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## Time and migration studies: Theoretical and methodological intersections

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# CMR Working Papers

91/149

**OLGA COJOCARU**

**Time and Migration Studies.  
Theoretical and methodological  
intersections**

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## ***Abstract***

This paper examines the intersection of two fields of study, rarely conjoined so far: time scholarship and migration theories. Building upon previous studies that have conceptualized social articulations of time, it aims to trace the intellectual progression of the field, including the major debates and the main thematic categories. By no means exhaustive, the present theoretical review on migration and temporality rests primarily on the works of Robertson (2015), Griffiths et al. (2013), King et al. (2006) and Cwerner (2001) who are among the first scholars to theorize ways in which time or multiple temporalities inform migrants' lives and ethnographic modes to investigate it. By conjoining all these research efforts together, I hope to demonstrate how a temporal approach on migration processes can enrich existing studies with in-depth insights about migrant subjectivities.

Key words: temporalities of migration, transnational families, waiting, uncertainty, bureaucratic time

## ***Streszczenie***

W tym artykule analizuję przecięcie się dwóch rzadko zestawianych ze sobą obszarów badawczych: studiów nad czasem i badań migracyjnych. Na podstawie dotychczasowych konceptualizacji czasu jako zjawiska społecznego zamierzam odtworzyć rozwój refleksji w tej dziedzinie z uwzględnieniem punktów węzłowych debaty. Proponowany przegląd nie ma charakteru wyczerpującego i koncentruje się przede wszystkim na pionierskich pracach powstałych na przecięciu perspektywy czasowej i obszaru migracji, takich jak opracowanie Robertson (2015), Griffiths i in. (2013), Kinga i in. (2006) oraz Cwernera (2001). Autorzy ci jako pierwsi konceptualizowali sposoby zanurzenia życia migrantów w czasie i rozmaitych perspektywach czasowych oraz opracowali etnograficzne podejścia służące badaniu czasowego ujęcia migracji.

Korzystając z ich dorobku zamierzam wykazać wartość czasowego (temporalnego) ujęcia zjawisk migracyjnych, jako pomagającego pogłębić wiedzę o doświadczaniu tego procesu przez jego podmioty.

Słowa kluczowe: czasowe ujęcie migracji, rodziny transnarodowe, oczekiwanie, niepewność

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<sup>1</sup>As a result, the theoretical work reviewed here has been tailored according to the topic of the research project, which tackles Eastern European domestic workers in Italy.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper brings together insights from time scholarship and migration studies and proposes a research thematic framework tailored for a temporal approach on labour migration. After giving a rationale for approaching migration through the category of time, this paper will put forward the potential asynchronies experienced by migrants when they have to learn and internalize unfamiliar temporal norms and rhythms in their quest to build a new livelihood in the host environment. A temporal approach on transnational families can also reveal the type of de-synchronization experienced by family members missing each other and thus structuring their every day life according to the long awaited reunions. In a further section, agency is theorized as a temporal phenomenon, an exercise of choice, which plays a crucial role in the strategies that labour migrants develop in the host societies especially under conditions perceived powerlessness in relation to the structural constraints. Lastly, this paper reveals the temporal implications of migration governance such as duration of visa or allowed number of working hours and other state-designed policies meant to maintain temporarity of certain categories of migrants. In addition, it points to gendered time inequalities, implying that employed women have less free time and are prone to suffer more from role strain or the need to manage multiple temporalities in different life spheres.

In terms of theory, this approach will fill in a gap in the literature since time studies have little intersected with migration scholarship thus far. Ethnographic studies have favoured primarily a spatial approach on migration, time being deemed a far too abstract concept to be looked empirically into. However recently increasing attention has been devoted to the dynamic and heterogeneous temporalities of migration. King et al. (2006) stress the practical and theoretical importance of time in the study of migration in their attempt to theorize how migration and integration unfold through time, across generations or increasingly significant, across gendered/feminized migration flows.

