

Multivoiced decisions. A study of migrants' inner dialogue and its connection to social argumentation.

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Abstract

This paper sets out to explore the relation between social argumentation and *inner debate* by taking into account suggestions from argumentation studies and from social and discursive psychology. It develops Dascal's (2005) claim that there are metonymical and structural relations between the two realms of debate by substantiating it with data taken from international migrants' inner debates at moments of difficult decisions. The data are drawn from the experience of migrating mothers who have to decide whether to go back or to remain in their host country (the UK). I show that others are present in migrants' multivoiced decisions in two important senses: first, inner debates can be reconstructed as *critical discussions* (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984). Second, the *locus from analogy* has the special function of allowing the comparison between the migrant's experience and someone else's experience.

Keywords: inner debate, argumentation, Bakhtin, argumentation from analogy

*In every voice he could hear two contending voices
(M. M. Bakhtin)*

1 Introduction

Different streams in psycho-social research have pinpointed the profound unity existing between dialogue with others and dialogue with oneself. Thinking is a social activity per se, imbued with the presence of others (Marková 2006; Perret-Clermont 2000; Billig 1996). Dialogue with oneself and dialogue with others seem therefore not to be two idiosyncratic phenomena, despite the attention of argumentation and debate studies being primarily focused on *social* activities (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004: 55). There are similarities and commonalities between external dialogue, involving different individuals, and internal debate and reasoning (Dascal 2005). Billig (1996: 57) even argues that:

It will be suggested that psychologists have overlooked the extent to which our inner deliberations are silent arguments conducted within a single self. If deliberation is a form of argument, then our thought processes, far from being inherently mysterious events, are *modelled upon* public debate (my emphasis).

In this paper, I choose to follow the path traced by Billig (1996) and Dascal (2005); more in particular, I embrace Dascal's hypothesis that inner debate and public argumentation are

contiguous and structurally similar forms of communication; and I set out to prove this empirically. I claim that a clue that hints to such continuity and structural similarity is the *presence of others* in an individual's inner debate. Therefore, investigate how others are present in inner debate. This paper will show that, when individuals reflect with themselves, not necessarily they are alone. They know what others have told them. They keep something for them of others' claims and argumentations and feel the need to respond. They want to justify their decisions publicly, when they feel they are going towards what is believed to be common sense. Even when facing very personal decisions, they do not want to evade the others' acknowledgement of the reasonableness of their decisions.

I will elaborate on this perspective by providing some evidence of how others are present in inner dialogue. Such evidence is drawn from a corpus of data concerning international migrants faced with crucial decisions such as whether to permanently return to their home country or to stay over in the host country (see section 3).

In this paper, I will proceed as follows. In section 2, I will discuss the state of the art of works concerning self-debate and social debate or, more in general, language and thought. I will do so by considering, on the one hand, the important contributions by Vygotsky and Bakhtin (2.1); on the other hand, I will concentrate more specifically on the debate on the boundary and relations between argumentation and inner debate (2.2.). In section 2.2, I will equally present Dascal's hypothesis, which I am largely relying on in this paper, even though keeping in mind the important clues emerging from other theoretical contributions. After having introduced the data which I am going to analyse (section 3), I will discuss them. Two aspects emerge in relation to the presence of others in inner dialogue: the emergence of inner argumentative discussions (section 4.1) and the comparisons via locus from analogy (4.2). I will then briefly conclude in section 5.

2 Inner debate and argumentation: state of the debate

2.1 Vygotsky and Bakhtin

When approaching the study of inner dialogue, we stand on the shoulders of two giants of the past century: the Russian scholars Lev Vygotsky and Mikhail Bakhtin, to whom many disciplinary traditions owe a lot for different reasons. Their interests and approaches converge on the study of the internal processes connected to inner dialogue. As Wertsch (1991: 13) puts it, both scholars share the assumption that certain aspects of human mental functioning, including psychological processes carried out by an individual in isolation, are fundamentally tied to communicative processes and encompass communication.

Vygotsky (1896-1934) is interested in an ontogenetic approach to inner speech; in other words, he investigates how inner speech and thought are developed in the child. We owe to this author the hypothesis that inner speech be a form of internalized dialogue, learnt by the child after he masters *communicative* speech (Vygotsky 1962: 19). Moving from some of Piaget's earlier works on preschool children's, Vygotsky hypothesizes that "egocentric

speech”, namely loud speech addressed to the child himself, is a temporary form of loud inner speech. In schoolchildren, egocentric speech is not present, having evolved into inner speech already. In other words, schoolchildren and adults do not stop to speak to themselves; they simply do it internally, in such a way that we do not have any loud sign of inner speech left. According to Vygotsky, in fact, adults’ inner speech coincides with their “thinking for themselves” (ibid., p. 18). Thus, for this author, it is thought that follows language and not the opposite. Vygotsky claims that “the speech structures mastered by the child become the basic structures of his thinking” (ibid., p. 51). I will come back to this point when approaching the theory of argument schemes in section 4.2. For now, it is important to remind that Vygotsky’s view has originated a prolific stream of studies in social and developmental psychology; it had more or less direct influence on a number of authors (see Wertsch 1985, 1999; cf. as well Zittoun 2006).

Vygotsky’s perspective is focused on inter- and intra-psychological processes and their relation, approaching inner dialogue from the point of view of developmental psychology. A semiotician¹ and a literary critic, Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975) approaches inner dialogue from the point of view of communication. We owe to him the concept of a profound *dialogicality* and *multivoicedness* of all inner processes of thinking and decision-making (cf. in particular Bakhtin 1984).

Bakhtin develops his theory by studying the structure of the novel and, in particular, the works by Fyodor Dostoevsky, whom he considers the initiator of the dialogic novel (1984). In Bakhtin’s view, Dostoevsky’s novels are characterized by “a plurality of independent and unmerged voices and consciousnesses” (1984: 6), the characters being “*free* people capable of standing alongside their creator, capable of not agreeing with him” (ibid.). Bakhtin often makes use of a metaphor drawn from the musical domain to describe this type of novel: he speaks of *polyphony*, thus comparing dialogic novels and contrapuntal harmony. In Chapter 2 of his “Problems of Dostoevsky’s poetics”, he gives the example of Raskolnikov’s inner dialogue at the very beginning of *Crime and Punishment*. This example is particularly relevant to our investigation because Bakhtin manages to show how others may be present in the inner dialogue of a person who faces a difficult decision. In this dialogical monologue, Bakhtin observes, all future major characters of the novel are present; and “Raskolnikov has entered into a fundamental and intense interior dialogue with them, a dialogue of ultimate questions and ultimate life decisions”. It is worth quoting some brief excerpts from Raskolnikov’s inner dialogue, whose topic is Dunechka’s decision to marry Luzhin:

It’s clear that Rodion Romanovich Raskolnikov is the central figure in the business, and no one else. Oh yes, she can ensure his happiness, keep him in the university, make his whole future secure; perhaps he may even be a rich man later on, prosperous, respected, and may even end his life a famous man! But my mother? It’s all Rodya, precious Rodya, her firstborn! For such a son who would not sacrifice such a daughter! [...] Sonya, Sonya Marmeladova, the eternal victim so long as the world lasts. Have you taken the measure of your sacrifice, both of you? Is it right? Can you bear it? Is it any use? Is there sense in it? And let me tell you, Dounia, Sonya’s life is no worse than life with Mr. Luzhin. ‘There can be no question of love’, mother writes. And what if there can be no respect either, if on the contrary there is aversion, contempt, repulsion, what then? [...] *Crime and Punishment*, part I, ch. 4.

