



A Nomad from Within? Resilient Identities in an Interconnected World

Russian-Speaking Immigrant Women in Italy
(Re)-Constructing the Self

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Social Sciences

by

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| <p>Abstract</p> <p>Within the current political context of global migration the concept of 'identity' has played a major role in the struggle between assimilative and exclusionary practices and policies. Such policies in many cases are the result of a wronged imagination about human identity and the subjects who possess it. In my master's thesis I conceptualize 'resilient identity' as an innovative and highly needed approach to studying today's constantly transforming subjectivity. Through the analysis of the self-narratives of Russian-speaking female immigrants in Italy, I explore how 'resilience of identity' is constructed and manifests itself. My thesis additionally brings together the philosophical and theoretical heritage of Rosi Braidotti's nomadic theory and Amartya Sen's identity thinking. This heritage together with the new concept of 'resilient identity' allows me to critically revise the traditional understanding of identity and, to describe a today's subject "from within" based on subjects' own perceptions about the self. This description allows me to generate some recommendations for future research and policy-making processes.</p> | |
| <p>Keywords</p> <p>Resilient identity, Nomadic theory, Subjectivity, Narratives, Immigrants</p> | |

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1. Introduction

It is a real challenge for the academic research to study people who simultaneously create and inhabit our postmodern, rapidly transforming and highly interconnected world. Subjects who migrate and experience changes, influenced by the pluri-ethnic and multicultural environments, cannot be understood through the traditional concepts and approaches. Many of the old ideas have been proven inadequate: they are unable to accurately describe people and current social relations. The new contexts demand new methods and research tools.

Arguably, the conventional understanding of the term 'identity' - along with other connected reasons - is currently causing the well-documented European struggle between assimilative and exclusionary practices and policies, which target immigrants and limits their well-being. The perception of 'identity' as something fixed, anchored in culture nationality/ethnicity and even genes has played an important role in the general context of today's intensified violence and instability (see for example Sen 2007). The current cultural and other policies were created with this perception.

At the same time many feminist, post-structuralist and post-colonial philosophers argued that the old ideas, particularly those about people who live in today's world, should be reconsidered. Those philosophers are demanding from their colleagues a higher conceptual creativity which could help to confront and contest the mainstream understanding of the world, instigating the shifts in power and re-conceptualizing many key ideas (Appadurai 1994; Braidotti 1998; Spivak 1992). Feminist philosopher Rosi Braidotti, for example, specifies that a shift in political debates about subjectivity is required (Braidotti 1998). The philosopher offers her own comprehension of the postmodern subjectivity unfolding her thoughts in the nomadic theory. Braidotti's fresh and innovative ideas inspired my current enquiries as well as this master's thesis.

By conducting this research I make a step forward in a hard task of understanding and describing today's exceedingly unsettled subjectivity. I also show that identity is a transformable and highly-changeable category. Moreover, I respond to the aforementioned demand for the greater conceptual creativity by developing a new concept of 'resilient identity' and explaining its possible application for studying subjectivity. Resilient identity is applied in my thesis to the analysis of immigrants' self-narratives. I carefully selected narrative methodology from other possible options, because I believe that narratives, specifically in the form of life story interviewees, allow me to receive and analyze a vast amount of information about changes and resilience in interviewees' lives.

In the first chapter of my thesis I present the theoretical background of my research. I explain why I am interested in it and how it was influenced by Braidotti's ideas. Further, I develop the concept of 'resilient identity' and address some important critiques of Braidotti's nomadic theory by using the concept and explaining how it can complement Braidotti's theory. Additionally, I adjust some Braidotti's ideas to the scope of my enquiry considering Amartya Sen's identity thinking as well as his concepts of 'agency' and 'capability'.

The chapter that follows explains in a greater detail how the narrative methodology helps me to understand the contemporary subjectivity. I also express my reasoning for the choice of methodology. In the same chapter I consider possible limitations in different stages of data production and analysis. As an example, I assess the process of the selection of respondents applying some ideas from the intersectional approach.

Further I proceed with the data analysis testing the developed concept of 'resilient identity' and some of my theoretical assumptions by studying the self-narratives of Russian-speaking immigrants in Italy. I address the research questions exemplifying and scrutinizing the transitory moments in narrators' lives. I pay an extra attention towards how 'difference' and resilience are constructed.

The results of the analysis are evaluated and debated in the chapter “Discussions”. Finally, my conclusions are articulated in the last chapter where I consider the future perspectives and possible applications for the concept of ‘resilient identity’.

2. Theoretical Background

In this chapter I develop the theoretical background for my research. Particularly, I describe how the idea for this master's thesis was born and how it is connected to Rosi Braidotti's theory of nomadic subjectivity. I clarify how Braidotti's views offer some fresh and interesting insights for researching on subjectivity of today's world, providing a strong philosophical background for this research. I also explain that due to the scope of my research I should include to it the immigrant's own perceptions, so further in the chapter I propose to incorporate some Amartya Sen's key concepts in order to bring the discussions to the individual level and to explore immigrants' subjectivity 'from within'. I elaborate on the manner in which I use and synthesize some ideas from Braidotti's and Sen's thinking and explain how I combine them in order to study immigrant identities strongly emphasizing immigrants' own views and understandings of the topic. Finally, I propose a concept of 'resilient identity' which I believe to be applicable for studying post-modern, non-fixed identities in general and nomadic subjectivity in particular.

2.1 Braidotti's Nomadic Subjectivity

The idea for this research originally emerged due to my personal experience of immigration, facing multiple adversities and living through big shocks for what I thought at that time was my identity. During the course of my life I have encountered numerous manifestations of difference. Being born and raised in Russia, and later becoming an immigrant in such unlikely places as Mexico and Finland, I have personally experienced vast changes in terms of location as well as social, linguistic, economic, political and cultural environments, meeting different people with different backgrounds, ideas, stories, origins and aspirations. This experience eventually led me to change many of my perceptions not only about people, ideas and things that surrounded me, but also about my own self. During

that time I lost my initial understanding of such important categories as 'home', 'nationality', 'belonging' and even 'myself'.

Driven by my inner desire to explain the transformations which I have experienced both externally and internally, I have started my own investigation on immigrants' identities which is summarized in this master's thesis. One of the most important objectives of my inquiry was to understand and explain how the transformations in self-views happen and how the subject makes sense of them. During the preliminary investigation I was unsatisfied with many of existing theories applied in different researches on immigrant identities. I felt that they did not fully represent my own experience or the experiences of people who had lived through similar situations in their lives. As a result I started developing the concept of 'resilient identity' which could be applied in the research on people who inhabit today's interconnected world.

After having defined some key concepts and outlined some possible directions for the further research, I discovered Braidotti's theory about nomadic subjectivity. I was astonished at how accurately her philosophical ideas reflected some of my personal experiences and how close they were to my own inquiry. As a result of such alignment, some key theoretical assumptions in my master's thesis are, to an extent, comparable to Braidotti's nomadic thinking. Even if the development of this master's thesis and my discovery of Braidotti's theory were not chronologically synchronized, it is possible to argue that the nomadic theory represents the starting point and philosophical vector for building up the theoretical framework for this research.

In several of her books Braidotti has expressed her concerns about constantly being "behind time" in terms of theory and concepts. This means that in the context of today's rapid and continuous changes researchers cannot adequately represent neither our time, not ourselves. According to the philosopher, the old theories and discourses are of no use in the postfeminist, multiethnic, postcolonial, postmodern and globalized societies we create and live in, so they cannot grasp the meanings

which are currently being produced (Braidotti 2011). Braidotti has made a call to the academy for improving conceptual creativity: “We need to think differently about ourselves and the ongoing process of deep-seated transformation” (Ibid, 8). My present research represents a response to that call as well as an innovative way for addressing the problem of feeling “behind time”.

It is fair to argue that Braidotti’s theory influenced my research the most in terms of understanding subjectivity. By developing some of Deleuze’s ideas Braidotti elaborates a ‘nomadic subject’ “who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity.” (Braidotti as cited in Ahmed 2000, 103). A nomad does not have any nostalgia, inertia or any other form of motionlessness. Philosopher’s concept of ‘nomadic subjectivity’ opened for me a new possibility to approach my inquiry from a different point of view, particularly, by imagining and researching the subject as someone who is rootless, nonunitary and constantly transformed.

For my research it is important to underline that Braidotti’s nomadic subject is not enrooted anywhere, and represents a continuous becoming without a permanent location or any unifying identity. A nomad does not feel at home anywhere and does not completely belong to any nation, class, race or any static social categories. A nomad constantly escapes the mainstream and other discourses. Such subject denies the dualistic categories as mind/body, reason/emotion, or thoughts/senses, and travels freely between them as a threshold of all transformations. A nomad additionally possesses a critical consciousness and refuses to fit in any pre-mediated categories or pre-constructed molds. The fact that a nomad does not fully belong to any culture or social category allows the subject to look at them with a critical lens, in other words as if it were “from outside”.

Philosophically nomadism symbolizes ‘disidentification’ from Eurocentric and ‘phallogocentric logic’, and produces new embodied and embedded concepts, theories, ideas and politics, where the physical, symbolic and sociological overlap. Politically, nomadism embodies the desire to destabilize the center. Braidotti

suggests that through introducing this theory the political center would be simultaneously destabilized and activated (Braidotti 1994).

Therefore, Braidotti's concept of 'nomadic subjectivity' is more than just a metaphor, it is a 'figuration'¹ and a political fiction for constructing new myths and realities. It offers researchers an opportunity to study people outside the traditional, dualistic, androcentric-inspired schemes, coming up with new tools, methodologies and theories, which focus on exploring changes, difference and disruptions. I argue that Braidotti's ideas on subjectivity open some new political and philosophical dimensions for studying immigrants and their changing identities, avoiding anchoring the discussion on such categories as 'cultural' or 'religious identity' which in many cases are perceived and treated as fixed or not easily adaptable.

Braidotti's nomadic theory represents a set of new philosophical ideas about today's world and people who inhabit and embodied it. Nevertheless, I argue that theory's direct application for studying today's subjects and for policy-making purposes is quite challenging and should be carefully revised. I do so in this master's thesis. For example, it is important to take into consideration that the traditional policy making processes rely on a very different imagination about the subject. Consequently, it could be complicated to base the new policies on Braidotti's innovative ideas without some preliminary adaptations and innovations in the policy-making processes.

Concerning the academic research, in case of studying subjectivity, there are also some complications related to creating a description of an ever-changing subject. Is it possible or reasonable conduct an academic study on a subject, who tomorrow will be different from today? Will the image of the described subjectivity be reliable if the subject constantly changes? Further in this chapter I address some of these questions.

¹ According to Braidotti, 'figuration' is an embodied and embedded politically informed image of thoughts

In the particular case of my research the direct applicability of Braidotti's theory could be limited – together with the aforementioned reasons – due to the existing difference in scope between her theory and my inquiry. The former is developed largely considering the dimension of social relations and hierarchies inside them. My thesis, instead, requires an analysis on the individual level. In Braidotti's texts the changes and transformations in subjects are majorly discussed from the collective perspective and from the point of view of power-relations and discourse. Braidotti sees the subject in the process of transformation as dependent on the context and defined by her positioning in society. In other words, subject is described through power relations with other subjects and the transformations are theorized mostly in terms of shifts in power.

As an example when Braidotti describes the process of 'becoming-woman' she stresses the key role of subject's positioning and 'the politics of location':

If one starts from the Majority position (...) there is only one possible path through the Minority. (...). For those who start from the position of empirical minorities, on the other hand, more options are open. If the pull towards assimilation or integration into the majority is strong (hence the phenomenon of phallic woman), so is appeal of the lines of escape toward minoritarian becomings. (Ibid 2011, 43)

The scope of my thesis is different: I study a subject "from within" by analyzing immigrants' self-narratives: it is important to understand how the subject perceives the changes of the self. In order to do so I must maintain the focus on the individual understandings and transformations, so I put the emphasis on subject's own ways of dealing with changes and difference.

While I believe that Braidotti's analysis of macro-level power-relations and discourses is very important, I argue that the subject rarely perceives her own life in those terms. It is my opinion, the subject rather makes sense of her life underlining her individual role and decisions, instead of taking into accounts power-relations and discursive practices. I claim that it is important to introduce some new concepts to my research in order to be able to study subjectivity and immigrants' identities from the point of view of their personal understandings of them. I believe that the

concepts which emphasize the role of an individual in an identity-building process are suitable for answering my research questions and should effectively complement Braidotti's theory.

In my opinion some of Amartya Sen's ideas about identity and additionally some of his concepts from other works could be very suitable for my research. They have a certain potential to complement some unattended spaces in Braidotti's theory adding a new level of analysis to it. In the next part of the chapter I explore the important aspects of Sen's identity thinking simultaneously addressing some of its critiques. I also identify the concepts which are suitable for my enquiry and have a potential of complementing Braidotti's arguments on subjectivity facilitating the analysis of my empirical data.

Ultimately, the application of the selected and proposed concepts to the analysis of the empirical data will confirm if my current approach is correct or should be further adjusted. As an alternative, a certain combination of collective and individual level of analysis may be needed when researching on immigrants' identities. If found necessary, the scope of the further researches could be adapted in order to take into account both power relations and the role of an individual.