There are a few remarkable attempts to theorise and operationalise the dimension of time into the study of international migration. Two works are mostly notable, Torsten Hägerstrand's (1982) treatise of time geography and the pioneering 8-fold temporal framework expounded by the Brazilian sociologist Saulo Cwerner (2001). In addition,

Griffiths *et al.* (2013) offered a comprehensive theoretical review of migration, time and temporalities. Scholars have highlighted temporality in studies of asylum and immigration systems and processes, especially in terms of disjuncture, uncertainty and ambiguity (Griffiths 2013, 2014; de Haas 2012; Mansouri and Cauchi 2007). Previous works on lifecourse theory in migration studies (Bailey, 2009; Kobayashi and Preston, 2007) with their emphasis on temporal contingencies, stages, transitions, and sequencing, also heavily inform the discussion of migration and time.

Methodologically, conceptualizing time and migration can prove to be an intricate mission. Ethnographers can only hope to capture “snapshots and slices”<sup>2</sup> of complex migration systems (McHugh 2000:72) and supposedly, there is always going to be a conflict or a mismatch between the times of the researcher and the time of the researched/migrants (Fabian 1983). Hence multi-sited fieldwork (Mazzucato, 2009; Marcus 1995) aiming to analyse the simultaneity of social relations across space can be complemented by “multi-temporal fieldwork” (Harney 2014). Robertson developed a conceptual framework of “time tracks” (a temporal path of social behaviour) and “timescale” (scales of social, political and temporal ordering) to capture the multiplicity of both spatial and temporal relationships

## **2. Why research migration through time?**

Migration is customarily viewed as a spatial act of mobility that is a change of residence on a shorter or longer term. Yet, more than a shift in geographical location, migration is a major biographical event causing disorder in one’s timeline, an interruption of normality, which needs to be dealt with extraordinary resources. Thus relocating for various purposes is a movement *both* in space and time, or dramatically termed, both a geographical dislocation and a biographical disruption. This distinctive period is temporally relevant because it is marked with uncertainty when migrants are prompted to continuously re-imagine future and adjust their trajectory.

At the societal level, major changes are intrinsically temporal. Altered gender relations or changing patriarchal patterns largely observable after recently increased

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<sup>2</sup>In addition to multi-sited fieldwork meant to analyze the simultaneity of social relations across space (Mazzucato, 2009; Marcus 1995), Harney (2014) brings up the notion of multi-temporal fieldwork.



feminized labour flows can be also observed through the prism of time. Furthermore, a temporal approach on migration is also useful when comparing previous ages of migration (19<sup>th</sup> century) with contemporary features of migration or, alternatively observing different stages of a single migration cycle from the pre-departure to the period of settlement/integration/return (cf. King et al. 2006).

Migration projects are essentially informed by migrants' own aspirations and priorities. If they view themselves as strictly temporary, they will save money, focus on working time and maintain ties with home. If they deem their exit as permanent and cherish longer plans for settlement, they will naturally show more interest in integration. Nonetheless it is crucial to understand that migration trajectories are subject to changes anytime and decision-making is ongoing, therefore, the boundaries between the categories of migrations are many times fuzzy and fluid. Intended permanent migrants can swiftly decide to return to the origin country or temporary migrants can live in such a protracted limbo that they become long-term settlers, even against their will. From the host state perspective, the ideal migrant should conform to a continuous sequence of stages, from arrival to integration/return. However migration trajectories can hardly progress in a linear manner as long as migrants are in the position to continuously renegotiate their initial decisions in pursuit of life plans. There are migrants who go smoothly from one stage to another, whereas others might be stuck in one stage, or feel powerless because of various constraints, deadlines or requirements they have to meet.

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King *et al.* (2006: 259) argue for a “deeper ethnography of migrant decision making” which would be able to shed light on the stickiness and fuzziness around temporariness, permanence, transience, precarity, flexibility and alienation across migrant practices and

subjectivities (Robertson 2015). Therefore in-depth data on mechanisms of migrant future making or temporal orientations can contribute to design policies, which would prove sensitive to migrants' goals and not violate their horizons or expectations. Gaining sensible insights into their temporal subjectivities will heighten the understanding of migrant behaviour in the long or short term according to their migration goals, or how it is that *'there's nothing as permanent as a temporary migrant'* (Griffiths 2013).

