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Informal Learning
in a Transnational Setting

Exploring learning spaces of people migrating
between Estonia and Finland

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UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE

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# Abstract

The aim of this dissertation was to explore the learning processes of migrants in transnational settings and the emerging transnational spaces of learning. The focus was specifically on the experiences of people migrating between Estonia and Finland (both transmigrants, shuttling to and fro between the countries, and the more settled immigrants). The research questions were: 1) What kinds of informal learning environments emerge in transnational settings, particularly concerning migrants between Estonia and Finland? 2) What are the characteristics of transnational learning processes from migrants' perspectives? 3) How are conceptions and practices shared in transnational learning environments?

The research data (78 semi-structured and 20 life-course interviews) were gathered in Finland during the TRANS-NET project (Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism, 2008-2011). The interview data were analysed qualitatively, following theory-guided content analysis in which theoretical concepts provided insights for the interpretation of the data collected.

The theoretical framework related to socio-cultural, situated learning theories (for example, Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) and research on migrant transnationalism. The situated learning approach has examined learning as a collective phenomenon, exemplified through shared participation in the social practices. Transnational migration studies have explored how migrants engage in transnational social fields, spaces, or circuits embedded in at least two societies across national borders. The framework developed by Faist (2000) and Pitkänen et al. (2012) was applied in this research to analyse the structure of transnational spaces. While there is a large body of research on transnational networks and border-crossing activities of migrants, there are only few studies examining migrants' learning experiences in transnational settings and diverse transnational learning environments.

Three main, broad transnational learning environments were identified: transnational family space, transnational occupational space and transnational civic space. These border-crossing, socially constructed spaces connected people residing or having resided in at least two or more different societies. On the macro

level, these spaces were shaped by international, regional, and national policies, administrative regulations as well as the socio-cultural and political development of societies. The meso level social formations, such as families, work communities, non-governmental organisations and transnational networks, provided arenas in which both migrants and non-migrants had the opportunity to engage in situated learning processes in their everyday lives in a transnational setting. On the micro level, individuals had diverse learning trajectories and experiences in transnational environments.

The informants' key learning processes included identifying differences in conceptions and practices, comparison of different beliefs and behaviours, reflecting on one's own socio-cultural heritage, on-going processes of identity construction, adoption of new ideas, ways of behaviour and mindsets as well as sharing conceptions and practices across national borders. Some of the informants had been acting as transnational brokers by mediating and interpreting information, skills and practices, for example, between families, work organisations and associations located in different countries. The informants had shared conceptions and practices related to societal and occupational issues, gender orders as well as cultural traditions with their non-migrant relatives, friends, colleagues and associative contacts although differences in the politico-historical development of societies created barriers between the individuals and groups impeding and complicating such exchanges.

The results show how in transnational learning spaces both migrants and non-migrants can adopt and share new conceptions and practices as well as construct their identities through their engagement in various social groups and communities, involving on-going struggles and power differentials, both within a nation-state and across national borders. The study provides new perspectives through which to explore informal, cross-border learning environments in a world in which people are increasingly mobile and interconnected through their family, occupational, associative and societal ties.

# Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli tarkastella siirtolaisten oppimisprosesseja ylirajaisissa ympäristöissä ja näissä muodostuvia ylirajaisia oppimistiloja. Kansainvälisten muuttoliikkeiden ja rajat ylittävän yhteistyön myötä syntyviä erilaisia ylirajaisia yhteisöjä ja verkostoja sekä yksilöiden kokemuksia näissä on tutkittu vähän oppimisnäkökulmista. Ylirajainen tila *(transnational space)* viittaa tässä kansalliset rajat ylittäviin, sosiaalisesti muotoutuneihin tiloihin, jotka yhdistävät kahdessa eri yhteiskunnassa asuvat tai asuneet henkilöt. Siirtolaisilla *(migrants)* tarkoitetaan sekä maiden välillä liikkuvia muuttajia että pysyvämmin maasta toiseen muuttaneita henkilöitä. Tutkimus keskittyi erityisesti Suomen ja Viron välillä liikkuvien siirtolaisten ja maahanmuuttajien kokemuksiin. Tutkimuskysymykset olivat 1) Millaisia informaaleja oppimisympäristöjä muodostuu ylirajaisissa toimintaympäristöissä (koskien erityisesti siirtolaisia Suomen ja Viron välillä)? 2) Millaisia ovat ylirajaiset oppimisprosessit siirtolaisten näkökulmasta? 3) Miten käsityksiä ja toimintatapoja jaetaan ylirajaisissa oppimisympäristöissä?

Tutkimusaineisto (78 puolistrukturoitua haastattelua ja 20 elämänkertahaastattelua) kerättiin Suomessa TRANS-NET- tutkimusprojektissa (*Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism, 2008-2011).* Haastatteluaineisto analysoitiin laadullisen, teoriaohjaavan sisällönanalyysin avulla.

Tutkimuksessa sovellettiin sosiokulttuuriseen oppimiseen ja ylirajaisuustutkimukseen liittyviä teorioita ja käsitteitä. Situationaalisen oppimisen teoria (esim. Lave & Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) korostaa oppimisen tilannesidonnaisuutta, sosiaalisten yhteisöjen toimintaan osallistumisen merkitystä yksilöiden oppimiselle ja oppimisen kollektiivista luonnetta. Kansainvälisiä muuttoliikkeitä tarkasteleva ylirajaisuustutkimus on nostanut esiin ylirajaiset tilat, joita muodostuu sosiaalisen vuorovaikutuksen kautta erityisesti tulo- ja lähtömaissa asuvien ihmisten välille. Ylirajaisen tilan rakenteen tarkastelussa sovellettiin aikaisemmin kehitettyä mallia (Faist 2000; Pitkänen ym. 2012).

Tutkimuksessa nousi esiin kolme laajaa ylirajaista oppimisympäristöä: ylirajainen perhetila, ylirajainen ammatillinen tila ja ylirajainen yhteiskunnallinen tila. Nämä rajat ylittävät, sosiaalisesti rakentuneet tilat yhdistivät kahdessa tai useammassa eri

yhteiskunnassa asuvat tai asuneet henkilöt. Makrotasolla erilaiset tekijät, kuten kansainvälinen, alueellinen ja kansallinen politiikka, hallinnollinen sääntely ja yhteiskuntien sosio-kulttuurinen ja poliittis-historiallinen kehitys, muovasivat näitä tiloja ja vaikuttivat sekä yksilöiden että yhteisöjen toimintaan. Mesotasolla, erilaiset sosiaaliset ryhmät ja yhteisöt, kuten perheet, työyhteisöt, kansalaisjärjestöt ja ylirajaiset verkostot, tarjosivat yhteisöllisen oppimisen areenoita erilaisissa arkipäivän toimintaympäristöissä. Mikrotasolla yksilöillä oli erilaisia oppimispolkuja ja -kokemuksia ylirajaisissa ympäristöissä.

Tässä tutkimuksessa siirtolaisten keskeisiksi oppimisprosesseiksi ylirajaisissa ympäristöissä nousivat esiin käsitysten ja toimintatapojen erojen tunnistaminen, erilaisten uskomusten ja tapojen vertailu, oman sosio-kulttuurisen taustan reflektio, uusien ideoiden, toimintatapojen ja ajattelutapojen omaksuminen ja jakaminen yli kansallisten rajojen sekä identiteetin rakentuminen erilaisten yhteisöjen jäsenyyksien kautta. Osa tutkimukseen osallistuneista henkilöistä oli toiminut ylirajaisina välittäjinä esimerkiksi eri maissa sijaitsevien työyhteisöjen, järjestöjen ja perheiden välillä. Nämä ylirajaiset välittäjät olivat selittäneet ja jakaneet yhteiskunnallisiin, ammatillisiin ja kulttuurisiin traditioihin liittyviä käsityksiä ja toimintatapoja sukulaistensa, ystäviensä ja kollegoidensa kanssa, vaikka yhteiskuntien erilainen poliittishistoriallinen kehitys muodosti esteitä tälle toiminnalle.

Tutkimustulokset osoittavat, että ylirajaisissa oppimistiloissa niin siirtolaiset kuin kantaväestökin voivat omaksua ja jakaa, yli kansallisten rajojen, uusia käsityksiä ja toimintatapoja sekä luoda identiteettiään sosiaalisen toiminnan kautta. Rajat ylittävään, yhteisölliseen oppimiseen vaikuttavat myös yhteisöjen ja ryhmien sisäiset kamppailut ja jäsenten erilaiset valta-asemat.

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I have also benefited from participating in Professor Pitkänen's doctoral seminar. I wish to thank all the participants for useful discussions and comments concerning my drafts. In addition, I would like to thank Tiina Vaittinen and Nelli Piattoeva for their assistance and comments during the finalisation of the manuscript. I thank Virginia Mattila for conducting professional language editing and assisting in the translation of interview excerpts for this dissertation.

# Contents

# Abbreviations, Tables, Figures and Transcription Marks

**Abbreviations**

CoP: Community of Practice

EU: European Union

NGO: Non-governmental organisation

TC: transnational competence

**Tables and Figures**

**Transcription Marks**

| | |
|---|---|
| /…/ | a word or several words have been removed (to shorten the account or to avoid revealing the identity of the informant) |
| X | name of a place, person, or organisation has been removed |
| [this is] | background information |
| FONT | This font marks the speech of the interviewer |
| Font | This font marks the speech of the interviewee |

# 1    Introduction

## 1.1    Background

International migration has become more diversified in the last decades. There are both temporary and permanent migrants, transmigrants shuttling to and fro between the countries, seasonal migrants spending only short periods abroad as well as undocumented and irregular migrants circumventing state controls and regulations. In addition, there is a variety of reasons for migration, such as, professional and economic motives, family matters, studies, political instability of the 'sending' country, environmental issues, violent conflicts, fear of persecution as well as searching for a more rewarding life-style. (Castles and Miller 2009; Pitkänen, İçduygu, Sert 2012) Contemporary migrants often have close socio-cultural, political and economic relations and ties to two or more societies, including both countries of immigration and emigration. Due to the rapid development of information and communication technologies, migrants can more easily maintain connections across national borders and follow societal developments in several nation-states than they could few decades ago. Also the development of transportation as well as the decreased costs of this, including flights, has facilitated cross-border visits of migrants to their former home countries. (Vertovec 2009) Through diverse activities, such as transferring money, maintaining online communication, providing care, supporting political associations, conveying professional information as well as engaging in discussions on societal matters with non-migrants living in the countries of origin, migrants have maintained and developed their transnational contacts across borders.

Since the 1990s, researchers have explored how migrants engage in transnational social fields, spaces or circuits embedded in at least two societies across national borders (for example, Basch, Glick Schiller, Szanton Blanck 1994; Faist 2000; Glick Schiller, Basch, Szanton Blanc 1992; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Rouse 1991). These border-crossing spaces connect both mobile and non-mobile people in various countries, particularly between the country of immigration and migrants' country of origin. These studies have drawn attention to the cross-border flows of people, ideas, money and goods, and to the ways in

which people's lives and their communities have been transformed through intensive transnational contacts and collaboration (Faist, Pitkänen, Gerdes and Reisenauer 2010; Levitt 2001a; Pitkänen et al. 2012). Research has been presented on transnational families and kinship networks, migrants' political practices and forms of identification in a transnational setting, the impact of financial and material remittances (money and goods sent by migrants specifically to the countries of emigration), transnational professional networks, transnational caring, and so on. Research on social, political and cultural remittances (for example, Levitt 1998, 2001a; Córdova and Hiskey 2008; Flores 2005; Gakunzi 2006; Jiménez 2008) have examined from the perspective of socio-cultural transmission how migrants transmit beliefs, practices and mindsets particularly from the countries of settlement to the sending regions. While there is a large body of research on migrants' transnational economic, political and socio-cultural practices, there are only a few studies examining migrants' learning experiences in transnational settings and diverse transnational learning environments (for example, Guo, S. 2013a; Monkman 1997, 1999; Singh, Rizvi, Shrestha 2007). In the educational studies, transnational perspectives are still relatively new and rarely explored (Guo, S. 2013b; Waters and Brooks 2012), and the focus has mainly been on examining the learning of migrants, and migrants' integration paths from the perspective of 'receiving' societies. This study examines the learning processes of migrants in transnational settings, and the emerging transnational spaces of learning. Therefore, the results of the present study could provide new perspectives for studies in the field of education to explore informal, cross-border learning environments in a world in which people are increasingly mobile and interconnected through their family, occupational, associative and societal ties.

The theoretical framework of this dissertation relates particularly to socio-cultural, situated learning studies as well as research on migrant transnationalism. Socio-cultural learning theories have introduced the idea that learning is essentially a social phenomenon which should be analysed taking into account its social, cultural, institutional and historical dimensions (Säljö 2004; Tynjälä 1999; Wertsch, del Río, Alvarez 1995). The situated learning theorists have examined learning and knowing in relation to the social communities in which it takes place (for example, Brown, Collins, Duguid 1989; Collins, Brown, Newman, 1989; Lave and Wenger 1991), and the ways in which individuals can convey conceptions and practices between different social groups and communities (for example, Boland and Tenkasi 1995; Wenger 1998). Research on migrant transnationalism has drawn attention to how migrants' identification, practices and social ties are not limited to

one nation-state only. The framework developed by Faist (2000) and Pitkänen et al. (2012) has been applied in this research for analysing the structure of transnational spaces. Research on social remittances (see, Levitt 1998, 2001a; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011, e.g.) has likewise provided insights to examine border-crossing flows of ideas. Both the studies exploring transnational spaces and those examining situated learning have offered key concepts for this research to elucidate transnational learning environments.

In this dissertation, transnational spaces are understood as socially constructed spaces which transcend national borders and connect people residing or having resided in at least two or more different societies. I examine transnational spaces on three levels: macro, meso and micro, with the focus on meso and micro levels from the learning perspectives. In contrast to many studies applying transnational perspectives, I do not explore only the migrants' ties to their countries of origin, but I also take into account their other cross-border ties and attachments as well as their learning experiences in diverse social groups and communities, including the current host society.

The data of the present study were gathered in 2009-2010 in Finland as a part of an international research project entitled Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism (TRANS-NET), conducted in 2008-2011[1]. The research project examined the dynamics of people's transnational practices in the transnational spaces of Estonia-Finland, India-UK, Morocco-France and Turkey-Germany, and how these were connected to wider processes of political, economic, socio-cultural and educational transformations underway (Pitkänen et al. 2012). The data set of the dissertation includes 78 semi-structured and 20 life-course interviews of people who had mostly migrated from Estonia to Finland[2], or had been transmigrating between the two countries. The interview data were analysed qualitatively, following theory-guided content analysis in which theoretical concepts provided insights for the interpretation of the data collected (Krippendorff 2013; Ruusuvuori, Nikander, Hyvärinen 2010b; Silverman 2001; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009). Most of the informants had been migrating between Estonia and Finland and had socio-

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[1] The project was funded by the European Commission, 7th Framework Programme for Research - Socio-Economic Sciences and Humanities, see http://www.uta.fi/projects/transnet/

[2] Some informants migrated to Finland when Estonia was a part of the Soviet Union until 1991, and a few informants had migrated first to another foreign country, and then to Finland.

cultural, occupational and civic engagements and contacts particularly in the Finnish and Estonian societies.

## 1.2    The Development of the Estonia-Finland Transnational Space

In this section I will briefly summarise the main features and historical development of Estonia-Finland transnational space. In Chapter 2 (theoretical and conceptual background), I will consider earlier research concerning this transnational space, and, in Chapter 4 (results), I will examine the main macro level factors shaping the transnational learning environments in which the informants had engaged.

The geographical and linguistic proximity[3] of these countries has facilitated transnational practices of people in this binational space. Also the fact that Finland and Estonia have both been EU Member States since 2004 has supported the intensification of migration flows and cross-border collaboration. The distance between the capitals of these countries, Helsinki and Tallinn, is only 80 km across the Gulf of Finland, and frequent ferry connections promote visits in both directions. There is a long history of mutual cooperation and contacts between the peoples inhabiting the geographical areas of contemporary Estonia and Finland; cross-border collaboration and migration have continued for several hundreds of years. Both areas were under foreign domination for several centuries. Finland was a part of imperial Russia from 1809 until 1917, and Estonia since the 18th century until 1918. In the 19th century, Finnish people started to emancipate, and struggled against the gradually tightening Russian hegemony. Since 1917 Finland has been an independent nation-state. The Estonian national awakening in the second half of the 19th century strengthened the socio-cultural and national identity, and Estonia formed its first republic in 1918 after the Russian Revolution. (Hyvönen 2009; Jakobson, Järvinen-Alenius, Pitkänen, Ruutsoo, Keski-Hirvelä, Kalev 2012a)

During the Second World War, Estonia was occupied by the Germans and the Soviets, and annexed by the Soviet Union from 1944 until 1991. Finland, on the other hand, was liaising with Germany, fought two wars against the Soviet Union

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[3] While the Finnish and Estonian languages belong to the same Finno-Ugric linguistic group, the second official language of Finland, Swedish, which is spoken by a small minority, is an Indo-European language.

(1939-40 and 1941-44) and finally the Lapland War (1944-45) against the Germans to expel them from northern Finland. After the Second World War, Finland *officially* pursued a policy of neutrality but in practice aimed to preserve particularly close relations with its Eastern neighbour, the Soviet Union. This was reflected in Finnish domestic politics in which the politicians avoided all decisions potentially detrimental to relations with the Soviet regime.

During the Soviet occupation of Estonia, cross-border contacts and visits were strictly monitored although the liberalisation period of the Soviet Union beginning in the late 1980s allowed more collaboration in cultural spheres. In the northern parts of Estonia, people were able to watch Finnish TV, hereby familiarising themselves with the Finnish language and the developments in Finnish society and also, more widely, events outside the 'Iron Curtain'. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Finland developed closer cooperation with other European countries, and joined the European Union in 1995. Estonia joined the EU in 2004 and the Schengen Area three years later. This occasioned an increase in migration flows and removed some administrative obstacles to cross-border flows between Finland and Estonia particularly after the end of transitional period in 2006. (Hyvönen 2009; Jakobson et al. 2012a; Kyntäjä, 2008).

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, more people have been migrating between Finland and Estonia. The majority of migrants have been moving from Estonia to Finland although there have also been entrepreneurs, students, labour migrants, as well as family members of these groups moving in the other direction. In Finland, there have been both temporary migrants from Estonia, including posted workers and transmigrants (people shuttling regularly to and fro between the countries) as well as more permanent immigrants, namely people with Ingrian Finnish roots, students, labour migrants, as well as those moving for family reasons (spouses and children) with diverse educational backgrounds. (Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers, 2010b; Jakobson et al. 2012a) Since the beginning of the 1990s, Finland has allowed those people who could demonstrate their Finnish ancestry to immigrate to Finland on special conditions. The Finnish authorities and politicians stated that because of their Finnish ancestry, the Ingrian Finns, also known as 'returnees', could quickly adapt to the Finnish society, and replace a part of the retiring Finns in the future (Paananen, 1999). Approximately 30,000 Ingrian Finns migrated to Finland from the territory of the former Soviet Union, particularly from Russia and Estonia, within two decades. (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b; Martikainen, Saari, Korkiasaari 2013) Among foreign residents, Estonians form the largest group in Finland (around

44,600 people in 2013, 0.8 % of the total population) while Russian speakers constitute the largest, foreign linguistic minority group in Finland with 62,500 people (FIS 2013). In addition to permanent residents, there is a large number of Estonians residing temporarily in Finland particularly because of work-related transmigration. There are no exact statistics concerning this group but estimates have varied from 20,000 to 70,000 (Jakobson, Kalev, Ruutsoo 2012b; Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b; Lith 2007). EU nationals are not obliged to register their stay if it does not exceed three months. In Estonia, there have been around 10,000 - 13,000 Finns residing either permanently or temporarily in the 2000's (Hyvönen 2009; Jakobson and Kalev 2013).

## 1.3    Research Aim and Research Questions

As briefly explained in Section 1.1 and will be examined in greater detail in the next chapter, so far only few studies have been presented examining migrants' learning experiences and processes as well as emerging informal learning environments in transnational settings. While there is a large body of research on transnational networks and border-crossing activities of migrants, migrants' transnational engagements have rarely been examined from learning perspectives. *The aim of this research is to explore the learning processes of migrants in transnational settings, and the emerging transnational spaces of learning.* In this research the focus is specifically on the transnational learning processes and informal learning environments of people migrating between Estonia and Finland. This study explores these issues from the perspectives of socio-cultural, situated learning as well as from the viewpoints of studies concerning migrant transnationalism and transnational spaces.

The research questions of this study are the following:

1) *What kinds of informal learning environments emerge in transnational settings, particularly concerning the migrants between Estonia and Finland?*

I will explore the transnational, informal learning environments of the informants of this study, i.e. people who migrated from Estonia to Finland or were transmigrating between the two countries, through an analysis of their interview

accounts. This involves investigation of the social groups and communities in which the informants had participated particularly after emigration or the beginning of transmigration and to which they connected their experiences of learning. It moreover entails an examination of the transnational spaces in which the informants had engaged.

  2) *What are the characteristics of transnational learning processes from migrants' perspectives?*

I will examine how the informants described their learning experiences in border-crossing spaces: what they had learnt through their engagement in different kinds of social groups and communities, and generally in a transnational setting. I also pay attention to how they had been able to participate in these groups and communities. As it will be discussed in the next chapter, the ways in which people can engage in the practices of their communities affect their learning trajectories within these. From the situated learning perspective, on-going construction of identity through engagement in diverse social groups and communities, and in relation to wider societal structures is also an integral part of the learning processes of the individuals. Consequently, I also examine how the informants constructed their ethno-national identities and reflected on their membership of societies in transnational environments.

  3) *How are conceptions and practices shared in transnational learning environments?*

Chapter 2 will explain how studies on social, political and cultural remittances have drawn attention to how ideas, behaviours and mindsets can be transferred or conveyed across national borders in transnational environments. In the present research, this phenomenon will be explored from the socio-cultural, situated learning perspective: how particularly migrants can share conceptions and practices with others in a transnational setting, and how such processes are described in the interview accounts of the informants.

## 1.4     Structure of the Study

In this introduction, I have provided a very brief overview of existing research related to the topic, the general characteristics of the context, a synopsis of the data and methods, and have explained the aim of the research and presented the research questions. I now briefly introduce the structure of the rest of the dissertation. In the next chapter (Chapter 2), the theoretical and conceptual underpinnings of this research are explored: socio-cultural perspectives on learning, the situated learning approach, spatial standpoints in educational studies, research on migrant transnationalism and transnational spaces as well as studies related to transnational learning and the construction of identity in a transnational setting. In Chapter 3, methodological and ethical issues related to this research are discussed: the main features of the qualitative research approach, research design, interviewing, the qualitative content analysis of the interviews, likewise the composition of the data set. In addition, I explore the assessment of reliability and validity in qualitative research in general and specifically in this study. I also discuss ethical issues related to conducting this research. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study. This chapter is divided into three main sections: transnational family space, transnational occupational space and transnational civic space.The structure of each space as well as the informants' learning processes and informal learning environments is separately explored in each space. Furthermore, I also scrutinise how conceptions and practices are shared in transnational learning environments. Chapter 5 (conclusion) presents a summary of the main findings of the study. Finally, in Chapter 6, I discuss the meaning of results in relation to earlier research, consider the new, theoretical perspectives this research could provide on educational and transnational studies, ponder the practical implications of the study and the limitations of this research and also suggest some areas for further investigation.

# 2 Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

In this chapter, I introduce the existing research and theoretical concepts which are relevant for the purposes of the present study. First, I explain how socio-cultural learning theories have conceptualised learning, and how socialisation, enculturation and culture are understood in this research. Secondly, I explore the research on situated learning, and explain some key concepts drawn from these studies. Thirdly, spatial perspectives in educational studies are introduced. Fourthly, I examine how studies on migrant transnationalism have investigated migrants' transnational practices, cross-border flows of ideas as well as transnational spaces, fields and circuits in which both migrants and non-migrants participate. Finally, I introduce studies on the construction of identity in a transnational setting and also research with transnational perspectives on learning.

## 2.1 Socio-Cultural, Situated Learning

### 2.1.1 Socio-Cultural Learning, Socialisation and the Concept of Culture

Socio-cultural learning theories put forward the idea that learning is essentially a social phenomenon which should be analysed taking its social, cultural, institutional and historical dimensions into account. Activity theory, cultural psychology and the situated learning approach represent different streams of the socio-cultural learning tradition which have been inspired particularly by the ideas of Vygotsky and his followers. Researchers have also been drawing upon earlier educational and philosophical studies describing individuals as social beings, and emphasising the role of informal learning in their lives. (Hughes, Jewson, Unwin 2007; Säljö 2004; Tynjälä 1999; Wertsch et al. 1995). A number of researchers have underlined how earlier behavioralist and cognitive theories examining learning as an individual process related to the acquisition of knowledge from a teacher mainly in formal educational contexts do not sufficiently explain the phenomena while understanding social participation as an essential condition for learning offers new

perspectives for exploring such processes (Billett 2007; Fuller 2007; Hughes et al. 2007). Specifically the situated learning approach has examined learning and knowing in relation to the social communities in which it takes place. In this dissertation, I explore whether the insights and certain concepts of situated learning research can be applied to analyse learning in a transnational setting.

Socio-cultural research has looked at how participation in culturally organised practices, involvement in different social institutions and communities and the use of cultural artefacts shape learning. Some socio-culturally oriented studies seek to explain the relationship between individuals' intellectual processes and cultural-historical settings while others focus specifically on linkages between human action and institutional, historical and social situations in which the action takes place. Furthermore, broader socio-cultural perspectives explore, for example, processes of socialisation and the construction of identities in social settings. (Lantolf and Thorne 2006: 2; Wertsch et al. 1995)

Vygotsky in particular has been an influential figure for the development of socio-cultural learning perspectives. Vygotsky published several articles in Russian in the 1930s, and these were later re-published in English. For example, the edited volume *Mind in Society* (Vygotsky 1978), presents key ideas of his thinking. Vygotsky (1978) highlighted the importance of social interaction for human development. Children learn and develop their intellectual capacities through engaging in shared activities with adults and peers: the child's development takes place first on the social level, and, next on individual level. Socially rooted and historically developed activities are learnt and internalised through interpersonal interaction processes (Vygotsky 1978: 57). The concept of *zone of proximal development* describes the distance between the actual developmental level of a child and the level of their potential development; at the actual developmental level, children are able to solve problems independently while at the potential developmental level, they can deal with more difficult dilemmas in cooperation with adults or more capable peers (Vygotsky 1978: 84-86). This concept and approach to human development serves to underline the importance of social interaction and collaboration for individuals' learning. Situated learning theorists have drawn ideas from Vygotsky concerning the ways in which novices can acquire skills and conceptions from more experienced members of social groups by engaging in shared practices.

In the socio-cultural approach, mediation and human action are central themes. Human activity is explored in relation to the socio-culturally rooted settings in which social activities take place. The mediation of social interaction through

different kinds of linguistic 'tools' (words, concepts, theories) and physical artefacts (machines, equipment, programmes etc.) is underlined. These facilitate actions but also involve meanings. Our abilities to obtain information, to learn and to interact are essentially linked to the mediated nature of the social life. People can have access to the world indirectly through mediational means. Different artefacts provide a bridge linking human actions to cultural, historical and institutional settings. Cultural tools can both impose constraints and transformative opportunities for human action. (Rogoff 1990; Säljö, 2004; Wertsch et al. 1995) Individuals can transform cultural tools and also develop new ones; consequently, cultural settings also evolve and change through such processes.

The socio-cultural approach to learning is related to socialisation theories which examine the processes by means of which individuals become members of a society through social interaction in different kinds of agencies of socialisation. Primary socialisation refers to the early stages of socialisation taking place in childhood in the primary learning environment, usually the family. Secondary socialisation covers all other social groups and institutions, such as peer groups, religious communities, school, workplaces and also the media. The processes of socialisation are seen to continue throughout an individual's life-course. Traditional theories of socialisation have perceived individuals as passive participants who internalise the social rules and adapt to the society in question through social interaction. However, more recent theorisation has put forward the idea of human beings as active, creative and reflective social agents capable of transforming the society and its social communities. (Antikainen 1998; Antikainen, Rinne, Koski, 2013; Lanza 2007)

Socio-cultural streams of educational research have also paid attention to the ways in which individuals learn through social participation in all spheres of life, not only in formal educational institutions. While socio-cultural approaches often focus on informal learning environments, it is acknowledged that the learning experiences in the context of formal education can also be explored from socio-cultural perspectives. In general, *formal learning* refers to learning which takes place in educational institutions based on a specific curriculum and usually leads to a formal qualification. *Non-formal learning* is also organised, such as training sessions arranged at a workplace, but it does not provide a formal qualification. *Informal learning* refers to all other forms of unorganised, everyday learning, for example, at home or during recreational activities. Informal learning can also take place during formal or non-formal education when individuals learn something beyond the

scope of a specific programme. Informal learning can also refer to learning as an on-going, lifelong process. (Hager and Halliday 2009)

Socio-cultural studies explore how people can learn the prevailing social norms and practices through participation in diverse social groups. The process of becoming 'an insider' in a community has been described *as a process of enculturation*: by observing and participating in shared activities, learners adopt belief systems, learn appropriate behaviours and norms, and eventually obtain embodied ability to behave as members of that community. (Brown et al. 1989; Brown and Duguid 1991; Korhonen 2010). The term *enculturation* has often been used to refer to the processes by which individuals adopt beliefs and behaviours in their primary cultural contexts while *acculturation* has covered the processes which individuals undergo in foreign cultural environments (see, for example, Berry et al. 2002). While enculturation can be understood as learning, adopting and growing into culture, it has also been described as a multifaceted, context dependent process. Individuals do not necessarily respect or adopt all the values, beliefs, or practices of their cultural groups but instead may assess and select conceptions and behaviours from diverse social environments (Korhonen 2010).

The notion of acculturation has been widely criticised: the concept implies migrants' adoption and acceptance of the 'receiving' culture. In addition, the idea of acculturation seems to suggest that national cultures are separate, mono-cultural environments to which immigrants can 'merge' although nowadays hybridity of cultures has often been underlined. For example, Bhabha (1994) and Hannerz (1996) have drawn attention to how increasing global interconnectedness and transnational influences are revealing the hybrid, socially constructed nature of cultures and societies. Cross-border flows of meanings challenge the traditional understanding of cultures as separate entities in relation to specific collectivities and territories. Nowadays integration is often described as a two-way learning process: in addition to immigrants, the dominant groups of the society need to integrate into a culturally diverse society; this process entails the mutual accommodation of cultural values and traditions (Vasta 2007).

Although examining culture as such is not the main focus of this study, it is a concept which is linked to both the socio-cultural understanding of learning and to informants' learning experiences in a transnational setting. The traditional, essentialist view of culture explains culture as a separate unit with specified characteristics, and people belonging to the same cultural group, living or having lived within the same social environment, as sharing the same values, symbols and practices (see, for example, Hofstede 1991). Such an approach underlines the

impact of national cultures to human behaviour, and does not focus on diversity among individuals or a variety of styles within social communities. On the other hand, non-essentialist approaches underline cultures as not static but instead in a constant state of change. Cultures are constructed and re-constructed through social interaction. From this perspective, one should examine diverse cultural elements and fragments rather than cultures as separate entities. Between these two approaches, one can also identify studies combining elements of both perspectives. For example, researchers may acknowledge diversity among people but still propose the existence of fundamental cultural differences between nations or see culture as determining human action. (Dervin and Keihäs 2013: 35-36; Holliday 2011; Virkama 2010) In this dissertation I adhere to a non-essentialist perspective on culture, understanding cultures as fluid and socially constructed. Furthermore, I argue that people's multi-membership of various communities during their life-course shapes their learning experiences and forms of identification in different cultural settings.

Examining people's understanding of cultures is challenging when different forms of 'culturespeak' prevail in both everyday discussions as well as in scientific and political debates: cultural fundamentalists understand cultures as inherently conflictual, interculturalists suggest particular methods for coping with cultural differences, and cultural celebrationists argue for the intellectual and aesthetic values of each culture (Hannerz 1999). The essentialist understanding of culture, seeing individuals of bearers of one specific culture, has dominated public discourses in contemporary Europe (Grillo 2003). Discussions on cultures also include questions on authority and power: who can define borders demarcating different cultural groups, and how cultures have been constructed in relation to prevailing social and political frameworks (Raunio, Säävälä, Hammar-Suutari, Pitkänen, 2011). In a transnational setting, defining one's cultural roots is often linked to the construction of national and ethnic identities. In addition, in this study, the informants' understanding of the meaning of culture shaped their discussion on learning in a cross-border setting.


## 2.1.2   The Situated Learning Approach

The framework of situated learning introduces a social, informal perspective to learning: learning does not only take place in formal contexts in different kinds of educational institutions but particularly in people's everyday lives through

participating in different kinds of social communities, acquiring new skills and ideas, and constructing their identities through such participation. Furthermore, the situated learning perspective challenges the traditional understanding of learning as an individual act of knowledge acquisition and transmission, and, instead, promotes the view of exploring learning as a collective phenomenon, exemplified through shared participation in the social practices (Fuller 2007; Hughes et al. 2007; Lave 1996). *For this dissertation, socio-cultural, situated learning studies provide key theoretical perspectives and concepts to explore informal learning environments and migrants' learning processes in transnational settings.*

The research on the situated nature of knowledge and knowing, for example by Brown et al. (1989), Collins et al. (1989), Resnick (1989) and Rogoff (1984), have drawn attention to how cognition and learning are embedded in activities, situations and the specific social context. The traditional paradigm of learning has portrayed knowledge as a product which is codified, stable and context-independent (Brown et al. 1989; Fuller 2007; Resnick 1989). However, another point of view is that knowledge is always 'a product of the activity, context, and culture in which it is developed and used' (Brown et al. 1989:32). Although thinking and problem-solving are contextually situated, people are also able to generalise and apply some aspects of knowledge and skills in new settings (Rogoff 1984). While it is important to acknowledge that knowing and learning are rooted in specific socio-cultural and historical contexts, people also need the ability to apply knowledge and skills in different social environments. Concerning scientific knowledge, theories cannot be applicable only in narrowly defined (social) contexts. The basic idea of scientific theories, models and concepts is that they can be tested, compared and possibly applied in different contexts.

Exploring learning through the metaphor of *apprenticeship*, focusing on the ways in which novices can acquire skills and knowledge from more experienced members of communities by participating in shared activities, has aroused interest among several educationalists. The idea of craft apprenticeship has been extended to cover culturally organised activities in different environments. Apprenticeship is presented as a natural form of learning which takes place in people's everyday lives: people learn diverse skills through observation. In traditional forms of apprenticeship, learning is separate from teaching: skills and knowledge are transmitted through participation in practice without intentional teaching. The graded, contextually embedded process of apprenticeship allows novices to develop their skills step by step. (Collins et al. 1989; Goody 1989; Resnick 1989; Rogoff 1995). Children's development and learning through guided participation

with adults in a socio-cultural activity has been represented as an example of apprenticeship by Goody (1989) and Rogoff (1990). Interaction with both adults and peers supports children's development by guiding their participation in social activities and promoting their gradually growing responsibility in these. According to Rogoff (1990), learning is shaped by interaction with expert members, motivational factors of a learner, shared problem solving, and individual ways of appropriating shared understanding. Research on *cognitive apprenticeship* (for example, Collins et al. 1989) has explored how in formal education one could apply such ideas to teach expert ways to solve complex tasks. In this approach, the focus is on learning cognitive and metacognitive processes rather than practical and physical skills as in the traditional apprenticeship models. The aim is to extend situated learning to different settings in order to enable students to master their skills in diverse environments.

Lave's and Wenger's new approach to analyse learning, which was presented in their book *Situated Learning.Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (1991), has been called a kind of paradigm shift in the study of learning (Hughes et al. 2007; Fuller 2007; Billett 2007). Their contribution was based on earlier critical debates concerning the socially mediated nature of learning, learning through apprenticeship and also building on other studies highlighting the situated nature of knowledge. Lave and Wenger (1991:29, 35) explain learning as situated activity through the concept of *legitimate peripheral participation*. With this concept they refer to the processes by which individuals participate in different social groups, foster their knowledge and skills by engaging in shared activities and can gradually move toward full participation in these groups. Therefore, they describe learning as an essential part of all social practice. By peripheral participation they refer to the multiple ways of engagement in social communities as well as to individuals' changing perspectives and transformed identities throughout their life-long learning trajectories. Peripherality can be either empowering or alienating depending on the power relations of the communities which can restrict or allow full participation in the activities and the resources needed (Lave and Wenger 1991). Lave and Wenger evidently draw on the earlier theorisation of learning as apprenticeship, describing the gradual cycle of learning from novice to expert within communities of practice. The emphasis is particularly on exploring learning as a collective form of social participation in shared activities rather than highlighting individual perspectives and experiences within different social environments.

Lave's and Wenger's view of the learning cycle within communities, emphasising learning the existing know-how through the journey to full master of

practice, has been criticised for failing to explain how new knowledge can be produced within the communities and how such communities can transform (Edwards 2005; Fuller 2007; Jewson 2007). Engeström (2007: 42) argues that Lave's and Wenger's model seems to suggest that, in a community of practice, there is only one centre of supreme knowledge and skills towards which all its members are striving. Therefore, transforming the existing knowledge base becomes problematic when the participants are aiming to achieve a full understanding of existing practice. While Lave and Wenger (1991:113) state that the processes of learning and transformation of communities are intertwined they do not clearly explain how the transformation processes can take place in such environments. One possible catalyst of change could be from different learning trajectories of participants and also from their membership in different communities which would make it possible to adopt diverse and new perspectives for developing the socio-cultural practices of communities. Rogoff (1990) argues that guided participation in a cultural activity does allow creativity and transformation of existing knowledge. Through the process of appropriation individuals transform the information and skills they have acquired through socially shared activity. Cultural changes also occur when individuals convey practices in altered form to the next generation, thereby taking into account of changes in the wider social environment.

The one-way learning process, emphasising the transmission of practices from 'old-timers' to 'novices', has been described as one of the weaknesses of the legitimate peripheral participation model of Lave and Wenger (1991). The novices or masters as such are not homogenous categories; for example, newcomers to a work community may already have extensive experience from other fields outside working life or from different workplaces. Novices' expertise and roles within the workplaces can differ considerably. Expertise as such does not depend solely on the age or status of employees at the workplace. Newcomers' level of expertise is shaped by their previous life experiences, for example, in educational or work contexts. Although the learning processes of novices are not necessarily similar to those of experts, more experienced members also continue to enhance their skills and understanding through participation in different social groups and communities. Furthermore, novices may be more experienced in some tasks and contribute valuable know-how to the work team, thereby supporting the learning of both their peers and experts. (Fuller 2007; Fuller and Unwin 2004; Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2003; Rogoff 1995). Organisational learning cultures also play a role in how newcomers's expertise is acknowledged at the workplaces.

Organisations can support the sharing of skills and knowledge by encouraging dialogue and boundary crossing and also by showing respect for co-workers and their expertise. However, in *restrictive learning environments* (Fuller and Unwin 2004) knowledge sharing and obtaining new perspectives are not supported.

## 2.1.3    Communities of Practice

Individuals belong to different kinds of social groups and communities, such as families, leisure groups, work teams, religious communities and professional associations, throughout their lives. Some of these groups can be described as communities of practice (hereafter CoP) which Lave and Wenger (1991: 98) first defined as 'a set of relations among persons, activity, and world, over time and in relation with other tangential and overlapping communities of practice'. The description of CoPs in their book (Lave and Wenger 1991) can be interpreted as referring either broadly to all social environments in which people participate throughout their lives or, in more narrow terms, to relatively small groups united by common practice and goals (Fuller 2007). The concept of a community of practice was later refined by Wenger (1998) and also by several other researchers applying the concept to different fields of study. According to Wenger (1998: 73-84), the three main dimensions of CoP are 1) mutual engagement 2) a joint enterprise and 3) a shared repertoire. *Mutual engagement* defines and unites a community. Different kinds of communities have different ways of enabling engagement and ensuring community maintenance: doing things together or interacting, for example, through electronic platforms. It is emphasised that mutual engagement does not mean peaceful, equal relationships between participants: conflicts and tensions may arise among participants of these communities. The *joint enterprise* refers to collective processes of negotiation: practices and goals are defined through the processes of pursuing these. The *shared repertoire* of CoP includes, for example, stories, tools or concepts which that community has either created or adopted during its history. These are constantly refined and, therefore, reflect the community's history of mutual engagement. The concept of *reification* refers in this context to the processes by which communities produce, for example, different kinds of tools, symbols, concepts or documents which 'reify something of that practice in a congealed form' (Wenger 1998: 59). These artefacts can thus also become objects of negotiations and actions. For example, a transnational online

group can create its own specific parlance and techniques, and the meanings and appropriate use of these can become a part of their shared discussions.

Wenger (1998: 122-126) suggests that CoPs are often relatively small, informal groups where members know each other, share ways of talking and engage in sustained interaction. In addition, they know each other's competences and have together produced some specific tools, concepts or styles of doing things together. Therefore, a nation or a diaspora, for example, would be too large a unit to match this definition. The members of a diaspora (for example, Kurds living in various countries) can still share ideas of common historical roots, rituals, symbols, styles or discourses. Therefore, these can form a *constellation of interconnected practices* (Wenger 1998: 127). Interactions between smaller units within the diaspora can allow people, for example, to share ways of talking, cooking, dressing or performing certain rituals. Shared beliefs, stories and traditions create feelings of unity among people living in different countries.

There seems to be a certain contradiction with the idea that communities of practice are 'an integral part of our daily lives' (Wenger 1998: 7), and with Wenger's attempt to limit the use of the concept by defining altogether 14 indicators which show that such communities have been formed (Wenger 1998: 125-126). These indicators include, for example, rapid flows of information, shared styles for showing membership, absence of introductory preambles, and a common discourse reflecting a particular world view. It appears that, for Wenger, communities of practice are rather ideal types of communities which may be difficult to identify in real-life situations. Particularly in Wenger's later publications (for example, Wenger, Mc Dermott, Snyder, 2002) and also in a large body of managerial studies, developing CoPs in organisations is offered as a solution to enhance the efficacy and economic success of companies rather than as an analytical tool to examine modes of learning.

On the other hand, Lave (2008: 283, 290) underlines that a CoP was not intended as a normative model for creating better business or study groups; rather, it offered 'a way of looking, not a thing to look for'. Instead of defining strict indicators of CoPs, one should understand learning as participation in socially situated practices wherever people engage regularly, for substantial periods of time, in shared activities (Lave 1996: 150). Through shared practice, people obtain the social, material and cognitive resources needed in a society and simultaneously construct a social identity (Duguid 2008a: 3). In this dissertation CoPs are understood as social groups united by mutual engagement in shared practices. It is acknowledged that CoPs can involve conflicts and power differentials, and do not

represent somehow ideal, harmonious learning communities. It is also noted that learners may engage differently – in more or less regular modes and levels of intensity - in shared activities. Therefore, instead of assessing whether a particular group has all the characteristics of a CoP, one can ask whether a certain group represents a CoP for a particular learner.

Educational research has explored how the development of communities of practice could be supported in formal education and in which ways these communities could enhance learning outcomes (for example, Fredskild 2008; Hoyte, Myers, Powell, Sansone, Walter 2010; McArdle and Ackland 2007; Shacham and Od-Cohen 2009). It has been proposed that such communities can support professional development and lifelong learning after graduation. Concerning workplace and organisational learning, the concept of community of practice has been widely applied in several studies aiming to improve organisational efficacy, increase knowledge-sharing and stimulate learning at work (for example, Akkerman, Petter, de Laat, 2008; Chalmers and Keown 2006; Jeon, Kim, Koh, 2011). The majority of studies on CoPs have been related to business organisations and workplaces while only few studies have explored the learning experiences of migrants in the communities they engage in (Gill 2007; Jackson 2010; Verma 2010; see also Alfred 2010, and Monkman 1997, 1999 who do not apply the CoP perspective). These studies have mainly focused on migrants' learning experiences in the countries of settlement. Williams and Baláz (2008b) have drawn attention to how migrants can act as knowledge brokers between different CoPs. Gill (2007) analysed the intercultural adaptation of Chinese postgraduate students in a British university and noted how such adaptation was in itself a process of intercultural learning fostered by social interaction and engagement in communities of practice.

While the framework of CoPs has created both controversy and enthusiasm in diverse fields of study, it has also been underlined that the concept itself needs clarification and should be critically examined and refined (Boud and Middleton 2003; Fuller, Hodkinson, Hodkinson, Unwin 2005; Fuller 2007; Hughes et al. 2007; Jewson 2007). One issue raised by the critics (Contu and Willmott 2003; Fuller et al. 2005; Jewson 2007) is that the significance of power relations and internal struggles within communities of practice has not been sufficiently addressed by situated learning theory and its applications. Although Lave (1993), Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) have acknowledged that CoPs are not necessarily harmonious places of learning but instead involve relations of power and conflict, they have not scrutinised how this can affect learning in CoPs. Social divisions based, for example, on racialisation, ethnicity, gender, social class and

sexual orientation shape learning opportunities, identity construction and meaning making particularly in multicultural environments (Lave 1996). Only a few studies applying the CoP perspectives focus specifically on the impact of ethnic and national divisions on learners and shared practice (Hughes et al. 2007; Lave 2008). Contu and Willmott (2003: 284) have argued that, in fact, popularised versions of situated learning theory have downplayed Lave and Wenger's (1991) original ideas that learning processes are integral to the exercise of power and control. In this study I also reflect the impact of internal divisions and power differentials on the learning opportunities of informants in different social environments.

Understanding and defining *community* within the concept of CoP has also aroused discussion. It has been argued that the meaning of community remains obscure in both Lave's and Wenger's (1991) as well as in Wenger's (1998) theoretical contributions. They do not clearly position themselves in relation to different definitions of community within sociological tradition although they seem to draw on the idea of symbolically constructed, imagined entities (Jewson 2007). However, they originally argued that

> ..in using the term community, we do not imply some primordial culture-sharing entity - - nor does the term community imply necessarily co-presence, a well-defined, identifiable group, or socially visible communities. It does imply participation in an activity system about which participants share understandings concerning what they are doing (Lave and Wenger 1991:97-98)

On the other hand, Duguid (2008a: 3) suggests that the key concept is not, in fact, community but instead practice: the CoP model would not exist without social practice. In this research, the concept of CoP is understood as an entity in which practice and community are inseparable; the CoP refers to the social and practice-based nature of learning.

*Practice* is also a central concept for understanding communities of practice, and also for the situated learning theory, particularly as defined by Lave and Wenger. For Wenger, practice is 'doing in a historical and social context that gives structure and meaning to what we do'. Yet it is not limited to concrete, practical activities but also includes mental activities; engaging in practice involves both acting and knowing human beings. (Wenger 1998: 47-48) Hager and Halliday (2009: 180) point out how practices are both layered and nested. Practices are located in different nests but can also overlap. From the situated learning perspective, this could be understood such that practices are rooted in different CoPs ('nests') although several CoPs can share the same practices. Practices are developed based on earlier 'layers', i.e., building on and modifying new practices in relation to the

previous ones. Furthermore, individuals who act as brokers can convey practices to different 'nests' (CoPs) but the new practices are always modified to suit for the needs and conditions of a new setting. Duguid (2008b) underlines how occupational practices often involve tacit knowledge about how to carry out work. Tacit knowledge is usually difficult to explain and share unlike codified, explicit knowledge. Yet codifying the best practices, for example, does not necessarily allow sharing practical know-how with other groups because knowing how (to do something) is rooted in the local practices. In this dissertation, I usually refer by the term practice to all kinds of socially shared, regular habits, activities and traditions which people follow in their everyday lives, for example, at home, or in their workplaces. Drawing on the situated learning tradition, practices are understood as adopted, modified and transformed through participation in different kinds of social groups and communities.

One of the weaknesses of the CoP and legitimate peripheral participation perspectives presented above is ignoring the role of internal conflicts and differences within CoPs. In addition, the ways in which CoPs are related to wider historical developments as well as political and socio-cultural structures are not clearly explained. The *social practice theory* developed by Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) focuses on the differences and conflicts among participants of local practices as well as the impact of macro level developments and wider, historical struggles shaping local, contentious practice. Holland and Lave (2001: 4) underline the relationship between individuals, local practices and societal structures in the following way: 'political-economic, social, and cultural structuring of social existence is constituted in the daily practices and lived activities of subjects who both participate in it and produce cultural forms that mediate it'. Local practices and the struggles within these are connected to wider historical, socio-cultural and political struggles; the relationship between local and national or global-level struggles is reciprocal: each can shape the other. The individuals engaging in local practice are historically related and partially divided through power relations and unequal access to material and symbolic resources. Socio-historically developed divisions based, for example, on ethnicity, nationality and gender, are manifested, challenged, and negotiated in local arenas.

## 2.1.4 Learning across Boundaries

Several researchers have examined how ideas and practices can be conveyed from one community to another, and which factors can promote or impede such processes. Yet, as research on the contextualised nature of cognition (for example, Brown et al. 1989 and Collins et al. 1989) has shown, transferring knowledge from one social organisation to another can be challenging. Volet (1999) examines knowledge transfers in cross-cultural settings from a situated learning perspective, and notes how individuals' capabilities as well as beliefs, values and expectations of a particular social community affect the possibilities for sharing conceptions and practices acquired in a different setting. As discussed earlier, communities may constrain or support the shared learning of their participants. Regarding individuals, their motivations, practices and expectations concerning learning also play a role in supporting or impeding mutual exchanges.

