

Lena Näre and Serena Messina

*From Citizen to Societal Membership? – Perspectives to the Capabilities of
International Migrants in Naples*

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Lena Näre
University of Helsinki
Università degli studi di Napoli, “Federico II”
lnare@mappi.helsinki.fi

Serena Messina
Università degli studi di Napoli, “Federico II”
serena.messina@fastwebnet.it

1. Introduction

Migration from the peripheries to the centres is one of the most significant phenomena in today's world. In the last years it has become a truly global phenomenon. The number of people on the move has increased dramatically over the past decennials; the sending countries have multiplied and women play an increasingly important role in these migration flows. In other words, migration flows have accelerated, diversified and feminised (Castles & Miller 1998). It is in the light of these changes that we outline what common ground capabilities approach and migration research could share.

We sustain that the fundamental human capabilities can offer important tools to guide and sensitize the international initiatives in favour of improving the quality of life of all people. However, when we focus on the particular situations that characterise the lives of migrants we are faced with an inherent contradiction in the premises of the capabilities approach: assuming that the subject of the capabilities is a *citizen* belonging to a *nation-state*. Migrants who are in movement from one country to the other or who are not formally citizens in the country where they live, do not seem to be adequately represented within the approach on capabilities. Thus, we argue for a looser concept than that of the citizen for the subject of capability approach. Moreover, we analyse how the list of capabilities as been proposed by Martha Nussbaum (2000) can prove useful in improving the quality of life of immigrants. We will not go deep into the ethical discussion whether migration as a global phenomenon is good or bad in the long run (cf. Barry & Goodin 1992), but instead take a practical stance of approaching the reality of immigrants in the specific context of Italy and the city of Naples.

In our discussion we draw on the on-going ethnographic Ph.D. research on East European and Sri Lankan migrant domestic workers in Naples conducted by Lena Näre. We approach inter- and transnational migration from gender perspective, which means regarding both how gender defines migration patterns and how immigration can change gender relations. Focusing on immigration brings to the fore relations between different nationalities, ethnicities and cultures, which intersect with gender and class distinctions.

2. *Inter- and transnational migration in the global era*

According to the UN statistics at the turn of the millennium there was 175 million registered immigrants in the world. If these migrants would constitute a nation, it would be the fifth most populated country in the world. As economic globalisation has failed in creating jobs and work opportunities in many parts of the world, the number of people who has left their countries of origin has grown: in the 1990's the number of migrants increased by 6 million person per year (ILO 2004). Respectively immigrants' remittances have become an important economic source for many developing countries. According to the World Bank, immigrants' remittances amounted to over 80 billion euros per year – and this includes only official transaction - of which 60 % were sent to developing countries. The remittances to developing countries surmount the official development assistance, capital market flows and amount to more than half of foreign direct investments to the developing countries (Nyberg Sorensen 2004). It has been argued that the benefits gained from remittances is often an initial phase and in the long run the sending countries will suffer from losing their active citizens and from 'brain-drain'.

However, the old pattern that required migrants full integration into the 'receiving' country has changed and in today's global world there are new and flexible modes of migratory movements: 'commuting migration' in state border areas such as Central Europe (Morokvasic 2003), rather short-term migration (as the case of Eastern European immigrants in Italy), gradual migration that traverse different countries and finally the creation of transnational communities which allow people to go back and forth, sustain strong social and economic ties with the arrival country without settling in the destination country (Faist 2000, Levitt, DeWind & Vertovec 2003).

The movement of people across state borders creates social spaces, practices and identities that surpass national boundaries: "cultures are not closed in to places, but places are traversed by cultures" (trad. ours, Chambers 2003). We should liberate ourselves from thinking the nation-states as containers of cultures in specific geographical territories and limiting the analysis of social processes within the geographical and political boundaries of nation-state what Andreas Wimmer and Nina Glick Schiller (2003) call 'methodological nationalism'. In the current literature on international migration, *transnational* is used to refer to these kinds of social spaces and practices. Transnationalism does not mean to say that states would not have a strong influence on the people living on its territory whether 'native' citizens or immigrants. On the contrary, the recent years have