2.2 'Agency' and 'Capability' in Sen's Identity Thinking

Amartya Sen's identity thinking is articulated in several of his essays, lectures and in the book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* where the scholar advocates for widespread and multilevel recognition of the idea that every person possesses multiple identities. 'Identity' in Sen's understanding is characterized by strong collective features: the scholar sees it primarily in terms of belonging to a certain group. At the same he emphasizes the possibility of choice of identity which every individual could make. Interestingly, by conceptualizing identity in such a way Sen simultaneously addresses the individual and collective levels of the concept.

I believe that for my particular inquiry the most interesting of Sen's ideas is his recurrent argument that identity is a matter of individual choice. In many of his

text and public speeches Sen underlines that an individual should be able to deliberately decide which of the multiple identities she wants to use in every particular situation:

Given our inescapably plural identities, we have to decide on the relative importance of our different associations and affiliations in any particular context. Central to leading a human life, therefore, are the responsibilities of choice and reasoning. (Sen 2006, 8)

If compared with Braidotti's thinking, it could be argued that Sen holds almost an opposite opinion when imagining an individual: he recognizes the role of the context in which individual grows and develops, yet he emphasizes the importance of a deliberate and responsible choice of who the person is and how she sees herself.

The idea of choice in terms of identity is largely criticized at least in two important aspects. The first one is that person's choices are argued to be only illusions of choices, given that a person has to deal with many pre-given situations from the very beginning of her life: the person is born in certain community, to certain parents, with certain physical characteristics, etc. Even her education and opportunities are largely determined by the context she lives in. Therefore, people normally can "choose" only from the possibilities they are familiar with, so this kind of choice basically does not exist. This critique is linked to what Braidotti conceptualizes as subject's positioning, and means that a huge part of a life of the person is determined from the moment she is born and hardly represents a result of person's individual choices.

Sen, acknowledging the limits for individual choices, argues that those limits do not completely erase the possibility to choose: "Choices of all kinds are always made within particular constraints" (Sen 2006, 19). The scholar compares this problem with budget constraints, claiming that given a restricted amount of money in their wallet, people still have an opportunity to decide what to buy with it (Ibid).

Unlike Braidotti, Sen establishes the scope of his research on a combination of the individual and collective level, even though strongly emphasizing the former. He also takes an important stand against communitarian thinking in general. Sen

says that communitarian argumentation leaves a person without freedom to choose her own destiny. Acknowledging that some basic cultural beliefs or norms may influence person's choices, the scholar argues that they do not determine the choice entirely. In other words, if a researcher thinks about a person only in terms of collective relations (e. g. where that person comes from, and the influence of the norms, practices and traditions related to person's origins) it would mean for Sen that such researcher leaves unattended an important aspect of individual self-determination taking away person's agency.

Following Sen's logic, it would be feasible to consider the possibility of individual choice when researching on identities. Moreover, it could be argued that to deprive a person from such a possibility would mean to limit greatly the potential outcomes and reliability of an academic research while the same deprivation in real life would signify to limit person's development and well-being.

When evaluating any individual choices the concept of 'agency' is particularly important in Sen's thinking. 'Agent' is "someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives." (Sen 1999, 19). Interestingly, in many of his texts Sen conceptualizes 'agency' as an action of value. Therefore when applying Sen's concept to my research, specifically during the process of assessing transformations and changes I must consider if an individual deliberately chooses to be transformed, if the reasons for such transformations are connected to the values of that individual and if the resulting transformations are valued afterwards.

The second important critique of Sen's idea of choice in terms of identity is the notion that what ultimately matters is not how a person chooses to define herself, but how other people perceive that person. Sen himself is aware about this critique and mentions it in some of his texts, although he does not offer a comprehensive solution for it. Nevertheless, I argue that while this critique is very valid, it does not lead to disappearance of the possibility of person's choice of identity, so the individual choice should still be considered (e.g. a person could still deliberately

choose her identity from available possibilities and further to negotiate her choice with other people).

Working with Sen's capability approach and addressing the critique about the perceptions of one's identity by other people, Teschl and Derobert have made an interesting suggestion: they propose to treat the distorted perceptions of someone's identity as a "capability deprivation for those who suffer from them" (Teschl and Derobert 2008). 'Capability' is another concept that is especially important in Sen's thinking as well as for my inquiry. It represents the "effective freedom of an individual to choose between (...) different kinds of life that she has reason to value" (Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy). In other words, if a person has reasons to value a certain identity and wants to choose it as her own, other people or institutions should not deprive that person from this possibility.

Following the logic expressed by Teschl and Derobert, I argue that when researching identity, it could be very important to address it in terms of capability deprivation. Ideally, as an important outcome of such a research, some comprehensive policy recommendations could be produced, so people who suffer from wrong perceptions can be heard and the wrong perceptions could be detected and dealt with in practical terms.

In order to summarize this brief review of Amartya Sen's identity thinking it is important to mention that he brings the analysis of the issues related to a subject and subject's identity to the individual level. I argue that Sen's 'agency' and 'capabilities' will benefit my research. Their application will specifically help to explore some important aspects in subject's (re-)construction, in particular those which remain unattended in Braidotti's theory. While Braidotti's ideas about nomadic subjectivity are new and philosophically inspiring, Sen's concepts open a possibility to explore this new type of subjectivity from a different standpoint, namely from a subject's own perspective.

2.3 Temporality and Location in Braidotti's Nomadic Theory

In previous sub-chapters I have described how some of Braidotti's ideas could be complemented by Sen's ideas, specifying in what way their combination could benefit my research. By combining them I opened a possibility for researching on today's subjects and for analyzing what kind of role the individual choices, 'agency' and 'capabilities' could play when they (re-)construct themselves. This theorization allowed me to start building up the framework for addressing the main research questions of this thesis. Nevertheless, before proceeding with the analysis of empirical data, an additional critical review of Braidotti's nomadic theory is needed. Particularly, I am interested in addressing some theoretical knots related to the non-fixity of the subject.

I argue that the application of the theory of nomadic subjectivity to my own research could potentially cause some difficulties (apart from the issues related to the differences in scope, discussed before). Another share of possible difficulties is connected to the general fluidity of Braidotti's concepts and the idea of constant transformations entrenched in them. As it was mentioned earlier, it is challenging for the current research methods to grasp any notion or meaning of ever-changing subject.

Indeed, there are some important criticisms of nomadic theory related to the changeability of its subjects. For example, when reviewing some Braidotti's ethical proposals from the book *Transpositions: on Nomadic Ethic* Hemmings (2010) brings to attention the issue about temporality of a subject. Particularly, Hemmings states that the imagined subject's temporality should always consider a present moment, assumed that the present is "time for us to commit to breaking old habits and invest in becoming-otherwise. We must work now – hard, fast, carefully – within and outside of ourselves in order to remake the past and re-imagine the future." (Hemmings 2010, 91). Hemmings insists that this need remains unaddressed in Braidotti's theory, because the subjects described by her are constantly moving (at least symbolically), hence always inhabit the future. In my understanding, this

critique represents a call for conceding to the subject a moment and a certain period of time for reflection. This moment is needed for re-organization of the past and imagining the future in between multiple subject's becomings.

Hemmings holds a similar opinion concerning the location of a nomadic subject²:

To be located – grounded even – is to be able to reflect on possibilities for transformation as they arise in the moment of their transformation, but from a particular place and with likely effects uppermost in mind. This is essential for critical sanity. (Ibid, 90).

By stating that, the scholar confesses that as a subject she feels anxious about being continuously propelled to spaces, which are totally new and unknown for her, without having a certain space, where her roots could be sorted out and grounded at least temporarily (Ibid).

In the book *Nomadic Theory: The portable Rosi Braidotti* Braidotti offers her views on the process of becoming nomadic, which could guide further possible discussion on the issue: “Becoming nomadic means that one learns to reinvent oneself, and one desires the self as a process of transformation. It is about the desire for qualitative transformations, for flows and shifts of multiple desires.” (Braidotti 2011, 41). As a response to this idea – and starting with a very basic argument: a person cannot reason out of nowhere – I argue that in order to desire transformations and to value them, a subject should have an opportunity to experience them to some extent or know that such a possibility exist. Consequently, before becoming nomadic a person should imagine herself as located somewhere outside of the desirable transformations and should have a certain imagination about herself³.

Only through living in a present moment and by imagining herself as being located, a person is able to experience desire of the future changes in her identity. Therefore, I argue that there should be a phase, both in terms of time and space (if

² In this particular case the subject is represented by a nomadic critic

³ I.e. a certain starting identity

not “real”, at least in subject’s imagination), when and where a person experiences a certain fixity. Consequently, even the process of becoming nomadic should start from that symbolical ‘starting point’ or in other words from an imagined identity.

Further in her book Braidotti states: “Crucial to becoming a nomad is the undoing of oppositional dualism majority/minority and arousing an affirmative passion for the transformative flows that destabilize all identities.” (Ibid). Similarly, it is possible to argue that before undoing the oppositional dualisms and starting moving towards transformations, a person should imagine herself as caught in some of the dualisms (i.e. to be both in a fixed location and in present time) and to be able to realize that.

Consequently, the very process of becoming nomadic seems to require some sort of initial imaginary fixity⁴. Interestingly, Braidotti mentions that a person is never completely nomadic, because if she becomes nomadic, it would mean that she becomes something fixed instead of being constantly transformed. Consequently, a practical way of sustaining nomadism could be represented by a desire to continue transitioning between imagined identities. Ultimately, only the application of Braidotti’s theory along with my complementing ideas to the empirical data will show if those assumptions are correct.

Further in this master’s thesis I develop a new concept of ‘resilient identity’, which I believe is suitable for researching transformations in the life of a nomadic subject and for understanding how the subject makes sense of the self. Additionally, I believe that the concept helps to solve some of the aforementioned theoretical knots in the theory of nomadic subjectivity. In my opinion the term’s further conceptualizing also offers some relevant elaborations and opens new paths for research on immigrant identities. In the next sub-chapter I develop a very short review of academic literature, where the relation between resilience and identity is

⁴ For example, an identity which is about to be reinvented, a fixed locations in one of the spheres of influence of the oppositional dualisms, etc.

explored. I also explain why further conceptualization of 'resilient identity' is needed.

2.4 'Resilience' and 'Identity'. Previous studies

Identity is currently one of the most studied constructs in social sciences (Schwartz et al. 2011). The interest for the topic as well as the number of related researches and publications have steadily increased in the last few decades (Côte and Levine 2002). Different bodies of research on identity have emanated from different theoretical and disciplinary traditions and contributed with different types of methodology and levels of analysis (Schwartz et al. 2011). The variety of theories and approaches to studying identity is immense, so even within a same discipline different methodologies for researching this complex construct may coexist⁵'Resilience' has also been studied within numerous disciplines, from ecology to psychology. Some scholars argue that the concept has been used so much that it has become an important part of the cultural discourse (Aranda et al. 2012). The concept itself has been born as a result of an interdisciplinary research which attempted to explore, describe and understand connections between social and ecological processes (Cote and Nightingale 2012). Human resilience in particular has been studied in connection with variety of contexts: family and community, individual resilience, resilience in cross-cultural perspectives, resilience-based policies among others (VanBreda 2001).

Interestingly, despite of the fact that the two aforementioned constructs have been studied extensively, there are very few studies where the relation between them is considered. The majority of such studies have been conducted within the discipline of psychology and mostly in relation to some traumatic experiences, in connection with children and adolescents' development of identity, or the LGBT

⁵ For example, according to Hitlin (2003), within sociology there are several approaches and understanding of the concept

community and other minorities. The scopes, approaches, methods and results of such studies vary greatly.

For example, in the article *Reflecting Resiliency⁶: Openness about Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity and Its Relationship to Well-Being and Educational Outcomes* for LGBT Students Kosciw et al. (2015) discuss the relation between resilience and the act of disclosing the LGBT identity to other people. The authors argue that the fact of “being out” is important for identity development and may also enhance resilience. Nevertheless, the scholars also claim that the only fact of “being out” does not automatically enhance resilience, given the fact that once person decides to reveal her LGBT identity, other issues come into play (e.g. peer support, risk of victimization and the contextual differences between urban and rural communities).

In the article *American Indian College Students: An Exploration into Resiliency Factors Revealed through Personal Stories* (Montgomery et al. 2000) it is demonstrated that the ability to integrate the traditional Indian identity and values into the educational system leads to greater resilience in students and better educational outcomes. According to the authors, the ability to build of an effective balance between Indian and “traditional academic” identities is also an important factor for students persistence and success in studies.

Bonanno et al. (2002) research on people’s coping mechanisms, their capacity to overcome loss of significant people and resilience during the bereavement period. Concerning the relation between resilience and identity they argue that “one of the defining characteristic of resilient individuals during bereavement is their capacity to maintain continuity in identity” (Ibid).

Interestingly, in his *Resilient Identities: Self, Relationship, and the Construction of Social Reality* the psychologist William Swann (1996) uses the term ‘resilient

⁶ Resilience and resiliency are two variations of the same word. The word ‘resilience’ is more common in academic literature

identities' in the title of his book, without clarifying what 'resilient identity' means. Neither has he managed to conceptualize the term in the book.

