an intermediary agency and has had experience with head hunting in Veneto. He confirms that it happens that employers explicitly indicate that they do not want candidates with specific nationalities or migrant backgrounds. Another example is that of Senecio, who has experience in headhunting, and as an intermediary recruiter for retirement homes. It is mainly in this second field that he has observed discrimination based on country of birth. As a recruiter, Senecio advised regarding the selection of nurses and care assistants. He indicates that there are "beliefs" concerning the "culture" of specific candidates. For instance, Senecio reported that his supervisors explicitly asked him once not to select African candidates, as they were perceived as being too abrupt. At the same time, he indicates that women from Eastern Europe tended to be excluded because they were seen as being too compliant and distant. He adds that they were also negatively judged because they had an "in-home caregivers' attitude" (*badanti*).

> The ladies from Eastern Europe who came to do the… interview for care assistants. Well... often they were disregarded... not only for my judgment but also for other judgments in the commission. They were discarded because they had this in-home caregivers' attitude, which for some recruiters is, in inverted commas, 'on the site' in the culture of these... of the nationality of these people. Well... and so yes, it influences... sometimes nationality.
>
> Senecio, previously recruiter in an intermediary agency, Veneto

It is worth noting that the comment of Senecio also involves class relations. The "attitude" that is described correspond to the *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1986) or embodied cultural capital, which strictly connects to social class. As mentioned in chapter 1, *habitus* presupposes a process of incorporation that starts from early domestic education. It is converted into an integral part of the person. Its acquisition is disguised and functions as symbolic capital, meaning that it tends to be unrecognized as a form of capital and it is seen as a legitimate competence. As a result, the fact that recruiters disregard in-home caregivers' attitudes gives the idea that they might negatively assess what they associate with working-class *habitus*. As a result, it seems that preferred candidates would be those who embodied middle-class *habitus*. This trend will be further explored in the following chapter, in which we analyse the embodiness of skills.

It is worth noting that the experience of social workers in Veneto echoes that of intermediary recruiters. When looking for internships or positions for their users, social workers have to negotiate with employers who have specific requests in terms of nationality/country of birth/racialisation. In this regard, Selena has noticed that for each type of work, there is a selected nationality. "For instance", she said, "to work as a cleaning lady they ask us to find women from Sri Lanka, for in-home caregivers, they ask for Moldavians and Romanians". From Selena's perspective, Nigerians are those who face more obstacles to access employment. Even when they used to work as teachers in Nigeria, they struggle to be hired as cleaners in Veneto.

Overall, the descriptions mentioned above highlight that essentialisation and racialisation practices in Italian local labour markets go beyond that studied by Scrinzi (2003, 2013). They are limited neither by the selection of in-house caregivers nor to the practices of volunteers in selection centres. Indeed, they encompass other jobs, namely in the hospitality industry and intermediary care positions. Moreover, selecting candidates based on nationality/country of birth/racialisation is a practice that is accepted and eventually used not only by volunteers but also by professional recruiters.

Compared to Veneto, in Alsace stakeholders tend to be less explicit on how the recruitment process is influenced by racialisation and essentialisation that associate specific countries of birth with capacities and attitudes. Nevertheless, fieldwork also stresses that migrant women are being essentialised and the stereotyped views that recruiters have about them influence their access to employment. Moreover, it was highlighted that candidates perceived as non-whites could face more challenges in accessing employment. The following section will further develop the issue.

3. Feeling essentialised: migrant women’s perspectives

The following paragraphs focus on how women feel they are being looked at in local labour markets. Furthermore, it develops how women feel that these representation influence their access to employment. This part of the dissertation is divided into two sub-parts. The first one focuses on the experience of migrant women from countries of

Sub-Saharan Africa, while the second one studies the views of participants from European non-EU countries.

3.1. Black women and white walls

The previous section already highlighted that both in Alsace and Veneto graduate women from Sub-Saharan Africa are particularly exposed to stereotyping. As a result, they might struggle to find employment in line with their studies. The following section further explores the issue based on the experience of participants.

In both regions, interviewees with different working positions stressed that the fact of being black was anything but an advantage to find employment commensurate with their graduate degree status. "There are so many prejudices" explains Rosamel, who was born in Cameroon and works now as a physiotherapist in Veneto. In Alsace, Callaia mentions the specific stereotypes with which she feels Africans are being associated. "They believe we are lazy", she says. As a result, Callaia feels she needs to do twice as much as others would do. Rosanna, who was born in Cameroon and lives in Veneto, has similar feelings. She explains that "they always think that we foreigners, especially we Africans, are not up to it", she says, "and when you've proved you can make it, then they say 'yes, she can'".

In both regions, interviewees indicated that they feel there is a wall that prevents black migrant women from accessing qualified employment. This impression is based on their job hunting experience as well as on that of the family members, friends and acquaintances. Both in Alsace and Veneto, it happens that migrant women are told by recruiters that they might not get the job because they are black. This is what happened to Raisa. She was born in Cameroon and then moved to Italy, where she got a master's degree in communication sciences and marketing. Since Raisa graduated, she has struggled to find employment in her field. When we met, she was occasionally working as a cultural mediator. Raisa stresses that she has had several job interviews. In one of them, she was told that the direction of the company "did not want to colour" the company.

> I did a lot of interviews after graduation. In some cases, they tell you: "You know the world, for example of the [name of the company], we don't want to colour the environment. We need a little... it's a bit stiff. I tell you clearly because it is useless to tell you that as soon as we need someone, we call you". That's the truth. And unfortunately, you turn and go out with such despair. And so the reality is this.
>
> Raisa, graduated in communication sciences and marketing in Italy,
> works as cultural mediator, Veneto

Cassia had a similar experience in Alsace. She was born in Senegal, where she obtained a bachelor’s in management and ICT and worked for over six years as an administrative assistant. She moved to France to join her partner, expecting to continue her professional career. When we met, she has been in Alsace for two years but was still struggling to find employment in line with her studies. Cassia told me that she was once called for an interview as a management assistant. During the meeting, the recruiter told her that the fact of being black, coupled with that of not having a French degree, would make it difficult to find a job in her field.

Raisa, who was introduced above, adds that she feels recruiters have a different attitude when contacted by phone, and when meeting for interviews. For instance, it already happened to Raisa that recruiters told her by phone to come for a job interview. However, when she gets to the appointment, she often feels that they look surprised to see her and do not give any news after the meeting. Raisa feels that the negative outcome is connected to the fact that recruiters expect to see a candidate of another skin colour. Raisa's feeling of facing different attitudes over the phone, and when meeting afterwards, was also shared by Rose and Rosanna who were born in Congo and Cameroon and had studied in Italy.

In both regions, black migrant women with tertiary education reported that they felt they tended to be confined in "subaltern" positions, especially in feminised jobs at the bottom of the employment structure. While they are regularly being rejected for positions requiring graduate degrees, these women feel that when applying for jobs with low social recognition, they have more chances to be accepted. Rosanna, who was born in Cameroon and studied economics in Italy, stresses that she applied several times for positions in line with her studies but never got a reply. Conversely, she has managed to find employment as a cleaner, and more recently as a care assistant. "This is what they believe we can do", says Rosanna.

Cassia, who lives in Alsace, has similar feelings. As mentioned, she was born in Senegal, where she got a bachelor’s degree in management and ICT and worked for over six years as an administrative assistant. Cassia is especially critical of the person that follows her case at Pole Emploi, the French agency in charge of providing support to unemployed workers. As a registered unemployed, Cassia should be able to follow training supported by the institution. She wanted to pursue a course connected to banking, but her adviser at Pole Emploi never answered. Conversely, when she asked to pursuea training programme for being a childcare assistant, he processed her request in a couple of weeks. Out of this experience, Cassia concludes that women like her are perceived to be "only good" for "subaltern jobs".

> Because I didn't think it was going to be as hard as it is, that it was going to be… as discriminating as it is. That's it. But, they make you know it outright... Yeah, they tell you "I'll call you back", and then there's no feedback. But on the other hand, when I wanted to do the assistant thing, then it did not hang there. You come, they take you straightaway. At a push, we are only good for that, either to do... to sweep, to deal with... subaltern jobs, yeah.

Cassia, studied management and ICT in Senegal,
unemployed, Alsace

Similarly, Clemensia, who also lives in Alsace, tells me that she was shocked when a friend of hers, who was looking for an internship position with an NGO, was offered to work as a cleaner. She estimates that it is because her acquaintance is black that she was offered such a position. "You see the thing", she says, "'She is black, she can do the cleaning'. I'm not sure they are making this proposal to every intern".

In both contexts, black migrant women stressed that they feel to be perceived as low skilled workers. As a result, interlocutors, such as recruiters, but also patients or clients, might be skeptical or surprised when they learn that these women are graduates or that they are experienced professionals. For instance, Callaia who works as a nurse in Alsace tells me that, when she works with a white colleague, it often happens that patients ask questions of the latter, even though Callaia has a higher skilled and higher status position.

In Veneto, Rosamel, who now works as physiotherapist also mentions the surprise she created with recruiters and secretaries, while she was looking for employment. By that time Rosamel already held an Italian university degree and had working experience in the region. When leaving her resume, she often heard that spokespersons were surprised and asked "But are you a physiotherapist?", "How have you done it? ".

Similarly, while studying communication sciences and marketing in Italy, Raisa did an internship at a bank. To go to work she would wear a business suit and a jacket. Raisa tells me that once a woman asked her if she was a Jehovah's Witness and was surprised to hear that she was working for the bank.

When they do manage to access higher level positions in an organisation, these migrant women might also have to deal with their colleagues' stereotypes. This trend was noted in both regions. For instance, as a nurse in Alsace, Callaia had to bear the disrespectful comments by her colleagues and her patients, while Rosanna, who works as a care assistant in retirement houses, indicates that she is often faced with rude remarks. "So you have to have a lot, a lot, a lot of patience because you get so many bad and bad words", she says, "but, it is the workplace, you always have to smile".

The previous paragraphs have highlighted that both in Veneto and Alsace, migrant women who are perceived as black, face essentialisation and racialisation which prevent them from accessing positions comensurate with their graduate education and skills and confine them in jobs with low social recognition. However, these are not the only positions for which they are hired. There are some notable exceptions described by stakeholders. For instance, we have seen that Callaia is working as a nurse in Alsace, and Rosamel as a physiotherapist in Veneto. As it will be further detailed below, fieldwork highlights that in both contexts, they might access intermediate and graduate positions in specific sectors, such as those involving social reproduction.

As far as differences between the two regions are concerned, fieldwork suggests that jobs are slightly more accessible for black migrant women in Alsace, compared to Veneto. According to stakeholders, this trend includes access to jobs with low social recognition. In Italy, social workers that participated in the fieldwork highlighted that graduate women from Sub-Saharan Africa might face obstacles to finding employment in Veneto as cleaners and in-house caregivers. Selena observes this phenomenon. She works as social worker for an NGO that supports migrants.

> We have many women job seekers from Nigeria, and for them nothing, it’s very difficult for them to find work, even though they were doing very good in their country of birth. Because we have many clients from Lagos, who tell me 'in Lagos I was a teacher’. I understand, but here it is difficult to find even work as

> a cleaner. So we have worked to organise training on cleaning, because there is this nationality preference, according to the job, even for the most unpretentious ones.
>
> Selena, social worker, Veneto

Salma made similar comments. She works for a cooperative that offers support to migrants. Salma indicates that it is more difficult to access positions as in-house caregivers for women from Sub-Saharan Africa compared to women from other areas. In this regard, the literature highlights that both in Italy and France migrant women working in the care and domestic sector are subject to different forms of essentialism (Scrinzi, 2013). For instance, in Italy Scrinzi (2003) observes that the recruitment procedures are based on processes of racialisation and essentialisation that associate specific "races" and "cultures of origin" with skills related to domestic and care work. For instance, she found that recruiters believe Peruvian women are better at providing care than Nigerian women, whereas women from Morocco have the reputation to enjoy cleaning.

When it comes to intermediary positions, it is interesting to note that interviewees in Italy tended to have an idealised image of France as being more open towards African migrants. Access to low and intermediary positions was mentioned as an example of the contrast between both countries. For instance, Rada indicated that she had the opportunity to go to France, and noticed that there were black taxi drivers, cashiers, working in public offices. "Here, in Italy", she says, "you can do a thousand of supermarkets, you will never see a black cashier".

Rose and Rosanna, who graduated in Veneto and have struggled to find employment in their fields, made similar comments. When I tell Callaia, who works as a nurse in Alsace, that some interviewees in Veneto perceived France as providing more opportunities for black women, she says that "it's not true". Callaia finds that "it is only more insidious" and she gives me further examples of how she is continuously being treated as “other” at work. Further insights on the sectors that are being accessed by women from these areas is provided in section 4 of this chapter. In addition, chapter 5 analyses how their skills are being valued in both region, and how this process leads to different outcomes in Alsace, as compared to Veneto.

When it comes to comparing Alsace and Veneto, another interesting difference in the accounts of the interviewees regards their relative employment positions compared to other migrant groups. In Alsace, women from Sub-Saharan Africa compared their access to the labour market to that of white locals and children of migration. They did not refer to the positioning of other migrant women.

Conversely, in Veneto, these women explicitly referred to stratifications according to citizenship and skin colour. As mentioned in chapter 3, Rosella raised the issue observing how stratifications have changed over time. This woman was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo and, after struggling for several years, she works now as a doctor. Rosella indicates that from the 1990s, she feels Africans started feeling "skin diversity". From that point, she founds there has been a progressive stratification of the labour market, according to nationality.

> But when there was the boom... the boom of immigration, around the 1990s, then there... especially we Africans, we started... we even started to feel the diversity of the skin. So if you show up… when those from East arrived, when the Filipinas arrived... 'No, first them, first the Europeans, then maybe the Filipinas, then you'. So we started… this mistrust against Africa, Africans.
>
> Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
> studied medicine in Italy, works as doctor, Veneto

A last relevant observation that was mentioned by women from Sub-Saharan Africa, regards the institutional challenges they might face when accessing employment. These obstacles concern both the Italian and the French areas of fieldwork. For instance, in the Italian context, Rosella mentioned institutional challenges that she has faced in her career. Rosella was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo. She moved to Veneto by the beginning of the 1980s and struggled to finish her studies in medicine while working and caring for her child. Once Rosella finished her university career, she was successful in passing the State exam for doctors. Meanwhile, she explains that a new law was adopted that prevented non-EU citizens to register to the Italian medical association. As a result, she was not authorised to work as a doctor. "The discrimination that becomes law is ugly", says Rosella. She continues saying:

> If I meet a person in the street who tells me... he can tell me everything, I can bear racism... but the thing that hurts me the most is that one, you know, when the State legalised discrimination.
>
> Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
> studied medicine in Italy, works as doctor, Veneto

Fortunately for Rosella, the norm was revoked. She could then register in the medical association and has been working until now as a doctor in Veneto.

An example of institutional challenge in Alsace was given by Callaia, who stressed that she struggled to see her diploma as a midwife and her experience recognised in France. At the end of the procedure for the recognition of foreign titles, she was informed that she was allowed to work only as a nursing assistant in maternity. Other concerns regarding institutional obstacles were highlighted by migrant women from countries of Europe, non-EU. In the following section, we analyse how graduate women from European non-EU countries feel they are essentialised in the local context and how they feel these processes influence their access to employment.

3.2. The otherness of women from Europeans non-EU countries

The interaction with women from European non-EU countries stressed that, although they might not be explicitly racialised as non-white, these women are also subject to forms of labelling, depending on the specific country they come from and the employment sector they intend to enter. As previously mentioned, both in Veneto and Alsace, recruiters referred to stereotypes regarding these women. For instance, we already stressed that in Veneto, Sirelli indicated that Ukrainians are perceived as "authoritative, strong, almost grouchy", while Senecio reported that Eastern Europeans might be seen as being "too compliant and distant" to work as care workers. In Alsace, instead, Daphne, who works as social worker estimates that Eastern Europeans have the advantage of "physically" corresponding to the "French norms". So how are these women experiencing the fact of being otherised?

3.2.1."It depends on your nationality". The Italian context.

During interviews, migrant women with tertiary education referred to the way they feel they are being perceived. For instance, Viola was born in Russia, where she used to work as a professor and financial director. Since she moved to Veneto to join her partner, she has been struggling to find employment in line with her previous experience. Viola contrasts the respected position she had in Russia with the denigration she is facing in Veneto. She explained that she feels labelled and categorised. "I became a migrant from Eastern Europe" and as such, she suffered from being devalued and disrespected.

> So, now, everything is different. I became a migrant from Eastern Europe, let's say, little, little respected, little... let's say that people sometimes talk to me like… like an idiot absolutely. The last thing, the general practitioner was talking to me, as if... as if I were an idiot. This is difficult.
>
> Viola, studied English philology in Russia, unemployed, Veneto

Like Viola, Veronica also used to have a rewarding position before moving to Veneto. This woman was born in Ukraine, where she used to work as an administrative assistant. She moved to Veneto in the 2000s, enrolled in a PhD programme and finally started working in business management. Veronica distinguishes the way foreigners are being perceived depending on whether they come from a powerful country like the United States, or a less powerful country. In her case, she feels that Ukrainian women tend to be associated with in-home carers and sex workers. "I am not an *extracomunitaria* from the United States", she says, "but I am an *extracomunitaria* from Ukraine, and here you have the in-home carer, that look after old ladies, or young girls that are prostitutes".

After 15 years of living in Veneto, Veronica indicates that almost everyday someone reminds her that she is a foreigner. Like Callaia, who was born in Niger and works now as a nurse in Alsace, Veronica also feels that she is continuously treated as “other”. Furthermore, she indicates that her "face is not Italian", which implies that “othering” relates to the sight. Veronica's observation highlights that Ukrainian women might also feel essentialised and racialised in Veneto.

> It’s fine if I have the Italian passport and everything, but anyway, I think that... I know there is... Because since 2003, well, I'm in Italy, that’s why I’m telling many, my husband, many, well not every day, but almost, somewhere, someone, tells me I'm a foreigner. Because anyway I speak Italian but there is... anyway, the face is not Italian at all. So they also recognize me from the face. So there's this thing.
>
> Veronica, studied economy and business in Ukraine, and economy in Italy, works as a business manager, Veneto

However, Veronica also feels that, in the labour market of Northern Italy, employers have positive representations of the ability to work of Eastern Europeans. She refers to a company where she has just started to work and explains that the employer has hired her and two other Ukrainian women, as he felt that Eastern European women had "a great sense of responsibility at work". Veronica contrasts this image with the representation she has of Italians, who are always "talking, drinking coffee, talking, drinking coffee, and then going out of work". Veronica gave examples of other work experiences she had in Veneto, and in which she estimates she was much more productive than her Italian colleagues.

Women from European non-EU countries tended to contrast their position in the labour market with that of women from other countries. Violet, who was born in Russia and works in export management, finds that Italians are especially attentive to the country of birth and nationality. From her perspective, Italians have a better perception of Russians, compared to Romanians and Moroccans.

> The only thing... You know what I can say, for example, in Italy, Italians see that, well it depends on your nationality. For example, Russia is seen very well by Italians, because Russians when they come here, they spend a lot of money, they are usually rich people and... those that just don't count the money and Italians see us that way. Even more, they always tell me "Ah, you Russians, you are all so smart, good". I say "But not all are like this, not really all beautiful, smart." I say, yeah. Also, for example when I go into a shop, no, if you go, [name of the place] where there are all... And there are always salespeople who speak Russian, because when they are customers, like Chinese (they are) very rich. I always say "I'm not that rich Russian, I'm the poor one" (laughs). But they see us well. Instead, if you are Romanian, or Moroccan, it is completely another thing.
>
> Violet, studied foreign languages in Russia,
> works as a self-employed export manager, Veneto

Violet was not the only one to describe a stratification according to nationality or racialisation. Winika also referred to such a structure. This woman studied for five years at a university in Ukraine to become a music teacher. She first moved with her partner to Russia, where she found employment in a school. After that, she moved back to Ukraine, but as the Soviet Union was collapsing and the economic conditions were deteriorating, she decided with her partner to move to Italy. Since she moved to the region, she has worked as an in-home carer, a waitress, and a pizzaiola. Winika has never found employment comensurate with her previous experience.

When describing the local labour market, Winika referred to a comment of a recruiter in the hospitality industry. During the job interview, the recruiter, who would later on hire her, said that he preferred "Slavs" over candidates from Africa, or Muslims. Although she was retained for the position, Winika had to face the violence of being inserted in a racialised labour market, where essentialisation is made explicit. Furthermore, Winika indicates that her colleagues do not hesitate to make stigmatising comments. What can be "really hard", she says, "is to bear the people around you".

> That is, I say in parentheses… I could say that I have heard more than a few times, when they say "We prefer you, the Slavs, than those from Africa, or Muslims, etc, etc". But this… let’s say, this is not part of... of my personal experience. To me, no, personally, no. There was... in the workplace, but out of the precise context of work… because of this ignorance I was telling you, ignorance of little education, that there are people really, nationalists, racists, yeah. These (incidents) have happened to me. But that does not depend on the company or the manager, or on the people who hire me. It is these everyday people that you meet, and who talk to you. That work hasn’t been hard, but it’s hard to bear the people next to you. There is racism.
>
> Winika, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine, works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

3.2.2. "The culture of the labour market". The French context.

In Alsace, fieldwork also gave a contrasting picture of the racialization of European women from non-EU countries. Indeed, there is a gap between those who feel concerned with positive stereotypes, and those who feel stigmatised for the way they are perceived. Whether positive or negative, these stereotypes always involve forms of essentialization.

Like Veronica in Veneto, Abelia has the impression that Eastern Europeans have the reputation of being good workers. This woman was born in Russia, where she followed a five years programme at the University of Moscow and got a degree to teach Russian. However, by the late 1990s, she decided to move to France with her partner to escape from the economic instability that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union. Abelia now works as a librarian, but before that, she used to work as a shop assistant. From her perspective, the fact that "Eastern Europeans" have a "good reputation” had a positive impact in her access to this intermediary position.

Azalea was also born in Russia. Although she does not contradict the stereotypes mentioned by Abelia, she founds that Russians are not that privileged in the local labour market. Based on her own experience and that of friends, she believes that French private companies are quite reluctant to hire foreigners, including Russian and Eastern Europeans. This woman graduated in economics in Russia, where she also worked for trade companies. Azalea discovered Alsace as an exchange student and, as she enjoyed the region, she decided to move back as a young professional. "I was a little bit naïve", she says, stressing that it was much harder to find employment than what she thought before moving to the region.

> After I graduated, I returned. And I was a little bit naïve, in that sense because I thought I couldn't find a company, a French company which could hired me, but then I realized it's not possible at all, as French companies have very strict requirements concerning foreigners. To hire a foreigner, not from the EU, they have really to prove my added value, they have to organize interviews with

> French people. And only if French people are not suitable for the job, they can hire me, make all of these requests for my visa.
>
> Azalea, studied economics in Russia, works as an administrative assistant, Alsace

Azalea finds that a first obstacle concerns the French regulations. She explains that employers who would like to hire a non-EU citizen are expected to prove they did not find a French or an EU candidate for the position. The practice that Azalea mentions was introduced in 2011 through the so-called Guéant circular. Although the text was revoked, norms continue to discourage the recruitment of non-EU citizens, as they need to pay a specific tax and have additional paperwork to fill in. In practice, the French norms continue to discriminate non-EU candidates when accessing the labour market.

Besides norms, Azalea finds that recruiters are reluctant to hire migrants, even when they obtain French citizenship. When we met, Azalea was planning to apply for citizenship the following year. Despite becoming French, she believed she would still struggle to find work with local companies. "I have very, very, low hope of being hired by French companies", she says, "even though there will be no problem with documents, I still see that foreigners are seen less favourably". For instance, Azalea feels that there can be some prejudice if the candidate speaks with an accent.

Amapola also mentioned stereotyping and legal barriers. However, compare to Azalea, Amapola see the obstacles the other way round. She acknowledges that there are stereotypes about Albanians. However, she found that it was her previous migratory status, together with the fact that she did not have a French degree, that were the main reasons for not accessing employment.

Amapola studied in Albania and moved to Alsace at the beginning of the 2000s. She initially arrived in the region in the context of her work as a diplomat, but then remained for family reasons. As a result, she had to quit her job and struggled to find employment for a few years before being hired by an international institution. Amapola points out that Albania tends to be associated with the mafia in the Alsatian context. Although she has heard comments about it in her daily life, she feels that this was not the main obstacle in her career. Amapola believes that it is instead her previous migratory status that was preventing her from accessing jobs. She used to have one-year permits for family reasons, and feels that employers did not want to hire her because they were skeptical regarding whether she would obtain a new residence permit. Amapola describe her experience with intermediary agencies.

> I was going twice a week "Hello, do you have something for me?" (laugh). I would say to myself, I have nothing to lose. And sometimes, they would tell me "oh yes can I...", each time there was a new person, "can I have your residence permit?". They would see it, but sometimes it was at half way, so I only had six months left. "Yes, but you have a six-month residence permit, it is difficult to…". And I would say, "Yeah, but I don’t intend to separate or divorce, that's how they are delivered. That doesn’t mean that... I would have it automatically. Normally I have it. There's no worries". I don’t know if that was what... restrained (them), but it became at a certain point... I remember, I was living it very badly. I was... desperate, really.
>
> Amapola, studied literature in Albania,
> works as an administrative assistant, Alsace

The narrations of Azalea and Amapola stress that migratory policies (short term permits) and norms on hiring, limit the access that graduate migrant women have to the labour market. Moreover, as these policies specially target citizens from non-EU countries, they reinforce the reluctance that recruiters might have towards candidates from this area. In the end, these policies contribute to the racialisation of the local labour market. Faced with a local labour market that appeared to be closed to foreigners, both Amapola and Azalea decided to look for opportunities within the international organisations that are present in the region. Access to these institutions will be analysed below.

Like Amapola and Azalea, Aster also finds that she had to target international organisations to find employment in Alsace. Aster was born in Ukraine, where she studied English and German philology and worked as an interpreter. She first moved to Germany, where she was enrolled in master's and then a PhD programme. Meanwhile, she worked as an assistant at the university and as a language teacher for migrants. She moved to Alsace in 2012 to work as a consultant for international organisations. "For me, it has been absolutely clear from the very beginning, my chances in the French labour market are rather limited", she says, "the segment of my labour markets are international organisations". She worked in this sector for two years, after which she moved back to Germany.

Like Azalea, Aster also highlights that one of the main obstacles to be hired by local companies was the regulation, and more specifically that on "employers who want to get foreign workers, from non-European countries". In addition, she referred to the administrative procedures which slowed down access to employment. For instance, Aster indicated that it took her about six months to fill and submit all the documents needed to be covered by social security insurance. When she participated in the fieldwork, over five years had passed since she started the procedure. "And the procedure hasn't been finished until now", she told me laughing.

Besides policies and administrative practices, Aster also referred to a "culture of the labour market" that in her view, is not that open towards foreigners. Aster compares the local labour market with that of Germany. Although she acknowledges migrants are also facing challenges on the other side of the Rhine, she finds that in Germany graduate migrants have more chances to find employment in their field.

> Let’s say also with reference to the culture of the labor market. Because if I compare the situation of migrants in the labor market in Germany and in Alsace, for those whom I know, that in Germany there are a lot of migrants who

> studied for example in Russia, who came to Germany many years ago, but they could get positions with their degrees. You know this problem. And doctors, if they wish doctors… physicians, always they [want them]; engineers more or less; IT specialists; social scientists ok, sometimes they have to study, but also some of them landed in their field of education, in the migrants' field. So the chances are better. And generally speaking, in Germany, nobody is surprised if a Russian or a Russian speaking person, I speak about persons from the former soviet union, it is quite a usual issue if you are calling someone and then, so I am working on social sphere and everywhere I come across the post-soviet union names, the Russian language or something like that.
>
> Aster, studied English and German philology in Ukraine and sociology in Germany, worked as a consultant for international organisations, Alsace

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In conclusion, the previous paragraphs underscored that in both contexts, women born in European countries outside of the EU have mixed feelings about the way they are looked at. While some participants feel associated with an image of "good workers", other women find that they are perceived as "migrants" or "foreigners", and as such, face stigmatisation that can influence their access to employment.

When it comes to contrasting the outcomes in both regions, it is worth noting that in Veneto interviewees were more eloquent about the essentialisation processes in which they are involved, highlighting that stratifications according to nationality, are made explicit by recruiters, and stakeholders in the labour market. Like the women from Sub-Saharan Africa, those from European non-EU countries also compared their position with that of women from other areas. Conversely in Alsace, women from European non-EU countries did not described explicit stratifications based on nationality. Nonetheless, they also indicated that there were concerned by forms of essentialisation. Compared to Veneto, the women in Alsace seemed more concerned about the legal and administrative constraints that were preventing them from having full access to graduate positions. Overall, it was the practices of private actors that were at the core of the concerns in Veneto, while in France women from European non-EU countries were more worried about how segregation was institutionalised.

3.3. Looking at non-migrants' positioning

The previous sections have highlighted how migrant women with tertiary education feel they are being essentialised by stakeholders in the local labour markets. How are they perceiving the position of non-migrants? The first part focuses on their views regarding white locals, while the second focuses on children of migration..

3.3.1. Privileged white locals?

When it comes to describing the position of locals, both in Alsace and Veneto, interviewees emphasized that this group has a privileged position compared to migrant women. According to their views, locals would be preferred by employers if they had to compete for the same job. Different reasons were mentioned to explain this difference. For instance, having a local diploma was seen as a key by those who studied abroad. Women also found that locals would count on informal networks that facilitate access to graduate positions. Other reasons were connected to forms of essentialisation and racialisation, and were introduced in the previous sections.

Both in Veneto and Alsace migrant women had contrasting views on locals' position in the labour market. While some considered that locals are always privileged, others found that members of the majority group also face challenges when accessing employment.

For instance, Raisa, who was born in Cameroon and studied communication sciences and marketing in Italy, is quite critical towards Italians who complain about not finding employment. "If an Italian says he has not found a job", she finds, "it means that he is too demanding or that he is not really looking for it, because they have possibilities". Raisa concludes by stating that "for foreigners instead, it is very difficult".

Rose also lives in Veneto, where she studied communication sciences after moving from Congo. Although she also finds that locals are privileged compared to migrants, she feels that they might also face challenges when accessing employment. Rose specifically referred to the case of a university colleague, who did not find a job in her field and had to change her career. She specified that the woman she met was not only Italian, but more specifically from Veneto. Rose tells me how surprised she was to see her acquaintance at the hospital: "I saw her", she explains, "she was a nurse, and I said 'how come?'". Meeting her former colleague pushed Rose to put her situation into perspective, as she was not the "only one" to struggle in finding employment in her field.

In Alsace, views on locals' positioning were also contrasting. While some found that French and more specifically Alsatians would always be privileged in the selection processes, others noted that locals were also struggling. Like Rose, Amaryllis referred to the challenges that a French acquaintance was facing. Amaryllis studied in Armenia, where she used to work as a translator and a teacher. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, she first moved to Ukraine and then to the Czech Republic. She finally arrived in Alsace at the beginning of the 2000s, together with her mother and her brother. Although she obtained a French university degree, she has struggled to find employment in line with her studies. Since she moved to Alsace, she has mainly worked as a cultural mediator and a tutor. Concerning locals' access to different levels of positions in the labour market, Amaryllis referred to a woman she knows that works as a special needs teaching assistant. Her acquaintance is French and is faced with job insecurity as she often does not know whether her contract will be renewed or not.

Amaryllis concludes by referring to the challenges that both migrants and locals face when looking for a stable job. "Is it only for us?", she wonders, "I see that for non-migrants, immigrants, it's quite the same ".

In Alsace, a contrasting position, among others, was that of Colombine, who was born in South Africa, under the apartheid regime. Colombine identifies with comedian Trevor Noah, as she also feels she was "born a crime". Her father was white, and her mother was classified as mixed or coloured by the regime. Besides South Africa, Colombine has lived in the United States and the United Kingdom before moving to France. Colombine describes how she has been racialised as white, black or coloured depending on the context and the information she gave about herself and her family. Colombine indicates that it has been a relief for her to move to Europe, as she feels there is less need to "justify oneself for their skin colour", compared to South Africa and the US. However, based on the experience of an acquaintance who works in recruitment, she finds that white Alsatians are privileged over other specific groups, namely North Africans and their descendants.

Colombine referred to the specific practice of *BBR*, *Bleu-blanc-rouge*, as the colour of the French flag. In one particular recruitment in which her acquaintance was involved, the employer asked for a BBR candidate. She explains that this labelling implicitly supposes that it has to be a "French, European, Alsatian *pure souche* [pureblood]" candidate. She says that the employer wanted "someone that looks French, like a real French and not like a North African". She indicates that this practice recalls her of South Africa and concludes by saying that "if the system is against you, there is nothing you can do".

The previous paragraphs highlighted that interviewees have contrasting views regarding the challenges faced by white locals. On the one hand, they tended to stress that locals have a privileged access to employment and graduate positions, and mentioned practices of exclusion such as *BBR*. On the other hand, interviewees also diminish the specific exclusion that they face by indicating that locals are also struggling to find jobs in their field. To complete this analysis, we can ask how migrant women perceive the positioning of children of migration, and of locals who are being perceived as non-whites. The issue is developed in the following paragraphs.

3.3.2. Children of migration[12]

As far as racialisation is concerned, another point that deserves researchers' attention concerns the challenges that children of migration face in local labour markets. The notion specifically includes both descendants of migrants, namely children and grand-children of migrants that were born in France or Italy, and persons that migrated when they were under the age of 18. As stressed in chapter 1, the dissertation adopts the definition introduced by the network G2. Therefore, children of migration also include all those who were born abroad but who grew up in their country of residence. According to G2, although they are often labelled as migrants, children of migration who were born abroad "did not voluntarily emigrate, but they were brought to [the country where they live] by their parents or other relatives" (G2, 2017).

Although the employment position of children of migration is not at the core of the dissertation, there was relevant material that emerged from the field on the issue, and that adds additional insights into how labour markets are stratified. Indeed, children of migration are not affected by some of the obstacles that migrants who were born abroad face. For instance, although children of migration might not have systematic access to French or Italian citizenship, they are more likely to have an administrative status that provides broader access to the labour market. Moreover, their education and experience might have mainly taken place in the country where they live, and as such, they are less likely to be lost in translation. Children of migration also have a language proficiency equal to any other native-born, and as such, they should face less discrimination based on that skill, or employment bias related to the fact of having an accent. Putting aside these barriers, the difficulties they encounter in the labour market can be related to other dimensions, including essentialization based on racialization, gender and class.

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[12] The expression "children of migration" was introduced in chapter 1, and refers to persons that were born in their country of residence but whose parents were born abroad, as well as individuals who were born abroad but who grew up in their country of residence (G2, 2017).

As far as fieldwork is concerned, participants' observations slightly differed from one region to the other. In Veneto, migrant women born in Sub-Saharan Africa mainly referred to their fear of seeing their children being discriminated in the future for being black. Women hardly ever mentioned acquaintances that were born in Veneto and who were already facing discrimination. Rosanna was the only one who referred to an episode that happened to the daughter of a friend of hers. Rosanna stresses that the girl arrived in Italy when she was very young and mainly studied in the country. "If you hear her on the phone", she says, "you have the impression that you are talking to an Italian". Rosanna tells that the girl was once invited for a job interview. Once she got to the place, the girl was told that there might have been a mistake, as she was not supposed to have a job interview. Rosanna concludes that all that happened because "they expected to see someone else". Rosanna's description of the incident echoes the observation that was made above regarding the different attitudes of recruiters when talking by phone, and when meeting in person.

Conversely, in Alsace, comments regarding children of migration were more frequent. The challenges they face were also compared to those of migrants. For instance, Clemensia referred to this comparison. Clemensia was born in Senegal, where she finished high school. After that, she enrolled in a university in Alsace, where her sister and nephews were living. When we met, she had obtained a PhD and was looking for employment in her field. Clemensia finds that racialisation and discrimination are more "violent" towards children of migration. She gives the example of her nephews who feel Alsatian but are identified continuously as being Africans. Clemensia also finds that migrants are relatively better represented in universities compared to children of migration. From her perspective, this difference is connected to the fact that children of migration tend to be discouraged from going to university.

> In any case, in my university career, I did not see many blacks, Senegaleses, in any case, or Senegaleses, who did... who were born here, who studied here, and who are at the university here. While I saw a lot of Senegaleses that have studied in Senegal and came to university here. You see, it’s a thing that... is a problem. It remains an open question. But... it's wierd!
>
> Clemensia, studied sociology in France, unemployed, Alsace

In Veneto, interviewees from European non-EU countries did not refer to the issue. Instead, in Alsace, participants of this area of research made contrasting comments on the subject. Amaryllis, who was born in Armenia and occasionally works now as a tutor, indicates that she will always be seen as an "immigrant", although she has now the French citizenship. Amaryllis contrasts her situation with that of children of migration. "We will maintain this status", she says, "but not our children".

Araluen instead, highlighted some challenges that children of migrants, including from European non-EU countries, might face. Araluen was born in Russia and has been working as a teacher in Alsace for over ten years. In her daily work, she is frequently in touch with Chechen youth. Araluen observes that many of them face discriminations, including in the labour market. Besides racialisation, Araluen indicates that having a foreign-sounding last name can be a basis for being treated differently.