seen an enforcing of the frontiers of 'Fortress Europe' from those who come from 'non-wanted' countries and the rising of nationalism and racism (Lutz, Phoenix and Yuval-Davis 1995). Instead the concept of transnationalism is applied to describe human activities and social institutions that extend across national boundaries.¹ It has been used to refer to diverse realities such as social and economical networks, political participation, international human rights treaties and identity building. The development of ever-faster transport and communication means play an important role in facilitating these transnational practices and spaces. It is a debated question into which point immigrants really lead transnational lives (Levitt; DeWind & Vertovec 2003). As in our discussion, we do not intend to enter this debate, we use the term *international migrants* when talking about individuals. However, at the same time, we sustain that the lives of these international migrants are influenced by transnational processes and that we should not limit our analysis within the boundaries of nation-states. Especially when talking about human capabilities and universal values.

Immigration has been understood to have both positive and negative impacts to the countries of immigration. Employers clearly benefit from the cheap labour offered by immigrants, whereas workers competing in the same sectors might lose. Economically immigrants can benefit themselves but the system of social protection for workers can be eroded. Moreover, growing inequality in receiving countries has been argued to result from immigration. Core countries with low fertility can keep their population growing thanks to immigration. The population of Italy, which has one of the lowest birth rates in Europe (1,26 children per woman) has grown in the past years thanks to immigration. Arguments in favour of free mobility are often based on requiring compensation for the failures of development aid and making an analogy between the free movements of money and goods and people: if goods can move so should people (Goodin 1992). The more general argument against mobility of people is often articulated along the lines: "an ideal world would be one in which the vast majority of people were content with the conditions in their own countries" (Barry 1992, 279). Accordingly, we should concentrate on developing the nations in their fixed territories. We claim that this is position in not realistic, as the global economics have profound effects on different parts of the world and entice and force people to migrate.

Globalisation processes have changed migration patterns over the last 50 years. When post-war migration was dominated by the importation of cheap labour to the industrial core countries, the logic of globalisation has changed this pattern by moving production to the countries of cheap

¹ The debate and growing literature on the concept is so vast, that it would be the topic of a paper on its own. (see Vertovec 1999 for discussion on different notions of transnationalism).

labour force (Sassen-Koob 1984, Castles 2000). In the core economies, the need for cheap labour has shifted to the tertiary sector that has grown as the living standards keep rising, population ageing, women's participation in the labour markets increasing at the same time that state provided social services are declining. Combined to the demand for sexual services by the more mobile male executives (Truong 1996) migrant women find work in the vast service sector of core economies: ranging from cleaning to caring work and sex work (Enloe 1999; Morokvasic et al. 2003, Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2003). With these changes also the old concepts have proven insufficient. The ideal type of migrant, a sole man leaving his family behind to go to work for the industry, that has dominated much migration theory and research, has become clearly outdated. Today, immigrants are as likely to be women as men: according to the statistics women comprise 49 % of international migrants (ILO 2004). The growing participation of women in migration flows has often been explained by household, not individual, decision-making. According to this model families decide to send younger women overseas because they are more reliable in sending remittances, because their work in the household is seen less indispensable and because there is an international demand for female jobs, such as domestic service (see for instance Castles & Miller 1998, 25). Empirical research has shown that women usually are more reliable in sending money but the idea of an unitary household or family that rationally and unanimously makes decisions is a myth (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994; Phizacklea, 2003; see also Nussbaum's critique on family as a natural entity 2000b). Women migrate on their own, autonomously, therefore challenging also the persisting gender roles of the male breadwinner model. The motivations for emigration can be manifold and complex but as Annie Phizacklea's (2003, 84) research on migrant domestic workers in London show "money and self-respect seem to be at the centre of these accounts." Näre's empirical research on domestic workers in Naples show similar findings. Among the Ukrainian and Polish women, the need to earn more money, was mixed with feeling of responsibility to help younger brothers (28-year old Polish girl), hope to "have a change in one's life" (45-year old divorced Ukrainian woman who hoped to find a man in Italy), and wish to get away from alcoholic and sick husband (47-year old Ukrainian woman). All these motivations can be put under the heading search for security. Whether it be security over everyday life, that is monetary security, bodily integrity or security over one's future. The common practice found among both Eastern European and Sri Lankan immigrants living Naples was that of building a house— a physical home into which the immigrants intended to return. Thus, paradoxically, transnational migration can be used as a tactic to create settlement and security in the old home country where migrants wish to

return.² Further, migration not only contributes to economic development in the countries of origin but can also promote social change. Ideas, practices, social capital that flow from the countries of destination to the countries of origin can play an important role in changing family structures, gender relations, caste and class hierarchies (for the concept of social remittance see Levitt 2002, for a case study in Sri Lanka, see Gamburg 2000). At best, emigration can be empowering for women, at worst women migrants' can find themselves in abusive and exploitative conditions.