As we can see, Raskolnikov reports words uttered or written by other characters; he engages in a fierce dialogue with them, answering to their words and challenging them. Bakhtin characterizes this dialogue as featuring a conflict of voices, in which we hear the main character's bitter irony, for example, as stratified over the intonation of the other characters' words. The other characters are virtually present in the here-and-now of Raskolnikov's decision.

It is important to spend a few words to give a fuller account of Bakhtin's approach, as dialogism is not limited to the world of artistic prose or to inner dialogue. As Bakhtin puts it, the dialogic orientation is a natural property of any living discourse in everyday life, inside and outside institutional settings:

"But as we have already said, every extra-artistic prose discourse – in any of its forms, quotidian, rhetorical, scholarly – cannot fail to be oriented toward the "already uttered", the "already known", the "common opinion" and so forth. The dialogic orientation of discourse is a phenomenon that is, of course, a property of any discourse. It is the natural orientation of any living discourse. On all its various routes toward the object, in all its directions, the word encounters an alien word and cannot help encountering it in a living, tension-filled interaction" (Bakhtin 1981: 279).

Dialogism is thus an immanent propriety of any uttered world, insofar as it refers to other discourses. Therefore, Bakhtin (1981, 1986) speaks of *addressivity* of all discourses, because "every word is directed toward an *answer* and cannot escape the profound influence of the answering word that it anticipates". (1981: 279, emphasis in the original). It is true that Bakhtin suggested that words reflect the multiple voices of "a given culture, people and epoch". In this relation, Wertsch (1991: 53) remarks that Bakhtin did not limit the notion of addressee to the immediate speech situation. Instead, he considered that "the voice or voices to which an utterance is addressed maybe temporally, spatially and socially distant" (ibid.). Dialogism, however, is present as well in the relation between the speaker and people who have talked to him/her recently and who are still present in the speaker's inner discourse:

"This addressee can be an immediate participant-interlocutor in an everyday dialogue, a differentiated collective of specialists in some particular area of cultural communication, a more or less differentiated public, ethnic group, contemporaries, like-minded people, opponents and enemies, a subordinate, a superior, someone who is lower, higher, familiar, foreign, and so forth. And it can also be an indefinite, unconcretized other" (Bakhtin 1986: 95 q.td in Wertsch 1991: 53).

Arguably, by this saying, Bakhtin is emphasizing the continuity of interpersonal dialogue and inner dialogue by showing, via the notion of *addressivity*, that others are present in inner dialogue.

Bakhtin's notion of a dialogical orientation of discourse has had a profound influence on fields so various as to comprise psychology, linguistics and discourse studies, originating a series of "dialogical approaches to language and cognition" (Grossen and Salazar Orvig 2011: 492; cf. Grossen 2010 as well). A leading figure who is bringing Bakhtin's intuitions forward is certainly Ivana Marková. Concerning inner discourse, this author employs the phrase *Inner Alter* to identify "the symbolically and socially represented kinds of the Alter that are in an internal dialogue with the Ego" (Marková 2006: 135), thus highlighting the possibility for others to be present in a subject's inner dialogue. The Inner Alter may take

different forms: reference groups, conscience, individual and collective memories, commitments and loyalties, and so on (ibid., p. 136; see also Marková et al. 2007).

2.2 The blurred boundary of argumentation as a social activity

There certainly is a conflict of opinion, or difference of opinion, at the heart of Raskolnikov's inner dialogue partially reported in the preceding section. It is clear that he is opposing other characters' standpoints, challenging them with questions which express doubts. In facing a difficult decision, Raskolnikov lives an argumentative discussion within his mind, which Dostoevsky discloses to his readers. One would imagine that the striking connection of this kind of inner dialogue to social argumentative discussions has been already thoroughly examined. Yet when it comes to argumentation studies, regrettably few authors approach the topic of inner dialogue.

Such gap is even more problematic if we consider that it might lead to a paradox. If inner dialogue is not a form of argumentation, what is it then? Should we think of two completely idiosyncratic phenomena, we would paradoxically maintain that, in a public argumentative discussion, standpoints are defended reasonably; yet that they originate *uncritically* in the black box of the arguers' minds. So one would be bound to publicly defend in a reasonable fashion what he has unreasonably decided in his silent thoughts.

Even intuitively, this is not the right interpretation. I will therefore take another path. In this section, I will take into account three authors who did indeed start the endeavour of considering the connection between public debate and inner argumentation. Two of them – M. Dascal and A. Rocci – are more typical argumentation scholars, while a third one – M. Billig – is the initiator of *discursive psychology*.

It is commonly held that argumentation is a social activity (see for example the pragma-dialectical approach proposed by van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, 2004). This view imposes a limitation to the study of properly said argumentative phenomena. In my opinion, this limitation is correct in theory; but it has been interpreted in such a way as to narrow the focus of the study of debate; and it is often unduly interpreted as if suggesting an opposition between argumentation studies and social psychology.

In argumentation, two or more disputants have some form of disagreement which is called a *difference of opinion* (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004). Rather than resorting to violence or other forms of non-communicative ways out of a difference of opinion, the two disputants try and engage in a form of dialogue characterized by the pursuit of reasonableness; in other words, they are committed to critically test their respective standpoints and arguments in search for a valid resolution of their disagreement. This characterizes the form of debate that is called *critical discussion* in the pragma-dialectical approach to argumentation (ibid.); other authors prefer the term *controversy* to describe a similar phenomenon (see Dascal 1998). In the *integrated* pragma-dialectical approach to social argumentation, the arguers' dialectical aim to solve their difference of opinion on the merits by means of a critical discussion is always paired with a rhetorical goal. Each arguer wants to win his cause; at the same time, he

is committed to do it reasonably. Maintaining the balance between the commitment to reasonableness and the attempt at being effective means that the arguers have to *manoeuvre strategically in all moves that are carried out in an argumentative discussion* (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2002). In particular, strategic manoeuvring manifests itself in the discourse through three aspects: “A particular choice made from the available *topical potential*, a particular way in which the opportunities for framing the addressee’s perspective are used [*audience demand*], and a particular way in which presentational possibilities are exploited [*presentational devices*]” (van Eemeren and Houtlosser 2009: 6).