Overall, concerns regarding the children of migration’s access to the labour market mainly referred to descendants of migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa, stressing that they are more likely to be racialised and face discrimination than the descendants of non-EU Europeans. Nonetheless, it was also highlighted that this second group could also be exposed to stigmatisations based on their last name.

The fact that children of migration were mentioned more often in Alsace compared to Veneto is likely to be related to the different histories of migration. Indeed, and as stressed in chapter 2, migrants in Alsace were over 4% of the population already in the 1920s, while in Veneto they only reached that threshold by the end of the 1990s. As a result, the share of persons that have parents or close ancestors that were migrants is more significant in Alsace, compared to Veneto. As it has been a long-existing process, the challenges children of migration face have drawn media, academic and activists' attention for a more extended period.

4. Accessible positions

The previous sections gave an overview on how stakeholders feel that migrant women with tertiary education are being essentialised in local labour markets, and the influence that they feel it has in accessing employment. The following section examines what specific positions are perceived as being accessible for these women.

4.1. Feminised and "ethnicised " sectors

The previous sections have stressed that both in French and Italian local labour markets, graduate migrant women feel they are confined in specific jobs, especially at the bottom of the employment structure. Moreover, both in Alsace and Veneto, stakeholders mainly referred to positions that are feminised. These are jobs were women represent the majority of the workforce, and that involve skills that tend to be associated with an essentialised representation of women's abilities.

Based on the literature, chapter 1 highlighted that women tend to be over-represented and associated with positions that involve care and that concern social reproduction in a broad sense (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015). In Alsace and Veneto, social workers encourage and direct migrant women towards these type of jobs, which also correspond to those in which migrant women feel they find employment more easily. At the bottom of the employment structure, stakeholders highlighted that migrant women in Alsace and Veneto tend to find jobs as cleaners and in-home care givers.

The intermediary and graduate positions that seem reachable for participants also correspond to care work and social reproduction. For instance, they feel they can more easily access jobs in the health sector, as care assistants, nurses, physiotherapists, and eventually as the more masculinised position of a physician. Besides these jobs, there were other posts involving social reproduction that were mentioned. For example, stakeholders indicated that graduate migrant women are present in intermediary and graduate jobs in the social sector, such as social workers, cultural mediators, and in education, working as language teachers.

As far as the social sector is concerned, in Alsace both recruiters and graduate migrant women felt that it was one of the few fields in which migrant women had chances to get an intermediary or graduate job. Drake, who works in the region as an intermediary recruiter, finds that the sector is "very open". Clemensia had similar views. She was born in Senegal and was looking for employment in the region. She had previously done several internships in the "social work field", particularly in labour integration. Clemensia feels that this sector is accessible to migrant women.

> All social stuff, in general, there is always a cultural diversity. Not only *énarques*[13], let's says, nor good whites with blue eyes. So, in general, these are middle-class, let's say, rather open-minded. And yeah, when you work in the social sector, in general, you are open-mind, yeah.
>
> Clemensia, studied sociology in France, unemployed, Alsace

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[13] Clemensia refers to graduates from the French elitist *Ecole Nationale de l'Administration (ENA)*, that trains senior French officials.

In Veneto, graduate migrant women also mentioned that field as being obtainable, especially the position of cultural mediator. In this regard, Rosanna indicated that "many" of her graduate friends are working with "cooperatives in the field of migrants". However, she highlights that their jobs do not correspond to their field of studies. "It has nothing to do", she says, "with what they have studied, but at least they have found something". As far as the "social work" sector is concerned, De Rudder and Vourc'h (2006: 182) have stressed that in France there has been an "ethnicisation" of these jobs, connected to the assumption that there is an "ethnic-cultural closeness" with the audience targeted by social policies. The same process seems to be ongoing in the Italian context.

Other jobs mentioned did not directly involve care nor social reproduction (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015). Nonetheless, some of them are still feminised. For instance, few migrant women in France said they felt they could get easier access to positions as secretaries and administrative assistants. Only a few positions mentioned did not involve social reproduction, and were more masculinised. Those corresponded to posts as export and business managers, which were specially mentioned in Veneto. In this region, women from the former Soviet Union considered these positions as obtainable, and even connected to their migrant identity. This was the case of Veronica, who has worked as a business manager for over a decade.

Veronica feels that what influenced her hiring in business management is that she speaks Russian. "But if I should look for a job", she says, "I don't know for example administration of a company that doesn't care about exporting, I don't know if they would prefer, if they would give priority to an Italian, in my opinion, yes". Access to these graduate jobs is connected to language skills, who might be valued differently according to whom embodies them. Embodiness of skills, and more specifically the assessment of language skills, will be further develop in chapter 6.

4.2. Gendered positions within international organisations

As mentioned earlier, graduate women from European non-EU countries who are struggling to find employment in the Alsatian labour markets might prefer to target international organisations to find work. Faced with a local labour market that appeared to be closed toward foreigners, both Amapola and Azalea decided to look for opportunities within these institutions. Azalea started as an intern and Amapola as a temporary worker. They both work now for an international organisation with permanent contracts as administrative assistants.

Although they enjoy the environment in which they work, both Azalea and Amapola feel they are overqualified for the job they are doing. Azalea estimates that, in the international organisation where she works, having tertiary education has only recently become a criterion for selecting administrative assistants. She contrasts the education of older employees with that of youth.

> The old generation assistants, at least French assistants, most of them they don't even have higher education. And now, all the young employees of the [international organisation], they all have high-level studies. So you see, it's kind of… requirements are really growing. That is interesting to follow. So in order to be "distinct ", no not "distinct "… how to say… that's someone notices you and give you a promotion, you're really need to be top, top. You know. It's big competition now, among young people.
>
> Azalea, studied economics in Russia, works as an administrative assistant, Alsace

Within Azalea's organisation, the human resources department is also aware of the over-qualification of non-EU women who work as assistants. Elm has been working as a recruiter at Azalea's international organisation for over twenty years. In the last decade, he has noticed that there has been a growing number of women candidates from Eastern European countries, and especially Russia, who have a high level of education.

Elm indicates that Russian candidates who already live in the region tend to apply for positions as administrative assistants and secretaries mainly. "There is a high level of education", he observes, "and sometimes for applications at a much lower level". Elm indicates that "over-qualification of candidates" is a "problem" that he has been discussing with his colleagues. Elm stresses that being overqualified does not exclude candidates, but can be a source of conflict and frustration. From Elm's perspective, it can be "complicated" to hire someone with high education for positions at a low level, with little chance to get promoted.

As far as access to the organisation is concerned, it is worth noting that to be hired, candidates need to have the citizenship of one of the member states, which includes countries of Europe which are not in the EU. As a result, non-EU Europeans might be able to apply to positions, while access is more limited to women that were born in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. Women born in countries that are not member states of the organisation might be hired only once they acquire the citizenship of these member states. Nevertheless, circumvention strategies can be put into place to access these jobs.

Carmel's experience is edifying from this point of view. Carmel was born in Nigeria, where she studied French and worked for a French cultural agency. She then moved to France, where she resumed university studies. The first time Carmel came into contact with the organization, she had already worked in Alsace as a bilingual secretary, but did not yet have French citizenship. Carmel tells me that after the interview "which went well", they wanted to hire her. As they could not provide her with an employee contract, she was offered to work as a consultant. Thanks to this first experience, once she obtained French citizenship, Carmel managed to be hired by the organisation with temporary contracts. This being said, although international organisations appear to be willing to hire migrant women, including those born in Sub-Saharan Africa, for positions as administrative assistants, we can wonder to what extent they might have access to upper grade positions. The answer to this question would require further research.

4.3. A useful essentialised otherness?

As mentioned in chapter 1, scholars have stressed that migrants might be perceived as a useful workforce from the employers' perspective. The precariousness of their administrative status and their positioning in the labour market enables companies' owners and managers to hire them at the lower cost compared to privileged locals (Terray, 2008). Tsing (2009) argues that migrants' "difference" has a constitutive role in supply chain capitalism. According to this theory, through subcontracting, employers at the top of the chain can cut labour costs and refrain workers' claims, without endorsing any responsibility. Migrants would be mainly employed by the service providers, meaning along the supply chain, and rarely directly at the top of it.

Interestingly, fieldwork stresses that these processes involving underemployment do not exclusively concern jobs at the bottom of the employment structure but also graduate positions. Rosamel experience is enlightening in this regard. She was born in Cameroon and moved to Italy to study physiotherapy. Since she graduated, Rosamel has mainly worked for NGOs and cooperatives. As positions in public hospitals continue to be closed to foreigners, Rosamel explains that foreign medical professionals are mostly hired through cooperatives, which offer worse working conditions compared to those experienced by Italians hired in the public sector. As workers employed through cooperatives are paid less, the system can offer a service that is open every single day of the year, including over Christmas.

> From the perspective of statistics and service offered, this is excellent: you provide service on Christmas day! But this is because there is a foreigner who works because you will rarely see an Italian working on the 25th unless they

> work at the hospital, with shifts and therefore they know that on the 25th the shifts are overpaid. Instead, in cooperatives on the 25th, it is the same salary.
>
> Rosamel, studied physiotherapy in Italy, works as a physiotherapist, Veneto

Rosamel adds that, when an Italian goes on holidays, the replacement position is guaranteed to be a foreigner; "those with no families", those "who do not worry about going on vacation or not".

Rosamel's comment echoes that of Castles and Miller (2009) mention in chapter 1. Through migration policies and new employment forms characterised by subcontracting, temporary work, and casualisation, migrants continue to be transformed into a "subordinate, flexible labour force" (Castles and Miller, 2009: 234). We could add that foreigners' and migrants' flexibility and precariousness enable employers to maintain a system, reducing costs and services which are "excellent", as Rosamel stresses, and open all year long. Moreover, Rosamel's observations stress that services such as health care are also involved in supply chain capitalism.

In addition to the trend introduced above, there are other recruitment practices that aim at benefiting from migrants' essentialised otherness. In this regard, Sequoia's comments are enlightening. He works for the HR department of a company based in Veneto. When talking about the possibility of hiring a candidate with a migrant background, Sequoia stresses that "it is always good to evaluate the opportunity to eventually *insert*" these candidates whom he associates with novelty. From Sequoia's point of view, migrant candidates are carriers of diverse "experiences", "cultures" and ways of "understanding work". Following Sequoia's reasoning, migrant candidates are therefore evaluated as the bearers of an intrinsic difference, which might be perceived as beneficial or disadvantageous for the company.

Sequoia's remark pushes the researcher to think that migrants' intrinsic otherness - in terms of "experience", "culture" and "way of understanding the work"- is a selection criterion. The recruiter values to what extent it is useful to bring this otherness, or what Sequoia calls "innovation breath" (*ventata di novità*), into the company.

Similar comments were made in Alsace, in the context of so-called "diversity management". Daphne, who is a social worker in a public institution, explains that in the context of diversity management, companies might find it useful to hire workers that correspond to the diversity of their clients. As a result, candidates are also hired because they are perceived as intrinsically different from an imaginary main-stream white majority.

> If I want to correspond to the image of my customers, from a marketing point of view, I hire different people, Asians, Blacks... That's it. But for the quota of diversity, exoticism, they will favor women. But it will not necessarily be for executive positions, be careful. For *cadres*, it's quite a bit more difficult. It opens a little, I don’t say that it doesn’t... Let’s say that Sub-Saharans are preferred when they play football.
>
> Daphne, social worker, Alsace

In the context of diversity management, Daphne finds that "diverse" women, and especially black women, would be preferred over men. This trend relates to the eroticisation of migrant women's bodies, which will be further analysed in the following chapter. However, Daphne specifies that hirings for diversity management purposes do not concern positions as managers. "That is it", she says, "for managers, it is quite a bit more difficult". Therefore, hirings for diversity management would privilege visible positions in contact with customers, and would be limited when it comes to management and top-positions.

5. The variable geometry of stratifications

The previous sections described how local labour markets are stratified in terms of gender, racialisation, and country of birth. Nonetheless, these stratifications and essentialism in the recruitment process are not applied in the same way all along the employment structure. They might change according to the characteristics of the employing structure, and depending on recruiters' and social workers' practices.

5.1. Diversified employers

The previous section highlighted that stakeholders feel that specific positions in the labour market are more accessible to migrant women. These positions are mainly those feminised that involve social reproduction, would it be in the care, cleaning, health, or eventually education and social sectors. Besides sectors, stakeholders in Alsace and Veneto distinguish accessibility to jobs based on the specific characteristics of the employing structure. In this regard, Sorrel, who works as an intermediary recruiter in Veneto, feels that it is difficult to make any "general" consideration. "Each company, each referent", he says, "has its own culture of reference". Despite each company having a specific way of recruiting, converging comments emerged from the fieldwork.

Both in France and Italy, the size of the company appeared as a critical issue. For instance, small and medium companies, especially in the Veneto region, were perceived as more inclined to use essentialising criteria in their selection processes. Recruiters working both for intermediary agencies and directly in HR departments described these businesses as *padronale*. The adjective alludes to the idea that the enterprises, and by extension, the recruitment process, are exclusively managed by the owner (*padrone*).

Conversely, recruiters both in Veneto and Alsace had the feeling that larger companies would be less discerning on the gender and country of birth of candidates. In Veneto, Sycamore works as a recruiter for a multinational company. During the interview, he highlights that his enterprise has adopted specific policies for an equal balance between gender within the teams. As a result, Sycamore, who was looking at that time for an engineer, indicated that being a woman could be an advantage in this specific recruitment process.

In Alsace, Dianella also works as a recruiter for a multinational company and shares the same feelings of Sycamore. Moreover, she indicates that her company is looking to increase its internationalisation. As a result, top management wants to attract "talented" workers with a multicultural background or experience. Nonetheless, Dianella notes that there is a contrast between the direction's policies and the attitude of "front line managers", who are more reluctant to welcome migrant workers in their teams.

Furthermore, the apparent openness towards so-called "international workers" could correspond to the diversity management described by Daphne. As mentioned, the selection of staff perceived as "diverse" could merely consist of providing an image of openness towards customers. In this context, migrant women might have access to low- and intermediary- positions, while managerial positions remain closed.

The previous observations that emerge from the field echo existing literature that sees the size of companies as a crucial variable for understanding the strategies and logics of recruitment (Fullin 2016, Allasino et al., 2004). According to these publications, there would be a lower rate of discrimination by the medium-large companies, whose more standardised procedures would enable foreign/migrant candidates not to be rejected at the first contact. This positive description of large-sized enterprises is nuanced by Kmec (2006). The scholar estimates that in the absence of control and monitoring procedures, and the existence of formal recruitment procedures does not guarantee out-group hiring - namely the recruitment of candidates who are perceived as belonging to other groups in terms of gender and racialisation.

The fieldwork conducted for the dissertation adds to this literature. On the one hand, it stresses that within the same large company, there can be tensions and contradictory behaviours according to the levels of management. Top-management might officially declare its openness towards foreign and migrant workers, while medium and low level managers can be reluctant to include these workers in their teams. Moreover, interaction with fieldwork stakeholders invites one to be particularly attentive to the specific positions to which "diversity", especially graduate migrant women, have access. Indeed, researchers need to examine whether these women have equal access to any job, including that of top-managers, or they are confined in feminine positions that aim at favouring the marketing image of the company towards its customers.

In addition to the size of the company, another critical characteristic that deserves the researcher's attention concerns the position of the employer company along the supply chain. In this regard, relevant observations were made by Carmel and Rosamel. Carmel was born in Nigeria and used to work as a bilingual secretary, and an administrative assistant in Alsace. She tells me that when she was looking for employment in the area, it is mainly in intermediary agencies where she felt judged for the colour of her skin.

On the other hand, Rosamel was born in Cameroon and works as a physiotherapist in Veneto. She mentions that during her job hunting, she mainly felt disdained by the employees of cooperatives. From her viewpoint, their rude attitude is paradoxical as these structures mostly rely on migrants' work. "It's a strange thing", she feels, "because 80% of cooperatives work only with foreigners".

Although this trend seem paradoxical to Rosamel, it fits Tsing (2009)'s analysis on supply chains. Tsing (2009) precisely highlights that supply-chain capitalism is based on inequalities according to gender, class, and racialisation. It is through the use of diversity and inequalities that labour costs can be cut and workers' claims refrained, while top-of-the-chain are released from all responsibility for labour.

5.2. Recruiters' levers

After analysing the differences in recruitment practices according to the size of the company and their position in the supply-chain line, the following section focuses on the individual recruiter's agency. To which extent do recruiters feel that they can choose a candidate?

Whether they work in an HR department or for an intermediary agency, recruiters described their work as being primarily that of an intermediary. While recruiters employed by agencies indicated that they work for clients, those working for private companies stressed that their job depends on managers' or team leaders' decisions. For instance, Dianella, who works for an HR department in Alsace, emphasises that her choices depend on the field managers for whom she works. "As an HR (employee), I am a support service", she finds, "so I'm going to help managers look for the right profiles".

Therefore, recruiters appear as not being alone in the decision making of selecting a candidate. Nonetheless, according to their comments, recruiters have different perceptions of their freedom to act. Their agency in the selection process seems more connected to their subjectivity than to the type of structure for which they work. While some could feel that their job consists of complying with the wishes of clients or managers, others indicated that they could influence the outcome and even change the mind of a future employer.

At the first extreme is Sirelli. She has worked both for an HR department and an intermediary agency. From her perspective, working as a recruiter in an agency means to "completely give way" to clients' wishes. As a result, Sirelli finds that recruiters should please clients in "everything", which might include requirements connected to gender, racialisation, and class of the candidates.

> Let's say that what an agency does in general, not only an intermediary agency, but also an agency that offers other types of services, such as the one where I am now, it is trying to completely give way to the clients' [wishes] and therefore to satisfy them in everything and for everything, that is, when a prestigious customer makes all kinds of requests, we must try to exhaust them, end of discussion.
>
> Sirelli, previously recruiter in an intermediary agency,
> now recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

Saffron instead has worked for over 20 years in Veneto's selection agencies. His position is more nuanced compared to that of Sirelli. He finds that clients, or better contact persons within clients' companies, often do not know what they are looking for. They do not understand the range of skills and abilities of candidates in the market, and there is often a "semantical difference" between what they say and what they "really" want. From Saffron's perspective, recruiters must guess what employers are looking for.

On the other extreme of the continuum when compared to Sirelli, there are recruiters that find they can influence the outcome. While Sirelli seems not to question clients' "all kinds of requests", Sorrel believes that he can present a person whose gender, nationality, or look does not match the initial request of the client. He also works in Veneto as an intermediary recruiter. Sorrel gives the example of a specific recruitment process he followed, in which the employer wanted to hire a man. The future worker was expected to operate in a foundry, in a team that was male-dominated.

Sorrel explains that he interviewed a girl that did not have a graduate degree but had previously trained, and had a long-lasting experience. The recruiter decided to present the candidate to the company, which reject her at first, but Sorrel insisted.

> I decided to present her to the company that immediately discarded her on paper, telling me "No, she is not good", trying to turn it around for a moment, and I said "fine, let's give her an opportunity, you should see her, I liked her, just see her, and then we can talk about it". Indeed, he chose her.
>
> Sorrel, recruiter in an intermediary agency, Veneto

As a consequence of Sorrel’s insistence, the client changed his mind and accepted hiring a candidate that did not correspond to the gender expected. "It is also nice sometimes", says Sorrel, "to be able to make people change idea".

Dianella also thinks she can influence the outcome of the selection process. As mentioned, she works for the HR department of a private company in Alsace. Dianella indicates that she often has to negotiate with field managers, who may have a priori bias towards migrant women. However, Dianella tells me that she is delighted as she has recently managed to hire a migrant woman for a technical position. "I am proud of myself", she says, "a young woman with little experience, well, I find this great".

5.3. Social workers' orientation

Both in Alsace and Veneto, social workers tend to be aware that migrant women are also graduates but struggle to find employment in their fields. Social workers indicated that they were concerned and even appalled by the challenges these women face. Nonetheless, their practice in supporting them mainly gives priority to access employment, whatever it is, regardless of the users’ previous experience. As a result, graduate migrant women tend to be orientated towards femininised positions at the bottom of the employment structure, namely in the care and cleaning services.

Social workers in Alsace still indicated that there exist planned paths to support access to jobs more in line with women's backgrounds. For instance, two support strategies were mentioned by Dalia, who works for an NGO whose activities target migrant population. Dalia indicated that in most cases, women have a "food emergency". They need to find any job that would enable them to have an income and support their families. In this context, the NGO supports them in finding employment mainly as cleaners and maids in the hospitality industry. The second type of situation mentioned by Dalia concerns women that have more time and resources. In this case, women have an individual follow-up, which mainly ends-up with re-training and taking time to think about a "new professional project". Overall, women are expected to do the "mourning of their former profession".

Daphne also works in Alsace, but for a public institution that follows unemployed persons. She describes the trajectories of graduate migrant women with whom she has interacted. Daphne stresses that, when doable, she tries to support her users so that they find employment in their field. "They have already lost a lot", she feels, "if they can keep their professional identity, it's better for them". However, she indicates that most of the graduates she follows have to "restart from scratch".

Daphne also mentions a specific graduate woman who managed to find employment in her previous field. The social worker stresses that it is because the woman was "resourceful" (*débrouillarde*), and managed to learn French and find internships by herself, that she did so. Therefore, her comment suggests that finding employment in one's field falls mainly on migrant women's shoulders. This being said, Daphne indicates that together with her colleague, she tries to take into account graduates' previous experience. However, Daphne finds that she is one of the few social workers that do so in the region. She is quite critical towards the lack of public support in recognising education and experience gained abroad. "We do not value skills acquired abroad", she states, "whether academic skills or professional skills, or knowledge or know-how, it is not valued".

As mentioned earlier, Cassia had quite a bitter experience when interacting with public institutions. Cassia, who worked for over six years as an administrative assistant in Senegal, is especially critical towards the person that follows her case at Pole Emploi, the French agency in charge of providing support to unemployed workers. As mentioned, Cassia feels that her counsellor only reacts to her e-mails when she asks to enroll in training for care jobs, at the bottom of the employment structure. Conversely, Cassia indicates that he does not reply when she looks for training opportunities more in line with her previous employment. From Cassia's perspective, her counsellor's attitude relates to the fact that he sees her as being 'only good' for 'subaltern positions'.

Like in the Alsace, social workers in Veneto also indicated that one of the main objectives of the support provided to migrants is to find any employment, regardless of the persons' background. In this regard, Selena mentions that she has meet graduate women who tell her that they were working as teachers. "I understand", she says, "but here it is difficult to find work even as a cleaner". As a result, Selena indicates that she might direct these women towards cleaning courses so that they can access employment, even though it is at the bottom of the employment structure. In Selena's case, it appears that there are not institutional paths for graduate migrants. She explains that her work consists of constructing a "support network ", made of potential employers, services, NGOs, that will facilitate migrant women's access to employment. The network might enable graduate women to obtain a job in their fields, but from Selena's perspective, this possibility is mostly a matter of "luck". She mentions the trajectory of a woman who studied architecture in Albania. By chance, together with the woman, they found a cooperative that works on that field, and that accepted hiring her, although her degree was not recognised in Italy.

Both in Alsace and Veneto, social workers emphasise the importance of training. Language training was perceived as a fundamental first step to facilitate access to employment. Successively, graduate migrant women might be directed towards professional training that in both regions mainly focuses on cleaning, caring, and eventually cooking. In this regard, Scrinzi (2013) has highlighted how these training programmes might contribute to the construction of "non-qualification" and racialisation. Although social workers perceive these courses as facilitating access to employment, they also contribute to confining migrant women in feminised, and eventually "ethnicised", positions at the bottom of the employment structure.

Conclusions of chapter 4

Through analysis of fieldwork outputs, this chapter highlighted how stakeholders perceive stratifications of the labour market. It also studied to what extent they feel that essentialisation processes influence the access that migrant women with tertiary education have to employment.

Stakeholders had different levels of disclosure regarding the issue. In France, the position can be arrayed along a continuum from de-negating and blaming those who pretend to be discriminated, to acknowledging that essentialisation and racialisation matter in the selection process. In Italy, different statements went from simple denial to an elaborate description of how essentialisation processes associate nationalities, country of birth or pretended cultures with specific characteristics. Accordingly, access to jobs in the Italian local labour market would be influenced by the stereotyping. Interestingly the fieldwork highlights, that this trend does not only concern practices that involve domestic workers (Scrinzi, 2013), but encompass different sectors of the labour market and were acknowledged by recruiters, social workers, and migrant women candidates.

In both regions, migrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa described how they feel that they are being judged in the labour market for being blacks. Participants highlighted that recruiters are referring to their blackness as a reason for not being selected, or as an additional disadvantage to access employment. As a result, they feel they are being confined in "subaltern" positions, while at the same time graduate jobs in their field are more difficult to access.

Although they might not be racialised as non-whites, migrant women from non-EU Europe also reported that they are subject to essentialisation. Some of these participants felt that there were positive stereotypes on their regard, which could eventually facilitate their access to employment. Conversely, other women from this area indicated that they feel otherised as "migrants from Eastern Europe", and as such, they suffer from being devalued and disrespected.

Besides essentialisation, migrant women also mentioned the institutional barriers that they had to face in their careers. These obstacles included a) the fact that specific jobs are closed to non-EU citizens; b) norms that privilege the hiring of locals over foreigners; c) educational titles that are not being recognised; d) the reluctance of employers to hire graduate migrants with short-term permits; e) the challenges faced to access health insurance. The importance that these obstacles have on migrant women's perception is illustrated by Rosella's statement, who indicated that she could bear racism, but what hurt her the most was "when the State legalised discrimination".

Another consistent output of the chapter, it is that it highlighted the economic interest that migrants can represent. In Italy, it was stressed that subcontracting is also concerning sectors such as health care. In this context, services are being subcontracted to cooperatives that mainly employ migrants. Playing on migrants' administrative precariousness, and on principles of supply chain capitalism (Tsing, 2009), it becomes possible to offer "excellent" services, at a low price.

Moreover, hiring "diverse" workers, including migrant women, was also depicted as a strategy implemented by employers to correspond to the diversity of clients. These trends, including diversity management, do not preclude essentialisation, as workers are hired because they are perceived as substantially different from a majority and dominant group. Moreover, stakeholders stressed that, in the context of diversity management, migrant women might access positions which involve customer contact. However, they would hardly be hired for positions as top-managers.

In addition to positions in the context of diversity management, the chapter identifies the main sectors in which migrant women with tertiary education are finding employment. These sectors mainly correspond to social reproduction and include care, health, social [work] sphere, and education. Other jobs regarded were the feminised positions of secretary and administrative assistant, and that of export and business managers. The following chapter will explore how access to these positions is related to the recognition of women's skills.

Finally, the chapter closed with a section that highlighted how the role of essentialisation in recruitment practices might vary according to the size of the employing company and its position in the supply chain. Moreover, it stressed that recruiters' might have influence in the selection process. Although clients or field managers restrict them, recruiters can change the mind of their counterparts and hire candidates that do not correspond to the gender, country of birth, and appearance that was initially requested. Lastly, it was highlighted that social workers are giving priority to access to work. Although access to employment might be fundamental, the practice of orientating women towards the cleaning and care sectors, regardless of their educational and professional background, contributes to reproducing inequalities in accessing the labour market and the overall underemployment experienced by this group.

Chapter 5. "She wanted me to take dictation". The embodiness of skills.

Callaia was born in Niger, where she worked for over ten years as a midwife. By the beginning of the 1990s, she moved to Alsace following her French partner who she met in Niger. As she wanted to continue working in her field, Callaia looked for information regarding how she could get her education and experience recognised in France. After a long process, she was informed that her Nigerien degree would not enable her to work as a midwife. She could work instead as a nursing assistant in maternity. Callaia wondered if she should enroll in training once again. She went to a midwives school to learn about the enrollment procedure. However, she was faced with an unpleasant surprise that curbed her desire to register.

Being born in a former French colony, which official language is that of the former coloniser, Callaia had pursued all her studies in French. However, when arriving at the midwives school, the director of the institution indicated that she wanted her to take dictation to see if she could read and write in French. "It was really humiliating ", says Callaia, "It was the first stick hit I received ".

After this episode, Callaia decided not to enroll at the midwives school and started working as a nurse assistant at a hospital maternity service. After nearly nine years of working as a nurse assistant, Callaia decided to take an exam to enter a nursing school and succeeded. When I met her, she had been working as a nurse for over eleven years. Callaia's story illustrates that skills, including language skills, are not external assets which are objectively scrutinised. Besides institutional barriers, migrant women are faced with the fact that skills are embodied. As a result, skills might be valued or disregarded according to who embodies them, and to the representations of the scrutinizers.

The previous chapter described how stakeholders perceive the stratifications of local labour markets, according to gender, country of birth, and racialisation. Chapter five analyses in more detail how knowledge, know-how, capacities, and skills are embodied and assessed depending on who holds them. The first section focuses on the social construction of migrant women bodies (1). The second section studies how recruiters perceived their selection process, and more specifically, the assessment of soft skills (2). The third section analyses how education and experience are being scrutinised, depending on who embodies them (3). The last section of the chapter analyses how embodied language skills are being valued in local labour markets (4).

1. Bodies at work – defining embodiness

1.1. The social construction of migrant women's bodies

Scholars have argued that the body is not limited to its physicality. It is also socially constructed and embedded in gender, class, and racial relations (Foucault 1991, Schatzki and Natter 1996, John O'Neill 1985). Sociologists have analysed the nexus between body and paid work, from multiple perspectives. For instance, Wolkowitz (2006) has explored the legacy of the representation of labouring bodies in gender, race and class-specific terms (Ibid: 6). Based on case studies, she contrasts the "iconic figure of the heroic, white manly worker ", and the "degraded female workers " pictured as having "usurped men's proper role as breadwinners " (Ibid: 7).

Most of the literature that studies the relation between body and labour has focused on "bodywork ", which includes service sector employees who work with their bodies and the bodies of others (McDowell, 2011). In this sense, Mears (2014) distinguishes different types of paid work, which directly involve workers' and customers' body. *Bodily labourers*, such as manicurists (Kang, 2010), are those who work on other's body to maintain or improve their health or appearance. *Intimate labour* instead, includes sex work and care work which is intimate and respond to bodily needs of people (Borris and Parreñas, 2010). *Aesthetic labour* encompasses jobs such as retail salespersons, fashion models, and strippers, where individuals are compensated for their own body's looks and affect (Mears, 2014: 1332). Mears (2014) typology also includes Hochschild's (2012) *emotional labour*, which characterises the work performed in jobs such as flight attendants. In these positions, workers are expected to control their emotions and, for instance, smile- as an embodied artifice.

Wolkowitz (2006) suggests going beyond these types of work and studying the embodied beings in the research regarding employment. From her perspective, embodiment needs to be also studied "when it is not explicitly targeted by the employer or mentioned by the informant as such " (Ibid: 182). In order to include Wolkowitz's invitation, the dissertation studies how the embodiness of migrant women's skills interfere in their assessment by recruiters, and conversely, what are the expectations on their bodily capacities.

Indeed, Wolkowitz highlights that gender, racial (and class) ideologies play a significant role in "naturalising aspects of bodily capacities" (Ibid: 175). Moreover, she stresses that capitalist labour process decides "which capacities are to be recognised and recompensed" and "which normalised", using gender, racialisation, and class as a "justification" (Ibid: 175). Wolkowitz highlights that these ideologies might hide the effort that workers put into performing work roles. Nonetheless, she also estimates that workers are more conscious of the surveillance of their *habitus* and might work on it. This agency can consist of conforming to work demands or distancing themselves from it. Collinson (2003) emphasises workers' agency, stressing that they also use their body as a resource.

1.2. Fluctuating racialisation and otherness

In line with the idea that bodies are socially constructed, this section highlights that racialisation and othering are fluctuating processes. They depend on the context, and above all on the viewing party who t racialised, essentialised, and otherised.

Stuart Hall (2013) has stressed that race is a floating significant. The way physiognomy and colour of the skin might be interpreted changes depending on the context and on who is looking. Moreover, as stressed in chapter 1, Pap Ndiaye (2008) indicates that in societies where blacks are underrepresented such as in France and in Italy, they are those who share the experience of being considered black. They have no choice to be or not to be black, but they have the option to assume the racialised identities or to reject them (Ibid: 57). Interviews with graduate women from Subsaharan Africa echo these reflections.

For instance, Clemensia was born in Senegal and moved to Alsace for her studies. She feels that blackness and whiteness are moving identities. "In Africa, I can be French, white", she says, "Here, I am going to be considered black, do I feel black or not? It depends on the days.".

On the other hand, Callaia refers to the fact that her interlocutors, especially at the workplace, continue to refer to her otherness even after living in France for decades. As mentioned, Callaia, who studied in a midwives school in Niger, and in a nursing school in France, works in Alsace as a nurse. Callaia introduces herself as *métissée*. However, she highlights that her difference is "visible" and this is why she continues to be "classified in a category". Despite her professional position and the time that has passed since she first arrived in Alsace, patients are regularly referring to her otherness.

> I've been here since the 1990s, but I'm still seen as... It's when I'm with people… I don’t realize. It’s when I'm asked a question like: "By the way, how long have you been here? Are you used to food? Isn't it cold here?' and I think, yeah, I'm not from here, but I'm not from there either, because I spent almost as much time there as here.

Callaia, studied at a midwives school in Niger, and at a nursing school in France, Alsace

When it comes to European women from non-Eu countries, the previous chapter stressed that although they might not be explicitly racialised as non-white, these women are also subject to forms of labelling. Participants' narrations highlight that the process of othering is also fluctuating and context-based. A relevant example that was mentioned is that of Viola, who was born in Russia and lives now in Veneto. Viola feels that she "became" a migrant from Eastern Europe when arriving in Italy. The verb that Viola uses emphasises the fact that it is a process,that needs to be contextualised in time and space. She was not labelled as a migrant from Eastern Europe before migrating, and she was not labelled as such where she previously had lived.

Another relevant example is that of Veronica, who was born in Ukraine and also moved to Veneto. Her narration highlights that the process of being other-ised can be long-lasting. After 15 years of living in Veneto, she indicates that almost everyday someone reminds her that she is a foreigner.

> Because since 2003, well, I'm in Italy, that’s why I’m telling many, my husband, many, well not every day, but almost, somewhere someone tells me I'm a foreigner. Because anyway I speak Italian but there is... anyway, the face is not Italian at all. So they also recognize me from the face. So there's this thing.

Veronica, studied economy and business in Ukraine, and economy in Italy, works as a business manager, Veneto

Veronica connects the fact of being other-ised to the visual perception of racialisers. She indicates that her "face is not Italian" and finds that "they recognise" her also because of her "face". As such, Veronica's account stresses that the way European women from non-Eu countries might be perceived corresponds to a form of racialisation, which share some features with the racialisation of black women in the Italian and French contexts.

1.3. Gendered and ethnicised skills

As mentioned earlier, Wolkowitz (2006: 175) highlights that gender, racial (and we could say class) ideologies play a significant role in "naturalising aspects of bodily capacities". The scholar finds that these ideologies might hide the effort that workers put into performing work roles. An example Wolkowitz gives in her book concerns the employment of migrant women in the domestic sector. From her perspective, employment of migrant women in these jobs partly relies on "naturalising" migrant women's ability to care, based on "racialised imagined differences, between employers and their servant" (Ibid:161).

Similar inputs are provided by Scrinzi (2003, 2013) in her study on the recruitment of domestic workers in Italy and France. The scholar highlights that in both contexts, there are processes of racialisation of migrant women. In Italy, Scrinzi (2003) observes that the recruitment procedures are based on processes of racialisation and essentialisation that associate specific "races" and "cultures of origin" with skills related to domestic and care work. For instance, she found that recruiters believed Peruvian women were good at providing care, whereas women from Morocco had a reputation for enjoying cleaning. As a result, we could add that the imaginary skills of these women workers were naturalised, and as such, were the object of little recognition and lower economic compensation.

Fieldwork also emphasised forms of naturalisation of skills, based on gender and racialisation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, recruiters and social workers referred to stereotyped characteristics that are either appreciated or denigrated by employers. As far as migrant women are concerned, it is worth noting that both in Alsace and Veneto, the features that seemed to be valued correspond to personality traits of conservative models of femininity. For instance, Daphne who works as a social worker in Alsace indicated that the elegance, vanity and submissiveness of Chechen women are seen with a favourable eye, and might facilitate their access to positions as a sales assistant. Conversely, Daphne finds that African women tend to be disregarded because they are seen as having too strong a personality.

> Here, we are on another profile of woman, somewhat sweet, docile. They will be listening; they will generally educate their children, Chechen, in this case, is their priority. But they are... excellent cook, pastry chef, excellent pastry chef, seamstress… These are the professions that stand out. Cooking, sewing, pastry. Not a lot of cleaning, yeah, not a lot of... Sales, a lot, because they look so good. They are elegant, that's it, pretty. They end up selling, in perfumery shops... when they are doing well in French. Oh, yes, yes, they do not [work] in cleaning.
>
> Daphne, social worker, Alsace

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Sirelli and Senecio made similar comments in Veneto. They both have experience as recruiters in the region. Although women from Eastern Europeans countries, and especially from Ukraine, are over-represented among in-home care givers in Veneto (Vianello, 2009), the recruiters felt that these women can be excluded from specific positions in the care and hospitality sectors, because they are perceived as being either "authoritative, strong, almost grouchy" or too compliant and distant.