Here it is important to note that in migration studies it is common to distinguish between voluntary and forced migration, referred also to as human trafficking. The term voluntary does not mean that migration would not have taken place if the economic social and political conditions in the country of origin would have been sufficient. The distinction stands for to the process of migration and to the degree of control a migrant can exercise over her movements. (Väyrynen 2002). However, empirical research shows that many women who are 'trafficked' to prostitution often know about the risks involved. However, the work conditions, paying the debt for the smugglers and the interest rates can prove to be unacceptable and the situation can turn out to be a one of slavery (for case studies and discussion on the topic, see Thorbeck & Pattanaik 2002). So, the situation can turn out to be what we imply when talking about 'trafficking'.

In the following chapter, we will consider what happens if we include migrants into the capability approach. In our view, considering immigrants as the subjects of capabilities calls for a reconsideration on some premises in the capability approach.

3. *Citizens or members? – Rights and Capabilities in Migration*

When immigrants belong to the polity and society of the country of immigration but do not want to apply for citizenship,³ who should guarantee the functioning of their basic capabilities? In the introduction to *Women and Human Development* Martha Nussbaum motivates why we need capabilities approach in today's globalised world. At the same time she defines the subject we should be concentrating on as a citizen in a nation-state:

² cf. Morokvasic (1992) talks about Poles who migrate in Germany "in order to remain in their place of residence

³ Research has shown that many migrants although living for over 20 years in the country of immigration show little or no interest at all to naturalization, i.e., to the applying for the citizenship of the country of immigration (Sassen 1996, 139). This was clear also in the case of immigrants in Naples.

“in a time of rapid globalization, when non-moral interests are bringing us together *across national boundaries*, we have an especially urgent need to reflect about the moral norms that can also, and more appropriately, unite us, providing constraints on the utility-enhancing choices nations may make. (...) In short, we need to ask what politics should be pursuing for *each and every citizen*, before we can think well about economic change. We need to ask what constraints there ought to be on economic growth, what the economy is supposed to be doing for people, and what all *citizens* are entitled to by *virtue of being human*.” (ital. ours; Nussbaum 2000, 32?33).

Limiting the right of human capabilities to citizens and thus almost stating that the *human* in human capabilities equals to *citizen*, is an unsustainable position. Surely, Nussbaum does not intend to make this sort of limitation but nonetheless emphasising the role of nation-state leads her to draw similar conclusion. According to Nussbaum (2000, 104) nation-states remain the most important actors in implementing human capabilities because “they are elected. They are accountable to the people (...) in a way that international agencies and extremely fine NGOs simply are not.” We claim, however, that although the nation-state still has an important role in politics, it does not mean that the people to whom it is accountable for should be formally citizens. Moreover, the terminology of citizenship is deeply rooted in the rights-based discourse, which in our view could be overcome in capability approach. Now, although we would accept that human capabilities do not necessarily have to be connected to formal citizenship status, it does not mean that nation-states would not be the one’s to implement these capabilities.

As Yasemin Soysal (1994, 3) shows referring to post-war migration to Europe: “incorporation into a system of membership rights does not inevitably require incorporation into the national collectivity.” Without formal citizenship status immigrants in European societies are entitled to various social, political and economic rights, such as health care, education in public school or local voting rights. Economic rights are most correlated to status categories, normally distinguished between work and residence permit. Instead, local voting rights were granted to immigrants already in the beginning of 1970’s in Ireland (after 6 months residence) and Sweden (after 3 years’ residence) (ibid, 127). Granting immigrants local voting rights is presently under way in Italy. The city of Rome for instance has already granted political rights in the local elections to its immigrant residents. Within the scope of this paper we do not want to go deeper into the philosophical debate on citizenship and rights (see Bauböck 1994 & 2003 for an interesting example of such discussion in national and transnational contexts). In the light of this brief overview we propose a much looser

concept of *societal membership* as the starting point for considering capabilities in migration⁴. Human capabilities could offer the moral basis for this membership but the configurations could vary in different national context. Without going deeper into the discussion on the limit of this concept, we now look at the new *members* in Italian society and polity.