Wenger (1998) has also scrutinised how individuals and communities of practice can introduce elements of one community into another and create new connections across social groups. People participate in activities of various social groups and communities during their lives. Through membership of different groups and communities, they can learn various ways of doing things and diverse meanings for concepts. Also, communities of practice are not isolated entities: these have connections with other CoPs, for example, through boundary objects, brokering and boundary encounters. Tools, documents and concepts can belong to several CoPs and become connections linking the communities involved, i.e. *boundary objects* (Wenger 1998:106-108). On the other hand, by *brokering* Wenger (1998:108-110) refers to liaisons created by individuals between different communities. Brokering requires translation, coordination and alignment between different perspectives, and, finally, introducing new elements into a CoP creates learning.

Star and Griesemer (1989: 393) have discussed the role of *boundary objects* in sharing knowledge by examining groups composed of amateurs, administrators and scientists, noting that even if boundary objects can be adapted to local requirements, these also maintain a common base across different sites. They showed how participants from different social worlds managed to avoid imposing their world's vision on the rest, but instead found boundary objects which served as anchors or bridges between different actors. An empirical study on a meeting of a multiprofessional team revealed how boundary objects were used as tools for

communicating and negotiating ideas as well as for examining work practices (Lallimo, Muukkonen, Lipponen, and Hakkarainen 2007: 177).

*Boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998: 112-113) are usually events that provide connections between communities; these include 1) one-on-one conversations 2) immersions created by 'visiting a practice' by broader exposure to a new CoP and 3) meetings of delegations (when several members of CoP meet members of another CoP, they can negotiate meaning both within each practice and across the boundary). The boundaries of communities are fluid and constantly renegotiated. The peripheries of a CoP can provide casual 'windows and meeting places' for newcomers and outsiders; communities may allow non-members, for example, to observe or even to participate in their activities without obligation to become a permanent member of the community. (Wenger 1998: 112-118) Consequently, there are various ways in which individuals can acquire new tools, concepts and styles from other communities and introduce these to their communities. Williams (2006) stresses that the situated learning perspective could provide insights for analysing knowledge transfers carried out by international migrants across national borders.

Styles and discourses can be transmitted across different practices and thus create forms of continuity between different communities. Through boundary objects, brokering as well as through boundary practices, overlaps and peripheries, new styles can be adopted and ideas exported. In these processes, styles and discourses can also be reinterpreted and adapted in different ways. In addition, when people construct identities, they may borrow, imitate and readjust ways of behaving. Different styles, therefore, are not always integrated in similar ways into various practices. (Wenger 1998: 129-130) Wenger's ideas on developing new styles within and across communities resemble theorising on hybridity which has been used to refer to processes where different social or cultural practices are combined creating new, mixed stuctures and practices (for example, García-Canclini 2001; Spielmann and Bolter 2006).

Research on *cultural brokers* and *cross-cultural brokering* has examined how individuals or organisations may serve as mediators between different cultural groups in multicultural societies (for example, Geertz 1960, Gentemann and Whitehead 1983, Samuelson 2013). The studies exploring the role of cultural brokers, often immigrants, in such processes have underlined how they can facilitate the integration of recently arrived migrants into the host society, engage in awareness raising and advocacy activities, manage cultural conflicts, interpret cultures, or even act as translators (of languages) (Agusti-Panareda 2006; Jones,

Trickett, Birman 2012; Samuelson 2013; Yohani 2013). These studies investigate cultural brokering mainly from the perspective of host societies: how immigrants' adaptation to the mainstream culture and receiving society could be supported through such an endeavour. In these studies, cultures are often represented as homogenous entities which cultural brokers can explain to others as 'experts' of these cultures. Cross-cultural encounters may also be portrayed as inherently conflictual and in need of management by cultural brokers.

In addition to engagement in the activities and interactions in the CoPs (discussed previously), there are two other modes of belonging – imagination and alignment - which also provide opportunities to learn and develop one's identity. The concept of *imagination* refers to 'a process of expanding our self by transcending our time and space and creating new images of the world and ourselves' (Wenger 1998: 176). Through imagination, people can locate their engagements and CoPs within broader structures and systems. Imagination can assist in creating communities in which people sharing the same characteristics or experiences feel a sense of unity even if they do not develop shared activities. Imagination allows people to explore other styles, behaviours and identities, for example, by visiting or observing foreign communities. This requires willingness to devote time to understanding foreign practices and also to suspend judgement. (Wenger 1998: 178-186) The concept of imagination is useful in the sense that it makes it possible to explore individuals' opportunities for learning outside their 'own' local learning environments. In addition, it can be applied to explain migrants' feelings of belonging to their country of origin and towards their nation even if the person has lived several decades in another society. Anderson (1991) has also analysed how national unity and the basis for the nation-states have been created through the idea of imagined, unified community.

The combination of both engagement in a CoP and imagination produces *reflective practice* (Wenger 1998: 217). In order to achieve this, individuals need the ability and interest to adopt new perspectives and also to change their forms of engagement based on these. Communities need to be open to the new ideas and transformed identities of their members. Visiting foreign communities, brokering and multi-membership can provide new sources of learning both for individuals and for the communities in which they take part. Learning across and within communities can transform both the individuals and communities involved. Boland and Tenkasi (1995) have studied interaction between different groups of experts in knowledge-intensive firms; they underline how the ability of one community to work jointly with another requires both *processes of perspective making*

*and perspective taking*; perspective making relates to the processes through which individuals and groups make their understanding and knowing explicit for others, and through a dialogue of perspectives requiring reflexivity taking into account and understanding also other perspectives. Finding innovative solutions presupposes the ability to understand, share and jointly create new perspectives. Such processes coincide with Wenger's ideas on boundary encounters, reflective practice and imagination, which also enable exploring new perspectives.

Through *alignment* people can direct their energies and actions towards larger social entities. Alignment can create communities in which people who share the same interests or passions can unite and act together. Alignment requires the ability to coordinate perspectives and direct energy to a joint purpose. (Wenger 1998:178-187) To sum up, Wenger argues that people can identify and experience learning within different kinds of communities and not only within communities of practice. People can also feel they belong to larger entities, such as nations, ethnic groups or social movements, and develop their identities based on these ties. Later applications of Lave's and Wenger's theoretical formulations have mostly focused on examining learning only within communities of practice, and, more specifically, CoPs located in business organisations, workplaces and educational institutions, although Lave's and Wenger's ideas also make it possible to explore informal learning in all kinds of spheres of everyday life.

*In this dissertation I examine how conceptions and practices are shared in transnational learning environments. The ideas of how learning can take place across the boundaries of social communities are particularly relevant to explore learning in a transnational setting. Therefore, concepts, such as brokering, boundary encounters and boundary objects assist in scrutinising cross-border processes of learning between individuals and communities as well as examining elements which may impede or support such processes.*

## 2.1.5    Identity and Learning Trajectories of Individuals

There is a need to reflect the position of the individual within the situated learning approach. Studies applying this approach often focus on examining social learning environments, and have overlooked individuals' agency and the impact of their prior experiences on learning processes and on the development of local communities. Several authors, such as Billett 2007; Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2003; Hughes et al. 2007, have explored the role and the importance of individuals within learning processes as well as the interplay between the community and the

individual. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2003) note that in the situated learning perspective there is a risk of seeing only the social dimension, and ignoring the roles of individuals. They underline how individual's perspectives on learning develop and evolve through the experiences and interactions throughout person's life course. Furthermore, one needs to look at how individuals choose to participate in social settings and how they construct their understanding based on their experiences of participation in diverse environments (Billett 2007).

Individuals' participation in social communities transforms both the individuals and the communities in which they engage: individuals' learning in various social environments contributes to the development of their communities and societies, and individuals also develop and learn through social participation. (Billett 2007; Fuller et al. 2005; Lave 2011; Rogoff 1990; 1995). Similarly, Edwards (2005:50) points out how people are both shaped by and shape their worlds. Moreover, individuals have unique, situated ways of engaging in social practices: 'persons are always embodied, located uniquely in space, and in their relations with other persons, things, practices, and institutional arrangements' (Lave 2011:152). Both individuals' motivations and their previous learning trajectories shape their participation in social communities. Rogoff (1995) has explored personal learning processes through the concept of participatory appropriation: individuals both change and develop their participation through involvement in social activities; this can be described as a process of becoming.

The recent applications of the socio-cultural learning approach underline the importance of the learner's active role and agency for productive learning in the social communities they engage in (Billett 2007; Eteläpelto 2007). The agency of individuals is socially situated in how they have subjective perceptions of the social structures which affect how they act; individuals are also socially positioned, for example, as citizens/non-citizens, employees/employers, or as men/women (Evans 2009: 215). In this research, it is understood that individuals learn through engaging in the activities of different kinds of social communities, and that they can modify the practices of communities through their own actions. One should note that individuals have different learning trajectories which reflect their multimemberships of diverse communities.

The development of identity is an essential aspect of a social theory of learning. Lave (1996:157) explains how the goal of learning, understood as apprenticeship, is to become a practicing participant in a CoP. Learning is closely related to the processes of identity construction through participation in social practice. In fact, the generation of identities is a social process which also shapes what is learnt

(Lave 1996: 157; Lave and Wenger 1991:53). Identity can be understood both as a negotiated experience of self and as a learning trajectory which is constantly reformed through participation in various communities. In addition, the experience of non-membership also shapes one's identity through the confrontation with unfamiliar practice: one understands where one does not belong by encountering 'the foreign'. (Wenger 1998) Identities are thus constructed by both experiences of participation and non-participation in diverse communities. Hall (1996) has also underlined how identities are developed in relation to discourses highlighting differences from 'the Other'. Wenger (1998: 154-155) differentiates five types of trajectories in terms of identity development and engagement within and between CoPs. Wenger underlines that the interaction of multiple trajectories contributes to the on-going identity construction of individuals throughout their lives. *Peripheral trajectories* provide limited access to a community, *inbound trajectories* refers to newcomers with the prospect of becoming full participants, *insider trajectories* relates to full members who continue developing their practice, *boundary trajectories* refers to brokers linking CoPs and crossing boundaries, and *outbound trajectories* lead out of the community.

The ways in which individuals' trajectories of identity formation are shaped by historical developments, national policies, trans-local struggles, and discourses have been explored, for example, by Holland and Lave (2001; 2009), Kearney (2001), Linger (2001) and Lave (2001). Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) focus on examining how practices of identification are related to local struggles within different communities, and also shaped by broader historical, economic and socio-cultural developments. Furthermore, they underline how identities are constructed through participation in differently situated, local practices. Holland and Lave explore how personal and collective identity development is shaped by social struggles and discourses. Yet the role of individual agency in these processes is somewhat obscure: while local actors' subjectivities and differences are acknowledged, it is also underlined how 'social practice theory emphasises the historical production of persons in practice' (Holland and Lave 2009:5). Through the concept of history-in-person, Holland and Lave (2009) explore how history and local, contentious practice are brought to the present in the minds and bodies of individuals. Hence the processes through which historical developments, political and economic struggles and social practices affect individuals' identity construction are underlined in this approach.

Kearney (2001) shows how national citizenship discourses in Mexico aiming to maintain existing class structures are challenged both by the local resistance of

indigenous peoples in southern Mexico, and also by the relocation of politics to emerging transnational fields created by cross-border migration. Lave (2001) also looks at identity negotiations in a transnational setting by examining families involved in port wine production in the British enclave in Portugal. Their aim to maintain British identity and traditional practices is confronted by the newcomers to the community, and also through wider socio-economic developments transforming the port wine industry. The old port wine families struggle to maintain the boundaries between the insiders and outsiders of the community through their daily practices. The local struggles on the maintenance of their heritage and distinctive identity are exemplified in debates about the proposed changes to the practices of the local British school and church.

Living in a foreign country or having multicultural 'roots' brings both challenges and opportunities in terms of identity construction. Drawing on social practice theory, Linger (2001) has examined the identity trajectories of a Brazilianised Japanese, called Eduardo Mori, in both Brazil and Japan. Eduardo's ethnic and national identification had evolved in different locations and times, both through self-reflection and personal agency as well as through the ways the other members of the communities in which he participated had defined his membership and belonging. In addition, reflecting both Japanese and Brazilian social practices and the ways of understanding Japaneseness and Brazilianness, Eduardo had reconstructed his own identity in a binational setting. On the other hand, he was also constrained by the practices of exclusion in both countries in which he had lived and felt he belong to. While Linger (2001) does not specifically draw on transnational migration studies, his ideas bear a resemblance to the studies applying these perspectives.

To conclude, the key idea of socio-cultural, situated learning tradition for this dissertation is how people learn and develop their identities through engaging in the activities of different kinds of social groups and communities throughout their lives. Through their multiple membership of different groups, they can obtain new perspectives, skills and ideas to develop their practices and knowing. They can also act as brokers introducing new conceptions and habits from one group to another. Yet such boundary crossing may not always be appreciated by all groups or all participants. Social learning environments are not necessarily harmonious communities; instead, disagreements, conflicts and power differentials are often a part of these. Moreover, broader historical, economic and socio-cultural developments and related struggles shape local learning communities and the on-going identity construction of individuals. *Migrants' learning processes, informal learning*

*environments and the ways of sharing conceptions and practices in transnational settings are explored in this dissertation from these theoretical standpoints.* In my view, socio-cultural and situated learning theories provide fruitful perspectives to explore in particular people's informal learning processes and informal learning environments. Yet I am also aware of the gaps in previous theorisation, which I have aimed to examine critically in this chapter.

## 2.2    Spatial Perspectives in Education

The 'spatial turn' in the social sciences in the 1990s increased interest in studying diverse educational issues, such as school designs, everyday places of schooling, and the development of national education policies, from spatial perspectives. Exploring space in education and learning has widened the traditional arenas and themes of educational research. There has been research on physical, social, cultural, embodied and mental dimensions of education as well as spaces of learning particularly in the context of formal education. (Brooks, Fuller, Waters 2012a; Cook and Hemming 2011; Gulson and Symes 2007a; Gulson and Symes 2007b; Oblinger 2006) Yet there is still a need to explore diverse and fluid spaces of learning in different spheres of life, including informal and non-formal settings. Furthermore, spatial analysis can reveal differences across physical spaces, provide means to examine the relationship between agency and structure, and explore the interaction of social processes at different levels. (Brooks, Fuller, Waters 2012b: 1, 4) Spatial perspectives may allow educational researchers to detach themselves from *theoretical and methodological nationalism* (Amelina, Nergiz, Faist, Glick Schiller, 2012; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2003) focusing research on only one nation-state when exploring processes which, in fact, cross national borders. Going beyond the idea that a nation-state is the only appropriate unit of analysis requires both new analytical concepts and perspectives.

Regarding the diverse border-crossing spaces – occupational, civic and family spaces – studied here, one of the aims of this dissertation is to explore how these spaces are constructed. Ealier theoretical discussions on space provide insights on the nature of transnational spaces of learning. Several researchers, including educationalists, applying the concept of space have been inspired by the works of Doreen Massey (2005) and Henri Lefebvre (1974/1991). Henri Lefebvre argued in

his book *La production l'espace*[4] how (social) spaces are always social products. He examined how each society produced and reproduced its own spaces. Lefebvre (1974/1991) also distinguished between spatial practices, representations of space and representational spaces. Spatial practices were related to the production and reproduction of each social space, and ensured its' continuity and cohesion. Representations of space were connected to the relations of production, and to the order of these relations manifested in knowledge and signs. Representational spaces were understood as spaces lived and experienced through their associated images and symbols. Lefebvre (1974/1991: 412) also predicted that space would assume an important role in modern societies from micro levels up to global levels, and noted how such spaces should be examined from cross-disciplinary perspectives. Lefebvre's theorisation of space underlines the interaction between physical, mental and social spaces; these spaces have also external and global connections (Poikela 2010).

Massey (2005) confirms the idea of space being socially constructed: space is constituted through social interactions and material practices embedded in power-relations. It is a sphere of plurality, consisting of different trajectories. Space as such does not exist prior to individuals, identities and their mutual relations; spatiality, social identifications and their interrelations are co-constitutive. Therefore, one should focus on the content of the relations through which space is formed. Massey (2005: 9,100) underlines how space is in the process of being made: it is always under construction and can be described as the co-existence of stories-so-far. The multiplicity of trajectories, ruptures and structural divides make space as difficult to grasp in its totality. For this research, both Lefebvre and Massey offer interesting insights on the nature of space: the idea of space being fluid and socially constructed, and also the understanding of spaces being formed through social interactions and material practices of people. Also, the existence of multiple trajectories within space reveals how individuals and their relations constantly mould socially constructed spaces.

Transnational migration studies do not often refer to Lefebvre's or Massey's ideas; these have rather developed their own theoretical framework to explore transnational spaces. Yet there are some studies in which a transnational perspective is combined with a different theoretical background. For example, Singh et al. (2007) have noted how transnational students actively re-negotiate the

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[4] The book was first published in French in 1974 and translated in 1991 into English as The Production of Space.

spaces they engage in. They explored how the experiences of Chinese students (both during their studies in Australia and after their return to China) in transnational spaces shaped their identities, and created particularly cosmopolitan sense of belonging. Drawing on Massey's and Lefebvre's ideas, these authors understand space as constituted through lived and imagined practices and also through symbolic representations; space is also a product of cultural, social, political and economic interactions. Spaces and spatial formations have been explored from different perspectives in relation to international mobility. For example, Collins (2012) argues that social networks formed in cyber-spaces have an important role in mediating the international educational mobility; cyber-spaces also produce new spatial formations including elements of transnational, educational and everyday practices. Waters and Brooks (2012) have drawn attention to the need to explore changing spatialities and emerging cross-border spaces in relation to international student migration.

Recent research on learning environments has also adopted spatial perspectives on learning. The aim has been to develop flexible and open learning spaces to support collective and shared learning in both formal and informal settings. In particular, virtual learning spaces have been explored in relation to formal education. (Korhonen 2014; Oblinger 2006) *Formal learning spaces* are usually accessible only for particular groups participating in formal educational programmes while *informal learning spaces* are public forums enabling interaction between the participants (Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009). Poikela (2010) has discussed the design of learning spaces in formal education: one of the learning environments identified is a cultural learning environment including shared conceptions and principles connected to practices, artefacts and the ethical guidelines of the learning environment. Learning spaces include spatial-social space, socio-cultural space, cultural-virtual space, and virtual-contextual space. Spatial-social space covers the social relationships of the participants while the socio-cultural space is related to learning different modes of action, thinking and cooperation (Poikela 2010:15).

When examining the spatiality of learning, one should note that learning does not take place only in physical or concrete spaces but individuals' learning experiences are also shaped by mental and social spaces (Poikela 2010). Learning spaces can also be examined as *reflexive spaces* in which individuals can reflect their own conceptions based on different views of other participants (Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009). From the situated learning perspective, learning spaces can be seen as *socially constructed spaces of learning* which are evolving through shared

participation and interaction (Korhonen 2014). Fuller, Brooks, and Waters (2012: 261) also argue that it is possible to combine spatial perspectives with situated learning approach: the idea of space being constituted through social relations and constitutive of them can be connected to the situated learning perspective formulating learning as evolving participation in changing social practice. While earlier research on learning spaces has often focused on the construction of such spaces in formal educational contexts, this study relates to transnational learning environments which are mostly located outside formal education and concern the everyday learning encounters of mobile and non-mobile people.

## 2.3      The Transnational Approach in Migration Studies

In this research, the focus is particularly on migrants' learning processes in cross-border settings and emerging transnational spaces of learning. The following sections explore how migrants' transnational practices and border-crossing social spaces have been examined in migration studies. In addition, earlier research on identity construction in transnational environments as well as transnational learning is introduced.

### 2.3.1      Migrant Transnationalism

Several disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, economics, geography, and international relations, have contributed to the development of multidisciplinary transnational studies. Since the 1990s, the 'transnational turn' in migration research has intoduced a new perspective to analyse and differentiate migrants' cross-border activities and ties as well as immigrants' integration in relation to international migration (Faist 2004; Portes 2003). The paradigm shift was inspired particularly by certain anthropological studies (Vertovec 2009:13), such as Georges (1990), Grasmuck and Pessar (1991), Rouse (1991), Glick Schiller et al. (1992) and Basch et al. (1994) who pointed out the processes by which migrants created social fields and spaces connecting their countries of origin and the host countries. Border-crossing perspectives on international migration challenge previous ideas on the nation-state as a container of social, political and economic processes and also traditional migration research focusing particularly on the integration of migrants to the countries of immigration (Vertovec 2004). Nevertheless, it has been highlighted that transnational communities as such are not new although the term

as such is a neologism (Kivisto 2001; Portes 2003). In addition, the *diaspora* concept has been used, already for centuries, to refer particularly to peoples dispersed by force but also for trading groups and, in some cases, labour migrants residing in various countries (Cohen 1997; Castles 2002). Concerning the concept of diaspora, it has been argued that this concept is, in fact, based on an essentialist conception of the shared origin of its members in the real or mythical homeland (Anthias 1998; Wahlbeck 2002).

The word transnational has now become popular among researchers, and it is sometimes used to cover all global or border-crossing phenomena. *International* is usually used to describe interactions between national governments, while the word *transnational* refers to social ties and activities between non-state actors, including organisations, social groups and individuals (Vertovec 2009: 3). Transnational spaces can be approached from individuals' perspectives by exploring their experiences, feelings of belonging, emotions and imaginings of border-crossing spaces (cf. Singh et al. 2007). Studies have shown how migrants may be committed not only to states or nations but also to specific locations, and how the local affiliation is meaningful for the migrants' identity development (Conradson and McKay 2007). In this research, 'transnational' refers both to the social ties and activities of non-state actors as well as the experiences, perspectives and identifications of individuals crossing national borders.

Researchers have discussed how transnational processes are connected to globalisation. Although transnationalisation partly overlaps with globalisation, there is a clear difference between these concepts: while globalisation is related to more abstract, less institutionalised and less intentional processes taking place in a world context; transnational processes concern actors within and across specific nation-states of a limited number (Faist 2000:211; Kearney 1995:548). There has been discussion as to whether and to what extent migrants' transnational practices can cause global transformations. Faist (2004:17) argues that migrant transnationalism and its social effects do not alone cause substantial societal transformations but 'migrant practices and identities draw upon and contribute significantly to ongoing processes of transformation' which may be global (also Vertovec 2004, 2009).

There have been debates on whether migrant transnationalism in general is a new or old phenomenon. Vertovec (2009) distinguishes between 'new' and 'old' features in migrant transnationalism. Traditional patterns of migrant transnationalism include, for example, strong emotional bonds sustained by transnational families across borders, the creation of dense long-distance networks, regular communication between migrants and their family members in the

countries of origin, transfer of financial remittances to home communities and transnational business activities. The novel developments of migrant transnationalism are related to the increased intensity of cross-border contacts, quantitative and qualitative shifts in the scale of remittances, more institutionalised forms of political engagement with countries of origin as well as the changes in policies of both the emigration and immigration countries creating a more favourable environment for transnational activities. While the term migrant transnationalism has been widely used in migration research, it could be interpreted as referring to a particular ideology, i.e. transnational*ism,* although it mainly concerns migrants' transnational practices and the formation of transnational spaces and communities. Therefore, the concept of *transnationality* could be more appropriate to describe the border-crossing activities of individuals, groups and organisations in all spheres of life, also taking account of the activities of non-mobile persons participating in transnational cooperation (Faist, Fauser, Reisenauer 2013: 9, 16).

Several typologies have been formulated to differentiate and classify transnationalism and transnational practices. For example, transnationalism can be examined 'from above' (macrostructural processes and actors) and 'from below' (individuals' cross-border practices), and also taking into account the meso level: transnational networks, communities and organisations (Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Portes 1997). In addition, one can analyse transnational practices in terms of their intensity, extent and frequency as well as social and institutional embeddedness (Itzigsohn, Cabral, Medina, Vásquez, 1999; Levitt 2001b; Gerdes, Reisenauer, Sert, 2012). In fact, critics of transnationalism studies have argued that such studies can exaggerate the extent and effects of the phenomenon by focusing exclusively on migrants with regular or intensive transnational activities (Guarnizo, Portes, Haller, 2003:1213). Research has shown how migrants may undertake transnational activities in one or several spheres, and the density of their cross-border practices may evolve during their lifetime. It has also been acknowledged that not all migrants are transnationally active. While studies often focus on the transnational activities of migrants, it should be noted that non-migrants, such as members of transnational families living in the 'sending' regions, may also engage in cross-border activities and belong to transnational social formations. Mobility is not the only sign of or condition for a transnational activity (Levitt 2001b).

The rapid development of information and communication technologies has done much to facilitate maintaining cross-border contacts and sharing information across borders more rapidly and extensively than before. The availability of

inexpensive, long-distance phone-calls has been described as 'the social glue of transnationalism' (Vertovec 2009:54). The reduction in the costs of international flights has also supported frequent visits both ways. In addition, Internet has become an important arena for transmitting images and information around the globe. Using information technology has become a part of everyday life for many migrants. As Miller and Slater (2000) have shown, the computer-mediated relationships of migrants are no longer separate from their other social relationships. Virtual social platforms offer public arenas to disseminate different kinds of material across national borders. For migrants, this provides opportunities to share - with their non-migrant friends and family members -information which may be forbidden and not easily accessible in their previous home countries (Järvinen-Alenius, Pitkänen, Virkama 2010a: 198). Furthermore, digital communities bring together both mobile and non-mobile individuals from different countries (Brinkerhoff 2009). In these groups, people sharing the same interests can unite, communicate and exchange ideas, beliefs and practices. Internet allows the members of such groups to cross geographic and national borders easily.

Transnational spaces and cross-border migrations can be examined from *micro, meso and macro levels* (Faist 2000: 30-35; Pitkänen 2012; Pitkänen et al. 2012). The macro level consists of the political, socio-cultural, economic and educational structures of nation-states and of the world system. Concerning economic factors, nation-states differ considerably in terms of labour markets, income levels and employment opportunities. In the political domain, regulation of migration at international and national levels through international agreements, regional and national migration policies and also national legislation significantly affect migrants' opportunities for cross-border movement. In addition, the political instability of a particular nation-state can be a factor conducive to outward mobility. The socio-cultural setting embedded in historical developments also plays a role in migration dynamics, for example, in how immigration or emigration is generally perceived in a society. Regarding the educational domain, differences in educational systems affect labour mobility, for example, in terms of acknowledgement of prior learning, and increasing migration flows also shape education regimes.

The meso level analysis of migration focuses on the role of organisations, associations, communities and border crossing social and symbolic ties of migrants, likewise transactions carried out in relation to these ties (Faist 2000:31). Transnational studies have explored the significance of migrants' cross-border networks and attachments vis-à-vis migration flows. These previous studies have also scrutinised, for example, the role of ethnic communities, transnational families,

religious groups, and political associations in creating border-crossing social spaces, fields or circuits. On the micro level, one can examine the experiences, identifications and expectations of individuals in relation to their cross-border engagements and activities. For example, Tiaynen (2013) analysed how the experiences of both trans-local and transnational mobility as well as cross-border encounters affected the identification of migrant grandmothers in the Finnish-Russian transnational space. Wright (2013) examined how Russian-speaking young people in Finland constructed their identities in relation to their social engagements, everyday family lives and border-crossing cultural practices in a transnational space.

Migrants' transnational practices have been investigated mainly from socio-cultural, political and economic perspectives. Concerning the socio-cultural domain, cross-border social practices have often been explored in relation to families. For example, conceptions of traditional gender relations within families have been challenged when migrants and returnees have introduced new ideas on these to their communities of origin as a result of their experiences in the country of settlement. How migrants' and non-migrants' socio-cultural identification have transformed through their cross-border interactions and changing modes of belonging has also been examined (for example, Levitt 2001a). Concerning the political domain, there has been discussion on how migrants aim to influence the politics of their home communities through a variety of means (for example, Koslowski, 2005). In the economic sphere, the impact of migrants' financial and material remittances on the migrant sending countries has been debated, likewise the implications of migrants' transnational business activities.

## 2.3.2    From Transnational Circuits to Transnational Social Spaces

It has been noted by Faist (1999) that concepts such as, transnationalism, transnational communities and transnational social spaces have often been used interchangeable or loosely. Hence, there is a need for conceptual clarity when applying such concepts. In the following, I will introduce some of the concepts regarding transnational social formations which are relevant for the purpose of this investigation. One should note that the field of studies on migrant transnationalism is very wide. Hence not all the approaches and variations can be explained here.

An essential feature of *transnational migrant circuits* (Rouse 1989, 1991) is the continuous cross-border flows of goods, people, money and information: through

these circulations various sites –sometimes located in several countries - can become interwoven so as to form a single community. Nevertheless, as Guarnizo and Smith (1998) argue, migrants are not 'floating in-between states' but transnational practices are always rooted in specific social relations between people and situated in particular localities. Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004:9-11) introduce the concept of *transnational social field* which include multiple networks of social relationships through which ideas, practices and resources can be shared and transformed. Transnational social fields include both mobile and non-mobile people; their life worlds are shaped by the cross-border interactions. Levitt and Glick Schiller also differentiate between ways of being and ways of belonging in social fields; ways of belonging describes practices indicating identification with a particular group while ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices of individuals within these fields. Some individuals may demonstrate a strong transnational identification although they have only few or no actual transnational connections. Therefore, ways of belonging and ways of being do not necessarily coexist. In this approach, an interesting insight is that transnational fields do not concern only concrete cross-border mobilities but also the exchange of ideas and practices and the ways of belonging in a transnational setting.

Faist (2000) has formulated the concept of *transnational social space* to examine the developmental processes of international migration, the emergence of transnational networks as well as the role of migrants' cross-border ties in immigrant adaptation. Transnational social spaces are 'relatively permanent flows of people, goods, ideas, symbols, and services across international borders that tie stayers and movers and corresponding networks and non-state organisations' (Faist 2000: 309). Consequently, Faist connects in his analysis three levels: individuals and their desires (micro level), social ties and activities related to transnational communities and networks (meso level) as well as structural opportunities (macro level). In this model, international migration is understood as a complex and multi-dimensional process with economic, political, cultural and demographic implications concerning two or more nation-states (Faist 2000: 8).

In Faist's model, particular attention is paid to the role of meso level actors shaping the development of transnational spaces. Transnational kinship groups, transnational circuits and transnational communities are the main types of cross-border social formations within these spaces. Transnational kinship groups rely on mutual obligations, reciprocity and solidarity creating bonds between family members living in different countries. Transnational business circuits and issue networks are based on the circulation of information, goods and people providing

mutual benefits for the participants. In transnational communities, dense social and symbolic ties are created and social cohesion maintained through diverse activities and common narratives. Organisations as transnational collective actors exercise formal control and coordination over both social and symbolic relations. (Faist 2000; Faist 2004; Faist et al. 2013) In Faist's definition of transnational social spaces, 'stayers' seems to refer mostly to those people in migrants' countries of origin who have not migrated abroad while 'movers' refers to international migrants. In the recent writings (Faist et al. 2013: 1-2), multi-sitedness of migrants' practices is acknowledged: transnational connections are not limited to migrants' countries of origin and destination. Also, the importance of transnational activities of non-mobile people is highlighted.

The predominant idea in studies on migrant transnationalism has been to investigate the cross-border relations between migrants and their non-migrant family members, friends and community members. These studies have mainly focused on investigating migrants' transnational linkages to their former home countries. However, the bipolarity of transnational studies is problematic: migrants' cross-border ties, attachments and activities often extend to several countries but this has not been explored as researchers have concentrated in cross-border activities between the countries of emigration and immigration (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a; Qureshi, Varghese, Osella, Rajan 2012). In this dissertation, migrants' experiences in transnational spaces are explored taking account of their diverse border-crossing connections, which are not limited to their former home country.

All three concepts presented here, namely transnational migrant circuits, transnational social fields and transnational social spaces, put forward the idea of cross-border flows of conceptions. However, research with transnational perspectives has often focused on the geographic mobility of people and items as an example of transnational activity while less research has been presented on the transnational exchange of ideas (Faist et al. 2013: 16). There is therefore a need to explore the forms of cross-border flows of conceptions and practices between migrants and non-migrants. Also, Mau (2010: 83) notes how transnationalisation and increased cross-cultural contacts have been transforming not only migrants' countries of origin but also the receiving societies. Therefore, one could examine interaction between migrants and non-mobile population in the host countries and related social learning experiences, as well. Furthermore, an additional dimension in exploring transnational spaces is to examine the spatial experiences of migrants and their trajectories of learning and identity construction in such spaces, including all those areas where they have significant ties and engagements. As explained earlier,

Singh et al. (2007) scrutinised from the perspectives of international students how their identities evolved in lived, experienced and imagined cross-border spaces. Monkman (1997; 1999) also focused on how migrants experienced their lives and widened their socio-cultural and linguistic repertoires in a binational setting.

### 2.3.3 Cross-border Flows of Ideas: Exploring the Concept of Social Remittances

The impacts of monetary and material transfers of migrants, i.e. financial and material remittances, from receiving states to their communities of origin have been examined in various regions stressing how financial and material remittances often have profound social effects on the migrants' homelands, communities and households. International organisations have praised remittances as powerful tools which can support the development of migrant 'sending' countries. It has also been argued that, in addition to financial and material remittances, migrants also transmit *social remittances*. Levitt (1998; 2001a,) in particular has developed a theoretical basis for understanding social remittances.

According to Levitt (1998; 2001a:54), social remittances are 'the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from host- to sending-country communities'. Although the term social remittances as such was introduced by Levitt, earlier research has also explored how migrants may transfer conceptions and practices to their countries of origin. In the 1950s and the 1960s, researchers suggested that returning migrants could support the development of their original home countries through the knowledge, skills and beliefs they had acquired in the country of immigration (de Haas, 2007:3). Migration was no longer perceived as a loss for developing countries but rather as an opportunity to obtain through monetary and professional transfers the valuable human and financial capital needed in these regions. Such a perspective has also been highlighted in the discussion on 'brain gain' or 'brain circulation' instead of 'brain drain' resulting from the migration of professionals from developing countries to more industrialised societies.

Levitt (1998; 2001a) has described how social remittances can be transmitted to family and community members residing in the countries of emigration. Migrants communicate with their relatives or friends living in the former home country, for example, by phone or through social media, and can simultaneously convey beliefs, attitudes and behaviours. They can share new ideas and practices during their visits

to the countries of origin, and conceptions can also be exchanged when non-migrants meet their friends or relatives in the new host country. In addition, migrants can take advantage of their powerful economic position related to financial transfers in order to influence decision-making in the societies of origin (Levitt 2001a).

Also migrant associations, informal groups, cross-border networks and non-governmental organisations may be transmission channels (Levitt 1998; Gakunzi, 2006; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010). The activities of migrant organisations and informal groups may take place in different countries and through different channels, including virtual platforms. The organisations may, for example, arrange meetings with key politicians or powerful social figures from their country of origin when such personages visit the host country. These face-to-face talks enable migrants to persuade politicians to adopt new ideas or to carry out social reforms. The associations can also use their transnational networks to support certain political forces, and simultaneously promote particular political ideas and practices. (Gakunzi, 2006)

The social remittances include systems of practice, normative structures, mindsets, world views and also forms of identification (Gakunzi 2006; Levitt 2001a). Systems of practice cover the behaviours shaped by normative structures, such as religious rituals and the ways of political participation. Normative structures consist of values and beliefs: for example, behavioural norms, ideas regarding family responsibilities as well as political and religious values and norms. (Levitt 2001a) In relation to social remittances, social capital has been related to the opportunity to influence the social actions of community members providing particular financial benefits (Levitt 1998).

In general, migrants can adopt new conceptions and practices through everyday interaction in the new country of settlement. They can also adopt different kinds of conceptions through formal education or training. In addition, they can acquire occupational skills and knowledge at workplaces. Levitt (2001a) has identified three general categories of migrants' interaction with the host society: recipient observers, instrumental adapters and purposeful innovators. Recipient observers do not often come into contact with the host society, and they mostly observe and adopt new behaviours and views passively. Instrumental adapters adopt new ideas and skills for pragmatic reasons in order to meet new challenges more effectively in the host country. Purposeful innovators actively select and absorb new phenomena while also combining existing ideas with new ones. Suksomboon (2008:478) has also suggested that neither senders nor receivers of social remittances are passive

agents: they can expand, select or modify the ideas and practices which they have adopted.

There are different factors which may impede or promote the adoption and transmission of social remittances. According to Levitt (2001a: 64-69), the following factors affect the impact of these remittances: 1) the nature of the remittance 2) the nature of the transnational system 3) the characteristics of the disseminator, 4) the target audience 5) differences between sending and receiving countries, and 6) the features of the transmission process. Some remittances may be more difficult to transmit while some are more easily communicated. The receivers' social status and life-cycle stage may also influence their impact. In addition, the level of differences between the value structures in the host country and in the receiving country also has an impact on how readily new norms are adopted. Furthermore, the extent and amount of social remittances conveyed simultaneously also influences on their effects. (Levitt 2001a) Regarding organisations and associations, weak social, economic or political position, capacity constraints, lack of useful connections and weak organisational structures may, for example, affect their chances to adopt and transmit new ideas and practices (Gakunzi 2006). Consequently, social remittances are not always automatically or smoothly transmitted; several factors affect this process. Migrants may also select, combine and modify the ideas and behaviours they transmit. The factors hindering the adoption and conveying social remittances relate to the senders or potential receivers, to the transnational spaces, to communities, organisations, groups or to the existing institutions in the countries concerned.

There have been several empirical studies applying Levitt's ideas on social remittances. For example, Suksomboon (2008) examined the remittances sent by Thai migrant women living in the Netherlands, and the impacts of both financial and social remittances to migrant women's families and their sending countries. Two case studies looked at the social remittances transferred by the African diaspora organisations situated in the Netherlands and Portugal (Gakunzi 2006). The study by Taylor, Moran-Taylor and Rodman Ruiz (2006) explored how migrants and their remittances –both material and non-material - affected the lives of people in four Guatemalan communities. Jiménez (2008) as well as Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010) investigated how the influences brought by migrants changed the attitudes and political participation of non-migrants in Mexico. Conway, Potter, and Godfrey (2012) explored the impact of social remittances, including professional knowledge, skills and societal conceptions provided by returned professionals who were described as agents supporting social capital

accumulation. Applying a wider perspective to remittances, Sorensen (2004) studied the impacts of both monetary and social remittances on development in the countries of origin on different continents. She has underlined the importance of analysing both types of remittances in order to understand migration as a social process in which migrants can act as transformative agents of societal change (Sorensen 2004: 8). To summarise, the previous research on social remittances has focused on the transfers of ideas related to family, politics and religious affairs as well as gender and ethnic identities while less attention has been paid to professional and educational spheres.

According to Flores (2005), social remittances should be supplemented by the term *cultural remittances*. Flores draws attention to the forms of cultural expression which are altered by migration flows. For example, in music, literature or painting, conceptions transmitted from host countries to migrants' former home countries manifest in the most tangible ways. Furthermore, one should not ignore the role of national and international power structures in transmission processes: the remittances conveyed by the elite sectors of migrant communities usually reinforce traditional hierarchies while the remittances of the poor and working-class sectors can challenge or upset existing power relations (Flores 2005).

The concept of social remittances is somewhat problematic. The processes by which financial and material remittances are transferred across national borders are not similar to those by which conceptions and practices are shared and adopted. While money and material items can be transmitted as such, skills and behaviours cannot usually be 'sent' in the same manner, detached from a physical person or a social context. Furthermore, the processes of adoption also differ regarding these two types of remittances: adopting a new belief or skill does not happen in a moment as does receiving money, it requires social interaction and reflection. Consequently, the word 'remittance' may not be the most appropriate to describe processes of different nature.

The research so far has mainly concentrated on exploring how migrants' social transfers, referred to as social remittances, modify the lives of 'stayers' (see Córdova and Hiskey 2008; Gakunzi 2006; Jiménez 2008; Moran-Taylor 2008; Parella and Cavalcanti 2006; Taylor et al. 2006). Although it has been noted that ideas could also be transferred from migrants' countries of origin to the host countries (Levitt 2008; Suksomboon 2008; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves 2011), such flows have not usually been scrutinised. Yet new concepts and practices can flow in different directions in transnational social spaces including both migrants and

non-migrants living or originating from various countries (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a).

The perspective applied in most of the studies concerning social remittances relates to the processes of cultural diffusion. However, adopting new ideas or practices usually involves *learning* something. Studies on social remittances, often explore these processes rather mechanistically: describing general conditions which affect the transfers but leaving out the individual and collective learning processes. In order to understand how ideas are developed, shared and adopted through social interaction and engaging in cross-border social activities one needs to investigate processes of social learning in a transnational setting. *This dissertation examines how conceptions and practices are shared in transnational learning environments drawing on the socio-cultural, situated learning perspectives.*

## 2.3.4    Transnational Families and Kinship Networks

Family is seen as a particularly relevant unit of analysis to explore everyday cross-border practices of people and transnational ways of living which transcend the boundaries of the nation-state (Gouldbourne, Reynolds, Solomos, Zontini 2010:10-11; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002b). Transnational families have been defined as families in which family members live separated from each other in different nation-states but can create a sense of unity and a feeling of collective welfare (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002b:3). In recent years several studies have explored the negotiation of diverse cultural, religious and linguistic identifications, transnational care giving, mothering across boundaries and cross-border lifestyles in relation to transnational families (for example, in Baldassar 2007; Bryceson and Vuorela 2002a; Goulbourne et al. 2010; Zechner 2010a).

The concept of 'relativizing' has been used by Bryceson and Vuorela (2002b: 14) to describe the selective formation of transnational, familial ties based on emotional and material attachments and needs in relation to spatial and temporal conditions. Transnational family is both a real and an 'imagined community' (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002a; cf. Anderson 1991) with shared emotions and mutual obligations. Cross-border kinship relations evolve and change in relation to mobility and social ties; both family and kinship can be fluid categories for migrants, encompassing both 'blood' and in-law relatives, post-divorce family members, friends, people from the neighbourhood, and even family pets (Matyska 2013; Qureshi et al. 2012). Although geographical distance is perceived as an

obstacle in relation to cross-border care, closeness can still be maintained in transnational familial relations despite physical remoteness. Schmidt (2011: 86) explain how members of transnational families can understand themselves as 'belonging to the same horizon of action'; such proximity can be maintained through everyday practices: sharing emotions and communicating frequently, for example, through Internet.

The members of transnational families have to negotiate and arrange their lives taking account of the national policies and local conditions shaping their cross-border experiences. Zechner (2010a) and Matyska (2009) have shown how different forms of cross-border care are adjusted to changing national policies, political circumstances, and family dynamics. Family responsibilities and the need of caring do not disappear after emigration; caring across state borders is increasing due to new forms of transmigration although national policies, geographical distance and a lack of financial resources may cause difficulties in arranging transnational, informal care (Zechner 2008; 2010b). As Hoppania and Vaittinen (2015) have noted, caring necessitates proximity between bodies, and there is both political and corporeal dimension in caring. Caring responsibilities may also restrict migration options or prevent migration if the social support provided by the state is inadequate and other relatives cannot assume the main responsibility for the everyday care of those in need of support. Migration can lead to 'global care chains' in which caring work in both host countries and in the countries of emigration is divided according to gender as well as socio-economic and generational positions. Sending financial remittances to family members can be perceived as a way to show emotional attachment and caring; particularly mothers living separated from their children consider that their role as the main breadwinner of the family is an important part of their transnational motherhood (Rivas and Gonzálvez 2011; Basa, Harcourt, Zarro, 2011).

Transnational caring may assume diverse forms and is often arranged across generations reciprocally (Gouldbourne et al. 2010: 178). The study by Tiaynen (2013) revealed how grandmothers were both active care givers and important agents in maintaining cross-border kinship relations in the Finnish-Russian cross-border space. 'Talking family', i.e. engaging in frequent conversations through telecommunication technology, was a significant transnational practice supporting family-making in this space. In addition, narrating family histories was a way to both imagine and create shared kinship roots across time and space. Tiaynen (2013) argued that her informants' contemporary grandmothering practices and conceptions were shaped by Soviet traditions, and these traditions also influenced

the values which these informants aimed to convey to their grandchildren. Therefore, macro level historical and political developments and national discourses also shape local family practices (cf. Holland and Lave 2001; 2009).

Although research on transnational families often highlights mutual support and love among the members, cross-border family relations are not always equal and harmonious. They may involve power imbalances, fractions, mistrust and confrontation between different social worlds. For example, the use and the amount of financial remittances sent to family members may cause disputes between senders and receivers. The power relations and financial dependencies shape cross-border family ties, and are often related to gender and generational divides. Family membership may be seen as conditional, depending on the monetary transfers by migrants. (Muller 2008; Qureshi et al. 2012; Rivas and Gonzálvez 2011). Therefore, research on transnational family spaces needs to address questions of power and dependency, and also internal struggles within such spaces.

Concerning cross-border family relations, one should note that these are not confined to migrants; due to increased international mobility, an increasing number of non-mobile populations have transnational family networks. In addition, binational marriages and partnerships can be seen as indicators of the transnationalisation of a particular society (Mau 2010: 57). Consequently, in this research, it is understood that transnational family spaces include individuals residing or having resided in at least two nation-states, and also those who are connected to such spaces through their family/kinship ties transcending the borders of nation-states.

In relation to formal educational practices, rapidly diversifying and increasing international migration poses novel challenges: how to accommodate the needs of mobile families and take into account the transnational orientation of migrants. Due to the international mobility of experts, there are a growing number of children who frequently relocate with their globally mobile parents. For this group, international schools represent transnational spaces of learning and identity formation (Hayden 2012). There are also children belonging to other transnationally mobile groups, such as Roma people and asylum seekers, whose educational needs are not always fulfilled. Guo, Y. (2013) explored how migrant parents aimed to support their children's schooling through transformative, informal learning: these parents actively examined local educational practices, and supported learning the native language at home. Preserving proficiency in the mother tongue was considered important for maintaining children's transnational

contacts and identities, and also a potential asset in working life. Concerning informal education, bringing up children in transnational settings often entails negotiations between different cultural traditions. In these cases, socialisation processes do not only concern integrating into one national setting but rather being imposed to different, sometimes, conflicting value and belief systems which involve processes of reorganisation and adjustments (Harrami and Mouna 2010). Such transformation processes can take place at both ends of transnational social fields in relation to cross-border flows of ideas and shared experiences (Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004). Child rearing may also activate the transnational orientation and practices of those individuals who have previously not been interested in their cross-border roots and attachments.

The research on Estonia-Finland transnational space (Hyvönen 2007; Hyvönen 2008; Hyvönen 2009; Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b; Jakobson et al. 2012a; Liebkind, Mannila, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Jaakkola, Kyntäjä, Reuter 2004; Zechner 2006) have shown how migrants often maintain close cross-border connections with relatives in the former home country: they maintain contacts online and through phone calls, make frequent visits, convey material, financial and social remittances, and provide cross-border care. Geographical proximity as well as developed modes of transportation and communication have facilitated transnational mobility and cooperation in this space. The EU membership of both countries has likewise facilitated border-crossing processes. Yet the intensity and forms of transnational contacts vary between individuals and families, for example, in relation to the length of their migratory movements, the place of residence, the socio-economic position and their social networks in these two countries.

Hyvönen (2007; 2008; 2009) explored the impact of migration on the motherhood strategies and conceptions of both Estonian and Finnish migrant women in the Estonia-Finland transnational space. Being a mother and having children influenced the migration decisions of both groups: Estonian mothers wanted to secure better education options and a safe living environment for their children while the Finnish mothers had hesitated about immigrating to Estonia, and were contemplating return due to the perceived insecurity of the new host country. The forms of transnational caring were often reciprocal and carried out particularly between grandparents and migrant families. Yet after emigration, Estonian mothers could no longer rely on the extended motherhood strategy, sharing caring work almost daily with one's own mother, but instead had to adopt more a nuclear family type of parental practices. These migrant women had also

noted differences between child rearing practices in these two countries, and had to reconcile different conceptions and practices concerning child care.

Research on social remittances has examined how migrants can adopt and convey various conceptions and practices to their family members in the sending regions. Both male and female migrants have adopted new ideas and behaviours concerning family order, such as division of household chores, acting against domestic violence and also more equal relations between family members. (Levitt 2001a; Moran-Taylor 2008; Taylor et al. 2006; Tiemoko 2003) Furthermore, these new ideas have notably affected women's attitudes in migrants' countries of origin, although emancipated ideas and behaviours have also caused disputes among community members. Concerning men, their behavioural changes have sometimes been only temporary (Levitt 2001a; Moran-Taylor 2008; Taylor et al. 2006).

Ideas do not necessarily flow only from the countries of immigration to countries of emigration although research on social remittances has explored specifically this direction. However, Suksomboon (2008) examined how cultural diffusion processes transformed the values and life-styles of non-migrants in the host countries. For example, Thai-Dutch couples renegotiated and reformulated their understanding of the family unit and also the assignment of familial responsibilities. In addition, the study by Matyska (2013) showed how cross-border visits to migrants' host countries provided opportunities for non-migrants, for example, relatives of migrants to compare and exchange ideas and practices concerning family life and gender roles. Yet migration-related changes to gender order within families, influenced by the cross-border flows of ideas, may be gradual or even ambivalent due to the social structures which resist transformations (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a).

To summarise, research on diverse transnational family spaces has focused on transnational families in which family members live in different nation-states. The research has examined the maintenance of cross-border family ties, identification, transnational caring and the impact of remittances and migration policies on the formation of transnational family units. However, transnational family space has rarely been explored from learning perspectives.