At the same time, it also happens that recruiters associate positions with capacities that would be specifically feminine. This was the case of Shamrock, who works in the human resources department of a private company in Veneto. When we met, he stressed that his company hires both men and women "fifty-fifty" and that from his perspective "it does not matter whether it is a male or a female ". Nevertheless, when describing specific blue-collar positions, he indicated that some of them, such as working on miniatures, were more adapted to women.

> Ours is a company that... among other things is divided precisely in the middle between male and female in recruitment, so, in strength... so, there are positions maybe also more suitable, others less suitable, even in a position, I speak, ah… Because we work on miniature components... sometimes female profiles are more suitable… but this is not something I look at…
>
> Shamrock, recruiter in an HR department of a private company, Veneto

Shamrock's observation echoes forms of essentialization that occur in the employment of seasonal workers in Spain where the need for female labour is justified by the "specific morphology of the female hands" which are for instance considered "particularly suitable for carrying out delicate activities, such as strawberry harvest" (Vianello, 2014). Shamrock also uses the expression "female profiles", giving the impression that these are jobs that are necessarily attributed to women.

1.4. The need to be pretty

By the beginning of the 2010s, Catherine Hakim held media attention by stating that women should use their erotic capital as a tool for empowerment (Hakim, 2010). Her argument has created a debate in academia. As a counter position, scholars have highlighted that beauty and attractiveness are socially constructed and embedded in specific social fields (Green, 2013). As a result, erotic capital can become an asset only if recognised as such, within a given context (Mears, 2014). In this regard, Martin and George (2006: 127) stress that sexual desirability confers status upon those who conform to the fields' "hegemonic systems of judgement". Moreover, scholars have highlighted that beauty and attractiveness are embedded in power relations that involve racialisation, class, and gender. Consequently, women's beauty is steeped in class inequalities, as well as colonial and patriarchal discourses that privilege whiteness, heterosexuality, youth, and upper-class (Mears, 2014: 1334).

When it comes to the impact of beauty in accessing employment, scholar's positions are divided. Green (2013: 152) estimates that sexual attractiveness benefits women only "minimally if at all in the employment sector". Mears (2014: 1339), instead, indicates that women can be both penalised for being unattractive as well as too attractive, but what remains steady is the "high level of scrutiny of their bodies". When it comes to class, gender and racialisation, Williams and Connell (2010) found that in a middle-class retail chain, the ideal worker was middle-class, heterosexual, and white. Based on their study, Mears (2014: 1337) indicates that workers "whose gender, ethnicity, body type, or class-imbued *habitus*" do not conform to an "aspirational aesthetic", can be overlooked for employment, disciplined, or relegated to "non-visible" positions.

The fieldwork conducted for the thesis confirms that beauty matters in the selection process. Both in Alsace and Veneto, recruiters referred to the prettiness of female candidates as a characteristic that was required or at least appreciated. As expected, the importance of looking good was specially mentioned to access bodywork. For instance, the criterion was mentioned by Varda. She was born in Albania and then moved to Italy, where she graduated in statistics. When we met, Varda had not found work yet on her field of studies and had been working in the foodservice industry, as a waitress and as staff of an ice cream parlour. Varda finds that in the "kind of works " she has done being a woman is an advantage, especially if "you are cute ".

However, what is beauty in the Alsatian and Veneto contexts? What are the aesthetic characteristics that conform to the fields' "hegemonic systems of judgement" (Martin and George, 2006: 127), especially in terms of racialisation and class?

Stakeholders highlighted the importance of aesthetics in different variants of "bodywork ", including for positions as care assistants and nurses. These jobs involve getting in touch with other's bodies. Mears (2014) connects care work with intimate labour as it answers to the bodily needs of people. In these fields, Spruce made relevant comments on the importance of aesthetics. He had previously worked for an intermediary agency that hires nurses and care assistants for retirement facilities. Spruce describes a specific recruitment process in which he was involved. It was for a nurse position. Spruce told me that the director of the institution tended to intervene to make sure they would select an attractive female candidate.

> Even when we were in selection contests, now and then the director came, a director who was very much... a little like saying... If the nurse was pretty, young, 'like this, very well'. If maybe she was over 45… with a tone of voice a little bit… imperative, maybe not particularly interesting from a physical point of view, "But is this one okay? But are we sure?"
>
> Spruce, previously recruiter in an intermediary agency, Veneto

Spruce concludes saying that he has noticed that "in several sectors" if a woman is to be hired, "she needs to be pretty".

In Alsace, Elm described the recruitment of a "young black woman" who was a candidate for a position as a scientist within his organisation. The woman succeeded in the written exams and was hired following an interview. Elm mentioned that the candidate was "perfectly competent in the technical field" and that she was also "very pretty". Would have he made the same comment if it was a male candidate? Elm's example also suggests that the aesthetical criterion can go beyond "bodywork ", as the woman was hired for a scientific position.

An interesting observation also comes from Sirelli's experience. She has experience as an intermediary recruiter in Veneto. Sirelli told me about a recruitment process in which she was asked to select a group of hostesses. Mears (2014: 1333) classify this job as part of *aesthetic labour*, as appearance is a central component of the wage, and workers commodify their own body. In her example, Sirelli explained that clients were looking for hostesses, of "a superior level ". Sirelli description encompasses aesthetics criteria, language skills and a *habitus* that could be associated with middle/upper class.

> The staff they were asking for were hostesses, but not hostesses 'figurines', hostesses who had a specific type of *standing*[14], who spoke English very well, and who also had a certain attitude, in the relationship, in the sense that, yes, in short, the guests of this fair were... that is, in turn, perhaps representatives of brands and so on and... they needed reception and... relations in general, no. [...] I have, I found some people, some people who were very much in line with that research, so the kind of missed models, yeah... who spoke perfect English, who had had international experiences, with high education, and so on. And others that might have had... they didn't have these requirements.
>
> Sirelli, previously recruiter in an intermediary agency,
> now recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

Interestingly, Sirelli's example stresses how gender and class *habitus* intersect and become a selection criterion in *aesthetic labour*. On the other hand, it highlights that recruiters associate higher education by bearing a middle/upper-class *habitus*. As a result, having tertiary education can be appreciated when accessing *aesthetic labour*, as education might function as a proxy to select workers with such a *habitus*.

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[14] Sirelli uses the word in English.

1.5. Eroticisation of migrant women bodies: Between exoticism and whitening

Chapter 2 described how colonisation contributed to the whitening of the French and Italian identities. In both contexts, scholars have highlighted that the construction of racial models was gendered. While white women tended to be depicted as "pure", colonialised women were eroticised. Petrovich Njegosh (2012) analyses the Italian cultural products of the first half of the 20th century. She notes that Italian women were depicted as innocent victims, while colonialised black women were portrayed as "hyper-sexualised preys" (Petrovich Njegosh, 2012: 44).

In France, scholars have underlined how the colonial project went hand in hand with the appropriation and eroticisation of colonised bodies, in particular, that of women (Blanchard et al., 2018; Dorlin, 2008). In both contexts, scholars stress that the eroticisation of colonial subjects, namely women, continue to mark the collective imaginary. Fieldwork seems to highlight that this trend does not only concern women from former colonies. It regards also women from other "peripheral locations " (Grosfoguel et al., 2015) that were not directly colonised but that are also racialised or essentialised.

In Veneto, women from both non-EU Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa feel they are being eroticised by Italians. Graduate migrant women believe they are perceived as playgirls, women of easy virtue or husband-stealers. Both Veronica and Rose referred to symbolic and verbal violence to which they are exposed. They specifically mentioned the interactions they have had with unknown persons in the public sphere. Veronica, who was born in Ukraine and works now in business management, referred to an episode at the beginning of her stay in Italy.

> I remember, it struck me. I went to pay at the post office, it was still at the beginning, and because of the accent, 'Where are you from?'. I said 'from Ukraine'. ‘Ah, yeah because you Ukrainian women steal our Italian males’. I said: ‘I have not stolen anything from anyone’.
>
> Veronica, studied economics in Ukraine and Italy, works as business manager

Another example is that of Rose, who was born in Congo and graduated in Italy. She feels black African women tend to be associated with the sex work industry. "For Westerners", she says, "the majority of women come for prostitution". Rose indicates that she has been approached by unknowns who "offer to do things", and this "including during daytime".

The eroticisation of women born in non-EU Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as their exposure to symbolic and verbal violence, echoes the findings of Angela M. Toffanin (2015). The scholar studies how Latin-American women are "hyper-sexualised" in the Italian context (Toffanin, 2015: 101). Toffanin highlights that this process is embedded in gender, racial, and class relations. It connects to stereotypes regarding country of birth, physical appearance and "projections" of different "femininity models compared to the alleged Italian 'standard'" (Toffanin, 2015: 99). According to these projections, Latin American women would be more accessible by nature, culture, or social and economic status, as migrant women are perceived as belonging to working class. Fieldwork conducted in the context of the dissertation stresses that this phenomenon does not only concern Latin American women. It affects a broader group of women, including graduates from Europe non-EU countries and Sub-Saharan Africa, who share the experience of being migrants.

In Alsace, female recruiters and social workers made implicit reference to the trend of eroticising migrant women by referring to exoticism. Dianella mentioned the hiring of a Colombian graduate woman in her company. As mentioned, the recruiter indicates that her colleagues accepted the woman well, because "Colombia, it was fine", she says, "it's a little exotic".

Similarly, Daphne, who works as a social worker in Alsace, referred to exoticism in the context of diversity management. As mentioned, Daphne considers that women are preferred over men when accessing positions that aim at bringing "diversity" to a company. On her views, this trend is because a woman would look "exotic". From her perspective, the research of "exoticism" might target black women candidates.

> I caricature for you to understand. Ok, she is black, but behind there is an elegance, there is a finesse, it will give exoticism to the company. We will enter our quota for the number of foreigners, tanned. If you are taking some, you might better take a woman. But because them… it's clearly sexist and purely... but it's a shame, but it's the truth.
>
> Daphne, social worker, Alsace

As in the case of Senecio in Veneto, who disregarded candidates with an "in-house worker attitude", Daphne's comments also highlight class expectation. Indeed, according to her statement, the "exoticism" that is welcomed is connected to elegance, and finesse, attributes that tend to be associated with middle/upper class habitus.

Daphne also stressed that, although migrant women might be hired in the context of diversity management, they might not access positions as managers. From her perspective, the hiring of "diversity" is limited to low and intermediary jobs. Her comment echoes the reflection of Mears (2014) on aesthetic labour. As mentioned, this segment of the labour market encompasses jobs in which individuals are compensated, indirectly or directly for their own body's looks and affects. Aesthetic labour includes positions such as sales-assistant in the retail industry. In this context, workers' bodies are controlled and commodified by the company. Meads notes that women are the "frontline aesthetic labours". However, their work does not translate into earning power, and their access to managerial positions remains limited. From her viewpoint (Mears, 2014: 1338), the value of women's bodies tends to accumulate to men, as they are the majority of owners in service and sex industries. Mears' (2014) analysis can be transposed to Daphne's comments. Consequently, in the context of diversity management, the value of the bodies of racialised and eroticised migrant women is essentially monetized by managers, who are mainly men, white, and upper class.

While Dianella and Daphne highlighted the potential working advantages of looking "exotic", black migrant women both in Veneto and in Alsace emphasized that they feel they are requested to mitigate their blackness when looking for employment. This is the feeling of Clemensia and Rose. When we met, Clemensia, who was born in Senegal and studied in France, was also looking for employment in Alsace. Clemensia indicated that, when she looks for work, she feels her hairstyle is being judged by recruiters, as nappy hair is not being considered positively. Clemensia feels that there is a pressure for non-white people to look like whites. She describes it as a call for "jacksonisation". Like Michael Jackson, blacks would be expected to change their bodies to look as white as possible.

> Does the French society, to finally integrate young people, want everyone to jacksonise, what? That everyone becomes Michael Jackson, that we get a nose job. My nose is flat, it is flat; it is fat, it is fat. It's not *baguette*... it cannot be, because my ancestors are black and we, in our case, our phenotype it's like that. So, I will not uncurl, change the colour of my skin, get a nose job, remove my lips, remove my buttocks... I mean, become the same, finally... such as the West proposes it.
>
> Clemensia, studied sociology in France, unemployed, Alsace

In Veneto, Rose shares Clemensia’s feelings. She had moved from Congo to Italy to complete her studies in communication sciences. When we met, Rose was struggling to find a job in line with her studies. During her job hunting, Rose indicated she was faced with unpleasant experiences. Rose once applied for a training programme that targeted unemployed persons. However, when she arrived, she was told that she was not expected to take part in the course. Rose was astonished and felt that she was refused because organisers saw her and did not want to include a black woman.

Despite her experiences, Rose believes that appearance and middle-/upper-class *habitus* might mitigate racial stereotyping. "Even if you are black", she says, "but you are well dressed, you express yourself well, [it's] the first impact that you leave". Rose’s comment touches upon the intrinsic relationship between racialisation and class *habitus*, which also appears in Franz Fanon (2008)’s *Black skin, White masks*. Similarly, Ndiaye (2008: 62) estimates that class position is a factor that "exacerbates " or "dampens " the discriminatory experience. In Ndiaye’s view, the experience of racial discrimination in accessing resources and relating to the police is "harder " for black persons of the working class, compared to those of the middle-class (Ibid: 62). Ndiaye warns that this trend does not mean that black elites are not concerned by discriminations. However, he finds that in its "concrete materialization ", it appears more "fleeting " and its effects are "mitgated " more easily (Ibid: 63).

2. Assessing embodied skills

Chapter 1 of the dissertation highlighted that the concept of skills is elusive and difficult to define (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013). Theories on human capital tend to focus on the "less-than-perfect international transferability" of specific skills such as language skills, and skills acquired through formal schooling and on-the-job (Chiswick and Miller, 2009). However, other skills need to be taken into account. For instance "soft skills" are becoming crucial within certain production processes.

On the other hand, there are capacities involved in performing work that are not being recognised as skills. In this regard, it is worth noting that positions such as domestic workers, workers of the cleaning industry, ushers, porters and custodians are often labelled as being "unskilled" or "lowly skilled", although they involved a variety of know-how, knowledge and capacities that are hardly being recognised.

Bearing in mind these observations, the following section studies how recruiters perceive and implement the selection process (2.1.), and how they assess soft skills (2.2.). Details regarding the use of eligibility criteria connected to essentialisation were provided in the previous chapter. These sections further analyse and problematize the practices of recruiters.

2.1. Recruitment process and subjectivity

Recruiters that participated in the research have different ages and training backgrounds, regardless of the region where they worked. While some recruiters had followed a university programme or training connected to recruitment, others emphasised that they have learned the work "in the field". For instance Sirelli, who works as a recruiter in Veneto, explains that she started with an internship and learned the job by shadowing a person in HR management. For Sirelli, working in recruitment corresponded to a shift in her career, as she was previously working in the social services sector.

Conversely, Drake, who works as recruiter in Alsace, indicated that recruitment was a *vocation* he had had since childhood. When I ask him to describe his first recruitment experience, Drake indicated that he started when he was a child, while involved in the scouting movement. "I recruit since I'm a kid ", he says, "I recruited [peers], and told everyone what to do ".

Drake methodologically described the ways and criteria he uses to select candidates. Drake indicated he bases his decision on a tryptic composed of skills, motivation, and potential. The recruiter stressed that skills included the knowledge, know-how, but also the "know how to be " (*savoir être*), which he connected to behavior. Drake gave a few examples of *savoir être,* indicating that some candidates might not be able to focus in a noisy environment, or to work in a "changing " company. Despite the details, a question that remains open is how Drake is assessing this *savoir être*. We can also wonder to what extant his preconceptions interfere in accurately assessing this criteria.

Shamrock, who works for a private company in Veneto, also gave details on how he selects candidates. Shamrock indicates that he distinguishes "more technical" profiles, which involve specific technical skills, from positions for which soft, human, and interpersonal skills are needed, like in the case of managers. For selecting the former profiles, Shamrock focuses on knowledge, education and experience, while for the latter, assessment involves more subjective criteria which will be developed further in the following section.

Both in Alsace and Veneto, recruiters referred to the subjectivity that is involved in the selection process. In this regard, Sirelli, who works as recruiter in Veneto, indicated that "selection is not a science ". From her perspective, "intuition " also counts "so much " in the selection process. "The nature of the meeting between recruiter and candidate is also very important ", she finds, "what you feel ", "what it provokes in you ". In the context of intermediary recruitment, Sirelli adds that a critical feature concerns also the need to train and prepare candidates before introducing them to clients.

In Alsace, Dianella also stressed the role of subjectivity, and feelings. She works for the HR department of a private company. Dianella finds that the more she works on recruitment, the more she finds it difficult. Dianella describes recruitment as a moment of "mutual seduction ". She finds that it is very difficult to get a "real idea " of what the person is really worth in the job.

> It is a moment of mutual seduction, where the company will say what it wants to say, often, sells a post from a very good angle, very beautiful angle... and then, well, the candidate is also always showing himself in his best light, and I find it extremely easy for smart candidates, and we always have smart candidates, it's often very easy to fool the recruiter.
>
> Dianella, recruiter in an HR department, Alsace

In both regions, the most experienced recruiters described the developments in their field in recent decades. Both Dianella in Alsace and Saffron in Veneto observe a shift from an attitude deemed more "passive" in which recruiters were waiting for applications, towards a more "active" position where candidates are sought directly in competing companies. In Dianella’s view, the use of new techniques related to head hunting has the effect of widening the inequalities in accessing graduate employment. On the one hand, those who are already working are contacted by head hunters and can therefore improve their working conditions and grow in their careers. On the other hand, outsiders have fewer opportunities. According to Dianella’s observation, being unemployed or employed in lower positions has almost become an unsurpassable obstacle to access graduate jobs.

2.2. Soft skills and *habitus*

As mentioned earlier, "soft skills" are becoming crucial within the production processes. Scholars have highlighted that these "skills" might refer to "generic human qualities", such as sociability and adaptability, which assessment is highly subjective (Mezzadra and Neilson, 2013: 141). The comments of participants to the field follow the same line of reasoning..

Both in Alsace and Veneto, soft skills were specially mentioned when describing the criteria for hiring managers. Soft skills were related to communication capacities. For example, Shamrock, who works as recruiter in an HR department in Italy, indicated that a "good candidate ", especially for the marketing area, must demonstrate "excellent communication" skills. Shamrock specified that this criteria includes non-verbal and para-verbal communication, and gives details on how he assesses these skills.

> You can immediately notice it perhaps in the gesturality of the candidate, in the way in which he puts himself, in the way in which he puts himself even concerning his tone of voice... if he speaks calmly, if he is quiet, if he is tense, if... there is an infinite number then…
>
> Shamrock, recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

Dianella instead indicated that, when looking for managers, she is always more concerned about their "courage ". I asked her to explicit what she understands with this term.

> The courage, well, to say things to collaborators, to know how to say "No" to a collaborator; to know how to say to a collaborator "This year I did not put you up for a pay raise, because you did not deserve it". And not to say "Well, I did not put you up for a pay raise, because I had no budget".
>
> Dianella, recruiter in an HR department, Alsace

Dianella indicates that the criteria is quite difficult to assess. She explains that she asks candidates what is their understanding of the term, and when was the last time they put "courage" into practice.

When it comes to describing the recruiting process, Dianella indicates that, before meeting candidates, she first interviews them by phone and asks her questions about definitions, and experience. Dianella also stresses that her company is trying to find new ways for assessing skills, especially soft skills. These practices include role-playing (*mise en situation*). Dianella feels that what comes out of an "observation of candidates " is "much more real ", compared to "a well-rehearsed-speech ", in which the person "thinks she knows herself, she thinks that she is a good manager, but actually she is hopeless ".

Both the criteria and the assessments mentioned by Shamrock and Dianella involve a high level of scrutiny over candidates' *habitus*. In this regard, Bourdieu (1986)'s theory defines *habitus*, as the embodied state of cultural capital. It presupposes a process of incorporation that starts from early domestic education. *Habitus* is converted into an integral part of the person. Its acquisition is disguised and functions as symbolic capital, meaning that it tends to be unrecognized as a form of capital and it is seen as a legitimate competence.

The *habitus* is a "structuring structure" shaping understandings, attitudes, behavior, and the body (Leander, 2010). It frames a way of thinking and acting, including body conduct, poise, bodily skills and competences, the embodied aspects of language in speech habits, vocabulary, and accent (Wolkowitz, 2006: 20). All in all, it is what makes social agents behave in a specific way, according to the circumstances (Bourdieu, 1986b: 40).

Bourdieu's *habitus* is context based. The value given to embodied cultural capital changes according to the *field*. Each *field* is marked by its own taken-for-granted understanding of the world, implicit and explicit rules of behavior, and valuation of what confers power onto someone (Leander, 2010). For instance, a philosopher can be indifferent to issues that are essential to a geographer (Boschetti, 2003: 48).

The previous section of the chapter highlighted that *habitus* and specially middle/upper class behavior is especially valued in body work, including to be hired as a care assistant or a nurse. The examples of Shamrock and Dianella, highlight that *habitus* is also crucial in the selection of managers. To be selected the candidate need to have the " gesture ", "way of putting oneself ", the "tone of voice " that is valued in Shamrock's *field*. Conversely, to be hired by Dianella, the candidate will need to have the *habitus* valued in the recruiters' *field*. Moreover, in Dianella's case, candidates also need to have a common understanding of "courage ".

Can migrant women's *habitus* and understandings fit in recruiters' mental image of the position? Bourdieu (1986) puts emphasis on the fact that *habitus* can be transferred from one generation to another, and is "acquired " quite "unconsciously ". However, Wolkowitz (2006: 176) stresses that people are more conscious of the grooming and surveillance of *habitus*. As a result, the "worked-up habitus of *fields* of labour " has become "more mindful ". Workers can conform to work demands or distance themselves from it. Therefore, candidates should be able to work on their *habitus* and cultural capital to correspond to Shamrock's and Dianella's criteria.

When it comes to migrant candidates, who are *outsiders* to the *fields* of employment, a critical issue concerns their access to the specific social and cultural capital. Perotta (2014) highlights that migrants' *habitus* was formed in another context, namely in their country of birth. As a result, compared to candidates that were socialised in Shamrock's and Dianella's context, namely those born or who grew up in the same region, it might be more challenging for migrants to get to know what are the "postures and mannerisms " and "way of carrying oneself ", that are valued in the selection process.

On the other hand, Perotta (2014) also indicates that migrants' *habitus* might change through new socialization that follows migration. Therefore, we could assume that migrants might overcome the obstacles mentioned above, depending on their social network (whether they know persons familiar to the employment *fields*), and their cultural capital (whether they access information on how to behave). However, Perotta

(2014: 175) stresses that social actors cannot easily get rid of their own incorporated dispositions, which are "extremely resistant to change ". Moreover, we should add that modifying one's *habitus* can have implications in terms of symbolic violence. It might imply that the person recognises as legitimate the power that imposes specific ways of being and behaving. Conversely, it is also because migrants are familiar with other contexts, that they are more likely to be conscious about the symbolic violence that is at stake in the labour market, like in Shamrock's and Dianella's fields, while locals might remain blind to it.

3. Scrutinizing education and experience

Both literature and fieldwork highlight that technical skills tend to be assessed through the scrutinizing of education and experience. Compared to the assessment of "soft skills " mentioned above, selecting candidates based on education and experience tends to be conceived as being more "objective ". However, in this process the representations that recruiters have of countries where education and experience was gained, intersect with the perception they have of specific groups in terms of gender, class, and racialisation. This section studies the influence of these representations in assessing embodied education and experience.

3.1. Embodied education and the international hierarchy of training countries

As highlighted in chapter 1, part of the literature on migration has focused on the "less-than-perfect international transferability" of skills (Chiswick and Miller, 2009). Different theories have been developed to explain the "educational mismatch" by occupation and over-education. *Human capital theory* observes that migrants have difficulties in transferring both formal schooling and labour market experience (Chiswick and Miller, 2009). Another example is the theory of *screening hypothesis* according to which, whatever schooling acquired abroad has unclear meaning for employers. Therefore over-education would be more prevalent for migrants from countries with labour markets and institutions "distant from the destination country" (Chiswick and Miller, 2009: 164).

A critical limit of this literature is that it does not take into account gender, racialisation, and class relations. For instance, Kofman (2012) stresses that knowledge associate with femininised reproductive sectors of the labour market tend to be overlooked, while *embrained knowledge* which tends to be used in male-dominated sectors has an easier transferability. Anyhow, the recognition of tertiary education titles is mentioned in several publications as one of the major obstacles that migrants face when attempting to access positions in line with their education (Coccia and Pittau 2016).

The challenge of having education recognised was also stressed by participants in the fieldwork, including recruiters, social workers, and women with tertiary education. For instance, Abelia mentioned her shock when she understood that her diploma was not as valued as she thought it would be. Abelia was born in Russia, where she studied literature for five years. When she arrived in France, she was informed that her diploma was worth a *bac+3*, meaning a bachelor's degree. "I thought that I had a great diploma ", she said, "and in France, here, super diploma does not mean that much ".

Dalia, who works as a social worker for an NGO in Alsace, is also concerned by the lack of recognition of diplomas. In her view, this is the main obstacle that migrant women with tertiary education face when trying to access graduate employment. Dalia finds that there is a lack of specific procedures to facilitate the recognition of diploma or degree titles. Dalia explains that together with her colleagues they do translate diplomas, and use the official platform ENIC-NARIC, to validate titles. However, she stresses that foreign degrees are "very but very very rarely recognized ".

Dalia referred to cases she has been following. Interestingly, she mentions a woman who used to work as a dentist in Georgia, but whose education had not been validated in France. In this case, the woman had education in a field that involved *embrained knowledge*, and although it should be easier to transfer, she was struggling to see it recognised.

Similar comments were made in Italy. For instance, both Winika and Rosalie indicated that the lack of recognition of education was one of the main challenges they have faced. Winika studied for five years at a university in Ukraine to become a music teacher, and she had working experience in her field in Russia. Rosalie enrolled in a programme to become a laboratory assistant, and worked in her field in the Democratic Republic of Congo for over six years. Nowadays, they both live in Veneto, where Winika works as a pizzaiola and Rosalie as a care assistant (*operatrice sociosanitaria*). Rosalie's diploma has not been recognised in Italy, while Winika has managed to validate only a few courses of her five university programmes.

In Italy, the recognition of education depends on the sector. For instance, in academia, to access public competitions or regulated professions (such as doctors and lawyers), there are specific procedures. Conversely, there are no official pathways to have a diploma recognised for all the other positions in the labour market. CIMEA is the official institution that deals with the recognition of diplomas. It is also member of the NARIC network, just like the institution mentioned by Dalia in Alsace. When it comes to professions that correspond neither to academia, nor public competitions, nor regulated professions, CIMEA indicates that the recognition of titles is up to the employer (CIMEA, 2017). As a consequence, the recognition of diplomas might depend on the preconceived representations that employers and recruiters have about the educational system where the degree was obtained.

Senna works as an HR manager for a private company in Veneto. She stresses that is extremely challenging for her to assess education gained abroad. Senna specifically mentions that education gained in Africa and Eastern Europe might not be seen as having "the same level of quality ". If a candidate graduated in Nigeria, she finds that recruiters might "turn up their nose ".

> Maybe degrees abroad in countries I don't know like... Africa or... Eastern Europe, they may not be seen as, with the same level of quality or... that is, often the degrees are not recognized for example... or at least... people turn up their noses, let's say if we say: "Where did you graduate?", "In Nigeria". Who knows what the training is offered there, who knows what kind of doctor you can be…
>
> Senna, recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

Senna’s comment is mindful of the *screening hypothesis* mentioned above. Schooling abroad has an unclear meaning for her. According to the theory, the tendency to exclude candidates would be "more prevalent " for migrants who studied in countries with "labour markets and institutions distant from the destination countries " (Chiswick and Miller, 2009: 164). Bearing in mind this hypothesis, it is worth noting a comment made by Selena, who is social worker in Veneto. Although Selena finds that it is "almost impossible " to see one’s titles recognised, she stresses that "of course " it all depends where the degree was obtained. "If you have a degree from London ", she says, "it changes ".

Following Chiswik’s and Miller’s (2009) theory, one could wonder why a degree obtained in the UK would be preferred, compared to one from Nigeria. Is it because the UK system is closer to the Italian (and French) ones? Putting it in another context, would a Colombian recruiter prefer to hire a candidate with a degree obtained in Panama, rather than in the US, because the labour markets and institutions are more similar? Rather than the similarity of systems, it is more likely that recruiters are influenced by the status of the country in the international arena, the representation they have of it, and eventually colonial history and ties.

Moreover, we can wonder to what extent Alsatian and Veneto degrees are worth more than that of African or Eastern European universities. In this regard, an interesting insight comes from the analysis of global university rankings. Scholars have argued that these rankings reinforce the "Western hegemony " in higher education (Yat Wai Lo 2011, Marginson 2009, Marginson and van der Wende 2007, Altbach 2006). The criteria used and their functioning would provide privileged status to universities of powerful countries, compared to countries that are weaker in the international arena. In this regard, the THE - Times Higher Education World University Rankings - is one of the three most influential ranking systems.

Despite this bias, it is interesting to note that according to the THE ranking two universities, one in Veneto, and one in Alsace, are rated below several African universities. For instance, the university of Ca' Foscary in Veneto, has a lower score than four universities in South-Africa, one in Uganda, and ranks at the same level of the Covenant University and University of Ibadan in Nigeria, while the University of Haute Alsace ranks significantly lower.[15]. As a result, despite indexes, titles gained abroad seem to be assessed according to a hazy hierarchy in educational status among countries based on representations and geopolitics.

In the absence of clear formal procedures, interviewees feel that recognition is partly left to the discretion on the part of recruiters and universities. Consequently, they might feel they have to use their social network or other informal strategies to try to get their studies recognized. In Alsace, Abelia describes, for example, how she fought to try to convince the head of a university department to recognise that her diploma was equivalent to *bac+4*. "I fought a bit ", she says, "I talked a little more with the head of department to prove that I could do it ". Abelia continues stressing: "I had the feeling that I could have four years straight away".

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[15] THE, Times Higher Education World University Rankings: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/world-ranking (visited on the 17th of August 2019)

The desire to struggle to get a diploma recognised varies from one person to another, depending in part on expectation and strategies, but also according to employment prospects in specific sectors. For example, Rosalie arrived in Veneto with a diploma as a laboratory analyst obtained in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Rosalie tells me that she would have fought more for her degree if she had gained a diploma for being a nurse, as she found that it would have enabled her to access employment. "But as an analyst ", she founds, "they don’t need so many workers ".

On the other hand, fieldwork also highlighted that equivalence of degrees might be less requested by recruiters to work in specific sectors, including work requiring graduate credentials. For instance, this seems to be the case when accessing business, and more specifically jobs connected to export management. An example is that of Violet. This woman graduated in humanities in Russia, where she worked as a teacher and in the business industry. By the beginning of the 2000s, Violet moved to Veneto and, thanks to a friend of her Italian partner, she managed to find employment in business once again. In her case, experience and, above all, language skills were more valued than her university degree.

Another example of jobs accessible without the recognition of titles is that of administrative assistant within international organisations. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, women from non-EU European countries, who struggle to find employment in the Alsatian labour market, might target this "segment of the labour market ", to put it in Aster’s words. Recruiters at the organisation seem to be willing to hire candidates with university titles gained abroad. Nonetheless, we can wonder to what extent they might value education gained in countries that are not member states of the organisation. In these cases, are they also influenced by the education hierarchy among countries that was mentioned above?

In addition to the comments regarding the lack of recognition of titles, it is worth noting that a consistent portion of interviewees did study in Italy and France, but were not finding employment in their fields. Therefore, having a local diploma is not enough to see one's education valued. Although their situation is very different, an analogy can be drawn with Fassin (2006)'s observations on undocumented migrants who are looking forward to getting a residence permit. According to the researcher, when these migrants end up being given a document, they go through a phase of euphoria, and then quickly enter a period of disappointment: "it was not just the lack of a residence permit that penalized them " (Fassin, 2006: 145).

When obtaining an Italian or French degree, migrant women, and especially those who had already graduated abroad, might face a similar experience. Although they can add a local diploma to their resume, some might still face obstacles. Other criteria are at play, including the essentialising processes that were highlighted in the previous chapter.

3.2. Embodied experience

Together with education, experience is also used as a filter to assess skills. This section analyses how experience is assessed and perceived by recruiters, and the extent to what the lack of (or lack of recognition of) experience represents a challenge for migrant women when accessing employment. Some factors relating to this context were already mentioned in the previous sections and chapters.

3.2.1. Continuous local experience

Both in Veneto and Alsace, stakeholders highlighted the necessity of having local experience to access graduate positions. This requirement leads to a vicious cycle, where as long as the person has no local experience she does not access graduate jobs, but to have a first experience, she must paradoxically already have one. "If you do not give me the chance to work once ", claims Rose, "I will never have experience". Rose, who was born in Congo, has graduated in communication sciences in Italy. Although she has had different jobs in the local labour market, she has never managed to find employment in line with her studies.

The paradox was also stressed by Dianella, who works for an HR department in a private company in Alsace. As mentioned earlier, she referred to the practice of head hunting, and selecting candidates that are already working in similar positions. Dianella highlights that this practice leads to a division of candidates between, on the one hand, those who are already working and can upgrade in their sector, and on the other hand, those who continue to be excluded and will hardly ever manage to access graduate positions.

> We would rather be in the role of proactivity and dynamic search of talents, than waiting nicely for the letter, the spontaneous application that someone kindly wants to send us. I think there was a greater passivity perhaps in time, where there were candidates. And we were a little... especially in times when there was mass unemployment. Here again, there is mass unemployment, but it affects specific populations that nobody actually wants.
>
> Dianella, recruiter in an HR department, Alsace

Another critical issue concerns continuity in the professional experiences. In Alsace, both Acantha and Araluen find that recruiters are suspicious when candidates have discontinuous experience, meaning they had worked in different companies, sectors and countries, which is generally the case of migrant professionals. Acantha and

Araluen were both born in Russia. Before working as a project manager in Alsace, Acantha had working experience in the Arabic Peninsula. Araluen instead used to work in Germany before moving to the Alsace, where she works as a teacher. Both find that heterogeneous trajectories were more valued in their previous environments, compared to Alsace. Acantha finds that "diversity is not valued". After working for a few years in Alsace, Acantha left the region and moved to Switzerland, where she expected to find an environment more open to diversity and experimentation.

> Well, let's say, the interviews I had, yeah, a lot of questions about my personal life. Why? Why so many changes? That's not always easy to explain. Because we have very different paths. And as I came from abroad very young, it is sure that in the length of twenty years, I lived too many different things. And it's not at all a monotonous life... A life where, let's say, everything is... Everything looks like classical, normal lives.
>
> Acantha, studied economics in Russia and
> eco-counseling in France, studies abroad, Alsace

The observations of Senna, who works as a recruiter in Veneto, echo that of Acantha and Araluen. She indicated that having a "gap " in the resume, meaning a period during which the person was neither in employment or in education, tends to be perceived negatively. In addition, Senna indicated that she would perceive the fact of having discontinuity, or downgrading in the career, for instance passing from "a long professionalism to an internship ", as being "out of tune ".

3.2.1. The embodiness of experience gained abroad

The lack of recognition of experience gained abroad was highlighted by different stakeholders. In Alsace, Daphne, who works as a social worker, finds that recruiters only focus on the experience gained in France. To illustrate her point, she imitated a conversation between a recruiter, and a migrant candidate with experience abroad. "Often, when you arrive ", she says, "they will ask you ‘what did you do as work?’, ‘Well, I was -I don’t know-, abroad…’, ‘No, no, but in France.’ ". Daphne further stresses that "skills acquired abroad, whether academic skills or professional skills, or knowledge or know-how, are not valued ".

Echoing Daphne’s comment, most migrant women in Alsace indicated that they feel their experience abroad is not valued in the selection process. For instance, this was the feeling of Acacia, who was born in Moldova and trained both in her country of birth and in France. Before moving to Alsace, Acacia had worked in Moldova as a teacher of literature, an editor, and a radio broadcaster. When applying for being a leader at a community center, Acacia feels that, although she had relevant working experience in Moldova, it was mainly her short experience in France that was taken into consideration. Nonetheless, Acacia also finds that some recruiters might take into consideration experience gained abroad.

> I tried to highlight the experiences and studies I did here. Because I know that, it's more important from the point of view of the employer from here... but I do not want to say that all I have lived elsewhere is erased, that it's not important. It's important for me but... for someone who... wants to hire someone, I think it's rather interesting and important what we did in the French context, here. And well, it depends on the path. There are people... and even the paths of employers. There are those who come from abroad and who have had a similar background we can say, and they will judge differently.
>
> Acacia, studied literature in Moldova and educational sciences in France,
> works as a leader at a community center

Although their previous experience might not being recognised, women might feel that there are still using it at work. For instance, Acacia, whose experience was mentioned above, indicated that when working with youngsters she uses her former skills as a journalist. Acacia specifies that she works with teenagers, and together with them she has edited and published a community journal, and they went once to speak at a local radio. "Knowing a bit the work specificity ", she says, "I prepared them in advance to ask the right questions, to be curious, to know what to look for ".