In the aforementioned examples the relation between resilience and identity is studied from very different perspectives and angles. All the studies also have different goals and outcomes, so after a brief review it seems problematic to come up with a consistent, comprehensive approach for studying resilient identity. Nevertheless, after my extensive research in different academic sources I have come to the conclusion that the term 'resilient identity' has not been properly studied in the academic literature. Remarkably, during my search for relevant studies I have found that some authors have used the term, but did not succeed in conceptualizing it. Therefore, one of the important purposes of this thesis should be to properly conceptualize the term and to explore the benefits of studying subjectivity with it, bringing the proposed approaches and methodology together in order to enrich the discipline of social sciences.

2.5 Conceptualizing the 'Resilient Identity'

As it was mentioned in the previous subchapter, in order to proceed with my present research a definition of the concept of 'resilient identity' is required. The term is fairly complex, given that it represents a combination of two very wide, extensively studied and multi-layered concepts. To have a clear take on the term and to understand it better, it is important to look separately to its constituents as well as to explain my particular usage of them. As a result, in this subchapter I discuss in greater detail the most important aspects of the 'resilient identity', providing ample explanation on how the elements of the concept and the concept itself are used and understood within this thesis. Therefore, the purpose of this subchapter is to discover the deeper meanings entrenched in the proposed concept, which I use for researching on today's constantly transforming subjectivity and also for complementing Braidotti's nomadic theory.

2.5.1 Identity

There are plenty of definitions of identity. The majority of them focuses on the specific traits of people's self-perceptions, personal beliefs, some particular positions in social hierarchy, occupation or belonging to a certain culture or ethnicity/nationality. In contrast, in this thesis I propose to use such a definition of identity which could be as open and flexible as possible. I believe that this allows me to take into account and analyze a wide range of different elements which constitute person's identity in every specific case. Suitable definition in my view is proposed by Schwartz et al. (2011) in the Handbook of Identity Theory and Research: "Identity involves people's explicit or implicit responses to the question "Who are you?".

The theories of 'identity' - contrary, for example, to the theories of the 'self' - tend to emphasize the relation of the self with the exterior world: in such studies the relations between the personal and the social are especially important (McLean and Syed 2014). By considering this, when study resilient identity I (following the example of Sen's identity thinking) simultaneously take into consideration the collective and the individual level of the concept.

Largely the studies of identity could be divided into three main categories according to how they conceptualize it, namely studies that explore individual, collective and relational dimensions of the concept (Sedikides and Brewer 2015). First dimension refers to the studies which prioritize the identity-formation processes within every individual as well as individual's related actions and decisions. They underline the important role of each person in creating answers to the question "Who are you?"

Second dimension refers to such studies, where people's identities are considered strictly in connection to their social roles, their identification (through different types of relations) with significant others: parents, friends, co-workers etc.

Finally, the third dimension refers to the studies where collective identity is explored. Such studies emphasize person's identification with a group of people and

her sense of belonging to a certain group. In my master's thesis prioritize the individual dimension, although my research is not limited to it.

The essential aspect in my understanding of the concept of 'identity' is its intrinsic dynamism. Arguably, in the short literature review from the previous sub-chapter, where the connections between resilience and identity were explored, researchers have showed an inclination to understand identity as a fairly fixed category. They focused only on the specific aspects of the concept, as for instance gender identity, tribal traditional identity or identity as a set of self-views that may possess the characteristic of "continuity." On the contrary, I believe that identity of an individual is not permanently fixed to any category, but highly changeable: it not only transforms when a person changes locations, acquaintances, lifestyle, but it also with time, by learning and acquiring new skills, etc. Moreover, I argue that the identity could simultaneously include the past, the present and the future self of a person. Consequently, to know who person is at the present moment is important for understanding where she wants to go and where she comes from.

In my opinion, to see identity in the essentialist manner is incorrect, so I agree with Braidotti, who argues that identity is constructed:

Identity is not (...) a fixed, God-given essence - of the biological, psychic or historical kind. On the contrary, identity is a process: it is constructed in the very gesture that posits it as the anchoring point for certain social and discursive practices. (Braidotti 2011a).

Philosophically, my understanding of identity is also close to Braidotti's writings, which are influenced by Deleuze's theory of difference, where identity is secondary to difference. In other words, identities are the result of existing differences between people and not the other way around. I believe that the identity is born and re-negotiated through exploration of difference and further exploration of the self, hence I believe that a subject changes through recognizing and making sense of encountered difference.

Incorporating to my research some critiques of Braidotti's theory discussed above, I use the term 'identity' instead of 'subjectivity' in many parts of this thesis,

because I intend to focus on the idea of a certain temporal fixity, conceding to the subject a symbolic moment and space for sorting out the transformations and differences.

2.5.2 Resilience

Plenty of definitions of resilience may be found in academic literature from different fields of studies. In my research I adopt the definition, which comes from the interdisciplinary socio-ecological research performed in the Stockholm Resilience Center. Although simple and applicable to many different systems, that definition is appropriate for human identity and it underlines the most important characteristics of the concept: "Resilience is the long-term capacity of a system to deal with change and continue to develop." (Moberg and Simonson 2011, 6).

In my understanding one of the essential aspects of 'resilience' is a strong idea about the existence adversities and changes embedded in it. Independently of what field resilience is studied in, be it ecology or psychology, the idea of inevitability of encounters with adversities is present. This idea is equally important in my research, because I believe that resilience is measured against changes and adversities, likewise the adversities are absolutely necessary for the resilience-building process. In my opinion a person who did not experience difficult, even possibly traumatic situations in life could hardly be defined as resilient. Therefore, the awareness about inevitability of changes and difficulties as well as psychological and intellectual preparedness for them is also crucial for the concept and my understanding of it.

Braidotti argues that "undoing difference is not a task that can be dissolved easily without causing psychic and social damage" (Braidotti 2011, 40). By developing this idea it is possible to argue that to encounter difference is a potentially traumatic experience for human psyche, values and self-perceptions. Consequently in this research difference is understood as a main source for adversities and shocks for people's identity. Difference additionally represents the adversities against which resilience of identity is measured. It is imperative to keep

in mind the double function of difference: difference simultaneously helps to build resilience and to measure it.

According to Lucy Irigaray, people tend to deal with differences through appropriation. She argues that it is an intrinsic human desire to understand everything which surround us through owning it. She states that the desire to own the unknown⁷ is noticeable in people's common ways of loving and maintaining the relationships they establish. The presence of difference could be so unbearable for people that they have invented multiple social, political, economic and psychological mechanisms to own the other and to avoid difference by producing and reproducing sameness. According to the philosopher, it is important to recognize that not every way of dealing with difference (and as a result not any resilience) is a desirable or healthy one (Irigaray 2004).

Unhealthy, or negative resilience, for example, could be built through the process of othering, when difference are appropriated or alienated. In her essays Irigaray explains both processes, and in in her thinking they represent two sides of the same coin. She argues that alienation and appropriation happen when one subjectivity encounters another one, but the former does not concede the latter a possibility to have her own world:

And there is no space, no interval or threshold between us which makes it possible for the one to go towards the other. I only meet myself or pit myself against myself – one myself that I know and appreciate and another myself that I do not know and reject". (Irigaray 2015).

Further Irigaray argues that another way to deal with difference exists. Essentially it consists of "*approaching other as other*":

To recognize the existence of another subjectivity implies recognizing that it belongs to, and constitutes, a proper world, which cannot be substituted for mine, that the subjectivity of the other is irreducible to my subjectivity" (Ibid).

I argue that this way of encountering difference leads to building a healthy or positive 'resilient identity'.

⁷ Frequently represented by 'the other'

There is still another idea embedded in the concept of resilience I would like to underline: the notion that the adversities could be overcome and harmful consequences prevented, so resilience could be enhanced, learnt and even taught. I argue that in my research it would not be any different: resilient identity could be assessed as an acquirable skill or in the same sense as Sen's 'capability', and there is an inspiring space for further research of this possibility.

2.5.3 Resilient Identities

Taking into account the most important aspects of 'resilient identity' discussed in the previous sub-chapters, it is possible to conclude that the term in this thesis is defined as follows: "Resilient identity is a human capacity to encounter differences and - being influenced by those encounters - to change the implicit and explicit answers to the question "Who are you?" in order to enhance development and well-being". I believe that the concept could be used to study today's subjectivity in an innovative manner. In my view, to see the possibility of enhancing resilience of identity as a skill or capacity which could be acquired and improved is particularly interesting field for research.

In this master's thesis I use the concept of 'resilient identities' for researching on immigrants' self-narratives and nomadic subjectivity. I argue that the concept is especially useful for understanding a nomadic subjectivity, because it provides an opportunity to create an imagination of a temporary fixed time and space without breaking up with Braidotti's notion of subjectivity, but complementing it. The application of the concept of 'resilient identity' represents an intent to stop or at least to decrease the speed of the transformations within the subject described by Braidotti. Symbolically, by exploring resilient identities, I explore a snapshot photo of a potentially nomadic subjectivity⁸. The concept of 'resilient identity' allows me to imagine a temporary location where the transformations, changes and differences are sorted out and either accepted as a part of a subject's imagined identity or

⁸ Changing subjectivity or/and subjectivity in the process of becoming nomadic

rejected. In a metaphorical language, invoking an image of the nomadic way of life the 'resilient identity' represents a temporal tent which a nomad inhabits, so she may have some rest between multiple becomings. 'Resilient identity' does not represent nomad's home, but a provisional space and time for reflections about the self.

In the next chapter of this master's thesis I choose the methodology which in my opinion suitable for researching on immigrant's identities and applying the proposed concept. The methodology used for producing and analyzing the empirical data should be able to provide me with reliable answers for my main inquiry: how today's subjects transforms and make sense of changes in their own self. Additionally, I look for answers for the following questions: is the concept of 'resilient identity' suitable for studying contemporary subjects and their perceptions about their own identity? Is the 'resilience of identity' is related to the nomadic subjectivity and how? Does the concept of 'resilient identity' help to study nomadic subjectivity?

3. Methodology

3.1 Identity and Narrative Research

Identity is a challenging topic to tackle in any scientific research. The investigations performed on identities usually require multiple layers of in-depth analysis of people's past, present and future. At the same time wide range of information has to be collected, processed and interpreted. Such information could be related to person's self-perceptions, social memberships, lifestyle, and a general political and economic context in which that person lives. This huge amount of potentially important data is one of the factors, which determine multiple variances in every specific case of research. Another significant factor is related to discrepancy in the produced results in such researches (Maas et al. 2000), which could also be challenging for further interpretation and use.

After revising a fair amount of academic literature on the topic I argue that there is no a universal method for studying people's identities, which would apply for each potential case and satisfy all the possible research objectives, hence it is every researcher's responsibility to plan carefully and to be sensitive about different methods applied in such studies. In this chapter I describe in detail my particular choice of methodology for studying identities and explain why I believe that this choice provides me with better ways of answering my research questions.

As I stated before, there is no a universal formula that inevitably produces the best or the most exact results, when researching identity. Nevertheless, from analyzing the academic literature where the authors pursue similar to my research objectives, I have noticed that the qualitative narrative is considered by many scholars to be very promising and resourceful method. People's narratives allow researchers to collect a wide range of diverse and unique data on numerous aspects of human life. Narratives are generally used for different purposes apart from strictly academic, as for example for deepening people's self-consciousness, for giving voice to traditionally unheard people and minorities, as well as for studying

changes and transitory periods in people's lives (Lieblich, et al 1998). All these purposes are significant in the case of my research: when moving to another place, immigrants encounter a lot of changes in their lives and depending on every particular context may undergo long transitory periods. At the same time, immigrants' voices are rarely heard directly, and their experiences are not taken into account. Women's understandings and perceptions are frequently disregarded in multiple spheres. Arguably, narrative methodology and specifically self-narratives could help me to tackle the abovementioned problems in my master's thesis.

McAdams et al. (2006) in their book *Identity and story: creating self in narrative* argue that people's narratives have made a progress from being just a promising field for studies to a widely-recognized and actively investigated topic. Thanks to evolution described by McAdmas it is currently possible to find a considerable amount of scientific literature where the relations between narrative and identity are examined. This kind of research is interdisciplinary in its nature⁹ and it benefits and is benefited by various scientific fields, from psychology to anthropology and education. Taking into consideration the interdisciplinary characteristics of the narrative research, its advantages reviewed in the studies mentioned above, as well as the specific inquiries of my master's thesis, I decided to use the narrative method for analyzing my empirical data.

3.2 Self-Narratives

Due to the specific emphasis on the changes and processes, which take place within every individual during the periods of transition, as well as individuals' own opinion about those changes, I consider that out of all existing types of narratives the self-narratives would be the most suitable for my research. Interestingly, the authors of the *Narrative Research: reading, analysis and interpretation* argue that the self-narratives represent manifestations of the "inner identity" of each person: "The

⁹ The research on identity is also essentially interdisciplinary, which allows me to consider the benefits of combining two interdisciplinary researches.

story is one's identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We know or discover ourselves, and reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell" (Lieblich et al. 1998, 7). This stressed correlation between people's self-narratives and their identities is especially inspiring for me. However, it is important not to assume that such correlations are absolute. In other words, the articulated self-views could represent an embellished image of a person, who narrator desires to be, or to be seen, but this image is not necessarily corresponds to the narrator current identity. On the other hand, it is impossible to research on a person's identity without taking into account that person's own views on the matter. Consequently, a person's self-narratives along with other contextual elements should be carefully recorded and analyzed in order to understand identity-related processes, which take place within every particular individual.