## 2.3.5    International Migration of Labour and Occupational Know-How

While several studies have been presented, for example, on international labour mobility, cross-border transfers of professional knowledge and migrants'

integration to the labour market of the host country, little research has specifically addressed transnational occupational or professional spaces. Pitkänen and Järvinen-Alenius (2009) have drawn attention to the emergence of transnational professional spaces as well as to multi-level transformation processes related to the increasing international mobility of labour and cross-border interaction within transnational professional communities. Bartley, Beddoe, Fouché and Harington (2012:2) have also argued that the border-crossing embeddedness of migrants in their profession creates a transnational professional space which includes sustained transnational ties of individuals, networks and organisations.

Migration to another country provides both learning opportunities and challenges for individuals, organisations and societies. Migrants' prior learning and professional skills are often undervalued or non-recognised in the countries of destination. This means that migrants cannot practice their professions or occupations because their qualifications are not recognised. Downgrading of occupational qualifications, skills and experiences is related to discriminative practices among labour market gatekeepers, including educational institutions, employers, and professional organisations. Visible minorities and highly educated migrant women in particular are vulnerable groups which often face processes of deskilling in the country of settlement. (Andersson and Fejes 2013; Man 2004; Wagner and Childs 2006)

While many host countries nowadays underline the importance of lifelong learning, for highly qualified migrants such ideals may, in fact, mean deskilling and re-education for lower positions when the processes of requalification required in the new host country are either very expensive or non-existent. (Guo, S. 2013c; Andersson and Fejes 2013) For example, in Canada, female immigrants often choose to re-educate themselves because they cannot afford the slow and expensive process of recertification. The national lifelong learning discourses focus on the alleged deficits of professionally trained migrant women. Such a discourse is seen as an ideological frame which shapes how people understand their reality and organise their behavior accordingly, including job-seeking activities. The current policies protect the invisible borders of professional knowledge and serve the interests of already employed professionals. (Gibb and Hamdon 2013; Ng and Shan 2013) In Sweden, although there are systems in place for the evaluation and recognition of prior studies, non-recognition of foreign diplomas and work experience occurs in local working life. Refugees and visible minorities often face deskilling in the new host country. Some professional groups, such as teachers, may experience descending vertical mobility: teachers having obtained their

qualification abroad have been able to qualify as child minders in Sweden. (Andersson and Fejes 2013) Similarly, in Australia, highly skilled migrants often end up in positions requiring little training; their 'narratives of exclusion' reveal latent racist practices at local levels valuing Australian educational credentials over foreign ones (Wagner and Childs 2006).

Studies applying *neo-colonial and post-colonial perspectives* to labour migration, and also to international migration in general, have drawn attention to the need to acknowledge the social and historical formation of international labour markets and overcome the state-centric analysis of international migration. Researchers have explored complex interdependencies between different locations, and the ways in which mobile individuals, spaces and places are intertwined in a postcolonial world. Such a world is shaped by unequal power relations, which are often embedded in the historical, colonial relations between different locales. Not only 'peripheries' or 'colonised' but also 'centres' have been affected by the transformation processes. (Blunt and McEwan 2003; Mains, Gilmartin, Cullen, Mohammad, Tolia-Kelly, Raghuram, Winders 2013; Raghuram 2009; Noxolo, Raghuram, Madge 2011) In addition, the development of educational systems has been shaped by colonial and neo-colonial relations across international borders, also affecting professionals' cross-border mobility. The educational institutions and national regulatory bodies exercise subtle control over transnational labour migration concerning, for example, the migration of health care professionals. (McNeil-Walsh 2004; Raghuram 2009; Walton-Roberts 2015) Yet one should note that new kinds of interdependencies affecting transnational migration are emerging between nation-states, and these are not always rooted in the colonial past.

The impact of international labour migration on countries of emigration and immigration has been previously discussed through the debates on brain drain vs. brain gain or brain circulation. However, the traditional concept of brain drain does not grasp new patterns of transnational mobility and cross-border collaboration: migration to another country may afford opportunities for new forms of cross-border cooperation and networking (Kim 2007; Tremblay 2005). For example, Welch and Zhen (2007) examined the transnational, scientific networks of Chinese academics: all the informants were engaged in transnational activities with colleagues in the former home country, carrying out research and teaching assignments, as well as publishing in local, scientific journals. Not only academics but also other professional expatriates in general can nowadays maintain extensive and frequent contacts with colleagues and institutions in their former

home countries (Saxenian 2006; Mahroum, Eldridge, Daar 2006) which facilitate transnational exchange of ideas.

Returned professionals may also share the knowledge they have acquired abroad with their colleagues 'back home'. A study by Williams and Baláz (2008a) revealed how Slovak doctors had enhanced their professional knowledge abroad by acquiring new skills, observing different practices, and fostering their reflexive capacities. These doctors had also been able to share new ideas with non-mobile colleagues in their country of origin although differences in professional cultures created challenges for translating and incorporating foreign practices into a different setting. Conway et al. (2012) showed how returned professionals in Trinidad and Tobago supported community development activities by providing their professional knowledge, skills and social capital in their country of origin although some of them also experienced difficulties with re-adjustment due to differences in cultural and societal practices.

International academic migration has become more diversified in recent years: new destinations for academic mobility are emerging on different continents (Kim 2007). A major part of international student mobility continues to take place from East to West, particularly to English-speaking countries creating uneven and differentiated educational spaces (Waters 2006), and also affecting the destinations of cross-border labour mobility. While for some students studying abroad can be a deliberate strategy for permanent immigration (Tremblay 2005), the return rates of international students have also been increasing in recent years due to the policies of sending countries. For example, the Chinese government and local actors are actively encouraging and supporting the return of Chinese students from foreign educational institutions (Shen 2007). International academic mobility is no longer examined only as an example of brain drain, but rather as a potential source for mutually profitable learning opportunities and brain circulation. Transnational academic flows, including flows of academics and students as well as cross-border flows of knowledge, management styles and educational policies, contribute to the transformation of higher education and academic professions around the globe (Marginson 2007; Rizvi 2007a).

Studies on transnational expert networks have explored cross-border exchanges of information. It has been argued that such networks can provide new kinds of learning environments where brain drain can be converted into brain circulation through the exchange of skills and knowledge. Although these networks may not be stable (Lowell and Gerova 2004), there is evidence that the number and activities of *transnational knowledge networks* have been increasing in recent years

(Meyer and Wattiaux 2006). While globally their number is still limited, their diverse activities, such as exchange of scientific information, joint projects, enterprise creation, training and *ad hoc* consultations can support the intellectual, technological and economic development of migrants' former home countries in various ways. Therefore, such networks can have transformative effects in the sending regions (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a). Transnational expert networks do not only unite people originating from one nation-state, but sometimes from the same region or continent enabling them to exchange information not only between the countries of emigration and immigration but also within and across several countries (Meyer and Wattiaux 2006). Physical mobility is no longer a prerequisite for transferring ideas across national borders. Through virtual networks expatriates can share conceptions and practices without relocating themselves.

Coe and Bunnell (2003) have explored transnational innovation networks which include international migrants, non-migrants, bridging associations and transnational enterprises. Regarding innovation processes, they highlight the importance of 'mobile knowledgeable subjects' who can support the redefinition of practices and eventually also innovation through their transnational network connections. Transnational innovation networks can gradually develop into transnational technical communities which provide opportunities for the continuous circulation of ideas, money, technologies and individuals (Coe and Bunnell 2003: 438, 452). An example of such communities are the transnational technical and business communities created by the 'new Argonauts' – mobile migrant entrepreneurs from Silicon Valley - in cooperation with local partners from countries of emigration (Saxenian 2006). In addition, multinational enterprises have also supported the creation of transnational, scientific learning spaces by supporting the international mobility of researchers and cooperation with academic institutions across national borders (Lam 2003). However, Rizvi (2007b) points out that the participants of transnational networks should learn to cooperate systematically and reflexively as well as to understand the uneven distribution of opportunities and asymmetrical power relations within transnational spaces.

While studies on labour migration usually examine the migration of individuals moving across borders, Aneesh (2006) has drawn attention to *virtual migration*, in which professional skills and knowledge migrate although the employee's body does not move. Aneesh (2006:68) argues that virtual migration can produce economic effects similar to those of conventional labour migration in terms of jobs and wages. Yet for individuals, migrating to another country provides clearly different kinds of experiences than working online for an international company in

one's country of origin. The impacts on families and communities are also different. Spatially dispersed work teams have become an increasingly common phenomenon in many business organisations, particularly in the IT sector. Aneesh (2006: 79-81) points out that cross-border communication and cooperation create difficulties for such teams: although virtual meetings and discussions are arranged, it is challenging to understand each other when the participants do not share the broader socio-cultural context. Therefore, in binational cooperation projects, a person familiar with both settings could be needed to mediate between the two teams.

The studies on knowledge transfers in relation to international labour migration provide interesting insights for analysing co-learning in a transnational setting. Williams (2006) has analysed how international migrants can contribute to knowledge transfer and creation, and what obstacles to sharing knowledge can be identified at individual and organisational levels. Williams notes that all migrants are potential knowledge carriers but there is a lack of empirical research concerning migrants' role as knowledge carriers, creators, and translators. In particular, there is a need to explore the learning experiences and knowledge transactions of all migrants, not just elite groups, such as highly skilled experts and managers (Williams 2007). It is suggested that the situated learning perspective is particularly useful for analysing knowledge transfers in relation to international migration because it makes it possible to focus on the mobile learning trajectories of migrants as well as on their learning experiences in all spheres of life (Williams 2006:602).

Research on transnational professional networks and transfers of knowledge and skills within these have focused particularly on highly educated migrants. For example, Beaverstock (2005) explored the mobile lives and global networks of inter-company transferees in the business sector. These managerial elites had extensive, cross-border connections with colleagues through which they shared locally based knowledge. Luxon and Peelo (2009) have pointed out that nowadays scholars often form international, disciplinary communities of practice united by common interests. Furthermore, studies focusing on the impact of transnational academic mobility in terms of knowledge sharing and developmental processes have been presented (for example, Kim 2007; Rizvi 2007a; Tremblay 2005).

The discussions on the transfers of knowledge in transnational expert networks and communities often stress the value of such transfers, and highlight the positive sides of the international mobility of professionals. Yet the knowledge and practices of transnationally mobile professionals and entrepreneurs can be contextually situated and appreciated only in certain communities and do not

necessarily maintain their value at all locations around the globe (Ley 2004). For example, teaching practices are often rooted in local educational histories which create cultural and linguistic challenges for academic sojourners (Luxon and Peelo 2009). Andersson and Fejes (2013) have also drawn attention to the challenges of international migration regarding the recognition of migrants' knowledge and prior learning acquired in another context. They explain how such knowledge does not necessarily retain its usefulness in the new context. For example, in construction work, the local building traditions and official rules may depend on climatic conditions and societal situations, and thus occupational skills and knowledge obtained on Central-African building sites may not be directly applicable in the Nordic countries.

Concerning the transfer of occupational conceptions and practices, Williams (2006) argues that some forms of occupational knowledge can be more easily transferred across national borders than others. Applying the typology of knowledge presented in Blackler (2002a)[5] to analyse knowledge transfers in relation to international migration, Williams (2006) suggests that embrained knowledge (dependent on cognitive abilities and conceptual understanding) and embodied knowledge (obtained through practical learning requiring physical presence) are transferable through physical mobility while encultured and embedded knowledge are only partly transferable due to their origins in socially constructed meaning systems and organisational routines. However, reflexivity can support the transfer and modification of foreign occupational practices in another setting. The encoded knowledge which is transmitted through signs and symbols is perceived as the most mobile form of knowledge. From the socio-cultural, situated learning perspective, William's (2006) ideas on the cross-border transfer of occupational knowledge are problematic: if learning overall takes place through social interaction in the shared activities of social groups and communities, embrained and embodied knowledge is also rooted in the socio-culturally constructed understanding of such knowledge. In addition, the idea of dividing knowledge into separate categories which could be transferred independently is against the idea of understanding learning as a holistic experience extending to all social activities.

Although some studies do indeed focus on cross-border transfers of occupational conceptions and practices, there is a need to explore the role of

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[5] Blackler (2002a; 2000b) argues that, in fact, this classification of knowledge is unsatisfactory. Knowledge should not be understood as a thing to be possessed but rather as an action. 'Knowing should be studied as a collective achievement that is mediated, situated, provisional, pragmatic and contested' (Blackler 2002b:63).

migrants in such processes, including those with basic and vocational education. In addition, these issues have seldom been examined empirically from the situated learning perspective. There is also a need to clarify and analyse the concept and the formation of transnational occupational space.

## 2.3.6    Migrants' Transnational Political Practices

Global and transnational influences have been challenging the traditional model of nation-state in which states are described as separate, autonomous units governing the people, legislation, political processes and economy within a specific area surrounded by recognised national borders. International migration and emerging transnational social spaces are changing the social meaning and the stability of territorial state borders as well as the boundaries of political and cultural communities (Bauböck 1998: 17). Researchers have debated to what extent cross-border migration and transnational practices of migrants are transforming the conventional nation-state. It has been suggested that while migrant transnationalism does not itself cause such transformations, it can contribute to on-going, significant changes affecting nation-states; in particular, migrants' practices are challenging the traditional interconnection 'identities-borders-orders' (Vertovec 2004, 2009; Faist 2004). While migrants may reside in one state and participate in its societal activities, they are often citizens of another state, and may feel they belong to the national community living in this state. On the other hand, through dual citizenship, they can simultaneously be members of two different nation-states, and enjoy the rights to participate in the political decision-making of both societies. In addition, in terms of belonging and national identification, migrants' ties and attachments are not necessarily limited only to one state or one nation.

Citizenship has traditionally signified membership of an autonomous political community including special rights and obligations, and opportunities for political participation in that community. In relation to international migration, the boundaries of citizenship reveal the clear distinction between outsiders and insiders. Nation-states still have the sovereign right to grant citizenship to the state, and control border-crossing over their national borders. Nationality can be an important factor in promoting or impeding migration to a specific country. (Bauböck 2007) For example, in the European Union, the citizens of EU Member States can freely migrate to another EU country. Also, EU citizenship confers

particular privileges for these nationals in other EU Member State, such as the right to vote in local and European Parliament elections.

Citizenship can be explored in terms of status, identification and civic participation. Jakobson, Kalev and Ruutsoo (2012b) combine vertical and horizontal perspectives from Fox (2005) in their three-level approach to examining citizenship and its formation in people's everyday lives. Concerning the vertical relationship between the individual and the state, citizenship as a status refers to formal membership, rights and obligations. In addition, from this perspective, citizenship as an identity implies identification with and loyalty to the state, while citizenship as participation concerns carrying out citizens' obligations. Regarding the horizontal perspective, citizenship as a status focuses on the membership in a society, manifested by belonging to different kinds of societal groups. Furthermore, from this point of view, citizenship as an identity means identifying with the civil society, and citizenship as participation implies different forms of civic activism. For this study, this multi-level approach to explore citizenship provides fruitful perspectives through which to scrutinise the identification and belonging of informants in a transnational civic space.

To some extent, boundaries between citizens and non-citizens have become blurred in several nation-states when the states have been granting more rights to permanent, foreign residents. The notion of social citizenship draws attention to the increasing entitlements of migrants to social welfare in their countries of residence. Permanent residents often have the right to participate in public education, and have access to health care and social insurance benefits. A broad understanding of social citizenship also extends to protection against discrimination, for example, in employment and healthcare. (Bauböck 2007) In addition, some legal obligations, such as paying taxes or participating in compulsory education, concern both citizens and non-citizen residents in many nation-states. Particularly in the European Union, EU citizens residing in another Member State are mostly equal with citizens of that country in terms of social security, education and employment.

An increasing number of countries worldwide are allowing dual citizenship, and there have also been more claims for dual nationality. This trend has been connected to the rise of international migration flows, and also to the political pressure and growing influence of migrant communities over their countries of origin. Dual citizenship has been presented on the one hand as a manifestation of the dual orientation of migrants, and on the other as a practical tool facilitating cross-border movements, businesses and eligibility for certain benefits. (Vertovec

2009) Yet there have also been critical voices pointing out potential security threats, difficulties of migrant integration, and competing loyalties resulting from dual citizenship.

Migrants' integration into the country of settlement can be examined on four dimensions (Martiniello 2007). The first dimension covers the civic rights which the 'receiving society' has granted to immigrants. The second perspective concerns immigrants' identification with both the host state and the host society. The third dimension relates to the immigrants' acceptance of the prevailing societal norms and values, and the fourth aspect refers to their political participation, mobilization, and representation. However, studies on migrants' transnational practices and identification yield additional dimensions to explore migrants' integration in a transnational setting. More preceisely, these studies underline that the issue should not be examined only from the perspective of the 'receiving' society.

Research on migrants' transnational civic activities has explored their voting practices, membership of political parties and other non-governmental organisations, participation in political campaigns as well as donations to political and charity organisations in the former home country. Furthermore, it has been noted that some migrants also engage in the activities of international non-governmental organisations, or in transnational social movements. There is a wide variation between individual migrants and also between different migrant groups in terms of their cross-border political activity and engagement. While some migrants participate intensively in homeland politics or in cross-border social movements, others are relatively passive as regards civic participation (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Jakobson 2014; Jakobson et al. 2012b; Vertovec 2009). Drawing on a study on the transnational political engagement of Latin American immigrant groups residing in the United States, Guarnizo et al. (2003) concluded that only a minority of these migrants engaged regularly in border-crossing political action. Yet they noted that prolonged residence in the host country increased the likelihood of political transnationalism because the newcomers did not necessarily have the resources needed for such activities. Jakobson et al. (2012b) in their analysis concerning migrants in the Estonia-Finland space observed that there were only few informants who were equally politically active and embedded in both societies. However, their data set consisted largely of fairly recent arrivals or new transmigrants, which may suggest that transnational activism may increase later among long-term residents or transmigrants. Guarnizo et al. (2003) point out that migrants' civic activities may not be as transformative as has been claimed, on the

contrary, migrants' transnational political engagement may serve to maintain existing power hierarchies and asymmetries.

Migrant men and women can have diverse trajectories in terms of their participation in civic activities. For example, Jones-Correa (1998) observed how male migrants from Latin America were participating more actively in ethnic associations with focus in the country of origin while female migrants were orientating more towards the country of settlement. Those few women who were active in ethnic associations tend to have only peripheral roles in these. However, migrant women often acted as mediators between the immigrant community and the host society. Jones-Correa (1998) explained the gender differences in civic engagements with the contrasting experiences of men and women after immigration. While men often experience downward economic and social mobility, and wish to compensate for this with associative activities, women, on the other hand, experience upward socio-economic mobility through their increased participation in working life and eventual economic independence within the household.

The transnational civic practices of migrants are influenced by at least two different societal systems: particularly the political structures and socio-economic contexts in both 'sending' and 'receiving' countries shape and are shaped by migrants' transnational engagements (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001). Such practices are rooted in specific settings, and are affected by local contexts. Migrants' country of origin may inhibit political activities and public discussion on political matters while the country of settlement may provide more opportunities for raising dissident voices. For example, Lyon and Ucarer (2005) reported how Kurds had been able to express their ethnic identity and mobilise political activities more effectively outside their homelands. In the case of Germany, the civil rights provided opportunities for developing community ties of Kurds, for the aggregation of resources and for organising various protest activities. Migrants' homeland politics may also be specifically targeted towards a certain region or city in the country of emigration, and the political struggles carried out in that locality may influence associative actions and divisions in the country of residence. Østergaard-Nielsen (2001) showed how both exclusive and inclusive political systems in the countries of settlement could restrict and dismiss migrants' transnational political practices because these were represented as impeding integration to the new society. Yet orientation towards political integration into the host society and transnational political practices can coexist (Jakobson et al. 2012a, Jakobson et al. 2012b; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Østergaard-Nielsen 2001).

Research on the effects of *political remittances* has examined how cross-border flows of political ideas and practices can influence attitudes and political participation of non-migrants in the countries of emigration, and how transnational political cooperation can also influence the host societies. Jiménez (2008) found out that, in Mexico, the individuals living in communities with high migrant population were more eager to take part in political and social activities. Returnees were aiming to implement changes in local politics and administration. However, local population sometimes considered the ideas of migrants 'too liberal' and was reluctant to carry out rapid social changes. Nevertheless, non-migrants engaging in transnational networks were more likely to work for political parties, to attend political rallies, to vote, and also tolerated their opponents, including their political rights and freedoms. Similarly, Córdova and Hiskey (2008) and Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010) showed how non-migrants with connections to migrants expressed higher levels of political tolerance and satisfaction with democracy compared to those with no connections to migrants. In addition, those having more exposure to transnational networks were also more active in local-level political participation. Concerning the studies on the Dominican Republic and El Salvador (Itzigsohn and Villacrés 2008), migrant organisations were a part of political opposition movements opposing the authoritarian regimes and taking part in the political processes which led to democratisation. Although these migrants had been first demanding democratic decision-making in their countries of origin, their contribution to the intensification of participatory democracy had been limited. Therefore, migrants in transition periods may have a special interest in supporting democratisation processes but when the political regime has been reformed their political activities may diminish or they may opt to maintain the privileges of certain groups (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a).

Non-governmental organisations, groups of activists and networks involving migrants may seek to change political systems. The activities can take place in different countries and through different channels, including virtual platforms. The case studies on African diaspora organisations situated in the Netherlands and Portugal (Gakunzi 2006) showed that these organisations and their members transferred different kinds of political ideas and practices both through informal contacts with family members or friends and through formal channels, such as meetings with politicians. In addition, they utilised transnational networks to promote political ideas. Furthermore, some groups acted as pressure groups via local organisations in their host countries in order to influence political change in their countries of origin.

Although both researchers and international organisations have in recent years been arguing for the positive aspects of political remittances portraying emigrant organisations and migrant communities as promoters of democracy, human rights and good governance, the exiles may nevertheless also perpetuate violent conflicts instead aiming at the peaceful coexistence of different groups (Faist 2007). Consequently, it is problematic to argue that migrants' political remittances invariably promote human rights or democracy. Furthermore, 'democracy' or 'good governance' is not necessarily defined identically by all actors.

Internet has become an important medium for migrants' political advocacy. Again, online migrant groups may both promote separatist movements and civil war and seek peaceful solutions to the internal conflicts in their countries of origin. Virtual groups uniting both migrants and non-migrants may provide platforms for discussions on the political future of the homeland and conflicting values. Moreover, interaction within such groups can also foster bonding and bridging social capital of their members. (Brinkerhoff 2009) Bonding social capital allows them to unite and share experiences with those with similar backgrounds while bridging social capital assists them in crossing national and ethnic boundaries by linking migrant groups in various host countries.

When discussing the flows of political ideas and practices in a transnational setting, it should be noted that migrants do not only adopt new political ideas in the countries of settlement but may already entertain ideas, for example, on advancing democracy and human rights when they emigrate. In the case of exiles fleeing authoritarian regimes, emigration has often afforded opportunities to promote their political ideas, and simultaneously influence political change in the country of origin. In these cases, migrants may 'send back' conceptions already arisen in the home country and also elaborate on these ideas as a result of their experiences in the host country (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a).

The effect of migrants' transnational orientations and network ties on their integration strategies and learning opportunities in the host societies has been discussed. Drawing on a literature review, Alfred (2010) noted how migrants often had strong bonding ties with the members of their own ethnic groups but weaker connections with other groups; yet relations with other groups could provide more learning opportunities for migrants than contacts restricted to one's own ethnic group. Alfred suggested that those migrants with access to national institutions and local social groups could more easily adopt national cultural practices and integrate into the local communities while those who were denied access held on to their ethnic group and maintained transnational ties.

On the other hand, research on migrant transnationalism challenges traditional perspectives focusing only on migrants' adaptation or integration to the host society. The transnational approach underlines that migrants' practices and identification are not necessarily limited to one nation-state. It has been shown that the relationship between migrants' cross-border activities and their integration into the country of immigration is complex and may be affected by their gender, class, religious and professional positions (Hyvönen 2009; Jakobson et al. 2012a; Jayaweera and Choudhury, 2008; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Morawska 2004; Portes 2003). Migrants' integration into the host society is not necessarily in conflict with an enduring transnational orientation; these parallel processes may be mutually reinforcing and supportive. Yet the significance of transnational ties may vary and evolve over individuals' life-course.

Research so far on migrants' transnational civic practices and engagements has focused on exploring their cross-border political activity and ties towards the country of emigration. This research has moreover addressed how migrants' civic identification may change in a transnational setting. The studies on political remittances have examined how the cross-border flows of political ideas and practices can influence the attitudes and political participation of non-migrants in the countries of origin as well as transforming the communities involved in these processes. Nevertheless few studies have been presented examining the learning processes of migrants in transnational civic spaces.

## 2.4   Identity Construction in a Transnational Setting

Research on multicultural, hybrid, diaspora and transnational identities (for example, Bhabha 1996; Bennett 1993; Pries 2013; Salakka 2005; Skapoulli 2004; Vertovec 2001; Wright 2013) has explored identity construction and forms of identification in cross-border settings. These differing approaches have looked at how individuals construct, perform and negotiate their identities in relation to different cultural, ethnic and national groups and across different localities, nation-states and regions. While some of these researchers have underlined potential marginalisation and feelings of in-betweenness related to such positioning, others have argued for the multidimensionality and richness afforded by diverse perspectives. For example, Bennett (1993) has discussed how cultural marginality can assume two different forms: *encapsulated marginality* refers to the state in which the individual's inability to construct a unified identity in a multi- or bicultural

contexts is experienced as alienation while *constructive marginality* exemplifies the situation in which being in-between different cultural frames of reference is experienced as an empowering position.

Recent research on identities has criticised the notion that all individuals have a static and essentialist identity. Instead, people may assume various identities throughout their life-course depending on the social setting. Identities are described as fragmented and developed across intersecting and possibly opposing practices and positions. Also, identities are constructed in relation to specific historical and institutional settings and discourses, often related to making a difference from 'the Other' and excluding those identified as outsiders. Local, transnational and global influences shape debates on identities. It has been suggested that one should rather examine on-going processes of *identification*: how people in different situations represent their identities based on the assumed expectations of other people, and how identities are displayed and constructed through social interaction. (Dervin and Keihäs 2013: 117; Hall 1996: 1-5) As, for example, Holland and Lave (2001, 2009) have argued, the development of identities and acts of identification are described as life-long processes shaped by the macro level social and political developments and discourses as well as conflicting local practices. Concerning the Finnish-Russian transnational space, Tiaynen (2013) showed how historical and political development, national policies and experiences of trans-local and transnational moves affected the identification and subjectivities of both migrants and non-migrants in this space. From the perspective of this research, it is interesting to explore how the informants described and constructed their national identities in the research interviews, and how such processes of identification reflected also macro level developments and national discourses.

Identity construction involves individual agency but it is also constrained by the ways in which the individual is defined by others. Social divisions, such as those related to gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation, constrain and shape individuals' identity development. Individuals engage in a lifelong process of identity building through their changing group engagements and personal learning trajectories in relation to different social communities and networks. (Jackson 2010; Lave and Wenger 1991; Monkman 1997; Pries 2013; Wenger 1998) They can actively construct dynamic identities through their daily practices although their identification is also shaped by the perceptions and activities of others. Skapoulli (2004) underlined the complexities of identity work in multicultural settings. By examining the experiences of an immigrant girl, Skapoulli showed how the identity

development of young immigrants was complicated by the conflicting demands of different social environments, for example, at school, home, and in the religious community. Yet they could flexibly and strategically use specific social and linguistic practices in different communities of practice, and combined elements of different cultural groups to develop hybrid cultural identities. The strategic use of language can also be a vehicle to perform certain identities, as Ullman (2004) discussed in relation to undocumented Mexican migrants in the USA. For example, these migrants were performing the roles of citizens or consumers/tourists through their use of either informal English or Spanish in order to hide their undocumented status and avoid deportation.

The boundaries of both individual and collective identities can nowadays transcend the borders of nation-states. In terms of national and regional identities, cross-border migrations as well national, regional, and transnational politics shape identity formations among both mobile and non-mobile people. Cross-border engagements of migrants affect the identity construction of the people involved in these transnational social spaces which may include locations in several countries. As discussed earlier, one dimension of citizenship is related to identity. In transnational settings, migrants negotiate their belonging in relation to at least two different societies and nation-states. Border-crossing flows of ideas and practices as well as the increasing multiculturality of societies also provide opportunities for mixing different elements and developing hybrid identities. (Bhabha 1994; Pries 2013; Vertovec 2001). Mobile people with intense transnational activities may end up as vagabonds described by Bauman (1996:28) as those who 'can never be the native, the settled one, one with roots in the soil' who experience exclusion in all societies to which they are connected through their social engagements. Tiaynen (2013) also discussed how migrants' feeling of multilocal presence can be experienced as disorientating, feeling homeless and belonging nowhere, particularly if combined with experiences of discrimination in different locations. Hannerz (1996: 89-90) suggested that the proliferation of individuals' cross-border social ties and diverse group engagements might gradually weaken national identity and involvement with national culture. Yet national identity may also be strengthened after emigration.

In addition to traditional notions of ethnic and national identities, Pries (2013) identifies other types of collective identities. Global identity relies on the universal humanism and the idea of shared humanity on a global scale. Macroregional identities are based on historical empires, religions, or macrogeographical divides. Glocal identities combine both local and global features, such as symbols and

norms. For example, the idea of universal human rights may acquire local interpretations which support the development of collective gender or religious identities at local levels. Concerning transnational families, their transnational identities may assume pluri-local forms without a clear centre-periphery distinction due to the dispersal of family members around the globe. Pries (2013:36) also noted that these different forms of identities could be perceived as complementary as people nowadays often express and experience multi-layered forms of belonging.

## 2.5    Transnational Perspectives on Learning

In educational research, studies focusing on migrants' learning have discussed in particular the learning of migrant children at school and the challenges of language learning in the host society. Transnational perspectives are still relatively new in the field of education (Guo, S. 2013b; Waters and Brooks 2012). Earlier studies have explored the transnational practices of international students and the formation of border-crossing educational spaces (Brittain 2003; Brooks and Waters 2011; Collins 2008; Singh et al. 2007; Waters and Brooks 2012), migrants' identity negotiations as well as informal and non-formal learning spaces in a transnational setting (Jackson 2010; Monkman 1997; Ullman 2004), the recognition of migrants' prior learning in transnational contexts (Andersson and Fejes 2013; Gibb and Hamdon 2013; Ng and Shan 2013), the transformative and developmental impacts of transnational migration on education (Pitkänen and Takala 2012); the impact of migrants' transnational ties on learning opportunities and trajectories in the host society (Alfred 2010; Monkman 1999) as well as transnational perspectives on lifelong learning (Guo, S. 2013a; Guo, S. 2013c). Furthermore, in relation to formal education, researchers have explored the need for transnational perspectives in pedagogy and teaching practices (Naidoo 2008; Schwieger, Gros, Barberan 2010) as well as the creation of transnational learning spaces in higher education supporting cross-cultural encounters and the integration of international students to a new academic setting (Guo and Chase 2011). Researchers, such as Mannitz (2002) and Monkman (1997; 1999) have drawn attention to how educational institutions often fail to recognise and acknowledge the transnational experiences and orientations of students with migrant background. In addition, there have been studies dealing with transnational competence (for example, Koehn and Rosenau 2010).

Monkman (1997, 1999) has explored Mexican migrants' learning experiences in a transnational setting. This study has addressed how the social, gendered network dynamics and cross-border orientation of migrants have shaped the meaning of these learning experiences. Monkman (1997; 1999) has examined both informal and non-formal learning at work, educational institutions, and through social interaction in networks at different phases of cross-border migration and settlement. The findings have suggested that those migrants with strong transnational attachment and connections to their country of origin are less keen on learning the new language unlike those who are oriented more towards integrating to the country of settlement. Some of the informants had strongly integrated into the economic sphere but in the socio-cultural domain wished to maintain their cultural and linguistic roots, and also convey these to their offspring. On the other hand, Ullman (2004) has challenged the traditional idea that learning the host country's language is always beneficial for migrants. Concerning undocumented migrants in the USA, employers may rather discourage this group from learning English by preferring non-English speaking, docile workforce which is easier to control than those fluent in the national language. Monkman (1999) has suggested that understanding transnational orientation and life-styles of migrants could support educational planning and practice to better satisfy the needs of adults with migration backgrounds. Nowadays the perspective on these adult learners is often one-sided, focusing solely on the perspective of the receiving society and the alleged deficiencies of the migrants.

Concerning emerging spaces of learning, Jackson (2010) has examined migrant women's informal learning in social spaces in postcolonial London. She has drawn attention how gendered, sexualised and ethnicised identifications shape and constrain learning opportunities of migrants, and affect their identity development. Through learning in informal and non-formal settings, these migrant women found ways to resist social constructions of difference. Participation in different social spaces allowed them to share informal learning experiences, and provided opportunities for empowerment and recognition of multiple identities (Jackson 2010). Monkman (1997) has also noted how both informal and non-formal learning environments provide opportunities and influences for migrants' renegotiation of identity in transnational arenas.

Koehn and Rosenau (2010) have introduced the concept of *transnational competence* and its applications. They have argued that this concept is more appropriate than, for example, cultural or global competence. The notion of transnational competence (TC) is not limited to cultural values or identities but

encompasses diverse cross-border phenomena which are challenging the old ideas of fixed borders and nation-specific challenges. Yet the term is less universal than the concept of global competence: people rarely act globally. Intercultural perspectives often focus on culture-specific characteristics and fail to take account of the hybrid nature of contemporary societies and the multi-dimensional identities of individuals. In addition to shifting cultural backgrounds, the TC framework aims to cover intersecting sources of diversity among people: gender, socio-economic position, place of residence and access to resources. (Koehn and Rosenau 2010:5-7)

According to Koehn and Rosenau (2010:8-15), the dimensions of transnational competence include five different domains of capacities: analytic, emotional, creative/imaginative, communicative, and functional. Analytic competence is associated with the ability to explore, identify, compare, and apply both generic and context specific knowledge. In addition, one needs to acquire understanding of complex beliefs, values, and practices in a specific cross-border environment. One also needs the ability to analyse the interconnectivity of events and processes which are linking different societies. Emotional competence includes curiosity and interest in examining the complexities of diversity, including different cultural beliefs and behaviours. In addition, one needs empathy and respect for divergent values and conceptions. Regarding creative/imaginative capacity, one needs the ability to capture and mobilise different perspectives to solve cross-border problems and to identify innovative, shared solutions. Communicative competence includes fluency in languages used in a specific transnational space, ability to engage in dialogues, and to resolve communication difficulties. Functional competence covers the ability to develop positive interpersonal relationships, to identify stakeholders, to employ diverse organisational strategies in a flexible manner, and the ability to overcome conflicts in relation to cross-border cooperation.

In relation to learning in a transnational, higher education setting, Volet (1999) has looked at international students' transfers of prior learning in Australian higher education. In this study, it was noted how the interplay between individual and contextual factors affected the transfer processes. The host institution and instructors did not appreciate all learning styles but rather preferred certain styles understanding these as 'universally good' while some were considered 'deficient' (also Tange and Jensen 2012). Thus, social expectations affect which kind of prior learning is accepted. Also those with authority and power to approve certain forms of learning can determine which kind of learning is acceptable in the new context.

Singh and Han (2010) have argued that teacher education programmes should engage in transnational knowledge exchange by recognising prior educational experiences and knowledge of international students. In addition, nation-centred teacher education could benefit from transnational connections and pools of knowledge accessible to students with migrant backgrounds. For example, students could compare their prior experiences and knowledge of different educational contexts: curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices in diverse settings. At the moment, locally obtained knowledge and experiences are often valued with respect to foreign practices. Overall, education should enable people to acquire the competencies needed in transnational occupational settings (Pitkänen and Takala 2012), and support engaging in professional diasporic networks productively (Rizvi 2007b).

Transferring conceptions and practices from one context to another is perceived as a complex phenomenon. Mariussen and Virkkala (2013: 150-151), drawing on Djelic (2008), have suggested that in the process of conveying ideas across borders one needs *translation*: when ideas are moved from one context to another they cannot emerge unchanged because a practice or institution as such cannot travel. These must be converted into words or images, and the act of translation also entails mediation and local adaptation. Therefore, transnational learning is an explorative process: adopting new ideas and practices involves a process of reconstruction in which the new idea is fitted into a new setting. Williams (2006:593) has also argued that migrants take part in the processes of translation where new knowledge can be interpreted and adapted to a new context through participation in local practices. Regarding international mobility, migrants have special roles as translators and creators of new knowledge across institutional, cultural, and national borders. The process of translation can modify and transform both translators, translated ideas, and, finally, also the institutions involved. Williams and Baláz (2008b) have noted that through knowledge transfers carried out by migrants, non-migrants, both in the countries of emigration and immigration, can access new knowledge, particularly encultured and embedded knowledge, which is generally more difficult to transfer across national borders than other forms of knowledge. They have also underlined how migrants engaged in brokering need a reflective understanding of socio-culturally embedded and locally constructed knowledge (Williams and Baláz 2008b: 77-78). In addition, Pitkänen and Takala (2012) have drawn attention to the ways in which migrants can be agents of development by supporting circulation of information and know-how in transnational spaces. Concerning the abilities needed in transnational

learning, Hannerz's ideas on cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1996: 102-104) provide useful insights. Hannerz has described cosmopolitanism as a particular state of mind and orientation to manage conflicting meanings in multicultural settings; it requires willingness to engage with 'the Other', and intellectual openness towards new cultural practices and views. In order to explore other meaning structures, one needs the ability to identify, examine and reflect on other perspectives.

## 2.6    Key Theoretical Insights for the Present Study

As explained in the section 1.3., the aim of this dissertation is to explore the learning processes of migrants in transnational settings, and the emerging transnational spaces of learning. This study explores these issues from the perspectives of socio-cultural, situated learning as well as from the viewpoints of studies concerning migrant transnationalism and transnational spaces. The characteristics of transnational learning processes, informal learning environments and the ways of sharing conceptions and practices in transnational settings are examined in this dissertation from these theoretical standpoints. These two theoretical fields have seldom been combined.

Socio-cultural learning theories have underlined how learning is essentially a social phenomenon which should be analysed taking account of its social, cultural, institutional, and historical dimensions. These studies have criticised behaviouralist and cognitive theories examining learning as an individual process related to the acquisition of knowledge from an expert particularly in formal education. The process of becoming 'an insider' in a community has been described as *a process of enculturation*: through participation in shared activities, learners adopt beliefs and practices, and eventually acquire embodied ability to behave as members of that community. (Brown et al. 1989; Brown and Duguid 1991; Korhonen 2010) Yet individuals can critically assess different conceptions and practices, and disregard some of those beliefs and behaviours prevailing in different communities.

The framework of *situated learning* has introduced a social, informal perspective to learning: learning does not take place only in formal contexts in different kinds of educational institutions but particularly in people's everyday lives through participating in different kinds of social communities, acquiring new skills and ideas, and constructing their identities through such participation. Lave and Wenger (1991:29, 35) have explained learning as situated activity through the

concept of *legitimate peripheral participation*. By this concept they refer to the processes by which individuals participate in different social communities, acquire new knowledge and skills by engaging in shared activities, and can gradually move toward full participation in these groups. Both Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) have explored learning communities through the concept of *community of practice (CoP)*. According to Wenger (1998: 73-84), the three main dimensions of CoP are 1) mutual engagement 2) a joint enterprise and 3) a shared repertoire. One of the weaknesses of the CoP model has been to disregard the role of internal conflicts within CoPs. In addition, the ways in which CoPs are related to wider historical developments as well as political and socio-cultural structures are not clearly explained. The *social practice theory* developed by Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) focuses on the differences and conflicts among participants in local practices as well as the impact of macro level developments and wider, historical struggles shaping local, contentious practice.

Researchers have drawn attention to how conceptions and practices can be conveyed from one community to another and how individuals can create new connections across social groups through multi-membership of diverse communities. *Boundary encounters* refers to events that create connections between communities while *brokering* denotes liaisons provided by individuals between different communities and social groups (Wenger 1998). *Boundary objects* (Star and Griesemer 1989; Wenger 1998) belonging to several social groups can serve as bridges connecting these actors. In this research, these concepts have been applied to examine how ideas and practices have been shared across national borders although originally these concepts have not been connected particularly to transnational issues. Yet Williams and Baláz (2008b) have applied the concept of brokering to examine knowledge transfers carried out by migrants.

Since the 1990s, researchers have explored how migrants engage in *transnational social fields, spaces, or circuits* embedded in at least two societies across national borders (for example, Basch et al. 1994; Faist 2000; Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004; Rouse 1991). Transnational studies related to international migration have examined cross-border relations and emerging social formations which are connecting migrants and non-migrants particularly in the countries of emigration and immigration. These studies have criticised earlier migration research focusing exclusively on one nation-state, often the host country, when exploring processes which are not limited to one country only. Migrants' transnational practices have been investigated mainly from socio-cultural, political and economic perspectives. Transnational spaces can be examined on *micro, meso, and macro levels*

(Faist 2000: 30-35; Pitkänen 2012; Pitkänen et al. 2012). The macro level consists of the political, socio-cultural, economic and educational structures of nation-states as well as the world system. The meso level analysis focuses on the role of organisations, associations, and social communities within these spaces. On micro level, one can examine the experiences, identifications, and expectations of individuals in relation to their cross-border engagements and activities.

Research on *social, cultural, and political remittances* has explored particularly from the perspective of cultural diffusion and transmission how migrants can transfer ideas, behaviours, identities and mindsets particularly from the countries of settlement to non-migrants residing in the migrants' countries of origin (for example, Flores 2005; Gakunzi 2006, Jiménez 2008; Levitt 2001a, Moran-Taylor 2008). There has been less research on how migrants can convey ideas and practices to the 'receiving' countries. Furthermore, earlier research has not usually examined from learning perspectives the ways in which ideas have been shared across borders between individuals and social groups. This dissertation explores these processes by applying concepts from the situated learning theory: how particularly migrants can share conceptions and practices with others in a transnational setting.

While there is a large body of research on migrants' transnational networks and practices, there are only a few studies examining cross-border flows of ideas and practices as well as migrants' learning experiences in a transnational setting. Transnational perspectives are still relatively new in the field of Education (Guo, S. 2013b; Waters and Brooks 2012). There have been studies examining, for example, migrants' identity negotiations as well as learning in a transnational setting (Jackson 2010; Monkman 1997, 1999; Ullman 2004), processes related to cross-border transfers of ideas (Mariussen and Virkkala 2013; Williams and Baláz 2008b) and those introducing transnational perspectives on lifelong learning (Guo, S. 2013a). Yet as Monkmann (1997; 1999) has underlined, exploring the transnational orientation of migrants could be useful for educators to better understand the perspectives of adults with migrant backgrounds. In addition, exploration of transnational spaces from learning perspectives can reveal the complex processes of learning taking place in a cross-border setting.

# 3 Data, Methodology and Ethical Perspectives

In this chapter, I discuss methodological and ethical issues related to my doctoral research. As Silverman (2001: 4) explains, methodologies, in general, refer to the choices researchers make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, and types of data analysis while methods are specific research techniques, such as interviewing. In this chapter, the main features of qualitative research approach are first explained. Then I focus on research design, interviewing and the qualitative analysis of interview data, also discussing the methodological choices and the composition of the data set. In addition, the assessment of reliability and validity in qualitative research in general and in this research in particular is discussed. Finally, I explore ethical issues related to conducting this dissertation study.

## 3.1    The Qualitative Research Approach

The qualitative research approach has been applied in this study. There are various definitions of qualitative research related to different streams of qualitatively orientated research traditions. The term can be used as broad category including a wide range of approaches and methods applied in different disciplines. Although it is difficult to provide a precise, universal definition of qualitative research, it is often argued that qualitative research is an interpretative approach aiming to understand the meanings which people attach to various social phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Ruusuvuori et. al. 2010b; Snape and Spencer 2003; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009). Researchers should take into account that they, too, belong to the social world, and cannot 'detach themselves' from it; yet they aim to understand the meanings of others and their social, lived reality (Varto 1992: 26, 62). Consequently, one of the basic concerns of qualitative research is how the researchers are able to understand the other, i.e., the informant, and how the investigators reflect their position in the research process.

The key aspects of qualitative research are often stated as including the flexible nature of research design, research methods involving close interaction between researcher and research participants, the importance of understanding informants'

perspectives and experiences, relatively small samples, and data analysis reflecting the diversity of the data, and the subjectivity of both the researcher and the informants (Flick 2006; Snape and Spencer 2003). In addition, qualitative researchers underline the socially constructed nature of reality and take into account the situational constraints that affect the research (Denzin and Lincoln 2003:13).

Adopting a certain research methodology relates to wider, ontological and epistemological perspectives which are not always clearly discussed or reflected in research reports. Ontological questions deal with the nature of the world and to the opportunities of getting to know about it; for example, whether social reality exists independently of the human mind, whether there is a shared social reality, and whether social reality is governed by general laws. Epistemological issues concern the ways of knowing about the world: what is the foundation of our knowledge, and how can we learn about the social world. (Snape and Spencer 2003) Six different ontological approaches can be identified: realism, materialism (as a variant of realism), subtle realism/critical realism, idealism, subtle idealism and relativism. With respect to the ontological stance of this dissertation, the position of subtle realism is adopted: it is accepted that an external reality exists independently of individual subjective understanding but it is knowable through the human mind and socially constructed meanings (Snape and Spencer 2003:16, 19).

Concerning epistemology, I adhere to the tradition of interpretivism: it is understood that human behaviour is not governed by law-like regularities but rather mediated through meanings and human agency; the researcher aims to understand and interpret the social world (Snape and Spencer 2003:17). The ways in which the social positions of the researcher may influence the research process should be discussed and made as transparent as possible. I have, for example, reflected upon the impact of the interviewees' national and linguistic backgrounds on the interview interaction, and also my own position in relation to the informants.


## 3.2    Research Design and Data

Regarding the sampling strategies for qualitative research, the key features concern the use of prescribed selection criteria and the sample size. Samples have to be selected carefully in order to be able to understand and elucidate the nature of the

phenomena examined. The sample should also be as diverse as possible with respect to the chosen population. Diversity enables identifying a wide range of relevant characteristics or circumstances which are relevant for the issue under study. The sampling units, for example people or events, have to meet the prescribed criteria in order to be selected for the investigation. Qualitative samples are often relatively small compared to quantitative samples, therefore, it is essential that samples are as diverse and representative as possible. In deciding on the sample size, researchers have to take account of the heterogeneity of the population, the number of selection criteria, the type of data collection methods, and the resources available. In qualitative studies, it is also possible to supplement the sample by adding new units to it if needed. (Ritchie, Spencer, O'Connor 2003b)

The research data were gathered in 2009-2010 in Finland as a part of an international research project entitled Transnationalisation, Migration and Transformation: Multi-Level Analysis of Migrant Transnationalism (TRANS-NET), conducted in 2008-2011. The research project was coordinated by the University of Tampere, and the project manager was Professor Pirkko Pitkänen. The project explored the dynamics of people's transnational practices and multi-level transformation processes surrounding transnationalism in four different binational spaces (Estonia/Finland, Morocco/France, Germany/Turkey, India/United Kingdom). The countries selected covered both so-called 'sending countries' (Estonia, India, Morocco, Turkey), 'receiving countries' (Finland, France, Germany, the UK) as well as 'transit countries' (Morocco, Turkey).6 The country pairs exemplified different kinds of transnational spaces with diverse historical legacies, political environments and socio-cultural background. For example, the India-UK case represented a space with long-term transnational contacts embedded in the shared colonial past across long distances. The colonial background has also shaped the development of the Morocco-France space. The Estonia-Finland case provided an example of a more recent transnational space in which both countries are EU Member States, Estonia being also a post-communist country. In the case of the Germany-Turkey pair, evolving labour migration flows, identity politics and debates about integration have influenced transnational relations within this space. (Pitkänen 2012:6)

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[6] Yet cross-border migration flows are nowadays often complex and it is not always possible to differentiate between a 'sending' and a 'receiving' country. Rather countries may be simultaneously countries of immigration, emigration and transit.

The research procedure, the interview questions for the semi-structured interviews, and the themes for life-course interviews were planned together in the research consortium although there were minor, country-specific variations. In the first phase of the project, the research teams explored historical, political and legal factors shaping these transnational environments. At this stage the researchers compiled a state-of-the-art report based on a literature review of preceding research on the field and an analysis of key policy documents. Before gathering the empirical data, a policy informing workshops were arranged in each participating country to present and discuss the planned research procedure with policy-makers and authorities working in the field of migration, and with the representatives of migrant organisations and other relevant non-governmental organisations. Secondly, each country team carried out 80 semi-structured interviews with people involved in transnational activities (both migrants and non-migrants). In the third phase, life-course interviews were conducted to gain a more profound understanding of transnational lifestyles and transformation processes related to cross-border activities. (Pitkänen 2012:7; TRANS-NET 2011) During the project the Finnish research team informed the interested parties (for example, those participants of the policy-informing workshop and the interviewees interested in receiving updates on the project) about the progress of the study.

While the TRANS-NET project focused on exploring the nature of people's transnational practices as well as multi-level transformation processes related to migrant transnationalism, this dissertation examines specifically the learning processes of migrants and emerging learning spaces in transnational settings. Therefore, the aim and research questions of the doctoral study differ from those included in the wider research project. I carried out the major part of the analysis for the dissertation after the TRANS-NET project had ended. Naturally both supervisors of the dissertation provided valuable feedback and guidance at different stages of the research process. In addition, participating in the research consortium provided opportunities to enhance my understanding of migrant transnationalism and the characteristics of the Estonia-Finland transnational space. The co-authored theoretical article (Järvinen-Alenius, Pitkänen, Virkama 2010a) on social remittances also provided important insights for my research.

