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CHAPTER 9

WORK AND GEOGRAPHICAL MOBILITY

The Case of the Male Accompanying Spouses¹

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Work and the search for a better livelihood are usually considered amongst the main drivers of human mobility. In times of globalization, work has become more global in nature, and involves more and more the transnational migration flows of many people. A great variety of international organizations, multinational corporations, and institutions in academia, science and medical fields, among others, now attracts a growing number of professional workers on a global scale. Some of these workers engage in repeated moves across countries, either for personal choice or against their will, for their career trajectories, or for the duration of their work contracts. At times, these people move with their families and, as a result, their partners can decide to remake work on-the-move, or stop working and take care of family duties. Accompanying the partner in international mobility has long been associated with the image of a “trailing” and nonworking “wife”

(Fechter, 2010) and with the dominant masculinity of some professions. Recently, major changes in the labor market and the consequent intensification of mobility have had an impact on professionals' family arrangements, on their families' everyday life, as well as on gender roles within the family (Coles & Fechter, 2012; Schaer, Dahinden, & Toader, 2016). In particular, the diversification of mobile profiles and the flexible conditions of some professional sectors, while creating more fragmented and unstable working conditions, have made transnational career trajectories imaginable for a great variety of people, including professionals' accompanying spouses. Furthermore, an increasing number of women become expatriate employees and now move with their male partners. Some of these partners can be confronted with several challenges relating to work transitions and gender roles in mobility. What are these challenges? How do they specifically make sense of their role as an accompanying and nonworking spouse, and how do they remake their working life on-the-move?

The present chapter will contribute to illuminating an emergent and increasingly important research issue, regarding work and family life in time of increased mobility. In what follows, we briefly present a non-exhaustive overview of major trends of research on work and mobility across the social sciences, with a special focus on anthropology and sociology. The choice of these disciplines—oriented toward the sociocultural embeddedness of human relations, actions, and institutions—allows unpacking the complexity of work as a sociocultural phenomenon. Afterwards, we introduce the context and main issues pertaining to the mobility of professionals' families, with a special focus on the image and role of the spouse from an institutional point of view. We propose a sociocultural psychological framework to the study of work and mobility, in particular to approach people's repeated work transitions due to their moves. The core of our demonstration is based on qualitative research conducted between 2015 and 2018 with mobile families temporarily living in Switzerland. After a brief introduction of this research, we discuss the various challenges for males accompanying spouses, and conclude with the major implications of this study and further directions of research.

WORK AND HUMAN MOBILITY

The ways in which work intertwines with the experience of human mobility has been the focus of a large research across the social sciences. Anthropological and sociological researches alike have long been interested in the structural determinants of labor migration—namely, the social institutions, economic and social conditions that sustain or constrain it—and in the more individual experiences and sociocultural configurations of work.

These include workers' everyday experiences and cultural meanings associated with the category of work (Calagione, Francis, & Nugent, 1992; Smith & Favell, 2006; Wallman, 1980), social and kinship networks and local practices of migrant workers (e.g., Avenarius, 2002), as well as gendered and family-related aspects of work in migration (Castro, 1982; Kim, 2009; Lamphere, 1987; Pratt, 2004). The broad study of work and migration across these disciplines has been characterized by an important transformation resulting from a paradigm change in migration studies. Traditional sociological literature has long investigated immigrants' work practices in the host country (e.g., Light, 1972), and described "ethnic cultural difference" persisting in the labor system either as the consequence of exploitation and discrimination, or as a form of reaffirmation of identity from the part of "immigrant groups" (Portes & Manning, 2008). Studies in anthropology, in turn, explored how categories of work and identity are reciprocally constituted through cultural meanings (e.g., Calagione et al., 1992; Wallman, 1980), and through social and spatial practices in the situated sociocultural contexts in which people navigate on a daily basis. These meanings and practices are complicated by the experience of migration, when people move across different contexts in time and space, contexts in which personal, occupational, and sociocultural identities can be redefined.

Recently, with the rise of "transnationalism" and "mobility" perspectives (Appadurai, 1996; Cresswell, 2006; Faist, 2000; Urry, 2007), the focus has shifted from migration as mere movement from a place to another towards mobility as the repeated circulation of bodies, objects, images, and meanings in a globalized world. This shift allowed challenging traditional directions of research on immigration, assimilation, and integration (Berry, 2001) towards more comprehensive studies on migratory flows and transnational belongings (Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Levitt & Schiller, 2004), as well as on individuals' engagement in repeated moves (e.g., Gyger Gaspoz, 2013). This shift also allowed scholars interested in the relationship between work and migration to move from the study of places (place of origin, place of destination) to the examination of the more complex and diverse movements involved in sustaining work, and of those work trajectories and livelihood practices cutting across different national, social, economic, and cultural boundaries (e.g., Baldassar & Merla, 2013; Colic-Peisker, 2010; Meier, 2014; Núñez-Madrado, 2007; Yeoh, Platt, Khoo, Lam, & Baey, 2016).