Lieblich and her colleagues further in their book offer a suggestion about how self-narratives should be treated in a scientific research. According to the authors, when a certain story is recorded and transcribed, the resulting text represents a 'still photograph' of a studied identity, while the actual one is constantly being redefined, hence very difficult to express in one separated narrative (Ibid). This particular idea is correlated to my theoretical assumptions exposed in the first chapter of this master's thesis. I argued that it is perfectly possible to study an ever-changing subjectivity¹⁰ through a still version of it, which may (or may not) contain information about other past, future and parallel versions of the transforming self.

I believe that a 'still photograph' expresses some aspects of the previously discussed 'resilient identity', which, according to my assumptions, should exist between subjects' multiple becomings. The still photograph of a resilient identity symbolically represents a time and a space where the subject (nomadic or not) makes sense of those becomings. Indeed, one single 'photograph' of identity cannot embody the totality of an ever-changing subjectivity, as well as one photo cannot

¹⁰ Any kind of subjectivity, particularly the subjectivity which could potentially be nomadic or at least possess some nomadic.

fully represent a person's life and memories. Nevertheless, it allows researcher to grasp a certain glimpse of changing subjectivity. Studying a temporary identity expressed in a self-narrative, therefore could potentially help to understand where the person comes from and to predict some future transformations and could be used as a method for the present research.

One of the objectives of my master's thesis is to describe and analyze the process when a person makes sense of the transformations which occur in her self-views. The challenging task in this case is to think how a "still photograph" of a temporary identity could help me to achieve my research objectives. In the ideal situation, it would be interesting to use an interview design, which includes at least two self-narratives from the same narrator, collected in two different points in time. For instance, to gather people's self-narratives before and after migration could be very stimulating. By comparing two or more "photographs" of person's identity made in different periods, it could be possible to detect if there are any significant transformations in subject's self-views. However, in practical terms I must take into consideration the limited amount of time, the geographical distance from my potential respondents and other related complications (e.g. not every future migrant knows exactly if, when and where she will migrate, so this fact significantly complicates the identification of the potential respondents). Considering the aforementioned, it is practical and honest to admit from the very beginning of the research, that I would not be able to collect more than one narrative form each person.

Having only one 'photograph' of ever-changing object of study may represent a large limitation for any research, although, I argue that it is possible to overcome any limitations of the chosen research method by developing awareness about and addressing them. It should be done during the stages of design and application of the selected method. I argue that that is equally doable and important when analyzing the obtained empirical data.

3.3 Life story Interviews

I strongly believe that the limitations considered in the previous sub-chapter could be properly addressed by several different actions, including choosing a correct type of self-narrative for the research. In my specific case the appropriate type of narrative should cover extensive periods of narrator's life and should be at the same time deep and detailed. It must also include the 'big picture' and simultaneously describe periods of changes in narrator's life as meticulously and exhaustively as possible. Considering these specific requirements, I believe that the life story interviews could be a good choice for my research:

Typically, a life story narrative includes the aspects of our life and experience that we want to pass on about ourselves to others, the parts that we have come to understand and see as the essence of our whole experience. It highlights the most important influences, experiences, circumstances, issues, themes, and lessons of a lifetime. (Atkinson 1998, 7)

Atkinson argues that life-stories are the main resources for understanding different occurrences and the inner logics of every individual life. In his opinion, it is a useful mean to know the particularities of every person's self-view as well as to understand how they reflect a "personal construction of reality". Further in his book the author reinforces the idea about the life story as a perfect source for attaining a big picture of any identity: "A life-story gives us the vantage point of seeing how one person experiences and understands life, his or her own especially, over time" (Ibid, 8). In other words, it could be argued that the life story corresponds to the requirements of my research.

Remarkably, there is another important advantage of using life-stories and this advantage is directly connected to my theoretical assumptions which I articulate in my thesis. The process of building a self-narrative, organizing it in a life story, with its stage and inner logic of development provides the subject with the symbolical space and moment, where she may make sense of occurring transformations, sort them out and to continue changing:

The act of constructing a narrative of a life could very well be the means by which that life comes together for the first time, or flows smoothly from one thing to the next, to be seen as a meaningful whole. For some people, telling one's story can be a way of becoming who one really is. (Ibid, 12).

In other words, by asking my respondents to tell their life-stories, I stimulate and witness the very process in which they of (re)-creating their own selves.

3.4 Interview Design and Limitations

After considering the advantages of life story interviews, I have chosen to conduct them in my research. Arguably, they will allow me to obtain the empirical data, which is necessary for achieving several research objectives, including testing the theoretical assumptions discussed in the first chapter. The quality of the empirical data is significant for assuring high-quality research results, consequently I believe that it is vital to prepare a thoughtful design of the interviews. In this part of my master's thesis I discuss some important aspects of the design of my interviews as well as possible limitations and difficulties that I could face in the process. As I mentioned before, in my research I need to focus on a 'big picture', by understanding the inner logic and the overall development of the interviewees' lives, as well as on some important details connected to the periods of changes in narrators' stories. The "big picture" reveals some general views and tendencies, while the small details can provide a great amount of information about interviewees and their attitudes towards particular changes and challenges. The design of my interviews should be suitable for both of those purposes.

One of the frequently used techniques for achieving a focus on a 'big picture' could be resumed in a simple action: a researcher should ask a respondent to tell her life-story. It is important not to give any detailed explanations on the topic and the purpose of the research, and not to provide the respondents with any specific requirements for their narratives or rules about how to build them. This uncomplicated technique usually leads to the situation where the respondents must think about their experiences as a whole, bringing the most impactful events to the

story and without adjusting the story to the particular needs of a researcher. I believe that this technique should be applied in my interview.

From the “big picture” I hope to be able to withdraw some general background information for the further analysis, for example, whether the interviewed people differentiate themselves from others or if they consider themselves members of different groups of people and think mostly in collective manner, how the interviewees imagine and define themselves, how other people are described by them, etc. I hope to be able to use this information for understanding the subjects from within, and for further assessment of the possible transformations in the self-views and the inner characteristics of every subject.

Once the big picture is built, what matters for my present research is to detect, explain, observe and describe in greater detail the specific processes closely related to changes and encountering difference. It is significant for me to understand the respondents’ approach towards those issues, thus occasionally I may require a very detailed narrative on them and will ask my interviewees for additional details if related information is mentioned. Later, by using the appropriate techniques of narrative analysis I will specifically study the moments, when the interviewees encountered difference or lived through different types of changes, including changes in self-views. I will use the combination of the two levels of analysis in order to understand if the interviewees possesses any of nomadic characteristics¹¹ described by Braidotti and if their identity are resilient.

3.5 Selection of the Interviewees

The process of selection of the interviewees for this research was aligned with its key objectives, namely to describe and understand a subject who lives in a modern interconnected world. I chose to study the subject ‘from within’, taking as the

¹¹ The key characteristics of a nomad which I will take into consideration are: the desire of changes and transformations, positive attitude towards difference, questioning the traditional dichotomies and mainstream discourse, etc.)

starting point the perspective of the same subject. In order to have a detectible link to the topic of interconnectedness of the world, I decided to analyze migrant's stories. Migration – being broadly discussed today in many different fields – produces migrants, “people who leave one country or region to settle in another, often in search of a better life”,¹² people who embodied the interconnectedness of the world, suffering and fueling it simultaneously.

During the process of searching and selecting potential interviewees, I had to take into consideration several essential factors, which help me to limit my possibilities. For example, my background knowledge about potential respondents was very significant for the process of selection. The importance of this factor is frequently underlined in academic literature: “The interviewer's background knowledge can sometimes be an invaluable resource for assisting respondents to explore and describe their circumstances, actions, and feelings” (Gubrium and Holstein 1995, 46). After assessing my background knowledge, I decided that I would be able to assist in a better way to those respondents, who are linguistically and culturally close to the context in which I grew up myself, hence to Russian-speaking people. I also considered important to have at least general knowledge about the country where the potential respondents migrated to, as well as the language spoken at the place¹³.

The moment when I defined who were going to be my potential respondents coincided with the period, when I just started my student exchange in Italy, and my country-specific background knowledge was not very prominent. Nevertheless, as I mentioned before, I had several experiences of migrating, and living in several foreign countries myself, so I believed that that fact provided me with certain supplementary knowledge on some generally important issues in the lives of

¹² The definition withdrew from the European Migration Network Glossary, at http://www.emn.ie/media/EMN_GLOSSARY_Publication_Version_January_20102.pdf

¹³ The interviews showed that my assumption was correct, given that multiple times my respondents failed to remember some Russian words, offering Italian translations instead. Thanks to my knowledge of Italian language I was able to better understand their ideas.

migrants and compensated some omissions in my background knowledge, if there were any. I had also visited Italy before, and provided my intention to interview my ex-compatriots I resolved that my knowledge and experience are suitable enough to conduct and analyze the interviews with Russian-speaking immigrants in Italy.

As the result, I started searching for potential interviewees in Bologna (the city where I lived) and other Italian cities. Having done some investigation, I discovered that there was a Russian speaking community in Italy and many of the members of that community communicate through the group *Russians in Italy* in one of the popular social media. The group at that moment had around 30 000 members.

According to Gubrium and Holstein (1995), the traditional way of the selection of respondents consists of choosing from all the possibilities people who, according to the researcher's opinion, can represent the investigated group "in a better way". The authors state that this search for a high-quality representation is inescapably connected to the process of "labeling" people, or in other words to evaluating of people according to our own assumptions about their competence. The scholars further state that the process of labeling could be potentially very dangerous for the academic research: "These labels affect the way we listen to others, leading us to treat some very seriously and to dismiss others as incapable of telling us anything worthwhile" (Ibid, 19). The scholars argue that the respondents' competence should not be the main concern for a researcher when selecting the potential interviewees. As the matter of fact, all the people are perceived by Gubrium and Holstein as competent for giving their view on any subject. The authors claim that if the respondents are pre-divided into some fixed group only according to researcher's assumptions about their competence and representativeness it could turn out to be counterproductive for the objectives of the conducted research.

Encouraged by aforementioned arguments, I decided to publish an open call for interview in the group *Russians in Italy*. I did not pre-select the potential interviewees in order to avoid "labeling" them. Thus, the main criteria for the initial

selection was migrants' interest in sharing their life-stories and in participating in my research. My goal at that moment was to simply monitor if I could have enough interviewees from that social media group or if I had to look somewhere else, applying different techniques for interviewees' attraction. Unexpectedly, I had a very positive response for that open call, receiving about 100 messages. Some messages were public (sent as a comments to my original publication in the group), some arrived by private messaging. Some of the people who were interested enclosed certain extracts of their stories in their messages in order to stimulate my interest in interviewing them.

Having received multiple responses, I decided to stop looking for more potential interviewees and further maintained personal conversations with those who had already expressed their interest in my research. Later, I had to reduce the number of potential respondents, given that in practical terms it was impossible to interview all the interested people¹⁴. Due to those practical limitations I had to establish some criteria for the advanced stage of the selection process. Young women represented the absolute majority of those people who expressed their interest to participate in the research, while men's response was quite restricted¹⁵, so I decided to focus my attention on young women (22-40 years old)¹⁶, who immigrated to Italy during their adult age¹⁷. Another practical selection criteria was the distance between Bologna to the place of residence of the potential respondents. I strongly believed that it was important to meet my interviewees personally, so I preferred these opportunities upon other available types of conversations (by phone or through internet). In my opinion, meeting a respondent personally helps to establish more substantial connections and to gain the interviewee's trust faster. This could subsequently lead to higher quality interview data and better research results.

¹⁴ I had to evaluate the scope of my research, limited time of my staying in Italy and deadlines for writing this thesis etc.

¹⁵ Only around seven men expressed their interest to participate in my research

¹⁶ I established these limits of the age category based on the age of women who contacted me

¹⁷ There was only two Russian-speaking women who were born in Italy or moved there in during their childhood.

Another criteria referred to the amount of time which migrants spent in Italy. As I looked for information connected to the deep changes in self-perceptions, I needed to interview those women, who had lived in a new context at least for a certain period of time, so they would have more opportunities to detect and sort out the occurring changes as well as to encounter different type of difference. At the same time it was important for to have a detailed information on some events, related to change of the context, so I looked for some relatively fresh experiences. I decided to establish another criteria for selection: my respondents should live at least one year and not more than seven years in the new context. Finally, interviewees' personal interest and availability were also established as important criteria for the selection process.

3.6 Intersectionality and the Selection of the Interviewees

Any step in choosing a correct methodology, including the selection of the potential interviewees, requires an ability of the researcher to be critical about her own work. It is necessary to avoid biases and to be able to interpret the obtained data from multiple points of view. I believe that some ideas from the intersectional approach¹⁸ could be very insightful in terms of defining some possible limitations of my present research.

The term 'intersectionality' was coined by the American civil rights advocate Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality means that every person should be understood and interpreted through the multiplicity of her social identities. The more possible identities are considered in an analysis, the best results could be produced. Crenshaw argued, for example, that identity politics consider difference between groups of people, but fail to consider it within the same group. This causes problems and misunderstanding when assessing violence against women, "often shaped by other dimensions in their identities such as race and class" and not

¹⁸ An approach to study different topics, widely used in feminist studies

exclusively by their gender (Crenshaw 1991). In other words, failing to take into account different levels of person's identity would mean an incomplete understanding of the layered, yet essential, elements that compose that person's experience. It would also mean that the identity-forming elements defined by different experiences are left unnoticed.