In the TRANS-NET project, each country team sampled 80 persons for the semi-structured interviews. In order to be selected, a person had to reside in the country in question, must have migrated from the pair country or be engaged in some transnational activities in that country. Only adults were chosen for the interviews. (Pitkänen 2012) The aim of the project was to gather a variety of

respondents: individuals engaging in diverse transnational activities and with different migratory backgrounds, educational qualifications and membership of different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. Yet the researchers were not aiming to achieve a certain number of specific categories in their sample. The Finnish research team interviewed people who had migrated from Estonia to Finland or who had been transmigrating between these countries for a minimum period of six months; the respondents included long-term and temporary migrants, labour migrants, posted workers, people migrating for family reasons, foreign degree students as well as so-called 'returnees', i.e. Ingrian Finns.[7]

In Finland, the informants were selected mostly through snowball sampling and also with the assistance of migrant associations and educational institutions. The migrant associations were contacted and asked to inform their members about the study (for example, via e-mailing lists). Three educational institutions were asked to forward information on the study to their Estonian degree students. Some contacts were gathered by following the media (for example, transnationally active individuals and entrepreneurs). The respondents for the thematically based life-course interviews[8] (20) were mostly chosen from among the informants who had participated in the semi-structured interviews, and two additional informants were recruited from among the Russian-speaking migrants.

In total, the data set of this dissertation consists of 98 interviews[9] which were collected jointly with the members of the Finnish team. The informants include 30 men and 50 women. Among the respondents, 67 are Estonian speaking; six Estonian and Finnish speaking; four Russian speaking, two Finnish speaking, and one Estonian-Russian speaking person. The group of informants represents different generations of both immigrants and transmigrants in this transnational space. In the TRANS-NET study, the respondents were divided into different groups according to the principal reason reported for their most recent move to Finland or the beginning of transmigration, see Table 1. The labour migrants formed the largest group: they either lived in Finland or transmigrated between

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[7] The Ingrian Finns include Finnish, Estonian and Russian speakers with Finnish/Ingrian Finnish speaking ancestors having lived mostly in Estonia, Russia or in the former Soviet Union (see Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b).

[8] I call these interviews *thematically based life-course interviews* because in Finland they focused on specific themes concerning the transnational experiences and life-stages of the informants.

[9] Two interviews carried by the Finnish team with Finns who have holiday homes in Estonia were analysed by the Estonian team together with other interviews of Finns. Therefore, these two interviews are not included in the data set of this dissertation.

Finland and Estonia. Commuting across national borders because of work-related reasons was more typical for men than women. The circular migrants had been living in several foreign countries. Most of them had obtained higher education qualifications and had been migrating for career reasons. The majority of respondents migrating due to family reasons (the second largest group, 20 persons) were women who had either migrated because of having married a Finn, or who had been moving during childhood because their parents had migrated to Finland. Fourteen informants had been migrating mainly because of studies, the others because of their status as 'returnees' (those of Ingrian Finnish origin but not, in fact, returnee migrants in the conventional sense of the term), and one because of adventure seeking (this informant can be described as a life-style migrant, see Benson and O'Reilly 2009). Yet the reasons for migration were often complex, and were related to several aspects concerning both countries and personal life experiences of informants. (Also Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers 2010b) Some of the informants had immigrated to Finland several times for different reasons each time. Therefore, classifying these informants into exact migration categories was somewhat problematic.

Table 1.    Migrant  groups[10]

| MIGRANT GROUP | FEMALE | MALE | Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| Labour | 11 | 7 | 18 |
| Labour (commuting) | 2 | 6 | 8 |
| Family | 16 | 4 | 20 |
| Students | 8 | 2 | 10 |
| Students (commuting) | 2 | 2 | 4 |
| Ingrian Finns | 9 | 4 | 13 |
| Circular | 2 | 4 | 6 |
| Life-style migrant | | 1 | 1 |
| Total | 50 | 30 | 80 |

At the time of the interviews, the respondents were aged between 19 and 64 years. They had been either living in Finland or transmigrating between the two countries for diverse periods, see Table 2. The Ingrian Finns and the informants who had migrated mainly due to family reasons had sojourned longest in Finland while many labour migrants had arrived fairly recently. Note that transmigration between Finland and Estonia had been a common practice during the first years of

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[10] The Tables 1 and 2 were created in collaboration with Elisa Keski-Hirvelä and under the supervision of Professor Pirkko Pitkänen, the leader of the Finnish team, and first presented in the country report (Järvinen-Alenius, Keski-Hirvelä, Pitkänen, Kallioniemi-Chambers 2010b).

migration history for many respondents. However, only those informants who were transmigrating during the interviews were classified as transmigrants in Table 2. In addition, some of those who had lived several years in Finland planned to eventually move back to their former home country. Therefore, migration was often a gradual and flexible process which might involve either periods of regular shuttling to and fro between the countries, several entries, or a final return migration to the country of origin.

**Table 2.    Residence in Finland or Length of Transmigration**

| RESIDENCE IN FINLAND or LENGTH OF TRANSMIGRATION* | 1-5 YEARS | 6-10 YEARS | 11-15 YEARS | 16- YEARS | TOTAL |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Labour | 11 | 3 | | 4 | 18 |
| Labour commuting* | 5 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 8 |
| Family | 1 | 7 | 2 | 10 | 20 |
| Students | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 10 |
| Students commuting* | 3 | | | 1 | 4 |
| Ingrian Finns | 2 | | 5 | 6 | 13 |
| Circular | 3 | 2 | | 1 | 6 |
| Life-style migrant* | 1 | | | | 1 |
| Total | 30 | 15 | 9 | 26 | 80 |

The respondents were relatively highly educated; 31 out of 80 respondents had already obtained university degrees in Estonia, and nine informants had earned

higher education qualifications in the host country. In particular, women with comprehensive or upper secondary school education had improved the level of their education during their residence in Finland. Female and highly-educated migrants may be over-represented and Russian-speaking migrants under-represented in the sample although there are no exact statistics available regarding the linguistic, ethnic and educational background of these migrant groups. In particular, there are no exhaustive statistics on the composition of transmigrants in the Estonia-Finland space. (also Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b) Therefore, it is difficult to assess how accurately the data set represents the characteristics of all mobile people moving between the two countries.

Table 3 presents the occupational categories of the informants according to the most recent workplaces. Eleven per cent of the informants (9/80) were unemployed at the time of the interviews. I classified the unemployed individuals according to the last job held prior to unemployment. Those who were full-time students at the time of the interviews were categorised as students. All the students had also done temporary or part-time jobs in addition to their studies. One should note that several informants had been working in different occupational positions during their work careers both in Estonia (or the former Soviet Union) and Finland. The researchers on the TRANS-NET project were not aiming to achieve a specific occupational distribution among the interviewees.

**Table 3.    Occupational categories of the informants**

| Occupational category | Number of informants |
|---|---|
| Administration <br><br> -specialists (6); office support staff (5) | 11 |
| Business <br><br> -managers (2); assistants (4) | 6 |
| Education | 6 |
| Construction and transportation | 7 |
| Entrepreneurs (self-employed) | 9 |
| Health care <br><br> -physicians (3); nurses (4) | 7 |
| Industry (factory workers) | 5 |
| IT and Media | 5 |
| Reseach & Development | 7 |
| Other (Specialists) | 6 |
| Students | 11 |
| Total | 80 |

In the TRANS-NET study, the questionnaire for the semi-structured interviews carried out in Finland and in Estonia was planned together with both Estonian and Finnish research team members. The interview questions related to the respondents' migratory backgrounds, their experiences in the host country and/or transmigration, informants' transnational contacts and activities, learning experiences, transnational competence, future prospects as well as their sense of belonging (see Annex 1). The informants were encouraged to relate their experiences freely, and the interviewers could ask additional questions or request clarification if needed to explore the themes addressed.

In the life-course interviews, informants' migratory backgrounds, transnational and local activities as well as formal, non-formal and informal learning experiences both before and after migration were discussed. In some interviews, the focus was more in formal education and in others in informal education and learning. Furthermore, the ways through which their sense of belonging, attitudes, and ties to both Finland and Estonia had evolved were also explored. Two researchers (the present author and Elisa Keski-Hirvelä), who conducted the second round of interviews planned the themes for each interview together on the basis of the earlier interview conducted with the respondent and in relation to the themes jointly agreed in the research consortium. Depending on the informants' transnational engagements, in some interviews, their transnational professional activities and connections were discussed in greater detail while in other interviews, for example, family or civic activities and learning experiences in these domains were emphasised. The interviews with two new Russian speaking informants combined questions and themes from both the semi-structured and life-course interviews.

It has been debated whether interviewers and research participants should be 'matched' according to some socio-demographic criteria, for example gender or linguistic background. While, in some cases, it could be useful, for example, for gaining access to a particular group, it could also create difficulties if both belong to the same community, for example, informants being inhibited about explaining their experiences or feeling that the issues are already known to the interviewer and need no specific explanations (Lewis 2003: 65-66). Furthermore, it is not always obvious which characteristic is the most salient one to match, for example, age, religious denomination, ethnic group, gender or education. In this study the population from which the sample was gathered was fairly heterogeneous in terms of educational background, age, profession, language, religion and domicile.

Therefore, it would have been difficult to match interviewers and interviewees on all these criteria.

The average duration of the interviews was one one hour. They were arranged in different places according to the interviewees' preferences (for example, at informants' homes, public libraries, or on the premises of associations). Due to long distances, a few interviews were carried by telephone. In these cases, the informant was always contacted before the telephone interview, and detailed information concerning the research was provided in advance; the informants were also requested to reserve at least one hour for this interview. In the semi-structured telephone interviews the respondents were often living either in Estonia or in northern parts of Finland. Some life-course interviews were also carried out by telephone. In these cases, the interviewer and the interviewee had already met face-to-face during the first interview. One life-course interview was conducted by e-mail at the request of the respondent. All other interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Four interviewers conducted the semi-structured interviews[11] either in Finnish, Estonian, or in English.[12] The interviewers were all native Finnish speakers. Most of the informants spoke Finnish fluently; ten respondents were interviewed in Estonian and one in English. In a few cases the interviewees had difficulties understanding some words. Thus it can be estimated that in few interviews the language created some obstacles to communication but in most cases interaction between the researcher and interviewee was smooth and the informants were able to express themselves without difficulty. The informants reflected their experiences in a detail, also mentioning issues which had been controversial or sensitive subjects for them.

In the TRANS-NET study, most of the interviews were transcribed by the project researchers, and all interview transcripts were checked by the interviewers, and unclear parts of the tapes were listened to again and re-written if necessary. Note that even a very detailed transcription cannot completely reproduce all the verbal and non-verbal nuances of the original interview; transcription is a product of choices (Nikander 2010: 433). Yet for the purposes for this research it was not necessary to try to include all non-verbal expressions; the focus was not specifically

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[11] I conducted 55 of all the TRANS-NET interviews, Elisa Keski-Hirvelä 32, Jaakko Hyytiä 3, and Petteri Aarnos 10 interviews in Estonian which he translated into Finnish.

[12] It would also have been possible to use an interpreter for Russian, but none of the respondents preferred that option.

on examining interaction between the actors. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim in Finnish or in English (if the original interview was in English); 10/100 interviews were translated from Estonian into Finnish, and transcribed in Finnish. Again, interviews extracts have been translated from Finnish into English for this doctoral dissertation. I made first the draft translations of the interview extracts, and these translations were checked by Virginia Mattila (a native speaker of English and an experienced translator). We also reflected how the meanings of some specific parts of the interview extracts could be translated from Finnish into English.

It has been noted that in translating interview data one may loose something of original meaning and style (Nikander 2010). For example, in this research, it was not possible to translate the local Finnish or Estonian dialects the informants were using in their speech. Consequently, some nuances might have been lost in translation but this did not essentially impair understanding the meanings of the expressions. Using translations is still indispensable if one wants to communicate research results to other people not fluent in the languages used in this research. When a researcher includes interview extracts in the final report, ethical concerns must be born in mind by ensuring the anonymity of the informants; in this dissertation, the names of persons, locations and organisations have been removed from the extracts.

## 3.3    Interviewing

It is debatable whether interviews can provide a 'mirror image' of reality, accounts of subjective experience, or only narrative versions of the social world. Miller and Glassner (2004: 126) suggest that interviews can provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds; although interviews are symbolic interactions, this does not exclude the possibility that knowledge of the social world beyond the interaction can be obtained.

In research interviews, participants usually have particular roles: the interviewer often guides the interview with her/his questions, and the interviewee provides answers on the issues raised. Furthermore, such interviews have certain goals and are institutionalised in nature. Research interviews nevertheless still follow similar patterns to ordinary discussions based on general rules regarding social interaction (Ruusuvuori and Tiittula 2005b: 22-23). Therefore, the researcher cannot remain completely neutral throughout the interview but is often required, for example, to

show interest, understanding, or sympathy with the respondents' experiences in order to create common ground. Conducting interviews in a language other than the interviewee's mother tongue creates additional challenges in the interaction: whether both understand and follow the same conventions regarding interaction. In this study, most of the informants were fluent in Finnish although it was not their mother tongue, and the interaction seemed to follow the same patterns as with native Finnish speakers. In fact, for some informants, it was difficult to state their first language; although initially it had been Estonian or Russian, they nowadays mostly used Finnish in their studies, at work and/or at home.

All interviews are interactional, implying that interviews are more like 'a two-way informational street than a one-way pipeline for transporting knowledge' (Holstein and Gubrium 2004: 143). Although there are many practical guides for conducting research interviews (for example, Keats 2000); meaning is not captured merely by positing the 'right' questions or using the right interviewing techniques; it is constructed communicatively in the course of the interviews. In addition, researchers finally interpret these interactive encounters and the embedded meanings through their analyses. One should not ask whether interview procedures 'contaminate data' but rather ask how interview can provide useful information about the phenomenon studied. (Holstein and Gubrium 2004: 141; 157) For example, some of the issues discussed in this study, such as informants' learning experiences, identities and the membership of different social groups could not be examined solely through observations. Yet due to the subtle and nuanced form of such experiences one needs to explore these from different angles, through diverse questions, and also by scrutinising informants' accounts of their activities. One way to arrive at a more profound understanding of the issue studied was to arrange another interview (the life-course interview) discussing issues and questions not addressed during the first interview (the semi-structured interview).

One should bear in mind that in this study the interviewees and interviewers often belong to different linguistic and national groups although nationality is not always easy to determine; respondents' ethno-national identities may be different from their former or current citizenship(s) or the linguistic group(s) they belong to. Even if the interviewer and interviewee shared the same national background, they could still represent different kinds of social worlds which could create difficulties in finding common ground. Age, occupation, educational background, ethnic group and gender can create either differences or commonalities between the participants of a research interview (Rastas 2005; Ruusuvuori and Tiittula 2005a; Tienari, Vaara, Meriläinen 2005). Rastas (2005: 94-95) has underlined that a

researcher should always reflect how one's position (for example, as a Finn) has affected interviews and the entire research process. In the analysis I paid attention to the roles which the participants assigned themselves or assigned to the other as Finns, Estonians, Russians, immigrants, and so on. Furthermore, one should note how nationalities are (re)constructed in social interaction, such as in research interviews (Tienari et. al. 2005).

As far as the position of the interviewer is concerned, the fact that I and also other interviewers are native Finns naturally affected our position vis-à-vis the interviewees and also their perceptions of us. Several informants positioned themselves as 'model' immigrants in the Finnish society, being 'law-abiding, hard workers and diligent tax payers' (also Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b; Jakobson et al. 2012a). Some respondents assumed the interpreter's role by explaining 'the Estonian culture and way of life' to the interviewers, often presenting this from an essentialist perspective, and assuming it to be the main agenda of the interviews (which was not the case). Some informants acted as transformers by criticising both societies and suggesting improvements to national policies. A few also challenged the interview questions or suggested additional issues to explore. One might also ask whether some informants would have felt the need to stress, for example, their 'Estonianness' or 'Russianness' if the interviewers had been native Estonian speakers or Russian speakers.

Concerning my position as a researcher, I explore the Estonia-Finland transnational space from the position of a native Finn. I have been socialised into the Finnish way of life in various informal, social groups and in formal education throughout my life. The perspectives and life-worlds of these informants differ from my experiences as a non-migrant in this space. However, I have also experienced temporary migration myself four times, the longest period being a 10 month-study-period abroad as a student on a Master's programme in the UK. Although at that time I was not aware of migrant transnationalism as a research perspective, I maintained intense cross-border connections to my relatives and friends in my country of origin during my residence abroad. Transnational mobility and international cooperation have become familiar to me through my work as a coordinator of international staff and student exchange programmes at two Finnish universities. In addition, having worked as an intern in two international organisations in Switzerland, and as a researcher on an international research project has provided opportunities for me to contemplate differences and similarities in work practices in different countries. I was involved in transnational, non-governmental activities through my voluntary work in Amnesty International

for a decade, including cooperation between national sections in Europe. Consequently, I have myself various transnational experiences which may colour but also support my analysis of the informants' accounts of their learning experiences in a transnational setting. Yet I am aware that my positions and experiences, for example, as a foreign degree student, or as an intern, may be different from the experiences of this diverse group of informants. Being a native Finn is only one of my social positions. In terms of other dimensions, such as gender, educational background, age, motherhood, occupational positions, associative engagements and political beliefs, I had more in common with some informants than with others. In addition, the informants were also able to position me (without specific explanations) as a female researcher with an academic background, which might make them feel either distance or closeness between our positions. A few interviewees also directly asked me about my own experiences concerning, for example, stays abroad, and I briefly explained my background to them.

## 3.4 Qualitative Analysis of the Interview Data

A qualitative research project usually starts by identifying the research problem or aims, formulating research questions, and thereafter by designing and implementing data collection, as explained earlier. Next, the researcher needs to gain an overview of the data familiarising herself with the data, identifying recurring themes, and then deciding on the themes or categories under which the data are to be arranged. The next step will be to go through the entire data set identifying parts of interviews related to the chosen themes, and organising the data so that extracts with similar themes are located together which enables the researcher to examine each subject separately. Clustering enables a researcher to form units of the parts which are connected or have common meanings. It is also possible to go back to the earlier stages of analysis: for example, after going carefully through data, the researcher may need to reformulate the research questions. It should be noted that the data are not self-explanatory; the process is led by the researcher's choices, ways of reading and constructions. During the final stage of interpretation the results will be tested against the data and 'outwards' (the findings of earlier studies and theoretical framework). Finally, the researcher should also engage in a theoretical dialogue, and possibly also identify practical

implications of the results and future research needs. (Krippendorff 2013; Ritchie et al. 2003b; Ruusuvuori et al. 2010b; Silverman 2001)

Elo and Kyngäs (2008) have differentiated between inductive and deductive content analysis: in inductive content analysis, the concepts are derived from the data while in deductive content analysis, the previous theoretical knowledge provides the structure for the analysis in which concepts, models, and theories can be tested and applied. Deductive content analysis may also reveal themes or categories which cannot be conceptualised on the basis of earlier research but needs to be defined by the researcher (Elo and Kyngäs 2008; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009). In relation to the application of theoretical framework, three different forms of qualitative content analysis can be identified, namely data-based content analysis, theory-guided content analysis, and theory-based content analysis (Eskola 2007; Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009). Data-based analysis relies on forming theories or concepts derived from the inductive analysis of data, and theory-based analysis is based directly on a particular theory, for example, testing a theoretical model. In theory-guided analysis, theoretical concepts provide insights for the interpretation of the data collected. It is difficult to position theory-guided analysis based on the inductive –deductive divide because in this approach the analysis often begins with data-based analysis, and theoretical perspectives are added at later stages of the analysis. (Tuomi and Sarajärvi 2009). In this research, data-based analysis was applied in the preliminary phase when the data were first organised, and the theory-guided approach was applied particularly in the later stages of the analysis. The aim has not been to test particular theoretical models but rather to enhance the analysis with the assistance of theoretical concepts.

On the other hand, Krippendorff (2013) introduces text-driven content analysis, problem-driven content analysis, and method-driven content analysis. In text-driven content analysis, researchers make interpretations of texts without defining research questions prior to the analysis process while in problem-driven content analyses epistemic questions and problems to be solved lead the process in which the analyst starts by formulating research questions. As Krippendorff (2013: 357) underlines, texts never speak for themselves; instead, researchers make interpretations on the basis of their conceptual perspectives, of the texts which may have multiple meanings. My research combines the processes of both text-driven and problem-driven analysis as defined by Krippendorff (2013). The research process started with familiarisation and careful reading of the interviews, and the research questions were reformulated in the light of the insights gained from these stages. The preliminary organisation and analysis of the data followed

the model of data-based analysis. However, theoretical conceptions also supported the analysis. In fact, it was a constant dialogue between the data and theoretical framework: data analysis with the assistance of certain theoretical concepts imparted a new understanding of the phenomena and also provided critical insights on some prior theorising.

**Table 4.    The Stages of Analysis**

1. **Familiarisation with the data: preliminary readings and identifying significant themes; re-examining the theoretical foundations of study**

2. **Reformulation of research questions**

3. **Preliminary, data-based analysis: organisation of the data into main categories and sub-categories**

4. **Exploration of theoretical perspectives to be applied in the analysis**

5. **Re-organisation of data into three transnational spaces to be examined on macro, meso and micro levels**

6. **Theory-guided analysis of the structure of transnational spaces based on earlier research findings, theorisation and the data gathered**

7. **Theory-guided analysis of meso and micro levels of the spaces by drawing insights on several theoretical concepts; structuring and contextualising the findings with the assistance of theoretical concepts (the concepts were chosen after a detailed examination of the existing research on the topic and the preliminary data analysis)**

8. **Comparison of results with the data, theoretical framework and with earlier research findings**

9. **Theoretical dialogue on the implications of the results**

Table 4 summarises the stages of analysis. In the following paragraphs, I explain the various phases of this research in greater detail. First, the interviews were read

carefully several times in order to attain an overview of the data set. This process was conducted first from the perspectives and themes of the TRANS-NET research project during which the data were gathered and in which I worked as a full-time researcher. In addition, I went through the full data set again after the project had ended when I was able to concentrate in this doctoral study. During the familiarisation process, it was possible to further contemplate the questions and themes of this dissertation. Although the management of a large qualitative data set was challenging and time consuming, this assisted me in becoming acquainted with the informants' perspectives.

It has been underlined that qualitative research is often flexible; although at the beginning of a research project the research themes and questions are carefully planned, the final research questions may be modified during the research process (Lewis 2003; Silverman 2001; Snape and Spencer 2003; Ruusuvuori et al. 2010b). In this research, too, the research themes evolved during the process: the research questions were reformulated after a preliminary analysis of the data and re-examination of the theoretical foundations of the study. My initial interest was in social remittances as defined by Levitt (1998; 2001a) and Gakunzi (2006) as conceptions, behaviours and mindsets flowing from host- to sending-country communities. However, already in the early stages of data collection (in the TRANS-NET research project), it emerged that one should examine the cross-border flows of ideas and practices as at least as a two-way process from host country to migrants' country of origin and also vice versa. In addition, after having conducted more interviews, familiarising myself with the data, doing initial analyses (for the TRANS-NET study) and also exploring the theme theoretically in a co-authored publication (Järvinen-Alenius, Pitkänen, Virkama 2010a), it became evident that one should rather examine these processes from learning perspectives: how ideas are adopted through participation in social groups and communities, and how these are shared between different kinds of communities. After conducting the analysis for the TRANS-NET study in collaboration with other members of Estonian and Finnish research teams, having carefully gone through all the data yet again, and having explored the existing research in the field, it was necessary to reformulate the research questions for this doctoral thesis. Examining the data from the perspective of migrants' learning processes and emerging learning environments in transnational settings appeared to be the most fruitful approach in light of the data and in relation to the research gaps identified.

I selected the interview extracts which were relevant for the purposes of this doctoral study from both semi-structured and life-course interviews. The excerpts

from the interviews chosen for this study related to the learning experiences of the informants, their activities and engagements in various social groups, communities, organisations and transnational networks, their ways of ethno-national identification and membership of a society, and accounts about sharing ideas, skills or practices with others. As far as this dissertation is concerned, the informants' learning experiences and environments were explored throughout the interviews. Not only those replies related specifically to learning but also accounts concerning their national/ethnic identities as well as experiences and activities in different social groups, communities and networks were useful for the analysis. The life-course interviews dealt more thoroughly than the other interviews with some aspects, for example, the informants' experiences and activities at the workplace, families, non-governmental organisations and in diverse transnational networks.

First, I organised the data according to 1) what the informants reported having learnt in transnational settings, 2) where and how they reported having learnt these things 3) with whom and how they had shared ideas, practices or skills across national borders, and 4) how they described their ethno-national identities and membership of a society/societies. Both social activities and learning processes were discussed in relation to several interview questions. Consequently, I had to go through the entire interview data carefully in order to identify and select the relevant parts for this research. It was also vital to explore the entire data set several times, and at the later stages of the research, I again had to re-read several interviews when a more focused picture was needed.

The units of analysis were usually excerpts of interviews related to a specific theme or themes. Following data-based analysis, the excerpts were first organised into main categories, and then divided into sub-categories. For example, concerning the informants' accounts of sharing conceptions and practices with others in transnational spaces, the parts of interviews related to this theme were first divided into three main categories: those related to work, family and society. These categories were divided into sub-categories differentiating different types of conceptions or practices which had been shared in a transnational setting. Concerning the examples of trajectories of individual informants in relation to the spaces examined, the unit of analysis was either an entire interview or a set of two interviews (if the informant had been interviewed twice). In these cases, I summarised the life trajectories and experiences of these informants concerning a specific transnational domain.

After having organised the data according to the informants' accounts of their learning experiences concerning both transnational settings in general and different

social groups, communities, organisations and networks in particular, it appeared that these accounts specifically concerned three domains: family, work and the societies/states.[13] Therefore, I decided to focus on these three categories from a spatial perspective, taking into account that informants' experiences and reflections were not related to one country only but instead concerned their life-trajectories in at least two societies: the data was arranged into three spaces: family space, occupational space and civic space.

Next I explored the research applying spatial perspectives both in educational research and studies on migrant transnationalism to find a framework and concepts which could assist my data analysis. Naturally I had already examined the research related to my research themes, but this time I checked which theoretical models or concepts might be useful for analysing transnational learning processes and domains. The framework developed by Faist (2000) and refined by Pitkänen et al. (2012) for transnational spaces seemed to offer the most fruitful approach to examine the structure of these spaces. I consider that the other spatial perspectives I explored (for example, those formulated by Massey 2005, Lefebvre 1974/1991 or Levitt and Glick Schiller 2004) did not offer a clear, concise structure to examine transnational spaces. In the TRANS-NET study, four binational, transnational spaces were examined on macro, meso and micro levels concerning their political, socio-cultural, economic and educational dimensions; different domains and analytical levels were cross-tabulated and key actors within these were identified (see Pitkänen et al. 2012). However, I approached transnational spaces from learning perspectives, while Faist (2000) and Pitkänen et al. (2012) had examined the formation of transnational ties, activities and networks and the development of transnational social spaces. Therefore, I was not using exactly the same model but rather assessing how it could be applied to analyse transnational learning processes and environments. In addition, throughout the study, the focus was more on meso and micro levels while I was also considering how macro level structures shaped the other levels.

I first analysed the structure of these spaces, reflecting theoretically in light of the existing research findings (on this analytical approach see Krippendorff 2013: 172, 175-177) and of the preliminary data analysis, the macro level factors as well as different meso level actors and micro level perspectives in these spaces. The macro

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[13] There were also some accounts which related to the informants' learning experiences in formal education. However, the main results in the educational domain had already been presented in Pitkänen et al. 2012. Therefore, these accounts are not analysed in this study.

level concerned global, regional and national structures and societal development. The meso level concerned social groups, communities, networks and organisations, while the micro level concerned individuals and their transnational ties, activities and learning processes. I then analysed the informants' interview accounts of their transnational engagements, forms of participation in informal learning environments, their learning processes, the modes of sharing ideas and practices across borders, likewise the construction of ethno-national identity in each space separately.

The research on socio-cultural, situated learning provided specific viewpoints elucidating learning in these interview accounts. Drawing on the socio-cultural learning theories, I approached learning as a fundamentally social phenomenon to be analysed taking into account its social, cultural and historical dimensions (see, for example, Wertsch et al. 1995). Furthermore, the situated learning approach provided perspectives from which to observe how learning took place in people's everyday lives through engaging in different kinds of social groups and communities, and through such participation obtaining new skills, behaviours, ideas and mindsets as well as constructing identities. In the analysis, several concepts from socio-cultural, situated learning research as well as from studies on migrant transnationalism assisted me in conceptualising the phenomena theoretically. The concepts such as *brokering (Wenger 1998), boundary encounters (Wenger 1998), community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), social remittances (for example, Gakunzi 2006; Levitt 1998; 2001a), transnational competence (Koehn and Rosenau 2010)* as well as forms of *trajectories (Wenger 1998)* provided analytical tools to examine the informants' accounts of their learning processes, informal learning environments and the modes of sharing ideas and practices in transnational spaces. These concepts theoretically enhanced my analysis of the interviews and my understanding of informal learning in transnational settings. The concepts also made it possible to structure the accounts into different categories. For example, concerning the accounts on sharing occupational ideas and practices across national borders, I could categorise these on the basis of the different forms of boundary encounters and the concept of brokering as defined by Wenger (1998). Different concepts enabled me also to contextualise the findings in relation to the existing research on migrants' transnational practices and the processes related to international migration. The final stage of analysis involved comparing and assessing the results in relation to the entire data set, the theoretical perspectives applied, and to the findings of earlier research, and also exploring the meaning of the results with respect to earlier theorisation.

In qualitative content analysis, it is not enough to simply introduce the categories or themes arising from the data. Instead, one needs to explore the factors affecting the differences between certain categories or particular phenomena. For example, concerning the ethno-national identity formation of the informants, in the preliminary phase of the analysis I noticed that some of the informants reported having maintained a strong national identity while others expressed transnational identification, i.e. they felt both Finnish and Estonian/Russian, or 'in-between' in terms of these categories. Therefore, I wanted to ascertain whether informants belonging to the same category with respect to their ethno-national identification had some characteristics in common. My initial assumption was that particularly long-term settlers might express transnational identification, and that the migrant group and the family ties might also have some impact on the ways of identification. I looked through the data on all 80 informants, their ways of identification, the length of their sojourn in Finland/ transmigration, their marital status and the nationality of their spouse/partner, their descriptions of their national roots and the main reasons for migrating. I considered some of the ways which, for example, Silverman (2010) suggests for enhancing critical enquiry and the validity of findings: testing assumptions using constant comparative method, comprehensive data treatment and analysing 'deviant cases'. I found out that those informants who had married a Finn, and/or were long-term residents in Finland expressed transnational identification more often than those who were more recent migrants and/or had married an Estonian. The migrant category, according to their principal reason for migrating, did not appear to influence informants' ethno-national identity formation. Also, looking at 'the deviant cases', for example, short-term residents expressing transnational identification, I noticed, for example, that the intention of return to the country of origin was also connected to the conception of identity: those who were planning eventually to return to Estonia reported a strong national identity while some recently arrived migrants planning to remain permanently in Finland had already adopted a transnational identity.

## 3.5    Reliability and Validity

In discussing the validity of certain research and the appropriateness of its methodological choices, it should be born in mind that methodologies or methods cannot be true or false as such, only more or less useful (Silverman 2001: 4). The

concepts of reliability and validity were originally developed in the natural sciences, and although measures used in physics or mathematics are hardly applicable to the social sciences or education, it is nevertheless feasible to discuss how 'sustainable' and 'well grounded' a particular study has been (Lewis and Ritchie 2003: 270). Silverman (2010: 290) argues that reliability relates to the degree of consistency with which the same instances are assigned to the same category by either one or more observers, i.e. systematic and coherent data analysis. However, it is debatable whether in qualitative research all analysis can be carried out in the exactly same manner when researchers are differently socially positioned, and also have diverse theoretical perspectives.

Concerning the appropriate design and conduct of the study, one should also ponder 1) was the sample without bias, i.e. representative of the target population 2) was the fieldwork carried out appropriately, for example, allowing informants to express their experiences sufficiently 3) was the analysis carried out comprehensively 4) is the interpretation of the researcher supported by the evidence 5) were all perspectives adequately identified and covered (Lewis and Ritchie 2003: 272). The informants were encouraged to express themselves freely in both sets of interviews, and the interviewers requested additional clarification if needed. Yet one should bear in mind that in research interviews the participants have particular roles as interviewers and interviewees, and research interviews differ from ordinary conversations in many aspects, as has been discussed in section 3.3. The transcribed interviews were carefully analysed in relation to the research questions. The interviews were read through several times during the analysis. The meanings informants' provided to their learning experiences were analysed throughout the interviews.

With respect to the validity of the findings and interview data, one should examine whether the analysis reflects the informants' meanings. In addition, one can assess if there is sufficient evidence for the explanatory accounts offered, and whether the findings have been presented in such a way as to enable readers of the study to see the analytic constructions created. (Lewis and Ritchie 2003: 274) In this report, several interview excerpts are presented in order to provide opportunities to assess the reliability of my analysis. As explained earlier, I had also applied some of the ways proposed by Silverman (2010:278-286) for enhancing the validity of findings, such as comprehensive data treatment and analysis of deviant cases. Furthermore, Silvermann (2010) notes that quantitative measures, when appropriate, could be used to survey the whole data corpus. Although counting techniques may sometimes be useful, the figures do not usually reveal anything

about the meanings the researcher aims to access. Also, qualitative samples are mostly small, and cannot be generalized in the same way as quantitative studies.

Several different ways can be used to validate or verify qualitative data. Internal validation can include constant checking and comparison between different cases and individuals as well as deviant case analysis in which 'outliers' are used as a resource assisting theory development (for example, individual differences may explain why the more general behavior is not always found, or these may show that the interpretation should be more focused). External validation can, for example, include the use of triangulation of methods, triangulation of sources, triangulation through multiple analyses or theory triangulation. (Lewis and Ritchie 2003: 275-276) In this study, both internal validation and theory triangulation, i.e. looking at the data from different theoretical perspectives, was used to enhance the understanding of the phenomena studied.

As explained earlier, female and highly-educated migrants may be over-represented and Russian-speaking migrants under-represented in the sample, although there are no exhaustive statistics available on the characteristics of people migrating between Finland and Estonia to estimate the share of these groups. In addition, the aim of the TRANS-NET study, in which the data were collected, was to find informants with diverse transnational activities. From this perspective, informants with higher education background were particularly interesting, as they were engaged in different kinds of cross-border activities. The data set (98 interviews) is also considerably larger than on average in qualitative studies, and is heterogeneous in terms of informants' transnational engagements, migratory histories, age, occupations as well as religious denominations. Consequently, it can be concluded that it provided a variety of perspectives through which to examine informants' learning processes and informal learning environments in a transnational setting.

## 3.6    Ethical Perspectives

Throughout the entire research process, an investigator needs to be aware of the general ethical guidelines on research conduct; these include informed consent (the informant decides freely to participate in the research after having received sufficient information about the study), anonymity, the right to privacy and protection from physical and emotional harm (for example, Fontana and Frey 2003: 88-89; Lewis 2003: 66-68). The participants in the TRANS-NET research

were informed orally and in written form about the general purpose of the research and about the research design before the interviews were conducted. They also received the contact details of all members of the Finnish team if they wished to contact the researchers after the interviews (for example, to withdraw from the study). A few people initially approached by the researchers decided not to take part in the research, and their decisions were naturally respected. Therefore, all interviewees participated voluntarily in the interviews. In this doctoral dissertation, participants' anonymity is protected by the manner of providing information on the individual respondents and by the manner of reproducing the interview extracts. The anonymity of informants has been ensured in this dissertation by removing all the names of places, organisations and persons which could reveal the identity of informants. The names of informants used in this dissertation are fictional. Furthermore, I give only general information on the informants' backgrounds (gender, age group, language, and in some cases also their professional field). As snowball sampling was applied in parts, research participants might possibly identify others if specific details were given.

Sometimes interviewees may discuss sensitive issues which are not necessarily the subject of the research and in these cases confidentiality of information should be particularly ensured. In this investigation the themes themselves were not particularly sensitive but some of the informants raised issues, for example, of their health, and these have naturally been removed from the interview extracts published. While research should not generally cause participants any harm, it is not always possible to estimate beforehand which interview questions, for example, may cause certain individuals distress. However, Kuula and Tiitinen (2010: 448) note that interviewees often use strategies to protect themselves if they are reluctant to deal with certain matters: for example, they may discuss the issue at a general level or indicate their unwillingness to reply to a particular question.

The ways in which the researcher discusses and names the informants also have ethical and social implications: in this way, the researcher assigns informants to certain categories. For me, it was a difficult issue to decide how I could name or conceptualise the whole group of informants. In terms of their ethnic, national and cultural identification, they were not a homogenous group (this is discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.4). Concerning their formal citizenship, there were both Estonians, Finns and people with dual citizenship (both Finnish-Estonian and Swedish-Estonian); one informant had no formal citizenship. I cannot therefore refer to this group as Estonians, for example, because they hold different formal citizenships and expressed national identification in various ways. Also, to refer to

them as immigrants would be problematic because some of the informants did not consider themselves to be immigrants, and transmigrants spend either approximately equal amounts of time in both countries, or the majority of their time in their country of origin. Furthermore, if a person migrated to another country more than 20 years ago, is it appropriate to call this person as an immigrant (forever)? Due to these ethical and conceptually based dilemmas, I usually use the word 'informants' when referring to the whole group including all interviewees.

# 4 Migrants' Social Engagement and Learning Processes in Three Transnational Spaces of Learning

In this chapter I present the results of this study. The chapter is divided into three main sub-chapters which deal with the informants' learning processes and trajectories in transnational family space, transnational occupational space and in transnational civic space. These spaces were identified as the main, broad transnational learning environments in which the informants engaged. These spaces can also be called transnational spaces of learning. The structure of the transnational space in question is presented at the beginning of each section. Then I examine the informants' engagements in these spaces, meso level informal learning environments, and the ways in which the informants adopted and shared conceptions and practices in transnational environments. The ways in which the informants constructed ethno-national identities and reflected their membership of societies in transnational settings are also discussed. At the end of each section the key findings are summarised.

## 4.1   Transnational Family Space

In this section, I look at the informants' learning processes and meso level learning environments in transnational family space. I define transnational family space as a socially constructed space based on people's border-crossing kinship ties. First I examine the structure of transnational family space on three levels (macro, meso, and micro). Then I explain how the informants maintained their cross-border family relations and what kinds of shared activities were developed in this space. In particular, I examine transnational family space on meso and micro levels from the perspectives of the situated learning approach and transnational studies: how social learning takes place within families and kinship networks in a transnational setting. In addition, I look at what kinds of conceptions, practices and traditions the informants have reflected, learnt, modified and shared in this space. Identity

construction is explored in relation to the enculturation and social learning processes taking place in transnational family lives.

## 4.1.1 The Structure of Transnational Family Space

In this section, I examine the structure of transnational family space by drawing on the concept of *transnational social space* developed by Faist (2000:196-209) and the framework applied by Pitkänen et al. (2012) differentiating macro, meso and micro levels of border-crossing spaces (see also Faist 2000: 30-35). These studies have examined the border-crossing movements of people, the transnational engagements of migrants and non-migrants and also emerging transnational social formations. In contrast to the focus of this dissertation, these studies have not explored the learning aspects regarding these spaces. To illustrate different levels of transnational family space, I give examples from the data and concerning previous research related to transnational families and their cross-border practices as well as studies concerning the Estonia-Finland transnational space. Most of the informants had intensive contacts with family members in this binational space, and the respondents also reflected socio-cultural practices of families in relation to these two countries. Yet some informants also had transnational kinship ties to other countries. Russian-speaking informants in particular had frequent transnational contacts to relatives living in the Russian-speaking regions (in the area of former Soviet Union), and they also underlined the importance of Russian cultural heritage in their family lives and the informal education of children. Therefore, I take account of all transnational family and kinship relations of the informants, not only those related to their country of origin/emigration.

On macro level, the social practices in transnational family space are regulated and shaped by international, regional and national agreements, regional and national policies as well as administrative regulations concerning emigration/immigration, social security, integration and education (cf. Faist 2000; Pitkänen et al. 2012). In the case of Estonia-Finland transnational space, opportunities for migration were generally restricted until both countries had joined the EU. Yet the cross-border mobility started to increase gradually already in the 1980s due to changes in administrative orders allowing tourism between Finland and Estonia and the opening of a direct sea ferry line between the two capitals (Tallinna and Helsinki). Although the mobility was subject to heavy restrictions, particularly on the Soviet side, both Finns and Estonians were able to

develop transnational, informal contacts through cross-border mobility which supported, for example, the formation of binational partnerships and marriages (Jakobson et al. 2012a).

Policies and administrative regulations concerning emigration/immigration, visas and residence permits restricted informants' opportunities to maintain transnational kinship ties and arrange cross-border visits particularly before the mid-1990s. The ways in which national and local authorities applied these regulations also affected the informants' arrangements for their cross-border lives. For example, an informant described how the authorities applied the same administrative rules differently to the same group of migrants in the early 1990s. While some Estonian students studying at the same Finnish institution had to visit Estonia every second or third week to renew their permits, the others could visit their families only few times a year because of the type of visas they had been issued with. In addition, the complexity of the regulations made the informants to endeavour to circumvent the rules. For example, another informant explained how she reported to the Finnish authorities that she was co-habiting with a Finnish man (a companion of her Finnish friend) in Finland in order to get the residence permit needed for a work permit although, in reality, she was a single-parent living in both countries.

Social policies and social security arrangements affect particularly those migrants who have family members living in another country, and caring responsibilities outside the current country of residence. Caregiving activities are, in general, framed by national social policy mechanisms and regulations. These policies often have a national character although increasing cross-border mobility of people and new forms of transnational families and caring have been challenging the traditional model which has focused on care within a nation-state. In recent years, migrants' practices and cross-border care arrangements have transformed social policy regulations particularly in many European countries. (Zechner 2010b) In Europe, child benefits and child home care allowances are examples of social benefits which can be granted by one state to individuals who live in another state (KELA 2014).

Integration and education policies shape how migrant families perceive the opportunities to maintain their linguistic and other socio-cultural traditions in the new host society. The host country may encourage the assimilation of immigrants by demanding that migrants adopt the language(s) of the host population, and discouraging the maintenance of the migrants' native language and cultural traditions. On the other hand, the integration approach adopted by some countries

underlines both the maintenance of migrants' own languages and cultural roots but also the need to integrate to the host society through learning the local language(s) and societal practices. In Finland, multicultural and integration policies have supported, particularly in the 1990s and early 2000s, maintaining 'one's own culture' within the private sphere while in the public sphere neutral, non-cultural cooperation and the equality of all members of civic society have been underlined (Huttunen, Löytty, Rastas 2005). Yet the recent integration policy documents in Finland suggest the view that integration should be a -two-way process in which both the majority population and immigrant communities should integrate into a culturally diverse society and accommodate their cultural values and traditions (also Vasta 2007). The goal of Finnish integration policies is nowadays to support the maintenance of immigrants' own languages and cultures although relatively modest financial resources have been allocated to advance this purpose, and more emphasis is, in practice, laid on adapting immigrants to Finnish society. (Saukkonen 2013) In educational policies, the aim has been to support migrant children to become equal members of Finnish society. Migrant pupils can obtain instruction in their own religion and in their mother tongue although provision of native language education is not compulsory but rather recommended. In practice, not all migrant children have the opportunity to learn their native language at their local school (Latomaa, Pöyhönen, Suni, Tarnanen 2013).

On macro level, the socio-cultural and politico-historical development of societies also shapes the everyday lives of individuals and families engaging in transnational spaces. As Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) have in general discussed, macro level developments and wider, historical struggles affect local, contentious practice, and also vice versa. For example, concerning the Finnish-Russian cross-border space, Tiaynen (2013) showed how the contemporary grandmothering practices and conceptions of her informants, including both migrant grandmothers and those with grandchildren living in another country, were profoundly shaped by Soviet family traditions, gender conceptions and the historical development of both countries; these traditions also affected the values and beliefs the grandmothers aimed to pass on to their grandchildren.

On meso level, transnational family space consists of transnational kinship networks and families. Earlier research has explored how members of transnational families live separated from each other but still create a sense of unity and a feeling of collective welfare across national borders (Bryceson and Vuorela 2002b:3). Different kinds of transnational families were identified in the data. Most of the informants understood 'family' to refer to the nuclear type of family, i.e. children

and parents. From this perspective, the transnational families in this study were mostly those families in which one family member was transmigrating between the countries, and the other family members resided in the country of origin. Transmigrants were often males working in Finland and regularly visiting their families living in Estonia. Some of the informants included their parents, grandparents, or aunts/uncles, living in the country of origin in their understanding of family. In these cases, the cross-border visits were less frequent but intense interaction was maintained through phone calls and online contacts. In addition to contacts within transnational families, all the respondents also had connections to other relatives within cross-border kinship networks. The forms of informants' transnational family/kinship interaction as well as shared engagements and practices are explained in the next sections.

Transnational family/kinship networks provide opportunities for exchanging and sharing ideas across national borders. Research on social remittances (for example, Levitt 2001a; Moran-Taylor 2008; Taylor et al. 2006; Tiemoko 2003) has explored how migrants convey ideas on gender roles and family order to their non-migrant relatives living in the country of origin, either during visits or through cross-border communication. In addition, the flows of ideas and behaviours can take place also to the other direction: from the countries of origin to the host societies particularly in binational and bi/multi-cultural families (Suksomboon 2008; Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010a).

Those migrant families or binational families whose members reside mainly in one country can also be considered transnational, meso level learning environments. Although the members of these families do not physically cross national borders, they may encounter socio-cultural and linguistic borders and different historical traditions in the daily interaction within families and related to their transnational contacts. Regarding the informants of this study, exchange of conceptions and practices as well as the development of hybrid cultural artefacts and practices was experienced in both bilingual (Finnish-Estonian or Russian-Finnish) and monolingual families (Estonian/Russian), see section 4.1.4. Furthermore, Section 4.1.3 discusses how enculturation processes were taking place within these families in Finnish society which represented partly different kinds of cultural practices and linguistic traditions than those cherished in these families. The family members negotiated and consolidated different socio-cultural practices and conceptions in their everyday lives.

On micro level, one can examine individuals' transnational ties, practices, identity construction, and learning experiences within transnational family space.

From the perspective of individual informants, their cross-border family/ kinship ties and engagement in different countries formed their own, personal transnational family space. In a transnational setting, family members have to negotiate between different cultural traditions, norms and values. For example, Harrami and Mouna (2010) have examined how the members of transnational families are involved in the processes of shuttling between at least two different cultural universes: reconciling diverse rules, codes and representations and making modifications to their own behaviours and mindsets. The following sections will discuss how transnational family space provided different kinds of social learning experiences for the informants. For example, socio-cultural practices were discussed, reflected on and shared between family members and relatives. The families and wider kinship networks were also important sites for the on-going construction of ethno-national, cultural and linguistic identities.

To conclude, transnational family space is a socially constructed, border-crossing space in which social practices are shaped by macro level factors, i.e. regional and national policies and administrative regulations as well as socio-cultural and politico-historical development of societies. On meso level, transnational family space consists of transnational kinship networks and families. On micro level, individuals engaging in this space have evolving transnational family/kinship ties and different experiences in relation to their cross-border engagements. Such spaces afford opportunities for comparing, reflecting and sharing diverse conceptions and practices across national and socio-cultural borders as well as constructing identities in relation to participation in meso level, transnational learning environments.

## 4.1.2    Engagement in Transnational Family Space

Maintaining ties to relatives in the former home country or in other countries was the most common form of transnational activity among the informants. The importance of an intimate relationship and frequent contacts to the mother living in the country of origin was particularly highlighted. In transnational family space, proximity can be maintained through frequent interaction and shared practices; despite physical distance, family members may feel belonging to the same horizon of action (Schmidt 2011: 86). In this study, many respondents underlined how technical developments, particularly Internet, had greatly facilitated maintaining cross-border contacts. Online interaction provided opportunities to share

meaningful events and emotions with significant others. "Talking family" (Tiaynen 2013), i.e. engaging in frequent conversations through telecommunication technology fostered unity and shared engagement among family members. For example, a commuting male migrant pointed out how daily Skype contact allowed him to participate in the everyday life of the family, even resolving minor disputes between children, or discussing the children's upbringing with his wife. Yet elderly informants still relied on traditional phone calls to maintain contacts with their family members, and preferred face-to-face contacts over virtual communication.