### 3. Time as a social category

Firstly theorized by classic sociologists (Durkheim 1912, Mead 1932, 1964, Sorokin & Merton 1937)<sup>3</sup>, time has been treated as a social category, based on representations, attitudes and strategies associated with the projection of temporally differentiated outlooks (Adam, 1990, 1998; Bourdieu, 1997; Giddens, 1991) or as a social interpretation of reality derived from the differences between past and future (Luhmann, 1982: 274). Social-anthropological approaches on time stress out its constructivist nature and its inescapable relationship to power and interests (Harney 2014, Durkheim, 1995; Evans-Pritchard, 1969; Gell, 1992). On the other hand, the adepts of the cultural theories on time contend that conceptualizations and experiences of time are highly culturally variable (time remains a silent language, to paraphrase Edward T. Hall 1959<sup>4</sup>)

Time is, essentially, a product of experience (Mead 1982), an awareness of change (Denzin 1982) and sequence (Couch 1982). The essential structures and processes that organize social life temporally have been researched under the titles timetables (Roth 1963, Zerubavel 1976), time tracks (Lyman and Scott 1970), temporal ordering (Moore 1963) and scheduling (Glaser and Strauss 1965, Zerubavel 1976, 1979, 1982, cf. Bergman 1992). Nancy Munn (1992: 116) puts forward the concept of *'temporalization'* to gauge the

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<sup>3</sup>see Bergman 1992

<sup>4</sup>Hall (1959:153) presents cultural time as a continuum that spreads between those communities whose members prefer to do one thing at a time (monochronic (M-time) as opposed to those cultures where people do many things at once (polychronic time (P-time). M-time cultures (United States, Germany, and Scandinavia) wait until one event is over before beginning the next one, (time is conceptualized as money); P-time cultures typically focus more on human interactions such that time spent with others is considered a task because it helps build bonds that may be useful in the future (Japan, Middle Eastern countries and South Asian countries). It is beyond the scope of this paper to assess Hall's assertion. What is important, however, is that Hall presents the distinction between M-time and P-time as fluctuating. Moreover, he shows that the changes in one's cultural perception of time follow significant alterations in the value system of a society.

way time is produced in the ordinary, everyday process of living. People live out their lives 'in' socially constituted and culturally entwined plural dimensions within which they create trajectories for the future but of which they may only be vaguely aware (cf. Harney 2014). As family members go to work, they disperse into fragmented temporal domains (Daly 1996). Correspondingly, *temporal stratification* (Van den Scott 2014) designates the need to negotiate (and prioritize) between self, families and institutional commitments. Scholars have come up with a plethora of terms to define and study the manner in which these social systems intersect within the individual or social group, from "depth levels" (Gurvitch 1964) to "time embeddedness" (Lewis and Weigert 1981) to "complex hierarchies of interlocking rhythms" (Hall 1983, 140). All of these concepts refer in some way to how these spheres intersect and interact with each other and how individuals must prioritize certain spheres of their lives at different times throughout the day. Each individual is part of numerous temporal orders/timetables, some self-determined, some imposed, some possessing linear structures (such as biography, career, surrounding world time) and some having cyclical structures (daily rounds). Flaherty and Zerubavel go as far as to talk about temporal intelligence to be able to master the tools to customize the qualities of time (doing time in various ways: controlling timing/frequency with which things occur, alter sequence, make time for some things instead of others). If they fail to synchronize or coordinate these timetables, they may experience either a scarcity of time (Luhmann 1968), time out or waiting (Bergman 1992). At the collective level, calendars create temporal segregation, which can reveal, establish and reinforce group boundaries (Zerubavel 1982, 1985).

Clock time is the objective measure of time, whereas event time is subjective and situational, and represents the time spent completing a task or attending an event (Plocher, Goonetilleke, Zhang, & Liang, 2002). Many Western and industrialized countries tend to highly value clock time because it allows time to be added, borrowed, and divided (Rubin & Belgrave, 1999). Clock time also allows individuals to be precise with planning and have a measure of efficiency (Bluedorn & Denhardt, 1988; Levine & Norenzayan, 1999). In contrast, event time features less rigid views on punctuality, and the passage of time is measured not by minute or hour, but instead by the time it takes for a task to be completed (Goldman & Rojot, 2003). Although we count it off in clock time, we experience the passing of time according to social activities, such as birthdays or promotions, which are not always linked with rational time (Geertz 1973; Givens 1979; Zerubavel 1997). The measurement of time does not always fit with the feeling of duration. Bergson [1910](1959) introduces

the concepts of *durée*, lived time and temps, mathematical, clock time, to explain this distinction. The experience of time (*durée*) does not flow evenly but is marked by “critical events” and stretches of empty time (Sorokin [1943] 1964, cf. Van den Scott 2014).