Recent studies, finally, are particularly interested in the socioeconomic changing conditions resulting from neoliberalism, what in sociology has been called "precarization" of labor and livelihoods (Della Porta, Hänninen, Silvasti, & Siisiäinen, 2015; Neilson & Rossiter, 2008), and explore how these transformations affect migrants' lives and trajectories (Agergaard & Ungruhe, 2016; Cangià, in press; Schierup, Munck, Likic-Brboric, & Neergaard, 2015; Weeks, 2015). These conditions, in particular the flexibilization of some professional

sectors, have an impact on individuals' work trajectories, which from being linear and more secured in the past become now more and more fragmented, unpredictable, and uncertain (Masdonati & Zittoun, 2012; Standing, 2014).

HAPPY SPOUSE, HAPPY HOUSE? THE ROLE OF THE ACCOMPANYING SPOUSES IN PROFESSIONALS' MOBILITY

The experience of migration is today viewed more and more as necessary for career development and work qualification (Meier, 2014). Some professionals, often for their career prospect, have to move across countries, and can experience an unprecedented sense of instability, due to their fixed-term contracts, to employment and job flexibility, or to the constant change of destination. Mobile work trajectories can also have an impact on people's family life (Tissot 2016). At times, professionals' mobile trajectory demands their partners to quit their job and take care of family duties, or to reinvent themselves in the new place. For these partners, usually in charge of the more practical relocation and settling-in process, and often quitting their previous job, the "adjustment" to the host country can be harder compared to the working partner, who generally continues to rely on the workplace as a possible anchorage in the new environment (Ravasi, Salamin, & Davoine, 2013). In human resources and business management studies, "spousal adjustment," defined as an individual's "degree of comfort, familiarity and ease with several aspects of a new cultural environment" (Ravasi et al., 2013, p. 1), has often been viewed as playing a central role in the assignee's job performance (Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2005). Previous literature on colonial expatriates, in turn, has described the domestic and emotional support provided by the "wife" as implicitly "incorporated" into the contracts between employees and employers (Callan & Ardener, 1984). However, since the 1990s the number of women expatriates moving with their male partners keep increasing (Cole, 2012). At the same time, the flexibility of the labor market, with the possibility to engage in freelance activities or change job in different times of the life course, have certainly made mobile work trajectories possible. Spouses' career trajectories and "dual career" issues are now included in the idea of "spousal adjustment," and are considered to be the most common reason for expatriates' refusal of overseas assignments (Cartus, 2007). The provision of dual career programs for spouses (job search assistance, language courses, intercultural training), also through specific associations like the International Dual Career Network (IDCN) and university welcome centers, become hence an integral part of the relocation agenda of companies, organizations, and academic institutions (Levitan, Zittoun, & Cangià, 2018).

The choice of following the partner in international mobility can entail a number of practical challenges. These can include loss of occupation, the lack of social network in the arrival destination, or issues relating to work permits. Some short-term types of permits, for example, can at times create an obstacle in the job-search and the application process, being that these types of permits are easily associated with moving and local employers are, in certain economic environments, unwilling to employ someone who will probably need to move again (Permits Foundation, 2009). Challenges can also pertain to more subjective experiences relating to the interruption of work and change of environment, as well as to the confrontation with dominant representations concerning work and gender roles (Cole, 2012; Harvey & Wiese, 1998). Moving across countries, while offering interesting opportunities for self-exploration, can also create a sense of disorientation and uncertainty regarding the future, in particular, as a result of the transition from work to unemployment. Spouses at times can experience a sense of uncertainty and insecurity with regard to the flexibility to move—often required of, or chosen from, their working partners—with the resulting unpredictability of time and place of relocation, and the resulting change of their work plans (Cangià, 2018). Especially for those people who have largely invested in education and career development, difficulties in finding a new job combined with the encounter with a new environment can have a profound impact (Schlenker & Gutek, 1987). Previous studies, more specifically, showed how male and female spouses, while sharing similar concerns, can also relate to the relocation process in different ways, with regard to gender roles and their position within the family and within the surrounding social context (Anderson, 2001; Copeland & Norell, 2002; Davoine, Ravasi, Salamin, & Cudré Mauroux, 2013; Ravasi et al., 2013; Silberstein, 1992). When taking part in various initiatives dedicated to spouses yet organized within a large group of women, and facing a population of expatriates dominated by working men, male spouses in heterosexual couples can face stronger feelings of isolation and more difficulties concerning the change of their status than female spouses (Davoine et al., 2013). We aim to contribute to these studies by exploring some of the subjective experiences and psychological implications of mobility as a male accompanying partner.