After assessing the level of intersectionality of the selection process, I acknowledge that it was limited. When choosing respondents, I did not take into consideration several social identities of the interviewees: class/social status, sexual orientation, income, whether they have any disabilities, etc. Additionally, the interviewees, all female, were initially found through searching in social media. This means that the women could be quite similar in their social identities¹⁹, given that they enjoy very similar privileges of having accesses internet, to social media, along with spare time to participate in a research as well as an interest and opportunity to share their stories. This could impact on my research negatively and I will not be able to assess different kind of subjects from several different angles.

On the other hand, it is not the objective of this thesis to describe migrants as fully as possible in terms, representing different social groups in this research. Acknowledging the limited time for solving the lack of intersectional approach in my selection criteria and resulting lack of full representation of Russian-speaking migrants in my research, I have no other choice, but to admit that the outcomes of my research would represent only a certain category of people who, if looked intersectionally, could have very similar social identities. People with different intersectional characteristics could have different experiences, which would require further research.

Another problem that could be detected is connected to my own position as researcher. If looked intersectionally, it could be noticed that my social identity could be very similar to my interviewees' identities, because I am also a social

¹⁹ particularly concerning their income level and social status

network user of similar age, class, social status and gender. This fact has at least two dimensions: on the one hand, there is a risk to contaminate and mix my experiences and opinion with those of respondents during the interviews and their further analysis due to our similarities, on the other hand, as it was discussed before, my background knowledge and closeness to the respondents' may be very beneficial for the research. As a solution I plan to limit my participation in the interviews to a bare minimum, in order to avoid contaminating the narratives with my own meanings or ideas²⁰.

3.7 Data Collection Methodology

The process of establishing and narrowing the selection criteria described earlier in this chapter allowed me to reduce significantly the initial number of potential interviewees. I managed to take 5 in-depth semi-directed life story interviews. The average length of every interview was about an hour. The interviews were held in public places (cafeterias, libraries, etc.) in Russian language. They were recorded. At the beginning of each interview I let the respondent know that the information she provided me during the interview was confidential, so I would not disclose or use her real name or the information they consider sensitive. I acted according to the code of ethics of academic research and complied with all the requirements for data protection in research.

The verbal instructions for the interviewees were the following: "I would like to ask you to tell me a story. The story should be about you and your life. Please remember that you are the storyteller of your own story, so you do not have to articulate your autobiography mentioning all the events which are typically brought up in a biography (like the place and time of birth, studies, etc.). You do not have to follow any "traditional structures", but do so if you want to. Try to mention all the

²⁰ Although, I am aware there are some academics who argues that meaning is created during the process of the interviews and a researcher should not be afraid of influencing the interviewees. See, for example, Gubrium and Holstein 1995

events that you think are necessary for the story. You can begin from the moment you want and you can stop where you think the story should stop. You can divide your story into chapters or you can tell it in any other way. Please know that I am not a mere listener of the story, so you can communicate with me if you want to do so. I will also ask you questions if I need to get more details about some events or your thoughts and feelings etc.” If I noticed any anxiety related to the process of storytelling or worries about the final results, I explained to the interviewees that their stories did not have to be perfect and as a researcher I believed that the narrated story represent only a ‘still photograph’, a specific moment in person’s life, hence they can be told and interpreted differently by different people and did not have to fully represent their lives.

As I decided to keep my participation in the process as little as possible, during the interviews I intervened only in those moments, when a narrator had some difficulties to continue the flow of the story. Normally, in such situations I asked to give more details on some matter, in order to avoid changing the topic or the flow of the narrative drastically. I also asked some questions in order to deepen certain ideas expressed by the interviewees, which I considered especially relevant for my research.

3.8 Data Analysis Methodology

It is possible addresses some difficulties and limitations of a given research method by selecting a correct approach to the data analysis. In this sub-chapter I perform a brief evaluation of the existing techniques of the narrative data analysis and explain which of them are most suitable for my research. According to Leibich et al. (1998) there are four types of narrative analysis: 1) holistic-content, 2) holistic-form, 3) categorical form and 4) categorical-content.

Holistic-content analysis consists of examining the entire narrative, focusing on its main themes and motives. The important feature of this type of analysis is that a story is examined as a whole and the focus of the analysis is on *what* instead of

how the narrator tells the story. This type of analysis is suitable for studies with open research objectives.²¹ Holistic-content of analysis could be applied for defining a particular *foci* (specific thematic point of the narrative) and understanding how that particular *foci* has developed during the entire story. This analysis is suitable for obtaining a previously discussed 'big picture' and it will allow me to understand some general ideas of each story, including its inner logic and narrator's attitudes towards them. I believe that the holistic-content analysis would be very suitable for me, because it would also produce huge amounts of information and allow me to detect and interpret changes and transformations which occur during the life of every particular interviewee.

Holistic-form analysis also involves examining the whole story, but the focus is on *how* the story develops (e.g. when and how it starts, ends, if it is lineal or if it goes back and forth, is there any climax in the story, etc.). While I find this type of analysis very interesting *per se*, I believe that it does not suite my research objectives: in my case *what* people say is more important than *how* they do it.

Categorical-form analysis also involves concerns about the structure of the story, i.e. its *how's* (namely how it is constructed and performed), but focuses only on the selected parts of the narration (for instance, if they are connected to an event or situation specifically interesting for the researcher). This analysis may, for example, scrutinize the grammatical structure of certain sentences or other linguistic factors. The strength of this analysis consists in the fact it opens possibilities for discovering some deeper meanings - not easy to detect in holistic-content analysis - and the narrator herself may not be aware of them. Lieblich and her colleagues for example, use this type of analysis to learn more about deeply rooted emotions and ideas that "might not have been apparent from examination of content alone" (Lieblich et al. 1998, 141). In my view the categorical-form analysis would help me to detect some changes in immigrants' self-perceptions otherwise difficult to notice,

²¹ In their book Lieblich and her colleagues use the holistic-content analysis to understand how early memories influence person's life.

but it also could lead to losing the focus on the 'big picture' of someone's identity. Trying to maintain the whole life story in mind, I could incorporate some elements of this type of analysis as auxiliary for my research.

Finally, the categorical-content analysis consists of sorting the information provided by the respondent into groups or categories and studying them separately. Depending on the research objectives, one or more categories could be studied in more detail. This kind of analysis allows researchers to examine in a profound manner that information which is directly related to the research objectives and questions without taking into consideration the whole story and all ideas included in it. I think that this kind of analysis is very detailed and deep, so it could be useful for me, when focusing on specific ideas in migrants' stories ('difference', 'others' and 'changes', 'I' 'myself', 'my', etc.).

To summarize, my choices between different types of the analysis are based on my assumptions about the quantity and quality of the data produced by each one of them and other important factors. After examining the available recourses for analyzing a self-narrative I came to a conclusion that a combination of holistic-content, categorical-content and categorical-form analysis could be well-suited for my research objectives. My main focus will be on the holistic-content analysis, while the other two will be used as auxiliary. With the holistic-content analysis I will analyze the following information: 1) how the interviewees encounter difference, and what are the outcomes of those encounters 2) how the interviewees make sense of changes, if they perceives them negatively or positively, whether they think changes are inevitable 3) how they define them self and if there are any modifications of this definition in the story it 4) do they desire changes (if yes, why? if not, why? 5) what are the foci of their stories and how it is connected to the whole story. The auxiliary types of analysis will be used for deeper understanding of the following ideas in the interviewees' narratives: 1) difference 2) changes 3) I/ self

4. Data Analysis

In this chapter I perform the analysis of the life story interviews of Russian-speaking respondents, applying the techniques and methodology discussed in the previous chapter. The real names of the participants have been changed in order to protect their anonymity. Additionally, the information which could possibly lead to identifying the narrators (such as names of places, family members and friends, age, professions, etc.) is avoided. All the participants gave me their written signed authorization for using the stories in the research for my master's thesis and other academic purposes.

4.1 Marina

Marina sees herself as a person with certain entrepreneurial characteristics. Throughout her story, she maintains an image of herself as a successful person who is able to take big decisions and to achieve big goals in life. In her life story she refers to her achievements multiple times, emphasizing her excellent performance during the school and university years and working life. Even her romantic relations are evaluated with this perspective. She underlines her desire to grow and to have 'better life', so this desire influences the majority of her life decisions. Many situations in her story are assessed by her through her aspirations to succeed. Taking into account the aforementioned, it is possible to argue that the success (especially the success which is expressed in economic terms) is a central *foci* in her self-narrative as well as in her self-views.

Marina has experienced different types of changes in life. For example, she changed her place of residence several times: these changes include moving from what she calls 'a provincial town' to a big city and back, as well as moving abroad and becoming an immigrant. She has also changed her occupation: she has been unemployed, self-employed and worked as an employee in different companies (big

and small). She has been single, involved in long-term relationship and married. She also experienced being a parent.

The concept of 'agency' is crucial for understanding Marina's story, because the majority of changes that she mentions is interpreted as the results of her own decisions and directly connected to her values and self-views as a successful person. In fact, she constantly underlines the changes, which are directly connected to her own choices and values, barely mentioning the other experienced changes. For instance, Marina only briefly discusses the time when she had to move from a big city to a smaller one because of her partner's work. Actually, the only important thing for her during that period was the fact that she was able to use her free time to develop some new skills and finding some new ways for succeeding in life²². Correspondently, the changes which are related to Marina's desires and values are always perceived positively by her.

Interestingly, she does not describe any change (desirable or undesirable) as entirely negative. During her life story the changes are discussed either in a positive way or barely mentioned. For example, the fact that she had to change her occupation (as being self-employed) during the times of the economic crisis in 2008 is not described by her as something negative, and she did not refer to any negative or pessimistic emotions. She says only few sentences about that stage of life, which are followed by a long description of the next stage, when she managed to find other possibilities to succeed.

Remarkably, Marina herself does not perceive her life as highly changeable. She says that she feels 'equally well' almost in any place. According to her, the changes, which happened in her life "were not "huge": "I am in my own world" - she explains. According to Marina, her inner sense of stability permits her to balance any external change. She says that this stability could be a result of not considering many things: "Perhaps I should look at things with a wider perspective in order to

²² She decided not to look for a formal job because the level of the salaries was very unsatisfying for her

notice some changes”, but she is comfortable in her current life. She argues that her good financial situation is the foundation of the stability that she has been experienced. She also mentions her self-confidence, entrepreneurial skills and adaptability: “I am sure that I can find job anywhere, if not being a self-employed, at least working for a company”. Marina’s ability to feel good anywhere and to be confident when facing changes in life allows her to think positively about the future: “I am open for changes”. The interviewee concludes this part of the story, saying that, if necessary, she would readily move to another country.

Additionally, she states that the adaptability to changes largely depends on person’s previous experiences: according to her, it is easier to move from one place to another having a previous experience of moving. Interestingly, Marina further adds that the desire to move is even more significant than experience by itself. She argues that the cases when a person actively pursues what she wants when moving to another country are very different from those when a person has to move unwillingly. Marina argues that the two cases should be understood and treated differently.

In her story Marina has described several situations, which could be interpreted as encounters with difference. Particularly, she mentions two types of encounters: those with more successful people, who inspired her to grow and change her life, and those which represented obstacles for her success. Difference – when it is represented by the encounters with successful people – is perceived by Marina very positively. She adds that two encounters of this type symbolized the two important “thresholds” in her life. During the first one she met people from the same town where she was born. Those people lived abroad and enjoyed a very high level of income. She characterizes them as people, who “think in totally different scale”. Especially surprising for Marina was the fact that they achieved so much in life, coming from similar circumstances: “They come from the same place, they are similar to me, just more courageous”. She underlines that encounters with successful people changed her “mentality” and helped her to pursue her goals in life.

The second threshold in Marina's life happened when she met a very successful person, who used to work with the Russian financial elite. Marina describes this event as traumatic and painful in many sense, because the person managed to "get into her head" and point out several of her personal traits, which she did not value at that moment. Marina accepts that the things she has heard from that person has made her reevaluate some of important aspects of her life and her attitude towards them²³.

The encounters with those people whom she perceives as obstacles for her success Marina characterizes negatively: for example, an ex-boyfriend from her hometown, who did not let her to peruse her dream, or a female friend, whom she blames for ruining a promising romantic relationship with a wealthy man. Those people are perceived as different from her, mostly because they do not have the same goals and expectations form life. The encounters with them are not interpreted as influencing. Neither of such encounters are understood as 'thresholds' in her life-story. Additionally, it is possible to notice that she has reinterpreted all those "negative" encounters, so when narrating her story she uses them as valuable lessons for her future: "I have decided: in my future life I won't have any serious relationships before turning 25". Marina has managed to incorporate those lessons to her life story and found a valuable explanation of their role in her life, so they do not oppose her main focus on success, but are perceived as part of her self-views and values.