Those transmigrants in particular, whose non-adult children and spouses were living in the country of origin, visited their family members frequently, usually at weekends or once/twice a month. Commuting migrants often underlined the practical difficulties related to commuting, and also discussed how transnational living[14] affected family life and parental responsibilities. The socio-economic positions of migrants influenced their opportunities to arrange cross-border lives: academics and entrepreneurs could make transnational visits more flexibly than those engaged in construction or factory work. Family members living in the country of origin made return visits to the host country. The cross-border visits enabled individuals to observe different societal practices and keep up intimate relationships with significant others. The frequency of visits had varied over the life-course, depending on the place of residence, work arrangements, evolving family ties and financial situation of the informants. Zechner (2008) also observed that economic factors sometimes limited the opportunities of Estonians to arrange cross-border visits although the distance is short, particularly between the two capitals. Those living in the metropolitan area around Helsinki in Finland could easily move between the two countries and combine work, family and leisure visits, as one of the informants, Grete, explained:

> Now when my mother also lives in Tallinn, I sometimes do daytrips so that I leave in the morning and come back in the evening, sometimes running errands, very flexibly and I meet my friends BETWEEN HELSINKI AND TALLINN THIS IS NOT DIFFICULT AT ALL[15] yes, it varies, sometimes I stay longer, we stay a longer time together. But when I'm alone I usually do

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[14] By transnational living I refer here to those informants who were constantly commuting between Estonia and Finland and in practice resided in these two countries.

[15] This font marks the speech of the interviewer.

daytrips, I don't want to stay overnight, I meet friends and run errands, go to the hairdresser's and such. And nowadays I sometimes live partly in this way that although I spend a lot of time here [in Helsinki] my life is also partly divided, I sometimes see a doctor in Tallinn or go to the hairdresser's there, some issues remain to be done in Tallinn

Grete, female, 30-39 years

Concerning transnational kinship networks, most of the respondents maintained intense connections with their relatives living mostly in Estonia but also in other countries (for example, Sweden, Russia, Ukraine and Germany). Those few informants, who had only distant relatives living outside their current country of residence, Finland, had occasional contacts with them. Most of the informants had weekly contacts with their family members living outside the current country of residence. Studies on Estonian migrants by Hyvönen (2007; 2009), Zechner (2008), Liebkind et al. (2004), and Jakobson et al. (2012a) have also reported that Estonian migrants located in Finland keep regular contacts to their relatives living in the country of origin. Different forms of communication enabled the informants to keep in touch with the everyday lives of their significant others, share ideas, and also to keep up their mother tongue skills. Internet communication was the most popular form of communication among the younger respondents: they chatted, made Skype calls, and changed messages through social media. Photos and videos were also posted in the Internet and shared with relatives around the globe. The development of information technology provided new arenas in which kinship connections could be recreated and maintained across national borders.

Estonians of my age [in Sweden] they have obtained a Swedish education and in that sense they have become Swedish, but we do keep in touch, they are interested in their own roots and it's rather positive that the contacts to the historical homeland are looked for /…/ also, in the Internet there is a family tree /../ to which you can round up all your relatives and everybody can add their own relatives throughout the world. In the net, there are places where relatives can add information on themselves and their relatives, and form a large web of relatives, it's quite interesting what opportunities exist, quite often you're too busy to keep in touch, to write e-mails or phone but you can sometimes look for happenings in others' family lives, if they add photos or if they have had some important family events

Helve, female, 30-39 years

Many informants considered that either Estonians or Russians, depending on which linguistic group they felt they belonged to, in general, cherished more kinship ties than Finns. The reasons for maintaining close cross-border contacts were related to feelings of responsibility, willingness to maintain one's own 'roots' and also passing these to one's descendants.

> In my opinion, it's quite inconceivable in Finland how people don't keep in touch with their relatives, we do keep very close contacts /../ always when we are visiting [Estonia] we have almost a schedule that well, now to the next coffee table [visit where coffee is served] and then to the next /../ I think it's so inconceivable how people don't keep in contact even with the close relatives when the life is so short. Even if you don't have to celebrate the birthday, having the party is not the point but the fact that we are together and exchange news

> Maarja, female, 30-39 years

Conveying financial or material remittances was one of the transnational practices which created bonds between migrants and their relatives. Some of the respondents had sent money to their relatives living in Estonia. Financial remittances had been sent particularly to informants' parents, children or grandparents but also to aunts, sisters, brothers and their offspring who needed financial assistance. Material remittances, such as clothing and household equipment, had been taken to relatives and friends particularly in the 1980s and the early 1990s when there was a shortage of various consumer goods in Estonia. (also Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b) It should be noted that in contrast to many other transnational spaces, in the Finnish-Estonian case, there have been financial and material remittances moving in both directions particularly during the last two decades although migration research has examined mainly the flows of these remittances from the more affluent countries to less well-off countries (Jakobson et. al. 2012a:183).

> HAVE YOU SOMETIMES SENT MONEY OR GOODS, FOR EXAMPLE TO ESTONIA? In the beginning, yes, but not any more nowadays. Luckily, they can all support themselves now but I do have to say that during early days I was always surprised how some people could go to an almost empty car [in the ferry between Finland and Estonia] when ours was full up to the roof/../ I worked then /../ in a shop and when the time of the Republic began [Estonia's regained independence] so my customers always asked whether they could bring something, and I said clothes and other goods and children's clothes, and then I took these [to Estonia] and I knew almost all

the sizes of friends, acquaintances and relatives, and the shoe sizes and all and I packed everything ready, lots of different things like refrigerators, and also washing machines we got somewhere, and cookers.

Annikki, female, 50-59 years

Transnational care was also a shared practice fostering emotional bonds between participants in transnational family space. During their visits informants had provided different forms of practical assistance particularly for their elderly relatives. In addition, they also aimed to give their relatives emotional support through cross-border communication and face-to-face encounters. However, relatives living in the country of origin were still taking care of most of the practical caring responsibilities as regards relatives in need of care. (also Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b) A few respondents reported how national policy regulations had restricted transnational caring, as Helda, a female migrant with Ingrian Finnish roots, explained:

When our granny was still alive, her last stages were like that she didn't want to move to Finland but she was so ill that she could not cope alone and the aunt who lived nearby [in Estonia] couldn't anymore take care of her all the time. So I was ready to take granny to stay with us but it wasn't possible any more because Finland would not [have accepted it] and then as she was ill, she would not have got a residence permit [for Finland]. She would not have received any social benefits just for dying. Of course, this was painful, one really felt that these two countries were separate states

Helda, female, 30-39 years

In a transnational setting, caring responsibilities are often reciprocal, multi-directional and carried out across generations (Gouldbourne et al. 2010: 178). In this study, the offspring of migrants had spent summer holidays with their grandparents in Estonia. Grandparents had also provided assistance in caring for grandchildren during their extended visits in Finland. While the informants of this study appreciated the assistance given by their parents, it has been shown by Hyvönen (2009:71) that tensions may also arise in relation to caring due to different conceptions of child rearing in the two countries (for example, whether corporal punishment is allowed or not). The respondents of this study did not

directly report such conflicts. On the other hand, it was pointed out that grandparents offered valuable support in fostering the children's learning of the mother tongue, and also passing on Estonian or Russian traditions to their descendants. For example, an informant explained how the cross-border care arrangements had fostered her son's proficiency in the mother tongue:

> When I was a single -parent for a while and I had to work in summer and I didn't want to take out study loan then I took my elder son, there were just two of us then, I took him to my parents to Estonia. I left on Friday, came back on Sunday, and back to work again on Monday, those were really hard visits for me /../ he was in Estonia probably the next three, four summers /../ in fact, he started to speak Estonian to me when he had been in Estonia for the summer holidays

> Ene, female, 30-39 years

Transnational family ties evolve and change over time, depending on the individual's life-cycle stage and personal circumstances. For example, one of the informants, Liis, described her changing cross-border attachments over the years. After having divorced her first husband, Liis moved to Finland in the mid- 2000's with her teenage son while her daughter spent a year abroad in Central Europe as an exchange student. After one year in Finland, the son returned to Estonia to live with his grandmother and continued his studies there due to difficulties in adjusting to the local Finnish school. Liis commuted between Estonia and Finland every month and usually stayed one week in Estonia with her family members. She remarried in Finland, and gave birth to her third child in Estonia although she was now mostly living in Finland. Her two eldest children were already adults at the time of the interviews; the daughter was working in Estonia, and the son was studying in Asia. Liis explained that she still supported both adult children financially, and regularly visited her relatives in Estonia. She mentioned also maintaining regular contacts with her former mother-in-law (from the first marriage) and with the sister of her former husband in Estonia. In Finland she had been caring at home for her new lately deceased mother-in-law. She explained that 'swinging to and fro between countries' was particularly important for her identity and well-being as 'she was always gathering up pieces of her identity' during her visits to Estonia. She would probably 'continue balancing between the two countries' for the rest of her life because of having relatives on both sides of the Gulf of Finland.

## 4.1.3    Enculturation and Identity Construction in Families in a Cross-Border Context

The families of informants negotiated, developed, and shared different socio-cultural and linguistic traditions. Informants with offspring considered that it was a parental obligation to teach one's native language, show traditional practices, and tell their children about their 'roots'. Passing on one's own cultural heritage to children was particularly connected to informal education in the native language (also Hyvönen 2007). The language was perceived as a medium through which traditions could be passed and on which ethno-national identity could be built. Proficiency in the mother tongue was also regarded as important for preserving transnational connections with relatives (also Guo, Y. 2013). Teaching the language and mores was a way to give the next generation the chance to choose whether to maintain their Estonian or Russian heritage, give it up, or to choose their own paths to construct multicultural, transnational or hybrid identities. The informal education in the native language was also associated with sharing narratives and experiences on wider societal and historical developments of the country of origin.

> YOU SAID THAT YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONVEY OR TELL YOUR CHILDREN ABOUT YOUR OWN ROOTS. SO, HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO TEACH OR TELL ABOUT THESE? Well, first of all, we have this language, we speak only Estonian at home and nothing else, no Finnish at home, not at all. And then we have these Estonian books all around the house and also movies and DVDs for the children. It comes a lot through language that if we say something or there is a phrase and then a child asks what it means and through that one can tell them about things. And, in fact, my granny [from Estonia] is now here [in Finland] to help to look after the children and, of course, she tells these stories how it was during the war and such.
>
> Marina, female, 30-39 years

Families were aiming to pass on Estonian or Russian language to their offspring in mostly Finnish-speaking environments which created challenges. The children sometimes rejected these attempts, highlighting the importance of Finnish in the surrounding host society, and opting for Finnish when communicating with parents. Among the respondents there were both monolingual families where both parents were Estonian or Russian speaking and also bilingual families, both Finnish-Estonian and Finnish-Russian. In bilingual families, both Finnish and Estonian/Russian language was spoken more widely among family members than in monolingual families. The educational background of the parents influenced the

linguistic choices: more educated parents preferred to use only the mother tongue with their offspring (also Liebkind et al. 2004: 172-173) while those with lower educational qualifications stressed the importance of adjusting to Finnish society and learning the local language.

Maintaining the minority language in bilingual families was often more challenging than in monolingual families. In the former, the informants acknowledged the value of teaching one's language to the children but considered it difficult in Finnish society. The Estonian women married to Finnish men were particularly keen to teach the mother tongue to their children but had experienced difficulties in following this principle in practice (for example, the husband preferred to use only Finnish between family members). In this study, those respondents who had given up speaking Estonian/Russian to their children felt the need to justify this to the interviewer: teaching one's native language was considered their duty, albeit a challenging one, as this informant explained:

> When X [the youngest child] was two years then I went back to work and it was so hard when I was working in three shifts and I was so tired and the children were small and they were in Finnish day-care, and they spoke Finnish there, and I felt that speaking Estonian would be such an effort, and then I gave it up because at the time I felt it was easier to speak Finnish although now I could think of it and I might want to speak Estonian to them, but the children our now reluctant, they say that as we live now in Finland, speak Finnish to us, please, they are not so fond of it now

> Laine, female, 30-39 years

The findings of Hyvönen (2007) and Teiss (2005) suggest that experiences of discrimination, the invisibility of the Estonian minority in Finland, the low status of the Estonian language, and the linguistic similarity of the Estonian and Finnish languages are reasons for difficulties in maintaining the mother tongue skills in Estonian families living in Finland. Furthermore, in bilingual families, the everyday conversation patterns and strategies of language use chosen by the parents and other adults outside the family have an impact on the development of the bilingualism of the children (Teiss 2005; Lanza 2007). Lanza and Svendsen (2007) argue that both migrant parents' social networks and language ideologies may influence their children's language acquisition. It is not only parental or family strategies towards language learning but also other social settings (both formal and

informal), including daycare, school and peer groups, which affect the language learning and language retention of migrant children.

In addition to language, the informants wanted to pass on various values, attitudes, and everyday traditions to their children, and, more generally, Estonian/Russian identity and bonds to Estonia. Estonian or Russian practices were connected particularly to festivities which were often celebrated with relatives (either in Finland or in Estonia). Some of the informants felt that many Estonian traditions had been 'lost' during the Soviet era, and consequently it was problematic to revive these. For the respondents living in binational families, passing on Estonian mores to the children was considered difficult, particularly if they had given up speaking Estonian: how to define and teach 'the Estonian way of life' outside one's country of origin. In these cases, the respondents had sometimes experienced discrimination because of their ethnic background, and were reluctant to force their children to adopt Estonian identity. Furthermore, it should be noted that informants had different understanding of notions like 'culture' and 'traditions'. In some cases, they associated culture with 'high' cultural manifestations outside their everyday lives.

> ..to pass on that culture to the children or also those old traditions because there are such issues, somehow such old traditions in Estonia which do not exist in Finland, and I hope that our children could feel and know those. YES, WHAT KINDS OF? COULD YOU GIVE SOME EXAMPLES? Probably food culture, and then these customs which relate to nature /../ when my kids fall ill before I give them any medicine, I try those granny's ointments and I've prepared natural medicines and such from nature myself. And then our kids are used to it that we don't eat [laughs] buy much from the chemist's

> Airi, female, 40-49 years

> HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO PASS ON THIS ESTONIAN CULTURE TO YOUR CHILDREN? Well if you think of these practical things, it's through literature, music and other things and, in a way, I'd like to show Estonian perseverance and also pass on skills how to cope with difficulties to the next generation. If you look at Estonia's history through the centuries, almost millenia, it has been always surviving under foreign rule, and still the Estonian nation has survived. I'd like to highlight those abilities, adaptability and being dynamic which I think are typical for Estonians

> Indrek, male, 30-39 years

Families were important sites for identity construction, not only for the offspring but also for the informants themselves. Concerning ethno-national identity formation, most of the informants who had married a native Finn or had a Finnish partner reported transnational orientation: feeling they were both Finnish and Estonian/Russian. They often described how this shift had happened gradually, and they had also noticed that they had adopted Finnish behaviours, beliefs, and mindset exemplifying the Finnish side of their identity. On the other hand, those informants who had an Estonian-speaking partner had often maintained a strong Estonian identity. Therefore, in binational partnerships the informants took part in on-going, cultural exchanges which contributed to the transformation of their ethno-national identification while the Estonian couples supported the maintenance of their shared national identity.

For the Russian-speaking respondents, Estonia was important as a country where they had spent their childhood and to which they had transnational kinship ties. Otherwise the ties to the Russian-speaking world were often more meaningful than connections to Estonian society or the Estonian state as such. All Russian speakers had either already obtained or applied for Finnish citizenship, thereby also reflecting their willingness to become a part of Finnish society. The importance of Russian roots was highlighted in their willingness to teach Russian language and show 'the Russian way of life' to their children, for example, through visits to Russia or by participating in the activities of the Russian-speaking clubs in Finland. Consequently, their transnational family lives were shaped by their cross-border contacts to Estonia, and to Russian-speaking communities in other countries, and everyday experiences in mostly Finnish-speaking environments. Transnational visits provided opportunities for significant learning experiences, as this Russian-speaking informant, Svetlana, recounted:

> We visited Russia, too, all those culture places to see what Russia is and why you should learn Russian. I remember here in Finland, when [our child] was still small, and asked why he should learn Russian when no-one else speaks it except you and dad /../ and then we went to St. Petersburg and there were people all over [laughs] and the four-year-old son said that they all speak Russian. And I said, yes, there are so many, even more in other places /../ and I remember that, even on the next day, he told them at day care that we went to a place where all the people spoke Russian and it was a big shock for him that these people who speak Russian in St. Petersburg don't know Finnish

> Svetlana, female, 40-49 years

Living transnational lives also created challenges for some informants. For example, Grete explained how her dream would be to live in three localities almost simultaneously: in Berlin, Tallin and Helsinki. She had been transmigrating between these localities and living in all these three cities due to her studies, work and family. However, she discussed how such a mobile life-style might be difficult to combine with the educational and developmental needs of her child in the future.

> When I spoke about my need that one needs this culture and that culture, that it's more interesting and diverse in that way, and this is all true but when one has a small child or children, then it's this point of view that how about her/his development and identity, that how much time one should spend in one culture and how much one can live a transnational family life, this all raises questions /../ and when she/he[16] goes to school then everything should happen mostly in one place that's maybe the main question

> Grete, female, 30-39 years

The following experiences of Natalja exemplify the meaning of transnational family ties as well as other social engagements for the on-going identity negotiations in a cross-border setting. Natalja spent her childhood in a Russian-speaking area of Estonia which at that time was a part of the former Soviet Union. At the age of fifteen, she moved to Tallinn, where she was mostly engaging in Estonian-speaking peer and student groups. Natalja met her future husband, a Finnish man, in Estonia, and during the three first years of their relationship she was constantly transmigrating between the two countries. The couple first communicated in Estonian because both were fluent in that language. After having first studied in an Estonian university, she continued her higher education studies in Finland, got married, and gave birth to two children. At the interview, she described how cultural differences and the impact of different societal backgrounds were often discussed with her husband. For example, her husband felt that she had adopted Soviet behaviours and mindset. Concerning the enculturation of her children, she paid particular attention to speaking Russian to them, although the children were often reluctant to use the Russian language. She participated with her children in the activities of Russian clubs in Finland to familiarise them with

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[16] In the Finnish language, *hän* refers to both she and he.

Russian cultural practices through the shared activities, such as arranging festivities. She also wanted to impart religious beliefs to her children, and participated regularly in the activities of the local Lutheran parish in Finland. In Estonia, she had been a member of a different religious denomination but she felt that it was important that family members should belong to the same religious denomination.

Natalja explained that through Skype she was in almost daily contact with her mother who lived in Estonia. Her mother was the most significant person for her. In addition, she was liaising with other relatives and friends in Estonia, discussing both everyday matters and societal happenings with them. In addition to discussions, they also exchanged photos both by mail and online. Keeping constantly in touch with relatives, particularly parents, was described as an essential part of the Russian tradition. Natalja felt that visits to Estonia were also important for her children: they could understand the significance of their native language by playing with other Russian-speaking children. Regarding her ethno-national identification, Natalja described as feeling herself partly Estonian, Finnish and Russian connecting this to her changing involvement in different linguistic groups during her life-course. In addition, she felt that her current media usage, following particularly the Finnish media but also the Russian media, also reflected her evolving sense of belonging: the Finnish side was gaining ascendancy over the Estonian part.

### 4.1.4 Sharing Conceptions across Borders and Developing Hybrid Cultural Practices

Families often combined and mixed traditions creating cultural hybridity in their everyday lives. Observing new traditions in the country of settlement allowed respondents to borrow some elements of these, and add these to the *shared repertoire* (Wenger 1998) of their family or kinship community. For many respondents, traditions were associated with the main festivities, such as the Christmas and Midsummer festivals, and particularly with the food consumed during these celebrations. Each family had decided to form their own combination of traditional festive dishes uniting Estonian, Finnish and Russian styles. Yet the informants did not want to maintain any traditions from the Soviet era.

> Oh yes we always celebrate Estonian Independence Day. At Christmas, we have both Finnish ham and Estonian *verivorst*, blood sausage, like both traditions, I wouldn't like to those give up. There aren't so many Estonian

traditions, those traditions of our own were actively forgotten during the [Soviet] occupation, and now they are revived when I'm already in Finland, all those Soviet traditions [gives a laugh] no thanks, none of them

Romi, male, 50-59 years


how about those festivities, for example, Christmas or midsummer festivals[17], how did you celebrate those? We usually spent Christmas at the home of my step-father's parents [in Finland] and there were actually no other children then, and we always sang to them because there is a tradition in Estonia that one has to perform a song or recite a poem for each gift, and they didn't have this [tradition] so we perhaps brought it. Otherwise, those Christmas meals were rather different here compared to [those which we had in Estonia] there, so my mother sometimes brought blood sausage from Estonia which [people also eat] here in X [a town in Finland] but which people didn't eat on our island [in Finland]

Rando, male, 20-29 years


There was considerable variety in traditions among informants. For one, arranging trips to pick berries or wild mushrooms in the forest was an important tradition, for another, going on a holiday to a remote place with family members, or taking Holy Communion at church. Although there were some overlapping practices, there was also a wide variation and individual features. Relatives were connected to each other through *boundary objects* (Star and Griesemer 1989; Wenger 1998), for example, stories, festivity traditions or recipes shared by other families, also creating feelings of unity between different family units. The informants' families and their relative's families 'back home' could be described as forming, to some extent, *constellations of interconnected practices* (Wenger 1998: 127) which shared some 'artefacts' but had also created and 'finetuned' their own practices.

The ways Finns celebrated or did not celebrate some festivals aroused interest or confusion among the interviewees, and comparing these was also a way to assess differences in Finnish versus Estonian/Russian conduct and local communities. One can explore the meaning of different traditions for the respondents through the concept of *reification* (Wenger 1998: 58-61): how the practices and objects linked

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[17] Midsummer festival is one of the most important festivals celebrated in both countries.

to these reify something of that community's function and how observations of these can reveal socio-cultural differences within societies. This informant discussed and compared the meaning of certain festivals and events in both countries:

> I'm amazed and surprised that people do not appreciate birthdays here in Finland. On the other hand, I understand it why not but, personally, I always try to remember those, and send a postcard or something like that /.../ the first day of school is a significant event in Estonia, and we explain to all that it is the day of wisdom, when we come to school to learn something new again. But here [in Finland] people stress how one is dressed, and where you bought your new school clothes, which I think is not so important, I was surprised, I thought one could highlight more the knowledge and skills which people came for [at school]
>
> Elle, female, 60-69 years

Some of the informants had introduced Finnish traditions to their relatives in Estonia, such as an Easter tradition, in Finnish called *virpominen,* when children dress up as witches and visit their neighbours and relatives carrying decorated branches and also reciting rhymes in relation to that event. This cultural practice is, in fact, nowadays a mixture of both the Orthodox and pagan traditions in Finland. In these cases, migrants had assumed the role of *transnational brokers* (cf. Wenger 1998) introducing elements of the tradition followed in the local community in the host society to another located in the country of origin, across the border. When migrants convey ideas and practices adopted in the country of settlement to their relatives and friends living in the country of emigration, the products of such socio-cultural transmission have been called *social remittances* (Levitt 1998; 2001a). This concept represents the idea that in addition to traditional remittances, i.e. money and material items, migrants may also take beliefs, behaviours and rituals across the borders. New practices are not necessarily adopted as such but people in the migrants' country of origin can modify these and also combine different kinds of ideas and traditions creating new, hybrid cultural practices.

> For example, people on that side [in Estonia] have been really interested in this *virpominen* here [Easter tradition in Finland] /../ There have been those traditions of their own and cultural things there, and it's so interesting that when Estonians go there, they do these *virpomisoksat* [decorated Easter twigs] taking a piece of culture there /.../ when they have brought Easter eggs from one house to the next [in Estonia] and then Christmas ham that hasn't been eaten in Estonia but when Estonians [from Finland] go back home for

Christmas, they take a ham with them. And people there are starting to observe this [tradition], really enthusiastically they are baking ham for Christmas

Nanna, female, 40-49 years

Diverse cross-border actions, such as transferring financial and material remittances, providing care, or exchanging photos in the net enabled the informants to share experiences, emotions, ideas and behaviours with non-migrants and other migrants residing in different countries. The encounters between migrants and their relatives offered opportunities for *boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998: 112-113) – whether one-to-one or between groups - where new conceptions could be shared, adopted and finetuned to the other practice. Through conversations and meetings, participants of these encounters could exchange ideas, and practices across national borders. For example, the informants discussed differences between the Finnish, Estonian, or Russian ways of conduct with their relatives. In general, keeping up contacts –whether face-to-face or virtually - with family members and other relatives in Estonia and in other countries enabled the informants to share all kinds of issues with their significant others: everyday matters, personal and professional development, and also wider, societal issues. For the informants, visiting their former homeland enabled them to keep up with the development of Estonian society although the speed of this was often surprisingly fast for them. In addition, for their children, visits to Estonia also provided an opportunity to see the everyday reality of the country of origin. Similarly, when family members or relatives visited the informants in Finland, they could observe the different way of life in local communities.

The differences in the cultural and historical development of societies and the lived experiences of individuals shaped encounters between spouses in binational families; these differences sometimes created obstacles affecting the interaction within the family. In addition, a few informants reflected on how sharing ideas and discussing diverse issues with family members abroad could be problematic due to having lived for a long period in different social environments and having different perspectives on social issues. Migrants contemplated issues from a transnational, comparative perspective while non-migrant relatives had experienced living in only one national context. Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) have underlined how socio-economic and cultural structures as well as historical transformations affect local practices and the development of the individuals participating in these. In relation to the informants and their relatives, these broader, socio-economic and historical

developments shaped local practices and set up boundaries between individuals living on different sides of the border or having different roots.

> This contemporary life there [in Estonia] has been taking people in that direction, and we have developed in another direction. Our relatives say that we have also changed but they cannot say in what way we have changed, you feel it at a different level /…/ our understanding has widened, we can look things from a broader perspective, or look at things from a higher point, or farther off. We feel that we haven't changed but the other party has. But it is just that you are in your own life, doing your own things, and they are in theirs', and both develop in the direction of their context /../ and when we meet, there are clashes, or walls which have to be climbed over, or doors which have to be opened

> Kaarina, female, 40-49 years

> CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS AFFECT YOUR PAIR RELATIONSHIP? These do affect it to some extent. The starting point is, of course, that although we are about same age, our childhoods have been very different. My childhood in Soviet Estonia in the 70s and 80s was completely different from the childhood of my age group here. Also in the pair relationship, those different views about different practices come up sometimes, for example, at home or outside /../ this is not perhaps so obvious among friends but in the pair relationship, in everyday encounters, this always comes up to some extent

> Indrek, male, 30-39 years

To sum up, families were sites were Estonian/Russian practices, mores and values were maintained, shared and modified in contact with other groups and communities. In those bilingual families, in which the informant had married a Finn, family relations offered opportunities for creating close relations with native Finns, and for comparing the socio-cultural traditions of the two societies. The contacts and shared activities between migrants and their non-migrant relatives, whether residing in the host society, in the country of origin, or in other countries, enabled the participants of these spaces to exchange ideas and observe different practices.

### 4.1.5    Informants' Families as Communities of Practice

When examining the families of respondents from the perspective of social learning theory, one can perceive that in many respects such families match the features of *communities of practice* (CoP), including mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire (Wenger 1998). In general, the family members may have different positions in families, and they may follow different kinds of trajectories in relation to their participation in these. The concept of *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave and Wenger 1991) could in general refer to the processes by which children engage in the lives of their families, foster their knowledge and skills by participating in shared activities and gradually move toward full participation if allowed to do so. Yet, as noted by Lave and Wenger (1991), power relations within communities may restrict individuals' access to resources and full participation in the activities.

Although members of transnational families may live separated in different countries for short or long periods, *mutual engagement* can be maintained through frequent online communication and phone calls. New forms of communication allow them to share everyday matters, ideas and emotions through speaking, writing, photos, or videos despite physical distance. In addition, visits across borders are one of the means to maintain face-to-face contacts and intimacy, and provide opportunities to offer physical care. Sending or bringing money or material items may also be forms of preserving unity and common engagement within transnational families.

Communities of practice are also exemplified by a *joint enterprise* (Wenger 1998) including collective processes of negotiation concerning their practices and goals. In a transnational setting, these negotiations within informants' families were often related to the maintenance of different traditions, languages, and identities. In respondents' families, these processes involved, for example, discussions on the everyday use of languages (whether Estonian, Finnish, or Russian), how children should be brought up, and what kinds of values and practices should be maintained in the family. For many informants, the fundamental question was how to pass on an Estonian/Russian identity to the offspring, and maintain 'the Estonian/Russian way of life' while living mostly in Finland and maintaining transnational connections. The informants also discussed how they could support the integration of their children into Finnish society and into its various institutions, such as school. A certain tension is discernible between primary and secondary socialisation and differences concerning the acculturation strategies of the

respondents. Most of the parents aimed to enculturate their children into Estonian/Russian culture and civic life although they also deemed it important that their children learnt to integrate into Finnish society. They also underlined the significance of national roots and the difficulty of maintaining the bond with the Estonian state and society outside their country of origin. Some of the informants adhered to the idea that 'one's own culture' should be maintained in the private sphere but in the public sphere, including formal education, the aim should be to inculcate the norms of the host society. On the other hand, others considered that the school should also support the maintenance of minority languages and cultures.

A *shared repertoire* (Wenger 1998: 82-83) of the informants' families included own ways of organising family life, celebrating festivals, stories of their family histories, specific cultural artefacts and shared ways of informal education. Many respondents mentioned particularly how certain dishes were an essential part of festivities and also of the everyday lives of their families. In bilingual and bicultural families, different traditions were often combined to serve the needs of all family members. A shared repertoire was developed throughout the family history: new practices, tools and concepts were added to the repertoire, and some removed or forgotten. As the respondents explained, they had also adopted some Finnish ways of celebrating festivities.

Neither transnational families nor transnational kinship are necessarily harmonious or, conflict-free. For example, cross-border financial and material connections may create tensions, dependencies and long-term conflicts between family members. Gender and generational differences also merit attention. As Qureshi et al. (2012: 54-55) underline, transnational families and kinship networks are 'internally fractured by relations of gender and generation', and these may be sources of exploitation. In addition, Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) have shown how wider, historical struggles shape *local, contentious practice*, and how those involved in are partially divided through power relations and unequal access to material and symbolic resources. In this study only few respondents reported internal tensions and inequalities between relatives. Although financial and material remittances were sent to the relatives, these flows did not create direct dependencies or conflicts among the family members. It was rather differences in conceptions and practices concerning gender orders and societal issues which had created contention within the family or kinship networks. Furthermore, inequality and power differentials might be embedded within transnational family space although these issues might not be openly discussed.

The traditional Estonian way of thinking is that a woman's place is in the kitchen, and I'm astonished at these things, I don't know to what extent I would have wondered at these if I'd lived in Estonia. For example, my mother meets my brother's new girlfriend, and then she tells me that she's so nice and can do everything, so I ask, mum, what do you mean by everything, and I knew that she meant like cooking and taking care of the home but I'm astonished how one can say such things. On the other hand, I feel that my Finnish relatives here in Finland think that I should be like that but I just don't have that attitude that women should stay in the kitchen, I just don't have it. And there have been conflicts because of this.

Sirje, female, 30-39 years


Well, to be honest, if a Finnish son takes a wife from Estonia then family members, parents and neighbours [in Finland] think that because our son could not get a Finnish woman, then he brought one from Estonia because you can get one cheaper there, you can make an impression with a Toyota Corolla there which you cannot do in Finland. But, of course, you don't ever say such things aloud.

Jaanis, male, 30-39 years


The frequency and intensity of cross-border contacts varied both between different kinship groups and also within the same group at different stages of life. The ties between children, parents and grandparents were often particularly intimate, and frequent contacts were maintained even if family members resided in different countries. The contacts with more distant relatives were usually less intense than with immediate family members. Yet as indicated earlier, informants had different conceptions of 'family' and 'kinship'. Therefore, the informants formed communities of practice particularly with those to whom they had intense ties while the meetings with other relatives resembled more *boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998: 112-113), i.e. events creating connections between different communities of practice or between individuals belonging to these.


## 4.1.6　Summary

It has been argued here that transnational family space is a socially constructed space which is based on the border-crossing kinship ties of people. This space is shaped by macro level factors, i.e. regional and national policies and administrative

orders as well as the socio-cultural and politico-historical development of societies (cf. Faist 2000; Holland and Lave 2001; 2009; Pitkänen et al. 2012). On meso level, transnational family space consists of transnational kinship networks and families which include both migrants and their non-migrant relatives residing in various countries. Transnational kinship networks, locally-based family units as well transnational families consisting of individuals residing in different nations-states form transnational learning environments on meso level. On micro level, individuals engaging in transnational family space(s) have evolving transnational family ties and different experiences in relation to these cross-border engagements. Each individual has their personal, transnational family space based on their cross-border family/kinship ties and shared activities. Such space provides opportunities for adopting, reflecting and sharing diverse conceptions and practices across national and socio-cultural borders as well as constructing identities in relation to participation in these transnational learning environments.

The families negotiated different socio-cultural and linguistic traditions in their everyday lives. The native language was understood as an essential component of informants' cultural heritage. The Estonian, Russian or Finnish language was perceived as a medium through which traditions could be passed and on which ethno-national identity could be constructed. Teaching the native language to the offspring in mostly Finnish-speaking environments was a challenging endeavour which sometimes caused tensions and debates between family members. The informants moreover wanted to pass on different kinds of values, attitudes and everyday traditions, and, more generally, Estonian/Russian identity to their children. The Russian-speaking informants mentioned the importance of their ties to the Russian cultural communities more than to the Estonian state. Families were also important sites for identity construction, not only for the offspring but also for the informants themselves. Those informants who had married a native Finn had gradually adopted a transnational identity while those who had an Estonian spouse often underlined the importance of their Estonian roots for their ethno-national identities. The informants' families, including those in which family members resided in different countries, showed the features of *communities of practice* (CoP), including *mutual engagement, a joint enterprise, and a shared repertoire* (cf. Wenger 1998).

Families often combined elements of different cultural traditions creating cultural hybridity in their everyday lives. The Estonian/Russian/Finnish practices, mores and values were modified in contact with other groups and communities (particularly the Estonian, Russian and Finnish-speaking ones). Through *brokering*

and *boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998) migrants shared conceptions and practices with their non-migrant relatives. Frequent communication both online and by telephone, reciprocal visits and other shared activities, such as transnational care and sending financial and material remittances, contributed to the maintenance of shared engagement and ties across national borders, and allowed the informants to share their everyday lives, meaningful events as well ideas and practices with their significant others. Yet differences in conceptions and practices concerning gender orders and societal issues had also created contention and tensions between family members. The processes of socio-cultural transmission between migrants and their non-migrant family members have previously been examined through the concept of *social remittances* (Levitt 1998; 2001a). However, the informants mostly engaged in shared discussions and activities with their relatives across borders which did not necessarily include direct transfers of ideas but rather more long-term processes of social learning within transnational family space.

On micro level, transnational family spaces were *lived, experienced and reflexive spaces* (cf. Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009; Singh et al. 2007) for the informants. In everyday family lives, they reflected different socio-cultural traditions, and had also adopted new conceptions and practices related, for example, to gender orders and societal issues. Intense contacts to family members and relatives, both online and face-to-face, across national borders enabled them to maintain emotional ties and to create shared practices fostering these bonds among migrants and non-migrants participating in these spaces. Through transnational kinship contacts and related interaction they could also follow wider, societal developments in diverse countries, allowing participants in these spaces to enlarge their perspectives and understanding of social phenomena.

## 4.2    Transnational Occupational Space

In this section I explore the informants' learning processes and informal learning environments in the transnational occupational domain. It is argued here that transnational occupational space is a socially constructed space based on the border-crossing occupational ties and activities of people who work or have worked in different nation-states. First, I examine the macro, meso and micro levels of transnational occupational space. I focus particularly on the micro level, i.e. work-related, cross-border learning experiences and the relations of individual migrants, and also on the meso level, particularly the work communities and

professional networks in which the informants had adopted, reflected and shared new conceptions and practices. Finally, I look at the informants' accounts of the construction of identity in relation to work communities in transnational settings. The learning processes of informants in transnational occupational space are explored from the perspectives of the situated learning approach and transnational studies.

### 4.2.1 The Structure of Transnational Occupational Space

As explained in Section 2.3.5, so far only few studies have been presented exploring specifically transnational occupational or professional spaces although there are several studies dealing with international labour migration and international transfer of occupational knowledge. Initially, Bartley et al. (2012:2) suggested that the border-crossing embeddedness of migrants in their profession creates a transnational professional space which is formed by cross-border ties of individuals, networks and organisations. I prefer to use the notion of transnational occupational space instead of transnational professional space to include all occupations, not only those related to higher education or specialised professional training.

While research on transnational spaces (in general) has focused on exploring cross-border activities and ties between migrants and their non-migrant contacts, particularly in migrants' countries of origin, I explore migrants' occupational experiences and ties in the host countries and in other countries to which they are connected through their occupational activities. Consequently, from the perspective of migrants, their entire occupational engagement in both countries of emigration and immigration – or the countries of transmigration – as well as other cross-border, occupational ties shape their learning trajectories in the transnational occupational space. I look at these spaces as lived, experienced and reflexive spaces (cf. Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009; Singh et al. 2007) by exploring how the informants navigated in and through different occupational traditions and sometimes conflicting national and local occupational practices.

To explore the structure of transnational occupational space, I use the typology of migration spaces divided into macro, meso and micro levels (Faist 2000: 30-35; Pitkänen 2012; Pitkänen et al. 2012). To illustrate these levels in more concrete ways, I give examples from the existing research, from the data, and particularly concerning the Estonia-Finland transnational space. The majority of the

informants had been migrating particularly in-between these two states. However, it should be noted that, in this study, several highly educated professionals also had cross-border professional contacts and engaged in professional activities outside this binational transnational space.

On macro level, transnational occupational space is shaped by global and regional economic structures, national socio-economic environments and also international, regional and national policies and agreements regarding immigration/emigration, employment, and education (cf. Faist 2000; Pitkänen 2012; Pitkänen et al. 2012). While immigration policies, legislation, agreements and administrative regulations control the physical mobility of people within cross-border occupational space, educational and employment policies, legislation and the decisions of governing bodies curtail the mobility of intellectual capital and the occupational know-how of individuals. Low income levels and unemployment have often been mentioned as the push factors for emigration. Among the informants, the labour migrants with vocational education stressed the economic factors affecting their decisions to migrate (to find employment or enjoy higher earnings in the new host country) while those with higher education underlined the importance of professional development and career advancement. Yet it should be noted that in the Estonia-Finland space, economic considerations have also motivated Finns to migrate to Estonia. The economic recession that hit Finland very hard in the early 1990s, due to the overheating of the internal market and the collapse of the Soviet Union, encouraged Finns to move to Estonia where the market was still growing. The economic growth in Estonia in the 2000's attracted Finnish professionals and entrepreneurs to migrate there. (Jakobson et al. 2012a 167-168) In addition to economic considerations, the socio-cultural and political structures of the countries involved were significant in migration processes; informants reported how the closeness of the cultural roots of the two nations, the linguistic proximity and societal factors such as political stability and the highly developed social security system of Finland had influenced their decisions to migrate (also Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b).

In the case of the Estonia-Finland transnational space, opportunities for migration were generally restricted until the early 1990s. Although commuting across borders before both countries had become EU Member States was complicated due to legal obligations concerning visas as well as residence and work permits, some of the informants reported having already transmigrated due to work in the 1990s and in the early 2000s. The administrative obstacles to transmigration were finally removed when the transitional period restricting the

movement of individual labour migrants ended (2007) and when Estonia had joined the Schengen area (2009)[18]. Changes in migration regulations in the Estonia-Finland space have increased the number of labour migrants since the mid-2000s; in particular, there have been more seasonal, temporary and circular migrants who take advantage of the free movement of labour and services between the EU countries (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b; Jakobson et al. 2012a; Lith 2007). The Finnish regulations concerning the transitional period (2004-2006) which restricted the movement of individual labour migrants but supported free movement of services, increased the number of Estonian posted workers in Finland and promoted the operations of labour-force leasing companies as well as Estonian companies contracting blue-collar workers to Finland, particularly in the construction sector (Forsander 2008; Jakobson et al. 2012a; Kyntäjä 2008). Therefore, administrative regulations were conducive to mobility through firms rather than individual mobility during that period.

When adult migrants having already completed vocational or professional education in one country, move to another country, their qualifications are assessed according to the host country's qualification systems. Migrants' prior learning and professional skills are often devalued or not recognised in the countries of settlement (Andersson and Fejes 2013; Man 2004; Wagner and Childs 2006). Concerning, the Estonia-Finland transnational space, the EU membership of both countries and the harmonisation of the European Educational Area under the terms of the Bologna Process in particular (see, for example, Naumanen, Leppänen and Rinne 2008) have shaped the educational and occupational dimensions of this space. Directive 2005/36/EC on the recognition of professional qualifications stipulates the principles according to which a Member State of the EU must recognise education or professional qualifications acquired by an EU/EEA citizen in another Member State. (OPH 2013a, OPH 2013b). Prior to the EU membership of both Finland and Estonia, the informants of this study experienced more difficulties with the recognition of their educational qualifications than after these countries had joined the EU. This related specifically to regulated professions, such as police, teaching, medicine and nursing. In this research, difficulties with the recognition of prior occupational qualifications were related to the local practices of meso level actors, particularly educational institutions. Some of the informants had decided to continue their vocational training or higher education in Finland.

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[18] In 2001 Finland started to apply the Schengen agreement allowing the free movement of people within the Schengen area in Europe (FM 2013).

However, in some cases the informants completed a full, equivalent degree without no accreditation at all of their prior studies.

On the meso level of transnational occupational space, the main actors are the educational and work organisations, professional associations, likewise cross-border occupational networks. Educational institutions and the training they provide shape both national and local understanding of the occupations and occupational qualifications needed in different positions. When migrants wish to update their occupational qualifications through education, educational institutions have the power to recognize or disregard their prior occupational learning as explained above. Professional associations may likewise influence on how migrants' existing qualifications are recognised in the new host country. Yet there are significant national differences in the systems of recognition of foreign qualifications: in some countries, local authorities and national regulatory bodies play a key role in this while in others employers or professional associations have more impact on the processes (Andersson and Fejes 2013; Guo and Shan 2013; Schuster, Vicenza Desiderio, Urso 2013). From the perspective of situated learning, meso level actors, particularly work communities are important sites in which work-based learning takes place. Occupational practices are negotiated and developed through daily engagement in shared work activities. The workplaces can provide or curtail opportunities for adopting, developing, or sharing new practices (also Fuller and Unwin 2004). For migrants, work communities provide opportunities for comparing different work traditions, and also for developing their identities through engagement in their work environments. For the informants, their transnational, occupational networks were also arenas for sharing work-related information as will be discussed in the next sections.

This study confirms the importance of social networks in supporting both emigration/immigration and job-acquisition. The effect of social capital on employment often depends on the nature of social ties: bridging and linking social capital are more valuable assets for migrants in finding employment than are bonding ties. As existing research has shown, contacts to host country nationals are particularly valuable for migrants' employment prospects. (Ahmad 2005; Forsander 2002; Kanas, van Tubergen, van der Lippe 2011) Therefore, Granovetter's (1973) argument on the strength of weak ties in job-seeking also applies to migrants: more distant acquaintances can provide more useful contacts than close friends and relatives. The informants had taken advantage of their transnational networks to find employment in Finland prior to immigration; such networks did not only consist of individuals belonging to the same ethnic, linguistic, or national group but

also included host country citizens who had been assisting their acquaintances on the other side of the border. Faist (2000) has also underlined the importance of transnational networks between migrants and non-migrants (particularly in the country of origin) as 'transmission belts' facilitating all forms of cross-border mobility.

The employers' perceptions of ethnicity can also support or restrict access to new work environments. Estonians have, in general, been well employed in the Finnish labour market although those Estonians who arrived in the late 1980s and early 1990s experienced more difficulties in finding employment than those arriving in the 2000s. If compared to other migrant groups, the proximity of the two national languages and the positive attitudes of employers may enhance their increased employment prospects. Estonian-speaking migrants in particular may have an advantage over Russian speakers on the Finnish labour market. (Forsander 2002; Pohjanpää, Paananen, Nieminen 2003; Jasinskaja-Lahti and Liebkind 2005). Research has shown how Finns have prejudices against certain migrant groups, i.e. one can identify specific ethnic hierarchies. A study on the perceptions of five major groups of immigrants in Finland showed that the attitudes towards the in-migration of Estonians were the most favourable, although variations in the attitudes over the years were discernible depending on the socio-economic and employment situation in the host country (Jaakkola 2009).

On the micro level, the focus is particularly on the experiences, activities and the development of occupational knowledge and know-how of individual migrants in border-crossing occupational space(s). When people migrate to another country, they first aim to gain access to a workplace or start their own business, join a new work community, understand the rules of interaction in this new workplace, and develop occupational ties which can extend to other work communities (outside one's own). In most cases, they have to start working in a new language environment, which poses additional challenges. What newcomers bring to these new work environments are the occupational skills and knowledge obtained during their previous learning trajectories at workplaces as well as in formal and non-formal educational contexts.

For individuals, transnational occupational space is also a *lived, experienced, and reflexive space* (cf. Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009; Singh et al. 2007). Individuals engage in this space through their own everyday activities in the realm of work. The informants underlined how having worked and lived in two different countries had particularly widened their perspectives to analyse and recognise different phenomena and ways of working. Section 4.2.3 considers how the informants had

identified and compared different occupational traditions and also developed their competences in working in a transnational setting. Section 4.2.4 then reports how they had engaged in *brokering* (Wenger 1998) in transnational occupational spaces. Section 4.2.5 describes how participation in diverse work communities in transnational occupational space affected the informants' identity construction.

To summarise, transnational occupational space is a socially constructed, border-crossing space shaped by macro level factors, including global and regional economic structures, national socio-economic environments as well as migration, employment, and education policies. The meso level actors in this space are work communities and organisations, transnational occupational networks, educational institutions and professional associations. On micro level, individuals engaging in this space have diverse occupational ties and different learning trajectories in relation to their work experiences, occupational networks and educational background.

## 4.2.2    Engagement in Transnational Occupational Space

In this section, I look at what kinds of work environments the informants had participated in after in-migration (or at the beginning of transmigration) to Finland, how they had been able to integrate into the work communities in the new host country, and also the types of cross-border occupational networks they had engaged in. From the situated learning perspective, full access to the activities, information and resources of a work-based community is an essential prerequisite for learning at work (Lave and Wenger 1991). In cases when full access is denied, for example, due to institutional arrangements, opportunities for learning become restricted. Also, the construction of identity as a full member of community is dependent on the possibilities to participate in a full range of activities on an equal basis (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).

Many interviewees had worked in organisations in which none of the other employees had an immigrant background, some of the informants had worked in binational environments with other Estonians and Finns, and the rest in work communities composed of various nationalities. Health care, education, science and construction work proved to be particularly international fields of employment in this study. Many respondents underlined having at least normal, conventional or good relations with their colleagues although, particularly at the beginning, they had sometimes experienced friction in social relations at the workplace or a certain

distance from other employees. In those cases, they had been identified as representing 'the Other'.

A few informants admitted to having experienced discrimination at work, for example, receiving lower wages than native citizens, or unequal treatment in terms of career advancement. Particularly in the 1990s, respondents considered that the media portrayed Estonians and Russians in negative terms (also Raittila 2002), Finns had prejudices against these groups, and these negative attitudes were reflected at local workplaces. A study by Liebkind et al. (2004) on three immigrant groups in Finland revealed how experiences of discrimination at work varied depending on the ethnic and linguistic background of the migrants concerned. In that study, Estonian-speaking migrants had experienced less discrimination than Russian speakers. The present study revealed no such differences; however, the size of the Russian-speaking group in this data set was small if compared to the Estonian one. Gender and ethnic demarcations may also intersect in work settings, as the following quotation from an Estonian-speaking informant, Anna, shows:

> HOW HAVE PEOPLE TREATED YOU GENERALLY IN FINLAND? Well, in general, not badly but, of course, there always happens such things that if you are from Estonia and a woman, then you're a whore, of course, particularly sometimes at parties, and because I moved here during a period when there were still fewer Estonians here, particularly at workplaces, this does still happen that if one is from abroad, particularly during those early stages, people thought that a foreigner, particularly from the former Soviet Union, is nice and welcomed here unless she/he comes right next to me, to my everyday life. I remember once during those earlier times that one person almost touched me to make sure that I was really flesh and blood, that could such a person be working next to him/her[19]

> Anna, female, 40-49 years

There were also informants who felt that migrant workers were in general disadvantaged in their workplaces. They reported that non-native employees could never fully be equal with Finns regarding, for example, career advancement. Such workers would always remain marginal in the work communities without opportunities to gain full membership, following *peripheral trajectories* (Wenger

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[19] The interviewee spoke in Finnish; Finnish personal pronouns do not denote gender.