#### **4. (Migration) asynchronies**

Temporal disjunctures are experienced when individuals share the same territorial space but lie in different temporalities. It has long been suggested that individuals marginalised from mainstream societies (including to some extent newcomers) experience temporal disharmony and disconnection (Cwerner 2001). Migrants experience asynchronies when, confronted with an unfamiliar temporality in the host country (new rhythms, patterns of work and leisure etc.), they have to adjust to an alien pace of life (some have proclaimed this as even more difficult as learning the language – Levine 1981) and internalize a whole semiotics of time (Cwerner 2001, Zerubavel 1987). Disjuncture between expectations and reality also contributes to an altered experience of time in which the future is uncertain and life is unstable. In terms of rhythm disjunctures, it would be relevant to inquire how migration disrupts existing routines and patterns (Roseman 1971) building upon Lefebvre’s classic work on the analysis of biological and social rhythms, which has been expanded by more recent writers discussing temporal norms, rhythms and repetition (for example Edensor 2010).

#### **5. Temporalities of transnational families**

Transnationalism brings about time-space disjunctures for families whose members experience desynchronization when missing and waiting for each other (Hogben 2006, Sack 1987). For instance, Tymczuk examined the temporalities of separation in transnational families by examining how Ukrainian children conceptualise family separation and togetherness in relation to agency and temporality (2015). A further step would be to look into the current tactics of resynchronization and keeping in touch with the family back home and compare how were the transnational family ties sustained when communication technologies were not widely available and how do the recent technological advancements affect the transnational links today. How is “togetherness” maintained across distances/borders, after all?

Scholars have concluded that the notion of family as an 'imagined community' is increasingly enlarged in the sense that shared memories and obligations along with the sense of mutual belonging start to be not exclusively linked with geographical proximity. In the case of transnational families, cohabitation seems to lessen, while practices of caregiving at a distance generates a sense of 'co-presence', despite absence and separation (Baldassar & Merla 2013 Tymczuk 2015), while remittances and technologized communication can create 'intimacy in separation' (Parreñas 2005) or 'virtual intimacies' (Wilding 2006). Relationships are constantly rebuilt as well as family history and narratives (Ambrosini 2007). Patriarchal schemes can be altered and, very often, women become more autonomous and competent in the managing of money.

Zhou (2015) has already pointed out the ways in which transnationalism brings about time-space disjunctions for families by looking at the caregiving practices of Chinese grandparents in Canada. She revealed the temporal inequalities embedded in transnational migration, at least from the point of view of a global time competing with fragmented peripheral temporalities. Poster (2007) found that globalization does indeed privilege certain times (and times zones) over others in his study of a call centre in India. He showed that there is a stratification of time privilege across a global economy which means people are not being liberated by time but constrained by it, particularly across the global North and South divide.

With reference to the legal status, studies show that transnational engagement is the strongest amongst undocumented and insecure migrants (those with only short-term stay permits) whereas dual citizens are the least transnational, and long-term residence card-holders occupy an intermediate position (King and Debono 2013).

## **6. (Temporal) Agency**

### **6.1. Agency**

If individual biographic time is viewed as a reflectively constructed succession of choices and decisions (Carmo 2014, Giddens 1991) and not determined by a predefined script, how do actors formulate projects for the future, how do they engage with the structural context and how do they respond to social and economic change (Anderson *et al.* 1994)? Varying understandings and embodied experiences of time are intimately intertwined with power and agency. Scholars illustrated how powerlessness affects the strategies that labour

migrants are trying to develop in an often-hostile society. Social psychology conceives of agency as an exercise of will, expression of personal choice, the source of novelty and improvisation in human conduct.