In Veneto, Rosalie also indicated that she is using the knowhow she acquired abroad. Before moving to Veneto, Rosalie had studied in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where she worked for over six years as a laboratory assistant. Nowadays, she works as a care assistant (*operatrice sociosanitaria*). Rosalie stresses that thanks to her previous experience in Africa, she did not have any problem relating to users. "I knew already, I know how, these are things I have studied ", she says, "It is something I have already practiced working at the hospital ".

Both cases, that of Acacia in Alsace, and that of Rosalie in Veneto, illustrate that the knowledge and know-how that comes from previous experiences gained abroad is made invisible, even though they are used at work. Although this knowledge and know-how benefits the employers, they are not compensated by any monetary or symbolic recognition. This phenomenon has been observed in other contexts, particularly in the UK, where Cuban (2013) notes that former nurses who work as domestic workers use their skills at work without any form of recognition. As in the UK, trained women that work in France and Italy are subject to *brain abuse*, meaning the use of their capacities with no compensation.

Fieldwork also highlighted that recognition of previous experience might vary according to the employer and the sector. For instance, in Alsace migrant women felt that their previous experience would be better valued in international organisations compared to other companies. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this is one of the reasons why they target this "sector ". Moreover, for some interviewees having "too much " experience, including that gained abroad, could be a disadvantage to be hired for positions as an administrative assistant. Amapola, who was born in Albania and previously worked as a diplomate, indicates that she felt she would not be selected because she was considered overqualified. "I was convinced that I was not going to have it ", she says, explaining that one of the recruiters in the panel stressed several times: "given the work you had before, are you really going to enjoy what you are going to do?"

Another example is that of Amaryllis, who studied in Armenia, where she used to work as a translator and a teacher. Amaryllis moved to Alsace at the beginning of the 2000s. She occasionally works as a tutor with high school students, and as a cultural mediator. Amaryllis points out that during job interviews, she is often asked about her experience as an English teacher and a translator in Armenia. Nonetheless, to work in her previous field, Amaryllis stresses that she would need to have experience in English-speaking countries, like a friend of hers has. As a result, and similarly to what happens with education, Amaryllis' comment highlights that experience might be valued differently depending on the place were it was obtained.

Interviews in the field highlight that regardless of the country were experience was gained, the characteristics of who embodies them can also be a consideration. For instance, experience in Sub-Saharan Africa might have a different value according to the person that embodies it. In Alsace, Elm who works as a recruiter for an international organisation, highlights that he values the experience gained in Africa. However, when he goes into the details about the persons about whom he was referring, he indicates that they were German and French. Therefore, the question as to whether the experience in Africa of a black candidate born in Africa, is valued in the recruitment process, remains open.

A striking example that regards embodiness and the perception of experience gained abroad was given by Saffron. He has been working as an intermediary recruiter for more than twenty years in Veneto. By the end of the interview, I hypothesized the profile of a woman candidate that would be born in Ghana, and have experience in export management in that country. I asked Saffron to comment whether he would hire her for a position his agency was currently advertising. Saffron reacted with sarcasm.

> A Ghanaian, a Ghanian, who sold I don't know, pots for cooking for explorers, maybe… Export Manager for Western Africa. Here we are talking about Europe. And only Europe. Why? For a straightforward reason, because these products, to be sold outside of Europe, they must respond to different characteristics, so if I sell in the United States if I sell in Canada... these are already two different things. And so since these are shocking freezers, in Western Africa what do you think that they might shock freeze. Surely, there is a narrow interest, so it could be interesting if someone wanted to… I mean, there are global interests in Sub-Saharan Africa, so Ghana and so on; products that are sold there are those that for us are a bit obsolete or not good because they are growing there, petrol, so the benefit goes to the population.
>
> Saffron, recruiter in an intermediary agency, Veneto

The perception that Saffron has of African economies might have a significant influence on the way he values, or more probably underestimates, the experience of candidates who were born in Africa, and previously worked in that area of the world.

4. Embodied language skills

To close the chapter, we propose to focus on language skills. Rather than studying how these skills are being assessed, the section analyses how they are being valued according to the context and the person that embodies them.

4.1. The local language(s)

As stressed in the previous chapter, having a good command of the official local language was perceived by social workers in Veneto and Alsace as a key to access employment. As a result, language training appears as the main priority when supporting a migrant women, including those with tertiary education.

Fieldwork highlighted that speaking the local language can be an eligibility criteria, even for positions in which workers will be mainly speaking in another language. For instance, Senna, who works as a recruiter in Veneto, gave the example of social media managers. Depending on the clients' request, Senna has hired candidates whose mother tongues are English or Russian, and that re in charge of managing the customers' social media in their first language. Although she used to give priority to the knowledge of the foreign language, Senna indicates that not knowing Italian was problematic, as social media managers were not able to communicate properly with their clients. As a result, having good proficiency in Italian became an eligibility criteria.

Women that participated in fieldwork interviews highlighted the commitment with which they have learned the local official language. In Veneto, interviewees born in Sub-Saharan Africa indicated that having a good proficiency in Italian was a criteria to obtain a study visa. As a result, these women had completed language courses prior to their migration. Rosamel, who works now in Veneto as a physiotherapist, describes how committed she was to learn Italian. She wanted to be "at the top ", she says, replying with "perfect oral Italian ", not saying "'la' when there is a 'lo' ".

> I remember that in those years there was a free newspaper that was distributed *Leggo*. At the university, they distributed them but also here at the station, as you arrived at the station they distributed them to you. But also at the university. There were also boxes. Every day, I took them and read the whole newspaper, be it the economy, politics, beauty... everything. Ok. I read them to improve my Italian. It was the only way. And I knew it would work like this.

> Because I knew that to learn the language, you have to read it; you have to talk, and read it. And so I didn't see… all day at the university… I had no other space to learn Italian. So the breaks were reading all that newspaper there. The problematic words I marked them on a notepad like yours.
>
> Rosamel, studied physiotherapy in Italy, works as a physiotherapist, Veneto

On the other hand, Rosalie tells me that she has struggled with the Italian language. She arrived in Veneto, in the context of family reunification, to live with her former Italian partner. Rosalie indicates that she would have enjoyed taking classes, but her partner did not want. "He was very jealous ", she says. As a result, Rosalie explains that she slowly learned the language by reading the free newspaper, and by interacting with a child she was caring for who spoke Italian. Rosalie's story stresses how access to language and training can be at the basis of gender control and violence.

By preventing Rosalie from learning Italian, her partner was impeding her from building social networks in her new country. He was also slowing down Rosalie's possibility to access employment and to be active in administrative practices. Her partner was controlling and disempowering her. Although striking, this complex issue would lead us beyond the objectives of the dissertation and is not further developed.

Another critical issue that was highlighted in the fieldwork regards the impact of accent in accessing employment. In this regard, Cuban (2013) has stressed that because of accent, the language knowledge of migrant women might be under-estimated by employers. This phenomenon was also highlighted in France and Italy.

Azalea, who was born and studied in Russia, has struggled in Alsace to find a position that corresponded to her studies. As a result, she applied for a position at an international organisation, and was hired. Azalea remains skeptical regarding the criteria of recruiters in what she calls "French companies ". She feels that "unless you speak perfect French, […] there can be some prejudice about you ".

Carmel has similar feelings. She was born in Nigeria, where she also studied and had working experience. After moving to Alsace, she trained and worked as a bilingual secretary. Although she had studied French at the university in Nigeria and had a tertiary education degree in France, she feels that having an accent was always a disadvantage when looking for work.

Another relevant experience in this regard is that of Acacia as it highlights how preconceptions might evolve and how women cope with them. As mentioned earlier, Acacia was born in Moldova, where she had also studied and worked before moving to Alsace. In her work, Acacia has faced users and colleagues had doubts about her language skills in French. However, Acacia has managed to change their minds by proving that she can be even more accurate than they in grammar and spelling. She is confident about her skills and stresses that she knows what she knows. Acacia tells me about an episode with her colleagues. They were struggling with a grammar issue, and she gave the solution.

> A foreigner that tells you how to write. They did not believe me. I said ‘check it up’. And then, they checked, and since that, they are always asking me.
>
> Acacia, born in Moldova, studied literature in Moldova and educational sciences in France, works as a leader at a community center

This experience was a little victory for Acacia. Although she is aware of prejudices, Acacia takes it as "something normal ", because she knows "it will change ".

In Veneto, Veronica, who was born in Ukraine, instead referred to the way her accent might interfere in daily interactions. She stresses how her accent always provokes questions and comments on her origin. However, Veronica finds that her intonation has not prevented her from accessing employment. Veronica has mainly worked in business and export management. She stresses that in her new workplace, two other Ukrainians "who also have an accent " were hired. From her perspective, the employer "appreciates " Eastern European’s sense of responsibility at work.

Another critical issue relates to the colonial past, as it might have left a common language in the countries of the former empire. As a result, French and Italian can be the mother tongue of migrant women, especially those from former French colonies, who might have a high proficiency in this language. This commonality should, at least in theory, be an asset for migrants coming from the former colonial areas. However, interviews in the field lead one to conclude that, although migrant women might be fluent in French, their language skills can still be disregarded.

As mentioned in the introduction of the chapter, Callaia considered applying for a midwives’ school. However, she was shocked to hear that the director of the institution wanted her to take dictation. It seems the director did not expect a woman like Callaia to properly speak and write French. Although colonisation has left behind a common educational system and language, it had simultaneously built up a racial-social system that continues to influence current social representations.

A last issue that deserves attention regards the fact that both in Alsace and Veneto, there is a local language that is still spoken by part of the population. For instance, according to a survey conducted by the Italian Institute of statistics (ISTAT, 2017v), in 2015 almost 40% of employed workers in Veneto were using a dialect at work. Similarly, according to surveys conducted in Alsace, 43% of respondents in 2012 had a good proficiency in Alsatian (OLCA, 2012), while at the beginning of the 2000s, 48% of respondents were using the local language at work (DNA/ISERCO, 2001).

In Veneto, interviewees that work in the care sector, namely with elderly persons indicated that they use the dialect at work. For instance, Rosanna, who was born in Cameroon and graduated in economics in Italy, stresses that after having worked for a few years as a care assistant (*operatrice sociosanitaria*) she now also understands the

Veneto dialect. A similar comment was made by Winika, who was born in Ukraine. Winika works now as pizzaiola, but when getting to Italy she first worked as an in-home caregiver. She stresses that the family with whom she lived spoke the Veneto dialect. "I ended up in a family with a dialect ", she says, "It was a nightmare, because there were no words in any dictionary ". Nonetheless, Winika finds that working as in-home caregiver was a good opportunity to get to know the local and national languages, as they were "talking around " her, and she was not isolated. Winika concludes by saying: "This is why I say I was also lucky in some things ".

In Alsace, although stakeholders tended to refer to locals as "Alsatians " rather than "French ", they rarely mentioned the need to know the local language. Carmel was the only one who made explicit reference to it. As mentioned, Carmel was born in Nigeria, studied both in her birth country and in France, and worked in Alsace as a bilingual secretary and an administrative assistant. Carmel felt that, when working as a bilingual secretary, Alsatians were rude on the phone, when she was not able to understand them properly.

4.2. Foreign language skills

Proficiency in a foreign language, different from the local official one, is increasingly becoming a crucial feature in the production process. Scholars estimate that skills in a foreign language are a major factor affecting wage and labour opportunities (Garrouste, 2008), especially in international trade and service sectors. In studying trade between Eastern and Western Europe, Fidrmuc and Fidrmuc (2009) observe that widespread knowledge of languages is an important determinant for successful foreign trade, with English playing an especially important role. In the service sector, Tucci and Wagner (2004) estimate that this skill is particularly important, as ideally customers should be addressed in their own language.

Isphording (2013) warns that the returns to foreign language skills might vary across the wage distribution, according to the sector, the language, and the specific position that is accessed. An additional constraint that is missing in the literature cited above is the embodiness of language skills. The proficiency in a foreign language might not be equally valued depending on who holds them, and how the candidate might be perceived in terms of gender, racialisation, and class.

When it comes to proficiency in English, recruiters highlighted that it could be an asset to access positions, such as social media manager. In Veneto, Senna works as recruiter and often looks for candidates whose mother tongue is English. She indicates that ideally candidates should also have proficiency in Italian, and experience in communications. As far as country of birth is concerned, Senna indicates that the workers she has hired were mainly from the United Kingdom, and the United States. When I ask her if they ever had candidates from Nigeria, Senna tells me that they did but did not consider their application. From her perspective, Nigerian English, both written and spoken, is not "sustainable" for their customers.

> We did not consider them. Because that is an English that is not... sustainable for our customers and... both written and spoken, a lot... at the spoken level, the accent is very heavy and... probably they will also struggle.
>
> Senna, recruiter in an HR department, Veneto

In Veneto, graduates from Sub-Saharan Africa whose mother-tongue or education language is English are more likely to see their language skills valued, in social work or in jobs that involve interacting with English speaking African migrants, such as cultural mediators. For instance, this was the case of Rada, who started working at an NGO as a cultural mediator. Rada was born in Cameroon where she graduated with a trilingual bachelor’s degree, in Italian, French and English. After that, Rada got a Bachelor’s and a Master’s in political sciences in Italy. Thanks to her experience as a cultural mediator, she managed to access other positions within her employment structure. As a result, when we met Rada had a contract as *operatrice socio assistenziale*, but her daily work was going beyond the title of her job. Rada was performing work closer to that of a social worker, supporting refugees in their administrative procedures.

Conversely, in Alsace, fieldwork suggests that proficiency in English of black African women is likely to provide access to a broader range of jobs. An interesting experience in this regard is that of Carmel. She was born in Nigeria, and studied both in her birth country and in France. Although Carmel indicates that it happened that she was judged by the color of her skin when looking for employment, she also stresses that she managed to access positions that had English as crucial eligibility criteria. Before obtaining her French diploma, Carmel occasionally worked as an English teacher. Once she obtained her master's in human resources, she started working as a bilingual secretary for private companies, and was then hired as a bilingual administrative assistant for international organizations.

Besides English, other languages are valued in the local labour markets. As highlighted in the introduction of the section, additional language skills can specially be appreciated in sectors such as international trade, services, and we should also add the field of social work. As far as business is concerned, it is worth noting that Veneto is estimated to be one of the Italian regions with the highest value of the export business. Although its exports mainly connect the area to other EU countries and the US, countries of the former Soviet Union are also among the main areas with which Veneto companies trade (Ufficio Statistica della Regione Veneto, 2018). As a result, companies are also looking for Russian-speaking candidates to work in export management.

Saffron has been working in intermediary recruitment in Veneto for over twenty years. From his perspective, foreign languages are skills that can "easily" be valued by candidates who are not Italian, specially in international trade. However, Saffron estimates that employers might have specific expectation concerning the nationality of the worker. "For example, for the back office ", he says, "nationality is asked there, ‘I want Russian and not the Ukrainian’, just to be say, because Russian is Russian, and Ukrainian is Ukrainian, even if they are... they want it like that ". As a result, the selection process might provide an advantage to only a subset of the Russian-speakers, according to trade relations, country of birth, and representations.

Nonetheless, fieldwork suggests that export management is not closed to other Russian speaking women. Veronica is one of the stakeholders that has been working in the field. She graduated in Ukraine, but also hold an Italian Master’s and PhD. When we met, Veronica had been working in export management for over seven years. She underlines that it is because she speaks Russian that she has been able to have a career in Veneto.

> For those jobs I was looking for, it didn't influence that much [the fact of being born abroad], because they were looking for a mother tongue. For this job. But if I would be looking for a job... I don't know for example administration of a company that doesn't care about exporting, I don't know if maybe they would prefer, if they would give priority to an Italian. In my opinion yes.

Veronica, studied economics in Ukraine and Italy, works as a business manager, Veneto

As highlighted by the experience of Rada,that was mentioned above, the language skills of migrant women might facilitate the access to employment in the social sector, specially to work as a cultural mediator. As mentioned in the previous chapter, scholars estimate that the presence of migrants in this sector is related to the assumption that there is an "ethnic-cultural closeness" with the audience targeted by social policies (De Rudder and Vourc’h, 2006: 182). The phenomena is also visible in Alsace. For instance, Amaryllis explains that as she speaks Armenian, she has also been able to work as a cultural mediator. Nevertheless, she feels that there can be gender constraints to access those jobs. For instance, Amaryllis finds that a man might be preferred over a woman for working in contexts such as at the police station.

Acacia, who was born in Moldova, has not worked as a cultural mediator, but she was hired as a leader in a community center. Although speaking Russian was not requested or even specially mentioned during her job interview, she highlights that knowing this language has facilitated her relationship with the Chechen inhabitants of the neighborhood. In this case, her knowledge of the language is not valued by the employer, but useful at work, and corresponds to the *brain abuse* that was mentioned earlier.

In line with the examples that were developed in this section, fieldwork suggests that according to the language that migrant women speak, but also depending on their accent, country of birth, and physionomy, they might have an easier access to specific jobs. These jobs might vary considerably in terms of monetary return, stability, and positioning in the employment structure. Nonetheless, in line with Liversage (2009), we can refer to these jobs as being connected to the migrant identity of workers. In the following chapter, we will develop how migrant women can use it as a strategy to access employment.

Conclusions of chapter 5

This chapter highlighted the multiple impacts that embodiness has on the assessment of skills. Skills might be valued by employers and recruiters according to who embodies them as well as depending on social relations based on gender, racialisation, and class.

When it comes to the social construction of bodies, the chapter stressed that both women from Sub-Saharan Africa and non-EU Europe might be subject to essentialisation and racialisation processes. These processes are context-based and change according to period, place, and the persons that look at them. As far as stereotypes are concerned, both in Alsace and Veneto the naturalised characteristics that were positively assessed correspond to personality traits of conservative models of feminity, which value elegance, vanity, and submissiveness, and devalue characteristics such as having a strong personality.

Fieldwork also highlighted that the physical body of female candidates is subject to high scrutiny, especially for jobs that involve bodywork, such as in the service sector, but also in the care sector. Female candidates are often expected to be pretty. The chapter indicated that prettiness is socially constructed, and that recruiters tend to associate this criterion with having a middle or upper-class *habitus*. Interestingly, it appears that higher education is used by recruiters as a proxy to select workers with such a *habitus*.

The chapter also emphasised that both in France and Italy, migrant women's bodies are being eroticised. Conversely, migrant women, and especially black women, felt that they are compelled to mitigate their blackness when looking for employment. For instance, Clemensia feels there is a call for jacksonisation: Like Michael Jackson, blacks would be expected to change their bodies to look as white as possible. In this regard, fieldwork also highlighted the intrinsic relation between racialisation and class *habitus*.

When it comes to the assessment of skills, recruiters stress that the selection process is not a science and that intuition and sensations have a role to play in the outcome. The assessment of soft skills appeared to involve a high level of scrutiny over candidates' *habitus*, including their non-verbal communication, their gestures, their tone of voice. As *habitus* is gender, class and field-specific, assessment of soft skills might offer an advantage to candidates from middle and upper class that navigate in social fields that are close to that of recruiters. In this scenario, the migrant women who are outsiders to the fields might find it more challenging to adopt the habitus that will be valued.

Skills are also being assessed through education and experience. As far as education is concerned, the recognition of foreign titles was perceived as a major challenge. Assessment of education gained abroad seemed to rely on recruiters' representations. Degrees from educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa and non-EU Europe tended to be disregarded, although western rankings might place them in higher positions than local universities. Moreover, it was stressed that having a local diploma does not guarantee access to graduate positions.

Fieldwork highlighted that recruiters tend to look for candidates that have a continuous, and eventually upgrading local experience. Discontinuity, in terms of countries, sectors, and companies in which the worker gained experience, tended to be seen with suspicion, although it is a feature that tends to characterise migrant trajectories. Moreover, experience gained abroad was often disregarded, even when migrant women were using the know-how and knowledge from previous experiences. Although these skills are benefiting employers, they are not compensated by any monetary or symbolic recognition.

Finally, the chapter studied how language skills are being perceived. In this regard, it was highlighted that women's skills could be disregarded because of their accent. Moreover, it happens that they are fluent in the local language because they were born and grew up in a former colony, but regardless of their fluency recruiters had doubts about their ability. Although colonisation has left a common educational system and language, it has simultaneously built up a racial-social system that continues to influence social representations, and produces exclusion of those considered subaltern because they were born in former colonized territories.

Besides the local language, migrant women can push their foreign language skills to the forefront, namely to work in the trade industry, social field, services and education. However, the proficiency in a foreign language might not be equally valued depending on who holds it, and how the candidate might be perceived in terms of gender, racialisation, and class. For instance, the English of Nigerians seemed to be disregarded in Veneto with respect to work in positions such as social managers, while in Alsace, individuals with the same skills are accessing positions like English teachers, and bilingual secretaries.

In Veneto, graduates from Sub-Saharan Africa are more likely to see their foreign language skills valued in social work or in jobs, such as cultural mediators, that involve interacting with migrants. Both in Alsace and Veneto, working as cultural mediators seem to be a job accessible for both migrant women from Sub-Saharan Africa, and European non-EU countries. Positions in trade and export management seemed instead to mainly concern Russian speaking women. In this regard, fieldwork brings to light that recruiters might have specific requests regarding the nationality of candidates, asking for instance to hire Russians, rather than Ukrainians. This practice highlights that women from European non-Eu countries might have a different access to employment, according to their specific country of birth or the way they are ethnicised, or racialised.

Based on fieldwork, and stakeholders' experience, feelings and perspectives, chapter 4 and 5 have depicted stratified labour markets, in which migrant women tend to be essentialised, and have access to specific positions throughout the employment structure. How are these women coping with stratifications? How do they resist and eventually challenge the essentialization processes that are in play in local labour markets? What strategies do they implement to access employment more in line with their aspirations? These are some of the questions that will be addressed in chapter 6.

Chapter 6: "I can't limit my life to your prejudices". Coping and resistance strategies.

Rosamel grew up in a medium-city of Cameroon. When she finished secondary school, her parents decided that she would study abroad, as her brothers and sisters had done. The first option was France, but as there were no opportunities to apply for a study visa in that country, Rosamel's parents opted for Italy. After passing linguistic and career entrance tests, Rosamel started studying physiotherapy in Veneto. She graduated after three years of being in Italy and started looking for employment in her field. Rosamel remembers she was going from one cooperative to the other, leaving her resume.

> It's not like I had an appointment. I carried my resume everywhere. "Yeah, put it there". I used to think: "'put it there' is it because you don't care, just to be done with me, or are you working and busy?". Anyway, you still feel prejudice. And in that, you should never give up. No matter how this is my conviction. The prejudice of the other, or the difficulty that the other has to see me as I am, for what I am, cannot prevent me from doing what I have to do. I can't limit my life to your prejudices. I can't take that load; it's not up to me. And so, I continued carrying it everywhere.
>
> Rosamel, studied physiotherapy in Italy, works as a physiotherapist, Veneto

Thanks to her persistence, Rosamel has managed to work continuously as a physiotherapist since she graduated. Although she feels that interlocutors in cooperatives were eventually essentialising her, Rosamel refused to internalize the negative label. She had confidence in her working capacities and felt she could find work in her field. Like Rosamel, migrant women with tertiary education react in very different ways to the essentialist processes that affect them.

Scholars have studied how people react to stigmatisation and essentialisation. Departing from Goffman's (1990 [1963]) and Allport's (1954) analysis of stigma and prejudice, part of the scholarship proposes to think about stigmatisation as a form of stress. According to the literature, this approach permits calling attention to how stigmatised people cope with the stress they endure as a consequence of their stigmatised status (Miller and Kaiser, 2001; Allison 1998). In this context, *coping* is understood as " conscious volitional efforts to regulate emotion, cognition, behaviour, physiology, and the environment in response to stressful events or circumstances" (Compas et al., 2001: 89).

On the other hand, scholars have highlighted that Goffman's (1990) approach and the analysis of coping strategies mentioned above tend to give little room to resistance. Accordingly, in Goffman's theory stigmatised individuals can hardly destigmatize themselves, or put forth their stigma as a "simple and not especially discredited difference " rather than a "failing " (Gussow and Tracy, 1968: 317). According to Goffman (1990 [1963]), individuals "manage" information about themselves, and "react", rather than resist or reject negative appraisals of others. Riessman (2000: 114) stresses that Goffman assumes that stigmatised persons hold the same belief about their condition as the rest of society, while "in the empirical world ", there are countless instances in which individuals disavow dominant perspectives.

This chapter takes into account these critics. As a result, it analyses women's reactions and strategies that either cope with essentialism and stratifications without questioning them, or conversely that resist and challenge these processes. The first section of the chapter focuses on migrant women's coping and resistance practices when faced with essentialism (1). The second section studies how these women build up strategies towards employment, that are based on their knowledge of local labour markets and their stratifications (2). The third section deals with women's self-perception of their positioning in the labour market, and how they eventually cope with downgrading or explain their success in accessing the jobs they wanted (3).

The chapter analyses practices and strategies from an intersectional perspective. Indeed, the way women perceive and react to essentialism, and the strategies they implement, vary according to class, racialisation, migratory status, as well as gender expectations and negotiation between a woman and her partner. As far as class is concerned, the possibilities that women have to react and build strategies are conditioned by the economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital they have at their disposal. For instance, confronting blamers verbally does not have the same implications for a woman who has a precarious working status and cannot count on external financial support, compared to a female worker that has a permanent contract and can count on her partner to support her if she loses her job. This example of intersection is further developed in the chapter.

Lastly, it needs to be stressed that the practices and strategies that are analysed in this chapter are interlocked. Migrant women do not follow a single path but might implement different practices and strategies at the same time. Moreover, these women might also change their views and expectations. As a result, practices and strategies might evolve along with their lives, based on their experiences. As suggested by Miller and Kaiser (2001: 88), women try several alternatives, and feedback from one response may alter other responses that are made.

1. Coping and resisting essentialism

The first section focuses on how migrant women react to essentialisation. As mentioned, these practices might challenge the dominant ideology, but this is not always the case. Their reactions can also include the incorporation of negative discourse. In addition, reactions might be individual or collective. Moreover, they can be visible to some and invisible to others. As stressed by Riessman (2000), invisible practices can also correspond to a resistance practiced towards essentialism.

The section identifies three types of responses to essentialism. The first type corresponds to coping strategies that reproduce a negative discourse against an oppressed group (1.1.). The second type encompasses resistance practices implemented at the individual level that do not directly challenge the dominant ideology (1.2). The third group correspond to responses that are visible and challenge negative discourse at the individual or collective level (1.3).

1.1. Accepting the negative discourse

1.1.1. Denial and minimisation

When faced with essentialism, migrant women might react by denying or minimising its effects. Scholars identify denial and minimisation as one of the main strategies to cope with prejudice and discrimination (Ruggiero and Taylor, 1997). Miller and Kaiser (2001: 80) associate this reaction with "disengagement coping ". The person avoids stress by denying the existence of the problem. Denying and minimising might also correspond to "wishful thinking ", meaning that the person wishes that those with power are kindly disposed towards them (Ibid: 80).

It is challenging to trace these coping strategies in interviews. Indeed, it implies that the person deny or diminishes essentialism compared to a standard, which corresponds either to a pretended "objective " process of essentialism (Miller and

Kaiser, 2001)[16], or to the essentialism that the person feels but does not express verbally. In the fieldwork conducted for the dissertation, denial and minimisation were identified when women had ambivalent statements regarding essentialism. An example is that of Rosalie, who studied laboratory technics in the Democratic Republic of Congo and was working as a care assistant in Veneto. During the interview, Rosalie first indicated that she wanted to "put aside the problem of racism". However, by the end of the interview, and as we continued talking about her experience, Rosalie stressed that the way Africans and foreigners are racialised has a strong influence in accessing employment.

> Without going into racism, we also feel that we do not have the race that is here. That is a fact too. That also influences a lot, a lot. [...] It is a matter of fact, maybe, I would tell you that... you pretend not to see it, not to feel it, you try to live it, to live with that reality and to move forward...
>
> Rosalie, born and studied laboratory technics
> in the Democratic Republic of Congo, works as a care assistant, Veneto

Rosalie's comment is striking as it highlights that she has partly incorporated the dominant discourse on Italian whiteness. Indeed, she assumes that she does not correspond to "the race that is here ". Rosalie's reaction also corresponds to what Eijberts and Roggeband (2016: 134-135) identify as a *conciling* response. Women accept the stigma, as from that point they do not consider or seize upon any possibilities for change. Eijberts and Roggeband (2016: 140) estimate that the strategy can serve as a first step towards saving and investing more energy to be put into other forms of coping.

Other technics of diminishing consisted on the one hand in affirming that racialisation, and essentialism matter, and on the other minimising its effects by comparing migrant women’s positioning in the labour market with that of other social groups. As mentioned in chapter 4, some of the interviewees diminish the challenges that they face as a group by highlighting that locals are also struggling to get a job (Rose in Veneto, Amaryllis in Alsace), or that discriminations are more "violent " towards children of migration (Clemensia in Alsace). In this regard, an interesting comment was made by Amaryllis, who acknowledged that her position was ambivalent. Amaryllis confronted the success of a migrant acquaintance and the challenges faced by an Alsatian colleague.

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[16] In their paper, Miller and Kaiser (2001: 80) estimate that denial or minimisation happens when "stigmatised people do not make claims of discrimination even when the *objective* evidence points strongly to the possibility that the poor outcomes they have experienced were due to prejudice " (our emphasis)

> We say, "yes, we are immigrants", we reject everything on this fault, in quotation marks of "being immigrants", but afterwards she did that. We had a colleague [name] who was Alsatian, but who did the same translations as we did. She was also fighting to be hired. Oh, I'm having a bit of double talk.

Amaryllis, born in Armenia, studied pedagogy in Armenia
and literature in France, works as a tutor, Alsace

The last process that included minimisation was that of affirming that essentialism matters when accessing employment, while highlighting at the same time that the challenge to access graduate jobs connects to other reasons, such as the lack of a network, or lack of recognition of foreign titles.

> Would they refuse to take me because I am black or because there are other [candidates] who have published more than me, or who are much more qualified, or that... anyway, everything works by network nowadays… and that I did not have a sufficient network. That's it. I can say "Yeah, people are racist a bit". Well, it's just that, in fact, you have no network, yeah, you have less of a network when you're black, who grew up there, than when you were born here, and already have more or fewer connections, contacts. Your parents know that professor, and so on. Well, was there racism in it? Mmm... not necessarily.

Clemensia, born in Senegal, studied sociology in France, unemployed, Alsace

Before continuing with the analysis of responses, it is worth noting that interviewees always used denial and minimization in combination with other responses to essentialism.

1.1.2. Accepting and differentiating

The literature that focuses on coping strategies highlights that stigmatised persons may turn to their own, sympathetic others who share their stigma. According to Goffman (1990), disadvantage can be used as a basis for creating community. In the context of what Goffman calls *in-line group alignment*, stigmatized persons might adopt a militant line that enables "the next generation " to "greatly profit from [their] efforts by being more accepted" (Goffman,1990: 138).

Conversely, stigma might also stimulate practices of internal social differentiation and distancing from the stigmatised group (Wacquant, 2008). In this regard, Moroşanu and Fox (2013: 440) find that migrants might "internalise" stereotypical representations of the dominant group. As a result, they might reproduce the prevailing negative discourse and stereotypes, and react by differentiating and distancing themselves from co-nationals.

Based on fieldwork with Romanians that cope with stigmatised identities in the UK, Moroşanu and Fox (2013) identify two strategies of distancing. The first strategy consists of transferring the stigma to the Roma, reproducing, therefore, stereotypical representations on the Romanians' internal 'other'. In this context, their participants "made ethnicity salient through a process of boundary 'contraction' " (Ibid: 448). Romanian migrants were drawing attention to "ethnic boundaries " within what locals "erroneously " perceived as a single migrant group.

The second differentiation response identified by the scholars consists of distinguishing oneself from other co-nationals based on "personal success ", grounded in individuals' skills and accomplishments (Ibid: 448). In this regard, Moroşanu and Fox (2013: 452) stress that emphasis on personal skills and achievement also emerged in "lower-skilled environments ", implying that the strategy was not only used by upper and middle classes but also by members of the Romanian working class.

When it comes to the fieldwork, three main strategies of distancing were identified. The first corresponds to a process of boundary contraction (Ibid: 448), although it did not involve tackling internal others. Rose, who lives in Veneto, used this process. She mentioned that African women tended to be associated with sex work. In order to respond to the essentialism, Rose transferred the stigma to Nigerian women. In doing so, she reproduces a negative, essentialist discourse, and dissociates from a group still defined in a national, ethnic or racialised way.

> Because for Westerners, the majority of women come for prostitution. Because Nigerians… it's Nigerians who do that. I am Congolese. Well, as it is difficult for them to distinguish… nationalities, Congolese, Nigerians, Ivorians. For them, we are Africans, so maybe I'm here to look for money. So maybe I'm a street woman. So as a result, sometimes they come to you and all that, asking you to do things even during the daytime.

Rose, born in Congo, studied communication sciences in Italy, unemployed, Veneto

A second strategy that was identified in fieldwork corresponds to referring to "personal success " (Ibid: 448) and contrasting it with the failure of other co-nationals. For instance, Yasmin partly used this strategy.

> Because who starts from below already... gives up certain things. A girl I know who works in [city], she would be a professional I don't say a programmer, but

> she could have another job in a company, but she's stuck there, caring for people. She did not go further to make the degree recognized; in my opinion, it is unthinkable... She was at the polytechnic university, she was already teaching, but she did this reverse, probably to make her life easier... I mean that some try. I see in the facebook group of Ukrainians in Italy, those between 25 and 40, look a bit for redemption from this point of view. [...] This is the generation that tries to make redemption of what they used to have. Some instead relax completely, understand that this is their reality, and leave it that way. [...] If a person has clear objectives, it succeeds in getting what she wants.
>
> Yasmin, born in Ukraine, studied forestry in Ukraine
> and foreign languages in Italy, experience as business manager, Veneto

In contrast with the findings of Moroşanu and Fox (2013), Yasmin did not only referred to her individual success and skills. She rather divided the group of Ukrainian graduate women between those who had "clear objectives " and the will to work in their field, and those who "relax ", who try to make their "life easier ". With her statement, Yasmin blames graduate Ukrainian women who de-skilled for their position in the job market: if they have access to positions at the bottom of the employment structure, it is because they are not sufficiently determined to access other jobs.

The third strategy of differentiation that was identified consisted of differentiating by arguing closeness to the dominant majority. This response was used by Amaryllis, who was born in Armenia and works as a tutor in Alsace. Amaryllis has internalized a negative discourse on migrants, according to which they represent a threat to the (local white) "population ". Although Amaryllis partly identifies with the migrant group, she also distances herself from it, by putting forward arguments based on her administrative status, ties, and living experience in France.

> Myself, I can really give evidence of this... of this enormous, this phenomenon is hard again, this phenomenon of migration. I call it… I say to my husband

> who is of French origin, I say, I think... I always found that it's uncontrolled. And it remains uncontrolled. [...] Finally, frankly, the population suffers. The people who have lived here for centuries, we will say like that. Nobody talks about it. And I allow myself to talk about it because precisely I am not from here. Well, I have the nationality. So I can take a bit the defense of the population... who says that this country belongs to me, belonged to me before. [...] Of course, I feel French, because since I have my children who are French, since I have French nationality, after 16 years and... that I came, and I am... and I see myself transforming here... this country that has transformed me. So, it's my country, of course. But, we will not lie, I will always stay with this immigrant touch. And why remove it? I cannot take it off; I have to give evidence. It is my vocation to give evidence. To tell how it's going, and why not also say things more honestly than people... how to say, who welcome. The people who welcome are the French who have always lived here. [...] And they are embarrassed to say... you know when I welcome people, it's me for example, I'm embarrassed immediately to say, "Listen, tell your children to take off their shoes." But if I am someone who is also invited, I can say, "stop, stop, you will mess up!".
>
> Amaryllis, born in Armenia, studied pedagogy in Armenia
> and literature in France, works as a tutor, Alsace

Amaryllis' account has several implications concerning the internalisation of a negative and essentialist discourse towards migrants. Firstly, she perceives migration as an "uncontrolled " problem, although she does not explicitly indicate why the phenomenon would alarm locals. Amaryllis only gives a metaphor on how migrants "mess up ". Secondly, she excludes migrants from her representation of the local population, which is defined according to ancestors who would have lived in the area "for centuries ". Although Amaryllis did not explicitly refer to ethnicity or racialisation, she defines the legitimate locals (those who 'welcome', in opposition to those who are 'invited') according to their bloodline.

When it comes to distancing, Amaryllis presents herself as being in the middle between ‘hosts’ and ‘guests’. Although she stresses that she will always have an "immigrant touch ", she distinguishes herself by pushing forward her ‘Frenchness’, connected to the fact that she has acquired French citizenship, her partner and children are French, and she has lived for 16 years in the country. From her perspective, the fact of being inbetween gives her the legitimacy to give a negative (and essentialised) description of migrants and to tell other migrants how they should behave.

1.1.3. Hiding the difference

Scholars estimate hiding or concealing the stigma is a response that aims at coping with stigmatisation and essentialism (Goffman, 1990). This strategy implies that the person accepts the dominant discourse. Eijberts and Roggeband (2016: 134) estimate- that concealing is only possible "to the extent that stigma can be rendered invisible or made hard to detect ".

As stressed in the previous chapter, interviewees from both European non-EU countries and Sub-Saharan Africa highlighted that their differences tended to be visible and long-lasting. Nonetheless, concealing practices were also identified. Although none of them mentioned trying to completely hide their otherness, some of their practices were aimed at diminishing the perception of difference.