A SOCIOCULTURAL PSYCHOLOGY APPROACH TO THE MOBILE WORKER

In order to account for the life of the accompanying spouses, we propose a theoretical frame inspired by sociocultural psychology of the lifecourse. This theoretical frame has a series of presuppositions and has developed mid-range concepts to explore some of the changes and continuities along the

unique life of persons. In terms of presuppositions, sociocultural psychology admits that social and cultural conditions provide meanings, social representations, institutional and material guidance to people, as well as various opportunities. However, it considers that the person, who does an intense work of internalization, appropriation, positioning, has his or her own subjectivity, and can, to some extent, define a margin of freedom. Second, it considers these transactions between the person and the societal environment from a dynamic perspective. Third, it gives a particular attention to semiotic dynamics, that is, processes of circulation of signs, discourse, and interpretation (Teo, 2015; Valsiner, 2014; Zittoun, 2012; Zittoun et al., 2013).

From a classical life-course perspective, development takes place all life long, and in all life domains; transitions or turning points have to be understood on the background of their social and cultural meanings and normative expectations; and people's lives are interrelated, especially if these are in kin relations (Elder & Giele, 2009; Levy, Ghisletta, Le Goff, Spini, & Widmer, 2005). Based on these assumptions, we particularly focus on the dynamics that affect males accompanying spouses. Here, we thus propose to consider not a priori geographical movements or institutional changes as transitions; rather, we propose to consider what events or situations people experience as ruptures—as disruption from the taken-for-granted, as preventions to carry out their usual actions, as suddenly generating uncertainty or anxiety (Zittoun, 2006, 2009). In that dynamic sense, transitions are the processes triggered by an experienced rupture, by which the person engages in processes of change that may eventually allow them to recover some sense of normality. Three interrelated dynamics of changes characterize transitions: processes of identity change (repositioning, social recognition, self-definition, etc.), processes of learning (mobilization of skills, development of knowledge, definition of new activities, etc.), and processes of sense-making (process of interpretation of the situation, its sense within one's biography, recreation of continuity within one's past and possible futures, as well as elaboration of the emotions associated with these transformations; Hviid & Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun, 2006, 2007a; Zittoun et al., 2013; Zittoun, 2016; Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson, & Psaltis, 2003a; Zittoun & Perret-Clermont, 2009). Although these three dynamics are widely known in psychology, the specificity of our approach is to show their mutual dependency: that is, learning can be impeded or favored by the challenges of identity making; or conversely, identity change can catalyze, and be catalyzed by, new sensemaking (Zittoun, 2006; Zittoun & Grossen, 2012). Finally, our work allowed us to closely examine the diverse ways in which people handle identity changes, the manners in which they engage in learning and in various activities to support the work transition, and finally the alternative meanings of work that people can create out of their new experience as male spouses.

METHODS

We draw upon a recent study on the mobility of professionals and their families temporarily living in Switzerland, conducted between 2015 and 2018 as part of the NCCR On the Move. For this research, we use a combination of methods, including in-depth and narrative interviews with 27 families (mostly individually, two in couples), an online questionnaire addressing their migratory trajectories, as well as participant observation in expats' gatherings and networks (e.g., women's clubs, spousal associations). Here, we reflect upon in-depth interviews conducted by the first author (FC) and third author (DL) with eight male accompanying partners of women employed at multinational companies, living in various cities and small towns of Western Switzerland. At the time of the interviews, these individuals were unemployed and those who just started a new job used to be unemployed shortly before. All the respondents—except for two who were already unemployed—used to be fully or temporarily employed in a job corresponding to their level of education and expertise before relocating to Switzerland.

Participants were contacted through several relocation agencies, spousal associations, and personal contacts. The interviews (each lasting between one and two hours) were held at a time and place chosen by participants. Male spouses usually preferred to meet in a public space, like over a coffee or at a restaurant—which is worth noting as, on the contrary, a larger part of the women interviewed for the same project preferred to meet in their houses.

Interviews were based on a semi-structured grid that included specific questions concerning these men's migratory trajectory with their family, their everyday life in Switzerland, social networks, work situation, and future plans. However, the interviews were guided by an "ethnographic imaginary" (Forsy, 2010), through which the researcher participates in the narration of the person's life (Hockey & Forsy, 2012), and were conducted in ways that enabled people to freely propose new topics during the course of the conversation. As a matter of fact, other topics were brought to the fore, such as people's concerns about job search, relationships with other members of the family, and their ideas on possible alternatives or future destinations. Exchanges between the interviewer and the respondents concerning respective personal experiences of migration and work-related issues proved to be an advantage in order to allow people to talk about their personal experiences. Depending on people's availability, we met some respondents a second time after one year for a second interview, in order to follow their life during the period of settling in and during the process of job search. We aimed to identify continuity or discontinuity in the way these people experience mobility and work transition also in case of concrete

events occurring in the course of their stay in Switzerland (e.g., birth of a child, internal migration, start of a new job).

Based on detailed examination of the cases under study, we decided to draw on the model described above and to use the following three dynamics as analytical categories (Masdonati & Zittoun, 2012; Zittoun, 2006):

- *Identity change*: How do male spouses reposition themselves vis-à-vis their new role as accompanying spouses?
- *Learning processes*: How do they mobilize their skills or acquire new knowledge and competences for professional and personal development in mobility?
- *Sensemaking processes*: How do they reinterpret the new situation, in particular with regard to the “work” dedicated to sustain the household and kin relations on the move?