The material we draw on consists of in-depth interviews of Eastern European (Ukrainian and Polish) immigrant women (N=20), Sri Lankan immigrant men and women (N=8) and experts that work with immigrants. Moreover, use is made of participant observation conducted in ACLI-COLF⁵ -organisation that is specialised in intermediating immigrant domestic workers to Neapolitan employers.

4. *Assessing the fundamental capacities in the case of migrant domestic workers in Naples*

In this chapter we will look into the specific empirical case of migrant domestic workers in Naples, South Italy. We will discuss what fundamental capabilities are at stake when we think of immigration from the so-called “Third and old Second World” countries to Italy.

The first capability we see to be especially relevant for migrants is related to *bodily integrity*: “Being able to able move freely from place to place; having one’s bodily boundaries treated as sovereign, i.e. being able to be secure against assault, including sexual assault, child sexual abuse, and domestic violence; having opportunities for sexual satisfaction and for choice in matters of reproduction” (Nussbaum 2000, 78). In this historical moment, the question of being able move freely seems to have become extremely problematic for all the persons coming from “non-wanted countries”. With the actual Bossi-Fini law on migration it has become extremely difficult to enter Italy from the so-called countries with strong migratory pressure (distinction made in the official Italian statistics see www.ISTAT.it). The only legal way for the workers of these countries to Italy is highly restricted to annual quotas that do not respond the actual need for labour force. For instance, for the year 2004 Italy has set a quota totalling 79 500 immigrants, divided in subordinate and seasonal work. These quotas have further been divided into regions and countries of origin so

⁴ There has been proposals to replace the concept of citizenship with concepts such as *denizen* (Hammar 1990). In our view a new concept would only deepen the distinctions between citizens and this new group.

⁵ ACLI-COLF (Associazione Cristiana Lavoratori Italiani) is a Catholic organisation that coined the term COLF=collaboratore domestico/a (domestic collaborator) and that today is one of the biggest intermediators between domestic workers and employers.

that for instance the region of Campania would have 630 places for subordinate workers and 2000 for seasonal workers (www.stranieriinitalia.it). The application has to be done in the country of origin and so the migrant should already have a work contact prior to emigration.

Thus, for the large part of aspiring immigrants the only legal ways to enter Italy remain by family reunification, that has unreasonably long handling times, and by tourist visa. Entering with tourist visa and overstaying has been the way in which the majority of the interviewed immigrants had arrived in Naples during the last years. Nowadays, the abuses of tourist visas has made it even more difficult – or costly – to obtain one. When two years ago the tourist visa from Ukraine cost around 600 euros, it now costs almost 2000 euros. Many of the Sri Lankans had friends or relatives that have had their tourist visas denied although they filled all the formal requirements. In order to come to Italy, one is surer to get a visa for another Schengen-country. Without any personal contacts aspiring immigrants need to resort to services of middlemen who can charge over 9000 euros for a tourist visa. There has also been cases where Italian embassies have denied entry to the country based on short visiting visas for experts, such as lectures, who come from these “non-wanted” countries. Sometimes, close personal relations to Italy won’t help when confronted with the visa regulation policies. A Bielo Russian woman whose Italian boyfriend had invited her over, was denied a tourist visa, although she had all the documents in order, an invitation and money to prove her economic independence during her stay. The Italian embassy didn’t even explain the reasons for denying her visa.