For instance, women mentioned that accent and lack of knowledge of the local language were the basis of essentialist processes and discrimination. We mentioned that Azalea, who studied in Russia and works as an administrative assistant in France, finds that "unless you speak perfect French, I think there can be some prejudice about you ". In this regard, the previous chapter highlighted how women committed to learn the official local language, trying not to make any mistake when speaking (Rosamel, who was born in Cameroon and lives in Veneto), or to have such a high level of grammar that they can correct their native colleagues (Acacia, who was born in Moldova and lives in Alsace).

The previous paragraphs have analysed how migrant women cope with essentialism by implementing strategies that accept it or reproduce forms of essentialisation. Conversely, the responses that are analysed below question and challenge labelling and stereotyping. As such, these strategies aim at resisting essentialism.

1.2. Refusing the labelling

As mentioned, resistance practices are not always visible (Riessman, 2000). Migrant women might resist by refusing to internalize a deviant label (1) or by avoiding a confrontation (2).

1.2.1. Resistance thinking

Migrant women with tertiary education might not always perceive that openly challenging essentialism is a possibility. Speaking out and taking action might represent a risk that varies depending on their subjectivity but also on their labour status, and their economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital. When migrant women feel that they have too much to lose if they openly challenge essentialism, they might still oppose the dominant wisdom by refusing the labelling, and implementing resistance thinking.

An example that illustrates the tension between resistance thinking and the impossibility to act openly was given by Rosanna, who was born in Cameroon and works as a care assistant in Veneto. Rosanna studied international economics in Italy. She feels that African women tend to be relegated to the bottom of the employment structure. She finds that "this is what they believe we can do ".

Although Rosanna is sceptical about the possibility of accessing graduate employment in Italy, she blames recruiters and does not question her capacities. Rosanna has not abandoned her dream of working in her field. At the same time she is working she is enrolled in a Master's programme in economics, and indicates that, at the end of the mandatory internship, she can be hired if she proves that she is "good ". Otherwise, Rosanna also eventually plans to move abroad to find a job in her field, as she feels her skills would be better valued in other national contexts. Rosanna trusts in her capacities. However, in her daily work as a care assistant, she feels that she cannot reply to verbal provocations. Rosanna's work ethic, but also her labour status, the fact that she needs an income, and her power position in the *field* discourages her to act.

> Now I work as a care assistant, but I don't want to end my days there. No, because if I'm honest, I did it because I couldn't find a job in my field. Although I like this job so much, let's say, it's very physically demanding. Also psychologically, because there is a different approach when you are a foreigner. So you have to have a lot, a lot, a lot of patience because you get so many bad and bad words. However, it is the workplace; you always have to smile. And not just from patients, even from colleagues, no. So it's not a place where I want to finish.
>
> Rosanna, born in Cameroon,
> studied economics in Italy, works as a care assistant, Veneto

Rosanna describes the emotional labour (Hochschild, 2012) she implements, as she has to continue smiling despite the verbal violence to which she is exposed. Rosanna's example illustrates how women's perception of their possibility to act depends on their symbolic but also economic capital. Rosanna does not speak out because of her work ethic, but also because she "couldn’t find a job in [her] field ". From her perspective, acting out would involve a significant loss, a risk she does not want to take for now.

Fieldwork stresses that resistance thinking might involve putting the fault on the blamers. Different strategies are used to discredit those who essentialise and racialise, and affirm migrant women’s superiority. Interviewees emphasised the lack of cultural capital of blamers. For instance, Rosella emphasised the ignorance and lack of knowledge of offenders, while Winika disregarded her colleagues for their low level of education.

> A bit for... many in my opinion, many unpleasant situations that we live, it is not so much due to racism, to malice... it is just lack of knowledge, in my opinion. I don't perceive malice as much as ignorance, in my opinion.
>
> Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
> studied medicine in Italy, works as a doctor, Veneto

> There was... in the workplace, but out of the precise context of work… because of this ignorance I was telling you, ignorance of poor education, that there are people really, nationalists, racists, yeah.
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine,
> works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

Level of education might also be a proxy used to refer to a class difference implicitly. Although women might have experienced downward social mobility, they reaffirm their class superiority compared to blamers by referring to their higher level of education, or their class position before migration. As far as the level of education is concerned, Vianello (2014b: 92) indicates that in Soviet countries, in which Soviet citizens were considered equal owners of the means of production, education was "one of the main factors of social stratification ". As a result, Vianello finds that Ukrainian migrants attach great value to education.

When it comes to previous social position, an example was given by Viola. She was born in Russia, where she studied philology and had a prestigious professional career. She contrasts the stigmatization she has had to endure in Italy, to her previous position.

> And I moved here, just for this reason, to have a family… Because the social position is... I remember that in San Petersburg, the people who did not know me once they knew I was working at the university, for the [name of the employer], "But you look like a normal person, can I be on first name terms with you[17]". But they joked a little but… So, now, everything is different, I have become an Eastern European migrant, let's say, little, little respected.
>
> Viola, born in Russia, studied philology in Russia, unemployed, Veneto

Both in Alsace and Veneto, migrant women also stressed their superiority compared to blamers by highlighting their knowledge of different contexts. Women indicated that they had had the opportunity to travel, get to know "other things ", and open up, while blamers remained among them and have never seen anything new. These positions were adopted by Callaia in Alsace and Winika in Veneto.

> If people have this imaginary there, it is not even by malice. It's just because they have... I say to myself, "I'm lucky, I left my country, I came". So I got to know something else, they did not... they did not... they did not share anything, they stayed between them.
>
> Callaia, born in Niger, studied at midwives school in Niger
> and nursing school in France, works as a nurse, Alsace

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[17] In Italian, Viola uses the expression "posso darti del tu", which refers to the fact of being addressed with the informal second-person *tu*, rather than using the more formal form of address *lei*.

> They now, until the end of life, I think they will be like this. They don't travel, they don't encounter anything new, because people open up when they see differences. I say as soon as you come out of a trip, you have already seen the world... the different world.
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine,
> works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

Denigrating the blamers might also involve forms of essentialism that tackle the dominant majority. To assert their superiority in response to essentialism, graduate migrant women also referred to the lack of merits of locals. They found that locals have opportunities within easy reach, while migrants must fight to access resources and employment. This position was developed by Raisa, who was born in Cameroon and occasionally works as cultural mediator in Veneto. At the end of the interview, when the recorder was off, Raisa gave details on her views on Italians. From her perspective, Italians can afford to refuse a job because they live at their grandmother’s, and can use their grandfather’s car. She contrasted this situation with that of foreigners, who cannot afford to refuse any employment, as they have to pay for everything, and are not otherwise financially supported.

1.2.2. Strategic avoidance

In order to protect themselves from the violence involved in essentialism, migrant women may choose to avoid specific persons or spaces. This response to essentialism enables migrant women to avoid unpleasant confrontations, but at the same time, it also risks contributing to the reproduction of inequalities. Avoidance strategies run the danger of "self-imposed exile " (Riessman, 2000). On the other hand, it also enables migrant women to look for "safe spaces ", where they can resist objectification (Collins, 2000).

In fieldwork interviews, migrant women indicated that they were avoiding sending their resume for positions for which they found they had little chance of being hired. This practice corresponds to what De Rudder and Vourc'h (2006: 181) call "anticipatory rationalization " that prevent candidates from presenting their application for specific positions in order to avoid a "humiliating confrontation ". In fieldwork, "anticipatory rationalisation " was often the result of previous negative experiences. Two examples are that of Cassia in Alsace and Rosanna in Veneto. The former was born in Senegal where she studied management and ICTs, the latter was born in Cameroon and studied economics in Italy. They both tried to find employment in their fields, but their attempts failed. As a result, Cassia had stopped looking for employment when we met, while Rosanna was focusing on intermediary positions in the care sector.

> I had disillusionment anyway; I had even stopped applying. Until... until now I'm not looking anymore. I wait to see what I can do and how to do it so that it can be productive because it's useless to undertake, um, studies, which in the long run are useless. And that in the end, you do not like what you do. That's it. So, I really had much disillusionment. Because I didn't think it was going to be as hard as it is, that it was going to be… as discriminating as it is.
>
> Cassia, born in Senegal,
> studied management and ICT in Senegal, unemployed, Alsace

> Well, in the field of studies, indeed, I never found anything. Never. And then I got tired; I said 'what's the point'. And therefore, I no longer searched in my field. I was just looking for... I was just looking [for work] as a care assistant.
>
> Rosanna, born in Cameroon,
> studied economics in Italy, works as a care assistant, Veneto

Both Cassia and Rosanna's accounts correspond to strategic avoidance, but they also serve a different purpose. In the case of Cassia, the fact of stopping her job hunting enables her to save energies so that she can reflect on strategies that can facilitate access to the positions she wants. Conversely, Rosanna's avoidance aims at focusing her employment searches on positions that seem easier to access. Like Rosanna, several interviewees were mainly looking for work in specific sectors that appeared as 'more open' to migrant women. Those sectors were listed in chapter 4. By targeting specific jobs, women avoid unpleasant confrontations and wasting time, but they also contribute to the reproduction of the labour market stratifications.

1.3. Challenging essentialism

Migrant women are not only resisting silently to essentialism. They might also speak up and act to challenge the process. This section studies everyday resistance practices that include confronting the blamer verbally, taking action, and organizing collectively to deconstruct essentialism.

1.3.1. Confronting verbally

As mentioned previously, responding to provocation is not always perceived by migrant women as an option. Depending on their working status, their economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, and on the *field* where aggression happens; women might consider that acting would involve a significant loss, a risk that they might not want to take for now. This decision does not mean that they remain silent, as they might use other avenues to resist essentialism.

On the other hand, migrant women might also feel empowered to talk back. In doing so, they challenge accusers and deconstruct stigma. Callaia, who was born in Niger and works as a nurse in Alsace, stresses that she takes a stand in interactions and replies to negative comments.

> I often talk to my children when they come home, and they are unhappy because something happened. I try to tone them down by saying "Don't let people walk all over you ". That's what I've learned. Since my first job, the second, until I changed, I arrived, I said to myself "It's over!". [...] So, I said to myself "No". Because when we are nice, we say "yes, thank you, please". It's like we're weak. It's always the image we have "Well, we are blacks, it's *Y'a bon banania*[18]". And that we smile and always say "yes" and "amen" and we go... I'm like that, but you must not push me. If they push me, I don't let myself be pushed around. In the past, I would let it go… now I've learned that it does not work that way. But that does not stop me from being what I am, in the deep inside me, fundamentally. And then if it doesn't work I... I say what I think.
>
> Callaia, born in Niger, studied at midwives school in Niger
> and nursing school in France, works as a nurse, Alsace

Callaia describes how her response to essentialism has changed. While she used to "let it go ", now she says what she thinks. Compared to the past, she now feels empowered to take a stand and speak.

In her research with childless women in South India, Riessman (2000) also observes how the reaction to stigma might change in women's life. The scholar estimates that age, maturity, and education can provide the tools to see through dominant ideologies and acquire the confidence to confront them (Ibid: 126). Since she arrived in Alsace in the 1990s, Callaia has not only acquired maturity and age, but she has also passed a competitive nursing exam which has re-asserted her capacities. She has also accessed a graduate position and works with a permanent contract as a nurse in a public hospital. Moreover, she has acquired cultural capital concerning the functioning of the French context and gained economic stability. All these factors contribute to building self-confidence in order to openly challenge essentialism.

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[18] The expression refers to a French product Banania, a chocolate-banana milk flavouring, which uses a stereotype colonial images of a Senegalese '*tirailleur*' (a corps of African colonial infantry in the French Army). Anne Donadey (2000: 11) considers Banania images as part of 'commodity racism' and stresses that they participate in a "white supremacist ideology denying Black people subjectivity and self-definition ".

1.3.2. Taking action: Confronting and leaving

Besides talking back, there are different ways in which migrant women might take action to resist and challenge essentialism. One of these paths consists of leaving a setting in which they tackled by essentialism. This reaction is different from strategic avoidance, although it also aims at avoiding unpleasant confrontations. However, leaving a place involves taking action. The absence of the person transforms the setting and interactions within a *field*. It is an act of resistance that challenges essentialism and dominant wisdom.

A striking practice consists of quitting a job. Undertaking this path usually involves a significant financial loss, as the person stops receiving her salary. Nonetheless, quitting a job might have a different economic impact on migrant women, depending for instance on their economic capital (such as savings), their social network (who can financially and emotionally support them), and the possibilities they foresee to find another employment or an alternative source of income. As mentioned, Rosanna, who works as a care assistant in Veneto, prefers not to openly react to provocations as it might involve a risk of loss that she does not want to take for now.

Callaia, who works as a nurse in Alsace, is one of the few interviewees who indicated that she quit a job because of her manager’s attitude. However, it is worth noting that she did not resign, but she asked to be transferred to another service within her employer’s organisation. The job security contributed to empowering her in order to leave a setting where she was feeling judged and essentialised. The episode happened when she started working as a nurse, right after finishing nursing school.

> So when you arrive, you have to get used to it. Where is this thing? What do we have to do? That's it. So it was difficult, but I put all the goodwill to get there. But I saw that it was never fine until I asked to have an interview with her [the manager]. And I said, "I'm doing my best, I'm doing everything I can, and God knows I'm not a dumbbell, I've already worked and so I know how to work with humans", as if I... and I said "There is something I do not understand", I said, "You always have something to blame me for, there is always that, that, that..." And there, I saw that... she said, "Oh, I did not realize and everything". Then finally, she says to me "But actually..." I release a calm that disturbs her; I am unfazed, I smile and... So when she told me that... I thought "Wow", I was almost 45, I said... yes, I was 43... yes, that's it... she told me that, I thought "But, I cannot change, I'm like that, if that's how she perceives me and that's what disturbed her, I cannot change". "Well", I said, "Well, in this case, I'm leaving". And I asked to leave.
>
> Callaia, born in Niger, studied at midwives school in Niger
> and nursing school in France, works as a nurse, Alsace

After this experience, Callaia got the transfer to a unit where she has been working for eleven years.

Besides quitting one's job, another way of leaving a set of circumstances consists of moving to another city or country. This response to essentialism is a way migrant women have to 'vote with their feet', meaning that it might reveal their "preferences about the desirability of alternative locations " (Faggian et al., 2011). Participants in the fieldwork conducted mentioned their wish to move to other countries or other cities within the country, where they perceived they would be less essentialised and would have more chances to access graduate positions.

The wish to move to a more 'open context' was mentioned both in Alsace and Veneto, particularly by women who felt racialised as blacks. For instance, in Veneto, Rosanna and Rosalie wanted to move abroad. The former graduated in economics in Italy and the latter in laboratory technics in the Democratic Republic of Congo. They were both working as care assistants.

Rosanna spoke about her African friends who were graduates and had moved abroad as they felt they would never find a position in their field in Italy. Rosanna has the perception that in countries such as France and Belgium "They can see what Africans are worth, which is not the case in Italy". She also wished to move abroad but was not inquiring yet on where and how to move.

Rosalie, instead, saw Switzerland as a country where she would be able to find a job more in line with her studies: "You know that Switzerland is a country that focuses more on economy, performance. Because if you go there in Switzerland, you find all the nationalities, I think they have already overcome this problem. There might but just a little.". When we met, Rosalie was inquiring about the procedure for migrating to Switzerland.

In Alsace, Clemensia, who studied in France and was looking for employment, indicated that "if France does not want me, well, I'll go to Canada, the United States, China... I do not know, I'll go anywhere in the world. Well, I think Paris, they are a little more cosmopolitan, so, I set my hopes on it ". Like Clemensia, Cassia, who studied in Senegal and was unemployed when we met, also perceived Paris as a city where she would have more opportunities to get a job in her field.

> They are more open-minded. By dint of looking here without finding anything, you must... maybe the grass is greener elsewhere (laugh).
>
> Cassia, born in Senegal,
> studied management and ICT in Senegal, unemployed, Alsace

Moving to Paris did not remain an unreachable dream for Cassia. When I contacted her, six months after we first met for the interview, she had indeed moved to that city.

When working with Muslim migrant women in the Netherlands, Eijberts and Roggeband (2015) also observed that these women intended to leave the country as a response to stigmatisation. However, the scholars (Ibid: 142) found that the option of moving was less attractive to the women who had children, as they did not want to "uproot their children ". Conversely, in our fieldwork, children were not always refraining women from moving. In the opposite, being mothers could further motivate them to move abroad as they did not want their children to endure the discrimination they had faced.

Migrant women, and especially those who feel racialised as black in the society where they live or have experienced racial discrimination, feared their children would live the same experience. As a consequence, they wanted to move to other localities perceived as being more open-minded, where they believed their children would have more opportunities. Both Rada in Veneto and Clemensia in Alsace expressed their worries that their children could be discriminated against because of the skin colour. Rada already had two children and was wondering where to go next. Clemensia did not have children yet, but also felt concern about the issue.

> So, then, my thoughts are not limited only to myself, but on how can I put my children at ease, how can I put my family at ease. So I'm wondering. By making them grow up in this country, will they have the opportunity... not to live ‘what I have lived’, in quotes? Will it be different if we go elsewhere?
>
> Rada, born in Cameroon, studied literature in Cameroon
> and political sciences in Italy, works as a social worker, Veneto

> If I have children, the first thing I will do is, when they finish primary school, I try to take them elsewhere. Because for me, the *collège-lycée* [high school]

> system, especially *lycée* too… we're going to say *lycée* because it's the transition anyway… creates a machine to orientate. When you have a bit of an origin, a bit coloured, they tend a bit to orientate you towards coloured kinds of stuff, yeah, *Professionnel*, *bac technologique* [technical college baccalaureates], etc., although statistically, it offers fewer opportunities, yeah.
>
> Clemensia, born in Senegal, studied sociology in France, unemployed, Alsace

1.3.3. Taking action: Compensating and proving capacities

Another way to take action in response to essentialism consists in fostering human capital skills to prove their worth in the face of the stigma (Eijberts and Roggeband, 2015; Miller, Kaiser, 2001; Shih, 2004). The strategy includes the fact of perfecting language skills, "even if [migrant women] are already fluent " (Eijberts and Roggeband, 2015: 143). As mentioned, efforts in this sense might also correspond to a response that aims at hiding the difference. Therefore, compensating by learning the local language accurately has a double implication. On the one hand, it accepts the call to "perfectly speak " the local language, as mentioned by Azalea in Alsace[19]. On the other hand, it challenges essentialism as migrant women might be able to give evidence that their knowledge of the language can be better than that of locals. In this regard, we mentioned that Acacia, who was born in Moldova and works in Alsace, was correcting the French grammar of her native colleagues.

Compensating responses also include returning to study in one's field in the country of migration to prove one's capacities. Here also, the strategy has a double implication. On the one hand, women accept that their degree obtained abroad is not worth in the local labour market. On the other hand, the strategy stops the tongue wagging of blamers who doubt migrant women's skills while enabling these women to regain confidence in their capacities. These were the aims that Callaia had when she enrolled once again in training.

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[19] As mentioned, Azalea, who studied in Russia and works as an administrative assistant in France, finds that "unless you speak perfect French, I think there can be some prejudice about you "

Callaia had attended a midwife school in Niger. After a long process, she was informed that her Nigerien degree would not enable her to work as a midwife, but as a nursing assistant in maternity. She started working at a hospital, but she felt harassed by her manager, who was continually doubtful of her capacities.

> I do not know why. I was, if I may say the word, the *bête noire* of... whenever there was something, she... humiliated me by showing that I was not, I was not good in what I was doing. Until I started to doubt... to doubt about myself. And, uh... it was terrible because I... really felt harassed. I went to work... reluctantly and all. And one day she is… she passed like this and then she swayed me like that, and she said to me: "There is the competitive nursing exam that... uh... to do it". I said, "No, I do not want to be a nurse". Then finally, I took… I looked, and I said: "And well". I think it was to tell me, uh... I'm not able to be a midwife here. Maybe a nurse is... That's how... it's a challenge. I took it like that. Well, I registered, and I did the competition. And I succeeded.
>
> Callaia, born in Niger, studied at midwives school in Niger
> and nursing school in France, works as a nurse, Alsace

Succeeding at the competitive exam was a personal victory for Callaia, that enabled her to regain confidence in her skills. Moreover, through her degree, Callaia's cultural capital was institutionally recognized in the French context (Bourdieu, 1986: 21). She could use it to access graduate positions and silence blamers who would doubt her capabilities.

1.3.4. Collective action

We previously mentioned that migrant women who accept the dominant-negative discourse might find ways to distance themselves from the group with which they are associated to order to cope with essentialism. On the other hand, they might also ally themselves with those who share their stigma in order to resist and challenge essentialism. Based on the analysis of the fieldwork we conducted, we identified that aggregating with co-nationals or other persons that share an experience of stigma might involve three different resistance and challenge practices.

In order to cope with essentialism, migrant women might gather in order to create "safe spaces " (Collins, 2000) where they form supportive relationships and pass everyday knowledge regarding how to cope with essentialism and stratifications. An example was given by Cliantha, who was born in Senegal, where she studied sociology, and now she lives in France where she studies sociology again and works as a chambermaid. Cliantha indicates that she has found support in the community of Senegalese students that live in her city. This backing consists of emotional support when she feels homesick, but also in sharing strategies to help access employment in the region. It is thanks to her network that Cliantha has found employment in the hospitality industry.

Similarly, Rosanna, who lives in Veneto, indicates that she is a member of an association that gathers Cameroonians from a specific region of the country. Like Cliantha, Rosanna highlights that the group provides emotional support and shares information on how to navigate the Italian environment. Moreover, Rosanna indicates that solidarity among members can include financial and academic support, as an acquaintance from the association helped her to study for her exams in mathematics.

> That inside we make small donations, if we can say, something like that. If one has any difficulty, some... so let’s say that when someone has something to rejoice about, we do it together, and when one has something to cry about, we

> do it together. Yes, since we are far from our beloved ones, then we consider this group a bit like our family, which we do not have here. [...] And even there, they helped me so much with advice, because they had been in Italy for a long time. Also, in studying, because even at a certain point, I also had to approach one of my fellow citizens so that he supported me with mathematics because he was good at math.
>
> Rosanna, born in Cameroon,
> studied economics in Italy, works as a care assistant, Veneto

The second aim of collective gathering and action might be that of challenging negative stereotypes by promoting a positive image of the group. In this regard, Rosella explains that it is precisely to challenge the essentialism that emerged in the 1990s against African migrants, that she created an NGO to promote the "beautiful side of Africa ".

> And in fact we have tried to call the association [name] precisely for... to show the beautiful part of Africa, to make Africa known, that Africa is not just criminality, it is not just... because here, at a certain point, African means you're in prostitution, no. African means you are *clandestino*, therefore in crime. So with this association in our own small way we have also tried to do the little we have... [...] We have made Africa known for its art, Africa as well as... Africa is food, Africa is also literature, Africa... In short, a little of African culture, trying to make people know about it.
>
> Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
> studied medicine in Italy, works as a doctor, Veneto

Initiatives such as that mentioned by Rosella aim at deconstructing negative stereotypes, by promoting a positive image of a stigmatised group. Nonetheless, this practice does not prevent the emergence of new stereotypes. Although they can be perceived as positive, they can still reify a difference between locals and migrants, based on an alleged culture. That being said, self-organising to promote a counter-image and a counter-narrative of a stigmatised group is a way to speak up and speak out. It empowers the oppressed group, who can challenge the dominant wisdom, conquer a stand in the political arena. From there it becomes possible to push claims forwards and counterbalance power relationships.

The third aim of collective action and gathering consists of organizing collectively in order to claim rights and equal access to resources explicitly. In fieldwork, interviewees mentioned that they were involved in groups that aimed at supporting migrant women's access to rights. For instance, Yasmin, who was born in Ukraine and had experience as a cultural mediator in Veneto, indicated that she had volunteered in an association that aims at supporting Ukrainians in their access to rights and services.

> A bit from personal experience because I came to Italy, I had to inform myself, and then as a cultural mediator, we had refresher courses and all the bureaucratic basis. Then I collaborated with a migrant association called [name]. We organised an information desk, and there I gave information to migrant women regarding documents, regarding the residence permit, many asked me how to bring their children here because they wanted to enroll them in university, especially for youngsters that were 18.
>
> Yasmin, born in Ukraine, studied forestry in Ukraine
> and foreign languages in Italy, has been working as business manager, Veneto

Yasmin used the knowledge of the system that she has accumulated working as a cultural mediator to support co-national women. Her practice also connects to the first type of collective action that was mentioned, namely the fact of sharing knowledge on how to navigate the system. Although her work consisted of supporting access to rights, she was not directly challenging the framework and dominant wisdom.

In the fieldwork conducted, none of the interviewees was involved in movements or associations that explicitly aimed at challenging the institutional and political framework, or that promoted norms and policy changes that would enable migrant women to have equal rights and access to resources compared to non-migrants. However, the section highlighted how women cope, resist, and eventually challenge essentialism and dominant wisdom. Although they are activists of movements that look for changing the status quo, their everyday resistance practices also contribute to transforming society and change what Aster's call the "culture of the labour market ".

2. Strategies and employment paths

After analysing how women cope, resist and challenge essentialism, this section analyses how they use their knowledge of the labour market to navigate stratifications and construct employment strategies. The section aims at completing the paths identified by Liversage (2009), who focuses on the "vital conjunctures " of "high-skilled " migrant women that look for employment in Denmark. It also analyses the extent to which these different strategies and paths may challenge or reproduce stratifications.

2.1. Reproducing stratifications or refusing assignment?

Withdrawing from the labour market and relying on social networks is often perceived as strategies that contribute to reproducing stratifications. It is argued that these paths lead migrant women to be relegated to positions (or employment status) in which they are already overrepresented. However, fieldwork stresses that these strategies can also be used to resist assignment and circumvent essentialism.

2.1.1. Withdrawing from the labour market

Chapter 4 highlighted that, both in the French and Italian local labour markets, migrant women, and especially those from Sub-Saharan Africa, had the feeling that they were relegated to the bottom of the employment structure, in 'subaltern' jobs, namely in the cleaning and care industry. Faced with this restriction, migrant women may respond by deciding to withdraw from the labour market. By doing so, they partly reproduce stratifications since, both in Italy and France, migrant women are overrepresented in unemployment, compared to non-migrants. However, at the same time, by doing so, they resist by refusing to take up the place that is assigned to them.

Interviews in the field emphasize that women might refuse assignments by leaving a job that they deem not in line with their training. We mentioned earlier the case of Rose, who studied communication sciences in Italy and started working in the cleaning sector to support her family. After several years of working in that sector, Rose quit her job as she was feeling frustrated and felt it did not value her studies.

> I already had a family, so I had to quit [an internship] and do the cleaning. I was doing it for almost ten years. Almost ten years, yeah. Until I said: "No, it's enough ". I studied I cannot continue doing this kind of work… not only because my body was not holding up to it anymore, I had back pains, pains in my knees, pains a bit everywhere, let's say... I had to stop recently... This year, I resigned.

Rose, born in Congo, studied communication sciences in Italy, unemployed, Veneto

Other women avoid the assignment at the bottom of the employment structure by refusing jobs or limiting their job search. As mentioned, this path was followed by Cassia, who studied and worked in Senegal before moving to Alsace. As mentioned in the previous section, after struggling to find employment in her field. Cassia had stopped her job hunting, in order to understand better where to "set foot ".

In both cases, that of quitting or refusing jobs, women can implement a strategy to conserve energy and take time to think about the paths that will enable them to access a more satisfying job. The decision to step out of the labour market depends on the resources that the women have at their disposal. In the absence of economic capital or a support network, it may be more difficult for them to refuse or leave a job that is their only source of income.

Similarly, it was mentioned that leaving the local labour market and moving to another region or country can be a strategy to circumvent essentialism. Undertaking this path can also enable women to circumvent other obstacles that prevent them from accessing the jobs they want. For instance, Acantha, who was born in Russia and worked as a territorial administrator in Alsace, decided to move to Switzerland, where she felt that recruiters would better appreciate the heterogeneity of her working experience.

Moving abroad or to another region can be connected to limited job offers in the local labour markets. For instance, Camellia, who was born in Senegal and studied sociology both in Senegal and in France, had the feeling that there were few working opportunities in Alsace to work in the sector she wanted, namely that of the solidarity-based economy. As a result, Camellia decided to move to Paris, where she found employment in the third sector, as a project coordinator with youth.

> Ah, indeed, I did not look that much for jobs in [the Alsatian city]. Em, because it's true that I did not see myself living all the time in Alsace. So, I... I started to search with only a few institutions that were connected with... with [my] Master’s programme. So, I started looking a little bit and then, that’s it, I saw that there were not many opportunities... that they depended enormously on

> funding, it was a little complicated. So... so I left very quickly, I did not want to wait for months, and months. [...] If I had stayed in [the Alsatian city], I would have had to continue paying for an apartment without necessarily having a job, or I would have had to go back to work in the hospitality sector, which I did not necessarily want.
>
> Camellia, born in Mauritania, studied sociology in Senegal
> and in France, moved to another region

2.1.2. Relying on ambivalent social networks

As mentioned in chapter 1, scholars highlight the centrality of networks in defining the migration project and work placement (Portes and Bach 1985; Piselli, 1995; Ambrosini, 2005). According to this literature, relying on social networks contributes to the reproduction of stratifications in the labour market. Tognetti Bordogna (2012) emphasises that skills and aspirations often become secondary while belonging to a specific nationality comes first. In labour markets that are highly stratified on the base of gender, migratory status and citizenship, the use of national networks can limit access to positions at the bottom of the employment structure, namely in the care sector.

Nonetheless, fieldwork highlighted the co-national networks could also facilitate access to intermediary positions. For instance, in Italy, Zinnia and Varda found employment as a waitress, a sales assistant, and a hostess thanks to co-national Albanian friends.

Moreover, relying on the network also enabled women to access graduate employment and eventually to circumvent essentialism in the recruitment process. This strategy was observed in Alsace, by interviewees such as Azalea. As mentioned, Azalea struggled to find employment with "French companies ". As a result, she targeted international organisations to find a more satisfactory job. In Azalea's case, an acquaintance informed her about the possibility of appling for a job in the organisation.

Like Azalea, Amapola and Aster also decided to target international organisations because they felt that they had little chance to get a graduate job in other companies in Alsace. In both, cases, it is through acquaintances that they managed to get their first contract in these institutions.

> And then, I do not remember who told me that they were looking for someone [in the organization]. And I'm the only one... well, the only one... if I could have a chance, it was in an international organization, where they were not going to look at my papers for... to give me a job. [...] It was like word of mouth. So someone here… told a friend of mine that... "we are looking for someone for this project" and she put me in touch... I gave a CV, I had an interview, and it's like that.
>
> Amapola, studied literature in Albania,
> works as an administrative assistant, Alsace

Amapola’s example illustrates that relying on a network might enable migrant women to circumvent obstacles and essentialism in the local labour market[20], and access positions that they found more satisfying.

The literature has highlighted that a similar objective can be reached if migrant women can count on a network of local peers, such as other students met in local universities (Manohar and Killian, 2015). In this regard, Rosamel, who works as a physiotherapist in Veneto, stresses that she has found employment, thanks to her peers. Together with former students, Rosamel is part of a Whatsapp group in which they eventually post information on available jobs. Getting the information through this network enables Rosamel to avoid unpleasant confrontations in intermediary agencies. In her case, relying on the social network also allows her to circumvent essentialism.

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[20]. As mentioned, Amapola indicated that employers were refusing to hire her because they thought that her short term permit for family reasons would not be renewed.

In contrast with the social network of co-nationals, scholars tend to consider 'bridging ties' with natives as leading to 'better' jobs and occupational status (Kanas et al., 2011; Lancee, 2012). Based on fieldwork with Romanians in London, Moroşanu (2016) highlights that the outcome of these networks might differ depending on the strength of the tie. The scholar argues that the impact of weak ties is limited in terms of accessing graduate employment. Moroşanu (Ibid) estimates that access to positions at the top of the employment structure "often requires embodied cultural capital specific to the destination context ". As a result, she estimates that migrants benefit more from strong ties with natives, for accumulating the 'embodied' cultural capital indispensable for occupational advancement (Ibid).

Our fieldwork also stresses the limits of 'strong ties' with natives. For instance, women can have a native-born partner and have frequent contacts with their families in-law. They would be considered as having 'strong ties' with locals. However, the potential advantage of that network can be jeopardized by the violence that aims at isolating them. The literature on family and gender violence has brought to light that men and women have been socialised to accept the family structure in which they live, even when there is power unbalance, and relationships are based on domination and dependence (Toffanin 2015; Bimbi and Basaglia 2013; Saraceno 2003; Goode 1971). Power unbalance might be reinforced in the context of bi-national couples, when migrant women join local partners. The former might move by herself with no network, and limited knowledge about the context where she is about to live, while her partner can count at the local level on a more extent cultural and social capital.

An example of the ambivalence of 'strong ties' was given by Viola, who used to have a rewarding social position in Russia. Viola has moved to Veneto to unite with her Italian partner and lives in the same house as her mother-in-law. Before leaving Russia, Viola obtained a diploma to teach Russian for foreigners. Since she moved to Veneto, the woman has struggled to get information on how to become a language teacher in Italy. Viola has gone from one office to the other to understand what is the official procedure to enter the waiting lists to teach. Viola was shocked when she understood that her sister-in-law works in a school, but no one in the family has given her any information on the issue.

> My mother-in-law told me: "You have to go to every school and bring your resume". I carried the curriculum but felt that there was something wrong. They asked me questions I didn't understand, about the *abilitazione*[21]... I didn't understand. Only a year later, the girlfriend of a friend of my husband explained all these things to me. Even though... she does a different job. Simply... because to make the request you need to know what to do, and if you don’t know, you can't figure out what to do. And so she explained that to me... Although… later I realized that my mother-in-law knew it all and didn't even give me any suggestion, because the wife of my husband's brother works in a school. And nobody... I was very angry, really, because when you discover these things, you say, but how we put it. Okay, it's better to overcome it... And it's just a cultural thing... The peculiarity, part of the culture, I have to know that this can happen. It's not that people do it for... just because they are used to being closed, not sharing information.
>
> Viola, born in Russia, studied philology in Russia, unemployed, Veneto

Viola partly copes with the violence by diminishing it and connecting it to a cultural difference. As far as access to employment is concerned, Viola’s experience also stresses that in the context of family violence, ‘weak ties’ can be more supportive. Indeed, in contrast with the silence of her family-in-law, it is an acquaintance with whom she has a ‘weak ties’ that informed her of the procedure to become a teacher.

2.1.3. Targeting jobs with lack of staff

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[21] In the Italian educational system, *abilitazione* is a special qualification for teaching, which can be obtained following specific paths that are regulated by norms.

Migrant women with tertiary education had the perception that specific jobs in the health sector were more accessible, due to a lack of staff. In this regard, the literature has identified in the past a lack of nursing and health care technician staff and the subsequent hiring of foreign workers to fill the gap (Vianello, 2014). Rosanna, who was born in Cameroon and graduated in economics, feels that, besides jobs with low social recognition, her co-nationals have easier access to positions in the health care sector.

> Many also work as warehouse workers, who work here at [name of the company]. Yes, many warehouse workers. There are many Cameroonians who work here at [name of the company], all graduates. Yeah. And there are very few in their area. The doctors yes, the nurses yes, because yes, I also know many Cameroonians, like the brothers of my husband who is in Brescia, who work as doctors.

Rosanna, born in Cameroon,
studied economics in Italy, works as a care assistant, Veneto

Among the interviewees, those who graduated locally in health care careers were all working in their fields. However, it is worth noting that to access the sector, they were facing a series of challenges. Firstly, those who studied abroad did not manage to see their diplomas recognised at the same level in France and Italy. Rosalie's diploma as a laboratory technician from the Democratic Republic of Congo was not recognised in Italy, while Callaia's certificate from the midwives school in Niger only provided her access to become a nursing assistant in maternity in France.

A second challenge relates to the migratory status of these women. Local regulations might limit the access that foreigners have to posts in public health institutions. As a result, migrant women who have not acquired local citizenship might be forced to take positions in the private sector or work with subcontractors like cooperatives. For instance, to work as a physiotherapist in Veneto, Rosamel has mainly been hired by either private institutions or cooperatives. As a result, migrant graduates might access positions in the health sector but with more precarious working conditions than locals who are hired directly by public institutions.

Another challenge that also relates to the migratory status concerns the closure of professional associations in the health sector. As mentioned in chapter 4, Rosella explained that when she graduated in medicine, a new law was adopted that prevented non-EU citizens to register with the Italian medical association. As a result, she was not authorised to work as a doctor. "The discrimination that becomes law is ugly", says Rosella. Fortunately for Rosella, the regulation was revoked. She could then register in the medical association and has been working until now as a doctor in Veneto.

The examples from fieldwork illustrate that jobs with lack of staff, such as in the health care sector, might be more accessible for migrant women, but only under specific circumstances. Barriers include the lack of recognition of titles gained abroad and regulations that limit the access of foreigners to professional associations and jobs in public institutions. As a result, migrant women risk being hired in that field, as second class workers. Their salaries and working conditions might be more precarious than those of nationals who perform the same tasks when hired by public institutions.