Agency has been treated as a temporal phenomenon (Emirbayer and Mische 1998), informed by the past (in its “iterational” or habitual aspect) and oriented to future (as a “projective” capacity to imagine alternative possibilities and future trajections). Thus agency is tridimensional: it is iterational, projective, and practical (“chordal triad of agency”). Any of these dimensions may function separately or simultaneously or may predominate, thus we can speak of actions that are more (or less) engaged with the past, more (or less) directed toward the future, and more (or less) responsive to the present. The question is which of these 3 manifests more powerfully in the experience of migration. The authors claim that for each analytical aspect of agency one temporal orientation is the dominant tone, shaping the way in which actors relate to the other two dimensions of time. The methodological challenge is to disaggregate the dimensions of agency and thus explore which orientations are dominant within a given situation.

## 6.2 Constraints

Hägerstrand’s time geography illuminated the types of constraints that determine people’s capacity to perform certain activities or projects. The Swedish geographer posited that individuals in daily life engage in multifarious time-paths of movement with fixed points (labelled stations such as home, workplace, community centre) to form a group (an ‘activity bundle’) for a particular purpose/project (migration, creating a family, sustaining a livelihood, building a house, educating children) (Hägerstrand 1982: 324 *apud* King *et al.* 2006). Their ability to carry out these activities are conditioned by their capacity constraints (distance and travel costs, for example), coupling constraints (whereby the individual cannot move abroad because of personal or family obligations) or steering constraints (mechanisms created with the intention of facilitating, or blocking, access to migration – such as special incentive schemes for certain categories of migrants, or immigration laws to prevent migration) (Malmberg 1997: 144, *cf.* King *et al.* 2006). As previously remarked, constraints approach is useful to explain nonmigration and illuminate the distinction between aspiration and ability to migrate (Carling 2002).

### 6.3 Time perspectives

Belief in one's control in life has been examined in relation to temporal orientation and how people value the past, present, and future. These differences can lead to an enforced present perspective, when one is prone to focus on the present and enjoy the moment or a future oriented attitude when one sacrifices the present time for the sake of a better future.

When examining one's time perspective, one needs to take into account determinants such as class, age, and sex, concrete social roles and systems<sup>5</sup> (Luscher 1974, Bergmann 1992). Certain environments or social institutions<sup>6</sup> impose a more structured time experience (eg. hospitals, nursing home, prisons, army) shaping various styles towards time – passing time, waiting, doing time, making time, filling time, killing time. In a similar vein, (migrant) domestic workers by having no schedule or institutional rigour in the private realm of the household, might feel the need to come up with a strategy to better structure their time. Constant surveillance from the employers may attribute characteristics of total institution to the domiciliary space. Alternatively, other migrant domestic workers, in their quest to maximize their income, juggle concomitantly several part-time jobs, having a very packed schedule as a result, which requires rigorous time-management.

McGheea et al. (2012) draw on Emirbayer and Mische's analysis of the relationship between 'agency' and what they call 'embedded temporalities' to examine the interaction between participants' recollections of life in Poland and their evaluation of their present lives in the UK in order to examine the impact of these on their future plans (to stay in the UK or return to Poland). The authors conclude that articulations of individuals' pasts, presents and anticipated futures are also significant factors shaping their migration, settlement, and re-migration decisions<sup>7</sup>

By considering 3 different periods of migration (the years of crisis during the late socialist era, the period of structural adjustment following the end of socialism, and the period following accession to the European Union) in Poland, Pine (2014) argues that

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<sup>5</sup>In addition to educational level, class membership or simply psychological traits like being achievement-oriented.

<sup>6</sup>discussed by Erving Goffman's in his collection *Asylums* (1962) and by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment*.

<sup>7</sup>For example, according to Rose, 'people may be more likely to compare themselves with their own situation at an earlier time than with that of others in the same point in time' (2006: 78)

migration is both a future-orientated and a backward-looking process and one that involves movement between different temporalities, spaces, and regimes of value. She focused on kinship and households and the way in which formal and informal economic activities, networks of care and reciprocity, and the possibilities of migration are negotiated within and among them during these very different economic periods.