Social argumentation certainly has peculiar characteristics which are not present in inner debate. For one, as Dascal (2005: 48) puts it, external debates take place “between clearly demarcated and ontologically independent entities”, namely human beings. The communicative and non-communicative behaviour of another human being, the so-called antagonist, in the here-and-now of social debate, is always to some extent unpredictable and, thus, potentially surprising. The *real* other – differently from Marková’s Inner Alter – cannot ultimately be reduced to our anticipations, because he or she is always free to modify his or her standpoint, to accept ours, to leave the discussion, to bring forward an argument we didn’t initially think of, etc.

In this sense, social argumentation and inner argumentation are certainly distinct phenomena. Nevertheless, a pioneer in this pursuit, Dascal suggests considering external debate as a *counterpart* to self-debate (ibid., p. 34). More precisely, his proposal is twofold. On the one hand, he hypothesizes that there be a *metonymical relation* (what I will call *contiguity*) between these two types of debate: “Criticism by others may engender, along with a public polemical exchange, an inner process of self-criticism or at least of self-examination” (ibid., p. 45). There is, thus, temporal, psychological and communicative continuity between social argumentation and inner dialogue. For example, one may make up her mind about a certain course of action and, then, try and persuade her husband about it; then she may accept some of the husband’s criticisms and go back to a process of self-debate, concerning the validity of her decision. This is line with the results of social psychology showing that individuals who make a decision are not in a social void; they connect to their community *before, during and after* their reasoning process, in order to make sense of the situation and elaborate a judgment (Perret-Clermont and Zittoun 2002: 3).

On the other hand, Dascal highlights that there are *structural analogies* between self-debate and public debate. He argues that the metaphor “argument is a war” applies to both realms of debate: in both we would have positions, targets, contenders... Then, different candidates fill up these “slots” of the general structure of “argumentation as war” in debating with self and debating with others. For example, while the contenders may be two human beings in external debate, they may be “different faculties of the mind” in self-debate (ibid., p. 49). In order to single out the analogies between self-debate and social argumentation, Dascal moves from Aristotle’s suggestion to apply one and the same term, namely *deliberation*, to both inner and social debate (ibid., p. 53). This suggestion may be reasoned out from the accounts of deliberation in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and in *Rhetoric* respectively. In both cases, as

Dascal shows, deliberation has the following characteristics, which I synthetically regroup as follows:

- Orientation to the choice of a future course of action
- Pursuit of rational persuasion (of oneself or others)
- What is probable (rather than what is necessary) is the object of deliberative activities.

Elaborating on and departing from this “Aristotelian clue”, as he calls it, Dascal suggests a parallel between Aristotle’s deliberation and *self-controversy*, namely inner argumentative discussion oriented towards a model of *reasonable* resolution of disagreement. Yet he also accounts for a further two types of self-debate. The former, which he calls *self-discussion*, is characterized by mathematical rationality; the arguers’ personal and emotional side has no room in it. The latter, called *self-debate*, includes pre-decision and post-decision forms of self-deception and, as we might put it, auto-manipulation. These two types depart from the ideal model of an argumentative discussion; thus, in this paper, we will restrict our interest to self-controversy. Dascal, however, has the merit to show that the phenomenon of manipulation and the so-called derailments of the arguers’ strategic manoeuvring, to put it in pragma-dialectical terms, may occur in self-debate as well. This is, after all, a further analogy of self-debate and public-debate.

Coming back to the structural analogies between self-debate and public debate, there is one more theoretical suggestion which expands on Dascal’s account. Rocci (2005) suggests that inner argumentative dialogue (in his terms: *soliloquy*) could be considered as analogous to a reflexive predicate of the type “she washed herself”. The reflexive verb indicates two logically distinct entities which are however covered by the same person (she/herself), albeit taken in different aspects: *who is washing* is the entire individual, a rational human being capable of action; while *who is being washed* is just her body. Analogously, in fact, in soliloquy the overarching argumentative function foresees two logically distinct roles – speaker and hearer, protagonist and antagonist, arguer and audience – which however are in practice covered by one and the same human being. This human being is considered in different aspects; Rocci (2005:101) cites a dictum attributed to Pierce, who is said to have claimed that all thinking is dialogical and that “yourself of one instant appeals to your deeper self for his assent” (see Schlesinger, Keren-Portnoy and Parush 2002, q.td in Rocci, *ibid*).

A scholar who approaches argumentation from the background of rhetorical psychology, Michael Billig, draws very similar conclusions to Dascal’s. He argues that, if *witcraft* (Lat. *inventio*) is a basic form of thought, “then we can expect private thinking to be modelled upon public argument” (Billig 1996: 141; cf. also Billig et al. 1988: 17). In his view, we assume both the role of proposer (protagonist) and critic (antagonist), thus arranging our inner debate. When debating internally, “the individual decision-maker must oscillate between the different arguments and has the responsibility for inventing both pro and con reasonings” (*ibid.*, p. 144). When facing an important decision, such as whether to get married, it is not sufficient that individuals “echo the reasons for one action”; they must “conduct some sort of internal debate” in order to deliberate properly (Billig et al. 1988: 17).

Collecting some evidence from William James' research on inner controversies on religion lived by believers and disbelievers (James 1902), Billig argues that some of the most dramatic argumentative confrontations occur internally (ibid). The religious domain may certainly become a highly dramatic arena of personal deliberation processes; Billig (1996: 143) views this as a case of decision-making, namely when "then individual is involved in a protracted and agonizing dilemma about which course of action should be taken". Similarly, Dascal (2005) suggests that inner debate often arises when individuals are confronted with difficult decisions, which imply complex decision-making or *deliberation* procedures. I will take care of these suggestions and proceed, in this paper, focusing on inner debates characterized by *pragmatic reasoning*.

The theoretical accounts of inner debate stemming from argumentation and rhetoric, as well as those stemming from a Vygotskian perspective, look promising. Unfortunately, however, they have been applied to scarce, if any, real data. With the present contribution, I set out to substantiate this approach by providing empirical details on how this particular form of reflexive debate occurs. In the next section, I will describe the type of data which will constitute a basis for my paper.

3 The data

The data I will be considering have been collected in the framework of the project "Migrants in transition: an argumentative perspective", funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (PBTIP1-133595). Twenty-nine migrating mothers of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds (aged 25 to 50) have been interviewed about their experience of international migration. These migration experiences had a common end point: at the time of the study, the interviewees had all been living in the greater London area for a period of one to twenty-two yearsⁱⁱ. The interviews lasted from 32 to 90 minutes (average: 60.89 recorded min, mode: 60 min); they were all recorded and transcribed according to the standards of conversation analysis adapted to the needs of an argumentative analysis (for a discussion on this aspect, see Greco Morasso 2011).