4.2 Olesya

From the very beginning of her story Olesya defines herself as someone "different". She explains that she was different from people whom she met in her home town, and she was aware about the existing difference already since her childhood. Olesya specifies that she had a "different mentality", which for her meant that "something

²³ For instance, the romantic relations that she was involved at that moment

was lacking” in people who surrounded her. According to the interviewee, due to this perceived difference she wanted to change the environment in which she lived since her early age, so eventually she started looking for such opportunities. When Olesya visited Europe for the first time, she realized that “European mentality”²⁴ was exactly what she was looking for. She further explains that after that realization she started desiring specific changes in herself, actively “collecting knowledge about European mentality” and willingly adjusting to it. Taking the aforementioned into consideration, it is possible to argue that the *foci* of Olesya’s story and her self-views is her desire to change her place of residence by moving to a European country and to transform her mentality towards a mentality, which she defines as European-like. Additionally, it is important to mention her self-determination as someone who is able to endure many changes and challenges in life.

Olesya has changed the place of residence few times: she was born in Russia, but traveled extensively. She also lived and studied abroad before moving to Italy permanently. According to her, the changes that occurred in her life were actively sought by her and motivated by her inner desire of changes. She wanted to become “better person” which equals to her to being similar to people with ‘European mentality’. This fact shows that the concept of agency is crucial for Olesya’s self-views.

Olesya describes the changes which she experienced in her life mostly in a positive manner. Some changes could be unpleasant, she argues, but generally they help a person to grow. Following this logic, she interprets changes and difficulties as challenges, which helped her to come closer to the image of the self that she desired and valued since her childhood. For instance, in her story Olesya mentions many disadvantages of living abroad, she argues particularly that anything she does in a foreign country is more difficult than doing it in the country where she was born. Nevertheless, she maintains a positive evaluation of these difficulties and says

²⁴ “European mentality” is defined by Olesya in terms of balance between working and free time, as well as between public and private life

that thanks to those challenges she has managed to get rid of certain “complexes” and “flaws in her character”. Throughout her story, she builds a powerful image of herself as of someone who is able to withstand all those challenges and difficulties. “I am ready to do more, to be more stressed”. She values her effort to become a different person and compares this process with starting a new business project: “You must invest a lot to get something back”.

Olesya’s desire of changes could be detected in her narrative. She says that the processes of moving abroad and adapting to a new context “are similar to an addiction: you want to prove yourself that you can do it”. Nevertheless, not any changes are addictive: further in her story the interviewee argues that in order to become an addiction those processes should correspond to a person’s values. Olesya, for instance, does not desire change per se, but she wants only those which she values (e.g. those changes that help her to become a person she wants to become). She specifies that it was precisely her desire of changes, her agency which helped her to adapt to all the situations in life: “If you do not like the place where you go, it is almost impossible to adapt there”. Olesya contrasts this agency-driven changes with other situations when people are unable to adapt to a new context r country “only using a country for their own goals, without trying to become a part of it”.

The interviewee comments on future changes in a positive manner. She does not discard the possibility of moving to another city or country, explaining this readiness with the fact that has already great experience in moving around. According to her, the experience plays a great role, but the most important thing is the inner desire for such changes, which should be connected to the desire and capability of transforming as a person. She feels very comfortable in Italy and would accept to change the place of residence only if it matches her own values and desires.

The encounters with difference that Olesya mentions in her story could be generally divided into two types: encounters with people who are different from her (in terms of not being ready to go through the same processes as Olesya went

through: to study and to live abroad) and encounters with people she wants to become alike (European people, Italians, foreigners who adapt easily). In her story Olesya contrasts her self-views with the self-views of those people who do not desire similar experiences. "Immigration is not for everyone" - she says. She mentions that from time to time her acquaintances ask her "What do you do it for?" referring to moving abroad and overcoming all the difficulties. Interestingly, she never describes different people in negative terms. Nevertheless, there is a type of people who she dislikes, namely people who "milk the country they live in as they would milk a cow". Olesya does not like when people move abroad in pursuit of certain goals, which are not related to changing their mentality or becoming a better person. Interestingly, further Olesya says that she has also acted like those people before, when studying in other countries.

Another type of encountering difference mentioned in Olesya's story is when the interviewee meets people with European mentality, whom she appreciated greatly, or other immigrants, who successfully assimilated the European mentality. These encounters are characterized positively. Olesya appreciates her acquaintances in Italy, arguing that "For feeling really comfortable in a new place you should be part of the community". As it was mentioned before, Olesya makes a conscious effort to re-construct herself, becoming similar to Italian people and people with European mentality.

Remarkably, the interviewee states that her perception of foreign people has changes with time. She accepts that when she traveled to different countries with her parents she used to perceive foreigners as "creatures from other planets". She comments that it was difficult to her to talk to a foreigner, so she had some difficulties in establishing conversations with people when being abroad. Her parents were aware of that issue and decided to send her abroad for studying language. She remembers herself of that period with some level of surprise. Analyzing what she felt at the moment, she argues that the problems in communications with foreigners was not because of her poor level of English, but

rather due to her inability to perceive foreigners as “normal people”. Finally, she managed to rid of that problem and understood that “they are human beings, some of them are good, and some of them are bad, just normal people”. This change of perception and active work on herself allowed Olesya to start her transformation and endure many challenges in her current life.

4.3 Ekaterina

Ekaterina sees herself as a responsible, studious, reasonable and well-educated person. It is important for Ekaterina to develop professionally and personally acquiring valuable knowledge and skills. During her story she refers to different courses that she took in order to be better in her profession and to grow up jobwise. The interviewee brings a wide range of topics into her story, analyzing and comparing different political and social issues in contemporary Russia and Italy. When discussing those topics, Ekaterina makes clear that she has formed a thoughtful and reasonable opinion about them. It is possible to argue that the *foci* of her story is her know-how and the capacity to accomplish things, finding the most reasonable and practical manner to do so.

Ekaterina has experienced different changes in life: she has moved from a big to a small city, she has changed her context drastically by moving abroad, becoming a wife and a parent. Interestingly the interviewee says that one of the most important period of changes for her was when she decided to study other subject at the university, which led her to change her professional and even personal life. Ekaterina explains that she entered a university in her home country, but never liked the chosen subject, so after some time of being dissatisfied with her studies she decided to go to Italy and to start a new life. She had met her future husband by that moment (he was living in Italy), so the change of the university and studied subject represented a strong motivation for Ekaterina to start a new life with her future partner.

In her story Ekaterina has mentioned several transformations in herself, including her interests and values. She says that she modified some of her approaches to education, and the ways of doing things in general. She also perceives a very significant change in terms of encountering different types of people and her attitude towards them. All those changes, including the changes in values and attitudes Ekaterina describes positively. For example, she states that it was good that with time she managed to change her expectations from the role of women. According to her, she used to think that all women “should become moms as early as possible”, and while Ekaterina herself complied with that role, by the time of the interview she changed her opinion. Now she argues that having a kid is every person’s choice, but not duty.

The narrator also claims, for example, that she changed her attitude towards immigrants from different countries, and has become “more tolerant”. Even though there are certain things that she still struggles to tolerate in foreigners²⁵, Ekaterina perceives herself as less judgmental, and more ‘open-minded’. Remarkably, she compares her current state of mind with her previous self and also with the mentality of her ex-compatriots²⁶. This comparison is always favorable to her current self. She argues that these changes were difficult to accept, but now she “likes it better”. The changes Ekaterina attributes to her life in abroad: “I think that Italy and Europe in general helped me”.

In spite of the fact that the narrator perceives changes very positively, the encounters with difference in Ekaterina’s story are interpreted majorly in a negative manner. In comparison with other interviewees she does not describe any positive difference, which could motivate her to continue changing. The narrator mentions various types of encountering difference: the first type includes encounters with other ‘stranieri’²⁷ in Italy. Ekaterina mentions for example that she was not able to

²⁵ For example, when a Muslim women cover herself completely

²⁶ Ekaterina is an active user of the Facebook group “Russians in Italy”, where she observes what are the attitudes of Russian people towards multiple topics, she calls it “my personal research”

²⁷ She calls ‘stranieri’ herself and other foreigners in Italy.

communicate with foreign students, especially who were very different, who did not speak Italian and “did not make effort” to do so. “I cannot understand it”- Ekaterina claims. She recognizes that it is very challenging to encounter very foreigners “who are very different and do not resemble our culture”. Interestingly, she also defines herself as “straniera”, but seemingly there is the hierarchy of difference within that category.

Another type of difference, namely differences with Italians is described slightly more positively by Ekaterina. She argues that Italians are too relaxed and rarely have a responsible attitude towards life in many of its aspects²⁸, but there is also a positive side of this attitude in: Italians are less stressed than Russians. She claims that it was problematic for her to accept this relaxed attitude, but now she is used to this rhythm of life and the level of responsibilities.

The third type of difference Ekaterina refers to is her difference from Russian people²⁹. The interviewee appreciates that thanks to her experience of living in Europe, she has become less stressed, more tolerant and more open-minded, comparing to her ex-compatriots. In her current life Russia represents a ‘source of negative news’ and attitudes. She specifies that the most stressful moments in her current life are related to news from Russia. Ekaterina consciously monitor Russian media and actively participates in discussions about new policies and laws in the country.

According to the interviewee it would be very difficult for her to move to other country again. She has evaluated several possible places to move, but all of them were seen negatively. The important factor in her evaluation was how immigrants are perceived in one or another country as well as opinions of her acquaintances who live abroad and experiences described by different people in social media.

²⁸ She have seen that attitude multiple times, during her study, at work even in interpersonal relations.

²⁹ Specifically from those Russians who live in Russia or in Italy, without changing their ‘Russian mentality’.

4.4 Ksenya

Ksenya sees herself as an independent person, organized and self-reliant. Ksenya's self-view is strongly connected to her personal goals in life and particularly to her specific actions that allow her to achieve those goals. The interviewee says that since her childhood she perceived herself as 'an adult' and acted correspondently. Additionally, she describes herself as a very positive-minded person. These perceptions are combined with Ksenya's self-view as a person who is able to think independently, and "out of the box". Generally, she has an "I can do it" attitude towards different challenges and changes. Ksenya believes that her positivity and the ability to rely on her own strengths allows her to overcome problems in any aspects of her life³⁰ as well as to adjust to changes. Her self-reliance together with generally positive attitude towards life is a *foci* in her narrative.

The changes she mentioned in her life story are related to moving abroad, marrying, studying new subject in the university and starting a working life. The events connected to changes of narrator's context and place of residence are not emphasized or perceived as very impactful *per se*: "I do not mind living anywhere, it really depends on a person how she feels in a particular place". Remarkably, important changes for Ksenya are those connected to her inner self and values. For instance, she defines her current participation in an intensive 'online game' for losing weight as something that "changed her mind". As a result of this game she is currently engaged in regular physical activity. She is proud to comply with very difficult rules of the game, which do not allow participants to skip training sessions or to break the dietary instructions. Generally Ksenya is very satisfied when she manages to achieve goals, which are difficult to accomplish for other people. She also briefly mentions some changes in herself, she feels, for instance, according to

³⁰ For instance relations with other people

her, she has become more open and more self-reliant. Ksenya argues that those recent changes are caused by living in Italy.

The narrator describes her 'changes in mind' in terms of knowing what she wants and being sure how to know a way to achieve that. For Ksenya, many positive changes in life were possible only because she wanted them, so changes are generally perceived as positive and valuable by her. Ksenya does not mention any changes that had a negative impact in her life negatively during the story. Even difficult and potentially traumatic moments are interpreted as events that enhanced her self-reliance³¹. For instance, she comments that at certain point in her life her mother was very sick, so Ksenya managed to reaffirm her own independence and reliability during that period.

At the moment of the interview Ksenya feels that she is ready for any changes, she is also excited about them. She says that she is looking for a new big goal in life and she is very positive about achieving it: "I just have to want something". The narrator also feels very optimistic about a possibility to change her place of residence moving to other country. Ksenya feels that she would be able to move again anywhere and she would enjoy living in a different context. Developing her thought she adds that she would feel great in an Asian country or somewhere closer to the sea.

Encounters with difference that describes Ksenya during her story mostly refer to meeting and communicating with people who are not able to be as self-reliant and organized as she is. She describes that many people are surprised by her self-discipline and ability to achieve goals: "I told that³² to Italians and they said "Wow". She characterizes her brother as different from her according to the same assessment: her brother lacks self-discipline and sense of responsibility. Additionally, Ksenya thinks that people who have more negative attitude towards life or their own self are also different from her. She brings up to the story an

³¹ Ksenya barely mentions this type of changes in her story.

³² Referring to her practice to wake up early in the morning to learn foreign languages.

example of her friends who are used to be dissatisfied with their appearance. In contrast she comments: “Even when I do not look particularly well, I always say that I am beautiful, but just today I don’t look good”. Interestingly when Ksenya speaks about people, who are different from her, there is no negative emotions towards them. In her narrative she emphasizes her difference and her preference for her way of being and doing without looking down to other people. Even when Ksenya mentions those compatriots who complain about difficulties of immigration in social media³³, she simply states that she has a different opinion “I am skeptic about that, I think that the problem is in a particular person, who does not adapt”. She does not describe different people unfavorably in that case and generally. It is possible to argue that she does not see difference as pejoration. Even though she feels that she is more self-reliant or responsible than others, she takes that fact as empowering for herself and not as depowering for others.