Interviews were fully transcribed, and names of people, places, and of any other revealing information have been altered to guarantee anonymity. Interviews were analyzed through a combination of in-depth case-based analysis and a transversal analysis of all cases. Each individual’s experience herein presented is unique and illustrative of a personal biography. However, we use representative extracts exemplifying some commonalities in the way people handle the rupturing experience of becoming a male spouse, commonalities that are typified by recurrent strategies with regard to the dynamics under exploration.

ON ACCOMPANYING THE WORKING PARTNER AND REMAKING WORK ON THE MOVE

In order to account for the transitions of these male spouses, we need first to understand their experience of rupture, in particular, those events that disrupt their daily routine and that activate the three abovementioned psychological dynamics. Some of the interviewees explicitly describe their role as an unemployed accompanying spouse as a new experience. They define themselves as being professional workers, some at senior level, shortly or some time before relocating to Switzerland. The decision to follow the female partner is usually based on economic and work-based evaluation, on who has the job that is better paid and with more career prospect at the time of migration. The decision to move is thus not followed by a decision to stop working altogether. The usual plan for these people is to quit their current job, yet start looking for a new one as soon as possible in the new destination. The choice of relocating to Switzerland for some spouses seems to be based on the idea of this country as characterized by

a promising labor market, as a place in which they could easily find a job. Once arrived, however, all respondents report a different situation and a number of specific challenges. Switzerland is described as a “closed”² labor market with “its own rules” and with less work opportunities than expected, where employers tend to favor “locals,” and younger people with “less experience,” or to “play it safe,” especially for those who try to look for a job in fields different from their own. Challenges in the job search can also pertain to language barriers, or even to perceived discrimination towards some nationalities (Latin American) that are viewed as easily associated with menial jobs.

The alteration of personal professional trajectory and the condition of unemployment due to migration bring these individuals to experience a rupture in the course of their daily life. Moving can imply being out of a job for quite some time, and spending more time at home. As a result, these people experience negative feelings concerning the difficult job search, reflect on their work trajectories, and come to deal with dominant representations relating to gender roles. These rupturing experiences can have several psychological implications with regard to the three processes abovementioned; namely, identity change, learning, and sensemaking processes. In the following paragraphs, we illustrate these dynamics in turn.

From Professional to Being a Stay-at-Home Spouse

A transition, like the one experienced through migration, brings the person to confront with new roles, rights, duties, and social expectations, and to interact with new people in new ways (Levy et al., 2005). The alteration of one’s definition of personal and social identity resulting from the loss of job and from a new daily routine as the nonworking and staying-at-home person in the family, is an important aspect that characterizes the experience of mobility both for female and male spouses. The shift to the new role as a male spouse, in particular, can affect people’s social identity, in particular their self-image, self-identification, and self-presentation (the way these people position themselves and feel about what they do in the course of their everyday life), as well as the external categorization (how other recognize them; Jenkins, 2008; Lamont, 1992).

Along with previous research on the topic (Harvey & Wiese, 1998), we observed that the professional career plays a critical role in these male spouses’ self-identification. All interviewed men described themselves based on their career expertise. Looking for a job is extremely important and difficult, against a backdrop of what they call a continuous “pressure” from others to quickly find a job, the “frustration” in sending applications and being rejected, as well as the concern about not contributing financially

to the household. In the transition from an at times stable and powerful job to being unemployed, spouses start questioning their own professional and personal position in the surrounding society and in the family. Some spouses report a gap between the level of their expertise and actual work opportunities, between the way they feel about themselves and the way others recognize them in the job market. Some come to face a numeric unbalance between accompanying female and male partners, become aware of their new role as the nonworking man, and are confronted with a gender “barrier”; namely, those dominant cultural representations that identify the man as the breadwinner in the family. In these spouses’ words, dominant representations of gender roles manifest at three interrelated levels: The structure of the job market, with a population of expatriate managers still dominated by men who cannot understand a man following his wife; social expectations and perceived “pressure” from others to quickly find a job as a nonworking male spouse; and in the way they feel about themselves and about the change in their professional and family life.

These people handle the identity change from being a professional to being a stay-at-home male spouse through different strategies: They can modify the dimension of evaluation and the resulting meaning of one’s identity position (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000; Miller, 2002; Tajfel, 1974); they can change their own position vis-à-vis the boundary between themselves and others (Wimmer, 2008); and they can semantically *move* (Gillespie, 2012) around the new identity position as a male spouse in ambivalent ways. Three spouses, Nicolas, Yannick, and Jerome,³ illustrate these strategies, respectively.