But why should we defend the capability of free movement across national boundaries in the first place? We argue basing on the importance given to freedom as the constitutive principle of capabilities: “a set of vectors of functionings [beings and doings], reflecting the person’s freedom to lead one type of life or another” (Sen 1992, 40). In other words: “the notion of capability is essentially one of freedom ? the range of options a person has in deciding what kind of life to lead” (Drèze and Sen 1995, 10?11.) Restricting free movement limits personal freedom both the in positive sense of freedom, “power to achieve chosen results” (Sen 1985, 208) as well as in its negative sense, “freedom from” constraints. Moreover, restricting free movement is both limiting one’s *well-being freedom* as well as *agency freedom* (Sen 1992, 56?72; Sen 1993). In a world were the strongest indicator of injustice is that people born in Sub-Saharan Africa lack vastly in opportunities and resources compared to those people born in Western Europe have, defending immigration control means defending this privilege. On the basis of truly universal values one

should have the freedom to move from place to place in order to pursue one's well-being and agency as well as the freedom to leave conditions that do not permit this pursuit.

We can also think of more practical arguments why people should be able to move freely. The restrictions for people's movement have caused a worldwide business of smuggling and trafficking in people. Consider the case of Siranta and his young wife Shiromi:⁶

Siranta is a 25-year old Sri Lankan man who arrived to Naples six months ago. He left his newly wed wife and then still unborn child to their hometown near Colombo. His wife's parents and all other siblings are all living in Naples. In Sri Lanka he started to study political sciences but lacking the economic means to pay for the fees, he got a job in a textile factory where he moved his way up to the position of head of department. His salary was so small that he could survive, but didn't see a secure future for his child. He decided to follow his brother-in-laws example and emigrate. The only possibility to enter to Italy was to organise a visa from a relative living in Sweden and come from there to Italy. He paid 6 000 euros for the visa and journey. Once in Naples, he got a job in a butcher's shop but found it physically too hard and badly paid so he started looking for cleaning jobs. At the moment, he works in nine different places: private homes and offices. Some of the jobs are substitution jobs that he will have to give up when his friend returns from Sri Lanka. Now he manages to earn 700 euros a month which is good considering he lives with his parents-in-law and does not pay rent. Now he is thinking of ways how to get his wife to Italy. The visa application for Sweden got rejected and so he is considering of turning to private persons who could organise a visa to another Schengen-country. These people ask over 9 000 euros for their services. Moreover, Shiromi should apply for a tourist visa because she with a little baby she has no possibility to get visa on employment basis. Siranta's legal ways of moving in this situation are extremely limited as also he is 'illegally' working and has to wait for the next amnesty to get a regular stay permit.

In the Italian case the hypocrisy of the state becomes clear, when we take a look on what happens when migrant domestic workers overstay their tourist visas. As their work is highly requested, they manage to find employment rather easily and become members of the society remaining legally aliens. As domestic workers; carers for the children, elderly and infirm, they provide for the welfare state is unwilling to provide, thus saving on social services expenditure (Andall 2000; Anthias 2000). Also for the private households, a living-in domestic worker (600?900 € per month) is a cheap solution compared to e.g. nursing homes (1500?2000 € a month) or private nursery schools. However, the way immigrant domestic workers, and other workers for that matter, get treated by the law demonstrate a strong reluctance towards them. In order to acquire a regular status, they have to wait until the government decides on a special measure for the regulation of unofficial immigrants (sanatoria). These amnesties have taken place in regular intervals, approximately every four years. In the amnesty of 1998 215 000 stay permits (permesso di soggiorno) were approved (Scevi 2003, 181) and according to the preliminary statistics from the last amnesty in 2002, a total of 650 000 stay permits were granted for immigrant workers (Il Venerdì di Repubblica 23.4.2004). If we think

⁶ All the names have been changed.

that in order to apply for the stay permit requires a work contract that has endured at least six months prior to the application, we notice clearly that thousands of hundreds of unofficially entered immigrants are able to find their place in the society. Nevertheless, immigrants can be forced to live in a precarious and illegal status for many years, before regularisation becomes possible and even then they are wholly dependent on the their employers' willingness to regularise the worker. Many Ukrainians told about the ordeals of trying to convince the reluctant employer to make the application before the two-month application time expires. Those immigrants whose employers would who decided to continue to benefit from employing an irregular worker, did not have other possibility to file a complaint against their employers that can take a long time before having a permit.⁷