4.5 Elena

Elena mostly defines herself through her nationality, she is Russian, but she was born in Soviet Union, so she also thinks about herself as soviet. According to her she inherited the soviet values and mentality. In spite of the fact that she migrated several times in her life, and resided in a foreign country, Elena still identifies with Russians, soviet and post-soviet people. Elena frequently uses term “we” referring to herself as a part of that group of people. The narrator also uses pronoun “we” referring to people living in Italy, but she does it occasionally, so “we”, which means soviet and Russian people represents her primal way to think about herself. Remarkable, Elena does not use pronoun “I” very often, she prefers to identify herself in collective term instead, which is very different from all other interviewees who imagined and described themselves mostly in individualistic terms. Sporadically, Elena defines herself as an individual, in these cases she claims to be

³³ And who are consequently different from her.

an extrovert and a person who cherish friendship. Also as someone who is currently unhappy about the quality of her relationships with people around.

Elena has experienced several significant changes in her life, but during her story she mentions only few of them: she has moved several times during her childhood and adult years and lived abroad. She had to leave a job, which she considered to be very good and she changed her marital status as well. Interestingly, the migration is defined by Elena in very negative terms. According to her the term represents a human ambition to live a better life, but it is a sign that the current life is not very good for people who decided to migrate. Describing migration in general terms (not referring to her personal story of migration) she uses the following phrases: "It is a gamble", "it is a risk". When talking about her own experience of migration she says: "We had to go", "I must leave that place" emphasizing that the actions were forced on her. Changes in general are seen from a similar perspectives by Elena. The foci of her story are the differences between Italian and Russian people. Despite of describing these differences in collective terms, it is noticeable that they affect Elena personally. Her being Russian and having Russian values, which lead her to long for closer relations with other people, are directly connected to the *foci* of her story.

Elena imagines Italians as a nation, and defines them through certain ways of doing things, which she thinks are common for them. She distinctly divides Italy into Northern and Southern parts, and in her opinion that division influences Italian people and their values and mentalities greatly. She contrasts Russian and Soviet values, traditions, habits and practices with the Italian ones and claims: "I will never be Italian". The narrator argues that people in Italy are very individualistic, very self-oriented and "wear masks". She mentions that to discover those qualities Italian people was very hurtful for her at first, so she had to adapt in order to avoid traumatic experiences. Her adaptation occurred mostly in terms of keeping certain distance from other people. She confesses that now she is used to "keep everything inside" of her. She rarely tells any negative things to others, because her Italian

acquaintances “do not want to listen” about her problems and sometimes tell that to her directly.

Elena perceives difference in terms of “inevitability”: she is sure that she would never have Italian mentality, and they would never have Russian one, so the difference is not only inevitable, it is irreconcilable. The narrator thinks that the only solution to this situation is to adapt her expectations, learning how to leave with difference, without letting it to affect her life. Especially difficult for Elena was the period when she just moved abroad, she claims that at the moment she managed to adapt to the situation. At the same time she mentions that she still lacks closeness to other people and “real friendship”, which she had in the past, in her home country.

Elena thinks that other people also define her as different. She suggest that in Italy she is immediately tagged as foreigner, as Russian. Additionally, Elena believes that: “We (Russians) are something that is very difficult to understand”. Throughout her story she constantly opposes Russian and Italian (or European) values, heavily favoring the former.

Arguably, Elena does not desire changes in her life, thinking that changes are always connected to risk. She would not be happy about a possibility to immigrate again to other country. She would accept a temporary relocation, but it would be very hard for her to change her place of residence again.

5. Discussions

In this chapter I summarize and interpret several important results from the analysis of the interviews with Russian-speaking immigrants in Italy described in the previous chapter. I deepen their possible interpretations by assessing the results with my theoretical approach presented in the first part of this thesis. Here I also discuss possible answers for my main research questions exemplifying how the interviewees transform their self-views and through which processes they make sense of those transformations. Apart from this main point of the discussion, I specifically consider an important dimension that, in my opinion, is substantial for the subjects' identities: encounters with difference. Interviewees' nomadic characteristics and resilience of identity are additionally evaluated. I also discuss the connection between nomadism and resilient categories and the way they interact with each other.

5.1 General Research Outcomes

Based on the results of the narrative analysis performed in the previous chapter, it is possible to argue that all the interviewed women see themselves within a frame of more or less unified identities. This could be argued due to some detectable key self-views and values which are maintained in the core of women's narratives about the self. I interpret the set of the central views and values as their unified identity and believe, that they represent a starting point, from where the interviewees experience changes. It is important to underline that interviewees' unified identity is not static, but it gradually develops and sometimes even being drastically transformed throughout subjects' life-stories.

Interestingly, that unified identity is commonly linked to the *foci* of the women's stories, so all the interviewees use it to analyze the events occurred in their lives as well as to organize the inner logic of their narratives. It could be claimed that this first outcome of the research confirm Braidotti's assumptions about identity as

constructed and non-fixed but at the same time it shows that a subject needs to imagine a time and space, where she could be temporarily located. My interviewees create such time and space – each one in her own manner – and express them in their narratives. Additionally, none of my interviewees described a continuous flow of transformations in their narratives. This fact gives ground to Hemmings’ concerns discussed in the first chapter and shows an example of a subject who seeks a moment and space where and when to be enrooted. Their symbolic roots are located – if not in the exterior spaces – at least in their inner imagination about the self.

The existence of a unified identity could be interpreted as opposing to Braidotti’s imagination about the subject as non-unitary. It could be claimed that the subjects that Braidotti describes in her nomadic theory (ever-changing, rootless, moving between dichotomies, etc.) should not be able to produce and sustain her core self-views due to their essential non-unity. That could mean that the non-unitary subjects should possess a fragmented identity and express it in their narratives. Nevertheless, when addressing similar problems Sidone Smith argues that the non-unitary essence of the subject could be preserved without “endless fragmentations and a reified multiplicity”. According to her, a subject is “located historically in language produced in everyday gendered, racialized and cultural/social experiences and expressed in writing and speaking” (Smith as cited in Bloom 1998, 6). In other words, in spite of the inner non-unity, a subject could be constructed and symbolically unified through different language practices.

Following this logic, it can be argued that at the moment of the interview my respondents used the described by Smith possibility of locating and expressing the subject in language. As a result they produced imaginary identities located in their own stories. This, however, does not necessarily mean that the actual unity of the subjects exists, given that according to Smith’s logic, the subjects could preserve a non-unitary essence even when imagining their own unifying identity. Consequently, the first outcomes of my research confirms some Braidotti’s

postulations about subjectivity – including the non-fixity of subject's identity – and does not contradict the thesis about non-unity of the subject.

Another important outcome of this research allows me to understand that in subject's self-imagination the simultaneous fixity and fluidity may coexist. Based on my analysis of the empirical data, it could be argued that while all the interviewees build an image of a unifying identity, some of them simultaneously recognize its changeability and actively look for the valuable changes in it. For instance, one of the interviewees mentioned that she desired changes in her mentality and pursue such changes in her everyday life. In my opinion, this proves that in subject's experience the unifying attempts to produce a coherent, undisrupted identity may coexist with conscious efforts to modify the self. Seemingly, the core views and values can be slowly transformed, but those transformations do not lead to the loss of the self. This particular observation allows me to argue that nomadic subjectivity is not only a theoretical possibility, but can exist in practice.

This outcome, however contradicts Sen's idea about multiple co-existing identities within one person, given that no interviewee defined herself in such terms, claiming to have a unique, unifying identity and being able to develop and transform it.

My research also reveals the role of changes in subjects' self-imagination. From the analysis of the interviews it is apparent that the changes represent a dynamic component in the subjects' stories. The desirable changes move the analyzed stories forward. They also help narrators reaffirm their self-views and motivate them to keep looking for further changes. The desirable changes are highly valued by the interviewees. The undesirable changes are used in a different way: they are incorporated to the stories as challenges or lessons. Those changes are also used to reaffirm the core picture of the self. Thus both desirable and undesirable changes are used for the subject (re-)constructing processes. The two type of changes could be valuable for the narrators: as long as the changes are used for self-(re-)construction, they are assessed in a positive manner.

Another outcome of the research confirms my assumption about a beneficial effect of incorporating Sen's concepts of 'agency' and 'capability' into research on subjectivity. It is possible to argue that agency plays a significant role in the process of evaluating and making sense of changes and experiences in a subject's life. My research shows that the changes which were evaluated positively are closely connected to respondents' values and self-views. Seemingly, an interdependent relation could be detected: if a person feels that a decision was made because she wanted so, it will be evaluated positively disregarding decision's "real" consequences³⁴.

On the other hand, the changes which are not directly connected to interviewees' agency are either not mentioned, or mentioned extremely briefly in their stories. Such changes are frequently discarded by the narrators as non-necessary in the fabric of their narratives and are not used for the self (re-) construction. Consequently, agency is an important factor to take into account when evaluating the processes, connected to the construction of the self, identity and subjectivity. This does not directly contradict to Braidotti's philosophical assumptions, but complement them. As a result of my research I have come the conclusion that the concept of 'agency' should be incorporated to the studies of subjectivity.

As it could be detected from the analysis of the interviews Sen's concept of 'capability' is less directly connected to the immigrant's self-views. I did not find a direct reference to capability in Teschl and Derobert's sense of person's freedom to be recognized in the way she wants to be recognized. However, Elena, for example, made me understand that she suffers when other people "put a tag of 'Russian' on her", assuming things about her character and values without even knowing her as a person. It would be interesting to assess in future research such a possibility of

³⁴ The case of Olesya, when she willingly moved abroad. She recognizes that it is more difficult for her to do anything than doing the same back to her country. Even though she value her effort enormously.

capability deprivation and particularly if the aforementioned “tagging” limits Elena’s capabilities and well-being.

The analysis of the interviews also helped me to explain and exemplify the application of the concept of ‘resilient identity’. Particularly, I discovered that the following elements are important for such application: the transformations in the subjects’ self-views, their relation with the imagined core identity, the consequences of the transformations and the role and impact of the encountered difference. Based on the analysis of the interview, it could be argued that the detectable changes in self-views located in time, space, contrasted or aligned with other people’s views and represented in self-narratives indicate if a person possesses a resilient identity. Furthermore, the attitude and usage of encounters with difference show what type of resilient identity – positive or negative – a person may have.

Another outcome of my research allows me to claim that the resilient identity could be build: two of the interviewees mentioned that their capacity to adapt to new places and contexts is developed with practice. Arguably, it also could be seen that the aforementioned adaptability is associated with more positive attitudes and higher well-being in the interviewees. These facts allow me to assume that the development of resilient identity could be studied in future research through the Sen’s concept of capability and with purpose of enhancing human well-being.

I believe that a person’s ability to adapt her self-views according to new contexts and circumstances represent important aspects of human well-being. The opportunities for such adaptation should be studied and further put in practice through correspondent policy-making and capability-building processes. The challenge for the future research is to find the ways of enhancing the positive resilience of identity. If found, it could serve as a foundation for creating new comprehensive policies and practices.

5.2 Changes in the Interviewees' Self-Views

From the analysis of the life-stories of the Russian-speaking immigrants in Italy I managed to understand how the interviewees changed their self-views and the attitudes towards those changes throughout their lives. I argue that similarly to the generally positive attitude towards changes in life, the interviewees perceive changes in their identities in a positive way. Such favorable evaluation is persistent in their stories, although there are few exceptions³⁵.

Every narrator, although to different extent, emphasized satisfaction with her current self, and positively distinguished the current version if comparing with the previous ones. Three of the participants explicitly compared the past and present selves. Ekaterina, for example was astonished by such comparison. She commented that she did not know where her previous identity had come from. She discussed her family environment and analyzed it in order to find the answer for her question, even though she did not manage to explain why she was different in the past. Remarkably, Ekaterina does not like her previous selves, and wonders why she was the way she was. The changes, instead, were evaluated positively by her. Olesya shows a similarly negative attitude towards her previous self, being surprised by her ideas from the past. She also mentions that she does not know why she were like that. Marina, instead, refers to her previous self-views, but she does not express any astonishment about them, evaluating them negatively, but mostly in terms of valuable lessons. She favors her current self, but is not surprised by the fact that she was different in the past.

Interestingly, the woman who spoke less about different versions of her past-selves was Ksenya. Seemingly (at least it follows from her life story), she managed to maintain the same self-views throughout the whole life. Ksenya easily traces a narrative line between her values and ideas from the childhood and the current ones. As a result, she did not express any surprise remembering herself in the past, and

³⁵ An exception is represented by Elena's forced self-changes to less open, trustful and friendly self, which the narrator herself evaluates negatively.

did not contrast her current self with any other previous versions. Only few times during the life story Ksenya mentioned some slight changes in herself. Although it is possible to argue that those changes are completely concordant with her current self-perceptions and the *foci* of her story. All the transformations are described by Ksenya as continuation of her desires, goals and conscious actions.

A desire of changes in identity³⁶, was enthusiastically expressed only by Olesya. Remarkably, both Olesya and Marina expressed confidence about their capacity to adapt and feel good in new contexts. They both mentioned that the capacity for adaptation in a new place grows with experience of doing so: the more a person adapts to new circumstances, the easier it is for her afterwards. It is possible to argue that Marina and Olesya evaluates their inner resilience or capacity for adaptation in terms of aforementioned concept of capability: it corresponds to their values, involves agency, additionally it is acquirable, improvable and desirable.