Nicolas, a male accompanying partner in his forties, recently migrated to Switzerland to follow his wife in her international assignment for a multinational company. Now in Switzerland, he says, he finds himself in a very new situation, taking care of their children and the household while she is at work. His interrupted professional identity is understood through economic and temporal considerations regarding career trajectories. This interruption is characterized by a temporal rupture in the course of a personal and professional rhythm suddenly suspended, a rupture that needs to be justified in front of employers in view of future work:

[...] at the end we need to define ourselves. In my case is hard, in my case being out of the job for 3 years now is hard for me because it’s going to be hard to find a work if we go back to South America for example, for me it’s gonna be very hard to find a job. Because for the Latin culture, being 2 years out of the job market is like not understandable. Of course I could explain that we had this situation, that I was accompanying my wife as an expat etcetera, but at the end it’s like the market doesn’t understand it.

Nicolas tries to handle this identity change and modifies the dimension of evaluation as a nonworking stay-at-home spouse, by joking about it and about his group of Latin male spouse friends:

we are called *los dichosos*, it means we are the happy, the happiest, we are the joyful, because we are not working, our wives are the ones who work, they have to, you know, like provide the sustain, sustainability (laughs).

Being a male spouse is not always easy for Nicolas, though. When moving to Switzerland, he was also confronted with the high number of female accompanying spouses met during his everyday life. At the beginning, he explains, his new identity as a nonworking man in the household was difficult to handle, especially considering his past professional life. Being a stay-at-home male spouse, from being understood with regard to cultural beliefs, comes to be described as a more personal experience, linked to family values. The modification of the dimension of evaluation (from cultural beliefs to personal experiences) helps Nicolas to handle the “huge change” and makes it seem more “normal”:

I think it’s part of the culture, being the man, you know, the family and the man is supposed to be in charge, so when I realized that I was at home non working and my wife was in charge of the sustainability of the house etcetera, so this is a huge change and whilst I was there it was hard to understand it at the beginning, but now it’s normal, it’s a decision we took and we are living it [...] It was not easy because I was doing a lot of things [...] I liked what I was doing, I had a very good relationship with the company, with the colleagues, so it was very good my job, it was—but as the decision was taken the end objective was the family so for me it was like another decision to take and that’s it.

Male spouses can also reposition vis-à-vis the boundary between themselves and others (i.e., between female and male partners), and try to assimilate into other categories like in the case of Yannick. Aged 41, Yannick followed his wife for the first time in 2014 to Switzerland, when she moved as an expatriate for a multinational company. He has been looking for a job since then. After years of global mobility when both could always manage to work in the country of destination, he decided to quit his job to follow his wife without having any job offer at hand. For the first time after a long time, he finds himself in a situation of unemployment, with lots of free time for family duties. During the interview, he describes himself as “well-qualified,” with a long experience in his field of expertise. Looking for a job becomes especially difficult and “frustrating,” since personal qualification and positive feelings about oneself collide with the way the “market feels”:

It's tough because I feel I'm so capable, I have enough experience, I'm young enough, I can—I can really do lots of great things, but the market doesn't feel that way.

Not contributing financially to the family is “difficult to accept” then “for a person who had a good career before moving.” During his free time, Yannick organizes “language coffees” with nonworking moms of his kid's school where they spend time together to speak different languages. He feels comfortable, differently from other male spouses, with the fact that these language coffees are mostly populated by women: for, he says, attending these events is “much better than to just stay at home and feel miserable.” Being surrounded by nonworking moms made Yannick reflect on being a stay-at-home male spouse compared to being a nonworking female spouse. When asked if he would be ready to stop looking for a job altogether, he explains:

Yeah, I said to my wife the same thing um yeah I did, I meet so many moms at school and (...) they haven't worked for years for ten or more years they're (...) okay they have two three children it's even more work so it's kind of (...) necessary really to be at home but for for them nobody is asking the question (...) “What are you gonna do? When are you going to work?” “Cause it's kind of it's normal they stay home and that's (...) that's it.” And, for me, like for (...) nonworking dads, that's always a question like, “When are you going to find a job? When are you going back to work?” and that's um do I have to really um you know?

With his engagement in these activities and the imagination of himself becoming a full-time “stay-at-home dad” and stopping looking for a job like some female spouses do, Yannick tries to reposition himself by “assimilating” into a more “socially accepted” category: the “nonworking moms”: “Look at these other moms not working (...) nobody is (...) asking them to go back to work.” On the contrary, the social “pressure” coming from the surrounding society towards male spouses to find a job and from his wife is what blocks his potential identity change.