1998:154-155) providing only a limited access to the work community. On the other hand, Lave and Wenger (1991:36-37) argue that *peripherality* in their model of legitimate peripheral participation is an empowering position if individuals are allowed full access to the practices of a community and can gradually increase their understanding through more intensive participation and involvement. According to the experiences of some informants, it was observed that peripherality can also be an empowering position for the individual: while first observing the practices from the marginal, the newcomers can gradually learn these and eventually move towards more active participation in their work communities. In these cases, the participants can follow *inbound trajectories* (Wenger 1998: 154-155) with the prospect of becoming full participants. For example, Mari-Liis, who had been working as a nurse in Estonia for several years prior to her transmigration experiences, explained how she felt that working in Finland first as a practical nurse was 'a soft-landing' and allowed her to get acquainted with the local nursing practices without too many responsibilities:

> It was a good year because I could get acquainted with that culture, care culture, it was almost like a rest for my brains, I really enjoyed it. You just do it what you are used to, you don't have to [think], you are so familiar with it that when you adapt to that culture then you don't have to [think] so much, you don't have to strain, and you have fewer responsibilities, in a way I rested that year

>          Mari-Liis, female, 40-49 years

Some of the respondents were engaged in *multicultural work communities* in Finland in which several employees had transnational roots. Some of these workplaces were related to manual or factory work while health sector communities also included highly skilled professionals. The multicultural nature of the work community was mostly considered to be an advantage: the respondents were not the only ones with migrant background. In addition, the multiplicity of perspectives was seen as a positive result of such communities. Yet it was also pointed out how communication between the colleagues and with clients could result misunderstandings and difficulties due to the foreign workers' inadequate proficiency in the local languages. The interviewees themselves usually considered their own language skills sufficient; some of them had been assisting those fellow workers with less language proficiency. For example, a construction worker explained how Finnish construction sites were nowadays multilingual work environments; he had sometimes acted as an informal interpreter between workers

and foremen thanks to his fluency in four languages. In multicultural work environments, conflicts may sometimes arise not only between host country nationals and foreign fellow workers but also among foreign professionals. For example, Edna, an Estonian-speaking medical doctor, gave an example of such *local-level struggles and power differentials* (cf. Holland and Lave 2001; 2009) at multicultural workplaces:

> There was a Russian doctor at hospital X, I was six months with him/her. He/she was a specialist, and he/she saw me like a granny of no value because I was not a specialist, a clear contrast to how the Finns treated me. Yes, I have been with Finnish professors in the same department in X, they never said that I was old and stupid like what I heard from the Russian specialist

> Edna, female, 60-69 years

A few informants had experience of working in *internationally oriented business or scientific organisations* both within and outside the Estonia-Finland transnational space. The working language in these international work environments was usually English. Similar educational backgrounds as well as shared professional experience and common goals united highly educated professionals in such spaces (also Raunio and Säävälä 2011). In terms of scientific work, common research interests and techniques connected researchers who had obtained their educational qualifications and professional experience in different countries around the world. These scientific communities valued the specialist knowledge and skills newcomers could contribute to their new work environments.

Particularly highly qualified professionals had often formed extensive *transnational professional networks* which included both (former) colleagues in Estonia and those residing in other countries. The professional networks of the informants were based not only on their transnational ties to their country of origin but also had a wider international orientation due to the nature of their work and increasing international cooperation in different sectors. Binational, Finnish-Estonian or Finnish-Russian, networks had been created based on common interests, for example, concerning the development of a certain profession, or created through common goals and cooperation on bilateral cross-border projects. In addition, particularly those informants who worked in research and development as well as in business organisations often had large, international professional networks consisting of individuals around the world (particularly in Europe but also in Asia, in the North America, and in Africa). Some of the contacts were a result of their

study and work periods abroad. Highly educated informants working in the public sector often had close links particularly to colleagues working in the adjacent countries (Estonia, Russia and Sweden) but also to the various EU Member States through nationally or EU-funded cooperation projects. Meyer and Wattiaux (2006) have also drawn attention to the international, multi-sited nature of *transnational knowledge networks*. From the informants' perspectives, international occupational networks were perceived to be important, particularly for information sharing and also for developing common projects which were favoured by donors and also useful in relation to the specific research or business interests of the informants.

Various kinds of *scientific, cross-border networks* were identified in the data: 1) international networks which included researchers sharing the same research interests but living in different countries around the globe, 2) binational networks in which Finnish and Estonian researchers collaborated and 3) transnational networks which connected the informants with their former colleagues in Estonia. All the seven informants of this study who were engaged in research also had scientific, cross-border contacts outside the Estonia-Finland transnational space. They attended international workshops, presented their research results in international conferences, and maintained contacts with foreign colleagues by E-mail and through Skype. Some of them also participated in the activities of international research associations, and collaborated on international research projects. Four informants had been working or studying in another foreign country in addition to Finland. In most cases communication and meetings with foreign colleagues were rather sporadic but in a few cases there were also closer connections through common research projects. The groups of researchers which were united by a common theoretical or methodological framework, commonly negotiated goals and were engaged in collaborative research activities showing features of *scientific communities of practice* (cf. Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998) although the participants were located in different countries. Yet it should be noted that the intensity of cooperation might vary within a specific group at different times; sporadic contacts did not create a sustainable learning community.

Concerning individual migrants, their respective trajectories within cross-border occupational space(s) are unique. They have different kinds of opportunities for engaging in transnational work environments according to their social networks and educational backgrounds - or more broadly speaking, social class - as well as previous work experiences. One of the informants, Piret, is a rather typical case of a migrant who has had a sporadic career and difficulties in finding paid work in the new country of residence. She moved to Finland in the late 1990s with her family

because of the opportunity provided by the Finnish state for Ingrian Finns to immigrate to Finland. She had taken the matriculation examination, and had also completed vocational education as a hairdresser in Estonia but had to abandon her first career due to health reasons. After moving to Finland, she first took a language course in Finnish, then courses in clerical work arranged by the local employment office and also passed a vocational exam in IT skills. She had experienced numerous periods of unemployment, carried out internships and then had several short-term contracts doing clerical work. She reflected that although the employment authorities were encouraging migrants to take courses in clerical work, there were few job opportunities in this field. Piret had also worked as a shopkeeper selling Estonian groceries in Finland. The main reason for starting business was to avoid unemployment. Her first business experiment in a middle-sized Finnish town failed due to limited clientele, but the second business venture in the metropolitan region in Finland was economically more successful: the retail business was meeting the needs of the growing migrant population in the metropolitan area. During this entrepreneurship period, Piret and her husband had intensive cross-border contacts and regular shuttling between the two capitals in order to transport all the items needed in retail from Estonia. Yet as a small entrepreneur she had to work in difficult conditions, and after divorcing her husband, she decided to sell the business. At the time of the interview, she was again unemployed and felt that her chances of finding a job were restricted because of her foreign background and the relatively high unemployment rate in her current place of residence.

Another informant, Mart, is an example of a migrant who has successfully taken advantage of adult education opportunities, free of charge, in the new host country. Mart came to Finland as a young adult, first to do a summer job as an agricultural assistant, and then decided to move more permanently to Finland with his wife and child due to the unstable political situation in the Soviet Union. He had been pursuing (but had not completed) technically oriented studies in an agricultural institution in his former home country. After having worked a couple of years in agriculture, he decided to take a technical course at an adult education centre. Mart continued studying at a Finnish university of applied sciences (polytechnic) thanks to the encouragement of a Finnish engineer. Having completed his degree, he had been working in various positions in Finnish firms requiring technical competence. In his opinion, the technical qualification completed during his studies in Finland had been a prerequisite for obtaining these positions. However, he reflected that most of occupational learning took place at the workplace after the formal

education. For some years, he transmigrated between Finland and Estonia as a trainer in technical and IT affairs in a company providing training for the staff of several Estonian companies. He had been also lecturing in an Estonian technical university. At the time of the second interview he had given up transmigration and was working as a teacher in a Finnish vocational institute. He was also conducting studies in a Finnish university of technology towards a master's degree in technology, and planned to continue his career either in education or in middle-management in companies.

The trajectories of another informant, Ilmar, provide an example of a labour migrant with an international career. He worked several years for an international company, currently at its Finnish office. First, he worked in the Tallinn office, and then he was transferred to a Nordic country in which he resided for some years with his family. He had also carried out several short-term work assignments in the USA as a posted worker. In addition to higher education studies in Estonia, he spent one year in the USA doing postgraduate studies. Ilmar had a wide international network through his work, daily contacts abroad, and frequently made international work trips. His current location (Finland) was optimal because of his area of responsibility and because of the short distance to Estonia where some of his family members lived. During the interview, he reflected and compared different work styles he had encountered during his career as well as the competences needed in international work environments. In the future, he may move to an Asian destination as a posted worker. His family was firmly integrated into Finnish society, although the contacts to Estonia were also intense. He underlined the importance of his Estonian roots and citizenship, and would like to return to Estonia later with his family, possibly after retirement.

Among the informants, there were several who had continued their education or obtained a new qualification in Finland. For them, Finnish education was often a means to find work in the new host country. In addition, education could also provide opportunities for career advancement in Estonia (either through return migration or transmigration between the countries) although social networks were perceived to be a requisite for obtaining a position back in Estonia. If one compares the experiences of Piret and Mart described earlier, one can perceive how education can provide various opportunities in terms of migrants' careers. For Mart adult education in Finland had opened up a new professional pathway for him at a higher level than before his migration. In the case of Piret, diverse training courses had not greatly enhanced her job -acquisition in the new host country. Some other informants in this study had also experienced how authorities'

intentions to re-educate migrants did not necessarily enhance their employability. The authorities often directed them to fields with limited career prospects. Rather it was the migrants' own initiatives and activities which supported their careers.

### 4.2.3 Adopting and Comparing Occupational Practices and Conceptions

Through everyday experiences, discussions and encounters with co-workers and clients the informants had been learning at work, particularly informally.[20] Learning was perceived as a natural part of working but also as something which was rarely analysed or recognised as such. It was reported that one could also learn from one's mistakes, and by asking advice from colleagues. It was noticed that hierarchies were, in general, lower in the Finnish workplaces than in the Estonian ones, and this supported information and skill sharing: informants explained that it was easier to ask for advice and communicate with superiors in Finland than in Estonia. Trusting and respectful relations with the fellow workers and managers supported informants' on-the-job learning. The importance of non-formal learning at workplaces was also pointed out: the informants had participated in professional training courses and sessions at work which had been useful, particularly for learning new techniques and technical programmes.

Both organisational and individual factors affect learning processes at workplaces. Among individuals, their motivations, interests, learning abilities and personalities play a role in work-based learning. Individuals need opportunities for learning, organisational environments supporting the development of workers, and also the necessary material resources needed at work. (Bartram and Roe 2008) For example, in the health care sector, the larger population of Finland had provided more learning opportunities for Estonian doctors as they came across different illnesses. Also, the respondents pointed out that there were more resources for arranging health care in Finland than in Estonia which also affected working environments and work-based learning. In terms of modern equipment, the Finnish workplaces in the health care sector were better equipped than the Estonian ones, and this afforded opportunities to widen one's professional expertise, as Edna, an experienced medical doctor, explained:

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[20] The informants reflected on their learning experiences in work communities in some semi-structured interviews, and in greater detail in the life-course interviews.

For example, computerised tomography, magnetic resonance imaging, those are skills and issues all doctors should know even if I'm not a roentgenologist. In Estonia, I wasn't familiar with this new field of medicine but now I am /../medicine has developed a great deal, this technical development has been fast, and also the fact that there are as many magnetic resonance imaging devices in the [Finnish] town X as in Estonia. So, you are much closer to these machines, and if there are only few of these, only experts like roentgenologists can go into this but if there are more such devices others also have to know something about them. In Estonia, I would not have known even this small part of this, so this is a clear difference

Edna, female, 60-69 years

The informants had often first followed more experienced workers before being entrusted with the full responsibilities of a professional in their work community. As theorised, for example, by Collins et al. (1989a), Goody (1989), Resnick (1989), Rogoff (1995), and Lave and Wenger (1991) *learning through apprenticeship* allowes novices gradually to become competent in practice by participating in shared activities and, through such participation, obtaining skills and knowledge from experts and from more competent peers. Edna reflected how she had learnt most of her professional skills at work by observing the practices of 'the master', and she had purposefully looked for such a relationship in order to update her professional skills in Finland:

During my studies in Estonia, it has all changed there, we had very close contact to the supervisor, it was a relationship between a master and a novice, and in X [a town in Finland] I tried and it was easy to obtain such a relationship. I think it is an easy way to learn, learn from a master, and it may bring also tacit learning, as well, perhaps that's the way more mature people learn, learn through watching how the other does it. Perhaps when we are young, we don't recognize it but when you grow older you can assess in what ways you learn. It is difficult to compare those, how a secondary school graduate learns and how people learn later at work

Edna, female, 60-69 years

On the other hand, the roles of 'novices' in the workplace are complex, and newcomers do not necessarily only have the role of learner but may also give guidance to more experienced workers (Fuller 2007; Fuller and Unwin 2004; Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2003). Newcomers' level of expertise is determined by their prior experiences both in educational institutions and at workplaces. Some

highly educated labour migrants in this study already had a wide professional knowledge when migrating to Finland. They had been able to utilise this knowledge at their workplaces, and had been engaging in *insider trajectories* (Wenger 1998: 154-155), as full, respected experts developing their practice at the workplaces.

Through their everyday participation in diverse work environments, the informants had identified differences between the Finnish, Estonian and Soviet-era work practices in various sectors. These differences partly depended on the time and places where and when the respondents had worked in Estonia and in Finland. The informants reported how some Estonian occupational practices might have been adopted already during the Soviet era and some informants had noticed American influences in the contemporary working life in Estonia. The respondents reported *differences in working styles and in work-related attitudes and norms*. While it was argued that the Finns, in general, were more motivated to work hard and concentrate on working than the Estonians, it was also suggested that, in recent years, the Estonians were, in fact, more flexible than the Finns for doing extra assignments if needed. This was connected to economic hardship and low wages in Estonian working life. Several informants underlined how Finns in general diligently followed the rules and laws, while in Estonia people considered whether the rule in itself was useful or whether one would get caught for breaking the law. Dishonesty and fraudulence were linked to the Soviet influences in Estonian society. Romi, a scientist with international expertise, described his experiences in the Finnish laboratory:

> I always remember how people thought about working with radioactive materials or experiments on animals, there are own rules /../I was positively surprised in the beginning [in Finland] how they came to talk to me *do you know* [saying this in English] that you should do it in this way and this. Not because people are observing these and you might get caught, but because one should do so, it was a very pleasant experience, and that's an example of how people respect laws because these are right and beneficial for all, not because you might get caught. That's a big difference, in fact, it's crazy in Estonia, that stealing and lying, that's inherited from the Soviet time

> Romi, male, 50-59 years

Yet the idea of 'a hard-working and honest Finn' could, to a certain extent, stem from a popular discourse which was either reinforced or negated by informants' own experiences at different workplaces. For example, one informant suggested

that in the Finnish company in which she had worked the recruitment and human relations practices were dishonest, and that nepotism, corruption and unreported income was flourishing in Finnish working life even if people did not discuss such issues openly.

Concerning *vocational hierarchy* and the roles of workers, the informants reported that occupational hierarchies were often stricter in Estonian workplaces than in Finnish ones. For example, medical doctors had a higher and more influential status in healthcare than nurses. It was also considered that the Estonians were not so used to working on their own initiative as was expected at the Finnish workplaces but rather waited for orders from their superiors. On the other hand, the Finnish employers seemed to have more confidence in their workers, and did not supervise them as much as in Estonia. The differences in employee-superior relations at workplaces do not necessarily concern only the Estonia-Finland transnational space but may also be familiar to other migrant workers coming from other regions, as Airi, a professional in immigrants' integration matters, pondered:

> When I came here, it was the Soviet time, and then in meetings [in Soviet Estonia] there was a superior, someone who led, and the others didn't have much to say. But here it was like, oh, oh, they're asking my opinion, that I'm developing these activities that they don't tell me what I should do. And what I've realised through my current work, is that when newcomers [immigrants] start an internship or begin in working life, they need support because they don't have this knowledge. This also portrays how work communities in their home countries, these function in another way. In those countries, they can be used to have someone who tells you what you should do but here you bear the responsibility yourself and you can also decide issues independently
>
> Airi, female, 40-49 years

*Decision-making and communication styles* had been perceived to be different in these two countries. While in Finland consensus-style decision-making aiming to consolidate disparate views prevailed, in Estonia work-related decisions might be made more flexibly and faster than in the neighbouring country. Concerning business life in Finland, projects were often designed carefully in advance while in Estonia new project activities could be envisaged without any knowledge of funding and actors. An informant reported how the Estonian business sector put more emphasis on top leaders taking part in decision-making processes while Finnish companies relied on middle management to carry out and take responsibility for activities in the area of their expertise. The informants explained

how there were differences in communication styles and feedback procedures in these countries. For example, one informant was surprised to receive positive feedback from a Finnish superior for good performance while in Estonia such feedback was not provided. Ilmar, a manager with international work experience, discussed the decision-making styles in this transnational space:

> In Estonia they have this practical attitude that one [should] reach an agreement immediately while here in Finland, you often have, how to say this, a kind of Swedish approach that everybody should agree and discuss issues many times, and after that, the solution can be discussed.

Ilmar, male, 50-59 years

While respondents often compared national differences in work practices, their observations and examples were based on their own experiences in specific workplaces. Therefore the situated nature of learning was highlighted in their accounts on these experiences. The informants also reflected how some of the practices could be applied in the other country. For example, a psychologist had noticed how multi-professional cooperation was successful in the Finnish educational and social sector, and discussed how it might also be useful in Estonia. On the other hand, the informant suggested that the Finnish schools could follow the model of the Estonian schools which had integrated more social activities to the school day for pupils than had the Finnish schools she was familiar with. A cook had observed how the Finnish restaurants in which he had worked had been efficiently organised: ordering and the arrangement of different items were well planned, and such arrangements could likewise facilitate work in the Estonian workplaces.

The informants' accounts showed the impact of macro level changes and socio-economic development on local practices. As Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) have underlined, political, economic and socio-cultural structures affect local practices although the individuals and the social communities in which they engage also transform these structures. For example, Mari-Liis, a nurse, discussed how the occupational conceptions of caring, the patient-doctor relationship, and the role of the patient in the care process had been evolving in her country of origin. Some of the differences were associated with the traditions dating back to the Soviet era, but it was pointed out how these occupational practices and conceptions had been gradually changing in Estonia. Therefore, occupational practices were not seen as static but instead as changing over time.

For example, [in Estonia, during the Soviet era], if a person had cancer, then they told this to his/her relatives but not to the patient him/herself /…/ Overall, there was an idea that the disease could get worse or speed up, or the psyche could not stand it, it was absurd. It was like the doctor was the boss and the nurse had to obey, and the patient was nothing. This autonomy of the patient and human rights in general are now understood differently, and, of course, this has changed in Estonia, too. It is related to the era, it is not only a question about Finland or Estonia.

Mari-Liis, female, 40-49 years

While the informants perceived differences in work practices in the two countries, many of them also underlined that each workplace had its unique styles of acting, speaking and arranging work. Newcomers had first to find out rules which were often 'hidden' and unwritten, and accommodate their behaviours accordingly. As Duguid (2008b) has discussed, occupational practices often involve tacit knowledge which is rooted in the local practices and difficult to grasp unlike codified, explicit knowledge. The informants' accounts revealed that although there were commonalities in particular fields of work or concerning a certain occupation, there were also specific rules and local work cultures in each work community. Consequently, the situated nature of occupational practices and knowledge was highlighted in the data.

## 4.2.4    Sharing Occupational Conceptions and Practices across Borders

This section considers how the informants had been sharing occupational conceptions and practices in transnational environments applying concepts both from the situated learning theory and transnational studies for the analysis. Wenger (1998) and also Boland and Tenkasi (1995) have explored how connections and interaction between different communities can provide new perspectives and ways to develop their activities and knowing. One way of transferring the elements of one practice to another is through *brokering* (Wenger 1998: 108-110): individuals, i.e. *brokers*, who are familiar with the practices of two different communities, can introduce new tools, concepts, ways of doing things, or systems to another practice. *Boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998:112-113), such as meetings of delegations

and one-on-one conversations of two people belonging to different communities of practice can also enable sharing and obtaining new ideas and practices. Wenger does not connect these concepts to a transnational setting but discusses boundary work in general between different communities of practice. In this study, the concepts of brokering and boundary encounter are applied to explore how ideas and practices have been shared in transnational learning environments. The examples of both brokering and boundary encounters in occupational realms were identified from the data as the following examples show.

Indrek is an example of a *transnational broker* in the Estonia-Finland space; he has been conveying and translating both Finnish and Estonian business styles for actors on both sides of the border. He had worked for more than a decade in Finland, several years for a Finnish company owned by Estonians, and, at the time of the interview, for an Estonian organisation. Indrek discussed how it had been useful to be familiar with business practices in both countries and to be able to observe actions from a certain distance. On many occasions he had been explaining policies and planned actions to cooperation partners in both countries. For example, Finnish agencies had difficulties understanding rapid changes made on the Estonian side, and Indrek had been explaining the reforms and convincing these Finnish agencies to implement the new strategies and lines of action. He reflected that there was sensitivity towards criticism from the nationals of the neighbouring country on both sides. Therefore, one needed special skills to clarify and accommodate different perspectives in transnational environments.

Similarly, Liina had been engaged in brokering through her work as a civil servant in a Finnish public organisation. She had assisted both Finnish and Estonian colleagues in their national organisations to understand the most fluent ways to engage in cross-border cooperation. She had explained to the Finnish co-workers, for example, how to write a request to Estonia for official assistance and cooperation in criminal investigations. Furthermore, Liina had clarified to the colleagues on the Estonian side which procedures should be followed and how official messages should be formulated in order to guarantee successful cooperation between the two countries. In the interview, she underlined that communication styles always had to be adapted to the local contexts.

An example of *a one-on-one boundary encounter* (Wenger 1998: 112-113) in a transnational setting is related to project work. Airi was familiar with several projects related to migrants' integration and employment in Finland. She had informed her colleague in Estonia about the best practices adopted on a Finnish project, and the Estonian colleague had drafted a new project application based on

those ideas. Airi had also advised her colleague how to write a successful and fluently written project plan. There were also a few examples of transnational exchange of ideas through group meetings between Estonian migrants, their former colleagues in Estonia, and also with Finnish co-workers. This form of cross-border activities exemplifies the notion of *boundary encounters*, particularly the *meeting of delegations* (Wenger 1998:112-113). For example, Larissa had been working in a public organisation in Finland, and had arranged visits for her Finnish colleagues to a comparable organisation in Estonia. The visits had enabled officials on both sides to discuss their work and observe course of action in another context. Larissa reported that one benefit of the visits could have been that more female officials had been recruited for her current organisation in Finland, following the example of recruitment policies in the Estonian organisation visited. Sara, working in a Finnish municipal organisation, had organised a study visit to Finland for Estonian colleagues to learn how to solve mould problems in old buildings; the Finns had already been using these techniques while for the Estonians the phenomenon and its solutions were still novel. These kinds of cross-border initiatives allowed the participants to share practices and obtain new ideas on how to develop their work and organisations.

Successful transnational brokers support the *processes of perspective making and perspective taking* (Boland and Tenkasi 1995) making thought worlds of different communities understandable to others. For example, Leif had been supporting these processes for more than a decade through his cross-border, professional activities. He had previously worked as an entrepreneur in Estonia in close contact with Finnish companies. At the time of the interview he was working in both countries liaising with Finnish and Estonian enterprises, organisations and authorities. He had obtained higher education qualifications from Estonia, and had been using this knowledge in his current and previous occupations. He had a wide professional network in these two countries, and he perceived that social contacts were essential for acquiring in-depth knowledge of both countries. In his view, such knowledge could not be obtained only through media or electronic contacts but rather through personal experiences and discussions. He was active in professional organisations and associations in both countries. Although there were some similarities, he had also identified substantial differences between Finnish and Estonian business practices, decision-making styles and organisational cultures. He reflected that in successful border-crossing cooperation one had to understand practices on both sides and know life-worlds in both societies. Transnational work-experience particularly had provided him with the ability to perceive and analyse

issues from different perspectives and had also conferred feelings of empowerment in relation to work: being able to act successfully in cross-border settings.

As the above-mentioned examples reveal, brokering between different work communities and organisations requires abilities to create connections, address conflicting interests and to mediate between different perspectives (Wenger 1998: 109). Brokers need to understand organisational cultures in both settings in order to be successful in coordination activities. Transnational brokers also need fluency in local languages, context-specific communication skills and knowledge of work-related practices in different settings. Regarding transnational boundary encounters, migrants can take advantage of their existing cross-border contacts and knowledge of diverse work contexts to support work-based information sharing between individuals and organisations located in different countries. As noted by Williams and Baláz (2008b: 77-78), migrants engaged in brokering need a reflective understanding of socio-culturally embedded and locally constructed knowledge.

The abilities which Leif, Indrek and Liina had gained in cross-border cooperation had fostered their *transnational competence (*Koehn and Rosenau 2010), including analytic, emotional, creative, communicative and functional competence. Analytic competence included their ability to access an understanding of common professional and business practices in both countries and to discover effective cross-border interaction strategies. Emotional competence involved their sense of transnational efficacy and their ability to evince genuine interest in diverse occupational cultures. Creative competence constituted the ability to plan mutually acceptable solutions for transnational cooperation. Communicative competence comprised fluency in local languages and also the ability to engage in successful cross-border dialogue. Functional competence covered their abilities to apply procedural understanding in transnational interactions as well as the ability to employ diverse organisational and communication strategies in a transnational setting.

Parallel to financial and material remittances, i.e. money and goods sent by migrants to their former home countries, *social remittances* has been defined by Levitt (1998, 2001a) and by Gakunzi (2006) as ideas, behaviours and mindsets flowing from communities in the host country to those in the sending country. The research on social remittances has focused particularly on the transformative effects of such remittances on families and community organisations in the migrants' countries of origin. From the data of this study, one can identify flows of *occupational remittances*, i.e. work-related conceptions and practices conveyed from one country to another particularly through transnational brokering and boundary

encounters. In the present study it was noted how occupational remittances did not only move from the country of immigration to the country of emigration but also vice versa. When the informants had moved from Estonia to Finland (or in a few cases, to another foreign country), they had also brought with them their occupational skills and knowledge as well as their understanding of their occupational roles and traditions which they had internalised in their country of origin to the new host country, and had been applying, sharing and developing these with their co-workers in the new work environments.

In this study, occupational remittances were identified specifically in relation to highly educated migrants, although migrants with lower educational qualifications had also brought and shared with their fellow workers, for example, manual skills and techniques they had learnt in Estonia. The informants explained having applied the generic occupational skills, for example, organisational, presentation and language skills they had learnt in Estonia also in their new workplaces in Finland. In addition, they had also brought with them the occupation-specific know-how which they had accumulated in their country of origin. For example, factory workers manufacturing specific products had been able to apply their occupational know-how in both countries in a similar manner. The medical doctors who had practiced their profession in the Estonian organisations had also been applying this specified knowledge and skills in the Finnish workplaces. In the case of medical doctors the fairly similar basic professional education in both countries had facilitated the transfer of professional skills to another national context although the doctors had also identified differences in the historical traditions of the professions and in specialised, medical education in these two countries.

The experiences of Mart, who had moved from agricultural work to engineering and IT work, were introduced earlier. In his case one can perceive different kinds of flows of remittances, concerning both directions of such flows and the type of remittances conveyed. First, the occupational remittances, such as technical skills to repair machines which he had learnt in Estonia during the Soviet period, had been useful in his work on Finnish farms. When working as an agricultural assistant in Finland he had sent material remittances back to his country of origin: transporting and donating agricultural machinery from Finnish farmers to Estonian farmers in need of modern equipment in the early 1990s. During his transmigration period as a trainer in several Estonian companies, he was able to convey occupational remittances from Finland to Estonia, at this time, technical know-how and IT skills he had learnt in Finland.

The ability to share practices across borders can depend on the occupational communities and on the occupational fields. For example, concerning the healthcare, practices may be linked on the local, social practices, and there may be a view in workplaces that newcomers should rather integrate and adopt these practices than introduce new ones (Pitkänen 2011b). Healthcare workers interviewed in this study also underlined their willingness to learn and adopt local practices in their Finnish workplaces. On the other hand, the informants stressed that, for example, the profession of a medical doctor and its related duties are in principle fairly similar in both countries which facilitates working in another country. The newcomers can rely that the 'basic script' of diagnosing a case, finding a cure for a patient's illness, is similar to what they have learnt previously in another country. In addition, medical Latin serves as a lingua franca between doctors and facilitates the integration of newcomers into the new practice. Consequently, there are features in the doctor's work – such as the use of medical Latin -which are shared by different work communities and, therefore, represent *boundary objects* (Star and Griesemer 1989; Wenger 1998) which connect different professional communities and serve as bridges facilitating communication between different actors.

> Medicine is actually quite easy when you can cope even if you cannot use a lot of Latin with patients, you can use it between colleagues, all of them can understand it, and everything goes well in that way and then you can learn this medical language very fast and then you can dictate these epicrises [case records] and that won't take a long time. But, of course, it takes a much longer time to [obtain] professional competence but at least you can reach the beginning /.../ when you know how things should happen, it is always the same script that it is not something like marketing in which anything can happen. It always begins with the situation that a person is ill, and you start to find [ a cure] it always follows the same pattern, it's easy to catch the drift

Marina, female, 30-39 years

Work communities do not always encourage the introduction of new practices. Some informants explained how the workplaces where they had worked had not taken full advantage of their existing skills and knowledge. Fuller and Unwin (2004) call some work organisations as *restrictive learning environments* in which boundary crossing, knowledge sharing, dialogue between colleagues, and exploring new perspectives are not encouraged. For example, one male interviewee had been working in the field of information and communication technologies in Estonia, and had also been running a business in the same field in another foreign country

before moving to Finland. He explained that he could use only a small part of his skills and competences in his current workplace in Finland. He also discussed how, unlike in his previous Estonian workplaces, the hierarchical nature of the Finnish work organisation and its introvert practices did not support sharing and obtaining new knowledge.

> We have this enterprise that even the Finnish army is not such a hierarchical system as our company. If I'm on the grass roots level then the managers are in the seventh heaven/../ On the Estonian side, I was always in rather small enterprises /../the system included maybe three levels: top, middle and the lowest level, and then at the grass root level, and also at the second one, in fact, the managers were always near enough to the everyday life /…/ what I wonder in Finland, how Finns are always self-centred, they always try to reinvent the wheel, and for some reason, the board does not plan to send someone abroad to look at similar issues or business, this area has been well arranged already. They don't let anyone go there, or if they do, only the highest level, those who know nothing about these grassroot things, and that's why nothing works. [Understanding] the entire system and open-mindedness is what will take things forward

> Siim, male, 60-69 years

Sharing skills and knowledge between individuals, work communities, and organisations requires special skills and attitudes. Wenger (1998: 217) suggests that in order to attain *reflective practice* individuals need the ability and interest to adopt new perspectives and also to change their engagements based on these while communities need to be open to novel ideas and to accept the transformed identities of their members. Questions of access and power differentials also play a role in how participants of diverse occupational communities can take advantage of learning opportunities in transnational work settings: if an individual is not allowed full access to participate in the daily activities of work community, learning opportunities are restricted. Yet, as observed by Andersson and Fejes (2013), transnational mobility of people creates difficulties in the recognition of migrants' prior occupational learning carried out in another context: such knowledge does not necessarily retain its value and usefulness in a new context. Therefore, difficulties related to the acknowledgement and sharing of the prior learning of migrant workers can relate particularly to this contextually situated understanding of know-how and to the difficulties of assessing and applying know-how in another setting.

Transnational exchange of ideas and materials can also take place in scientific spaces. One informant, Helve, a transmigrant working mainly in Estonia and also pursuing postgraduate studies in Finland, explained about the on-going Estonian-Finnish research cooperation in her field. This network-type collaboration followed fairly traditional forms of scientific cooperation: commonly arranged binational seminars and some co-authored publications. According to Helve, this cooperation was particularly useful in terms of research methodologies: both teams could gain new insights regarding the research methods used in these two countries. From the Finnish side, Helve had learnt how to use new electronic analysis programmes while the Finns had been learning more traditional techniques to analyse material and to collect field data in Estonian villages. She also underlined how cultural proximity facilitated cross-border cooperation: these researchers were examining social phenomena with similar cultural roots. Another informant, Romi, a scientist, reported on cross-border collaboration with his former colleagues in the early 1990s when Estonian society was facing economic hardship and lack of materials. The example below shows how, in the early 1990s, people, ideas, goods and money were flowing across the borders of Estonia and Finland. This cross-border, scientific collaboration was connecting both mobile and non-mobile individuals. This account of cross-border cooperation resembles the notion of *transnational social space* (Faist 2000; 2007) which includes flows of individuals, goods, conceptions and services across international borders connecting individual stayers and movers as well as organisations.

> At the beginning of nineties, *nineties* [repeating in English] it was a difficult time in Estonian society, and also in research, so in practice we assisted our colleagues there. Quite many made short visits /…/ came here to do a couple of experiments and went back there /../ we did even a couple of articles together /…/ and when they had difficulties obtaining some research chemicals, we bought them here and donated them, or if they had their own funding but couldn't order it /…/ then we did, and a guy came here to fetch it. Quite often it was like this: 'Well, my experiment will come to a standstill if I cannot get this, we don't have it' Then I just ordered it /…/ and helped. Or simply 'Come here and do the experiment here' if a machine broke down there or they didn't have one.

Romi, male, 50-59 years

Studies have also shown how some professional migrants maintain extensive and frequent contacts with institutions and colleagues staying in the countries of emigration (Mahroum et. al. 2006; Saxenian 2006), and how *diaspora knowledge*

*networks* and *transnational innovation networks* support the flows of people, capital, technologies and ideas between migrants and non-migrants, not only between the host and the home country but also within and across several nation-states (Coe and Bunnell 2003; Kuznetsov 2006; Meyer and Wattiaux 2006). Such networks exemplify how professionals can contribute to the development of their countries of origin by sharing professional knowledge and know-how with colleagues, and also by sending material and financial remittances to their former home countries, or to several countries through diaspora networks. Yet such networks may dissolve when the economic development accelerates in the country of origin, or when there is no longer reciprocal interest for collaboration. In case of Estonian researchers, the period of intensive cross-border collaboration was relatively short during the economic transition period in Estonia. This cooperation gradually declined when research interests diversified and some Estonian researchers emigrated to other countries. In the following years and decades these scientists focused more on international fields of cooperation than on collaboration with colleagues in the country of origin.

## 4.2.5    Identity Construction in a Transnational, Occupational Setting

The situated learning approach underlines how participation in social communities does not only mean learning to perform new activities or taking on board new ideas but specifically developing one's identity as a full participant of diverse socio-cultural communities (Lave and Wenger 1991). Identity is a negotiated experience which is exemplified by the ways in which individuals perceive themselves through social participation and how others situate such individuals in relation to everyday participation in the social communities. Identity can be understood as a *learning trajectory* which is constantly reformed through participation in various communities (Wenger 1998). As noted earlier, the informants had experienced different kinds of trajectories in their work communities. Those informants who had experienced discrimination or marginalisation in their work communities without an opportunity to gain full membership had followed *peripheral trajectories* which, in some cases, ended up as *outbound trajectories,* leading out of the community if the person had become unemployed or had decided to move to another workplace. Some informants explained that first they were apprentices, observing the occupational practices of a specific workplace, and then taking more responsibilities and achieving a more equal standing at the workplace. They had

followed *inbound trajectories* with the prospect of becoming full participants. Those informants who already had extensive work experience had actively engaged in developing the practices of their workplaces through their *insider trajectories.* Those interviewees who had been active, transnational brokers creating connections and sharing information on the work practices in different organisations across national borders had followed *boundary trajectories.*

An individual's identity is not limited to one or more local communities but is also connected to broader categories and national institutions in a society, such as citizenship or membership of a civil society. From the lifelong learning perspective, Felstead and Jewson (2012:137) underline the important role of workplaces as sites of learning: individuals acquire skills, techniques and new knowledge at work which influence their labour market positions and social opportunities in societies. In the case of workers with a migrant background, membership of occupational communities can be one influential factor supporting their integration into the new society, and also into transnational work environments. Everyday arenas of interaction, such as workplaces, associations and leisure groups, play an important role in either supporting integration or exacerbating the marginalisation of migrants in their new home country (Pitkänen and Raunio 2011; Raunio et al. 2011).

Finding work in Finland, particularly in their own occupational field, appeared to be an important factor for interviewees in supporting their integration processes in the new host country; similarly, opposite experiences of having difficulties in finding employment in one's field of expertise had been experienced as discouraging and having delayed 'feeling at home' in Finland. Having close relations with colleagues and a welcoming atmosphere at workplace was also reported as having supported informants' integration into Finnish society. For many interviewees in this study, work-based relations to Finnish co-workers were their most important or indeed their only social contacts to the host population. Therefore, these social contacts and work environments in general provided important informal learning arenas where the informants were able to observe the practices of native Finns and also vice versa; they also engaged in shared conversations on different matters, including both work-related and societal issues.

The role of work communities and occupational membership in supporting the integration of migrants into the host society may also depend on the social and occupational position of a migrant, as this female doctor reflected:

> WHICH ISSUES HAVE ASSISTED OR SUPPORTED YOUR INTEGRATION HERE? Well, one gets lots of contacts through the locals, Finnish people, probably through the workplace, that a lot happens through their positive

interaction that if you are well received and you feel that you are useful here, it supports it. But at least in our case, it is the work community, and there you have a doctor's position, and then everybody is satisfied that you are there. We have talked about it a lot that it's different to come to live here and you are welcomed than, for example, if you are going to do construction work or just to do a job /.../ we have a much more positive view of Finland and how Finns are and what life is like here

Marina, female, 30-39 years

The meaning of occupational membership was not limited to local contexts but was also related to societal levels. For many informants being a member of a Finnish work community was central to their identity construction as a legitimate member of Finnish society. Particularly those who had experienced difficulties in finding work in Finland expressed feelings of delayed integration and being to some extent an outsider in Finnish society. Several interviewees underlined their intention to be 'diligent workers and good tax-payers' in Finland. These accounts expressed the idea that the legitimacy of their full participation in the society of settlement was shown through serious engagement in local working life. As these accounts were given in research interviews carried out between an interviewer (a native Finn) and an interviewee (with a migrant background) one might reflect to what extent the informants wanted to present themselves to the interviewer as 'model immigrants'. Therefore, these ways of identification could have been shaped by the assumed expectations of researchers as well as national discourses on the difficulties of migrants' integration to the host society (cf. Dervin and Keihäs 2013; Hall 1996; Holland and Lave 2001, 2009).

In other studies on migrants in Finland, such as Antikainen (2010), Nieminen (2010), Silfver (2010) and Vartia et al. (2007), the role of work-based relations and professional membership for the migrants' integration to the 'receiving' society has also been underlined. Professional membership covers not only occupational status but also the ability to take part in everyday practices and belonging to the social communities, and it is also connected to citizenship (Nieminen 2010). Antikainen (2010) concluded that, for her informants, women of Russian and Estonian origin, the experience of inclusion in Finnish society was conditional, depending on the notion of a citizen worker.

Not all informants aimed at integrating permanently into the host society. Particularly many commuting labour migrants and students perceived their stay in Finland to be only temporary. For transmigrants, Finnish workplaces were important arenas of social interaction, and 'windows' on Finnish society.

Commuting migrants often stated that due to time constraints they could not take part in leisure activities either in Finland or in Estonia, and also had limited time for other social contacts outside work and family environments. Although some of the commuting migrants underlined the temporary nature of their stay in Finland, they nevertheless intended to integrate fully into their local Finnish work communities. A few commuting migrants considered transmigration to be a natural way of life for them. Opportunities to further their professional development and careers encouraged them to continue commuting across national borders while significant others opting to stay in another country were the main reason for their continuous transmigration.

Some of the transnational brokers expressed multi-sited and transnational belonging in terms of their ethno-national identification which was reflected in their continuous ties to two or more societies. Concerning the informants with extensive transnational activities, which included both 'traditional' immigrants and commuting migrants, one can perceive how it is not only a question of integrating into the new host country but rather of integrating into a transnational setting. For example, Indrek, who had extensive experience of transnational business activities and exemplified a case of a transnational broker, explained how his continued transnational activities in the realm of work had, in fact, supported both his integration into Finland and maintaining ties with the country of origin.

> Since all the time, in fact, I have had contacts to Estonia through work, this has certainly helped my adaptation here [Finland] so well because the contact to Estonia was never broken /../ that through work I have always been able to take part in it

> Indrek, male, 30-39 years

A few informants simultaneously expressed both international and national orientation in terms of belonging, which reflected their experiences in international work environments. For example, Ranno, who had extensive, professional activities, described 'being at home' particularly at international airports. Yet he also underlined the importance of his Estonian citizenship and identity. His working environments were multicultural, which he found very satisfying and also expanding his intellectual horizons: he could perceive many alternative paths due to these international contacts. In addition to Ranno, there were some informants whose work environments were highly international. Their professional plans included options for obtaining more international work experience in the future. As far as their national identity was concerned, only a few of these informants had

a cosmopolitan orientation. The majority of professionals with wide international activities and overseas experience stressed the importance of their national attachment to their country of origin and belonging to the Estonian nation, like Ilmar, whose international career was presented earlier. In contrast to Kennedy (2004) on professionals with overseas experience, the transnationally active professionals in this study did *not* always report a strong post-national orientation but instead a strong nationally based identity along with an international career. The prevailing importance of national roots for internationally oriented Estonian-speaking experts may be related to the fairly recent regaining of Estonian independence after grassroots protests against the Soviet occupation, likewise these experts' future plans, which might also include an option to return to their country of origin.

## 4.2.6    Summary

In this study, transnational occupational space has been understood as a socially constructed space based on the border-crossing occupational ties and activities of people who work or have worked in different nation-states. I have been investigating transnational occupational space particularly from the perspective of migrants. The structure of this space was explored here on macro, meso and micro levels, applying the framework of transnational spaces developed by Faist (2000) and refined by Pitkänen et al. (2012). On *macro level*, international, regional and national policies and agreements as well as socio-economic structures and administrative regulations on migration, employment and education shape both the opportunities for the mobility of labour and the mobility of people's occupational knowledge and skills across national borders. On *meso level*, educational and work organisations, professional associations as well as cross-border occupational networks provide arenas where both migrants and non-migrants can share and develop their occupational knowledge and know-how. These actors can also approve or disregard migrants' prior occupational learning. The meso level actors, particularly employers, are in a position to allow or restrict access to work environments. On *micro level*, mobile individuals have their unique trajectories in transnational occupational space and different kinds of transnational connections and learning experiences. In this study, each informant had formed a personal, transnational occupational space based on their own cross-border engagements, and this was constantly being reformed in relation to their changing occupational

ties and activities at workplaces and in networks. The intensity of the informants' cross-border activities fluctuated over time. Transnational occupational networks and professional communities emerged when the participants shared the same goals and interests, and might also dissolve when the scope of activities changed or the need for cooperation ceased to exist.

Work communities in the host society provided *local, cross-border learning environments* for both the informants and their co-workers, including native Finns and others with migrant background, in which the participants had been able adopt and share occupational conceptions and practices, although power differentials and inequalities had sometimes hampered full participation in these. Other studies, such as Wrede (2010) and Nieminen and Henriksson (2008) have explored the negative impact of ethnic hierarchies on the occupational membership of foreign workers at the Finnish workplaces. The social class divisions also affected the informants' occupational trajectories and motives for migration: those belonging to the elite or upper middle class often migrated due to professional development and career advancement, while those belonging to the working class highlighted economic motives as the main reason for emigration. Yet obtaining a Finnish higher education degree free of charge had offered some informants an opportunity for upward social mobility. The informants had fostered their occupational skills and know-how through informal and non-formal learning at their Finnish workplaces. While many informants had already obtained work experience in their country of origin, they had been able to contribute both generic occupational skills and occupation-specific know-how to their new work environments in the host country. However, there had also been some *restrictive learning environments* (Fuller and Unwin 2004) which had not supported knowledge sharing and introducing new work practices.

Concerning particularly the Estonia-Finland space, the informants had identified differences in occupational norms, attitudes, vocational hierarchy and in decision-making and communication styles. The informants' accounts revealed how the *macro level, historical and socio-economic development of societies* had shaped local practices (cf. Holland and Lave 2001; 2009); Soviet influences in particular were still apparent in Estonian workplaces although the informants had also noticed how these practices were gradually changing. Although the interviewees often discussed national differences in occupational practices and conceptions, these observations and reflections were based on their experiences in specific workplaces. As the informants underlined, each workplace had its own organisational culture, including the ways of organising work, implementing work

tasks, and rules of interaction, and the newcomers had to learn the local work practices. Therefore, the situated nature of learning in a transnational occupational setting was highlighted in these interview accounts.

From the micro level perspective of the informants, a transnational space was also an *experienced, lived and reflexive space* (cf. Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009; Singh et al. 2007) which provided opportunities to compare different occupational practices and conceptions of professional roles in each setting as well as experience different kinds of work environments. In a transnational occupational space, newcomers do not only adopt new practices but can also acquire a more profound understanding of the socio-culturally situated nature of occupations and work-related practices. An important feature of informants' learning experiences in a transnational setting was that through participating in occupational activities in different countries they had been able to identify and analyse occupational practices in at least two different national contexts.

Transnational occupational networks provided *multi-sited learning environments* for the informants and for other participants residing in Estonia and in other countries. Through their transnational occupational networks, the informants had engaged in *transnational brokering and boundary encounters* (cf. Wenger 1998; Williams 2006; Williams and Baláz 2008b), which had enabled sharing occupational practices and conceptions across national borders. The informants acting as transnational brokers had supported the *processes of perspective making and perspective taking* (Boland and Tenkasi 1995) making the mindsets and local practices of work communities located in different countries accessible and understandable to others. Brokering had involved introducing new work techniques, clarifying organisational cultures, imparting the best practices and explaining local work requirements and communication styles. In this research, it was noted how *occupational remittances* (cf. social remittances, Levitt 1998, 2001a; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011), i.e. work-related conceptions and practices flowed both ways between the host country and the country of emigration.

The findings show how the informants had engaged in different kinds of trajectories (Wenger 1998) in their work environments: *peripheral trajectories, inbound trajectories, insider trajectories, boundary trajectories, and outbound trajectories* depending on their opportunities to engage in the shared practices of their work communities. Diverse learning trajectories affected their identity construction not only in relation to their local work environments but also in relation to wider, societal levels. For many informants, being a member of a Finnish work community was crucial to the development of their identity as a legitimate, full member of Finnish society (also

Antikainen 2010, Nieminen 2010, Silfver 2010; Vartia et al. 2007). Some of those informants who had been active, transnational brokers in an occupational setting had developed transnational identification expressing their sense of belonging to both societies.

## 4.3 Transnational Civic Space

In this section, I explore the informants' learning processes and informal learning environments in relation to their societal and civic ties and activities in transnational settings. Transnational civic space is defined here as an entity comprising the nation-states in which individuals are engaged in civic matters and as a socially constructed space through shared civic activities between people living or having lived in different civil societies. First, I introduce the structure of transnational civic space by examining the macro, meso and micro levels of these spaces. Next the focus is on exploring the meso and micro levels of this space from transnational and social learning perspectives. I look at informants' civic engagements and activities particularly in associations and non-governmental organisations as well as their learning experiences related to these. I examine how the informants reflected, adopted and shared different kinds of societal practices and conceptions in border-crossing social environments. Finally, I analyse their diverse modes of ethno-national identification and belonging in a transnational setting.

### 4.3.1 The Structure of Transnational Civic Space

In the following, I examine the structure of transnational civic space. Drawing on the previous definitions of transnational space, particularly by Faist (2000), and the framework applied in the TRANS-NET study (Pitkänen et al. 2012), I explain my own understanding of transnational civic space taking into account the social learning aspect of this dissertation. To illustrate these levels, I present examples from the existing research on transnational civic domain.

On macro level, international agreements on migrants' rights and also regional[21] and national immigration, integration and citizenship policies provide the general legal and administrative framework which affects both migrants' civic agency and membership in terms of citizenship and residence status (also Faist 2000; Pitkänen et al. 2012). The political structures and socio-economic contexts in both sending and receiving countries shape and are shaped by migrants' transnational engagements (Østergaard-Nielsen 2001). Citizenship has traditionally been connected to a membership in an autonomous political community including special rights and obligations, and opportunities for political participation in this community. However, migrants' border-crossing practices and forms of belonging have been challenging the traditional interconnection between 'identities-borders-orders' (Vertovec 2004, 2009; Faist 2004). While migrants can live in one nation-state and participate in its civic activities, they can hold citizenship of another state, and can feel sense of belonging to the national community living in this state. On the other hand, through dual citizenship, they can simultaneously enjoy formal membership of two different nation-states, and also enjoy rights to participate in the political decision-making of both societies. Furthermore, there are no longer strict boundaries between citizens and non-citizens. For example, the European states have been granting more rights to permanent foreign residents. EU citizens in particular enjoy privileges in another EU Member State, such as the right to vote in local and European Parliament elections.

As regards the Estonia-Finland transnational space, Finnish and Estonian integration and citizenship policies have taken different paths. Finnish integration policies in recent decades have focused on supporting the integration of long-term foreign residents. While the measures first focused particularly on asylum seekers and refugees, the integration regulations and activities are now targeted at all groups of immigrants. The aim has been to support the equal opportunities of immigrants to participate in Finnish society while maintaining their own cultural and linguistic heritage. Nevertheless administrative and educational practices have had assimilationist tendencies disregarding the idea of two-way integration processes (Vasta 2007) including the need for the majority to integrate to a culturally diverse society. On the other hand, in Estonia, the key issue has been how to integrate the large group of internal migrants from the Soviet era, i.e. those who moved to Estonia from other parts of the Soviet Union. This has involved

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[21] With regional policies I refer in particular to the EU policies on immigration and on the rights of EU citizens.

debates on rights to citizenship, dual citizenship and the language rights of minorities. Estonian integration policy follows neoliberal ideas underlining that individual migrants bear the main responsibility for their integration. Since Estonia's entry into the European Union migration policies have been liberalised, granting more rights particularly to the citizens of other EU Member States. Concerning dual and multiple citizenship, Finland has allowed those who have acquired Finnish citizenship to maintain their former citizenship while Estonia has not yet granted such rights. (Jakobson et al. 2012a; Pitkänen and Kouki 1999; Saukkonen 2013)

On the meso level of transnational civic space, non-governmental organisations, civil movements, transnational networks and informal groups provide arenas in which both migrants and non-migrants can meet and share societal conceptions and practices. Through associative engagements, participants of such groups can also develop and reflect their roles, for example as citizens, non-citizens, permanent residents, or as transmigrants in the societies in which they live. In societies, these meso level actors may play an important role in influencing political decision-making at both local and national levels. International non-governmental organisations, such as Greenpeace and Amnesty International, aim to influence policies both at national, regional and international levels. The transnational networks connecting both movers and stayers also allow cross-border exchange of ideas and behaviours in the civic domain. For example, Jiménez (2008), Córdova and Hiskey (2008) and also Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow (2010) have examined how political ideas have been conveyed across national borders, and how interaction between migrants and non-migrants has affected political beliefs and the level of civic participation of non-mobile populations. The role of these meso level actors in the civic learning processes of informants is discussed in greater detail in the next section.