Ksenya is looking forward towards future possibilities of changing the place of residence, job, acquiring new skills and modifying her life-style. Moreover, she specifically named several changes, which she is expecting in the foreseeable future. Ekaterina had an opposite opinion, and, in contrast with Ksenya, evaluated all the possible future changes negatively claiming that she would not be ready to change her life again.

This detailed analysis of the changes in the interviewees' self-views together with exploring their attitudes towards the changes helped me to understand how subjects perceive, analyze and explain such events. This consequently led me to accomplish some objectives of my present research and answer the main research questions. This analysis additionally gave me reasons for arguing further in this chapter about the interviewees' resilience of identity and their nomadism. But before being able to make assumptions about those categories, I should assess interviewees' ways of encountering difference

³⁶ As it was discussed this desire represents one of the most important nomadic characteristics

5.3 Encountering Difference

Difference – more precisely the attitudes towards encountering it – was established as important criteria for making assumptions about interviewees' resilience of identity as well as their possible nomadic characteristics. All the interviewees showed dissimilar approaches in terms of encountering difference. Marina, for example, manifested a habit of separating difference into two big categories, namely positive and negative difference. The two categories were formed in concordance with the values of the interviewee and in the following manner: those people who had similar values were perceived mostly positively by the narrator and inspired her to grow and achieve her goals in life. Accordingly, those who did not match Marina's values were characterized negatively. It is possible to argue, however, that Marina's current self-views are partly based on encounters with positively-characterized difference as well as negatively-characterized one, hence an undesirable experience of encountering negative difference is also transformed and incorporated to the life story in a beneficial way.

Olesya also divides difference into two broad categories, although in her case the categories could be best defined as desirable and undesirable difference. Generally, Olesya avoids characterizing the undesirable difference in an unfavorable manner, only underlining the dissonance between her self-perception and those of dissimilar others. Similarly to Marina, Olesya utilizes both categories of difference for the construction and reaffirmation of her current self-views, however, without alienation or appropriation of others described by Irigaray. Olesya is aware of the fact that different people exist, but the motivation and strength for withstanding changes Olesya receives only from the desirable difference, in other words, from those people who possess valuable characteristics for her.

Ekaterina characterizes the difference majorly negatively. She does not mention any positive difference that she would like to become closer to. At the same

time Ekaterina also uses the encountered difference in order to build and reinforce her self-views. Nevertheless, in contrast with Olesya, Ekaterina builds and expresses her current self-perception through the process of alienation of the others, specifically Italians. Simultaneously she appropriates valuable characteristics of post-Soviet people and believes that she also possesses them. The similar processes are detectable in Elena's story. She divides people into categories: positively evaluated people with similar to Soviet and post-Soviet mentality and negatively evaluated different people.

Finally, Ksenya never characterizes difference negatively, but instead she uses difference exclusively for reaffirming her self-views. Arguably, this process could be described as Irigaray's appropriation. Unlike Ekaterina and Elena Ksenya reaffirms her identity through positive recognition. She is aware of existing dissimilarities between her and other people, but when constructing her own self-views she chooses to integrate opinions of those people who can positively recognize her advantage before them. Ksenya mentions different people in her story exclusively for using their recognition, appreciation and positive encouragement for constructing her own. Correspondently, she does not describe any kind of difference, which could encourage her to change.

5.4 Interviewees, Nomadism and Resilient Identity

The totality of the analyzed empirical material allows me to make some assumptions about resilience of identity, nomadic characteristics of the interviewees and the concepts correlation. I argue that all interviewees have reached a certain level of resilience of their identities, except Ksenya who did not show any significant changes in her self-views. The majority of the interviewees manages to withstand the encounters with difference and to incorporate the results of such encounters into their life stories transforming their identity and their ways of answering the question: "Who are you?" Their type and level of resilience, however, varies greatly.

Remarkably, it is possible to claim that none of my interviewees is a nomad due to the following main reasons: they did not manage to escape the dualisms of the mainstream discourses and/or the “Eurocentric” and “phallogocentric logic” and in their narratives they do not reveal an ability to critically evaluate the cultures, looking at them “from outside”, as someone who does not belong to them. The majority of my interviewees is aligned with the neoliberal discourse and perceive themselves accordingly. Some of interviewees, although possess certain nomadic characteristics, as for example the desire of changes. Even though, my research shows that nomadic subjectivity in the form in which Braidotti imagines it, is still a “political fiction”, a myth and a possibility for future transformations of subjectivity. Further, I discuss the resilience of identities and nomadic characteristics of every interviewee separately.

In my opinion, Marina possesses a resilient identity, but the type of her resilience is mixed, because during her life story she shows both positive and negative ways of encountering difference. Marina has demonstrated her capacity to overcome possibly traumatic situations as well as to be inspired by others for conscious changes in herself. She extracts value from some of her negative experiences and transform them into valuable lessons, incorporating them to her life story in a constructive manner. However, she tend to alienate other people when she encounters difference which she does not value.

I also consider that Marina has some certain nomadic characteristics: she is positive about possible changes in her life (even though she does not currently look for them), she is capable to value a certain type of difference and is ready to change her internal and external environments in order to get closer to that difference.

Olesya is highly resilient, because she demonstrated the capacity to change her external context as well as her internal characteristics. Her resilience is positive, given that she does not use difference in order to alienate or appropriate. Instead, she uses difference to inspire herself for further transformations, doing that deliberately. Motivated by her imagination about herself, she values people who are

different from her, simultaneously making effort to recognize herself in them. I also argue that Olesya is the most nomadic of the four interviewees, even though she does not possess all the key nomadic characteristics. Olesya is ready to withstand difficult changes, because she sees value in the transformation itself, using it constructively in her life story.

Ekaterina's identity is highly resilient. She has changed her self-views quite drastically guided by her own values, which seem to be fairly flexible and dependable on the context and people she encounters. Although, Ekaterina's resilience is negative, because she is used to reaffirm her self-views through alienation of the others. If needed, Ekaterina would probably be able to adapt to any new circumstances and to further cultivate her resilience. However, if she is not able to find value people who is different form her, her resilience will continue being negative.

Arguably, Ekaterina is not a nomadic subject and did not even start moving towards nomadism, because of the absence of desire of changes she expressed in her life-story, the practice of alienation and appropriation of others in which she based her self-views and negative expectations from possible future changes. In spite of physically moving around and experiencing changes in many aspects of her life, Ekaterina resists changes generally. She resists even stronger those changes which could lead to transformations in her identity. She does not value changes and difficulties, which she had to overcome, discarding most of her negative experiences from the process of development of her self-views.

I believe that Ksenya's identity is not resilient, given that she did not mention any situation connected to big shocks or serious contradictions for her self-views. I cannot claim confidently that such events ever happened in her life, but based on the life story she created, I argue, that Ksenya did not have to adapt her self-views dramatically. She tends to interpret different situations in her life and encounters with difference only as reaffirming her identity. At the same time she is confident about who she is and who she wants to become. Her confidence is so high that she

does not even evaluate other possible scenarios. Ksenya does not let changes or other people influence her self-views in any way, and she mentions difference only when it affirms her identity. Possible development of resilience of identity is hindered by the absence of dramatic changes, which contradict her current identity. At the same time Ksenya seems to possess some nomadic characteristics, mostly connected to her desire of changes. However, the changes she desires are only those, which correspond to her self-views. Being ready to change her place of residence, for instance, she would only move to a place that she chooses by herself.

Finally, Elena's situation is very similar to Ekaterina's, given that she does not want to change her context and is used to encounter difference alienating and appropriating it. She is highly resilient, but her resilience is negative and she does not demonstrate any significant nomadic features.

Based on the aforementioned conclusions about existence or absence of nomadic characteristics and resilience of identity presented in the interviewees' self-narratives I crated the Figure 1, which shows the relations between resilience of identity and nomadism. The colors particularly express the level of resilience, where the darkest green represents the highest resilience and the lighter color represents its lowest level. Ekaterina and Elena occupy the exact same place in the graph. The figure suggests that the positive resilience of identity can be associated with possessing nomadic characteristics. This relation seems to be fairly proportional.

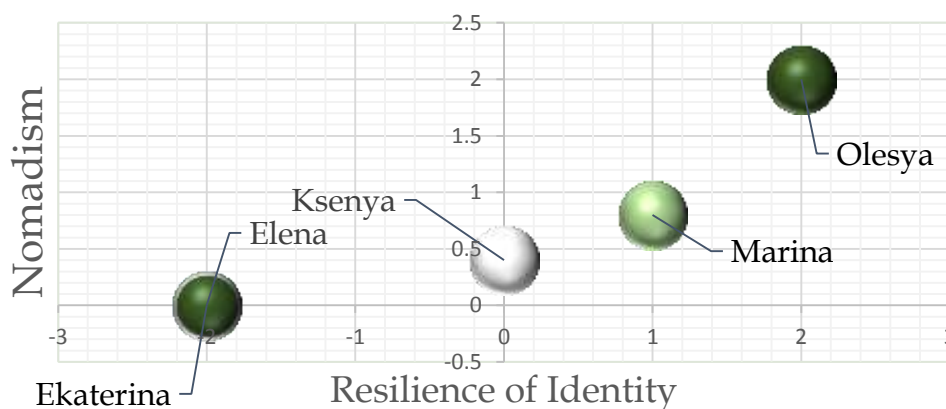


Figure 1. Relation between Resilience of Identity and

6. Conclusions

In this final chapter I come to a resolution about applicability of the concept of 'resilient identity' for studying and describing today's highly unsettled subjectivity and explain what connects/separates the concept and Braidotti's ideas about nomadic subjectivity. I review and summarize the most significant outcomes of my research and, based on that information, make conclusions about the possible impacts and relevance of the performed study for social sciences and future research.

6.1 General Conclusions

I have managed to conduct a study bringing together some of Rosi Braidotti's and Amartya Sen's philosophical ideas about identity and subjectivity as well as some concrete examples of the self-narratives from immigrants who inhabit our postmodern, interconnected and rapidly-changing world. I have done this research emphasizing the role of the self-narratives and subjects' own perspectives. As a result I was able to better understand and describe the subject "from within", underlining specifically how she sees, (re-)constructs and makes sense of the self.

Additionally, responding to Braidotti's concern of being "behind time" in terms of theories and ideas, I started developing the new concept of 'resilient identity'. The concept helped me to comprehend changes in self-views of today's highly unsettled subjects who, as I discovered in my research, might possess or not the nomadic characteristics. I applied the concept of 'resilient identity' when analyzing the self-narratives of the Russian-speaking female immigrants in Italy and observed how its application benefited the research on today's subjectivity and complemented some unaddressed aspects of Braidotti's nomadic theory, namely subject's need to be located in time and space.

6.2 'Resilient Identity', Nomadic Theory and Future Research

I found that some nomadic characteristics and positive resilient identity could be interconnected and even interdependent, while negative resilient identity seems to oppose nomadism. My research also showed that the positive resilience is acquirable and could be developed. This type of resilience was associated with higher well-being in my interviewees. Consequently, I believe that some actions and policies should be proposed in order to develop positive resilient identities in today's subjects in general and in immigrants in particular. I argue that this would eventually lead to subjects' higher adaptability and enhanced well-being. Although, as it was discussed before, it is necessary to conduct similar researches which involve people with different intersectional characteristics.

Interestingly, the interviewed white, female, young, economically affluent subjects with different types of resilient identities aligned their self-views (each one at a different level) to the mainstream, neoliberal discourse. Many of them adapted their values and aspirations accordingly. Seemingly, some nomadic characteristic can also coexist with the neoliberal identities. These findings suggest that a subject who possesses a resilient identity (as well as some nomadic characteristics) does not necessarily oppose the mainstream discourse or escape the phallogocentric logic. Therefore, the concept of 'resilient identity' does not directly help to contest the mainstream understanding of the world, but its application can stimulate a better understanding of today's subjectivity, which is essential for conducting studies in social sciences and creating more comprehensive policies.

Remarkably none of my interviewees fully embodied a nomadic subject, described by Braidotti, even though they inhabit our interconnected world and have lived through huge changes in their social, political, economic and other contexts, being influenced by the pluri-ethnic, multicultural environments. It makes me claim that the nomadic subject from Braidotti's imagination is still a political fiction. Resilient identities, instead, are already detectable in today's subjects and could help researchers to describe and explain the processes, which happen "within them". The

results of the practical application of the concept show that people's identities are transformable, and not necessarily anchored in people's genes, culture or nationality. Therefore, identity should never be treated or perceived as fixed in the academic research or within the policy-making processes.

In conclusion, I argue that it is important to continue developing the concept of 'resilient identity' and widening the possibilities of its application. The future research should further explore the connection between resiliency and nomadism, given that my research showed that the positive resilient identities could be associated with the processes that eventually produce nomadic subjects. Further research should also determine what kind of life experiences enhance positive resilience and explore practical opportunities for its enhancement. Additionally, the capability approach seems to be promising respective when studying identity. I argue that further research on resilient identity will open new possibilities for the discipline of social sciences and will help to create more comprehensive cultural policies which are not anchored in the traditional understandings of identity and subjectivity.

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ⁱ Names of the interviewees have been changed to protect their anonymity. The interviews were recorded and saved in MP3 format