The project intended to focus on the migrants' inner dialogue; in particular, I assumed from socio-cultural psychology the focus on how they coped with the *rupture* of leaving their country and moving abroad and the following processes of *transition*, including adaptation to a new life, sense-making and learning (cf. Zittoun 2006). International migration has been proven a significant rupture in the individuals' life (Kadianaki 2010; Hale and De Abreu 2010); therefore it is a promising domain to study inner dialogue in decision-making processes. In this case, the rupture of international migration is combined with the experience of *motherhood*. Depending on different circumstances, these two spheres of experience may support each other, the one providing a sense of continuity to the other (as suggested by Zittoun and Grossen, forthcoming); or they might be perceived as two synchronous ruptures which to some extent magnify each other's dilemmas (cf. Tummala-Narra 2004, Sigad and Eisikovits 2009). Mothers tend to feel worries and expectations about themselves *and* their children, having to deal with specific issues such as childcare, schooling and health in the new country. Moreover, they are at the heart of the family communication network often

including grandparents in the sending country and other relatives; therefore, they are likely to closely participate in the decision-making process at crucial times, such as, for example, when they must decide whether to return to their home country.

From the methodological point of view, the study of migrants' processes of transition is supported, in general, by in-depth reconstructive interviews. Via this method, individuals reconstruct how they lived a moment of rupture and the following transition a posteriori (cf. Zittoun 2009: 415ff). Considering the data emerged from this type of interviews from a discourse analytical perspective and, in particular, from the vantage point of debate and argumentation, permits to analyse the individuals' decision-making processes, including internal differences of opinion and their resolution.

In my case, all the interviewees judged their experience of migration as satisfying or even rewarding. Nevertheless, they all testified to a difficult process of decision-making, concerning in particular the turning points constituted by the *decision to migrate* and the *decision (not) to return* respectively. Generally speaking, these are crucial times in a migrant's experience (cf. Finch et al. 2009). In relation to the decision-making processes, the selection of migrating *mothers* is further motivated by the increasing awareness that migrants' decisions are often taken on a family basis rather than on an individual basis. Such awareness is emerging in the *new economics* theories of labour migration as well as in the study of migrants' *social networks* (see Castles and Miller 2009: 24-25 and 28ff respectively; see also Van Hear 2010: 35). Because migrating mothers often bridge and mediate between two generations, studying their decision processes allows having a multi-layered section of a family decision.

Some remarks are necessary about the type of data rendered by in-depth interviews in relation to interest in inner dialogue. The data I am relying on constitute the migrants' self-reflection on their experience as it is externalized to an observer (the interviewer). The interview is per se certainly a public form of communication; the object of the interview, however, is precisely the migrants' inner speech, their reasoning and their decision-making processes. I am aware that it might be argued that these data represent a spurious form of inner dialogue; in fact, once the subject is aware he is externalizing his inner debate to others, she will have an interlocutor in mind other than herself. Yet, as it is methodologically complex, if not impossible, to get a pure form of inner debate, this spurious form represents a good approximation. Besides, previous studies in cultural psychology have already proven in-depth interviews effective to picture the person's inner debate when he or she is still living a rupture as well as when reconstructing it afterwards (Zittoun 2006, 2009; Kadianaki 2010).

4 Discussion of the results

4.1 Inner argumentative discussions

A first clue to the presence of others in inner dialogue is the emergence of complex argumentative discussions reported by the interviewees. The results I am going to present

here confirm both of Dascal's suggestions presented in section 2.2. On the one hand, the metonymical relation of inner and external dialogue is confirmed: the interviewees implicitly or explicitly refer to previous social argumentative discussions. In this framework, the presence of others in their inner dialogue becomes a sign of such a metonymical relation of contiguity. On the other hand, there are structural analogies between inner dialogue and the ideal form of a social argumentative discussion, which I assume to be the *critical discussion* (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 1984, 2004). As it will become clear, it is possible to do an *analytical reconstruction* of argumentation for inner dialogue as well.

When asked about their intentions for the future, these migrants often resort from giving a clear-cut answer and discuss the reasons of their (often still open) decision. When they do not intend to go back home, they often feel that they carry the *burden of proof*, namely that they are in need to justify their position in front of a more or less defined audience; they seem to consider themselves as breaking common sense or a sort of natural expectation that every migrant wants to go back home at some point; they feel the need to clarify why their position is reasonable. It is important to consider that, when they do so, they put themselves in the role of an antagonist of a critical discussion; yet the interviewer, who has just asked about their intentions, is not to be considered as the protagonist. The interviewer, in fact, is neutral in relation to the migrants' decisions; they have in mind other protagonists – family, friends and other acquaintances – who would not understand or do not support their decision to stay over in London. In Bakhtin's terms, we might say that the addressivity of their discourse is oriented towards relatives and acquaintances. From the argumentative point of view, I will reconstruct the analytical overview of these inner argumentative discussions by referring to the pragma-dialectical notation (van Eemeren et al. 2002), in order to highlight the similarity of these examples to more canonical examples of social argumentation. Particular attention will be devoted to who the antagonist and protagonist are; because this shows how others are present in the inner argumentative discussion of the interviewed migrants.

Generally speaking, inner discussions can be found in a large part of my interviews. However, they differ as for length and complexity of their structure. In what follows, I have chosen to report three examples, which are progressively more complex and complete from the point of view of the development of an argumentative discussion.

Davitaⁱⁱⁱ from Argentina describes her difficulty in deciding whether to stay over or go back and defines herself as “torn” by the experience of international migration. She does so against a background of expectations which derive, in her opinion, from the fact that she is of Jewish descent and both her grandparents migrated from Europe to Argentina before the Second World War. Despite being “traditionally” a member of a diaspora, she finds it hard to live abroad. Significantly, the term *traditional* in “I come from a very traditional family” (see example (i)) indicates in Davita's case “propensity to migrate”.

(i)

So for my family it was (.) difficult yeah and sometimes I still feel that I am torn you know it's not that I'm completely 100% (.) happy with being here in a way you know (.) I come from (.) I mean a very traditional family in a way it's a Jewish family who are also used to: migrate in a way because my grandparents (.) came

from somewhere else all my grandparents like two of them (.) from my father's side they went to Argentina from (.) eh Poland (.) and from my: mum's side eh: one came from Germany went to Uruguay first and the other came from Latvia (.) all kind of Eastern European so (.) and that happened in the twenties 1920s-1930s before the war (.) so there is a history of migration in my family but still when it's your own time it's kind of hard I don't know.

In example (i), Davita advances her standpoint “it's kind of hard [to migrate]” against a backdrop of family expectations which she reconstructs from her family history. The protagonist and antagonist of the critical discussion are both internal to the interviewee; she thinks she should find it easy to be diasporic, but acknowledges it is not easy for her. The evaluation of her experience is still open. However, Davita does not discuss the reasons why she is still torn after almost fourteen years in the UK. For this reason, argumentation in this extract is limited to a difference of opinion, characterized by the contraposition of two different standpoints, or voices in a Bakhtinian sense, both alive within Davita's inner dialogue.