In the development of civic identity, both educational policies on macro level and educational organisations on meso level, have had a particularly prominent role in socialising individuals to the prevailing ideas concerning citizenship and nationality in a specific country. As, for example, Piattoeva (2010: 28-31) has examined, the main aims of citizenship education have been to promote political participation and engagement, foster the idea of a common national identity, heritage and shared cultural roots as well as to guarantee the loyalty of citizens and national cohesion. Finally, educational institutions have supported fostering the legitimacy of the nation state. As far as migrants are concerned, they can find themselves between two or more different citizenship education traditions: the

tradition taught in their country of origin, the new one prevailing in the current country of settlement, and, possibly, also more options if the migrant has been living and participating in formal education in several countries. Furthermore, if the political regime has undergone rapid transformation as in Eastern Europe in the 1990s, individuals may have embraced two different traditions of citizenship education in the same nation-state.

In addition to educational institutions, other agents of socialisation, such as families, peer groups, associations, religious communities and the media are other arenas in which national and ethnic identities are negotiated and constructed. The Section 4.2.5 highlighted how local Finnish workplaces were important arenas in which the informants developed their identities as full members of Finnish society, and also provided 'windows' for observing and discussing Finnish, Estonian and Russian behaviours with their colleagues. Non-membership of work communities through unemployment was experienced as having delayed the integration of some informants into the host society. Concerning migrant children, the families are often important sites in which national and ethnic identity formation is fostered and performed through different traditions. The ways in which the construction of ethno-national identity was supported and also negotiated in the informants' families has been discussed particularly in the Section 4.1.3.

Studies on migrants' political activities have examined the role of transnational networks and cross-border cooperation of non-governmental organisations. The aim of homeland politics may be to transform the existing political structures in the former home country, or to support particular political organisations and campaigns. Such activities underline the continued importance of transnational ties to the country of emigration for some migrants. For example, Gakunzi (2006) examined how African Diaspora organisations utilised transnational networks to introduce political conceptions to their countries of origin, and acted as pressure groups via local organisations in their host countries in order to promote political change in their former home countries. Research has shown how there is a great variation between individual migrants and also between different migrants groups in terms of their transnational political activity and engagement. Not all migrants participate intensively in transnational civic activities or in cross-border social movements (Guarnizo et al. 2003; Jakobson et al. 2012b; Vertovec 2009). In addition, it has been debated whether migrants' transnational political activities are transformative, or whether these serve to maintain existing power hierarchies and asymmetries (Guarnizo et al. 2003).

On micro level, individuals have diverse civic ties and activities in these spaces, different ways of identification and sense of belonging as well as reflections on the differences and similarities of societal conceptions and practices in border-crossing environments. In this study, I explore informants' learning experiences in relation to civic participation, living in at least two different societies, and the construction of their ethno-national identification in a transnational setting. The individuals who act and live in transnational environments have to negotiate their ethnic and national identities in terms of at least two nation-states. The legal status through citizenship is also an issue to be decided by the individual in terms of the legal options available. Through associative and political activities, such as voting, migrants can express and experience engagement with either one or two societies depending on the legislation in these countries.

From the perspective of this study, it is significant that living transnationally provides opportunities to examine and reflect upon civil society and political life in at last two different nation-states. Although research on migrant transnationalism has often focused on migrants' political activities and engagement with their country of origin, in this dissertation transnational civic space is understood as a unity comprising the societies in which the individuals are engaged in civic matters and as a socially constructed space through ties and shared activities between migrants and non-migrants living or having lived in different civil societies. As discussed earlier, macro level factors affect and shape individuals' opportunities for civic participation and the forms of membership of different societies.

## 4.3.2    Civic Engagement in Transnational Environments

In this section, I analyse the informants' civic activities and learning experiences with special reference to associations and also to transnational civic collaboration. I examine in what kinds of associations and informal civic groups the informants had participated specifically after immigrating to Finland or during transmigration, and what they reported having learnt through such participation and shared engagement. In addition, I differentiate diverse *trajectories* (Wenger 1998: 154-155) in relation to the informants' civic engagements.

Some informants discussed how interest among Estonians in participating in the activities of associations was generally not widespread. This behaviour was connected to the influence of the Soviet era on the Estonian society: civic activities were strictly curtailed in Estonia during the Soviet occupation of the Baltic

countries. Yet the informants also underlined how several migrants from Estonia had adopted the Finnish style of active civic participation: establishing associations themselves or joining the existing ones as well as planning common projects. Several respondents had engaged in the activities of different kinds of non-governmental organisations and informal groups, such as arts and sports clubs, parents' associations, religious organisations, environmental movements, trade unions, immigrants' organisations, housing associations, political parties, ethnically based associations as well as other informal groups of Estonian/Russian speaking people in the new host country, Finland. A few respondents had themselves established new associations in the country of settlement. In addition, some of the informants had engaged in cross-border cooperation between Estonian and Finnish associations, and also a few in international, non-governmental activities.

In Finland, many associations or informal civic groups in which the informants were involved consisted of host country citizens (usually without migrant background). The participation in shared activities of these groups enabled respondents to observe and reflect on the Finnish ways of conduct, and also compare these with their previous experiences both in the once again independent Estonia and in the former Soviet Union. For example, two informants, Liina and Natalja, pondered the differences and similarities in the decision-making styles of Finns, Estonians and Russians based on their observations of housing associations and corporations (in jointly owned blocks of flats)[22]. Liina was frustrated with the slow Finnish way to seek for common solutions through long discussions, and Natalja had noticed how the Finns were keen on shared, voluntary work in housing associations like in the communes during the Soviet era.

> When they have a short meeting in Estonia, or not even that, if they just decide quickly that this issue will be organised in this way, here in Finland, they may have several meetings, and ponder the issue from different angles /../ For example, in the block of flats in which I lived previously /.../ in my view, all work in garden should be done in May, there is no doubt about it because if you need to spread new soil and also seeds for the lawn, then our chair says 'one has to think about it, and ask them all whether they agree, maybe it could be done in autumn'. But nobody makes a lawn in autumn but

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[22] In Finland, private owners in blocks of flats usually set up housing corporations; the activities and the rights of owners in these units are governed by law.

instead in May. So during the time when she is going around all the others [neighbours], I've already spread the soil and arranged for the bills to be paid

Liina, female, 40-49 years

I always think that Finns resemble Russians in that they work together, for example, in housing corporations, they always do things together, like snow shovelling, they always love to do it together as on the collective farms in the Soviet Union. And it made me think that here it is just like with the Russians, this way, that Finns are like Soviet people in that sense

Natalja, female, 30-39 years

The informants thought about the skills, competences, and social networks they had acquired through involvement in non-governmental activities. Participation in different kinds of clubs and associations enabled informants to become empowered to act both in the new societal setting and also in cross-border contexts. For example, Reet had improved her self-confidence, professional skills and social capital by taking part in the activities of a Finnish non-governmental organisation as well as in international ecumenical activities. Such participation had supported her identity construction as a full, experienced and respected member of the Finnish civil society and also as an active agent in an international religious community. As noted in social practice theory (Holland and Lave 2001; 2009) and situated learning research (for example, Wenger 1998; Lave and Wenger 1991), the on-going identity construction of individuals is shaped by the social groups they engage with as well as the actions they embrace through participation in such activities. Through participating in voluntary, civic activities Reet had also gained an understanding of the benefits of civic and associative engagement for individuals and for society in general.

WHAT DO YOU THINK THIS [VOLUNTARY] WORK WITH ASSOCIATIONS HAS GIVEN YOU? First of all, assurance that although I'm an immigrant, I have a voice, and they listen to me, and [heed] my professional skills, and I have something to give /…/ it has taught me a lot about the world of associations both here and abroad that I see why associations are useful. In Finland, one couldn't do many issues without strong, old associations /…/ and in my own work, I have to be a strong superior and this associative sector has given this strong competence, a result of being in associations, it's

thanks to this associative work /…/ it also provides networks. All these are networks, and day by day, these become wider

Reet, female, 30-39 years

Participation in ethnic associations and informal groups of Estonian or Russian speakers was considered meaningful for maintaining one's native language and being able to share experiences with others having similar roots. Informants with children were particularly keen on joining such clubs in order to give their offspring an opportunity to belong to an Estonian/Russian speaking community. These clubs and associations typically arranged language lessons for adults and children, informal discussions, festivities, cultural activities and excursions. While national identity was often connected to language, fluency in the national language was represented as precondition for the membership of the national community, and also for the ability to maintain transnational connections with the kinship members living in the country of origin, or in another countries. Therefore, the native language was both a part of the *shared repertoire* (Wenger 1998) of these groups and a symbol of *reification* (Wenger 1998) which reified Estonianness/Russianness and shared cultural heritage of these communities. The clubs promoting Estonian/Russian language and culture provided opportunities for the informants to find new insights for understanding their national heritage, historical roots, as well as the cultural/linguistic hybridity exemplified in these environments. For example, one of the informants, Sirje, discussed different ways of speaking about ethnic minorities and perceptions of 'the Other' in Finland and in Estonia. She gave an example of the differences of such discourses from the Estonian club she participated in:

Where I can see Estonia, in a way, is in our club X [an Estonian club in Finland] where people speak Estonian in a Finnish way, well, how Estonian are they then, but somehow, I've got the feeling that there I can see Estonia /…/ for example, in the e-mail list, they discussed who could update the web-pages, and then somebody commented that I could do the *dog's work* [the respondent is using the word *neekeri*, an offensive word in Finnish, referring to a black person], and I almost fell out of the chair, excuse me, what, and then I when I told this to my Finnish friend, the same reaction, how can you say such things, you cannot say such things but Estonians don't react to it in the same way

Sirje, female, 30-39 years

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An interesting feature of the clubs for Estonians in Finland was that there were also native Finns taking part in the activities: Finns who were interested in learning Estonian language and culture. Consequently, such clubs let both native Finns and Estonian speakers get acquainted with another linguistic group and different cultural practices, and provided local, border-crossing learning environments connecting both migrants and non-migrants. In addition, some of the clubs enabled participants also to share professional knowledge and widen their occupational networks.

The complex way in which socio-cultural heritage is understood, maintained, and negotiated in a transnational setting is exemplified by the account of Annikki who explained she had Ingrian Finnish roots but had grown up in a multilingual environment in which Estonian, Russian and Ingrian Finnish were spoken. Her attempt to engage with the activities of an Ingrian-Finnish association in Finland failed, because she felt she did not share the same language, cultural habits, or life-experiences as the other members of this club. Therefore, her learning trajectory can be characterized as an *outbound trajectory* (Wenger 1998) leading out of the community due to failing to associate her interpretation of Ingrian Finnish identity and tradition with the shared practices of this group.

> I joined an association for Ingrian Finns but then I realised that I'm so far apart from that association because I was brought up in Estonia and there [in the association for Ingrian Finns] the younger ones didn't speak Finnish at all. The wives and husbands of the offspring of Ingrian Finns spoke Finnish and even they spoke it so badly, and some of the elderly people spoke it and some didn't, and the others, I didn't understand them, and also the manners were rather Russian, and then I decided not to go there. It was not the Ingrian [Finnish] which my mother spoke to me.

> Annikki, female, 50-59 years

Some informants had engaged in the activities of organisations mainly including citizens of the host country and also in ethnic/diasporic associations. Participation in the associations of ethnic minorities was not considered as a hindrance to participate in the organisations of the majority population. Rather such multi-membership was perceived as enriching their perspectives and also widening their social networks. A Russian-speaking informant, Svetlana, reported how involvement in associations could foster both integration into the new home country and maintaining of one's own cultural roots.

I think different kinds of organisations, associations, and volunteers' clubs can assist and support integration, and I belong to several [laughs] associations, indeed. And then hobbies, my hobby is /.../ it's a really important hobby for me and it has supported my whole life, that physical exercise, we have our own group, I've joined a Finnish group, and we have our own issues, and belonging to a group, that's really important for a human being, and, for immigrants, that's even more important. Belonging to a group in which there are no other immigrants, not just as a representative of immigrants but rather as a member of the Finnish group. But also that Russian speaking, one's own native language, magazines, media, support groups and parties are really important if there is a chance to be a part of one's own cultural group

Svetlana, female, 40-49 years

Only a few informants had actively engaged in religious or political organisations. The informants often underlined how religious activities were forbidden or strictly monitored in Estonia during the Soviet occupation. Therefore, religion as such, and religious associations had remained distant and foreign for many interviewees. Although some had joined religious organisations or taken part in religious ceremonies in Finland, their participation in such practices was often rather sporadic. Religion was considered more a personal affair rather than something which could be socially shared and practiced. One of the informants reflected how engaging Estonians in religious activities was a slow process; the non-religious mindset which had prevailed in the Soviet era still had a strong impact on Estonian society. Concerning political parties, the informants who had actively participated in these in the new host country described how they felt having been treated only as immigrants and not as full members of these parties. For example, in municipal elections, the parties had highlighted the immigrant background of these informants standing as candidates while they would have preferred to show their professional competence and general interests to support community development. Therefore, the informants' engagement with political associations can be described as following a *peripheral trajectory* (Wenger 1998) providing only a limited access to the practices of these groups.

There were a few informants who had been particularly active in the work of associations by establishing new associations themselves, and engaging in these as full members, continuously developing the practices within the organisations, exemplifying *insider trajectories* (Wenger 1998) in such communities. For example,

Airi, with Ingrian Finnish roots, described how first feeling marginalised in Finland with few contacts with other Estonian migrants, she had decided to set up a local association for Estonians to widen her own social contacts as well as to foster her children's cultural roots and fluency in Estonian language. The members of the association, mostly Estonian-speaking mothers and children, formed an *ethnic community of practice* which allowed them to share experiences, foster their ethnic, linguistic, and gender identities, and engage in shared activities, such as informal meetings, play actings, and arranging festivities. The competence gained in voluntary civic activities had opened up a new career for Airi in immigrants' affairs. Through this professional experience, she had enhanced her understanding of the integration problems faced by many immigrants: 'there were few opportunities for immigrants to show their skills and competences, it was difficult to even obtain an internship'. Therefore, with other immigrants she had founded a new multicultural organisation which was open to all immigrants regardless of their ethnic, linguistic or cultural origins. The aim of this organisation was to support the integration of immigrants to the new host society, provide a platform for meeting others with migrant background, promote the empowerment of these groups, and support the maintenance of their ethnic and linguistic roots. The organisation had arranged diverse activities, for example, clubs for elderly Ingrian Finns, art classes for Russian-speaking children, sports for migrant women as well as general advice and support for all immigrants in that region. Furthermore, the organisation also conducted transnational charity projects with Russian-speaking families in the western part of Russia by arranging summer camps for such families. Consequently, this organisation was an example of a *multicultural community of practice* in which people with diverse transnational roots engaged in shared activities supporting their empowerment in the new society, and this also provided opportunities for *brokering* (Wenger 1998) across linguistic, ethnic and national demarcations.

A few informants belonged to non-governmental organisations, such as professional and political associations, in Estonia either as active or passive participants. Regarding professional organisations, the membership was useful for enlarging the professional networks of the informants, and also facilitating cross-border exchange of ideas particularly on business and scientific affairs. With respect to the political realm, the membership had more a symbolic function. For example, an Estonian-speaking informant, Kert, explained how she had actively been engaged in voluntary defence organisations and patriotic students' associations while she was studying in Estonia, but she had maintained her

membership due to a desire to maintain her national affiliation. Consequently, these associative ties were a way intended to foster her *imagination* (Wenger 1998) of belonging to the Estonian national community in spite of residing outside the borders of the nation-state. Nations form imagined communities (Anderson 1991) to which individuals can feel they belong both through imagination and concrete actions, such as the activities carried out in voluntary defence organisations.

> For example, I belong to a kind of women's voluntary organisation in Estonia, there were such in Finland, too [before the Second World War], I'm a member of it. That's the best place in Estonia where you can maintain your patriotism and it's really important for me /…/ the other thing is that students' association where I've been a superior. Around the world there are 800 members, and in the local X there are around 200 members /…/ That's the place where I've been able to show my Estonianness, and demonstrate [the meaning of] independence, we really value it, and also remind others about it

> Kert, female, 20-29 years

A few informants reported on the present or past cross-border cooperation between Estonian and Finnish associations in the cultural, civic and health sectors. The history of Finnish-Estonian cross-border cooperation between non-governmental organisations dates back to the early 1900s, and has its roots in the feelings of brotherhood between the two nations and expression of solidarity for the Estonians due to Soviet occupation since the Second World War until Estonia re-gained its independence in 1991. The Finnish and Estonian associations had been able restart their transnational cooperation as of the late 1980s due to the liberalisation period in the Soviet Union. (Jakobson et al. 2012a) Some of the informants underlined the importance of these activities for their workplaces, and also for providing the first direct contacts with the Finns and the Finnish language which later also supported their immigration to Finland. For example, an Estonian doctor explained how, thanks to non-governmental, cross-border cooperation with the Finns in the late 1980s and early 1990s, she was able to enhance her linguistic skills and obtain new, professional knowledge through the material cross-border transfers. The binational cooperation provided opportunities for *boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998), such as meetings of delegations, between migrants and non-migrants which enabled cross-border flows of material, people and ideas to take place particularly after the regaining of Estonian -independence, also resembling the notion of *transnational social space* (Faist 2000) characterised by such flows.

In addition, an informant working in the media sector, Silvi, explained how since the early 1990s she had aimed to support the restoration of civil society and the tradition of voluntary work in Estonia. In Finland she had found good models and partners for such transnational civic cooperation, resulting in cross-border flows of ideas, practices and people. Silvi had been a particularly active *broker* (Wenger 1998) between an Estonian local community and a Finnish municipality, supporting the development of voluntary community activities in her country of origin.

> The thing I'm interested in is how to make people to cooperate again because during the Soviet time it was politically controlled, and then I set up in my home village, where I come from, in Estonia /…/ when Estonia got independence, I wanted to create civic activities through which people could work voluntarily for their community. I searched for models from Finland, and I also found a twin municipality in Finland, and then cooperation began. Then I trained all the elders of the village because they didn't have such activities and I had to find some people who could coordinate this voluntary work /…/ I did it all the time between Finland and Estonia, and then people began to cooperate, and this still continues there. These people, schools, municipalities, and some entrepreneurs, and also some folk dance clubs began to cooperate
>
> Silvi, female, 50-59 years

Some respondents had taken part in transnational cooperation which was not only limited to Estonia-Finland transnational space but also extended to other countries. These transnational communities united Estonians living in different countries. For example, Kaarina, with Ingrian Finnish roots, had taken part in the activities of the internet community of handicraft enthusiasts. This community consisted mostly of Estonian-speaking women living in different countries. It enabled them to communicate in Estonian with other members sharing the same passion and also to socialise with others of the same national origin. The activities were not limited to net communication but also included charity projects in Estonia. Although the net group consisted mainly of Estonian speakers, others could also visit the pages and obtain ideas through looking at the pictures and photos of handicraft designs without knowing the language. This mostly *virtual community of practice* exemplifies different features of CoPs as described by Wenger (1998). *Mutual engagement* was related to their shared on-line activities and also commonly organised charity projects. Their *shared repertoire* included shared ways of displaying their products, shared concepts and projects, such as 'Nominations for

the Mother/Father of the Year' in which they crocheted bed covers in the colours of the Estonian flag, and gave these to the nominees. *Joint enterprise* covered, for example, their net discussions and negotiations on forthcoming activities and targets. As explained above, the activities were mostly carried out on a virtual plane but some projects were also arranged outside the on-line environment. Through shared activities participants also fostered their gender and national identities in a cross-border setting.

Jaanis had engaged in cross-border cooperation with other Estonian migrant groups located in different countries. Such transnational cooperation allowed the participants to share ideas about their activities and, more generally, about integration policies of the host countries. These diaspora groups of Estonians faced the same kind of challenges outside their country of origin, and were able to find shared concerns with other diaspora groups of Estonians. While diaspora political cooperation prior to 1991 had focused particularly on supporting the regaining of Estonian -independence, and publicizing the case of Estonia internationally, transnational cooperation was more focused on the integration policies of the host country after the formation of second republic of independent Estonia. During the interview, Jaanis compared the Swedish integration model to the Finnish one, suggesting that acknowledging the significance of migrant associations for the successful integration of immigrants, as in Sweden, could be beneficial for the national integration policies in Finland.

> There will be the Eston days this year in Germany, every fourth year in a different city. There was a time when Estonians tried there to influence the policies of different countries to recognise Estonia's quest for independence /…/ But now we keep contacts because I've got more issues to discuss with a Swedish -Estonian than with an Estonian living in Estonia. We have the same experiences, the same problems, the same ideas

> Jaanis, male, 30-39 years

To conclude, non-governmental associations and informal civic groups had been important learning environments for several respondents. Through their active engagement with these communities of practice they had been able to learn the Finnish ways of civic engagement, understand their own historical and linguistic heritage, widen their social networks and foster their agency in a transnational setting. However, within associations different cultural conceptions and traditions were negotiated and contested, and the informants had also been opposing and criticising prevailing practices. Therefore, as noted by several

researchers (for example, Contu and Willmott 2003; Fuller et al. 2005; Holland and Lave 2001; 2009; Jewson 2007) conflicts, disagreements and struggles are an integral part of the on-going development of social groups sharing practices. Cross-border cooperation between Finnish, Estonian and Russian associations had provided opportunities for *transnational brokering*: sharing conceptions and practices regarding civic activities between different communities of practice, across national borders. In addition, brokering also took place at local levels: through multi-membership of different associations the informants had been conveying ideas from one association to another. These brokers had facilitated the exchange of conceptions and practices across linguistic and cultural borders, both between people of migrant origin and also between migrants and non-migrants.

### 4.3.3 Comparing, Adopting and Sharing Societal Beliefs, Practices and Mindsets

In this section I explore informants' descriptions on their societal learning experiences with particular reference to Finland, Estonia and the former Soviet Union. Yet informants' cross-border learning was not limited to these societies. Particularly those informants who had lived in other countries in addition these two contemplated their learning in light of these different settings they had experienced. Those informants who described having roots or feeling sense of belonging to several linguistic or ethnic groups connected their identity development and changes in belief systems to several cultural or national groups.

Several informants underlined how living in a transnational setting had widened their perspectives. They could analyse and discuss different societal phenomena from diverse viewpoints. Having lived in at least two different nation-states and societies had been an enriching experience: understanding local and national differences and being able to analyse these from a distance. The expanded mindset had taught them tolerance: one could understand that people had different views, beliefs and practices. Cultural diversity was no longer seen as a threat but rather as an adventure and an intellectual challenge.

> DO YOU THINK THERE ARE ANY ADVANTAGES OR DISADVANTAGES IN LIVING TRANSNATIONALLY, OPERATING IN FINLAND AND IN ESTONIA, OR HAVING CONNECTIONS BOTH WAYS? The advantage is a somewhat widened perspective, and then one can observe both societies and practices in a way from outside. But could this also be a mental disadvantage that one cannot feel being a part of the system when observing it? /…/ the

advantages are, of course, that you know two languages, two systems, know and feel matters, advantages in everyday life but also interesting to oneself

Helda, female, 30-39 years

Yet the informants also highlighted that living transnationally was also an enervating experience. Adjusting to living 'simultaneously two lives' in two societies requires individuals to engage in self-reflection and carry out identity work. One needs to explore one's own roots, cultural backgrounds, frame of reference, and challenge previous assumptions. Some informants noted that in order to integrate into the new environment, people need to make some adjustments to their conduct and frames of reference. Yet the country of origin is also constantly in flux, practices and belief systems also evolve there. Therefore, following societal developments in both countries, aiming to understand these and adjusting one's behaviour depending on the setting is a constant challenge.

> CAN YOU MENTION ANY ADVANTAGES OR DISADVANTAGES OF LIVING IN THIS WAY, TRANSNATIONALLY? Well, more knowledge can bring also more pain, I often feel this enriching that I can see more, I have, in a way, more opportunities, I can laugh at more jokes. A good example is that you cannot translate Russian jokes into any other language. And it's not only about the language; you have to adopt certain models of thought to identify certain models. Even if we speak French very well we'll always be tourists unless we can get into French society. But when you can do it, then you can observe the social situation, that's really rewarding. On the other side, it's also very tiring, very enervating. As a Finn has said, people live three times faster in Estonia. But I think this is not only about Finland and Estonia /…/ one could say that you live simultaneously many lives. It's richness but it also takes a lot of energy, it's wearing

> Ranno, male, 40-49 years

For the informants the Estonia-Finland transnational space was a part of their lived experiences: most of them felt that both countries were important to them. Learning societal practices and conceptions involved processes of imagination. Through *imagination*, individuals can locate their belonging in broader social systems, such as nations, although they cannot directly engage in these (Wenger 1998: 185-186). Through historical stories, rituals, songs and films, i.e. a shared repertoire of communities, individuals can create and reproduce ideas of a common history and roots. The informants had been observing and analysing the

roots of the Finnish, Russian and Estonian way of life and mindset through different kinds of artefacts: for example, TV programmes, newspaper articles, novels, songs and stories. In addition, some of them also pointed out how their national belonging and identity were also linked to such products.

> Here in Finland, I've recognized something unique in myself: I'm a kind of patriot, that's peculiar, when I lived in Estonia I just wanted to [move to] Europe. Lets say it's your own deep identity which you don't want to lose. Many things which are connected to Estonianness are important such as some foods, or difficult to say precisely, some TV programmes, you notice how you have this strong attachment to them, you notice you have this deep cultural identity only when you live abroad
>
> Grete, female, 30-39 years

It also emerged that fluency in knowledge of the local language was not enough to obtain an insider's understanding of a socio-cultural setting. Such knowledge could be obtained only gradually: immigrants could not quickly gain all that societal and cultural understanding which native Finns had been learning throughout their life in different kinds of communities of practice, at educational institutions and through the media. Therefore, they might lack an understanding of cultural, historical and social contexts even if they were fluent in the national language(s).

> It's not only about the language. Who were those *characters* [saying this in English] of *Pikku Kakkonen* [a Finnish TV programme for children]? CHARACTERS? [the interviewer replying in Finnish] Yes, these characters, I just don't know these. Even if you told me, I wouldn't get the idea but still everybody assumes that I know these. Then it happens like this that I go to lunch with two Finnish colleagues and they speak to each other all the time because they don't notice that when they mention, for example, a name of politician who has passed way, or the name of a writer, I just don't know it, then I have [a feeling] that the language does not take me far enough
>
> Sirje, female, 30-39 years

The informants often described having understood national differences in conceptions, beliefs and practices through discussions with family members and friends. Such discussions had also showed them how their own belief systems had gradually changed, and were no longer identical with those of people living in the country of origin. The informants who had other international experiences noticed they had taken on board influences from different sources, not only from Estonia

and Finland. The changes in beliefs and practices related to, for example, gender roles, political decision-making and codes of ethics. The changes in belief systems and ways of conduct had also affected their national identities: adopting a Finnish mindset was interpreted as also becoming Finnish despite Estonian, Russian, or other ethnic roots.

During the interviews the informants compared Estonian, Russian and Finnish behaviour and values. Differences in people's conduct were often associated with the historical development of Finland, Estonia and the former Soviet Union. It was noticed how the Soviet system and the rapid social change in Estonia after 1991 had affected people's ways of thinking and actions. In general Finnish society was regarded as more mature and developed than the Estonian society. It was moreover perceived that the institutional and historical developments in these societies had affected people's values and practices. As Holland and Lave (2001; 2009) have discussed, historical, socio-cultural and political struggles shape local practices and also the individuals participating in these while changes at local -level can also affect the macro level.

> I've always said that if there are some differences in ways of behaving between Finland and Estonia both in relation to the state and people, then this is not because Finnish or Estonian people are so different. Although Finns are a bit slower than Estonians, and think over issues for a longer time, and Estonians are fast in making decisions and also withdrawing from these, this is all because Estonia is still a rather young country. We could say that Estonia is like in its teenage or gradually emerging from it while Finland is already an adult state, or even takes the role of grandparent. If you think people, ways of behaving also evolve over years when nations and states become older these also change
>
> Indrek, male, 30-39 years

The Finns' character was associated with many positive features: honesty, trustworthiness and peacefulness, while Estonian society and people were considered the opposite with respect to these features. One can naturally ponder whether citing such positive features was related to the fact that the interviewers were Finns, and the interviewees had migrant backround. On the other hand the informants also pointed out diverse phenomena which, in their view, were negative sides of the Finnish society. Interestingly, shortcomings in the conduct of Estonians were frequently attributed to the Soviet system. Some of the informants had somewhat romanticised picture of 'old Estonia': at that time, people were

honest, law-abiding and assisted those in need. In Finland, they had re-discovered this old, ideal society.

> I visited X's allotment [in Finland], and suddenly, I got this strange feeling that the place and the region could be similar to what Estonia might have been before the Russians came. They had left a broom by the door as a sign that nobody was at home but they were nearby. They had also left a wheelbarrow outside. To be honest, stealing is a strange habit which came to Estonia from Russia.

> Oliver, male, 40-49 years

Finnish society was also seen as more organised than Estonian society. Furthermore, respondents claimed that political decisions were deliberated longer and more carefully in Finland than in Estonia which made life more secure and predictable in the former. Although many informants considered the well-organised and systematic functioning of Finnish institutions an advantage, it was also pointed out as a handicap: the Finnish organisations could not make rapid changes when needed while the Estonian ones were more flexible in this sense. Estonian society, on the other hand, was considered more innovative and amenable to changes than Finnish society. The Estonians could take risks, and fail and try again – or succeed. Particularly in business and working life one could perceive the differences, and understanding these different styles of behaviour was also a key to success in this transnational space. The ability to achieve an understanding of the beliefs and practices applied in diverse communities, particularly in these two societies, had fostered the *transnational competence* (Koehn and Rosenau 2010) of the informants, particularly the *analytic competence*, and sharing these ideas to solve transnational cooperation problems, had enhanced the *functional competence* of some of the informants.

Some of the interviewees had experiences of personal growth and learning in relation to the Finnish values and practices mentioned above: they felt that they had themselves changed their behaviour when they had been living in Finnish society, for example, by becoming more organised or peaceful. Therefore, by observing the practices of diverse communities, they had taken on board some of their behaviours.

I've learnt to be precise here, which is maybe not that common in the Estonian context, I've learnt to be precise, for example, in working life with all the bills, papers, and such, and to do things as promised, and to fill in these in a certain way

Helle, female, 20-29 years

I'm more peaceful and positive now, I always try to remain calm. Before I came to Finland, I was always nervous or angry but now I always try to be positive if I discuss with a mate or go to a shop in a town, even if a shop assistant makes a mistake, I say 'it doesn't matter'. Those are the things I've learnt in Finland.

Jan, male, 40-49 years

The different styles of public discussion had also been perceived. For example, the Finnish media were regarded as introvert, while the informants had noticed that the Estonian media had more critical debates and more reports on other countries. Many informants regularly followed both the Finnish and the Estonian media, and the Russian-speaking informants also the Russian media, thus they could make observations on what was reported, how, and by whom in these societies. This enabled them to widen their perspectives on societal issues in these countries, styles of reporting and events outside this Estonia-Finland space. The Estonian-speaking informants noted that following political events in Russia was vital for understanding potential future developments and the implications for Estonia. The informants had also been interpreting Finnish behaviour through news which had been reported in media. The different ways of behaviour reflected in the news had been discussed with friends, relatives and colleagues both in Finland and across national borders.

I'm interested in what Finns report in their newspapers/…/ what happens in Finland, that's really important but what happens in the world, something happens there, too, well, that's a side issue. Well, sometimes those Twin Towers collapse somewhere [referring to the 9/11 attacks] and al-Qaida exists somewhere but, listen to this: a car was run over by a train here in X [a Finnish town] /…/ An Estonian thinks that I'm so small and so insignificant, and there are so few of us, and all the important events happen out there/…/ I don't know, maybe it's again the Russian influence [in

Estonia], a large nation in the country, and its pressure is strong, there are over 400, 000, 450, 000 Russians and Ukrainians in Estonia

Oliver, male, 40-49 years

The differences in gender relations and positions in these countries also raised discussion: Estonia was generally regarded as a more patriarchal country than Finland in this respect. Ideas on gender relations in particular were changing slowly although, in working life, the Estonian women may have been even more successful than Finnish women in gaining leadership positions. A few informants reported that they had adopted new conceptions on gender relations during their stay in Finland, and these issues had also been debated among family members. Yet traditional ideas on gender roles had been identified in Finnish kinship communities, as well.

In fact, attitudes towards women, are really rather different [gives a laugh] rather different indeed. Estonia is still quite patriarchal country, I have been changing myself over time, too. I've started to think about these issues in a different way, to observe matters. When I visit Estonia, I can see that old, patriarchal attitude. It's quite difficult to define but one can clearly feel it.

Romi, male, 50-59 years

In addition to engagement in associations, ties to host country citizens and to friends and relatives living in other countries provided opportunities for the respondents to exchange and acquire societal conceptions and practices. Through these different kinds of cross-border contacts, contemporary societal issues related to Finland and Estonia were also discussed and ideas questioned. This informal communication, often occurring in pairs (one-to-one) and sometimes in small groups, enabled informants both to share news, new ideas they had adopted or views they had encountered, and also to adopt new perspectives, conceptions and practices. Following Wenger's ideas (1998:108-110), the informants were engaged in *brokering* also through their friendship connections between different communities: both introducing new ideas but also suggesting possible interpretation of events and traditions in society adopted in the host country or in their country of origin.

I have to say that Estonian friends are often on the defensive, 'oh yes, we have it too' [saying the phrase in quotation marks in a different tone] Although I say that this is arranged much better in Finland [they reply] 'we do, we do as well' [repeating the same tone] /../ but quite often they ask out

of curiosity how this social issue has been arranged in Finland, and then I explain a lot, and then [they reply] 'why it can't be like that here'. We talk quite a lot about the differences between these two societies

Romi, male, 50-59 years

…attitudes towards other cultures and other people, I don't know whether I've learnt them from Finland or through my work or my occupation. In fact, it has been learnt in Finland because all these attitudes towards difference and minorities are gentler here in Finland, and we sometimes have quite heated debates on these DO YOU HAVE THESE DEBATES HERE IN FINLAND OR ELSEWHERE? Well, both here in Finland with Estonian friends and acquaintances but also in Estonia

Helda, female, 30-39 years

Communication between friends was mostly limited to one-to-one conversations which represent one form of *boundary encounters* between individuals belonging to different communities of practice; such encounters offer opportunities to exchange and adopt new practices and ideas. According to Wenger (1998:111-112), the advantage of such one-to-one contacts is that participants can be candid about their own communities and practices, yet individuals cannot fully convey all aspects of their own practice without the presence of others and everyday activities.

A couple of informants had engaged in cross-border activities aiming to influence political beliefs and decision-making through their professional activities. For example, they had written newspaper articles, updated blogs on societal issues, and lectured on political themes. The purpose of these activities had been to introduce new political perspectives, ideas, concepts and successful civic innovations mainly from the country of settlement to the country of origin. Therefore, these endeavours can be explained through the concept of *political remittances* (see, for example, Córdova and Hiskey 2008; Jiménez 2008; Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow 2010; cf. social remittances, Levitt 1998; 2001a), i.e. conveying political conceptions and practices from the country of immigration back to the country of emigration. Such agency can be described as an example of *transnational brokering* in the civic realm: introducing beliefs and practices from one community to another. Concerning the media, these activities were, in fact, targeted at a wider society, not only at one specific community of practice. One

respondent with an academic background explained her transnational political practices in this way:

> I have been writing to the Estonian newspapers/../ doing different kinds of articles, I get more requests from there than here./../ I have also been giving public appearances on societal events, the political parties have also noticed and contacted me. /../ Previously, I was maybe trying to advertise the Nordic welfare state model and criticising such strict economic policy but nowadays it's maybe more different issues, like encounters between different cultures and nationalities, conflicts, integration issues and general discussion on values.

> Tiiu, female, 40-49 years

### 4.3.4 Construction of Ethno-National Identity and Membership of Societies in a Transnational Setting

Many Estonian-speaking informants, particularly those who had migrated recently but also some long-term residents, underlined a strong identification with the Estonian nation. Among long-term residents, particularly those who were married to native Estonians had maintained a *firm national, Estonian identity*. Through *imagination* (Wenger 1998) they could feel unity with other Estonians across time and space. They considered that they would always remain Estonians because of their roots, socio-cultural heritage, and continuing bond with the Estonian state through their citizenship. Becoming Estonian was seen as a result of growing into this culture and learning the historical traditions of the nation through their experiences in the family, at school and other group memberships throughout their lives, i.e. enculturation processes through both primary and secondary socialisation. In addition, some of the informants considered that 'Estonianness' was transferred 'in the blood', inherited genetically from one's ancestors.

> WHAT DOES THE FACT THAT YOU ARE A CITIZEN OF ESTONIA MEANS TO YOU? Well, you can't get rid of it, it's the entire cultural background that I am an Estonian, and one cannot change it. It's such a long history, practices, ways and habits to which you have been raised, already at grandmother's, and it portrays how these different dimensions of a citizen or differences come up, those things which others wonder at

> Mari-Liis, female, 40-49 year

Estonian citizenship means specifically that I am Estonian and I have to defend my country. Estonian blood flows in my veins, Estonian language, Estonian habits and history and everything.

Jaak, male, 20-29 years

Yet this nationalistic attachment was often associated with a feeling of loyalty towards the Finnish state, as well. Living transnational lives through engaging in both Finnish and Estonian societies was connected to 'being or feeling at home here and there'. Loyalty to the new host country was shown by 'obeying all laws and rules, paying taxes, and being diligent workers', i.e. adopting some behaviours which the informants associated more with Finns than Estonians or Russians. These respondents perceived no conflict in maintaining a firm Estonian ethno-national identity while also being full members of Finnish society. In this way they showed a *sentiment of dual citizenship* (Jakobson et al. 2012b), i.e. being connected to their country of origin through formal, national citizenship, and to the host society through social citizenship (cf. also Bauböck 2007). Applying the framework of Jakobson et al. (2012b) concerning different dimensions of citizenship, the informants underlined the importance of their Estonian citizenship as an identity involving identification with and loyalty to the state. On the other hand, they felt connected to Finnish civil society through their membership of different kinds of societal groups, identification with civil society, and civic participation.

Well, I feel entirely Estonian, 100 per cent, not at all Finnish. I feel I am a full member of Finnish society although not as a Finn

Ranno, male, 40-49 years

There were also many respondents who expressed manifestations of *transnational identification*. Many long-term residents in Finland as well as those who had strong bonding ties with Finns, particularly through marriage, explained having experienced a gradual change of their identity from Estonian identity to binational identity. Some recently arrived migrants intending to stay permanently in Finland also expressed feeling both Finnish and Estonian. Contextually shifting identities were manifest in the ways the informants described their changing identity: they felt Finnish in Finland and Estonian in their country of origin, or, conversely

Finnish in Estonia and Estonian in the host country. The mixed identity was associated with a feeling of in-betweenness, being 'somewhere in-between' Finnish and Estonian. Yet these informants did not associate this with not being integrated or being outside society, rather they stressed they felt integrated 'here' in the local community and at home in both societies.

Those informants who had married a native Finn, connected their gradually transformed transnational identity with adopting and combining Finnish, Estonian or Russian beliefs, practices and mindsets in their everyday lives. Therefore, informants' accounts on their identity development revealed how the processes of transnational, social learning were taking place in binational families. Furthermore, transnational identity was connected to the changing linguistic behaviours, such as speaking Estonian with a Finnish accent, or gradually declining proficiency in the native language.

> In some things, I feel and I notice that I think like the Finns, for example, when I discuss something with my sister or with my mum. This everyday life has transformed me /…/ I cannot say absolutely that I'm Finnish and I can't any more say I'm Estonian but it's a bit of both

> Mari, female, 40-49 years

> *Do you feel you are totally, partly or maybe not at all Finnish, Estonian, or something else?* Fifty-fifty *So, both Finnish and Estonian?* Yes, when I visit Estonia, also my dad says that I speak Estonian with an accent [laughs] and then when I speak Finnish, I'm not a Finn, look you can also hear it

> Katri, female, 30-39 years

Those reporting having ancestors with different national and linguistic backgrounds associated their multicultural identity with either inherited features because of their roots, or with their experiences of engaging in diverse social groups and communities. Because of not belonging to 'visible minorities', the informants were able to change their identification to reflect their changing position in these two societies. For example, Helda, with multicultural roots, explained how she wanted to belong to minority groups in both societies.

> [I feel] probably both Finnish and Estonian. Last Friday, I explained I'm, in fact, Finnish-Estonian-Russian. I was born into a family where the mother was Finnish and father Russian-Estonian but, in practice, Russian language

was [spoken] at my father's home. Estonian language was then adopted as a majority language and society from outside. However, in my life Russianness has now receded /.../ In Estonia, I felt, and it was written in my passport, that I am Finnish. Then I felt that it was really important to stress this, it was the minority part in me. But when I moved to Finland, it was import to emphasise that I am Estonian because it was minority here. One has to always somehow keep up that minority side

Helda, female, 30-39 years

A few informants identified themselves as feeling partly or solely cosmopolitans. Such identity was related to their international mindset and spiritual beliefs which underlined the shared roots and global interconnectedness of people around the world. Therefore, this identification could be also called *global identity* which Pries (2013) connects with the universal humanism and the idea of shared humanity on global scale. On the other hand, a few informants presented themselves, for example, as 'cosmopolitan Estonians' which could be described as a manifestation of *glocal identity* (Pries 2013) combining both local and global features. In addition, there were a few informants who manifested a *regional* identity connecting the development of their ethno-national identity to a particularly region where they had inhabited, for example, to the area bordering on the Baltic Sea.

Among the informants, there were a few who expressed *ambiguous identity*, i.e. being unable to explain their ethno-national identity and also feeling excluded from their community and on the margins of both societies. While Bennett (1993) associated *encapsulated marginality* with disintegration in shifting cultures and alienation in multicultural contexts, these informants felt alienated in both societies. Many of these informants also explained having experienced discrimination either in occupational domains or in public arenas. Living transnationally had not been an empowering experience for this group. Rather they had become *vagabonds* described by Baumann (1996:28) as those who can never be 'the native' and 'the settled one' but instead experiencing exclusion from all societies in which they have lived. Tiaynen (2013) also drew attention to how migrants' feeling of multi-local presence was experienced as disorientating, feeling homeless and belonging nowhere, in particular, if associated with experiences of discrimination in various locations.

> HOW DO YOU FEEL AT THE MOMENT, DO YOU FEEL YOU ARE FINNISH, ESTONIAN, INGRIAN FINNISH, EUROPEAN OR WHICH IDENTITY COULD YOU THINK OF? Oh, this has been so difficult because Ingrian Finns have never been accepted as a part of a community anywhere. We have been

strangers everywhere. No land of our own or anything. Not even our own language, our father could still speak it but he never taught it to us, perhaps because he didn't want any difficulties for us /…/ Because Estonians always rejected me, listen, you are nothing.So who do you think you are? And it was also awkward for me to try to explain who I am and where my country is.

Hilkka, female, 30-39 years

Language emerges as an important marker of boundaries in this Estonia-Finland transnational space. As there are usually no visible differences between, for example, the individuals identifying themselves as Estonians, Russians, or Finns, language becomes a sign of belonging or not belonging to a specific, ethnic or national community. The interviewees had noticed how even minor deficiencies in their speech could be recognised by the Finns. The non-native speaker had been defined as 'the Other', or as a person living on the margins of one's own national group. One of the informants explained having paid particular attention to 'speaking like a native', displaying an identity of a Finn by speaking flawlessly in certain situations although revealing Estonianness on other occasions. Ullman (2004) also drew attention to how the strategic use of language in specific environments enabled migrants to *perform* certain identities. In these cases, nationality was performed through certain styles of speech.

I could say that the time when I was selling flowers [at restaurants] has contributed my improving my language [skills in Finnish] a great deal so that nobody could notice that I'm Estonian. In the beginning, they asked a lot, of course, 'Are you a Russian whore or from Estonia'? [saying this in the slurred speech of a drunken person] Because of this I began to listen to very carefully to how a Finn says a certain word /…/ But in the beginning it was rather negative, particularly, on the streets, among ordinary people

Maarja, female, 30-39 years

The informants' accounts reveal how the identities are constructed both through the ways how individuals understand and present themselves but also through the ways others position them. Several informants referred to the ways in which Finns, Estonians, or Russians perceived them, and discussed whether they were accepted or not accepted as full members of a particular national group. In addition, administrative regulations had affected their identity construction. For example, the informants with Ingrian Finnish roots explained how they had already

been categorised as Finns in the former Soviet Union, and how this nationality had been entered in their passports. Other researchers, such as Jackson 2010, Lave and Wenger 1991, Monkman 1997, Pries 2013, Skapoulli 2004, and Wenger 1998, also discussed how both membership and non-membership of diverse social groups and communities affected lifelong processes of identity construction. Different social divisions, such as gender and ethnic background, constrain and shape individuals' identity development. Antikainen (2010) observed how gendered constructions of Russianness and Estonianness endowed migrant women with these backgrounds to appear as 'respectable Finnish women' in order to avoid exclusion and positioning as prostitutes in Finnish society. In a transnational setting, individuals also reflect their ethno-national identity in relation to different ethnic and national communities. For example, this informant with an Ingrian Finnish background, reflected his evolving identity formation in different locations and the ways others identified him:

> Who I can feel I am, who would I like to be? That's a difficult question because when I lived in another place, for example, in Central Asia/…/ it said in my passport, in Russian, that I'm Finnish /…/ when I returned to Estonia, nobody said I was born in Estonia, different habits, and everything was different. Later when I got used to it and understood what kinds of habits they had /…/ Estonians don't say I'm Estonian but Russians say I am Estonian

> Heimo, male, 40-49 years

When one analyses the informants' accounts on their ethno-national identity, one should bear in mind that these accounts were made in research interviews in which the participants have particular positions. As Tienari et al. (2005) note, nationalities are (re)constructed in social interaction, including interviews. An example of how the interaction between the research participants and the assumed expectations of the interviewer can affect the interview accounts of the interviewees, are the the ten interviews which were conducted in Estonian. The interviewer added 'European' to the identity categories proposed to the informants. Two of these informants explained that they also had a European dimension in their ethno-national identity. Therefore one can reflect on how interviewees in general modify their accounts depending on how identities are discussed in research interviews. One can also ponder to what extent people may express and perform their identity in different ways in different settings and how power relations affect such expressions. Might the informants highlight their Estonian or

Russian side in the company of members of their language community, and their Finnish side in the company of native Finns like the interviewers?

The informants brought out the challenges related to migrants' integration into the host country. As Finland changed its position from a migrant sending country towards a country receiving migrants from several countries only recently, in the 1990s (Martikainen et al. 2013), local residents have still difficulties in adjusting to this transformation. Some informants also underlined how Finnish society in general has a tendency to perceive newcomers more as temporary visitors than as permanent residents and full members of Finnish society, as this informant with an academic background reflected regarding working life and elsewhere:

> Some of the Estonians living here talk about a kind of 'suitcase effect' that people assume and treat you as a visitor, they are hospitable, treat you as a guest but they don't see you as a member of this community. They don't even think about asking you to join them because they think you are from somewhere else, you are probably going away

> Tiiu, female, 40-49 years

Both at the societal level and at the level of local communities, whether professional, civic, or other informal groups, some informants can be described as trapped in *peripheral trajectories* (Wenger 1998) in terms of their membership and opportunities for engagement. Furthermore, although some of the informants themselves aimed to struggle against this situation, others had faced how general critical debates and negative reporting in the media on Estonians or Russians (also Raittila 2002), had an impact on social interaction between migrants and non-migrants at both personal and social levels. In addition, their willingness to become full members of the Finnish society was constrained by ethnically based constructions of Finnish society and citizenship (see Lepola 2000). On the other hand, there were also informants who reported that Finns, particularly in their local work communities or in their neighborhoods, had received them well. Some of the informants had been actively participating in the non-governmental organisations, and civil movements and had been personally active transformers of their local communities, for example, by demanding and arranging tuition in Estonian language in the schools of their municipalities. Therefore, these informants had followed both *inbound and insider trajectories* (Wenger 1998: 154-155) in relation to their societal participation in the host society. In addition, those informants who belong to the Finnish and Russian speaking minority groups in Estonia also had experiences of not being fully accepted as Estonians in their country of origin. For

some of these informants, the experience of exclusion in their country of origin had been an incentive to migrate to another country. Consequently, as indicated by Holland and Lave (2001; 2009), local practices are connected to wider socio-cultural and political struggles, and the individuals' trajectories of identity-construction are shaped by trans-local, historical forces and debates.