#### **6.4 Temporal strategies**

Upon arrival in the new setting, migrants have to institute new routines and create order out of the unknown. By identifying migrants strategies to mitigate risk, discover new opportunities and make plans in conditions of uncertainty or little degree of “time sovereignty” (Elchardus 1994) prompts us to consider migrants not as victims, but as active agents. Therefore, in terms of temporal agency, one can think of two (but not exclusively) *types of ordering time* of migration experience: ‘futuring’ and ‘halting’ (Griffiths et al. 2013).

*Halting* in time designates the incapacity of individuals to take control of their time because they depend on external factors. A high dependency on the employer and heightened sense of legal insecurity can lead to temporal alienation (Cwerner 2001) in which migrants feel they have limited or even escape control over their time. Some suggest that this temporal limbo leads to an enforced orientation to the present, migrant live with today, not willing to invest valuable resources (time, energy, and money) for something, which they consider a short-term project.

*Futuring* refers to the ‘goal orientated’ migrant who views migration as a means to achieve a certain goal, a temporal interval from life sacrificed for the sake of reaching that goal: buy a house, have a lavish wedding pay for children’s education, support family. They tend to credit future with more value than their actual present time. The crippling debts some people incur in order to migrate, reflect a valuing of the future and a mortgaging of the present to an anticipated future (Bastia and McGrath 2011). Even if times are tough right now, there will come a *time* when things will be much better. In this respect, migration can be a tactic of creating a better future (Cole 2010), not a present one, but a future one.

By the same token, two comparable future attitudes may be classified. Aiming to identify strategies young people use in order to improve their prospects on the labour market, Carmo (2014) distinguished two different attitudes towards the future: either



‘cumulative projection’ which denotes a strategic orientation and mobilization of resources (especially education) to reach a future or ‘noncumulative projections’, defined from the perspective of the discontinuity between the past, present and future.

### **6.5 (Un)certainty vs. Hope (Subjunctivity)**

Certainty as a culturally situated experience is perceived differently by diversely situated people, in different cultural and societal milieus. In some ways, uncertainty echoes Giddens’s concept of “ontological insecurity” (1984, 1990) in which anxiety is evoked as a response to the disruption of one’s life trajectory.

How do radical and protracted uncertainties affect people’s aspirations for the future and their life/place-making projects? Horst and Grabska (2015) explore the dynamic nature of agency in conditions of protracted uncertainty that characterizes the lives of refugees, when plans for the future cannot be made because the past and the present are marked with precariousness and unpredictability. The authors have shown how the hybrid and contradictory temporal experience of living in a temporary situation for an unexpectedly long period has effects on the refugees’ well-being. *Subjunctivity*<sup>8</sup> is a concept used to define the degree of insurance incurred by migrants despite the lack of assurance (Whyte 1997:18) in their attempt to achieve a particular outcome (Grabska and Panjoy 2015). Vigh’s explorations of social navigation (2009) of individuals who cope pro-actively with uncertainty – how they act in difficult situations, move under the influence of multiple forces or seek to escape confining structures (ibid: 419).

People navigate uncertainty by maintaining belief in a better future (Pine 2014). At times the best way of coming to terms with the inevitable future might even be to stay inactive and accepting. Hope is a complex, many-layered notion resting on the capacity for imagination, on a sense of time and of temporal progress, on a desire to believe in a better future or in the possibility that something can change, and to some extent on uncertainty. Hope mediates uncertainty and can also be a driver of action, as shown by Hage (2003) in his analysis of the coping strategies of Lebanese migrants in Australia.

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<sup>8</sup>“Subjunctivity is not a characteristic of times. It is about the specific uncertainty that particular actors experience as they try sth that matters to them – as they undertake to deal with a problem. That is to say, it is a mood of the verb, it is about action, and especially interaction” a quality not only of narratives, but of at least some aspects of life.

Hope can function as an affective mechanism to manage temporalities of change and flux, aiding migrants to navigate in stable yet impermanent conditions or in conditions of severe dispossession? Similarly, Mar (2005) examined configurations of hope in motion between Hong Kong and Australia aiming to illustrate how objects of hope emerge as shifting referents in a play of loyalties, attachments and desires. Migration can be both a symbol and an enactment of hope and of faith in the future and an act of or a reaction to hopelessness, despair, and acute loss in the present (Pine 2014).