The irregular status immigrants are bound to face renders them especially vulnerable to various abuses from the part of the employers and makes it particularly difficult to seek help from fear of being deported. The nature of domestic work often means living and working in the same physical place and lacking legal status workers are even clearly at the mercy of their employers.⁸ In the case of women migrant workers the intimacy of the house as workplace can in the worse case turn into a potential place of sexual intimidation and abuse (see also Nussbaum 2000a):

40-years old Elina had just arrived to Naples from Ukraine. She didn't understand nor spoke Italian apart from few essential words. Not knowing anybody in the city she went job-hunting on a square that is a common meeting place for Eastern European women and a recruiting place. An Italian man who acted as a middleman for employers offered her a work as a carer for an elderly man in the outskirts of Naples. The first days in her new job went quite well, but after some time the man started to make unwelcome advances in the middle of the night, and one night insisted on that Elina would come and sleep with him. Confused and scared Elina decided to leave the house the next morning. It is needless to say she never got paid for the week she worked.

Cases of violations of one's integrity were more often violations of psychological and emotional integrity than physical or sexual assaults; racist comments, yelling and abuse of power. Almost all the interviewed had experiences humiliations of some sort. Here is one telling case that happened to 47-year old Natasha:

"I worked as a live-in baby sitter for two little children. The relationship with the children was good but with the mother, signora, horrible. The signora had had gone through a difficult period in her past: divorce and breast cancer. I felt she was jealous of my health and that made her also aggressive. She would come and wake up in the middle of the night after she got home pretending to ask for the children [Tonia slept in the same room with the children]. Then she

⁷ The injustice of this whole situation becomes even clearer when we think of the sums the state is cashing in with stay permits and their annual renewals.

⁸ A distinction to live-in and live-out jobs is usually made in the literature. Live-in workers usually have one afternoon (from 15.00 to 20.00) and Sunday free. Some renounce some of their free time for better pay.

would insult me in Italian thinking that I won't understand. She would say 'this cretina [idiot] when are you going to learn Italian' But 'cretina' exists also in our language, so I understood what she was saying. I had enough when one day when she asked me while we were having lunch, what I had done before coming to Italy. I said I was a teacher. She went all quiet but after a while she ordered me to clean the toilet after the small child had been there. I was still eating and answered: yes when I have finished my food. And she: no, right now. I got up and was about to go and get the gloves. But she said, no, without gloves. Then, I thought that's it, I have to go. She wanted to show me that although I have an education and she doesn't she is still above me."

Natasha's experience reflects on the many difficulties domestic workers face. Especially in the beginning, without knowing the language or the work, the domestic workers had no choice over their employers, in contrast to the employers who often have specific requirements over the workers. Further, in the personalised employer-employee relationship workers have little bargaining power apart from the power to suddenly quit their job. Until taking the final decision to leave the job, they have to bear with the insults.⁹ As many of the interviewed said: you just need patience, lots of patience. However, it should not be overlooked that the women take action and actively seek to maximise their working and living conditions – and freedom. This often means turning down living-in jobs and instead renting a flat with other women and taking up jobs on hourly basis. Working on hourly basis and the living expenses is often economically more disadvantageous but it can prove to be crucial for the self-esteem and sense of freedom. Those who had made this choice compared living-in jobs to prisons because of the lack of control one has being almost 24 hours “on service”.

Natasha's case reveals another aspect that characterises the particular power relations between employers and workers: the majority of Eastern European domestic workers are more educated than their employers. According to a recent survey, 35 % of domestic workers have a lower or higher university degree, 46,4% have a college degree and only 7% are not educated (La Repubblica 10.9.2003). However, once in the country of destination their educational background and special capabilities have no value and doctors, professors and factory workers alike work in domestic service. The government has no -or little- interest in helping immigrants in translating their degrees into Italian equivalents, nor has there been particular incentives to organise courses that could help to improve the workers' self-esteem and gain respect for the care work sector on the whole (cf. Nussbaum 2002). Recently some communes in North Italy have started to organise pilot courses tailored for immigrants. Needless to say, these courses do not consider the immigrants' individual

⁹ Cases of emotional and psychological humiliation from the part of employers have been reported also in other studies (see e.g. Parreñas 2001; Anderson 2000; Ehrenreich & Hochschild 2003).

capabilities, instead the point of departure is the markets' labour needs. The courses are concentrated mainly on elderly care in the private households. It is also remarkable that although in many parts of Italy there is an urgent need for health care personnel in hospitals and many qualified migrant candidates, the communal employment regulations may impede from employing a non-Italian citizen.