2.2. Concealing or removing barriers?

Concealing is defined by scholars (Goffman, 1990; Eijberts and Roggeband, 2015) as a strategy that aims at hiding stigmatizing identities and traits. Practices included under this definition might also correspond to strategies to remove barriers that prevent women from accessing the jobs they want. Although following the strategies mentioned above imply that women accept that their foreign degrees are worth less or that local citizenship is needed to access graduate jobs, these practices also challenge stratifications by enabling them to access positions that tend to be closed to migrant women.

2.2.1. Enrolling again in tertiary education

When women become aware that their foreign degrees are not recognised in their country of residence, they might decide to enroll again in tertiary education in order to obtain a local diploma. This path was undertaken by several of the women that were interviewed in fieldwork but implies that women count on specific economic, social and cultural capital. For instance, if they lack financial support, migrant women engage in jobs parallel to their studies, jobs that postpone obtaining the local degree.

In a few cases, women who already have significant working experience in the country of residence might request to have local training funded by their employers, in the context of lifelong learning. This modality was identified in the French context. For instance, Callaia, who was born in Niger, enrolled again in education after working for several years as a nursing assistant in maternity in Alsace. She managed to have her training be funded by her employer. As a result, she continued receiving her salary while studying at nursing school.

> And since it was an (approved) training, they call it lifelong learning. The hospital that is my employer supports it. So, I signed a recognition to work for ten years, yeah, because they paid for my training, so I had to stay. And I'm still in the hospital. Yes, I'm still a public servant [...] In fact, you're doing a competition... By that time, as I worked as a caregiver, I did the competition just like everyone else. And afterwards, the hospital, they accepted, because, during that time, I will be absent for three years and a half. So, they agree to pay me while I'm in training. In fact, that's what it means. And at the end of my training, I am obligated to work for them. Or, I do the training, I'm not paid but

> after I choose to work where I want. Well, it was a lot simpler to work and get paid than to... (laughs). I needed... that salary.

> Callaia, born in Niger, studied at midwives school in Niger
> and nursing school in France, works as a nurse, Alsace

2.2.2. Applying for citizenship

We mentioned that the fact of not having local citizenship can have several implications in limiting access to graduate positions. For instance, some posts or professional associations can be closed to foreigners. Moreover, local legislation might discourage the hiring of non-EU citizens. It was mentioned that in France, norms tend to discourage the recruitment of non-EU citizens. Indeed employers that want to hire them have to pay a specific tax and have additional paperwork. As a result, migrant women might seek to acquire French or Italian citizenship in order to have better access to graduate positions.

Although obtaining local citizenship might remove some barriers, it might not necessarily enable women to have equal access to graduate jobs, as compared to locals. The reasoning that was made in chapter 6 on the limits of obtaining local degrees can be transferred to the acquisition of local citizenship. An analogy can be drawn with Fassin's (2006) observations on undocumented migrants who are looking forward to getting a residence permit. According to the researcher, when these migrants end up being given a document, they go through a phase of euphoria, and then quickly enter a period of disappointment: "it was not just the lack of a residence permit that penalized them" (Fassin, 2006: 145). Similarly, we have seen that not having local citizenship is not the only obstacle that migrant women face.

In Alsace, Azalea is considering to require French citizenship. However, she is quite sceptical regarding the extent to which it will change her access to graduate jobs.

> I always thought I could find something in French companies, which was definitely not the case. And actually, I hope to apply for citizenship next year. And I have very, very low hope of being hired by French companies. Even though there will be no problem with documents, I still see that foreigners are seen less favourably, I would say.
>
> Azalea, born in Russia, studied economics in Russia,
> works as an administrative assistant, Alsace

Moreover, migrant women can also feel puzzled when asking for local citizenship, as if it might involve that they resign from the nationality they had at birth. It has happened that participants decided to postpone the request for local citizenship, as they did not want to be a foreigner in their country of birth.

Women who are couples with an Italian or French partner bring to light another reason that restrains them from applying for local citizenship. Interviewees referred to the stigmatisation of migrant women, that consider them as being playgirls or looking for a marriage of convenience. In this regard, Toffanin (2015) highlights that the representation of the ideal "romantic" love can be activated in a discriminatory way to stigmatize women who are perceived as damaging the gratuitousness of love with instrumental considerations.

For instance, Callaia, who was born in Niger, felt she was negatively judged by locals because she followed her French partner in her move to the Alsace. Callaia feels she would be less stigmatised if she would have moved for studying. Veronica, who was born in Ukraine, feels that her marriage with an Italian man is being perceived as the union between a rich old Italian man and a pretty economically interested Ukrainian woman.

> In Ukraine, they would ask me "So, you married a rich old man". Instead, here in Italy, they were asking my husband "Oh, you married a Ukrainian girl so she must be a charming girl." And so, that was it…
>
> Veronica, born in Ukraine, studied economics in Ukraine
> and Italy, works as a business manager, Veneto

At the end of the interview, Veronica indicated that she was puzzled about asking for Italian citizenship. Veronica did not want it to seem that she had married to obtain that nationality. The woman finally started the process, several years after her wedding, as she wanted to go to Ukraine for a visit. Due to political instability, Veronica wanted to make sure she would easily enter and leave the country. She thought that having an Italian passport would help her in doing so.

2.2.3. Taking competitive exams

A final strategy that was identified in fieldwork consisted of taking and eventually passing competitive exams. Migrant women perceived these procedures as being more neutral in terms of essentialism, compared to single recruiter's assessment of a curriculum vitae and job interview. It is worth noting that having local citizenship, and local diplomas, might be among the requests for passing a public competition. As a result, this strategy can involve accepting inequalities connected to citizenship and the non-recognition of foreign degrees.

According to the fieldwork conducted, migrant women are passing exams in sectors where there is a lack of staff, or to access positions connected to their migrant identity. In France, migrant women from Russia but also from South Africa were taking exams such as CAPES, to work as language teachers in secondary schools. The conditions for accessing such a public competition includes that of having the citizenship of an EU country and having a degree recognized as being equivalent to the French Master 1.

This section analysed the strategies that women implement to access employment, and eventually graduated jobs. We highlighted that all these paths can simultaneously reproduce but also challenge essentialism and the stratifications of the local labour markets.

2.3. Accepting or surfing essentialism?

To access positions that are "feminised " and "ethnicised ", such as those mentioned in chapter 4, the effort can be perceived as reproducing existing stratifications in the labour market. However, it might also correspond to strategies implemented by migrant women to access employment and a more rewarding position. Rather than accepting essentialism and stratifications, women who implement these strategies might surf these processes and use them to their advantage.

2.3.1. Taking ‘whatever job’

Depending on their economic and social capital, migrant women can feel that they "need " to work to support themselves and their families. Indeed, if they cannot count on savings or a network (including partner, family, friends or acquaintances that can support them financially), migrant women might not be able to withdraw from the labour market or take time to think about strategies to access satisfactory employment. As a result, they might accept any job offer, including posts that do not value their education and experience, namely at the bottom of the employment structure in the care and the cleaning industry.

In the strategy of taking 'whatever job', access to employment is mainly instrumental and aims at obtaining and eventually accumulating income. When women undertake this path, they also tend to implement different responses to cope with downgrading or unsatisfactory jobs. These coping strategies are developed in the following section of the chapter (section 3).

Family, and more especially, the birth of a child, often represents additional costs that push migrant women to take jobs with low social recognition. Several interviewees highlighted this burden. An example is that of Rose, who was born in Congo and studied communication sciences in Italy. Rose worked for several years as a cleaner in order to support her family.

Similarly, Rosella, who was born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, indicates that she had to postpone her studies in medicine to get a job when her child was born. Rosella worked for several years as a domestic worker before being able to return to her abandoned studies.

> He was born, so I lost the [academic] year, he was born, and I understood... Because you understand what it means to be a mother when you have your own child, and the expense no, because a child, you understand what it means in terms of cost only when you have your own son. I understood... No, I had to work, because he was born with a milk allergy, not even my milk... And so I had to... he grew up only with soy milk that costs a fortune — a disaster, not even my milk he digested. Then, immediately to work.
>
> Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
> studied medicine in Italy, works as a doctor, Veneto

The influence that children have in designing migrant women trajectories is further explored in chapter 7.

2.3.2. Undertaking formal and informal vocational training

Migrant women might also use their knowledge of stratifications to implement strategies that aim at obtaining more rewarding positions. One of these strategies consists in undertaking vocational or informal training at work in order to access jobs that are ethnicised and feminised but slightly more rewarding than entry level positions.

For instance, migrant women might feel that they are relegated to jobs with low social recognition in the care sector. This impression was expressed by Rosanna, who was born in Cameroon and studied economics in Italy, when she stated: " This is what they believe we can do ". However, Rosanna, like other migrant women, strategically decided to undertake vocational training so as to access positions more stable and rewarding than entry level positions. Although Rosanna has also worked as an in-home carer, it is thanks to vocational training that she has managed to access positions as a care assistant. Rosanna explains that, in addition to her studies in economics, she decided to undertake the care assistant training in order to have an "extra card to play", as she feared it would be hard to find employment as a graduate.

> As a result, I inquired about the training programme for *OSS,* care assistant. I enrolled in the programme. I was simultaneously following the lectures at the university as they were no longer demanding. And I also passed this programme at the end of 2013. I don't remember it well, anyway... I thought, as I already... I already had my fellow co-nationals who have finished economics, and other things at the university and who didn't, couldn't find work... because at that moment, it was difficult here in Italy, even for the Italians, who were not finding work... I said to myself "I better had an extra card to play, and so if I

> can't find work with my degree, maybe with this diploma [I will]". In fact I can say that it is what has given me work since then. From 2015 until now, it is my *OSS* certificate. Because with my (economics) degree, I have never found a job. That's why I did this course.
>
> Rosanna, born in Cameroon,
> studied economics in Italy, works as a care assistant, Veneto

This strategy does not necessarily involve enrolling in formal training. Women might also find a way to acquire specific skills at work that can enable them to access better positions in ethnicised and feminised sectors. Winika gave an example that illustrates this variation of the strategy. She was born in Ukraine, where she studied and used to work as a music teacher.

When Winika arrived in Italy, she first worked as an in-home carer and then in the hospitality industry. While working as a waitress, Winika felt that "so many people " could do the work she was doing. Winika needed to have more specific skills, that would give her access to a more secure job. This reasoning pushed her to start learning how to make pizzas. Winika did not undertake formal training but acquired the skills at work. From then, she managed to be hired as a *pizzaiola*, and continues to work in that job until now.

> And there, yes, as I understood that I needed something regular, that there are so many people who can come to clean the table, I needed a job that would give me the security to stay at that place. So I learned to make pizzas. I became a *pizzaiola* [pizza maker]. That's where I became... Gimmicks, which allowed me to learn. Because you occupy a post, it is not like that they allow you during working hours to give up your post and learn something nearby, even if you need 2 minutes. I made gimmicks to learn.
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine,
> works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

Both cases, that of Rosanna and Winika, illustrate how migrant women use their knowledge of the labour market, to surf stratifications and access positions that they perceived as more stable or rewarding. Thanks to vocational training, Rosanna has managed to work as a care assistant rather than an in-home carer. At the same time, Winika used "gimmicks " to learn how to make pizzas and work as a *pizzaiola*.

2.3.3. Working with the 'migrant identity'

One of the paths to employment identified by Liversage (2009: 132) concerns the fact of "gaining work based on the immigrant identity ". The scholar specially referred to positions in the welfare labour market such as teachers, caseworkers or counsellors working with other migrants.

We propose to enlarge Liversage's (2009) definition of jobs based on the 'migrant identity', so as to include all the positions in which migrant women can argue that they are more qualified than locals, based on effective or alleged skills they have acquired in their country of birth or through their experience as migrants. These are positions for which recruiters might look for specific linguistic capacities or presumed cultural proximity with users or partners.

These jobs include positions in the social sector, such as those indicated by Liversage (2009). In this regard, we stressed that both in France and Italy there had been an "ethnicisation" of these jobs, connected to the assumption that there is an "ethnic-cultural closeness" with the audience targeted by social policies (De Rudder and Vourc'h, 2006: 182).

Beside jobs connected to migration, chapter 5 highlighted that there is a series of positions for which recruiters might look for candidates with specific mother tongues. These jobs include posts as export managers, language teachers, bilingual secretaries, and social media managers. For instance, in Veneto, we stressed that graduate women from former Soviet Union countries, such as Russia and Ukraine, were likely to be hired as export managers, in order to facilitate trade with that area.

The previous chapter also highlighted that language skills are being valued differently according to gender, racialisation, country of birth, and class. As essentialism might influence the assessment of language skills, using the migrant identity to access employment leads to different outcomes according to the country of birth, and the way recruiters racialised or ethnicised women. For instance, in Veneto Nigerian women seem more likely to put forward their language skills when applying for positions connected to migration (such as cultural mediation), while they tend to be disregarded for other jobs that required language skills (such as social media managers).

Conversely, in Alsace, these women are more easily using their knowledge of English to access positions that do not aim at interacting with other migrants. For instance, Carmel, who was born in Nigeria and studied both in Nigeria and France, indicated that she has worked in that region as an English teacher, a bilingual secretary, and an administrative assistant for international organizations.

Moreover, accessing positions connected to the migrant identity can be part of a broader strategy to access graduate employment. Being employed as a cultural mediator or an export manager may work as a gateway to enter a company or a sector. Subsequently, migrant women might see their responsibilities increased and access jobs that are no longer strictly related to the migrant identity.

An example is that of Rada who started working in a cooperative as a cultural mediator and ended up carrying out tasks similar to that of a social worker. Although her job still involved interacting with migrants, Rada's responsibilities at work had increased, and her tasks were not limited anymore to linguistic and cultural mediation.

> So as a result, I was called from time to time to mediate here, or at the hospital, or *Questura* [police headquarters], so I was still active. It's true, I did not have a fixed job, but I was active in one way or another. And so, after there was... the [cooperative] opened a new project […]. And so, they needed... staff and they called me. And that's when I had the first contract with them.

Rada, born in Cameroon, studied literature in Cameroon
and political sciences in Italy, works as a social worker, Veneto

When it comes to export management, migrant women tend to be hired at first to trade in their mother-tongue or the linguistic area connected to their country of birth. Subsequently, they might be asked to manage the trade with other areas, and to perform tasks of business management that exceed interacting with foreign partners.

An example is that of Veronica, who was born in Ukraine. After obtaining a PhD in economics in Italy, she started working as a project manager to support the export trade of Italian companies in countries of the former Soviet Union. Little by little, Veronica started working with other areas, including China, Brazil, Singapore, and Dubai. After ten years, she quit her job and started working for a private company, where she is in charge of business administration. Veronica started in a position connected to her 'migrant identity' and progressively moved to graduate jobs that did not strictly connect to her migrant background.

> I worked as a project manager. This company dealt with... they were consultants for micro, small, medium-sized Italian companies that wanted to export abroad. Most of it was with the ex-Soviet Union, then I was in charge of China, then I was in charge of Brazil, and Singapore, and Dubai. […] Last year, I practically

> finished last year... since January of this year, I changed, I... work for another company that deals with [name of product]. It's technology. And so there is a product, and I do quite different things: administration, even staff management, a bit of everything. It's a small company that is growing, and so there are so many things to do at the beginning. Organizing fairs, with distributors, that’s it.
>
> Veronica, born in Ukraine, studied economics in Ukraine
> and Italy, works as a business manager, Veneto

Overall, the strategy that consists in entering a company through a position connected to migrant identity and then access other jobs, brings to light that migrant women are also surfing representations and essentialism in order to make a career and access jobs posts more in line with their background.

3. Reacting to employment outcomes

The previous section stressed that women might undertake different strategies and occupy diverse positions within the employment structure. One can wonder how they are reacting to the employment outcomes, both when they feel frustrated or satisfied with their job.

3.1. Professional identity, downgrading and gender orders

Scholars have stressed that prolonged, unsuccessful attempts at securing professional work commensurate with their training are "devastating " for migrant women with tertiary education, as it undermines their mental health, well-being and can lead to depression (Killian and Manohar, 2015: 156). In fieldwork, the frustration connected to not accessing employment in line with studies or previous experience was expressed by both women who had a rewarding position before migrating, and those who had never accessed graduate jobs and have studied in the country of residence.

When it comes to the first group of women, the literature highlights that migration might lead to downward or contradictory class mobility (Parreñas 2001: 150). For instance, Ho (2006) underlines that migration of women with tertiary education often leads to a ‘feminisation’ of their roles, as they find themselves taking up more traditional gender roles as wives and mothers. The concept of ‘contradictory class mobility’ coined by Rhacel Salazar Parreñas (2001) brings to light the fact that migrant women can simultaneously experience upward mobility, connected to their increasing income, and downward mobility related to the decline of their professional and social status.

In our fieldwork, Winika was one of the interviewees who experienced contradictory class mobility. Moving from Ukraine to Italy enabled her to provide income to her family and support her son. However, migration also lead her to work in positions, such as in-home carer, waitress and *pizzaiola*, which did not value her academic background and her previous experience as a music teacher.

In our fieldwork, women who had experience downgrading or contradictory class mobility tended to compare their rewarding position previous to migration, with their status in France or Italy. An example was that of Viola who was born in Russia, where she had a prestigious professional career, as a lecturer in a public university and a financial officer. As mentioned, Viola contrasts her previous position, to the stigmatization she has had to endure in Italy, where she feels perceived as a "migrant from Eastern Europe ", who deserves little respect. Like Viola, Cassia who used to work as an administrative assistant in Dakar also contrasts her previous professional position with her status as unemployed in Alsace.

Both women, those who had experienced downgrading with migration and those had never accessed graduate positions, also tended to contrast their position with that of friends and colleagues who have not migrated. Rosalie gave an example of that trend. She used to work in the Democratic Republic of Congo as a laboratory assistant and used to work as a blue-collar in Italy. Before undertaking vocational training to become a care assistant, Rosalie spent a few months in her country of birth. During her stay, she contrasted her position in Italy with that of her former colleagues.

> So at a certain point, I was discouraged. I came back to Africa a bit... And I wanted to see. But to my surprise, my friends, my colleagues, those with whom we worked, I really found that they had already emerged. They had houses, everything... so I was one foot in Africa and one foot here. In the end, finally, for the wellbeing of my son who was here, studying, I said: "Ok, I have to go back and try again to apply. If I really cannot find anything, then I go back to Africa".
>
> Rosalie, born and studied laboratory technics
> in the Democratic Republic of Congo, works as a care assistant, Veneto

For women who migrated in order to study abroad, an additional source of frustration relates to the fact that their families might have economically supported their migratory project. These women tended to feel guilty as they were not able to financially and symbolically reward their parents for the efforts they had made. Rose, who was born in Congo and had studied communication sciences in Italy, is one of the women who expressed this feeling.

> I didn't live in a poor family, because to come here your parents need to have money. Because if they have to pay for the plane tickets, your parents… the Italian courses that cost about... how much a month... in euros around... about 60 euros monthly, which is quite a lot in my country. So you have to have a lot

> of money to send a child here to Europe. And my parents sacrificed themselves to give me a better future. So I expected to finish my studies, find a good job and help my parents too. For what they had done. Unfortunately. I arrived... Of course, I got married, I have a fantastic family, a fantastic husband, but the reason why I came... to work, to find a good job, until now I have not yet reached this goal...

Rose, born in Congo, studied communication sciences in Italy, unemployed, Veneto

It is worth noting that the feeling of frustration or downgrading does not concern only women that are unemployed or underemployed in jobs with low social recognition. This sensation might concern migrant women all along with the employment structure. It happened that women felt that little value was given to their title and experience, even though they had accessed a position that required a degree.

An emblematic case was that of women who work as administrative assistants for international organisations in Alsace. While Carmel emphasised that she was satisfied with her position, Amapola and Azalea felt there was a gap between their background and their current job. Amapola referred to her previous position as a diplomat, while Azalea indicated that she had experienced that she could access a better position in Russia.

From a class perspective, it happened that migrant women contrasted their background with that of their colleagues, who were in disdain. The feeling of downgrading was reinforced by the fact that they of perceived their colleagues as being less educated or belonging to the working class. Winika emphasised this trend. She used to teach music in Ukraine and Russia and has been working in the hospitality industry in Italy.

> It’s not that you dislike what you do, but it’s the environment with people... basic education. It's what weighs. I am not ashamed to clean the bathrooms, but

> I am ashamed to communicate with those who clean them because it is unbearable. You really don't know... it's not exploited by the imperialist, capitalist world of rude people, or of little...
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine,
> works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

A crucial trend that was identified in fieldwork regarded the fact that the working position was defined in gender terms. Both women, those who had a job and those that were unemployed, emphasised their wish to be working women. They contrasted this representation with the conservative image of homemakers, that depend on the income of their husbands. In doing so, interviewees distanced themselves and blamed the women who are satisfied with being inactive. This attitude was adopted by Violet, who used to work in business management in Russia and works now in export management in Italy.

> I say that I have always wanted to work because economic independence means a lot to me. I am not of these women, I have never been a supported woman [*una mantenuta*], also because I divorced early, I raised my daughter alone. And so I'm one of those tough, strong women who doesn't need a partner.
>
> Violet, studied foreign languages in Russia,
> works as a self-employed export manager, Veneto

In the Italian context, it also happened that migrant women contrasted their wish to remain active with their representation of inactive Italian women. For instance, Veronica stressed that for her combining paid work with care work was fundamental in order to show to her daughters that a woman can do both. She contrasted this representation of gender roles, with that of Italian women that do not work, have a domestic worker, and idle away their time.

> In the end, you really also give this example to your daughters, you understand. Because... Because I could be satisfied and reach high levels. I worked in Ukraine and so. But I decided that I wanted to have a family. I started from scratch, "Let's see if I can get to these levels in Italy", everything to give them an example, that you can work, that you can train, that they respect you, that they want you, that they also... because you know, they also often tell me, I don't know "But how much time, all this time where you take it from, from where you get it". What I see here too often, you know, I don't know, they already don't work, cleaning lady, and they waste time like that, in gossips, in chatting.
>
> Veronica, born in Ukraine, studied economics in Ukraine
> and Italy, works as a business manager, Veneto

Interestingly, a change in gender orders and roles between the *fields* (Bourdieu: 1986) experienced between the country of birth, and that of residence can be interpreted as an expression of social downgrading. Migrant women might feel that relations between genders in their new setting are more conservative than those experienced prior to migration. When conservative gender orders are associated with lower social class, this type of change in gender relations can be seen as resulting from social downgrading between the status prior to migration and that in the current setting. An example of this trend was given by Viola, who was born in Russia and lived in Veneto.

> You know what I have noticed here... when we meet with friends in [city of Russia] we all talk, men, women. Here men strictly talk with men, women with women. This… I feel strange. I feel somewhat excluded. I can't say that my husband's friends don't talk to me, sometimes they speak to me. But generally during meals, when we go to festivals, men talk to my husband. It is a cultural difference. In Russia... maybe with people with less education, if you go away from [city of Russia], in a small town. There, it can be even more ugly: the woman is silent. Here is a middle ground.

Viola, born in Russia, studied philology in Russia, unemployed, Veneto

In the circles she frequents in Veneto, Viola feels that the gender order corresponds to a conservative model that she associates with Russian lower classes. By stressing the difference of gender orders between both contexts, Viola also refers to the fact that she perceives that her circles in Italy are lower class compared to that in Russia.

The previous paragraphs highlighted that migrant women with tertiary education attach significant importance to their professional status and working position. As a result, they feel frustrated when they do not manage to access positions in line with their studies or their previous experience. How are they coping with downgrading and unsatisfactory jobs?

3.2. Coping with downgrading and unsatisfactory jobs

As mentioned, migrant women might feel frustrated when they do not manage to access jobs in line with their previous experience or with their education. As a result, they might enact different strategies to cope with downgrading and unsatisfactory jobs. Although their concrete implementation is slightly different, these strategies might echo the coping paths enacted to react to essentialism introduced in section 1 of this chapter.

Moreover, strategies that aim at accessing employment and that were introduced in section 2 can also correspond to taking action in order to cope and overcome downgrading. For instance, enrolling in training, moving abroad, withdrawing from the labour market, taking competitive exams, applying for citizenship, targeting jobs with lack of staff or connected to the migrant identity are all paths that can be undertaken to cope and eventually overcome downgrading. The following paragraphs analyse other specific strategies that migrant women implement to cope with an unsatisfactory job.

3.2.1. Temporary downgrading and moving once again

Vianello (2014b) observes that migrant women might perceive their migratory experience as an "interlude " in their life, that aims to fulfill a specific objective such as accumulating economic capital. Downward mobility is made more acceptable because it is perceived as being temporary and takes place in a foreign country. As a result, the scholar estimates that migrant women might feel that the downgrading does not radically impact their social status, and when returning to their country of birth, they might regain their previous social position.

It also happened in our fieldwork that migrant women perceived the downgrading as being temporary. It is worth noting that this reaction was generally coupled with other coping strategies that aimed at stressing that they could regain status in their previous country or gain a better position if they move forward to another setting. Moreover, the women who mentioned the possibility of regaining status in their country of birth tended to highlight that their migratory project was not moved by necessity but rather by the wish to experience a new context, and see "how it goes".

> Well, I thought I can always come back home. If it won't work, if I don't receive anything, I can always go to [cities in Russia], and something will be there for me. Just, you know, I tried to push my luck and see how it goes.
>
> Azalea, born in Russia, studied economics in Russia,
> works as an administrative assistant, Alsace

By stressing the possibility of regaining a rewarding social position in their country of birth, migrant women are making reference to their power of mobility. In this regard, Smith (2006) stresses that workers' mobility power is manifest in the time involved with network building, the resources used for planning job moves, and the use of mobility threats to create strategic rewards.

Women also adopted this coping strategy when they migrated in the context of family reunification. In this case, they highlighted that they did not exclusively move to join a partner, but that they also wanted to face new challenges in their careers or gain experience abroad. Moving back to their previous country of residence was perceived as an option that made temporary downgrading more acceptable. For instance, Cassia moved to France to join her partner whom she met in Senegal. She has been struggling to find employment in her field in Alsace. Cassia sees moving back to Dakar, as an option that makes temporary downgrading more acceptable, although she would prefer to gain experience and training in France.

> Because me, in the end, I'm going back home. But also, if I leave, I do not know if my post in Dakar will still be waiting for me... I do not know when I will return. And when I leave, I need to have a French diploma, and then professional experience, so that it will not be that difficult for me to find a job there.
>
> Cassia, born in Senegal,
> studied management and ICT in Senegal, unemployed, Alsace

3.2.2. Differentiation and gender roles

A second strategy used to cope with downgrading consisted of differentiating from other women. This technic was already explored in the dissertation for coping with essentialism. Interestingly, when it comes to coping with downgrading, the strategy tended to be formulated in gender terms. For instance, migrant women would distance themselves from other women that were perceived as being satisfied with their status as homemakers.

As was mentioned, Violet and Veronica in Veneto contrasted their wish to be active in the labour market, with women that were depicted as *mantenute*, meaning that they depended on their partner's income. Both women were active in the labour market and were now satisfied with their position. In their case, differentiation did not strictly consist of coping with downgrading.

Conversely, Anemone was one of the women who implemented the strategy to cope with downgrading. Anemone used to work for the general prosecutor in Azerbaijan and moved to France following her partner, who works as a diplomat. When we met, Anemone was on maternity leave but maintained her intention to continue being an active woman. She contrasted her will with that of other women in 'her situation' who were satisfied with their status of housewives.

> The girls in my position. They also… no one is working here, yes, wives… no one… wives… how to say, I don't know, yes. […] Yes, there is someone who is working and who is in maternity leave, like me, but they have no… they don't think (like) me. But I want to work. If my husband would be [an] ambassador, I would even work, because I don't want to stay at home…
>
> Anemone, born in Azerbaijan, studied Law and worked as
> an advisor to the prosecutor in Azerbaijan, in maternity leave, Alsace

From a gender perspective, it is also interesting to note that migrant women contrasted their capacity to cope with downgrading to that of men. Their ability to work at any level to support their families was often a source of pride and contrasted with men's incapacity to do the same. An example was given by Winika, who contrasted her capacity to cope with downgrading with the failure of her former husband.

> I was living with my husband, then afterwards he became ill, he had a… psychiatric illness. Anyway, it is not easy. In my opinion, it is also connected to the change… because from a teacher, from a role you have in a society there, you pass… he was working irregularly on naval sites, you know, that every time you risk your life, all off the books work, endless working days... He had a mental unbalance, I had to bring him home, and we got divorced, because my son was already here. He said: "Let's go back there". I said: "No, you go back, if you find work, after that we can talk about it". And I say, my son is not a balloon, he just started to get inserted here, as soon as he started learning the language… from one country to another country, to a third country. What comes out then?
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine,
> works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

Winika's decision to leave her husband also had substantial emotional implications, as she stresses that she has sacrificed her marriage to give a possibility to her son to experience upward mobility. Coping by interpreting downgrading as a sacrifice for children is explored in the following type of strategies.

Before moving on to other strategies, it is worth noting that class differentiation was also used as a strategy to cope with downgrading. As mentioned earlier, Winika indicated that she felt downgraded because of the lack of education of her colleagues. On the one hand, we stressed that contrasting her level of education with that of other employees in the workplace reinforces her feeling of being downgraded. On the other hand, it is also a way to differentiate oneself from them: Winika might be performing a similar job, but she feels superior to her co-workers because of her level of education, and ultimately because of her class.

3.2.3. A sacrifice for the children and intergenerational upward mobility

Migrant women also cope with downgrading by associating temporary downgrading with the feeling of making a sacrifice for the children. In this context, accepting jobs that are not in line with their background responds to the need of accumulating economic capital in order to sustain their children, or even enable them to have a career and therefore a better social position.

As highlighted by Kofman and Raghuram (2015), mothers can also be responsible for the intergenerational transfer of class privileges. Following this reasoning, we can argue that by investing in their children's education and career, these migrant women are implementing a strategy that aims at intergenerational upward social mobility. This objective makes temporary downgrading more acceptable.

An example was that of Winika, who used to teach music in Ukraine and works now in Veneto as a *pizzaiola*. Winika indicates that she has supported downgrading and 'sacrificed' her marriage in order to give to her son a 'European situation'. She wanted her son to study in Italy and have a career in western Europe.

> I firmly had that plan of making him study here. You know, having a European situation and then... maybe I'm obstinate. So I sacrificed my husband to say so, we passed… but maybe even that, he went into a crisis [because] the activity did not correspond to his... his soul. So my son and I stayed here. He has now moved to Basel. Now I can also move somewhere else.
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine,
> works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

Now that Winika's son has finished his studies and moved abroad, she feels that she can focus once again on her career. She is now enrolled in tertiary education in Italy and is eventually planning to move abroad. Her temporary downgrading enabled her son to experience upward social mobility.

3.2.4. Resistance thinking and minimisation

Lastly, two additional strategies that are worth noting echo paths undertaken to cope with essentialism analysed in the first section of this chapter. The first one concerns resistance thinking. Despite downgrading and not accessing satisfactory jobs, migrant women feel that their employment position does not question their capacities. The feel qualified and skilled to access the job they want, but maintain the belief that employers do not acknowledge their worth.

Resistance thinking was already present in the first path on 'temporary downgrading and moving once again'. Indeed, the women that follow this strategy indicate that they feel their worth would be better valued in other contexts, such as in their country of birth or another country to which they might migrate.

Other women, who did not mention their intention to move abroad, also manifested resistance thinking by affirming their worth. In these cases, interviewees stressed that recruiters were not able to acknowledge their skills, but found that if employers would give them the chance to work at least once they would see that these women are good workers. In addition, these women also referred to their experience abroad as proof of their ability to work in their area. Two examples of resistance thinking were given by Rose, who used to work in sales in Congo and studied communication sciences in Italy, and by Raisa, who was born in Cameroon and studied communication sciences and marketing in Italy.

> I always had compliments, no, from my family, friends. "But how do you sell, and people... that is, they pay, people really take everything". And "compared to me when I go to offer goods" and therefore... in short, I really like conquering customers. So... That's why I would really like to work in that… in that field.

> […] Professional experience. Because everywhere you go they ask for experience, but if you do not give me the chance to work once, I will never have experience.
>
> Rose, born in Congo, studied communication sciences in Italy, unemployed, Veneto

> Therefore the important thing is just to enter. Once you are in, they see that: "Ah, she is a capable person". Because there are cultural barriers that cause fear: "Maybe who knows, who knows what...". Once you are in... The few foreigners who have managed to get a job, they keep it for ten years because, in the end, they see that they are capable people. But... there are only barriers at the beginning that hold you back a little. You just need to enter. I believe that when I find work, they will never let me go, they will say: "Yes, yes, she is good, *mamma mia*". (laughs) Then, you just need to search, find… hopefully.
>
> Raisa, born in Cameroon, studied communication sciences
> and marketing in Italy, cultural mediator, Veneto

When coping with downgrading, minimising strategies consists of highlighting the positive aspects of the job, even though it may not correspond to the educational background. Women used this response to downgrading in combination with other strategies. For instance, Winika, who used to work as a music teacher in Ukraine and works as pizzaiola in Veneto, combined this strategy with distancing. Although Winika highlighted her superiority in educational terms compared to her colleagues, she also identifies positive aspects of her professional trajectory in Italy. Winika specially mentioned the benefits she has gained from her experience as an in-home carer. The interviewee finds that compared to other women who do the same work, she had the chance to be in a family where people were talking to each other and as a result, she was able to learn the language.

> Relatives came to visit, even though they were speaking in dialect, but still, they talked around me. It was a linguistic aura. They set the table and repeated

> the same movements, accompanied by the same words. Some women are here for six or ten years, but alone with an older person, and she is alone. They do not speak Italian until now because they have nobody to learn from. This is why I say I was also lucky in some things.
>
> Winika, born in Ukraine, studied music pedagogy in Ukraine, works as a pizzaiola, Veneto

3.3. Explaining success in accessing satisfactory jobs

In fieldwork interviews, few women expressed that they were satisfied with their working position. As mentioned, the feeling of being downgraded did not strictly relate to holding a graduate position. Migrant women could also feel their background was little valued, including when they had posts that require tertiary education. Conversely, graduate migrant women may also feel satisfied with their job, although it does not correspond to their background. In this section, we give a brief overview of how migrant women explain their success in accessing a satisfactory job.

3.3.1. Counting on social capital

The previous section highlighted the ambivalence of social networks, stressing how it can, on the one hand, lead to reproducing stratifications, and on the other hand, aim at circumventing essentialism in the recruitment process. Migrant women, especially in the Italian context, highlighted the importance of their social capital in accessing satisfactory jobs.

A compelling account was given by Yasmin, who was born in Ukraine and has worked in business management in Veneto. Yasmin finds that a decisive difference between her trajectory and that of other migrants who struggle to find employment in their field is that her partner was an Italian, and enrolled in university where she met Italian peers.

> I was facilitated when I arrived in Italy from this relationship because I was a guest, financially supported, so I did not arrive in a vacuum even though, actually I was not wholly maintained, I gave my financial contribution... [...] But in this period I was able to see Italy from a different point of view compared to the other migrants who arrive. From a university perspective. I don't know if I can explain myself, because it is one thing to arrive here as a worker, so you have a rather particular field of communication and relationships. Instead within the university, I saw, it was variegated... there were boys from all over the world, from Ethiopia, Morocco... [...] So I saw, I had a way of discussing the Italian situation from different points of view, without Veneto centrism. The level of communication was also different, not only talking about the supermarket, the elderly and problems of this kind, but I had the opportunity to talk about other things, and I believe this has contributed a great deal to what followed later.
>
> Yasmin, born in Ukraine, studied forestry in Ukraine
> and foreign languages in Italy, has been working as business manager, Veneto

Yasmin highlights that engaging with Italians and foreign students enable her to see "Italy from a different point of view". Her comment also involves class relations. Yasmin compares the "level of communication" between students and that of migrants who she probably associates with care work as she mentions that they "only" talk about supermarkets, elderly and have Veneto centrist views. Therefore, Yasmin associates her success in accessing satisfactory employment to her social capital embedded in networks of more educated and upper classes compared to other migrants. Her account combines a reference to social networks and a strategy of differentiation from other groups of migrants.

When evoking the networks that facilitated their access to employment, women mentioned both strong and weak bridging ties (Granovetter, 1983; Moroşanu, 2016). Weak bridging ties were mentioned by Rada, who studied both in Cameroon and Italy and works in a position similar to that of a social worker in Veneto. Rada highlights that her first contact with the NGO where she works now was via a woman she met in a workshop on maternity. Rada was invited by a friend to talk with other mothers about her way of caring for her children. In the workshop, she met a woman who asked her about her background and indicated she could transfer her resume to the NGO. From Rada's perspective, it was a "stroke of luck" to meet that woman.

> I would say that, for example, in my case, as I said earlier, it was a stroke of luck to meet this lady who was working in the social service, who was… a liaison between me and this cooperative. It was really... I think that if I had simply sent my file, my curriculum, I do not think that... I do not know, but I do not think they would... maybe really considered my file.
>
> Rada, born in Cameroon, studied literature in Cameroon
> and political sciences in Italy, works as a social worker, Veneto

On the other hand, social networks might not directly lead to employment but still be crucial in designing strategies toward satisfying jobs. Migrant women also mentioned the role of their network as a powerful emotional and tactical support. Carmel, who studied both in Nigeria and France and worked as an administrative assistant in Alsace, gave an example of this type of support. She is one of the few women that underlined that she felt happy and fulfilled (*épanouie)* with her work. Besides education and ambition, Carmel finds that friends, who had similar trajectories, also pushed her and helped her to access the position she wanted.