## **7. Governing time and labour**

Temporal implications of migration governance are visible in the quantitative length of time that a migrant is allowed to stay on a particular visa, or the number of hours they are permitted to work per week. Robertson (2014) argues that, far from being just a temporal limitation on length of stay, 'temporariness' as a disciplinary practice of the state consists of three intersecting aspects: temporal eligibility; temporal constraints; and the contingent boundaries between temporariness, extended temporariness and permanence. The interplay of these three elements of time as discipline impacts on migrants' experiences and subjectivities in particular ways. Yet 'being temporary' can be understood in multiple ways, referring to an objective social 'fact'; to migrants' subjective expectations; or to normative constraints placed on migrants by the state (Robertson 2014, Bauböck 2011).

However, insecurities related to one's immigration status are experienced by highly skilled just like the lower skilled, as argued by Axellson (2016). She conceptualizes the border crossing as a temporal process spanning several years at least with specific stages to undergo (from work permit application to permanent status/departure). By the same token, Izabela Wagner (2015) even equates transnational scientists to migrants, by employing Abdelmalek Sayad's concept of "double absence" pointing to the liminal position of not being present in their country of origin but also not fully present either in the country of their destination from the social, economic, or political point of view.

Policy-wise, immigration measures are often constructed on the basis of short-term issues which violate the time horizons of migrant life paths and livelihoods and which show little concern for migrants' marginal and vulnerable status (King et al 2004). This becomes apparent when integration of the new comers is measured and periodized according to a pre-supposed linear trajectory.

## **7.1 Temporality of indeterminacy - Encounters with bureaucratic time**

Pertaining to the state temporalities is bureaucratic time marked by sustained indeterminacy - migrants waiting for the adjudication of their asylum claims, residence permits, visa extensions etc. (Greenhouse, 1996; Thompson, 1967). This temporal uncertainty also operates as a pernicious form of social control over migrants who are dependent on documents to plan their temporal horizons. Although focused on evictions in Rome, Herzfeld captures the social inequality embedded in the control of time and the unpredictable timing (Herzfeld 2009: 260, Harney 2014). Waiting for documents to be approved, regularization/amnesties, visa decisions, smugglers to announce the first step, wandering on the streets looking for work are interstices when one may feel they are not fully in control of the situation. As Hage (2009) noted, waiting undermines agency and leads to a kind of governmentality of 'stuckedness'. Waiting can be conceptualized as a passive state, it can make time feel 'numb, muted, dead' (Crapanzano, 1985: 44), yet it also can create opportunities for forms of limited agency: time to discuss plans for futures, to share knowledge about job opportunities, welfare, housing, other places and thus enable forms of sociality (Harney 2014). Thus waiting can be a product of agentic behaviour, if not strategic, in migration.

## **7.2 Leisure time**

Within neo-liberal societies the everyday practice of managing time as a scarce commodity has become central to the way in which we perform, and hence constitute, our identities as successful citizens. Economic metaphors mediate the way in which we experience time – as money, as something not to be wasted, and/or as a resource for maximising lifestyle opportunities in relation to careers and conspicuous consumption through leisure. Hence, how we use and value time is implicated in the production of our contemporary sense of freedom that is itself increasingly linked to aspirational lifestyles (Fullagar & Brown 2003) Free time is defined as the residual category of daily time that is not occupied by work or personal care activities. Leisure is thus framed as a non-monetary welfare resource, providing an opportunity for rest, social interaction, leisure participation, and self-

realization (Chatzitheochari and Arber 2012)<sup>9</sup>

Generally, labour migrants try to maximise work time and minimise free time. They do not strive for an active social life, since usually this is not part of their aspirations or migration goals. They mostly regard their stay as an intermediary period in which they live for their future plan, which is why they are not very concerned with the life they currently lead. Alternatively, migrants with legalisation aspirations value their leisure time differently. On the other hand, irregular and/or poorly integrated migrants in the labour market might have an abundance of undesired spare time. Time inequality generally points to the unequal distribution of free time, but how about people constrained to give up their free time or minimise it?