The static employment 'niches' that limit immigrants' possibilities to use their capabilities, increase racial and gender hierarchies in the society. Thus, care for the elderly becomes the work of Eastern European women, cleaning that of Sri Lankan men etc. These highly racialised notions can be seen in typical expressions such as "c'è l'hai una polacca a casa?" ("Do you have a Polish at home?").

Moreover, the movement from these defined employment 'niches' can prove to be difficult regardless how long the immigrant has been in Italy. This is the case of Sri Lankan Tharang who has lived over 13 years in Naples.

36-year old Tharang has worked cleaning houses on hourly base ever since coming to Naples. Over the years he has brought almost all of his family (wife, parents one sister and two brothers) to Naples and has now a three-year-old child born in Italy. He has regular residence in Naples but has no political rights. He speaks perfect Italian and Neapolitan dialect. He studies computer skills on his only free day (Sunday). He lives with his wife and child in a one-room apartment on the ground floor. With the money he has earned he had constructed a house in Sri Lanka and has also savings for his son's education. He is thinking about getting a loan and buying flat in Naples and has already been to a bank to discuss mortgage. Getting a mortgage seems to be extremely difficult without a guarantee from a Neapolitan person. Now, he doesn't know whether to return to Sri Lanka or stay in Naples. His wife, Runy, would want to return but Tharang is afraid he will not find work to support his family in Sri Lanka.

Tharang's and his wife's situation leads us to another urgent problem immigrants face in Naples and that is related to the capability over material surroundings: the question of housing. According to a recent study, immigrants are asked to pay higher rents than natives; they are charged per person and not by square metres and they rarely manage to rent a flat officially, with a contract (Ares 2000). This last problem leads to other difficulties when applying for a stay permit or residence permit. For these reasons, too often the habitations immigrant can afford are very small (e.g. Siranta lives three other relatives in a room of 20 square metres) or habitations that are not suited for living, e.g. garages that do not have windows or basic accessories. What comes to public housing, it has been made almost impossible to access to: one should not only have a regular work contract but also a regular stay permit for the last least six years or a two-year permit (when the usual stay permit is granted only for one year) (ibid.).

5. *Conclusions*

We would like to conclude our sketchy overview on how the question of migration could be approached from the perspective of the capability approach by making a few remarks. Firstly, none of these capability failures are necessarily problems only immigrants face. For instance, housing is a question that touches poor Neapolitan families, too. However, as the ARES' survey shows, migrants are discriminated compared to 'natives'. They are discriminated in the private sphere of interpersonal relationships where the landlords ask for higher rents from immigrants and they are discriminated in the public sphere in relation to social rights. Restrictive entry policy and lack of coherent immigrant policy have important consequences on immigrants' capabilities. The weak or inexistent membership status adds to these capability failures.

Secondly, immigrant-native is not the only distinction that needs to be considered. Social stratifications follow ethnic and gender lines, putting African men to more disadvantaged position than Sri Lankan men. When Sri Lankan men (as well as Filipinos and Bangladeshis) are 'allowed' to come to clean the Neapolitan private households because they are perceived as non-threatening, docile and hard-working, very few African men can access household work (most work in physically demanding jobs, such as in agriculture or as street-sellers). Moreover, Polish women as white Catholics – and thus nearer to 'Us' – are preferred over Muslim, Somali women in household work. Thus, race, gender, ethnicity are deeply intersected and influence the capabilities of immigrants (cf. Bakan & Stalius 1995).

Focusing on migration leads us to see the various inequalities that persist within 'developed' nation states and across nation states, in their transnational contexts. It also allows us to see how states can benefit from and thus sustain the existing inequalities within a society. We would welcome capability approach to the debates on international and transnational migration and citizenship that so far have been mainly concerned with human rights. Capabilities can offer a concrete way of enhancing immigrants' quality of life. Moreover, capability approach should not exclude the thousands of people who every year are forced to live their countries of origin, who are forced to stay on the move or who might be more or less permanent members but who are not and will not become its full citizens.

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