> Education is very important. Because otherwise, you stay at the bottom of the... Otherwise, I think I would have continued to do the cleaning, to do... you see, the odd jobs that do not lead to anything and then, that's it. It helped me a lot.

> And then, too, you have to be... you have to be really, really motivated, really determined, uh... really want to succeed. Ambitious. I have... I think I also have ambition... I also have friends who pushed me, uh... I have friends who are really... well friends who are Nigerians as well... well who are like me... who have had an education in Nigeria. They arrived. They are really determined... Uh, so... We help each other.

Carmel, born in Nigeria, studied languages in Nigeria and human resources in France, used to work as an administrative assistant in Alsace, moved to Belgium

3.3.2. Individual and collective capacities

Migrant women also explain their success in accessing the jobs they wanted by referring to their own capacities and work ethics. The trend of enhancing one's abilities was already stressed as a strategy to cope with both essentialism and downgrading. Interestingly, when it comes to explaining success, interviewees enhance their capacities both in individual and collective terms. The second form consists of highlighting capacities defined in cultural, national, or gender terms, which refer to a group in which the interviewees include themselves. Therefore, this practice involves forms of essentialism, meaning that the person includes herself in a group to which specific traits or capacities are associated.

In fieldwork, Yasmin spoke of her enhanced individual and collective capacities. On the one hand, she emphasized her individual ability to learn languages, compared to her Ukrainian husband and other migrants.

> Then I must say that I have a bit of an aptitude, because I perform the same in English and Polish, even in Italian, because I have an ear. He [her husband] speaks, makes mistakes, and fails to write. I'm pushing him a lot because he didn't go to the university, that makes it easy for you, you take notes, and that

> gives you a lot of vocabulary, and you produce something written. One thing that most migrants find it hard to do.
>
> Yasmin, born in Ukraine, studied forestry in Ukraine
> and foreign languages in Italy, has been working as business manager, Veneto

On the other hand, Yasmin stressed the capacities of Ukrainian women, including herself, to support their families, both by providing income and managing the family economy and paperwork. Interestingly, these collective capacities are defined both in gender and national terms. Yasmin describes them in contrast with an essentialised perception of men's capacities and gender relations in the Albanian community.

> It is more difficult for men. Firstly at the linguistic level, and then to adapt, to understand that he only has a few tools, he is powerless. And if they come following their wives, that the relationship in the family was good, they manage to insert themselves little by little, but even here the woman is the one that pushes, that carries the most massive stone: "Come on, let's do it". She is the one. I know a lot of families, where it is the woman who runs, almost a matriarchy, because the man is impotent here, he can't speak Italian. It is the woman who manages everything, bank, administration. Perhaps he has a permanent job, he earns money, but then, in the end, she is the one who is head of the family. This is that... that is perhaps completely different if you go to the Albanian community, where the man is always head of the family, family management is completely different.
>
> Yasmin, born in Ukraine, studied forestry in Ukraine
> and foreign languages in Italy, has been working as business manager, Veneto

As mentioned earlier in the dissertation, migrant women also perceived recruiter's positive stereotypes concerning their collective essentialised capacities, as facilitating access to employment. For instance, we indicated that Veronica, who works in business management in Veneto, feels that recruiters tend to see Eastern European women as being good workers. Similarly, in Alsace, Abelia stressed that Eastern Europeans have what she calls a "good reputation ", which she feels helped her to access intermediary positions.

When it comes to individual capacities, we mentioned that Carmel, who studied in Nigeria and France, finds that one of the factors that contributed to accessing jobs she wanted was her motivation and ambition. Similarly, in Italy, Yasmin also sees motivation and ambition as being crucial in her career. She finds that: "If a person has clear objectives, she can get what she wants". To a certain extent, Yasmin's statement blamed those who have not accessed graduate positions. If they have not managed to do so, it is because they were not motivated or ambitious enough.

3.3.3. Faith

It also happened that migrant women who hold satisfactory positions interpret their professional trajectory in religious terms. For instance, Carmel, who used to work in Alsace, referred to 'Lord's grace', and Rosella, who works in Veneto, mentioned the 'Providence', to explain how they have managed to access the jobs they wanted. Both women highlight the fact that only a few people would be able to follow the paths they have. From their perspective, it is thanks to their faith that they have managed to work where they are today.

> For someone who came to France in 2006, it's been almost twelve years now, my journey so far... It's not something that happens to everyone. You see, it's... I had a path anyway... For me, it's very beautiful, and for me, it's God who helped me a lot in that.

Carmel, born in Nigeria, studied languages in Nigeria and human resources in France, used to work as an administrative assistant in Alsace, moved to Belgium

Similarly, Rosella interprets her life in terms of ‘Providences’. She finds that her trajectory was not the result of her will but that the ‘Providence’ has chosen the path she had to follow. Rosella identifies three pivotal moments in her life, in which she finds that the events need to be interpreted in religious terms. The first ‘Providence’ consisted of moving to Italy through a catholic channel. The second was that the person that employed her as a domestic worker gave her an advance on her salary. As a result, Rosella could pay the enrollment fees at the university. The third one consisted of being able to pass the exams in medicine while working and caring for her son. Rosella feels that the energy she found to study "cannot come from a human being".

> I had the chance, so I say... the Providence of coming to Italy. It was not by choice. It was because of the Providence that I had. From... Don (a priest) who has... who welcomed me into his community, where he welcomed students from the third world. [...] I didn't know anyone, I didn't even know the language. That’s why I say it was a Providence. Because if I had to choose the country... I would have chosen where French is spoken since I spoke French. [...]
>
> The second Providence was that the lady where I was working as a domestic worker, she said, "[Rosella], you gave birth, it's been years, why don't you talk about your studies anymore?". I said: "I can't get back because I don't have money to pay, to pay university fees, so I can't go back anymore." She asks me: "How much money is it?". "I don't know", because I didn't even dare to go and ask, because four years had passed. Then she told me: "Why you didn't tell me, I could... I can anticipate you every month". [...]
>
> I spent a whole year sleeping only half an hour, yeah. I slept for only half an hour but... In my opinion, now that I think about it, I say no, this cannot come from a human being, in my opinion, it is the third Providence of my life. Because in my opinion, surely the Lord has given me a hand. [...]
>
> This is my story... my graduation odyssey. I no longer call it an odyssey, I call it a Providence, because I do not believe, in my opinion, it is the Lord.

Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
studied medicine in Italy, works as a doctor, Veneto

Overall, migrant women who have accessed satisfactory jobs had different ways of interpreting their professional trajectory, coming from the faith to valuing collective and individual capacities, or enhancing the role of their social network. Most of these women emphasized the uniqueness of their careers, sometimes putting their trajectory in opposition to those of other women who did not succeed in getting the job they wanted.

Conclusions of chapter 6

After studying in the previous chapters how local labour markets are stratified and influenced by essentialism, chapter 6 has shown how migrant women with tertiary education react to this twin phenomenon. The first section illustrated how migrant women cope, resist and eventually challenge essentialism. The second section studied the strategies that are implemented to access employment or satisfactory jobs. Finally, the third section analysed how migrant women with tertiary education react to their position in the local labour markets. More specifically, we studied how they cope with downgrading or explain their success in accessing satisfying jobs.

Throughout the chapter, it was stressed that gender, class, and eventually identities defined in terms of citizenship, country of birth or ‘culture’, interact to cope with essentialism and downgrading. While some coping strategies might reproduce forms of essentialism, others might aim at resisting and challenging them. As a result, everyday resistance practices and employment strategies that look to avoid confinement in jobs with low social recognition can be at the base of social change. By implementing these practices and strategies, migrant women with tertiary education are challenging and reconfiguring the stratifications of the local labour markets.

Chapter 7. "Managing the child, this was the most important difficulty". Policies, trajectories and mothering.

Rosella has been working in Italy as a doctor for over twenty years. This woman describes the path she followed to obtain her degree in medicine as an odyssey that lasted more than ten years. By the beginning of the 1980s, she was studying medicine in the Democratic Republic of Congo, but she had to quit her studies and leave the country. Rosella arrived in Veneto, together with the future father of her son, and enrolled in medicine once again.

To make a living in Italy, Rosella combined her studies with working as a domestic worker, a babysitter, and a cleaner in the hospitality industry. A few years after her migration, Rosella got pregnant and temporarily interrupted her studies once again. When she enrolled once again in education to finish her career, she had to combine her studies with paid work and the work of caring for her child. From her perspective, "Managing the child, this was the most important difficulty".

> So I resumed my studies, then there, it was very, very difficult, because I only needed a year to finish, I was a mother, a worker, a student, and even a wife. So I had four... four activities.
>
> Rosella, born in the Democratic Republic of Congo,
> studied medicine in Italy, works as a doctor, Veneto

As illustrated by Rosella’s experience and perspective, combining the work of caring for one’s child and paid work emerged in fieldwork as a crucial challenge that migrant mothers with tertiary education are facing. Being mothers have significant implications in their professional trajectories. Although access to the labour market by migrant women is connected to the way childcare is being managed (Bonizzoni, 2014) and to the normative order in terms of gender (Kofman 2012), family-related issues have received little attention in the literature on migrant women with tertiary education (Riaño, 2012; Shinozaki, 2014; Wong, 2014; Schaer, Dahinden and Toader, 2017). This chapter aims at filling the gap and deepening the knowledge in this field by analysing how the interplay between migration, welfare and care regimes, gender orders, and labour market stratifications, define the trajectories of migrant mothers with tertiary education. Moreover, it studies how family reunification and child-care policies shape migrant women's access to employment.

The methodology used in this chapter to analyse the interviews is that of thematic interviews combined with biographical policy evaluation (Apitzsch, 2008), as it permits to highlight how policies impact migrants' lives and how they react to it. The chapter opens with a prelude which introduces how the intersection between gender order(s), care and migration regimes has been analysed in the literature and presents specificities of the Italian and French models. The following sections consist of four portraits that emphasise different aspects of how mothering influences migrant women’s trajectories.

Prelude: Gender, care and migration regimes

Chapter 1 highlighted that, although women in western Europe has increasingly been participating in the labour market, gender ideologies continue to convey the idea that mothers should be the main carers of their children. As mentioned women remain the primary providers of unpaid reproductive work (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015), leading to what Balbo (1978) has called the double presence (*doppia presenza*), meaning that they are involved in both productive (or reproductive) work in the labour market, and unpaid reproductive work at home. In this context, access to care provision is key to enable migrant women to have a career, and regimes that retain the locus of care within the family might reinforce the conventional gendered division of labour (Shinozaki, 2014).

A consistent body of the literature has studied the interconnection between care and migration regimes, focusing on the presence of migrant women working in the domestic and care sectors. As mentioned in chapter 1 of the dissertation, *childcare regimes* are associated with three policy-related factors, which include the extent and nature of provisions, especially for under-school children; policies facilitating the combination between care work and paid work such as maternity, paternity and parental leaves; and cash benefits for child-care (Williams and Gavanas, 2016). These policies are combined with discourses and ideologies on what constitutes appropriate childcare, and expectations concerning mothers', fathers', and relatives' roles. *Migration regimes* relate to the policies that rule the entrance, settlement and naturalization rights as well as political, social, civil, cultural, and employment rights of migrants and their families, and norms that govern the relations between majority and minority groups.

As far as the intersection between care and migration regimes is concerned, scholars have theorised concepts such as that of *global care chains* or *circuits of care*, to emphasize how women from the Global South are migrating to care for children of women from the Global North, leaving their children behind and supporting them at a distance (Parreñas 2001b, Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2003, Williams 2010). These practices lead to both a care deficit in the Global South and an increase of inequalities in social reproduction. The demand for childcare is connected to the lack of public facilities and public support provided in the form of cash transfers, which encourages families to look for low-paid care provided by workers with low bargaining power, namely migrant women. With these theories, scholars highlight the irony of women from the Global North getting broader access to the labour market at the expenses of women from the Global South (Williams, 2010). However, this is not the only way in which care and migration intersect and shape migrant women trajectories. For instance, migrant women are also enacting childcare strategies locally (Bonizzoni, 2014).

As far as Alsace and Veneto are concerned, the two areas are embedded in national contexts which tend to be associated with different models of care and welfare. Depending on the typology that is being adopted, some scholars consider that France and Italy share the same model of welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1990), while others argue that they are different. Arts and Gelissen (2002) highlights that in Mediterranean welfare states, including Italy, care of children tends to be privatised to the family. Kofman and Raghuram (2015: 69) consider that Southern European conservative variant is characterised by strong familial welfare and stratified benefits, while France combines elements of different welfare regimes and could, therefore, be regarded as a hybrid.

Scholars have highlighted the differences between France and Italy concerning the provision of childcare. France tends to be regarded as having high levels of overall childcare which is partly based on registered childminders, while Italy is perceived as a country where the provision of formal services for young children is inadequate (Kofman, Raghuram, 2015: 82-83). Similarly, the comparative study of Craig and Mullan (2010) estimates that in France, there is more "extensive support for women to combine the roles of mother and worker". More specifically, maternity leave is state-funded, non-parental childcare is publicly subsidised, and there is near−universal coverage, especially for children over two years. Conversely, the two researchers observe that in Italy only 6% of children under three years are in full−time daycare. As a result, maternity leave of 20 weeks is almost compulsory, and after that period, mothers either withdraw from the workforce or rely on extended family for child−care assistance. Last but not least, together with Spain and Greece, Italy is regarded as having among the "lowest female labour force participation in the European

Union" (Ibid). Martin (2015) estimates that the current political context in France could lead the country to "run on the Southern track". However, the "balance sheet" between state and family is significantly different from other Southern European countries, as the state is still supporting households through public services, especially for childcare.

1. Winika: moving, staying and downgrading for children

Winika was born in Ukraine, by the end of the 1960s. She studied music teaching and moved to Russia with her partner to taught music. After a few years, Winika and her partner moved back to Ukraine, but as the Soviet Union was collapsing, they considered migrating to western Europe to secure income, as they already had a son and wanted to support the family. The first to leave was her husband, but as he felt it was easier for women to find work, Winika joined him a year later. Their son would stay in Ukraine until they earn the income requested for family reunification.

Winika first worked as an in-home carer. After that, she started looking for what she calls a ‘real work’. She found a part-time job in a restaurant, which she completed with a part-time position in a patisserie. While working at the restaurant, Winika felt that ‘anyone’ could do her job. To access a more secure post, she started learning how to make pizzas. In the meantime, the restaurant where she was working went bankrupt, and she had to look for a new job. Winika started working as a pizzaiola for another company, and could finally reunite with her son.

Winika’s husband went into depression and wanted to move back to Ukraine. From Winika’s perspective, her husband was not coping with the downgrading: from being a teacher, he was now working off the books as a blue-collar worker in shipyards. Winika wanted to stay in Italy to secure a ‘European situation’ for her son. She divorced and stayed alone with her son. When we met, Winika's son was finishing his studies and has moved to another country. The woman felt she could finally focus on her career and enrolled again at the university.

1.1. Labour market stratifications and transnational mothering

Winika's decision to move to Italy connects to structural inequalities of globalisation that forced her to temporary sacrifice her emotional needs and those of her son for the material needs of her family (Parreñas 2001b). Faced with the economic recession that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, Winika decided to move with her partner to Italy in order to financially support their family.

Moreover, her migration also connects to the way her partner perceived the stratifications of the Italian labour market based on gender and country of origin. We mentioned that Winika's partner was the first to migrate to Italy, but as he noted that migrant women had more chances to get a job, he convinced his wife to move with him. As a result, during a period, Winika practised what the literature identifies as mothering from a distance or "transnational mothering" (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997).

For women, the fact of being far from their children enters in contradiction with the ideology that sees mothers as the primary nurturers and caretakers (Parreñas, 2001b). As a result, migrant mothers adopt several strategies to negotiate their absence and give meaning to the contradictions they experience through migration (Fresnoza-Flot, 2009). In Winika's case, sending remittances and financially supporting her son was giving sense to her initial decision to migrate.

1.2. The need for income and migration regimes

The combination of a restrictive migration regime, and gender ideology that presents mothers as the main take-carers and determines emotions (Parreñas, 2001b), significantly marked Winika’s employment trajectory and strategies. Indeed, Winika’s main objective was that of securing income at first to reunite with her son, and then to ensure he would have a ‘European situation’, meaning a career in western Europe.

As a result, and to accumulate a higher income, she decided first to couple two part-time jobs, one in the morning at the patisserie, and one in the evening at the restaurant. In a second moment, and as she wanted to ensure a more stable income, she designed an employment strategy, which consisted in gaining skills in the sector in which she was confined, namely the hospitality sector. Winika indicates that she used "gimmicks" to learn how to make pizzas while working, and became pizzaiola. Thanks to her income and her employment situation, she was able to bring her son to Italy, after years of transnational mothering. Winika’s strategy was that of surfing labour market stratifications by staying in a sector where Ukrainian migrant women are over-represented in the local labour market but gaining a specific skill so to access a position more stable and rewarding than entry-level positions.

1.3. Downgrading and intergenerational upward mobility

Another relevant aspect that emerges from Winika’s account is that she accepted her downgrading in Italy and put aside her aspirations, as a cost to pay so that her son could have a ‘European situation’. In this regard, Winika indicates that now that her son has finished his studies, she can think about her aspirations, and go back to university or move abroad, as if projects concerning herself would have been disregarded for years.

Moreover, the woman specifies that she had ‘sacrificed’ her marriage for this objective, as her partner went into depression and decided to move back alone to Ukraine. Winika compares her determinism in providing upward mobility to her son, and her acceptance of downgrading, with the fragility of her husband, who did not cope with it.

In this regard, the literature stresses that mothers tend to be responsible for the intergenerational transfer of class privileges (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015). By investing in their children's education and career, these migrant women are implementing a strategy that aims at intergenerational upward social mobility. When it comes to Winika, she presents her professional trajectory in Italy as a sacrifice to enable her son to have upward social mobility. By following this strategy, Winika is also ensuring intergenerational upward social mobility.

Moreover, Winika's experience highlights that migrant mothers' focus on providing upward mobility to their children is also a strategy to cope with the fact of working in posts that do not reflect their background. Winika's firm intention to give a 'European situation' to her son enabled her to cope with downgrading, while her husband was going into depression.

Therefore, we could argue that gender ideology that sees mothers as primary nurturers and caretakers has multiple implications. On the one hand, migrant mothers might set aside their careers and affective life (for instance, with their husband) to give priority to their children's trajectory. On the other hand, this objective might give them the strength to cope with downgrading and enable them to gain intergenerational upward social mobility.

2. Veronica: Adapting paid work to unpaid care work.

Veronica was also born in Ukraine but by the end of the 1970s. Once she finished high school, the woman enrolled in economics. While studying, she had a first professional experience working for a joint venture between Ukraine and Austria. After a couple of years, Veronica quit her job and started working as an administrative assistant for a private university.

By the beginning of the 2000s, Veronica was offered by her employing university to take part in a Master's programme that was taking place in Italy. During her stay, Veronica met her Italian partner, who later became the father of her two daughters. Therefore, she decided to quit her job and leave her career in Ukraine to start a family in Italy.

When arriving in Italy, Veronica was struggling for a few months to find employment in her field until she found a position teaching business English through temporary agencies. Meanwhile, she applied for a PhD in economics and management at an Italian university, got accepted and obtained a grant. Once she finished her PhD programme, Veronica started looking for a part-time job in her field in order to combine paid work with unpaid care work, as she already had two children.

She started working part-time, as a project manager, counselling Italian companies that wanted to export their products. After over six years of working in the company, Veronica resigned as she wanted to experience new professional challenges and accessed a post as a business manager. Meanwhile, and in order to support her daughters, who were doing gymnastics, Veronica started working as a part-time coach.

2.1. Leaving a career to start a family abroad

Veronica stresses that having children was a priority for her. She did not directly move for them, as she was childless when she migrated. However, it was her firm intention to have children that pushed her to move abroad. Veronica's wish relates to gender roles and to the pressure that rests on women's shoulders for becoming mothers. In our fieldwork, other interviewees referred to the 'need' to become mothers. This calling differs from one woman to the other, depending on the contexts in which they have socialized, and the representations they have of gender roles.

Veronica also specifies that she quit a rewarding social position in Ukraine to start a family in Italy. From a gender perspective, it is worth noting that Veronica was the one who moved and had to "start from scratch", while her husband continued his career. This decision also intersects with the perception of global inequalities. Indeed, the couple decided to start a family in the country where they met, which also happened to be wealthier compared to Ukraine.

In her account, Veronica indicates that she accepted to lose the status she had gained in Ukraine as a price to pay to have a family in Italy. Nonetheless, she also specifies that she did not move with the intention of leaving aside her career. On the opposite, Veronica saw her move as a new professional challenge, as she would try hard to get a position in Italy equivalent to that she had in Ukraine: "Let's see if I can get to these levels in Italy", was her professional objective after migrating.

2.2. A work compatible with motherhood

Following the gender ideology according to which mothers are the primary caretakers, migrant women might accept giving priority to their partners' career and aspire to access part-time jobs in order to ensure the social reproduction of their family. Therefore, working part-time can become a priority in migrant women's aspirations.

In the negotiation of care responsibilities within the household, Veronica explains that the couple decided to give priority to her partner's career. The woman indicates that an option could have been that of hiring a baby-sitter but that she wanted to spend time with her daughters. Thanks to her economic capital and the financial support of her husband, Veronica was not forced to accept any job to support her family and could be more selective. To combine care for her children and paid work, she started looking for a part-time position. Veronica explains that when she started looking for a job after obtaining a PhD in Italy, the difficulty was not that of finding work, but that of obtaining an offer to work part-time.

On the other hand, Veronica indicates that her partner had offered her to stay home as he had enough income to support the household. However, the woman firmly wanted to stay active in the labour market. Veronica’s wish to have a job and a professional career is connected to her perception of gender roles. From her perspective, women need to combine unpaid care work and paid work. She contrasted this representation of gender roles, with that of Italian housewives that, from her perspective, do not work, have a domestic worker, and idle away their time.

Veronica also connects her wish to stay active and have a professional career to her daughters. The woman argues that one of the motivations she had to find employment was to be able to provide an example to her daughters that they can have a career and care for their children.

In the end, you really also give this example to your daughters, you understand. Because... Because I could be satisfied and reach high levels. I worked in Ukraine and so. But I decided that I wanted to have a family. I started from scratch, "Let's see if I can get to these levels in Italy", everything to give them an example, that you can work, that you can train, that they respect you, that they want you, that they also... because you know, they also often tell me, I don't know "But how much time, all this time where you take it from, from where you get it". What I see here too often, you know, I don't know, they already don't work, cleaning lady, and they waste time like that, in gossips, in chatting.

2.3. Class, knowledge and trajectories

Veronica’s account also highlights how class influences the trajectories of migrant women. Compared to Winika, Veronica counted on economic, social and cultural capital in Italy that could support her and give her the tools to elaborate a strategy that would enable her to access employment in her field. Veronica had social capital that included locals with graduate positions, such as her husband and her university peers. Moreover, she could also count on her partner to financially support her.

In addition, Veronica also was proficient in English and had a degree in a field, that of economics, where the knowledge could more easily be transferred to the Italian context (Kofman, 2012). All these factors contributed to the fact that Veronica perceived her job hunting in Italy as a personal choice rather than as an obligation, and that she had better access to graduate positions compared to Winika.

Veronica’s experience highlight that migrant women adapt their professional strategies and aspirations to combine paid work and unpaid work, caring for their children. The previous paragraphs also emphasise how gender orders and women’s representation of mothering influence their trajectories. In Veronica’s case, this representation pushed her to quit a rewarding position and move abroad to start a family, but also to look for a part-time job and have a career in Italy.

3. Amapola: Maternity leave, fears and guiltiness.

Amapola was born in Albania near the end of the 1970s. At the university, she undertook a career in French literature and philology. Once she graduated, Amapola started working as a project assistant for European institutions in Tirana, and then took a public competition to work at the Ministry of foreign affairs. As she succeeded, Amapola was appointed to a position as a diplomat in France. A year after her arrival, she met her French partner and, while she was still working as a diplomat, Amapola gave birth to her first son.

Four years after living in Alsace, Amapola's appointment was arriving at an end and, if she wanted to continue her career, she had to move back to Tirana. Together with her partner, the woman decided to stay in Alsace. As a result, she quit her job and struggled for a few years before accessing a new position. She was going from one intermediary agency to another with her resume but did not receive any job offers.

After years of job hunting, Amapola presented an application to work as an administrative assistant for international organisations. The woman got accepted and had a few fixed-term contracts until she signed a permanent contract with the organization in 2010. While Amapola was working with a temporary status, she gave birth to her second son. After years of looking for a job, she feared her contract with the international organisation would not be renewed. As a result, Amapola decided with her partner that he would take a year off to care for the child, while she would go back to work after ten weeks of maternity leave. When we met for the interview, Ampaola was still working in that position.

Like Veronica, Amapola also left a career to start a family. However, as the issue was already analysed in the previous section, we will focus on other issues that emerged from her account.

3.1. Working with a permit for family reasons

The portrait of Winika, highlighted how restrictive policies concerning family reunification might lead migrant women to take 'whatever job', as long as it provides income to fulfil the requisites for reuniting with their children. Amapola's experience highlights other consequences that restrictive family migratory policies have on the trajectories of migrant women. Permits for family reasons might provide access to the labour market, similar to that of migrants with long term residence permits. However, as they tend to be only valid for a year, recruiters might be reluctant to hire candidates with that type of permit. Indeed, Amapola highlights that staff in intermediary agencies were sceptical on whether her one-year residence permit would be renewed and preferred not risking to hire her.

3.2. Maternity leave and guiltiness

When Amapola had her second son, we mentioned that she was working with a temporary contract. Although she would have preferred to stay at home longer with her newborn, she decided to go back to work as she feared her contract would not be renewed. Her partner decided to take a one year leave from work to care for their child. This decision would, on the one hand, limit the income he would be bringing home to support the family, and on the other hand, it would enable Amapola to continue working and eventually progress in her career, after years of unemployment.

For migrant women, pregnancy might be perceived as being risky from a professional point of view. When they have struggled to access employment, they might feel afraid or guilty when going on maternity leave. The feeling is reinforced if their pregnancy takes place when they are under a temporary contract.

Amapola’s experience is one of the few cases in fieldwork, where fathers ensured the main care work when their children were new-borns. Her experience contrasted, at least for a few months, with the gender ideology that sees mothers as the main caregivers. However, it is worth noting that Amapola, and other participants whose partner was the primary nurturer when their children were new-borns, all felt obliged to go back to work and guilty from not being at home with their child. Guiltiness was the result of the contrast between their practice of care and their representation of gender roles, that still identifies mothers as maintaining the primary burden for social reproduction.

3.3. The limited extent of school and care facilities

In her account, Amapola did not emphasise obstacles to access to welfare facilities. For instance, she indicates that while she was looking for employment, her first child was enrolled in day-care. The woman was able to enrol her son in a nursery in Alsace while unemployed, which enabled her to look for work. Her experience contrasts that of other participants who indicated that because of their unemployment status, they were placed in waiting lists and could enrol their child at the nursery only occasionally when there were withdrawals from other parents.

Instead, Amapola’s concerns regarded the limited extent of welfare facilities, which forced her and her husband to elaborate strategies to combine paid and unpaid care work. As far as school, pre-school and nursery schedules and calendar are concerned, a major challenge for Amapola concerns the two-months summer holidays, as they can "last a long time", and neither her or her partner are able to take leaves from work to cover the whole period.

Besides holidays, the school week schedule can also be challenging. Amapola mentioned that in France, when her children were small, they had no school on Wednesday. As a result, her partner adapted his working schedule to be available for his children on Wednesday. Conversely, Amapola would care for her children alone on Saturday’s, while her husband was at work, leading her to feel lonely in the care work.

A final shortage of public services that was highlighted by Amapola’s account concerns care work for sick children. The woman indicates she used to feel guilty, bringing her children to school when they were a bit sick, but it happened that she had no choice because she felt obliged to go to work. Amapola’s case highlights that in one hand there is no public service available to take care of children when they are sick, and in the other hand that work time-off for sick children are not sufficient to cover families’ needs.

Amapola and her partner enact different strategies that aim at coping with the welfare shortage mentioned above. First, they combine and readjust their schedules so to care for their child when they are out of school. A second strategy consists in counting on their economic capital to fund extra-curricular activities during holidays. Other participants mentioned they were calling a nanny or babysitter to compensate for the limits of public service. However, it also represents a cost that not all migrant women can afford. Last but not least, Amapola also occasionally count on her in-laws' support to care for her children, especially during holidays.

3.4. Family geographies

Amapola’s conserve transnational ties with her Albanian family but does not count on their support for child-care. She specifies that her father is ill and needs specific medical treatment. As a result, her mother cannot leave him alone and, moving together to France to care for children would involve that he would have to face significant expenses for his treatment.

The fact that Amapola has less support from her parents, compared to her friends who live in Albania, connects to her family geography. Bonizzoni (2014) argues that family geographies are essential in defining women’s access to employment. This notion relates to whether there are family members in the country of arrival that can help in taking care of children and dependents. It also refers to the ease with which caregivers (especially grandmothers) in the country of departure and children in the country of arrival can move from one country to the other.

The capacity to count on family support depends on travel costs and migration policies. For instance, compare to an Albanian grand-mother, a Cameroonian grand-mother who wants to move to Italy to care for her grandchildren might face higher costs and more administrative procedures to travel. Therefore, migratory policies intersect with class, and country of birth to facilitate or impede the movement of caregivers that can support migrant women and enable them to work.

In contrast with Amapola, other participant women indicated that they had the support of their mothers to care for their young children. In a few cases, grand-mothers had moved, for instance, from Ukraine to Italy, with the specific aim of supporting their daughters in care work. In other cases, the support of the family was more sporadic, and consisted of short visits all year long, but was still perceived by migrant mothers as a relief. On the other hand, participants such as Amapola, and mainly participants mothers who were born in countries of Subsaharan Africa tended to feel lonely. Although their partner or network might support them, they were still missing the aid of their close family.

Besides the family of origin of the mother, the family-in-law can also be of support. For instance, Amapola mentioned that her children were sometimes staying at her in-laws and contributed to the care work. This support is particularly visible when the partner is originally from the area and has his parents nearby. However, fieldwork stressed that in-laws can also be of support even when they live in another country. For instance, a participant born in Ukraine who used to live in Alsace stressed that he daughter had lived for whole school years with her paternal grandparents in Spain, enabling her to finish her studies and work.

4. Rada: The challenge of accessing child-care services

Rada was born in 1986, in one of Cameroon's largest cities. When she finished high school, she enrolled at the university of her home-town and obtained a trilingual bachelor's degree in French, Italian and English. After that, and upon her parents' suggestion, she applied for a study visa in Italy, where she started studying human rights. For the first year, she could count on the financial support of her parents. After that, she needed to look for an income to make a living. Through a Cameroonian friend, Rada found a job as a cleaner in a supermarket and kept on working there until she finished her studies and got pregnant.

Rada's partner also moved from Cameroon to Italy to study. When they had their first child, she had already finished a master's programme in political sciences. Rada was wondering what to do next, until, during a workshop on maternity, she met a woman who was working as a social worker and offered to forward her resume to an NGO. Rada did a six-month internship at the cooperative, but as there was no possibility to be hired, she started occasionally working as a cultural mediator. Meanwhile, the cooperative opened a new project and offered Rada a position as an *operatrice socio assistenziale*, whose tasks were going beyond the title of the post, as she was expected to support refugees in administrative procedures. While working in this position, she had her second child.

When we met, Rada was still working at the cooperative. Her partner had recently started a vocational training out-of-town. He was leaving home early in the morning and coming back in the evening. As a result, Rada was caring for her children almost alone. She was struggling to combine her part-time job with care work, and any mishap could become a significant challenge. Rada also specified that she was obliged to enrol her children in private nurseries. She did not get the requested score to register in the public managed nurseries. In this regard, the woman pointed out the unfairness of the selectivity criteria, which gave priority in accessing services to families that had lived in the city for over 25 years.

4.1. Fearing discrimination of children

The previous portraits highlighted how mothering influences the decision of staying or moving from one country to another. Rada's account highlights other aspects of this impact. On the one hand, the woman indicated that she would like to move back to Cameroon, but she was staying in Europe for her children's well-being. On the other hand, she also expressed her worry about seeing her children being discriminated against because of the colour of their skin and was wondering whether she should move to another country. Like Rada, other participants in Italy and France, and especially those who felt racialised in the society where they live or had experienced racial discrimination, were fearing that their children would live the same experience. As a consequence, part of them was considering to move to another environment perceived as being more open-minded, where they believe their children might have more opportunities.

4.2. The need to access child-care

Rada's experience highlights that in the absence of a support network to care for children, migrant women might be able to work only when their children are at the nursery or school. It was mentioned that migrant women are particularly exposed to loneliness in the care work, compared to locals who have more chances to count on family, friends or acquaintances. As a result, these women are particularly in need of accessing child-care services to be able to combine paid work with social reproduction. If they do not access the services, they might be forced to stay home or be underemployed to care for their children.

Like in Rada's case, when women are alone to care for their children, limited hours of care services and school might force them to adapt their working schedule, and therefore their careers, to their children's schedule. For instance, Rada needs to work part-time to handle her children, as she is alone to leave them and pick them up at the nursery and preschool (*scuola materna*). She can only work when care work is covered by the services.

4.3. Obstacles to access child-care services

As mentioned, scholars tend to consider that France has a more extensive provision of child-care services compared to Italy where childcare continues to mainly rely on mothers' and families' shoulders (Kofman and Raghuram, 2015: 82-83; Craig and Mullan 2010). Nonetheless, in both countries, access to care services for children under three years old continues to be scattered, and do not cover all the population's needs (Bennett and Tayler, 2006; OECD 2017). Our fieldwork in Alsace and Veneto bring to light some of the specific obstacles that women are facing when intending to access child-care services.

A crucial challenge regards the legal obstacles that discriminate migrants compared to locals. For instance, giving priority to persons that reside in the town for more than 25 years, such as in Rada's case, discriminates against migrant women compared to locals, as they have been living in the area for a shorter period of time. In this regard, a regional law was adopted in Veneto in 2017, which was giving priority for accessing nurseries to "children of parents residing in Veneto, including in a non-continuous way, for at least fifteen years" or those "who had worked continuously in Veneto for 15 years, including periods living with unemployment benefits, of mobility, and unemployment" (Regione Veneto, 2017). The law was declared unconstitutional in May 2017 (Gazetta Ufficiale, 2017), and local rules are also being challenged. However, in the meantime, several migrant women, such as Rada, had to opt for private services as they could hardly fulfil the criteria to access public nurseries. In societies where mothers are expected to be the primary carers of their children, these discriminatory criteria are preventing migrant women from accessing employment.

In the French context, participants did not refer to legal obstacles that particularly penalised migrant women. However, different challenges were mentioned. One already mentioned regarded the fact that the unemployment status was preventing from accessing public child-care services. Another major challenge concerned the social and cultural capital that was requested to understand the procedure on how to apply and register in public nursery services. For an outsider, understanding the functioning of the system might be quite challenging.

4.4. Coping with limited welfare facilities and mothering networks

Rada's case stresses the role of economic capital for accessing childcare and enabling migrant women to work. In Amapola's portrait, it was mentioned that the woman could count on her economic capital to cover extra-curricular activities during the holidays so that she could dedicate more time to work. In Rada's experience, economic capital is fundamental to enable her to work. Indeed, obstacles to access public or affordable services forced her to enrol her children in private nurseries in order to work. As a result, in the absence of accessible and affordable services, women lacking economic capital or financial support from their network might have difficulty accessing nurseries and might be constrained to stay home to care for their children.

In her account, Rada seemed alone to care for her children and did not mention family or acquaintances that would help her in caring for her children. However, fieldwork indicates that migrant women might also count on a variety of informal support. Participants in Italy and France indicated that they could rely on the support of friends, but also of their network of co-nationals or peers at work or university. Another type of support that emerged from the fieldwork is the one between mothers of the same nursery, preschool or school. Both in France and in Italy migrant mothers stressed they could count on other mothers to pick-up their child, while they were working. Last but not least, it also happened that once mothers found their children were grown enough to look after themselves, they let them go and come back from school alone, and arrange meals so that they could help themselves.

Lastly, Rada might not have built a network of alternative carers that could support her in combining paid and unpaid work. However, activities connected to maternity enabled her to build ties that facilitated her access to employment. Indeed, Rada got in touch with the cooperative that would hire her later, through a woman she met in a maternity workshop. As in the case of Rada, activities connected to maternity and children can be spaces where migrant women get to know other persons and create a network. These ties can serve eventually as social capital that facilitates access to jobs or provides information and contributes to building employment strategies.

Conclusions of chapter 7

Through the analysis of the portraits of Winika, Veronica, Amapola and Rada, the chapter highlighted how gender, migration, care and welfare regimes intersect and influence the trajectory of migrant women with tertiary education.

As far as migratory policies are concerned, it was stressed that restrictions on family reunification contribute to migrant women deskilling and underemployment. Indeed, transnational migrant mothers might feel forced to take whatever job, as long as it provides income to fulfil the requirements for reuniting with their children. Moreover, restrictions might also prevent women from getting their parents in the country. As a result, they might lack the support of relatives in caring for their children, and feel lonely in their care work. Last but not least, short term family permits are also limiting women's access to the labour market, as employers can be reluctant to hire candidates with such permits.

