

# Left Behind

The impact of economic migration on  
Children Left Behind and their families

Hotel Leopold - European Parliament

*2 March 2011*



Giovanni Giulio Valtolina

*The challenge of being a  
transnational family*

CONFERENCE

**LEFT BEHIND**

Education Partner



FONDAZIONE  
PATRIZIO PAOLETTI  
PER LA PLENA E LA CORINACAZIONE



in Collaboration with

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# Migration and transnationalism

*"A process by which immigrants forge and construct social spots that link together their societies of origin and settlement"*

*(Glick Schiller, Basch, Blanc-Szanton, 1992)*

## The importance of:

- migrants' linkages to their homeland
- exchanges between the two worlds
- mobility across the borders
- consequences of migration on the societies of origin

**A plurality of "transnationalisms"**

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## Forms of transnationalism

1/3

	Economic area	Political area	Socio-Cultural area
<b>A) Identitarian</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Preference for goods and products of homeland</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Patriotism and nationalism at a distance</li><li>•Devotion to one's citizenship of origin</li><li>•Affiliation to homeland political parties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Homeland-sickness</li><li>•Main social identification with countrymen living abroad</li><li>•Identification with homeland artistic, folkloristic, and cultural expressions</li><li>•The myth of "going back home"</li></ul>

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## Forms of transnationalism

2/3

	Economic area	Political area	Sociocultural area
<b>B) Relational (Relationship level)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sending home remittances</li><li>• Sending presents and money for charity to the country of origin (and/or to the local community)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Systematic and constant interest in political and current affairs of the country and/or local community of origin</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Frequent visits and/or systematic distance relationship among transnational family members</li><li>• Frequent visits and/or systematic distance relationship with friends, acquaintances, and reference people within one's local community of origin</li></ul>

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## Forms of transnationalism

3/3

	Economic area	Political area	Sociocultural area
<b>C) Behavioural</b> Behaviour level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Investments (small activities, houses, land) in the country of origin</li><li>•Informal cross-border trade</li><li>•“Ethnic enterprises” aimed at making exchanges with homeland</li><li>•Circular migration on long distances</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Supporting political parties, candidates, or political institutions in the country of origin</li><li>•Taking part in the homeland general elections from abroad</li><li>•Political activism on homeland problems</li><li>•Taking advantage from dual citizenship</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Taking part in or supporting religious, sporting, or music events in the homeland.</li><li>•Taking part in social or cultural organizations in the homeland</li><li>•Taking part in charitable activities in homeland</li></ul>

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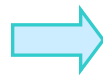
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## Transnational family

- Transnationalism as an intentional and actively pursued choice, but often also as an unavoidable choice.
- Transnational family members live separated by national borders, but keep different social fields together. These social fields include both who is leaving and who is staying at home. Transnational family members maintain emotional ties, reciprocal feelings of belonging and caregiving responsibilities (Cartheridge, 2010).
- Women and mother-children relationships represent a central aspect in transnational relationship.

Informal and “invisible”  
welfare in the host country



*Care drain and care shortage in  
the country of origin*

## Difficulties and consequences in the host country

### - Children caregiving

- feelings of anxiety, powerlessness, loss, guilt, loneliness
- three strategies that mothers adopt to overcome the pain for being separated from their children: replacement of caregiving with gifts, inhibition of emotions, rationalisation of distance
- remittances and various forms of communication to shorten distances
- reconciling a professional role with family can arouse emotional stress and unrealistic expectations → feelings of inadequacy and depression (Dion & Dion, 2006)

### - Aged parents caregiving

### - Couple relationship

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## Difficulties and consequences in the homeland

- children caregiving and education
- stereotypes about migrants' children
- stigmatization of the migrant mothers by home society
- children feeling of loneliness and abandonment
- possible youth deviances (bullying, excessive and flaunted consumption, use of alcohol and drugs)