People can also semantically *move* around the new identity position in ambivalent ways (Gillespie, 2012), sometimes resisting—by *disidentifying* from (Goffman, 1986) or *silencing* (Nagar-Ron & Motzafi-Haller, 2011) about it—sometimes opening up to it. Jerome arrived in Switzerland for the first time to reunite with his wife approximately one year ago, after having quit his job. This is his first experience of unemployment since he started working 10 years ago. The “specificity of the local job market,” he explains, is what makes him experience a big rupture in his work trajectory and professional identity, being his expertise and work profile not recognized in Switzerland as he was expecting. During this time of unemployment, Jerome takes care of the household and the family. His understanding of being a nonworking

and stay-at-home man is ambivalent. During the first interview, he resists his new identity position by remaining silent on this topic. When asked to talk about his feelings about being a stay-at-home and non-working male spouse, during our second encounter, Jerome constructs a “semantic barrier” of “essential sameness” (Gillespie, 2012), based on an idea of similarity between him and his wife in the past when they both were working, an idea of similarity that helps today to disidentify from his present being, a nonworking male spouse: except for financial reasons like the household relying on a single salary and some external pressure coming from the society, being a man in the house has never been a problem, it has never been “weird,” according to Jerome, “because even when I was working, I was doing those things [at home], we were sharing everything.” Later during the second interview, Jerome spontaneously decides to address the issue and explains how, when his family started to get professional support for handling the health issue of his kid, he was pointed out how being a non-working man was particularly difficult for him. He opens up to recognize his new position as a male spouse with regard to his role within the family:

This person was saying, “Yeah, in fact for you as a man (...) it's very difficult to, because you have to show for your kid the status of a man, of the father, but at the same time you're not working and you are doing homeworking.”

The new role as a stay-at-home and non-working male spouse, from being previously silenced and resisted, becomes real in Jerome's words through *quoting* an external other's voice.

The experience of Nicolas, Yannick, and Jerome illustrated different strategies to handle the change from being a professional to being a male accompanying partner. However, the experience of migration does not only challenge one's identity; it also demands the mobilization of past skills and the acquisition of new social, cognitive, and practical knowledge (Greco Morasso & Zittoun, 2014) to support the work transition, as we will explore in the following section.

Learning and Mobilization of Skills on the Move

As a “subjective, context-dependent, practical ‘knowledge how’” (Ingold, 2000, p. 316), skills are inseparable from human subjectivity, people's personal experience, and embeddedness in the environment. At the same time, people, through the deployment of their skills, can actively shape their surroundings (Ingold, 2000). Learning and mobilizing knowledge and skills for these spouses relate to various personal and contextual inter-related spheres of experience, namely the encounter with the local labor

market, the transformation of family life in mobility, as well as personal leisure time and social life. Spouses at times can try to mobilize and reinvent creatively their own skills for remaking their working life in the new place, they can acquire new knowledge for personal development in social and family life, or they can finally use alternative skills for expanding their own opportunities. We now explore these three processes in turn, through the experience of Victor, Yannick, and Jerome.

Looking for a new job in a different and new place, at times, demands to review and remake one's work profile according to the requirements not only of the type of job position, but also of the local labor market. Victor's experience well illustrates how people can mobilize one's own past and at the same time develop new skills to remake personal working life and to act in the new context. He is 48 years-old and arrived in Switzerland in 2014 following his wife in her international trajectory in a multinational company. Before that, he used to travel often to Africa for his own job. During the time of unemployment, he explains, he tried hard to create new work opportunities and to improve his personal skills. In particular, he engaged as a volunteer in a nongovernmental organization (NGO), a job that provided him, he says, "with opportunities to learn new skills, to fresh out my own CV." Recently, he managed to become a consultant for his wife's company, but he had to change his field of expertise to agriculture and agribusiness along with the needs of the company. He uses his own personal work and family past, and his personal determination and creativity for this change:

I basically said, "Look, you need someone like me, and you know, you've got great people working on these issues but that people from within the community come from business backgrounds" (...) and (...) now they have listened to me and they came back to me quite quickly with the proposition to do small piece of freelance work for them so (...) I had to set myself as a freelance independent um *consultant indépendant*. [...] I can do this because of my experience with volunteering work with the NGO (...) and also that I originally come from a rural community, my family, I've had family members who were farmers and involved in food business, and butchers, and bakers, and so it's I suppose bringing in some of the new things that I've learnt and connecting that with some of my family background, so to be able to convince huge food companies that I've skills that they need and they and they listened, and it's working well.

The acquisition of new skills and knowledge also relates to self-exploration and personal development. Yannick, for example, tells how he likes combining housekeeping work or daily errands with personal work and learning new languages, and how control over more free time provided him with a chance to work more generally on the acquisitions of new skills

(language), on self-exploration (what he really wants to do), and on personal development (e.g., becoming more "efficient," "improve as a person"):

I was always looking during this year and a half, "OK what is that I really wanna do?"; and I have invested a lot of time too for personal development for reading books about how to be (...) how to have more balance in life, how to be happier, how to achieve your goals and mhm and just mhm be at peace with you and your family and (...) I learn languages a lot [...].

This alternative work for personal development helps compensate for the feeling to be "useless and unproductive." Being out of work provides Yannick with the time to reflect on personal issues including feelings of "stress" and "anger." The acquisition of new skills, according to him, can have an impact on his more proximal family relationships and helps strengthen his parenting skills:

not just language, but personal development (...) to be really strong mhm strong personality to have integrities mhm that you don't get stressed easily mhm [...] I'm trying to do to deal with stress. [...] I don't work now so I don't feel stressed, just (...) want to improve as as (...) as a person, just to become (...) stronger more balanced so I don't get stressed or angry, 'cause like mhm as a parent yeah I would mhm improve my parenting skills [...] when you work full-time you have daily commitments you don't really have time (...) to think about lot of issues [...] issues (...) that bother me internally but now being out of work I I have a lot of time to reflect.