Not only those with a strong national, Estonian identity but also several other informants underlined the importance of their Estonian citizenship for their identity and their firm bond to the Estonian state. Many still highlighted how they were willing to integrate, and had been integrated into Finnish society as well. The informants expressed feelings of loyalty either to the Finnish or to the Estonian state, or to both states. The Russian-speaking informants who underlined the importance of their Russian heritage did not, however, feel bond or loyalty to the Russian state but more towards Finnish society and the Finnish state. The informants' loyalty to a state or states did not always coincide with their formal citizenship.

Several informants explained that as EU citizens they had almost the same rights and duties as the citizens of the host country, and, therefore formal citizenship no longer had any practical significance in their daily lives. However, the importance of citizenship as an identity as well as a sign of membership both of a nation and a society was still highlighted in the informants' accounts (also Jakobson et al. 2012b). For example, those informants who had given up their Estonian citizenship felt they had 'betrayed their nation', and regretted that the Estonian citizenship policies prevented them from regaining this. They wished they could still be formally members of Estonian society through citizenship even if living permanently in Finnish society. In addition, those informants who had obtained Finnish citizenship or were planning to apply for it reported that Finnish citizenship was important in signifying their full membership of a Finnish society and being partly a Finn. Also, Finnish citizenship or dual citizenship showed how their behaviours and identities had changed after emigration, and how these now also included a Finnish side in addition to the Estonian or the Russian dimension.

The informants perceived no conflict in maintaining emotional and formal bonds to their country of origin, but also simultaneously integrating into Finnish civil society. Therefore, several informants manifested a sentiment of dual citizenship (Jakobson et al. 2012b), i.e. being connected to their country of origin through formal, national citizenship, and to the host society through social citizenship (cf. Bauböck 2007). In terms of formal citizenship, a few informants with transnational identity conceptions expressed their wish to obtain dual

citizenship but were not officially allowed to do so due to the citizenship policies of Estonia. They felt that dual citizenship could be a sign of their dual orientation towards both countries. However, among the informants, a few had, in practice, dual citizenship because they had realised that Estonians had no obligation to renounce their citizenship, and even after having obtained Finnish (or Swedish) citizenship, they had maintained their Estonian citizenship. Therefore, these informants challenged existing national legislations and administrative regulations with their transformative practices.

## 4.3.5   Summary

Transnational civic space is understood here as an entity comprising the societies in which individuals are engaged in civic matters and as a socially constructed space through shared civic activities between people living or having lived in different civil societies. On macro level, international agreements as well as regional and national immigration, integration and citizenship policies provide the general legal and administrative framework which affects both migrants' civic agency and membership in the societies they engage in (also Faist 2000; Pitkänen et al. 2012). On the meso level, non-governmental organisations, civil movements, informal groups and transnational networks provide arenas in which both migrants and non-migrants can exchange societal conceptions and practices. In societies, these meso level actors can have an important role in affecting political decision-making at both local and national levels. On micro level, individuals can engage in diverse civic activities, express different ways of identification and sense of belonging as well as contemplate differences and similarities of societal conceptions and practices in border-crossing environments. Individuals who act and live in a transnational setting have to negotiate their ethno-national identities and civic membership in terms of at least two societies. For each individual, their transnational civic space is unique depending on their own societal engagements, experiences and ways of belonging.

Non-governmental associations and informal civic groups had been important learning environments for several respondents. Through their active engagement with these *communities of practice* (Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998), they had been able to learn Finnish ways of civic engagement, understand their own historical and linguistic heritage, widen their social networks and foster their agency in a transnational setting. The clubs promoting Estonian/Russian language and

culture provided opportunities for the informants to reflect their national roots, and to observe the cultural hybridity exemplified in these environments. The Estonian clubs enabled both native Finns and Estonian speakers to become acquainted with different cultural practices and provided local border-crossing learning environments connecting both mobile and non-mobile people. The informants had engaged in different kinds of *trajectories* (Wenger 1998) in relation to their engagement in associations, including *insider trajectories, peripheral trajectories, and outbound trajectories.*

Cross-border cooperation between associations provided opportunities for *transnational brokering* (cf. Wenger 1998): sharing between different communities of practice, across national borders, conceptions and practices regarding civic activities. In addition, brokering took place at local levels: through multi-membership of various associations the informants had conveyed ideas from one association to another. These *brokers* had facilitated the exchange of conceptions and practices across linguistic and cultural borders both between people with migrant background and also between migrants and host country citizens. The informants who had supported exchange of ideas and cross-border collaboration within and between associations had followed *boundary trajectories* (Wenger 1998). A few informants had conveyed political conceptions and practices, i.e. *political remittances* (cf. social remittances, Levitt 1998; 2001a) mainly from the host country to their country of origin.

Living in a transnational setting had widened the informants' perspectives and understanding. They could analyse and discuss societal phenomena from diverse viewpoints. Having lived in at least two different nation-states and societies had been an enriching experience enabling them to *explore local and national differences in societal conceptions and civic behaviours*, and to reflect how these were related to the historical development of both states. Many informants had experienced three different societal systems: the strictly monitored, communist society of the Soviet Union, the rapidly developing, market-oriented society of the newly independent Estonia and a kind of welfare society of Finland which enabled them to compare different societal systems. In their interview accounts, the informants explained, for example, how fear and suspicion was a part of everyday reality in Soviet society, and how people had to struggle to meet the daily necessities. Finnish society was

perceived to be radically different from that of Soviet Estonia.[23] Therefore, transnational civic space(s) represented *lived, experienced and reflexive spaces* (cf. Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009; Singh et al. 2007) for the informants. Multi-local presence in two societies required individuals to engage in self-reflection and carry out identity work. Through *boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998) with significant others living in their country of origin the informants had shared and compared differences in political decision-making, gender order, codes of ethics, and mindsets in general. Such discussions had also showed them how their own belief systems and behaviours had gradually changed, and were no longer identical with those of people living in the country of origin. Some of the informants connected their changing conceptions and behaviours to the ways in which their national identities had been transforming from national, Estonian identity to transnational or multicultural identity. The ability to achieve an understanding of societal beliefs and practices particularly in these two societies had fostered the informants' *transnational competence* (Koehn and Rosenau 2010), specifically their analytic competence.

Many Estonian-speaking informants, specifically those who had migrated recently, but also some long-term residents including those married to native Estonians, had retained a *firm national, Estonian identity*. Many long-term residents in Finland as well as those who had strong bonding ties with Finns, particularly through marriage, expressed *transnational identification*. The informants' accounts of their identity development revealed how the processes of socio-cultural, situated learning, affecting informants' beliefs and mindsets, took place particularly in binational families. Some informants had adopted *multicultural identities* as well as *global, glocal and regional identities* (see also Pries 2013). In addition, there were a few who reported *ambiguous identity*, i.e. not being to explain one's ethno-national identification, and feeling marginalised in both societies, connected to their experiences of discrimination. The informants' trajectories of identity construction were shaped by trans-local, historical forces, struggles and debate (cf. Holland and Lave 2001; 2009) as well as their experiences of participation and the ways others identified them in local communities.

The importance of citizenship as an identity as well as a sign of membership of both a nation and a society was highlighted in the informants' accounts, although

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[23] These brief descriptions of the societies are based on the descriptions of them by *the informants*. In Finland, there has been debate as to whether the Nordic style of welfare system is, in fact, waning. However, compared to Estonia, the informants perceived Finland to be a welfare state.

as EU citizens the informants felt they enjoyed almost equal standing with host country citizens. Many informants underlined the importance of Estonian citizenship for their identity, also indicating their belonging to the Estonian nation. Yet several informants manifested a *sentiment of dual citizenship* (Jakobson et al. 2012b), i.e. being connected to their country of origin through formal, national citizenship, and to the host society through social citizenship (cf. Bauböck 2007). As explained in the section on transnational occupational space (4.2.5), membership of a Finnish work community was central to the informants' identity construction as legitimate, full members of Finnish society although they also often retained formal membership of Estonian society through their citizenship. Participation in various associations had fostered the informants' feelings of being full, respected members of their local communities, and also of Finnish society.

# 5   Conclusion

In this chapter, I summarise the main findings of the study in response to the research questions. As explained in the introduction to the study, the aim of this research was to explore the learning processes of migrants in transnational settings, and the emerging transnational spaces of learning. The research questions were 1) *what kinds of informal learning environments emerged in transnational settings, particularly concerning the migrants between Estonia and Finland?* 2) *what were the characteristics of transnational learning processes from migrants' perspectives?* 3) *how were conceptions and practices shared in transnational learning environments?*

Three main, broad transnational learning environments were identified: transnational family space, transnational occupational space and transnational civic space. These spaces provided partly overlapping and partly separate, transnational spaces of learning for the informants. These border-crossing, socially constructed spaces consisted of three levels: macro, meso and micro. The intensity of informants' transnational contacts in these three transnational spaces varied over their life-course. While some had particularly close transnational family relations and shared activities, others were more active in occupational or civic realms. The informants' on-going construction of identity was shaped by their experiences and social engagement in families and kinship networks, at workplaces, in associations, and, more broadly, in relation to their participation in at least two different societies. Both the experiences in different societies and engagement in different kinds of meso level social formations had affected their learning trajectories in a transnational setting. The informants had different kinds of trajectories in these three spaces depending on their changing cross-border ties, activities and their multi-membership of several communities. As Massey (2005: 9,100) has noted, a socially constructed space is always under construction and consists of divergent trajectories: the multiplicity of trajectories and structural divides make the space difficult to grasp in its totality.

The preceeding chapter explored the structure of the three transnational spaces identified in this study drawing on the existing research and the analysis of the data. In the following, I briefly describe these levels, and also reflect on the interconnections between them. The main features of these spaces are summarised

in Table 5. On macro level, these spaces were shaped by international, regional and national agreements, policies and administrative regulations and also by the divergent socio-cultural and politico-historical development of societies (also Faist 2000; Pitkänen et al. 2012). Particularly since the mid-2000s, by which time both Finland and Estonia had joined the European Union, cross-border mobility of people was facilitated due to the EU regulations allowing free mobility of people. This change in the administrative regulations allowed the informants to arrange their cross-border lives more flexibly and facilitated visits of family members and other mobile people both ways (also Jakobson et al. 2012a; Hyvönen 2009). The mobility of occupational know-how was supported by the changing immigration, educational and employment policies thanks to EU regulations granting free mobility of labour and services, requiring EU countries to recognise educational qualifications obtained in other EU Member States as well as the increasing harmonisation of education, particularly in the higher education sector, as a result of the Bologna process.

Studies applying neo-colonial and postcolonial perspectives to international migration (for example, Mains et al. 2013; Raghuram 2009) have drawn attention to unequal power relations and complex interdependencies between different locations around the globe. If one applies such perspectives to the Estonia-Finland transnational space, one can perceive that there are imbalances in the migration flows between the two countries. Finland has been a destination country for many Estonians wishing to obtain a better income and a good standard of living. The Finnish companies, particularly in the construction sector, have benefitted from the flows of inexpensive labour force from the Estonian side. Finland has also attracted numerous Estonian professionals to move to the Finnish organisations. Such migration has served to compensate a lack of certain highly skilled specialists, for example, in the health care sector (Järvinen-Alenius et al. 2010b). Yet the migration flows have not been unilateral: there have been also Finns migrating to Estonia in search of employment, to set up enterprises and for career advancement (Jakobson et al. 2012a). Migration processes and interdependencies between the countries are complex in today's world, and cannot easily be contextualised in terms of power. In fact, scrutinising power relations between Estonia and Finland would require a detailed analysis of the economic and political relations between the two countries which is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

As explained in section 4.3.5, many informants had experienced three different societal systems: the communist society of the Soviet Union, the market-oriented society of the newly independent Estonia and Finnish society, which the

informants described as a welfare society. This enabled them to compare and consider the differences between these societal systems. Yet the rapid transformation of Estonian society from the early 1990s to the present day also posed challenges for the informants to follow societal development in their country of origin. In the civic domain, EU citizens enjoyed particular privileges in other EU countries which improved the informants' rights and stabilised their legal status in the host country. While Finland allowed dual citizenship, Estonia did not yet officially permit such arrangements. However, among the informants there were also those who had another citizenship in addition to Estonian. Therefore, these individuals challenged the existing citizenship policies with their transformative practices.

In this study, the meso level was also examined separately in each space. Concerning transnational family space, the meso level consisted of families and transnational kinship networks. On the meso level of transnational occupational space, the main actors were the work communities, educational institutions, professional associations as well as cross-border occupational networks. In transnational civic space, non-governmental organisations, informal groups, civil movements and transnational civic networks were the main meso level agents. In general, meso level actors can shape the macro level structures of these spaces through their activities, and also affect the agency of individuals within these spaces. From the learning perspective, meso level social formations provide arenas in which both migrants and non-migrants have the opportunity to engage in situated learning processes, including adopting and sharing new ideas, skills, behaviours and mindsets as well as constructing their identities through such participation in their everyday lives in a transnational setting.

**Table 5.    The Structure of Transnational Learning Spaces**

| Transnational Learning Spaces | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **MACRO LEVEL** | **MESO LEVEL** | **MICRO LEVEL: key learning processes** |
| **TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY SPACE** | -socio-cultural and politico-historical development of societies<br>-political and administrative structures (migration policies, social security, integration and education policies) | -locally based and transnational families<br>-transnational kinship networks | -reflection and negotiation of different socio-cultural traditions<br>-development of hybrid cultural practices<br>-maintaining and constructing ethno-national identities through family practices |
| **TRANSNATIONAL OCCUPATIONAL SPACE** | -global, regional and national socio-economic  structures and development<br>- political and administrative structures (migration, employment and education policies) | -work communities and organisations<br>-transnational occupational networks<br>-educational institutions<br>-professional associations | -comparing occupational practices<br>-fostering occupational skills and know-how<br>-sharing occupational information and work techniques<br>-identity construction as a member of work community and a member of a society/societies |
| **TRANSNATIONAL CIVIC SPACE** | - socio-economic structures and societal development<br>-political and administrative structures (migration, integration and citizenship policies; citizenship education) | -informal groups<br>-non-governmental organisations<br>-civil movements<br>-transnational civic networks | -exploring differences in societal conceptions and behaviours<br>-adopting and sharing societal beliefs, practices and mindsets<br>-constructing ethno-national identities and reflecting membership of societies |

On the *micro level* of these spaces, one can examine individuals' learning experiences, ties and trajectories in different social groups and communities, and in relation to wider societal development and structures. As discussed previously, individuals' participation in social communities transforms both individuals and communities in which they engage: individuals' learning in various social environments contributes to the development of their communities and societies, and individuals also learn through social participation (Billett 2007; Fuller et al. 2005; Lave 2011; Rogoff 1990; 1995). Therefore, individuals' agency can transform both the meso level actors as well as the macro level structures both in societies and in transnational spaces which connect at least two societies. The macro level structures also affect the agency of individuals and the development of meso level communities within these spaces. On the other hand, individuals' participation in meso level social environments contributes to their on-going learning processes and trajectories, involving identity construction. In addition, the informants' accounts revealed that in transnational settings migrants often reflected their belonging and membership in relation to wider societal structures, concerning at least two societies and nation-states.

From the micro level perspective, transnational spaces were *lived, experienced and reflexive spaces of leaning* (cf. also Laukkanen and Vaattovaara 2009; Singh et al. 2007) for many informants. In their everyday family lives, they reflected different socio-cultural habits and traditions. In work communities and through their engagement in transnational occupational networks they identified and reflected differences in occupational practices and conceptions both in different countries and at local levels. Through cross-border and locally based social contacts, experiences in meso level groups and communities and by regularly following the media the informants were able to observe and compare societal development in diverse countries, enabling the participants of these spaces to expand their perspectives and understanding of social phenomena. In relation to reflexivity, it should be pointed out that not all informants had identified such differences or reflected on the macro level factors shaping these spaces. This could be related to the way individuals' capabilities and motivations affected their learning processes and abilities to identify differences in conceptions and practices in a transnational setting (also Volet 1999). In addition, one needs to consider how individuals choose to participate in social settings and how they construct their understanding on the basis of their experiences of participation in diverse environments (Billett 2007).

Concerning *transnational family space*, transnational kinship networks as well as both locally based families and transnational families in which family members lived in different countries provided meso level, informal learning environments for the informants. In these learning environments, the informants had reflected, compared and negotiated different socio-cultural traditions, had engaged in on-going exchanges of cultural practices and also contributed to the development of hybrid cultural practices and artefacts. In transnational kinship networks, both migrants and non-migrants had discussed, for example, differences in gender orders and societal practices. Families were particularly important arenas for maintaining and constructing ethno-national identities in a transnational setting. The native language of the informants was perceived as a medium through which traditions could be passed and on which ethnic/national identity could be built. However, enculturation and identity construction in a transnational setting were complex processes involving internal struggles within families. For example, the family members debated about the languages used in everyday family lives. Many of those informants who had married a native Finn had gradually adopted a transnational identity while those who had an Estonian spouse often underlined the importance of their Estonian roots for their ethno-national identity. The informants' families, including those whose family members resided in different countries, showed features of *communities of practice*, including mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire (cf. Wenger 1998).

In *transnational occupational space*, the informants had engaged in situated learning processes in their local work environments: through observing local work cultures, ways of communication and implementing work tasks, as well as relations between employees and superiors, they had gradually understood local practices, internalised a part of these, and developed their identities as members of these communities. Social class was one of the factors affecting participation in the transnational occupational space; the socio-economic positions of the informants shaped their decisions to migrate and also the nature of their cross-border occupational networks. Depending on their opportunities to engage in the activities of their work communities, they had followed peripheral, inbound, insider, boundary or outbound *trajectories* (see Wenger 1998). Through participation in local, work-based learning environments the migrants had been able to improve their occupational skills, foster know-how and share occupational conceptions and practices with co-workers, including both native Finns and others with migrant backgrounds. Yet there had also been some *restrictive learning environments* (Fuller and Unwin 2004) which had discouraged knowledge sharing and introducing new work practices.

Due to power differentials and internal divisions based, for example, on gender and nationalities some of the informants had remained on the peripheries of their work communities without opportunities to fully apply and develop their occupational skills and knowledge. Through their experiences in local work environments, the informants had identified and compared differences in occupational norms, attitudes, the vocational hierarchy as well as decision-making and communication styles between local environments particularly in Estonia, Finland and the former Soviet Union. Transnational occupational networks had provided multi-sited learning environments for both mobile and non-mobile people enabling them to share occupational information and work techniques as well as engaging in the *processes of perspective making and perspective taking* (Boland and Tenkasi 1995) making local work practices comprehensible to others. For several informants, being a member of a Finnish work community was central to the development of their identity as a legitimate, full member of the host society. Some of those informants who had been active, transnational brokers in occupational settings had developed transnational identities expressing their sense of belonging to both societies.

In *transnational civic space*, non-governmental organisations, informal civic groups and transnational networks provided informal societal learning environments for many informants. In addition, local workplaces provided arenas in which social issues were debated and shared with others. The informants followed societal developments through the media, and contemplated the meaning of news and events with their colleagues, friends and relatives both in the host country and across national borders. Participation in various associations provided opportunities for the informants to learn local ways of civic engagement, explore their historical and socio-cultural heritage, widen their social and professional networks and foster their agency in transnational domains. Some of the non-governmental organisations and informal civic groups brought together both migrants and host country citizens providing local, border-crossing learning environments for the participants. In associations and in informal groups there were internal debates concerning the course of action and conflicting views about cultural traditions to be maintained and appropriate behaviours within these. Consequently, conflicts and struggles were a part of the everyday activities of these social groups, organisations and communities (also Contu and Willmott 2003; Fuller et al. 2005; Holland and Lave 2001, 2009; Jewson 2007). In relation to engagement in associations, the informants had followed insider trajectories, peripheral trajectories, outbound trajectories and boundary trajectories depending

on their access to the activities of associations. Both participation in different communities of practice and also embeddedness in at least two different societies had enabled the informants to enlarge their perspectives and understanding of societal matters. 'Living almost simultaneously two lives' in two societies required individuals to reflect their cultural and societal frames of reference. Some of the informants reported that their beliefs and modes of conduct in relation to gender roles, political decision-making, codes of ethics, and, more generally, their mindsets had gradually changed after emigration or the beginning of transmigration. Some of them also connected the changes in their belief systems and ways of behaviour to their experiences of the transformation of ethno-national identity. Therefore, it was not only a question of adopting new beliefs or behaviours but also of constructing a new identity and mindset in relation to these social learning processes (also Lave and Wenger 1991; Wenger 1998).

Concerning the informants' engagement in different transnational learning environments, one should note that the geographical proximity of Estonia and Finland was naturally conducive to cross-border practices. This enabled the informants to visit their significant others frequently and also to participate in their everyday lives on both sides of the Gulf of Finland. Providing transnational care was facilitated because of the short distance. It was also relatively easy to arrange cross-border visits in relation to transnational, occupational cooperation. Yet the informants could always be in only one particular place at any specific time. Although ICT enabled them to keep up connections more easily and communicate simultaneously, they were still physically bound to one location only. Therefore the members of transnational families still lived physically separated a part of the time, and this affected their mutual relations. Yet compared to other kinds of transnational spaces, for example the India-UK space, the geographical proximity and political framework of the Estonia-Finland space facilitated the maintenance of frequent cross-border contacts, including face-to-face contacts involving physical proximity.

Through *brokering and boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998) migrants were sharing conceptions and practices related to societal and occupational issues, gender orders as well as cultural traditions with their non-migrant relatives, friends, colleagues and associative contacts although differences in the politico-historical developments of societies also created boundaries between the individuals and groups impeding and complicating such exchanges. The processes of socio-cultural transmission between migrants and non-migrants have been examined through the concept of social remittances (for example, Gakunzi 2006; Levitt 1998; 2001a;

Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, 2011) explaining how ideas, behaviours and mindsets are transferred particularly from the host society to migrants' country of origin. However, the results of this study showed that migrants mostly engaged in shared discussions and activities with non-migrants, both locally and across national borders, which did not necessarily include direct transfers of ideas or practices but rather more long-term processes of social learning within transnational spaces. In particular, societal and socio-cultural practices and conceptions were seldom directly conveyed across borders but rather debated, contested and gradually modified through social interaction in diverse learning environments. The informants enhanced their transnational competence (Koehn and Rosenau 2010), including analytic, emotional, creative, communicative and functional competence, through their engagement in transnational collaboration particularly in occupational arenas.

Concerning the construction of the informants' ethno-national identity several Estonian speaking informants, specifically those who had migrated recently, but also some long-term residents, including those who were married to native Estonians, had maintained a firm national, Estonian identity. Many long-term residents in Finland as well as those who had bonding ties with Finns, particularly through marriage, manifested transnational identification, feeling either Finnish-Estonian, Finnish-Russian or in-between these. The informants' accounts of their identity construction revealed how the processes of socio-cultural, situated learning, affecting informants' beliefs and mindsets, were taking place particularly in binational families. Some informants had adopted multicultural identities as well as regional, global and glocal identities (see also Pries 2013). In addition, there were a few who expressed ambiguous identity, i.e. not being able to explain one's ethno-national identity and feeling marginalised in both societies due to their experiences of discrimination. The informants' trajectories of identity construction were shaped by trans-local, historical forces, struggles and debates (also Holland and Lave 2001, 2009) and by their experiences of participating in various social groups and the ways the others identified them in local communities. Some informants underlined how native Finns had difficulties in accepting newcomers with migrant background as full members of the host society. While many informants underlined the importance of Estonian citizenship for their identity and expressed sense of belonging to the Estonian nation, there were also several informants who showed a sentiment of dual citizenship (see Jakobson et al. 2012b), i.e. being connected to their country of origin through formal, national citizenship and to the host society through social citizenship (cf. also Bauböck 2007). These respondents did not

consider problematic maintaining both a mental and a formal connection to Estonia while also being members of Finnish society. On the other hand, the Russian-speaking informants who underlined the importance of their Russian socio-cultural heritage and ties to the Russian-speaking world did not feel loyalty to Russia but instead particularly to Finland.

To summarise the informal learning processes in transnational settings, one can differentiate several stages of learning in informants' accounts. In Figure 1, I have summarised these processes also indicating how they take place within transnational learning spaces in which different levels interact and different factors shape these processes. First, the informants had identified differences in conceptions and practices concerning socio-cultural, occupational and societal domains in at least two different societies. Secondly, they had compared different beliefs and behaviours they had encountered in the transnational spaces they had engaged and they had also considered which macro level factors, such as the political and historical development of societies, and also meso level factors, such as differences between organisations, work communities and families, might explain the differences in these beliefs and behaviours. Thirdly, they had also reflected on their own socio-cultural heritage in particular in relation to families and enculturation processes: what was essential in their own socio-cultural traditions, and what kinds of beliefs and practices they wished to pass on to their offspring. Fourthly, they had adopted new ideas, ways of behaviour and mindsets in the social groups and communities they had engaged in the transnational spaces. This had often been a gradual process which they had encountered through regularly engaging in the activities of these groups; such processes could involve either giving up some previous conceptions and practices, or maintaining both new and old habits. Fifthly, through participation in cross-border collaboration within transnational spaces, the informants had been able to convey and share conceptions and practices across national borders. Through brokering and boundary encounters some of the informants had been acting as transnational mediators and interpreters of information, skills and practices, for example, between families, work organisations and associations. Those who had been active transnational brokers had applied different practices sensitively in different contexts. Finally, the informants had engaged in on-going processes of identity construction: having lived in at least two different societies and nation-states required them to reflect particularly on their ethno-national identity and membership of societies. Through engaging in different social groups and communities they had constructed both their identities as participants of these as

well as members of societies and nations. Feeling to be a member of a national group/groups as well as a member of a society/societies involved processes of *imagination* (see Wenger 1998) for the informants: locating one's belonging within broader societal structures and in relation to 'imagined nations' (cf. Anderson 1991).

**Figure 1.    Migrants' Informal Learning Processes in Transnational Learning Spaces**
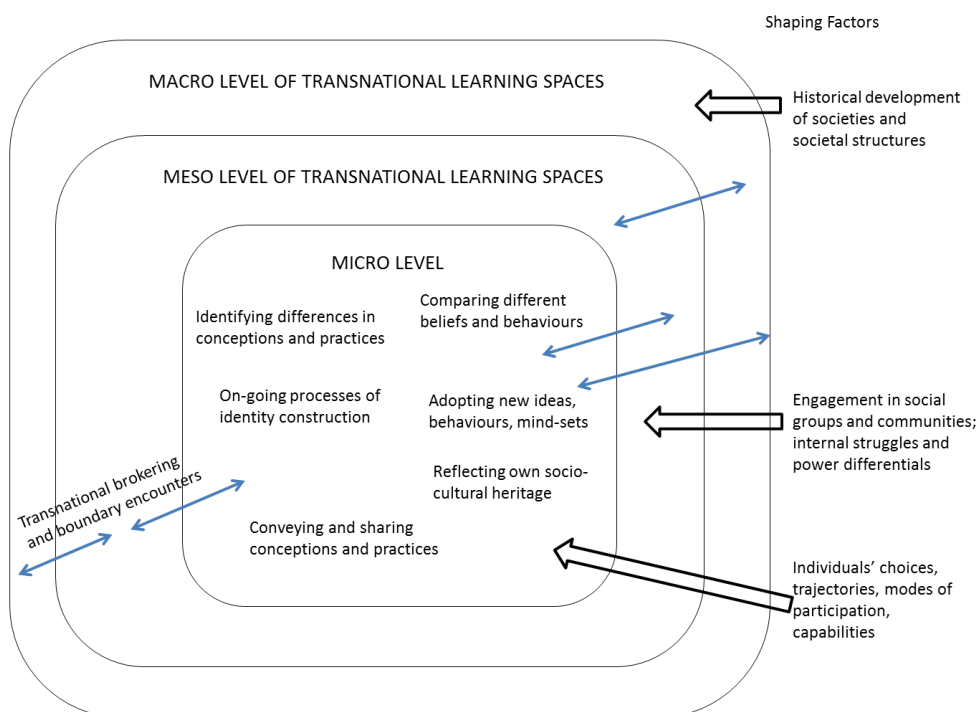


Through these different transnational learning processes the informants had also been *fostering different dimensions of transnational competence,* particularly analytic competence, which Koehn and Rosenau (2010) associated with the ability to explore, compare and apply both generic and context specific knowledge and to acquire understanding of core beliefs, values and practices in a specific cross-border environment. In order to achieve such understanding, one needs to be interested in examining and reflecting on different beliefs and behaviours which Koehn and Rosenau (2010) linked to the emotional dimension of transnational competence, while Hannerz (1996: 102-104) explained through the concept of cosmopolitanism how one needs willingness to

engage with 'the Other', and intellectual openness towards new cultural experiences in transnational settings. In order to explore other meaning structures, one needs the ability and interest to examine and contemplate other perspectives. Therefore, transnational learning processes are not necessarily automatic nor do they concern all migrants: as Volet (1999) underlined, individuals' capabilities as well as beliefs, values and expectations of a particular social community can impede or facilitate such processes. To what extent social groups, communities and organisations are willing to explore the processes of perspective taking, to develop reflective practice, and to engage in transformation processes resulting from the exchange of ideas and modification of new practices also affect the outcome of these processes on meso level.

# 6   Discussion

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical implications of the results in relation to earlier research in educational and transnational studies, the practical implications of the findings and the limitations of this study. I also suggest some areas for further research.

## 6.1   Theoretical Implications of the Results

For transnational studies, this study suggests a new perspective to explore transnational spaces: one can examine individuals' learning processes and diverse informal learning environments in transnational settings. So far only a few studies have scrutinised specifically migrants' learning processes as well as transnational learning environments (see, Guo, S. 2013a; Jackson 2010; Monkman 1997, 1999; Singh et al. 2007). As Faist et al. (2013: 16) have also noted the research so far on migrant transnationalism has often focused on trans-border mobility of people and items as an example of transnational activity while there has been less research on the transnational exchange of ideas. Transnational spaces are not created only through the physical mobility of people or financial and material transfers but also through social ties and interaction between people which provides opportunities for exchanging ideas and practices and also constructing identities through shared social participation across borders.

Furthermore, understanding transnational spaces from migrants' perspectives implies that one needs to take into account their social ties and engagement not only to the countries of emigration but also in the host society: the transnational learning processes of migrants are connected to their participation in various social groups and communities in at least two different societies. By examining the informants' learning experiences not only in transnational communities but also in the local communities inside the borders of one nation-state draws attention to how transnational phenomena can be identified inside 'the national' and 'the local', not only between states. Similarly, Sassen (2013) has pointed out how one can explore 'global' phenomena inside 'the local'.

The accounts of the informants revealed that some of them had transnational ties and activities outside the binational, Estonia-Finland space. For example, the Russian-speaking informants highlighted the importance of their socio-cultural ties to the Russian-speaking world. In addition, the informants with higher education background often had diverse transnational contacts in professional realms which were not limited to the Estonia-Finland space. Qureshi et al. (2012) also showed how the migrants from the Punjab (India) maintained transnational connections to several countries which reflected their mobile life histories and multi-sited transnational fields which connected people living on different continents. Consequently, one needs to acknowledge that migrants' transnational ties and activities are not limited to their country of origin. From the migrants' point of view, transnational spaces are not necessarily binational, i.e. limited only to two societies, but may include also their other cross-border contacts extending to other societies, as well. However, the TRANS-NET study in which the data were gathered focused on examining specific binational spaces, including the Estonia-Finland space. The interview questions and themes related particularly to the informants' ties and experiences in these two countries. Therefore, given this particular data, I could not explore in detail other transnational connections of the informants outside this particular space.

Research on social, cultural and political remittances (for example, Córdova and Hiskey 2008; Flores 2005; Gakunzi, 2006; Jiménez 2008; Levitt 1998, 2001a) has examined the ways in which migrants can transmit beliefs, behaviours and mindsets particularly from the countries of settlement to the migrant sending regions. These studies have explored how the processes of socio-cultural transmission can transform individuals' lives and bring about transformations in families, organisations, communities and gradually also in the migrants' societies of origin. The concept of social remittances seems to suggest that the processes of transmission are similar to the ways in which financial and material remittances are conveyed from migrants to non-migrants. However, the results of this study show that these processes should rather be examined from the perspective of socio-cultural, situated learning. Learning a new belief or practice involves participation and engagement in a social group or community. Through *brokering and boundary encounters* (Wenger 1998) conceptions and practices can be shared between members of different groups. In border-crossing environments, *transnational brokering* involves translation: the ideas and practices may need modification and adaptation to be applied in a new setting (also Williams 2006). The receiving communities also need to be open to the new ideas and changing practices and

they need to allow novel perspectives to be explored (also Boland and Tenkasi 1995; Fuller and Unwin 2004; Wenger 1998). Because macro level societal developments shape local practices, conveying beliefs and practices to another setting is a complex process in which the differences in the politico-historical development of societies can impede sharing ideas and behaviours and understanding their meaning and purpose.

While research (for example, Andersson and Fejes 2013; Gibb and Hamdon 2013; Man 2004; Wagner and Childs 2006; Williams and Baláz 2008a) has drawn attention to factors impeding and inhibiting the cross-border exchange and transfer of occupational know-how, skills and information, this study brings out factors which can facilitate such exchanges. *Boundary objects* (Star and Griesemer 1989; Wenger 1998) do not connect only local professional communities and practitioners but also those having acquired their professional expertise in different societies. For example, it was shown in this study that medical Latin served as a bridge facilitating communication between medical doctors having completed their basic professional education and having acquired work experience in different countries as well as having different native languages. Concerning transnational brokering, Williams and Baláz (2008b) provided examples of how particularly famous scientists and politicians acted as knowledge brokers in transnational, professional areanas. However, this study has shown how 'ordinary' migrants, those not attracting specific international or national attention, can act as transnational brokers between work organisations and occupational communities located in different countries. This research has also drawn attention to how transnational brokering requires and fosters specific skills, different realms of *transnational competence* (Koehn and Rosenau 2010), including the analytic, emotional, creative, communicative and functional dimensions of this.

Although this study presented several examples related to sharing occupational techniques and information with others both in locally based work environments and across national borders, transferring information or know-how from one professional community to another can also be challenging. Yet migrants can facilitate translation and modification processes due to their familiarity with both settings and local work organisations. Practices have to be applied in the new setting which may involve translation, adaptation and modification processes facilitating this endeavor (also Mariussen and Virkkala 2013; Williams 2006). Occupations have their own socio-historically constructed roots and traditions which shape work practices and the roles of workers (Eteläpelto 2008: 237). Transferring occupational knowledge and know-how from one context to another

may involve adaptation of the original idea to make it fit for the local traditions depending on the nature of information or practice being applied.

While research on cultural brokers and cross-cultural brokering has explored how individuals or organisations can act as mediators between different cultural groups in multicultural societies, manage cultural conflicts and interpret cultures to other individuals and groups (Agusti-Panareda 2006; Geertz 1960; Gentemann and Whitehead 1983; Jones, Trickett, Birman 2012; Samuelson 2013; Yohani 2013), this study has examined the role of migrants as transnational brokers, conveying and sharing social, occupational and societal ideas and behaviours between different social groups and organisations in transnational environments. The perspective of cross-cultural brokering suggests that cultures as unified, separate entities could be interpreted to others. Yet in transnational brokering mobile individuals build bridges between different groups and organisations and can support local translation processes, but they cannot transfer or explain entire systems of social practices or cultures to others. Also, unlike studies on cross-cultural brokering, transnational viewpoints do not focus solely on migrants' integration into the host society but examine their life experiences, learning trajectories and belonging in cross-border settings.

For studies in the discipline of education, this study suggests a new perspective to explore border-crossing learning environments. Instead of focusing only on cultural aspects, for example, by examining 'how cultures meet' or 'how people belonging to different cultures interact', cross-border learning encounters have been examined from the perspectives of situated learning research and transnational studies. The three-level -approach to studying transnational spaces of learning draws attention to how it is not the cultures portrayed as unified entities which determine learning experiences in a transnational setting. The macro level dimension of transnational learning spaces underlines how the historical development of societies as well as societal structures shape both individual's agency and the development of the communities they engage in border-crossing environments. The meso level of transnational learning spaces combined with the situated learning perspective highlight how both migrants and non-migrants can adopt and share new conceptions and practices as well as construct their identities through their engagement in various social groups and communities, involving on-going struggles and power differentials, both within a nation-state and across national borders. The micro level dimension accentuates how mobile individuals have diverse learning trajectories and experiences in transnational spaces throughout their life-course. The learning trajectories in at least two different

societal systems and multi-membership of different social groups and communities in at least two countries provided opportunities for the informants to compare and reflect on diverse societal, occupational and socio-cultural traditions, practices and conceptions. Reducing these experiences to mere 'meetings between different cultures', presenting these informants as representatives of their cultures, and portraying national cultures as unified entities, would not cover the complexity of learning in a transnational setting.

## 6.2     Practical Implications of the Results

The main focus of this research has been to examine informal learning environments and migrants' learning processes in transnational settings. Although the results may not have direct practical implications, understanding the transnational orientation and life-worlds of migrants can be useful for numerous practitioners, such as educators, teachers, social workers and other professionals providing services for migrants. In addition, for those working in multicultural work communities, the study can provide insights for understanding how cross-border exchanges of ideas and practices could be beneficial for organisations, and which factors can support or inhibit such exchanges. Also, for enterprises engaged in international business, understanding the ways in which migrants could support cross-border collaboration and utilise their transnational competence could provide incentives to recruit more workers with migrant backgrounds and to appreciate the potential which migrants possess due to their familiarity with different social settings and local communities.

For education and social services, this study opens up new ways to explore migrants' integration paths. Instead of focusing only on the host society, this study, along with research on migrant transnationalism (for example, Faist 2004 and Portes 2003) argues that the processes of migrants' integration should be rather examined from a transnational perspective: how migrants can maintain emotional bonds to more than one society and one nation-state, and how they construct identities through their multi-membership of several communities in cross-border settings. Furthermore, it considers that sustained ties and attachment to the former home country do not necessarily prevent individuals from integrating into the new country of settlement, as well. For example, Levitt and Glick Schiller (2004:1002) have also underlined how migrants' integration into the host society can coexist with enduring transnational ties, and these should not be seen as mutually

exclusive. For adult educators, it is useful to understand how migrants' previous learning trajectories in at least two societies can shape their understanding and mindsets, and how migrants reflect on new social, occupational and civic conceptions and practices in light of their previous learning experiences.

For professionals in education, it is insightful to understand how migrants often have transnational orientation, ties and diverse cross-border activities, and how these shape their family lives, societal activities and future options. Monkman (1997, 1999) also argued how understanding the transnational life-styles of migrants might support educational planning and practice to better satisfy the needs of adults and children with migrant backgrounds. Rather than focusing on understanding 'the culture' of the migrant students which could lead to portraying culture as a homogenous, stable entity, teachers could reflect on how migrants' lives are often embedded in at least two societies, and how the learning trajectories of migrants are shaped by the historical development of these societies, and by the social groups and communities they have engaged in throughout their life-course. Furthermore, educators should also identify and acknowledge the skills and understanding which migrants have acquired in formal, non-formal and informal settings. In particular, adult migrants' familiarity with different educational, occupational and societal contexts could provide new viewpoints through which to explore local practices and suggest alternative ways of conduct.

Earlier research (for example, Kalekin-Fishman 2010; Koehn and Roseanau 2010; Pitkänen and Takala 2012) has drawn attention to the skills and competencies needed in diverse transnational environments, and to the ways in which education could support the acquisition of such skills. Due to increasing international labour mobility, including both short-term and long-term migration, work environments are becoming more diversified, consisting of workers with diverse educational and occupational backgrounds. Therefore, as noted by Pitkänen and Takala (2012), education at all levels should foster people's competencies to work in transnational occupational settings. In addition, particularly highly educated professionals engage in transnational professional networks and in joint cooperation projects across national borders. To foster mutual learning and the development of shared knowledge in these arenas, the professionals could benefit from further training (Rizvi 2007b). In this research it was noted how the migrants had fostered different dimensions of transnational competence through cross-border cooperation and interaction in their everyday lives at work, in associative activities and in kinship networks. Therefore, one could consider how in formal educational contexts similar learning environments and

encounters could be created: for example, through international virtual courses or binationally organised intensive courses students could obtain experiences in engaging in shared activities with others across national borders. Furthermore, in such transnational, educational environments both students and teachers could gain opportunities to compare and analyse differences in educational, societal and socio-cultural traditions and practices. In this way, non-mobile students could also gain experience in transnational collaboration during their studies.

## 6.3    Limitations of the Study

This study focused on exploring the experiences of people who had either migrated from Estonia to Finland or were transmigrating between these countries. Compared to other migrant groups, whether in Finland or in other countries around the world, these informants can be described as a privileged group in many respects. As EU citizens, they can now move between the EU Member States and enter other EU countries without administrative barriers. Their educational qualifications obtained since EU membership should be recognised in another EU country. The linguistic similarity of the majority languages of the countries concerned can facilitate learning the first official language of the host country. Also, compared to many other migrant groups, Estonian speakers in particular are perceived favourably by the majority of Finns. Migrants coming from non-EU countries, particularly from Sub-Saharan countries, have experienced more discrimination in Finland. Therefore, their learning experiences and opportunities to participate in the activities of work communities, associations and civil movements may be different from those of the informants described here. In addition, there are many vulnerable groups of migrants worldwide, such as humanitarian and undocumented migrants whose life trajectories may differ drastically from the experiences and trajectories of these informants.

As this is a qualitative study, the research results cannot be generalised in the same sense as in large-scale, quantitative studies. One cannot, for example, on the basis of these findings measure the impact or the magnitude of cross-border flows of conceptions and practices in occupational realms. Nor can one calculate the share of migrants participating in transnational networks or activities. Rather, the results can illustrate the diversity of such flows and the informal learning environments in transnational settings. In addition, the study can provide

perspectives through which to study these processes in other contexts in which the macro level structures may be very different from these discussed here.

One can reflect whether the findings of this study are specific to the Estonia-Finland space or generalisable to other contexts. Adopting a socio-cultural, situated learning perspective implies that one has to investigate the specific socio-historical contexts in which the informants' experiences are embedded. Consequently social learning experiences are always rooted in particular socio-cultural environments at certain historical times. The spatial perspectives, for example those raised by Massey (2005: 9,100), highlight how space is always in the process of being made: it can be described as the co-existence of stories-so-far. Therefore the learning processes and transnational learning spaces which I have described and analysed cannot be claimed to be somehow universally valid and static. Yet the thereotecical perspectives and frameworks I have formulated can hopefully provide useful ground for other researchers to investigate other kinds of transnational learning environments. In such surroundings, other aspects, such as racialisation, unequal power relations, class differentials, hierarchies and diverse structural divides may be more salient than in the present study.

## 6.4    Themes for Further Investigation

This research focused on exploring the learning processes and informal learning environments of people migrating between Estonia and Finland. As explained earlier, the current political framework is particularly supportive of transnational activities and collaboration between these EU citizens while concerning other migrant groups and other geographical areas there may be more barriers to such activities. Therefore, one could explore in other contexts whether the framework developed in this study concerning transnational learning spaces could be applied in different national and regional contexts. One could examine, for example, the learning processes and environments of people transmigrating between two Asian countries, or from an African country to North America. This would enable analysis of the differences and similarities between diverse transnational learning spaces, such as transnational occupational spaces or transnational civic spaces embedded in different societal and historical settings.

While this research has focused on exploring the perspectives and learning processes of migrants in transnational settings, one could also carry out investigations regarding the learning processes of non-migrants participating in

transnational communities and networks in different arenas, for example, in transnational families or in associations engaged in transnational collaboration. In addition, one could explore particularly the learning processes of migrants and emerging transnational learning environments in relation to short-term or temporary migration in different geographical areas. Furthermore, as international student mobility is increasing worldwide, one could examine learning environments and learning processes in transnational educational spaces. Concerning international work environments, there is a growing number of work teams which engage in transnational collaboration; therefore, one could investigate how transnational learning takes place in these teams, and how conceptions and practices are shared between the team members, also taking account of possible barriers to such exchanges.

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# Annex 1: Interview Questions of the Semi-Structured Interviews (TRANS-NET Research Project)

These interview questions were planned jointly by the Finnish and Estonian research teams, and they followed the general framework of the TRANS-NET study (with minor country-specific variations).

**A. Personal Information** (the interviewee will first fill in the questionnaire concerning background information: gender, year of birth, country of birth, current marital status, number of children, native language(s), the year of in-migration to Finland/Estonia or the starting year of transmigration, current living arrangements, current employment, educational background, legal status in the host country)

**B. Migratory Background**

1. How did you end up in Estonia/Finland? Why? What was the key motivation for transmigration (work, family etc.) Please describe in detail.
2. Have you lived in other areas in Estonia/Finland? Why did you move?
3. Did you come here alone or with other persons? With whom?
4. What did you expect Estonia/Finland to be like before coming here? Did your expectations materialise?
5. How did you get information about your work / studies etc. before arriving in Finland / Estonia?
6. Did you receive some support (e.g. in finding accommodation, arranging practical matters) in the beginning of your stay / transmigration? From whom?
7. Have you been living in other countries in addition to Estonia/Finland? Where? For what purpose? For how long?
8. In which country is your family currently situated?

### C. Transnational Activities

1. Do you maintain cross-border contacts with other people (e.g. friends, family, others)? If yes, what kind of? How often and by what means do you communicate with them? Have these contacts changed during your stay in the current host country?

2. What kind of personal or family attachments do you have in the current country of residence?

3. Do you have relatives or other people who need your help or care in the country of departure? Are they children, people with disabilities, elderly people? What kind of assistance/care do they need? What in practice do you do to help them?

4. Have you ever sent money home/to your country of origin? To other countries? To whom (if any)? How much? How often?  - Or have you received money from your country of departure? From whom?

5. Do you think that during your stay in Estonia/Finland you have attained, for example, some ideas, knowledge, skills, etc. which can be useful and practicable in your previous home country (or in other countries)? (The same question will be repeated concerning the other direction.) Have you shared your experiences in your current/former home country; or in other countries; where? Please give some examples.

6. Are you active in any organisation, association or network (in Estonia, Finland or in other countries)? Please characterise your experiences. What are the means for this communication/cooperation? [telephone, email, post mail, visits, etc.]

7. Do you maintain professional cross-border contacts? How often? With whom? What are the means for this communication [telephone, email, post mail, visits, etc.]]

8. In case you commute between Estonia and Finland due to work, in which country is your workplace located? How about your employer?

9. What kind of relations/contacts (if any) do you have with people in your workplace/in your educational institution in the current country of residence/in other countries? To which national groups do they belong?

10. Have you been in contact with employment agency personnel, health services, social workers, immigration service, or other authorities in your current country of residence? In your previous host countries? Tell about your experiences [Please try to clarify the possible use of integration services]

11. How people have treated you in Finland/ Estonia?

12. Are you interested in the politics (at local/national/international levels)? Please characterise your experiences of political participation (if any)? Have you ever voted in Estonia/Finland?

13. Are you familiar with the Finnish/Estonian legislation, regulations etc. What is their role in your daily life?

## D. Membership, Participation, Identity

1. Where do you feel at home? [What and where is/are the lived/desired home(s)? Why?]

2. Do you feel yourself to be wholly, partly or maybe not at all Finnish, Estonian, Russian, or something else? What does this mean for you in practice (activities) etc.?

3. Do you feel loyalty towards some state(s)? (if yes, which and what does it mean for you?)

4. Do you feel that holding a citizenship is more an issue of practical rights and obligations, or does it also have some deeper meaning for you? (if yes, what kind of meaning?)

5. How do you understand the term 'transnational'? What do you think is the defining characteristic of a transnational person? Do you think this definition fits your situation?

6. Can you express any advantages or disadvantages of your situation being "transnational" or "non-transnational"?

7. In case you have border-crossing contacts, do these influence your daily life somehow? In what way?

8. Can you mention any traditions which are, in particular, important for you? Please give some examples.

9. What is the role of your mother tongue in your daily life? Do you use it every day? With whom? How about other languages?

10. What is the role of religious traditions/practices in your daily life? Please describe in detail. Are there any other groups (e.g. subcultural, world view) which are significant for your?

11. Do you feel that your current country of residence is a place where you want to stay longer? If not, what are your migratory plans?

## E. Transnational Competence and Future Plans

1. Please describe your educational background. What, Where, When… did you study?

2. What are your language skills (spoken/written)? Do you want to study any languages? If yes, which languages? Why?

3. Do you follow any media in Estonia/Finland / other countries? Please tell which media. Are you interested in events/news on Estonia/Finland?

4. Please characterize your professional training experiences in your current country of residence/in other countries. Would you like to improve your professional skills? Please tell more.

5. In your opinion, do you think that some special capabilities (e.g.knowledge, skills, attitudes) are needed in order to live and work in two or more countries? If yes, what kind of capabilities these could be?

6. Do you think that you possess those capabilities (skills, knowledge, attitudes etc.)? Please give some examples.

7. Can you mention any experiences where you, in your opinion, have learned some significant skills, knowledge or attitudes that are needed when working and living in two (or more) countries? Please describe the situations. Can you mention any situations where those learning experiences have, afterwards, been of use for you? Please describe in detail.

8. Do you think that your professional skills could be used in several countries or are they more suitable for a certain country? If yes; which one; and why so?

9. According to your previous experiences, have your plans come true in the course of earlier migration history? What have been the main obstacles? What has been the role of "chance events", your own action, and/or external forces in this process?

10. What are your future prospects (plans, hopes)?

11. Would you like to add something (which has not yet been discussed)?