The situation is different with Francisca, a second-generation Dutch migrant who has long lived in Belgium and subsequently moved to London. She reconstructs a complex argumentative discussion in which, as Billig (1996) puts it, she reports both sides of the argument; curiously, she discusses at length her opponents' reasons. Since she arrived in London in 1998, she never had a programmatic intention to stay over; yet she progressively felt like “more English” and she is now inclined to think she will not go back. She presents her standpoint (2) “We should not go back to Belgium”, supporting it against the opposite standpoint, (1) “We should go back to Belgium” (see tables 1 and 2). As mentioned, she devotes a long time explaining the reasons supporting (1). Although she lives the conflict between (1) and (2) personally, she positions herself as an antagonist against a protagonist who is represented by different instances. First, generically, “people”, who “do ask you that question [whether she intends to go back] a lot”, so that she gets “that question every time”. Second, her partner's mother, who “is always looking after other grandchildren and she always feels guilty towards us” because Francisca's children live far away and their grandmother feels she cannot be of much help with childcare on a regular basis. Third, common sense seems to be against Francisca's decision; not coincidentally, she says “I wonder why I am making things so difficult”, thus (slightly ironically) interiorising the possible objections she has been summarizing. The fact that she partially understands the reasons of her multifaceted counterpart is probably the reason why she discusses at length all the advantages which she would have in Belgium:

(ii)

I think the thing is (.) oh I don't know life there is easier (.) and I wonder why I'm making things so difficult for myself you know particularly with children I think I think it's SO much easier to be with the family: and in an environment which is very supportive of having children (.) here it's not necessarily the case (.) ah: in Belgium I think people are quite (.) quite child loving you know it's not (.) you take your children to a restaurant people won't look like you know noisy noisy brats whereas whereas here you feel there are things that you can't just do with children or people don't appreciate that much (.) so that's different and also different in terms of childcare I mean if we had been in Belgium we could have had my sister and Philip's parents and (.)

From the point of view of argumentation, the discourse of Francisca's opponents, who in this case play the role of protagonist of an argumentative discussion, can be reconstructed as a complex argumentation; 1.1, namely ease of life, is the main reason supporting standpoint 1; while 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 are two coordinate arguments supporting 1.1.

1. We should go back to Belgium
- 1.1. Because life would be easier there
- 1.1.1. Because it is a family-friendlier environment
- 1.1.2. And because we would have relatives for childcare

Table 1: Analytical reconstruction of the protagonist's argumentation

All these advantages notwithstanding, Francisca does not decide to go back. She announces her decision in front of a plethora of opponents, including, presumably, some part of herself:

(iii)

So in a way it would be easier (.) but I think I've become more English (.) you know when you it's it's difficult because I grew up in Belgium my parents were Dutch so I was always a bit of a foreigner (.) even though culturally they're not THAT different but (.) hh I never felt Belgian I was

Her standpoint "we should not go back to Belgium" is left implicit in (iii); yet it is introduced by the linguistic marker "but" which indicates opposition to the preceding arguments. The reason she gives for her standpoint is at the identity level: she says she has become more English and, therefore, as we may infer, going back to Belgium would not be as desirable as others may think. Her argument goes on because she feels the need to justify why she has changed her loyalties (as she will say further on in her interview) and become more English than Belgian. As a backing, she says that she had always been a bit of a foreigner in Belgium as well, because she was born to foreign parents. Her parents, in fact, came to the Netherlands and Francisca always perceived some slight differences to her Belgian friends, spanning from language to cultural habits.

2. We should not go back to Belgium
- 2.1. Because I have become more English
- 2.1.1. And this could happen because I had always felt a foreigner in Belgium (I was not a real Belgian)
- 2.1.1.1. Because I was born to foreign (Dutch) parents

Table 2: Analytical reconstruction of the antagonist's argumentation

I will now consider in greater detail an excerpt of an interview to Mary, a South African national who had been living in London for almost six years at the time of the interview. In Mary's case as well, a complex argumentative discussion testifies to the presence of others in the interviewee's inner dialogue. In answering to an interviewer's question about her intentions for the future, Mary chooses to reconstruct the inner debate in which she is involved:

(iii)

Well for the moment we don't have any plans at the moment of going back but (.) you you know if people (.) you know in my job (.) you talk with people every day: people sometimes ask so oh why did you come and: will you ever go back home (.) ah and I always say to them I m- ah the doors are never closed and I'll never say we'll never go back home (.) but (.) we don't have any plans till now (.) and it would only be under the right circumstances all those reasons why we came (.) they would have got to change I'm not gonna go back to that SAME (.) you know we we what I usually say is that we (.) I had to be working actually full time (.) for us just to pay listen I've (.) financially for my monthly expenses eh: people (.) who've been you know on HOLIDAY to South Africa might think oh gosh it's cheap! Ah you know? (.) ah: but it's it IS a wonderful country it's beautiful has got good weather beautiful you know (.) countryside and you know (.) the sea ah from Cape Town of course there's lots of (.) COASTS and beaches and (.) vineyards and wine and you know that's all lovely (.) but eh (.) when ah when you go off with POUNDS (.) and you go () restaurants than you go oh that's cheap (.) but when you live there (.) and you earn that small sums that you earn then the things are expensive and you don't go and eat out and you're very careful when you drive park your car because petrol is expensive so you know for the locals (.) it's not easy ah: (.) to (.) to manage (.) so: I don't want to just (.) go back (.) to that.

Mary works as a physiotherapist; she owns a private practice in Northern London. She explains that she is sometimes asked by her patients (presumably other than South Africans) why she came to the UK and whether she intends to go back home at some point. Saying that in her job one talks with people every day, she seems to justify those questions as legitimate. As in Raskolnikov's case (see section 2.1), we almost hear these patients' curious and astonished intonation in Mary's report. Yet, if we follow her reasoning, we discover that these patients, who – she adds – know South Africa because they have been there on holiday, are not simply asking questions; Mary interprets their asking as an indirect expression of the standpoint “you should go back home”, supported by two coordinate arguments: South Africa is cheap and it is a wonderful country. Table 3 reports an analytical overview (van Eemeren and Grootendorst 2004) of these arguments and standpoint:

1. You should go back to South Africa
 - 1.1. Because South Africa is a wonderful country
 - 1.1.1. And it is cheap (so you won't have problems living there).

Table 3: Analytical reconstruction of “the people's” position

The two coordinate arguments are both referring to how much South Africa is an enjoyable country: it has the advantage of a beautiful landscape and climate and living there does not require too much effort, because it is cheap. Such arguments seem even more compelling if we think that Mary now lives in the United Kingdom; in fact, the stereotypical background of shared knowledge and assumptions about this country includes the image of London as a rainy, grey and expensive city.