Other spouses engage in other activities and deploy alternative practical skills for leisure time, to simply "stay active," to act on the surrounding environment, and possibly to expand personal opportunities. Jerome, in a moment of great demotivation and lack of self-confidence in his job-search, explains how he thought about creating alternatives based on his own interests and capacities:

I'm a positive person, as I told you I have started doing this volunteering but even recently I started even I don't want to stay inactive, I want to do something (...) for example, I really like assembling furniture all this stuff, so I am doing this, I have put an advertisement on Anibis and I—I do assembly Ikea or Conforama furniture, all this stuff, so. This is something I like and know how to do so I was thinking "I know how to do it and lots of people don't know, so why not doing it?" [...] I even started thinking that through this I can even make a network, so (...) for example a person who asked me, was working in a company and she started saying, "Ah, there is a job position" [...] through this person I could introduce my CV to the HR and all this stuff, so. This can also be a means to do networking.

Engaging in new skilled activities can generate new opportunities for making new social relations and for counteracting the sense of “uselessness” associated with being at home without working. These two processes of identity changes and of learning are inextricably intertwined with dynamics of sensemaking, dynamics that we now explore.

Remaking Sense of Work: Sustaining Family Life and Relations in Mobility

Transitions can require a re-elaboration of personal meanings about the newness of the situation (Zittoun, 2012). As a result of the relocation and the new situation of unemployment, male spouses experience a new routine in their daily life, and come to construct alternative perspectives about their new identity position as a nonworking stay-at-home spouse. These new perspectives can in turn bring a new sense of oneself and one’s own role within the family.

Spouses, in particular, can remake sense of the newness of the situation by drawing upon various personal and “cultural repertoires” (Lamont & Mizrahi, 2012), that is the symbolic and cultural meanings that people can appropriate from their personal experience and from the sociocultural context, to make sense of themselves and of the surrounding world: these include rhetorical devices regarding *personal value* (the value that the new situation has for one’s personal life and intimate relations), or regarding *social value* (the value of one’s contribution in a web of social relations resulting from the new situation). The time previously dedicated to work comes to be replaced with more time in the house. The boundary between public and private spheres here starts blurring, and the *housework* comes to be signified through these personal and socially oriented meanings.⁴ Being a non-working and stay-at-home spouse, differently from working hard and full time, becomes hence important for the person, as it comes to represent an opportunity to engage more in family life and to spend time with children. Being at home and taking care of housekeeping duties can also be viewed as an important contribution and social value provided to the family and social life. Leo and Jerome’s experiences well illustrate these different forms of re-elaboration of the meanings associated with their new situation.

Leo and his wife have recently had a baby, and came back to Switzerland after some years of mobility both separately and together. In 2013, he quit his job to follow her in international mobility in her assignment in a multinational company. Leo expresses concerns about unemployment, yet, he also reflects about the positive aspect of being at home and subverts cultural representations describing the man as the breadwinner. He describes

himself as “lucky,” as his wife can provide for the family while he stays at home. The lack of financial contribution from his part, and the consequent negative feelings (“psychological stress”), are replaced with more positive feelings (happiness) and personal and family values. Being at home becomes an occasion for spending quality time with the family and for constructing new and alternative memories:

There is a bit of psychological stress because you think “God, I don’t work, I don’t contribute to the family” but actually it’s not like that you know, I think these are the remains of a culture that maybe we have seen and heard about in the course of our life, but if you look at yourself from the outside and you say “Look, no” if I look at my life there are some priorities, and unless you need to work because you cannot take care of your family, so I have been lucky that my wife has a salary. [...] I am the luckiest man in the world because honestly for me it is a privilege having the opportunities to be with my kid (...) every day, every time, to see him grow up. For me this is a great fortune, big time. If there was a moment in the lifetime in which not-working was necessary, it was now, honestly I don’t have regrets at all, I am really happy. [...] When I will be 80, if I get there and I will look back in time, having worked 6 months more now maybe I won’t even remember what I have done, instead spending these months with my kid, I will keep these memories for all my life. [...] Sure you need to be ready to stay at home without working but I am very happy about it and I would do it again.⁵

The time spent in taking care of housekeeping duties makes some spouses reconsider what counts as “work,” and then redefine the concept altogether: Work stops being viewed as merely related to employment but starts including different responsibilities, including work in and out of the household, family duties, administrative tasks, emotional and practical support, that very kind of social contribution associated with the role of the “accompanying wife.”