### **7.3 Being time-poor**

Time poverty is linked with long hours at the workplace, unpaid work and little leisure. By identifying the work week as the ideal reference period to understand time allocation, these studies have revealed that free time inequalities are gendered (Bittman and Wajcman 2000; Mattingly and Bianchi 2003; Sayer 2005), and that it is the educated and high-income workers in dual-earner families that are most likely to be 'leisure stricken' in today's post-industrial societies (Robinson and Godbey 1999, *apud* Chatzitheochari and Arber 2012). The 'time-poor' are defined as those economically active individuals whose free time falls below 60 per cent of the median free time of the working population (*apud* Chatzitheochari and Arber 2012)

In his book on social acceleration, Hartmut Rosa (2003) artfully argues how the quickening pace of life, technological advancements and fast social changes require increased flexibility in managing different spheres of life<sup>10</sup>. Time autonomy or being able to choose when to work and maintain a healthy work-private life balance seems to be the prerogative of higher occupational groups (Dex 2003, *apud* Chatzitheochari and Arber 2012). Low-skilled workers in Britain are more likely to be shift workers and work at non-

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<sup>9</sup>Everyone's right to rest and leisure is recognized by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN 1948: para. 24)

<sup>10</sup>"I cannot rest. I must be flexible in every possible respect, spatially, temporally, altogether, in order to be in a position (perhaps) to master the future. A future that is uncertain and therefore rewards those that are sufficiently flexible so as to adapt to the new requirements as swiftly as necessary."

standard times and/or on weekends as part of their contract and in order to raise extra income through ‘unsocial’ hours (Fagan 2001; ONS 2004). Van den Scott (2014) identifies the perils and problems around temporal embeddedness such as role strain (stress resulting from multiple temporal demands) and the commodification of time. More precisely, how the various temporal constraints are negotiated in different life spheres e.g. how temporal constraints from the work environment impact family and vice versa, how to better maintain boundaries between a public and a private self (Zerubavel 1979). Temporal constraints<sup>11</sup> may be associated with gender, education, age or cultural orientation, to name a few (Daly 1996; Moen 2003; Presser 2003; Southerton 2006). Gender, for example, impacts how individuals conceptualize and plan for their futures (Maines and Hardesty 1987). Another gender implication is that employed women have less free time (Daly 1996: 179) and are generally temporally worse-off than men (Szalai 1966); however, they also have developed multitasking strategies which mean they often are better at balancing work and home lives than men (Moen 2003). Some groups have temporal dominance (Engel-Frisch 1943), such as those who work “ideal” nine-to-five jobs, and some are temporally isolated, such as railway workers (Cottrell 1939)

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<sup>11</sup>Cultures have varying degrees of dedication to schedules. Some are monochronic (goal-oriented, one thing at a time) and others polychronic (i.e. multi-tasking) (E. T. Hall, Bluedorn et al. 1992).

## **8. Final remarks**

In migrant narratives, the decision to go abroad is marked as a special pinpoint in a person's life cycle, a major event that brings about irreversible changes. Change, disruption, loss with the familiar, uncertainty, waiting, these are the temporal tropes that more often than not characterize migration. The present review has put forward the main themes and theoretical categories arising from the conjunction of time scholarship with migration studies, following rather a thematic structure of the existing corpus of studies (than a chronological or progressive one).

Building on the sociological approaches on time and existing studies, this paper highlights the complex and fragmented nature of the migration processes across time rather than static events in one's timeline. The review presents the implications for the temporalities of separation and waiting in transnational families. It proceeds further to illuminate the role of agency in time horizons and decision making under conditions of uncertainty and insecurity materialized in various strategies or time perspectives. It then points to external dependencies in migration experience creating waiting time such as bureaucracy and the role of state and macrostructures in maintaining inequalities of sorts, specifically temporally ones (unequal distribution of free time). Decisions both on how one spends their time and life major choices are not always an individual prerogative but depending on macro structures beyond their control, therefore future research could explore the relation between the temporal perspective and the social class and the inequalities arising from it.

Hopefully this thematic framework will emphasize the temporal thickness/salience of migration and give a rationale as to why and how a temporal approach on migration could add more explanatory substance to studies in the field.

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