Of these two arguments, Mary accepts the former (1.1), while she does not agree with the latter (1.2). In accepting 1.1 (“but it IS a wonderful country [...] it's all lovely”) Mary even substantiates it with more details, speaking about the beauty of South African coasts, beaches and vineyards; her longing for her home country informs her inviting description of it. However, this argument is not a sufficient reason to go back; as an antagonist to the “people” who advance it, she provides arguments to demonstrate that 1.2 is not a valid argument

because it contains a false judgement: to Mary, South Africa is not a cheap country. This is a crucial aspect to be determined for Mary, because South Africa not being cheap is one of the reasons why the quality of life there was not satisfying to her; therefore, it is a good reason to stay over in England. To contrast this argument, Mary first pictures the protagonist as “people (.) who have been you know on HOLIDAY to South Africa”; the emphasis on “holiday” restricts the scope of their knowledge, signalling that they lack the natives’ experience, which she has got. Constructing the antinomy tourist/native is functional to the construction of Mary’s authority based on her position to know; she then says that “when you live there” you experience hard conditions and discover that this is not a cheap country to live in. This is an important reason not to go back, because, as Mary had explained before, because she had to work very hard to earn enough money to live, her quality of life was damaged: she hardly managed to see her son except in the late evening and she could not afford having a second child. All these conditions changed when she came to the UK: she started working on a part-time basis, thus finding more time for her family and yet being better off financially. After a few years, she gave birth to a second child.

In Mary’s reflection, the argumentative discussion is clearly centred on an issue which she has been considering extensively in all of its sides. On the one hand, we may certainly conclude that, at some level, as in Davita’s and Francisca’s cases, Mary identifies with both the protagonist and the antagonist of the argumentative discussion. On the other hand, however, Mary takes a precise position: she has made up her mind to stay over in the UK and she justifies her position. Similarly to what happens in social debates, we might even retrace Mary’s *strategic manoeuvring* to win her cause and present her position as reasonable. Particularly salient is Mary’s strategic manoeuvring with the topical potential: first, she decides to only oppose argument 1.2; second, her way of contrasting it is focused on the topical choice of giving an account of herself as more authoritative speaker than her opponents, who have visited South Africa as tourists.

The presence of external dialogues is reflected in the inner dialogues we have been considering: other interlocutors are always represented with their opinions and arguments. In some cases, as in Mary’s, we arrive at a very close picture of an argumentative discussion, including strategic manoeuvring. Clearly, this is an indirect representation, and the risk of incorrect representations of others’ positions of the straw-man type is always present. However, in studying inner dialogue in this paper, I do not aim at getting to a precise representation of the real dialogues in which Mary and the other migrants have been partaking; I am interested in what these migrants consider important for themselves. Therefore, it is precisely their representation of the others’ opinion which is important, because this is what they are considering as the protagonist’s opinion which needs to be contrasted.

4.2 Argumentation from analogy and the presence of others

Billig (1996: 140) has called attention to the connection between thinking and argumentation being one frequently made by ancient rhetoricians already. Isocrates (*Antidosis*, 256) is one

of them: “the same arguments which we use in persuading others when we speak in public, we employ also when we deliberate in our thoughts”. Interpreting Isocrates against the backdrop of contemporary studies in argumentation, we should say that the arguments of inner speech and of social speech are the same because *we make use of the same argument schemes*^{iv} when thinking and when publicly speaking. In fact, because loci and argument schemes^{iv} pertain to the structure of reasoning, they may be used to analyse not only argumentation but also other forms of reasoning, such as explanation or inner reasoning (Rigotti and Palmieri 2009). In this paper, I will discuss a specific argument scheme, namely *analogy*, which frequently occurs in my data, arguing that this is important for the situation of international migrants. By analysing argumentation based on analogy, I will show how the presence of others in inner dialogue may be retraced even in the structure of a single argumentative move. By this doing, I will further substantiate, on the basis of real examples, Dascal’s claim that there are structural analogies between debating with oneself and debating with others.

The locus from analogy is included in almost all typologies of argument schemes for its ubiquity in human reasoning (cf. Garssen 2001, Doury 2009). The medieval tradition would have categorized analogy under the *extrinsic loci*. Via extrinsic loci, the arguer connects to the state of affairs considered in the standpoint not for its intrinsic properties but in relation to another *possible world* (cf. Rigotti 2009). This makes extrinsic loci in general and analogy in particular important for allowing the presence of others in inner dialogue, as they programmatically foresee a comparison between different worlds.

I have argued elsewhere (Greco Morasso 2010), while discussing the results presented by Zittoun (2006), that reasoning from analogy is typical of people who are experiencing moments of rupture and transition. Migrants certainly fall into such category. In my corpus, I found instances of argumentation from analogy in almost 77% of the interviews. In the majority of the interviews where analogy arguments were present (19), they appeared once or twice; but in a few interviews (3) arguments from analogy occurred 3 times.

These rough statistics show how much argumentation from analogy is present in migrants’ account of their experience. As the world they live is uncertain, they find it useful to refer to another known world, similar to their situation, to find the cognitive and emotional resources to cope with their decisions^v. In the example discussed by Greco Morasso (2010), the analogy is based on the comparison between the arguer’s world and the imaginary world of a novel. In the case of migrants, the analogy is frequently made between the uncertain situation that one is living; and another experience of migration in the past, be it a personal experience or a reported one (based, for example, on a relative’s life). I will analyse a single exemplary case, in which the interviewee uses both the domain of a relative’s experience and that of her personal experience to reason from analogy and make sense of her present situation.

Linda is from the Ticino Canton in Switzerland and is married to a Dutchman. First, she draws on her husband’s experience as a resource to reason on her present experience. In fact, her husband, an academic researcher in the so-called hard sciences, had left the Netherlands for a post-doc position in Switzerland. He had been living there for several years before they

both moved to London. Second, Linda pictures the moments in which, in order to study at university, she moved from the Italian-speaking Ticino Canton to settle at first in a town within the French-speaking area and then in a larger German-speaking city. In both cases, the analogy with what she has been living allowed her to conclude that she could cope with her migration to London (see example (iv) and the analyses in Figure 1 and 2).

(iv)

Linda [...] I think (.) the problem is I don't know thinking that in any case he^{vi} did it already this step coming to Switzerland fro- from Holland he had already: to adapt a bit to a new life (.) and in any case the experience being from Ticino is a bit different because even if you stay in your country (.) eh going to the French or the German parts of Switzerland was a cultural change in any case: another language other traditions respectively influenced by France or Germany ehm (.) I don't know I found it in any case almost like going abroad even if you stay in your country (.) stamps are the same your bank is the same but (.) language and cultures are different (.) and (.) it's peculiar

Sara So you felt you had already [made

Linda [like a sort of emigration then and so:

Sara Then the first phase of your experience was helpful to you let's say

In order to analyse argumentation from analogy in example (iv), I will adopt an approach to the analysis of argument schemes known as the Argumentum Model of Topics (henceforth: AMT). First proposed in Rigotti and Greco Morasso (2006), this model has been then developed in a series of publications; Rigotti and Greco Morasso (2010) specifically discuss an example of argumentation from analogy. Notably, the AMT allows analysing the inferential configuration of arguments by distinguishing, on the one hand, premises of a *procedural* (formal) nature, directly depending on the locus, i.e. the relation or principle of support connecting standpoint and argument (see the textboxes on the right in figures 1 and 2). On the other hand, it accounts for *material* premises, connected to the speakers' cultural and personal experience. Endoxa are general statements concerning values and the interpretation of reality (see boxes on the left in figures 1 and 2); while data are pieces of experience.