Some male spouses describe the work at home of the accompanying partner as an important and alternative contribution that these people can provide their family and the society with, and as a significant aspect defining their new identity position. Jerome describes this work as an “unrewarded work,” since this contribution is not always valued and acknowledged by others, especially by the working partners:

It’s tough because, in French we say a *travail ingrat* (laughs) because it is never seen from outside (laughs) yeah [...] when everybody is back at home everything is clean, at the right place and so on, but this is what it should be but when everybody leaves in the morning is not like that (laughs) [...] even from my wife’s point of view, ok it is something which is normal to do because I am at home, it’s normal to do (laughs) I consider it too, but when [...] if you do something for your work [...] you’re expecting for some [...] ehm,

recognition let's say, which is [...] not when you do homework [...] so this is the bad part of being at home.

Work, in the words of these men, becomes thus more than the sole professional position that used to describe their identities in the past before the move, and comes to be represented by a variety of socio-emotional relations involved, and by the transformative power of their imagination and personal strategies to deal with migration. These socio-emotional relations include the social role of the male spouses, their intimate ties, the effort and contribution that they can bring to the family or to themselves for personal development, through other means and resources (other than financial). The process of sensemaking can thus catalyze new identity making, the acquisition of new knowledge, as well as the subjective temporal movement between past and future to reinterpret one's own present.

CONCLUSION

The sociocultural psychological approach on work and mobility herein proposed highlights the dynamic and mutual relation between sociocultural context and the individual. According to the model proposed, the experience of migration implies a transformation at different levels. Our analysis showed how this multilevel transformation occurs in the case of the male spouses under the condition of repeated moves, through the identity transformation into an unemployed stay-at-home man, through the mobilization and acquisition of skills and knowledge, as well as through a change in the way these people make sense of the new situation resulting from the loss of their job and from migration. This transformation makes these people confront sociocultural configurations, in particular gender roles, and with new dynamics within the context of the family. This transformation also brings people to develop personal strategies and draw upon personal and sociocultural meanings available to handle the identity change and to remake a sense of themselves and the surrounding environment.

Our analysis presents important implications in the study of work transitions and mobility. First, *work* should be analytically redefined based on the subjective experience and the various personal and sociocultural meanings that individuals use to describe what counts as work for them. We showed how work for the male spouses comes to be redefined on the basis of individual and family-based experiences, and of the social value of their new identity position in migration.

Second, the diverse resources that mobile workers can mobilize and the way they mobilize them, at different levels (personal and family life, the job market and social context, and the macro level of global economy under

different regimes of mobility), need further exploration. As in other instances of social and personal transformation (Gillespie, Cornish, Aveling, & Zittoun, 2008; Zittoun, 2007b; Zittoun, Aveling, Gillespie, & Cornish, 2012; Zittoun, Duveen, Gillespie, Ivinson, & Psaltis, 2003b), the present analysis suggests how people are constantly in search of elements and experiences that they can find in themselves, around them, and from others, and that help them navigate the complexity of their everyday life. In particular, these spouses' personal stories become a valuable testimony of how the experience of mobility affects, and is affected by, this constant search, and should therefore be subject to further research. Apart from the institutional elements available for these spouses, people can create and mobilize meanings and resources out of their experience—resources that can support them in the relocation to a new place, in the disruption of identity change, as well as in the transformation of family life in mobility.

As a whole, we wish to have shown how a sociocultural approach to work can allow identifying social and cultural meanings and institutional arrangements of work, their transformations, and the way these create the condition for human lives. At the same time, our perspective highlights human creativity in relation to work, even within such tightly constructed arrangements. Work, after all, is always a matter of human activity, and can take as many new forms as humans are capable of imagining.

NOTES

1. This chapter is based on an ongoing research supported by the National Center of Competence in Research NCCR—On the Move, and funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF).
2. Terms and phrasing in brackets are the exact wording used by the interviewees.
3. All names here are pseudonyms.
4. There is a large traditional literature across the social sciences using a socialist-feminist approach to work, and focusing on gender, economy and male domination, in particular on the distinction between public and private sphere in women's housework and between work and non-work with regard to childrearing and housekeeping (e.g., Barrett, 1980; Chodorow, 1999; Ferguson & Folbre, 2000; Gilman, 1903).
5. This interview was conducted in the native language of the interviewee and then translated into English.

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CHAPTER 10

ORGANIZATIONAL CREATIVITY FROM A SITUATED AND CULTURAL PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

Lene Tanggaard

In this chapter, I explore organizational creativity from a situated and cultural psychological perspective through empirical examples based on two major pieces of fieldwork studying the creative processes involved in innovation in organizations of various kinds. Theoretically, I will draw on the analytical perspective of situated learning and the cultural psychological perspective as these are explored in, respectively, the work of Lave and Wenger (1991), addressing learning as the driving force behind changes in social practices, and Jaan Valsiner, focusing on the complexities of whole<>parts (Valsiner, 2014, p. 37) and therefore essentially looking at organizing principles for creativity and the interplay between wholes (organizations) and parts (constituent elements of wholes, e.g., subjects, objects, tools, artefacts, etc.), that is,

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