The chapter also highlighted that gender ideology puts the burden of care work on women's shoulders. Although a few women might have a more balanced share of care-work with their partner, they still tend to be the main, if not the only, caregivers. As a result, they adapt their careers to care-work looking for part-time employment and turning down jobs that are perceived as not compatible with care or not providing the income necessary to support their family.

In this regard, the chapter also highlighted that strategies and trajectories vary according to class and depend on labour market stratifications, based on gender, country of birth, ethnicisation and racialisation. As far as recruitment practices are concerned, the chapter also brings to light that despite existing regulations to protect women from discrimination, recruiters are still finding ways to avoid hiring women of child-bearing age or those with children on school age.

Finally, the chapter stressed that access to child-care services is crucial to enable women to access employment and have a professional career. As they tend to be the primary caregivers, migrant women who are distant from their families might be able to work only when their children are at nursery or at school. In addition, discriminatory criteria are preventing them from accessing public care services. Moreover, the chapter stressed that access to nurseries might depend on specific economic, social, and cultural capital. Last but not least, we also highlighted shortages in child-care services and brought to light how migrant women cope with shortages by counting on informal support and arrangements.

Conclusions of the dissertation

Winika gave me an appointment in front of her university. The woman had recently enrolled in a graduate programme after years of being out of academia. Once we greeted each other and introduced ourselves, we agreed to move away from the university and look for a place where we could talk a little further away from indiscreet ears. In the end, we decided to sit at the riverside, where we discussed her situation and interest in the topic for more than an hour. When I turned on the recorder, after asking her permission, Winika was about to share her intimate life and thoughts with a person she had never met before. This woman had plenty of questions about my research and specified: "I'm asking you because I liked the research topic, and maybe this will be useful for the future. That is why I immediately said yes, without even thinking that much about it, because I liked the idea".

Echoing Winika's comment, we could wonder what the worth of this research is. What is its contribution to the literature? Moreover, how can it be "useful for the future", and participate in identifying paths that provide more equal access to employment for migrant women?

After seven chapters, and hundreds of pages of analysis, fragments of life and feelings, that have touched upon a variety of complex issues regarding stratifications and essentialism in the labour markets, the following paragraphs have the ambitious goal of summarizing the crucial points that emerged from the analysis of fieldwork and statistical data. The conclusion seeks to highlight the contribution of this dissertation to the scientific literature. In addition, it suggests practical and policy paths that could be undertaken to move towards more equal access to employment and resources.

The thesis brings a significant contribution to the literature on local labour market stratifications, as it focuses on a mechanism that continues to be understudied, specifically in France and Italy, namely the influence that essentialism has in shaping workers access to employment. Moreover, the dissertation is among the first studies to examine the challenges that migrant women with tertiary education face when accessing employment, by specifically focusing on essentialism. In addition, it does not only give voice to one of the sides involved in accessing jobs, rather it is original in its comparison of the perspectives of migrant women, with that of other stakeholders, such as recruiters and social workers, so to give a more complex picture of the social phenomena.

The dissertation analysed the employment positioning of migrant women with tertiary education from different angles. It is one of the first studies that uses statistical data to highlight the differential access that migrants with tertiary education have to employment in Italy and France, according to their country of birth and gender.

As far as graduate women are concerned, the analysis of the available data for Veneto and Alsace put into light that there are two groups of nationalities[22]/countries of birth[23], which have significantly different access to jobs. In the Italian local labour market, access to graduate positions follows a line that divides, on the one hand, graduates with Italian citizenship and that of other high-income countries, and on the other hand, graduates with citizenship from middle and low-income countries. The former have privileged access to graduate and top-level positions, while the latter are mainly hired for intermediate occupations or jobs that benefit from only low social recognition. Similarly, in Alsace, graduate women born in France and other EU countries have broader access to graduate positions, while graduates from non-EU countries are faced with unemployment and struggle to have their academic background valued. Therefore, both in France and Italy, statistical data suggests that access to employment is connected to the country of birth and that global inequalities between countries are reproduced and reflected in local labour markets, as workers born in less affluent countries also have fewer chances to access top and graduate positions.

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[22] The data analysed for Veneto compares gender, working position, education with the country of citizenship.

[23] The data analysed for Alsace compares gender, working position, education with the country of birth.

The dissertation explored stratifications also emanating from the perspectives of the stakeholders involved in the process, namely migrant women with tertiary education, recruiters, and social workers. Fieldwork echoed the analysis of statistical data, as stakeholders highlighted that migrant women tend to be employed in feminised and ethnicised sectors that involve social reproduction, namely those of care, health, social work, and education, or in jobs connected to their migrant identities, such as bilingual secretaries, and export managers. Moreover, both in France and Italy, migrant women, and especially those born in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa, indicated that they feel confined in "subaltern" positions, namely in jobs at the bottom of the employment structure in the care and cleaning industries.

Thanks to fieldwork, it was possible to assess and distinguish how different participants perceive the influence that essentialism has in conditioning access to jobs. When it comes to the recruitment process, stakeholders highlighted that in both contexts, recruiters are using country of birth, racialisation, ethnicisation, skin colour, physiognomy and gender as a proxy to select candidates. Both in Alsace and Veneto, black women born in countries of Sub-Saharan Africa tend to be racialised and essentialised and are among the workers who experience more difficulties in accessing graduate employment. Women from European non-EU countries might not be explicitly perceived as non-whites, but they are still regarded by processes of othering and essentialism that influence their access to employment.

It emerged from the fieldwork that groups defined in terms of country of birth, ethnicisation and gender, tend to be associated with specific behaviours. For instance, it appears that recruiters' representations in Veneto might eventually associate Eastern European women with being "authoritative, strong, almost grouchy", or relate this group of women with attitudes defined in class terms such as having an "in-home caregivers' attitude". Similarly, in Alsace as well, essentialism associated behaviours with specific groups of women, specifically African and Tchetchen women, while Northern African women were perceived to be among those facing the most challenges when accessing jobs. In both contexts, in order to be valued, migrant women were expected to behave following conservative models of feminity, models that include elegance, vanity and submissiveness.

In addition, recruiters highlighted that selection practices such as headhunting have the effect of widening inequalities in accessing graduate employment. While those who are already employed are contacted by head hunters and can improve their working conditions, outsiders have fewer opportunities. As a result, being unemployed or employed in lower positions is an unsurpassable obstacle to access graduate jobs for which headhunting is being used.

As far as differences are concerned, in Italy preferences according to the country of birth, ethnicisation and racialisation, are made explicit by employers and recruiters, and migrant women tend to be aware that access to jobs "depends on your nationality". The dissertation adds to the literature (Scrinzi, 2013, Allasino et al. 2004) highlighting that recruitment based on these criteria is not only the panacea of volunteer recruiters, but it is also a common practice of professional recruiters. Moreover, selection based on nationality, country of birth, racialisation and ethnicisation, concerns a vast range of jobs that includes bodywork in the hospitality industry, but also care-work, and access to managerial positions. In France, essentialist criteria according to the country of birth, ethnicisation or racialisation, are made less explicit. Nonetheless, fieldwork highlighted that in this context as well there are practices that are intent to privilege white locals in recruitment (such as the use of *BBR* as an eligibility criteria). Moreover, recruiters or field managers might "invent pretexts" to avoid hiring women that are perceived as carrying diversity, and migrant women, especially those who are black, feel they are being essentialised and judged for the colour of their skin or their country of birth.

To further explore the influence of essentialism in the recruitment process, the thesis uses the concept of embodiness (Wolkowitz 2006, McDowell 2011, Mears 2014) to analyse the assessment of skills. As a result, it becomes apparent that employers and recruiters value skills, according to who embodies them while also dependent on gender, racialisation, and class. In this regard, the dissertation highlights that assessment of skills is far from being neutral. Indeed, it often reflects the legacy of colonial imaginary and global inequalities.

Skills tend to be assessed through scrutinizing education and experience. However, in this process, the representations that recruiters have of countries where education and experience was gained, intersect with the perception they have of specific groups in terms of gender, class, and racialisation. As far as education is concerned, the assessment of foreign titles seems to rely on recruiters' representations. Degrees from educational institutions of Sub-Saharan Africa and non-EU Europe tend to be disregarded, even though western international indexes might place them in higher positions than local universities.

When it comes to experience, it became clear that recruiters have preconceptions regarding foreign economies. As a result, they might disregard experience gained in areas perceived as being of middle or low income, such as in African countries, especially if the person that holds the experience was born in that area. Moreover, recruiters tend to dislike experience that is discontinuous, in terms of countries, sectors, or companies. As a result, women who have moved from one country to the other tend to be penalised.

Proficiency in a foreign language was perceived as an asset that could be valued by migrant women to access specific jobs related to their migrant identity. These posts array from social jobs such as cultural mediators to positions in trade and export management. However, fieldwork also brought to light how essentialism based on colonial imaginary and global inequalities influences the assessment of skills such as language. Skills of native speakers who were born in a colonial area or countries perceived of low or medium-income tend to be disregarded. For instance, it happens in Alsace that doubt is cast upon the French skills of Francophone Africans, while in Italy Nigerian women might mainly value their English skills working as cultural mediators and struggle to see them enhanced in other fields that relate to business and communication.

The assessment of soft skills also appears to involve a high level of scrutiny over candidates' *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1986), which is gendered, classed and field-specific. In this scenario, migrant women who are outsiders might find it more challenging to adopt the *habitus* that is valued by recruiters. Moreover, assessment of soft skills risks being influenced by essentialism, as we mentioned that groups defined in terms of country of birth, racialisation, ethnicisation or gender, tend to be associated with specific behaviours.

Fieldwork also stressed that the body of female candidates, including migrant women, is subject to high scrutiny, especially when applying for jobs that involve bodywork, such as in the hospitality industry, but also in the care sector. Women candidates are often expected to be pretty, and prettiness is socially constructed. From a class perspective, it was stressed that recruiters tend to associate prettiness with having a middle or upper-class *habitus*, and higher education is used as a proxy to select workers with such a *habitus*. In addition, it was highlighted that in both contexts migrant women's bodies are being eroticised, following a contradictory trend that on the one hand sees "diversity" as being exotic and appreciable, and on the other hand compels migrant women, and especially black women, to mitigate their blackness.

The dissertation also stressed that migrant women’s "otherness" can be economically advantageous from the employers perspective. Hiring "diverse" workers, including migrant women, was depicted as a strategy implemented by companies to correspond to the diversity of clients. This trend, which includes diversity management, does not preclude essentialism, as workers are hired because they are perceived as substantially different from a majority and dominant group. Echoing Ndiaye’s (2008) comments on *tokenism* or symbolic display, fieldwork emphasized that jobs accessible in the context of diversity management are visible positions at the lower and medium level, while management posts remain unreachable. The dissertation adds to this literature stressing how gender and racialisation/ethnicisation interplay in diversity management. Indeed, it was highlighted that this practice tends to privilege "diverse" women, who are eroticised, over their male counterparts.

The lack of recognition of migrant women’s know-how, knowledge, capacities, and preventing them from accessing graduate position, is also functional, as it permits using their skills and offer services to customers at a low cost. In this regard, scholars have highlighted that supply-chain capitalism is based on inequalities according to gender, class and racialisation (Tsing, 2009). It is through the use of diversity and inequalities that labour costs can be cut and workers' claims refrained, while top-of-the-chain are released of all responsibility for labour. In this regard, the thesis emphasized that subcontracting is not limited to the private sector, but supply chain capitalism also concerns public services. In Italy, migrant women might access graduate jobs in the health sector, but mainly through subcontractors. As a result, they are employed as second class workers. Their salaries and working conditions are more precarious than that of nationals that perform the same tasks but that are hired by public institutions.

In addition, in both contexts, it is noted that migrant women, who are employed in intermediary posts and jobs with low social recognition, use the know-how and knowledge accumulated in previous experiences, although recruiters do not recognise their skills. As a result, they are using their expertise with no compensation nor recognition. This trend corresponds to what the literature has identified as *brain abuse* (Bauder, 2003).

Besides essentialism, the dissertation also touched upon institutional barriers that prevent migrant women from accessing jobs. In this regard, participants mentioned legal obstacles that they had to face in their careers in France and Italy. These obstacles include a) the fact that specific jobs are closed to non-EU citizens; b) norms that privilege the hiring of locals over foreigners; c) educational titles that are not being recognised; d) the reluctance of employers to hire graduate migrants with short-term permits; e) the challenges faced to access health insurance.

The dissertation also contributed to the literature by exploring how migrant women are coping, resisting, and eventually challenging stratifications and essentialism. It identified a series of strategies that women implement to react to essentialism. The first group of coping strategies consisted of accepting the negative discourse while minimizing it, hiding the difference, or transferring the negative stereotyping to another group of women that are essentialised. The second group corresponds to strategies in which women refuse essentialist labelings through resistance thinking or strategic avoidance. The third type of responses challenges essentialism, through verbal confrontation, or individual and collective action taking.

The thesis also examined the strategies implemented by women to cope with stratified labour markets. In this regard, there were also three groups of paths that were identified. The first type of strategies have an ambivalent outcome as it may enable women to refuse assignment at the bottom of the employment structure while at the same time reproducing stratifications. This group encompasses strategies such as a) withdrawing from the labour market and refusing jobs with low social recognition; b) relying on social networks with the aim of having an easier access to employment, and eventually graduate positions; c) targeting jobs with lack of staff, where migrant women risk being employed as second class workers. The second type of strategies consists of removing barriers that are preventing migrant women from accessing the jobs they want. This includes enrolling again in tertiary education, applying for local citizenship, or taking competitive exams.

The last and third type of employment paths consists of strategies in which migrant women use their knowledge of labour market mechanisms and surf essentialism to access whatever job that provides income, or eventually a more satisfactory position. Among these paths is the strategy that aims at taking vocational training, so as to enter sectors perceived as more accessible for migrant women, and access position slightly above entrance jobs. A final strategy consists in using the migrant identity and eventually playing on stereotypes to access specific positions in companies or NGOs, which includes posts such as that of export manager or cultural mediator, and use them as entrance doors to move to other jobs within the same employing structure.

In addition, the thesis analysed how migrant women with tertiary education react to their position in the local labour markets. More specifically, we studied how they cope with downgrading or explain their success in accessing satisfying jobs. In this regard, the thesis stressed how gender, class, and eventually identities defined in terms of citizenship, country of birth or ‘culture’, interact to cope with essentialism and downgrading. While some coping strategies might reproduce forms of essentialism, others might aim at resisting and challenging them. As a result, it was argued that migrant women’s everyday resistance practices and employment strategies can be the basis of social change.

The dissertation closed with a final chapter that focuses on mothering, as "managing the child" was perceived by several interviewees who are mothers as the main challenge they had faced when having a career in Italy and France. The chapter emphasized that restrictive migratory and welfare policies intersect with gender orders to shape the employment trajectories of migrant mothers with tertiary education, and often lead to de-skilling. In addition, as far as recruitment practices are concerned, it emerged that both in France and Italy, recruiters tend to be reluctant to hire women of child-bearing age or with children of school age. Despite regulations that condemn discrimination on that basis, fieldwork showed how, in both contexts, recruiters are finding ways to exclude these candidates from the selection process.

The dissertation also brought to light that access to child-care services is crucial to enable migrant women to access employment and have a professional career. As they tend to be the primary caregivers, migrant women who are distant from their extended families might be able to work only when their children are at nursery or school. To cope with shortages in child-care services, migrant women need to count on informal support and arrangements in order to combine paid work with care work.

Overall, the dissertation pointed out that, contrary to the presumption of innocence of Italians in racial themes (Faso, 2012) or to the French Republican model that claims to be blind to differences (Fassin and Fassin, 2006), recruitment practices in both countries are influenced by essentialism. Representations rooted in the colonial history, based on global inequalities and also on conservative and eroticised representations of femininity, affect the selection process and finally limit the access that migrant women with tertiary education have to employment. Moreover, essentialism shapes the stratifications of the local labour markets in France and Italy, restricting the access that migrant women have to graduate jobs.

In this context, what are the political paths and collective strategies that can bring change and ensure equal access to employment for all, including migrant women?

To conclude the dissertation, we provide food for thoughts on how policies could be changed in order to ensure equal access to employment, and overcome a double standard society or what Balibar (2009) has called a "European apartheid", in which access to rights, resources, and employment opportunities depend not only on citizenship and country of birth, but also on racialisation, ethnicisation, gender, and class.

Based on fieldwork and an analysis of the literature, it appears that a first step to move forward would be that of revoking institutional barriers that prevent migrant women from accessing graduate jobs. The dissertation brought to light some of the legal constraints that lead to unequal access to employment. Firstly, the thesis highlighted that jobs in the public sector or those regulated by professional associations might be excluding migrant women. For instance, in France, almost 5 millions jobs, both in the public and private sector, continue to be closed to non-European foreigners (Observatoire des inégalités, 2019). Opening all professions to foreigners, and condemning any discrimination in this regard would contribute to enabling migrant women to access graduate jobs. Moreover, it would avoid having double standards, and second class workers, such as in the case of health professionals employed in Italian subcontracting cooperatives.

Secondly, providing non-discriminatory access to employment also involves revoking the laws that introduce additional paperwork or taxes for employers who wish to hire non-European foreigners. Indeed, fieldwork in France highlighted that these norms are repelling recruiters from hiring migrant women with tertiary education.

Thirdly, the dissertation also stressed that active employment policies in Italy and France tend to reproduce stratifications. Indeed, social workers are also influenced by essentialism, or anticipate the essentialism of employers. As a result, they tend to guide migrant women with tertiary education toward vocational training and jobs with low social recognition, such as in care work and cleaning sectors, while giving little value to their educational background. There is a need to rethink employment policies so that social workers, together with these women, create paths that enhance their educational background. Agreements could be signed on the one hand with educational institutions to access training related to their previous background, and on the other hand with employers to facilitate their access to graduate positions and enable them to recover their former professional identity. As far as foreign diplomas are concerned, systematic and smooth mechanisms should be developed so that their recognition does not rely on recruiters' representations of foreign educational systems.

Fourthly, the dissertation also identified a series of migratory and welfare policies that limit the access that migrant women have to employment. In this regard, the thesis stressed that restrictive family reunification policies are repelling recruiters from hiring migrant women as they fear short-term permits will not be renewed. Moreover, these policies push women to take whatever job they can in order to fulfill the criteria to reunite with their children. In addition, restrictive policies prevent them from counting on family support to care for their children. Consequently, providing easy access to long-term family permits would facilitate these women's access to jobs, and eventually enable them to have satisfactory employment.

When it comes to welfare policies, as migrant mothers might not count on family support, they are particularly in need of accessing child-care services. Indeed, these women might mainly rely on school, nursery and extracurricular activities to be able to work. In this regard, there is a need to revoke the discriminatory criteria that prevent them from accessing public child-care services. Besides, the length of the services also needs to be reviewed, especially in Italy, where participants indicated that nursery and school schedule only enable them to work part-time. Accessible and affordable child-care services are also needed to be created so as to cover periods of long holidays.

At the same time, maternity and paternity leaves need to be rethought so that women do not feel obliged to go back to work, nor fear to stay home to care for their newborns or their children when they are sick. In this regard, anti-discrimination norms also need to be reviewed as recruiters are still finding ways to exclude women of child-bearing age and those with young children from the selection process.

Overall, as far as welfare policies are concerned, enabling mothers, including migrants, to have equal access to employment involves significant social changes that would put social reproduction, and care work for children and dependents, at the centre of the organisation of society. Rethinking social reproduction and care would also enable women to overcome the double standards situation, particularly visible in Italian family welfare system, according to which the ability to work of local middle and upper-class women relies on the care-work provided by migrant women who are paid little and receive low social recognition (Kofman, Raghuram, 2015).

The policy changes mentioned above would enable the removal of some of the institutional obstacles that prevent migrant women from accessing a satisfactory employer. However, these suggestions do not directly tackle essentialism, such as racialisation, which was the primary concern of the dissertation. Following Aster's comments in fieldwork, we can wonder how the "culture" of the local labour markets can be changed so that "nobody is surprised" to see migrant women in any post, including graduate, top, and power positions. How can racist and essentialist perceptions of migrant women be transformed?

In this regard, relevant insights are provided by Ndiaye (2008) whose work focuses on the condition of the black minority in France. The scholar suggests adapting the American measures of affirmative action, learning from its pitfalls, and create its French (and we could add Italian) way. For instance, these policies should make sure that minorities, including migrant women, access graduate and power positions, and not only *tokenist* jobs with a display function. Moreover, they should not replace social policies and avoid deepening inequalities between minority groups, unlike in the US where affirmative action has reinforced middle-class black minorities while those from working-class continue suffering from discriminations and deprivation (Ibid: 348).

In order to transform representations on migrant women, there is a broader need to decolonise imaginations. This long term objective involves recognising past and current colonisation, and how it influences social relations and stratifications of the labour market. It is also a matter of de-whitening the national identities, which involves including in the national "us" those who are for the moment excluded and racialised and referred to as "them". There is also a need to broaden the perception of local and mainstream cultures so that they include those cultures which are still perceived as diverse or minority cultures.

As far as racialisation is concerned, Ndiaye (2008) highlights that it is not a matter of erasing the skin colour, but of removing the social marker from it so that it becomes socially meaningless. The scholar is sceptical regarding the possibility of overcoming racialisation and essentialism. From his perspective, while some groups might manage to be less stigmatised, the phenomena of "racial domination" might be reframed around new figures of Otherness, and new frontiers between "us" and "them" might appear (Ibid: 72).

It was stressed that discrimination towards migrant women is functional with respect to economic interests and permit the offering of services, including public health care, at low cost. As a result, the desire to transform these mechanisms risks facing many resistances. Moreover, as long as there might be relations of domination and colonialization, such as those that the European governments and companies continue to maintain in Africa, global inequalities will likely continue to be reflected at the local level, through stratifications and unequal access to employment and resources.

In addition, it should be stressed that guaranteeing equality between migrants and non-migrants has been far from being among the priorities of French and Italian governments in recent years. During the three years of research for the PhD, policies adopted in Italy contributed to deepening the precarious stature and stigmatisation of migrants, reaching what NGOs have qualified as a "new low" in migratory policies[24]. Will the Government that entered into power in September 2019 revoke these norms? While writing the conclusions of the dissertation, the French parliament is about to discuss a series of measures on migration that are criticised by civil society for further limiting migrants' rights[25]. How far will the gap between migrants and non-migrants be widened? How far will the 'European apartheid' (Balibar, 2009) spread? Can we hope for a reversal of migration policies? While policies are getting harder, parts of civil society continue to develop initiatives to support migrants and build counter-narratives[26]. These movements reflect the tensions that exist in European societies, but also emphasise that it is possible to adopt policies that welcome migrants, guaranteeing their rights and ensuring equal access to resources.

Through its accurate description of the mechanisms that contribute to reproducing inequalities, the author hopes that the dissertation has provided food for thoughts to the reader and contributes to identifying levers on which pressure can be put to bring change.

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[24] See Sunderland J. (2018), "New Low for Italian Migration Policies. Preventing Rescue at Sea, Punishing Survivors on Land", Human Rights Watch, 26/9/2018, available at https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/26/new-low-italian-migration-policies (25/09/2019)

[25] See Manon Rescan (2019), Immigration : " On ne s'attendait pas à ce que ce discours-là vienne de cette majorité", *Le Monde*, 24/09/2019, available at https://www.lemonde.fr/politique/article/2019/09/24/on-ne-s-attendait-pas-a-ce-que-ce-discours-la-vienne-de-cette-majorite_6012811_823448.html (25/09/2019)

[26] See initiatives around Europe aiming at hosting refugees at home, such as Refugees Welcome: https://www.refugees-welcome.net/ (25/09/2019) or aiming at rescuing migrants at sea, such as Mediterranea - Saving humans": https://www.facebook.com/Mediterranearescue/ (25/09/2019)

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Addendum

Addendum 1: Participants in the research

Addendum 2: Example of trajectory scheme: Winika's trajectory

Addendum 1: Participants in the research

** Disclaimer: The information reported below corresponds to what emerged from interviews with stakeholders. We acknowledge that information on training and experience might be missing, as participants might not have reported all of them.*

Migrant women with tertiary education

		Born in…	Degree abroad…	Experience abroad…	Degree in the area…	Experiences in the area…
Alsace						
1	Cassia	Senegal	Bachelor’s management and ICT; 1st year of Master’s in Banking-insurance	Technical salesperson; Salesperson; Administrative assistant		Unemployed
2	Clemensia	Senegal			[Started Law] Bachelor’s, Master’s, and PhD in sociology	Unemployed
3	Cliantha	Senegal	Bachelor's in sociology	Worked at family restaurant	Enrolled in bachelor’s programme in sociology	Chambermaid
4	Camellia	Mauritania	Bachelor's and Master’s in sociology	Consultant for NGOs	Master’s in sociology / Master’s in solidarity based economy [Moved to another French region: enrolled in PhD]	Jobs in the hospitality industry, [Positions in other French regions: hospitality industry; survey assistant; project assistant]
5	Carmel	Nigeria	Bachelor’s in French language, Certificate in bilingual secretarial administration	Bilingual secretary	[Started literature] Master’s in human resources	Before degree in France: English teacher; Cleaner; Hostess; Grape picker / After degree in France: Bilingual secretary; Consultant (registration); Administrative assistant / [Moved abroad: Administrative assistant]
6	Colombine	South Africa	Equivalent bachelor’s in theology	Secretary; Personal Assistant	Bachelor’s and Master’s in English language / Public exam (CAPES)	English tutor; English teacher in public schools

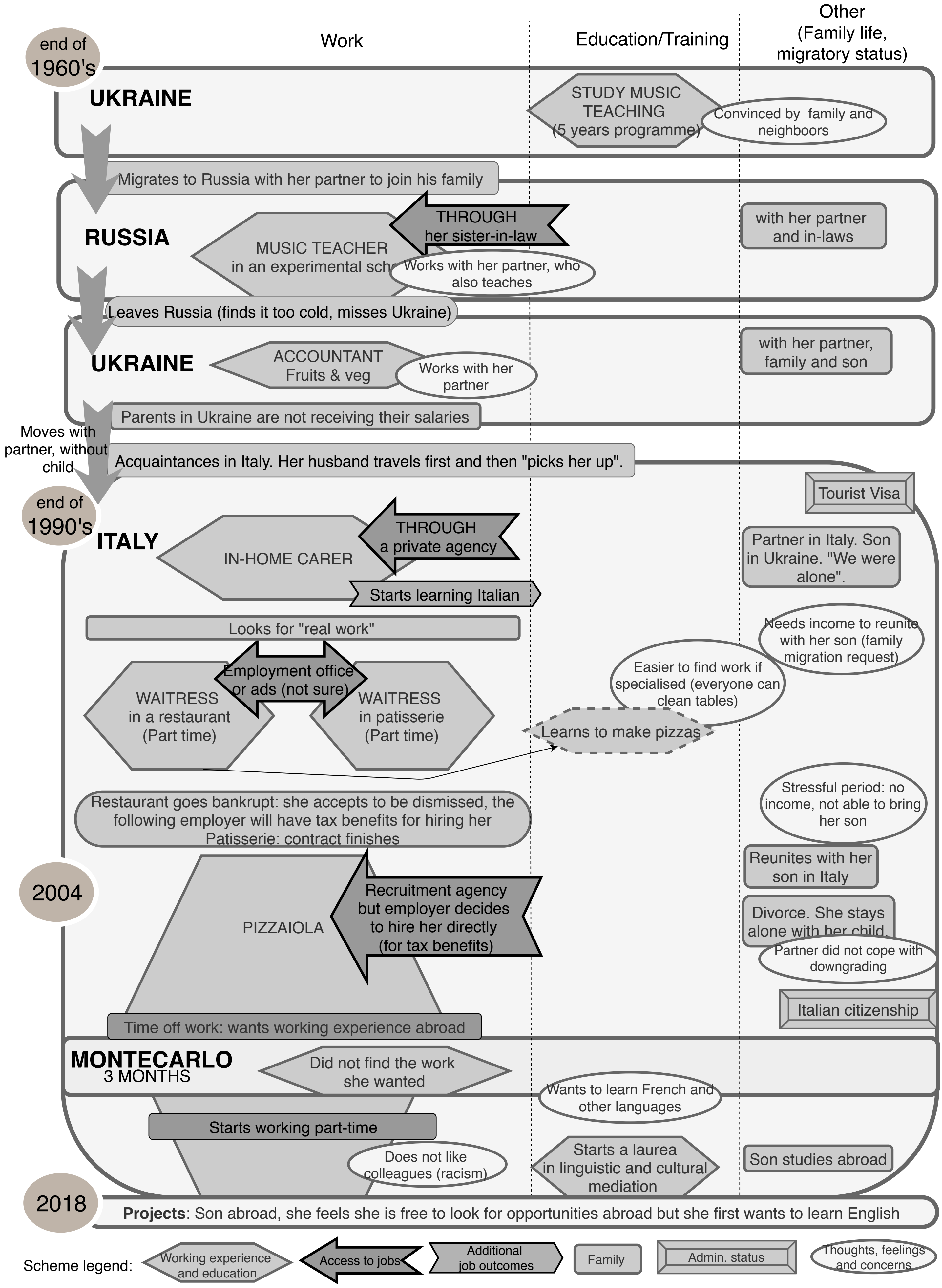
7	Callaia	Niger	Mid-wife school	Mid-wife	Nurse school	Before degree in FR: Nursing assistant in maternity / After degree in FR: Nurse
8	Amaryllis	Armenia	Bachelor's in Pedagogy	Teacher of Russian and English, translator	Master's in Slavic literature; started PhD	Flyer distributor; translator; Cultural mediator; Tutor - private lessons
9	Anemone	Azerbaijan	Master in Law and International Relations	Advisor to prosecutor		3 years maternity leave
10	Azami	Turkey	Master in Economics in Turkey	Bank manager		Unemployed
11	Acacia	Moldova	Master’s in Romanian and French literature	Publisher, university lecturer, civil servant	Master in education sciences in France	Tutor - private lessons, librarian, leader in a community center, receptionist
12	Azalea	Russia	Master in Economics, in Russia	Trade companies		Flyer distributor, administrative assistant
13	Amapola	Albania	Master in Literature in Albania*	Diplomat		Diplomat, Administrative assistant
14	Abelia	Russia	Master in pedagogy and littérature, in Russia;	shop assistant	Master’s in slavic literature; University Degree of Technology (DUT) Librarian	Shop assistant, Librarian
15	Aster	Ukraine	Phd in sociology in Germany	Language teacher, project manager		Consultant for international organisations
16	Araluen	Russia	Master in literature in Russia	Teacher (French)	Public competition (CAPES) in France	Teacher (Russian)
17	Alexandra	Russia	Master in literature in Russia ; PhD in San Marino		Master in literature and Translators school in France ;	[Experience in other French regions: Hostess, baby-sitter ; translator ; librarian ; secretary] University Professor

18	Acantha	Russia	Master in Economics in Russia ;	Translator, immovable consultant, commercial assistant, University Lecturer	Master in Eco-counseling in France	Local authority officer [Now: Re-study abroad]
Veneto						
19	Raisa	Cameroon	Master in Economics in Italy		[Other Italian region: Bachelor's and Master's in communication sciences and marketing]	Cultural mediator
20	Rosanna	Cameroon	Training in Italian		Bachelor's in Economics / Vocational training as care assistant (operatrice sociosanitaria) / Starts a master's in economy	Before degree: Shelf-stacker; Cleaning operative; Inventory assistant / After degree: in-home carer / After training: care assistant (operatrice sociosanitaria)
21	Rose	Congo		Trade self-employed	Bachelor's in communication sciences	After degree: Cleaning operative; University caretaker; Cook assistant
22	Rosalie	Democratic Republic of Congo	Degree in laboratory technics	Laboratory assistant	Vocational training as care assistant (operatrice sociosanitaria)	Blue-collar / After training: care assistant (operatrice sociosanitaria)
23	Rosamel	Cameroon			Bachelor's in physiotherapy; Degree in osteopathy (5 years)	Physiotherapist
24	Rada	Cameroon	Bachelor's literature tri-lingual		Bachelor's in political sciences; Master's in political sciences and human rights	Before Italian degree: Cleaning operative / After Italian degree: Cultural Mediator; Social worker although hired as *operatrice socio assistenziale*
25	Rosella	Democratic Republic of Congo	Starts medicine		Master's in Medicine; Public competition and inscription in the professional association	Before degree: Domestic worker; Baby-sitter / After degree: Doctor
26	Viola	Russia (Soviet Union)	Bachelor and Master in English philology; Training: Russian as a foreign language	Tutor; Translator; Financial officer; Editor; Lecturer	Equivalence Master's in foreign languages, English and Russian	Russian teacher in private school

27	Varda	Albania			[Started nursing school] Bachelor’s in Statistics	Before degree: Ice-cream parlour; waitress; After degree: waitress
28	Verbena	Albania	Bachelor in Albanian language and literature; Master’s in humanities	Teacher		Maternity leave
29	Zinnia	Albania			Bachelor’s in foreign languages	Before degree: Hostess; Check-in assistant; Call-center / After degree: Call-center; Sales assistant;
30	Winika	Ukraine (Soviet Union)	Music teaching	Music teacher; Accountant	Enrolled in a bachelor’s degree in linguistic and cultural mediation	In-home carer; Waitress; Pizzaiola
31	Yasmin	Ukraine (Soviet Union)	Bachelor forestry and international relations	Assistant to professors; translation	Bachelor’s in foreign language and culture	Before degree: Cultural mediator; Translator; Tutor for professional training; Hostess; After degree: Business management
32	Veronica	Ukraine (Soviet Union)	Bachelor in Economy, Master in business	Administrative assistant	Master in cultural mediation for business; Phd in economy and management	Before Italian degree: English teacher; Translation; After Italian degree: Project manager; Business manager; Coach (Gym)
33	Violet	Russia (Soviet Union)	Bachelor in languages (German/English)	Language teacher, Business assistant in corporations	Training: sommelier; sales management	Business assistant; Self-employed (export management)
Recruiters / social workers						
		Gender	**Experience in…**			
Veneto						
34	Sorrel	Man	Recruiter in an intermediary agency			
35	Saffron	Man	Recruiter in an intermediary agency			
36	Senna	Woman	Recruiter in an HR department			

37	Sirelli	Woman	Previous: Recruiter in an intermediary agency / Now: Recruiter in an HR department
38	Senecio	Man	Previous: Recruiter in an intermediary agency
39	Shamrock	Man	Recruiter in an HR department
40	Sycamore	Man	Recruiter in an HR department
41	Sequoia	Man	Recruiter in an HR department
42	Susan and Suzette	Woman	Recruiter in an HR department
42	Selena	Woman	Social worker
43	Salma	Woman	Social worker
Alsace			
45	Drake	Man	Recruiter in an intermediary agency
46	Elm	Man	Recruiter in an HR department
47	Dalia	Woman	Recruiter in an HR department
48	Daphne	Woman	Social worker
49	Dianella	Woman	Social worker
	Informants (Veneto)		
50	NGO activist	Man	Arising Africans
51	Child of migration	Woman	Born in Ivory Coast
52	Child of migration	Woman	Born in Moldova

Example of trajectory scheme: Winika's trajectory


Work
Education/Training
Other
(Family life,
migratory status)
end of
1960's
UKRAINE
STUDY MUSIC
TEACHING
(5 years programme)
Convinced by family and
neighboors
Migrates to Russia with her partner to join his family
RUSSIA
MUSIC TEACHER
in an experimental sch
THROUGH
her sister-in-law
Works with her partner, who
also teaches
with her partner
and in-laws
Leaves Russia (finds it too cold, misses Ukraine)
UKRAINE
ACCOUNTANT
Fruits & veg
Works with her
partner
with her partner,
family and son
Parents in Ukraine are not receiving their salaries
Moves with
partner, without
child
Acquaintances in Italy. Her husband travels first and then "picks her up".
Tourist Visa
end of
1990's
ITALY
IN-HOME CARER
THROUGH
a private agency
Starts learning Italian
Partner in Italy. Son
in Ukraine. "We were
alone".
Looks for "real work"
Needs income to reunite
with her son (family
migration request)
WAITRESS
in a restaurant
(Part time)
Employment office
or ads (not sure)
WAITRESS
in patisserie
(Part time)
Easier to find work if
specialised (everyone can
clean tables)
Learns to make pizzas
Restaurant goes bankrupt: she accepts to be dismissed, the
following employer will have tax benefits for hiring her
Patisserie: contract finishes
Stressful period: no
income, not able to bring
her son
Reunites with her
son in Italy
2004
PIZZAIOLA
Recruitment agency
but employer decides
to hire her directly
(for tax benefits)
Divorce. She stays
alone with her child.
Partner did not cope with
downgrading
Italian citizenship
Time off work: wants working experience abroad
MONTECARLO
3 MONTHS
Did not find the work
she wanted
Wants to learn French and
other languages
Starts working part-time
Does not like
colleagues (racism)
Starts a laurea
in linguistic and cultural
mediation
Son studies abroad
2018
Projects: Son abroad, she feels she is free to look for opportunities abroad but she first wants to learn English
Scheme legend:
Working experience
and education
Access to jobs
Additional
job outcomes
Family
Admin. status
Thoughts, feelings
and concerns