Figures 1 and 2 show the AMT reconstruction of the inferential configuration of Linda's two arguments from analogy. Figure 1 concerns her analogy with her husband's experience; figure 2 represents the analogy with her own experience in the past.

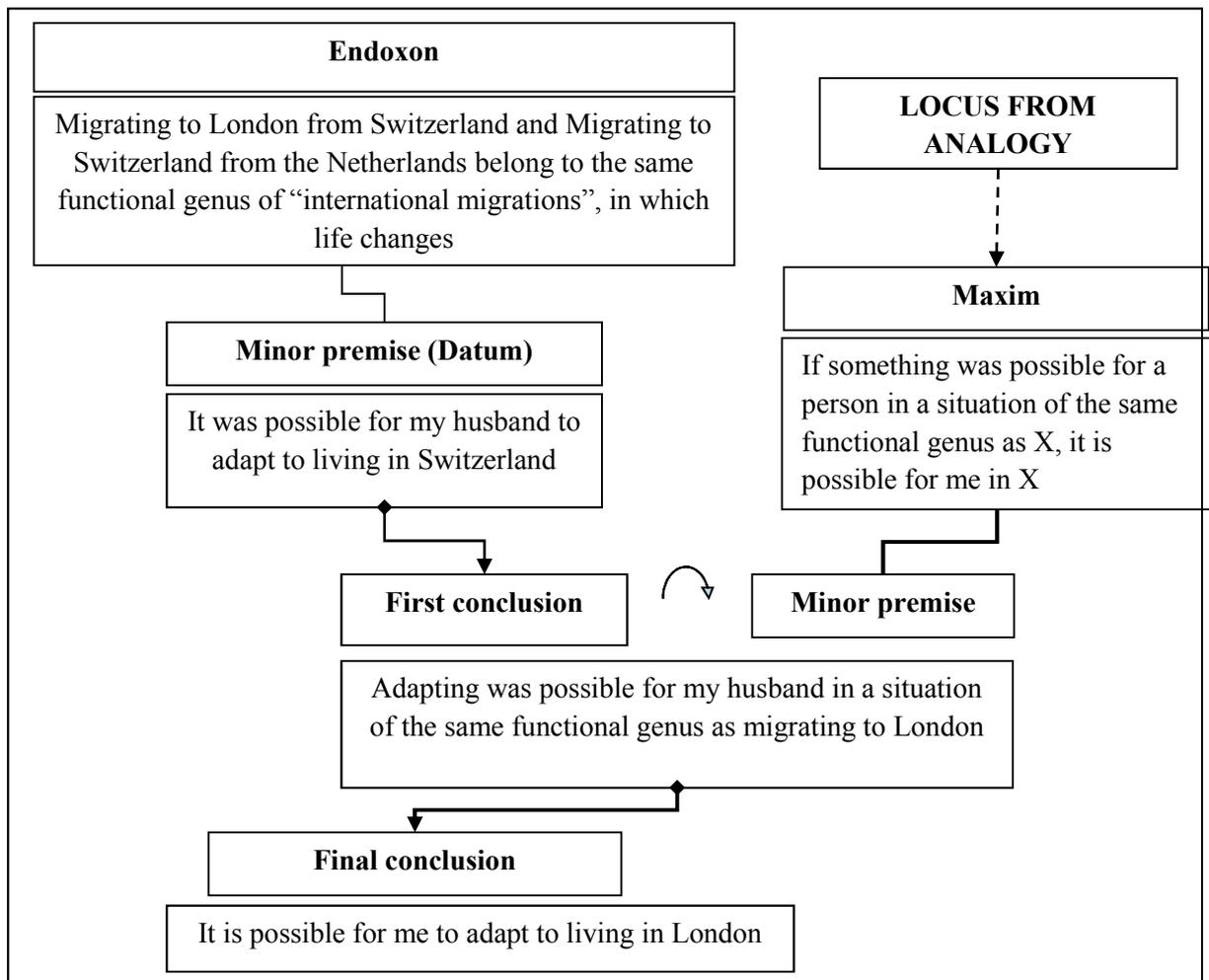


Figure 1: AMT analysis of the first argument based on the locus from analogy (analogy with Linda’s husband)

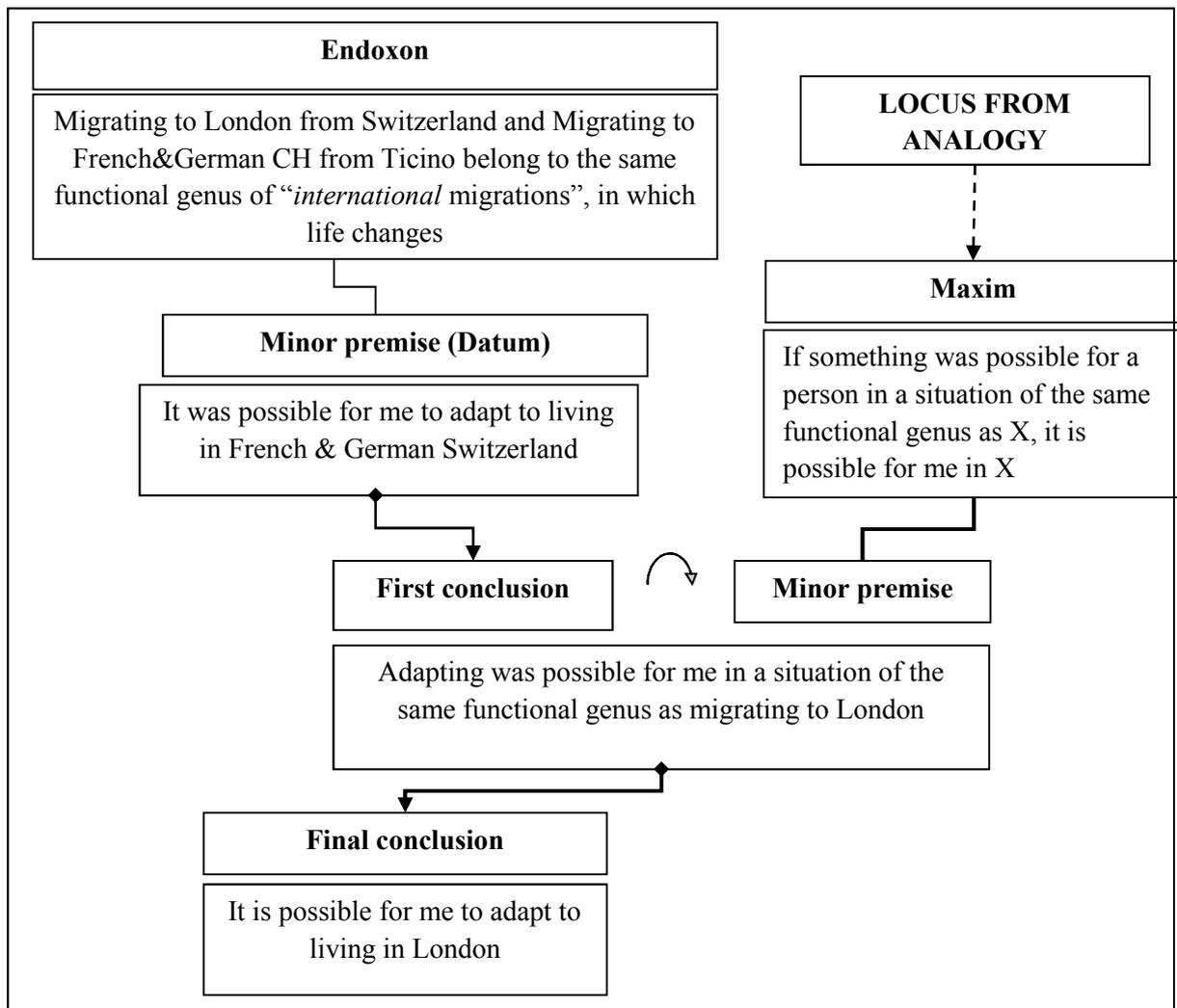


Figure 2: AMT analysis of the second argument based on the locus from analogy (analogy with Linda’s younger self)

In both cases, others are present in Linda’s inner dialogue: her husband and her younger self. The AMT representation allows showing where and how others appear in Linda’s argumentation. Indeed, the very structure of the locus from analogy foresees a possibility for a parallelism with somebody else’s experience. Of course, in this case, the presence of others is dissimilar from the cases seen in the previous section. In fact, others are not present as co-arguers holding a different position but as persons who lived a similar experience. In other words, they do not partake as protagonist in the inner argumentative discussion; but their presence permeates the migrant’s argumentation.

Thus, the analysis of argumentation from analogy contributes to show that the world of inner dialogue is not completely detached from that of public argumentation and, more in general, from social life. Others are there; they ask questions, make criticisms, advance standpoints which may trigger an argumentative discussion in us. Yet sometimes it is their mere presence which questions us; it is their life which fills up the premises of our own pragmatic arguments. In Linda’s case, it is in the “Data”, namely in the concrete evidence she is drawing upon, that the presence of others appears. This certainly reminds us of the

Bakhtinian concept of the *dialogic orientation* of any and every discourse (Bakhtin 1981) and it substantiates it in some way, by showing that even the inferential configuration of an argument may be dialogically oriented.

5 Conclusions

With this paper, I would like to contribute to exploring the hitherto largely unknown path which brings from public debate and argumentation to the mysterious realm of inner dialogue and decision making. Following Dascal (2005), I set out with the hypothesis that these two territories are contiguous and structurally similar; and I argued that the presence of *others* in inner dialogue is a clue suggesting that such contiguity and similarity exists. In my analysis, I substantiated this hypothesis with empirical data coming from inner dialogues of international migrants.

There is certainly still much to do to trace a precise map of the relationship between public debate and inner debate. However, with this contribution, I showed two important ways in which others are present in inner debate, focusing in particular in moments of rupture and transition, in which the interviewed migrants are in front of a difficult decision like, for example, whether to stay or to go back home. These decisions emerge as *multivoiced decisions* in two senses.

First, inner debate is often configured as a reported argumentative discussion. In this case, others may be seen as the protagonist of such a discussion, who support a certain “common-sense” opinion about what the interviewee should do; if she does not agree, she feels the need to present the protagonist’s standpoint and arguments and to contrast it with her standpoint and arguments. What results is a reported argumentative discussion, in which it is the migrant’s own responsibility to be as critical as possible in the evaluation of both sides, as Billig (1996) suggests.

Second, when analysing the structure of single argumentative moves, they appear profoundly dialogic, in a Bakhtinian sense. Others are present even in the implicit premises of the arguer’s monologic argumentation, in different ways. The locus from analogy is of particular significance in my corpus; it allows the possibility of contrasting the state of affairs which the standpoint is referring to with another possible world, virtually including the presence of others. In the analyses I presented, the experience of others was present at the level of contextual (material) premises and, in particular, *data* (in terms of Rigotti and Greco Morasso 2010).

Both these paths have just been opened and certainly are in need for further exploration. In particular, as the locus from analogy has frequently emerged in my data, I have in mind to pursue a more detailed research on the role it may have in migrants’ experience of adjustment. Besides, the context of a reported argumentative discussion of the type emerging from in-depth biographical interviews still needs to be thoroughly described in terms of an activity type, also highlighting its difference from public communication and its relation to inner dialogue.

Finally, one important limitation of this paper and of previous literature on inner debate as a form of argumentative discussion concerns the fact that both theories and examples (including my own) tend to concern cases of *pragmatic* decision-making. Individuals are said to engage in internal argumentation when they have to decide one course of action among other possible ones. Nevertheless, inner dialogue certainly occurs as well in knowledge-oriented practices, such as learning. The relation between pragmatic and knowledge-oriented argumentation in inner dialogue still needs investigation.

ⁱ Calling Bakhtin a *semiotician* is problematic, as he rarely employed the term *sign*. Nevertheless, he may be considered a semiotician in the present widely accepted use of this word, namely as somebody concerned with meaning in communication (cf. Wertsch 1991: 49).

ⁱⁱ For reasons of sample uniformity, all of the interviewees were first generation migrants. Twenty-four of them had been living in London for a time span ranging from 1 to 14 years. Nevertheless, five *extreme cases* (Flyvbjerg 2001) of longer-term migrants (15 to 22 years spent in the UK) have been included in the sample to examine processes of rupture and transition in a longer time perspective.

ⁱⁱⁱ For reasons of privacy, all proper names are pseudonyms.

^{iv} For a discussion about the connection between *argument schemes* and *loci* see Rigotti and Greco Morasso (2010).

^v For the sake of completeness, it is important to say that the locus from analogy is not limited to pragmatic argumentation in decision-making activities. In my corpus, I found instances of argumentation based on analogy in cognitive processes; for example, in the process by which a migrant and a foreigner gets to know about the host country.

^{vi} Linda's husband. This interview has been translated into English from Italian.

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