

WHY AND HOW ROMANIAN PEOPLE EMIGRATE TO SPAIN

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This paper draws on two qualitative researches: The Rural Non-farm Economy and Livelihood Diversification in Georgia, Armenia and Romania lead by The Natural Resources Institute, University of Greenwich, and commissioned by UK Department for International Development (DFID) and World Bank and a fieldwork in Barcelona based on a grant from Soros Foundation for an Open Society and University of Bucharest (in the framework of the program Regional Development) and the most important issues of the presentation are: 1) to determine the characteristics of labor market in rural Romanian areas in order to find the motivation behind migration and what emigration strategies were adopted 2) to study the integration of Romanian emigrants on "official" and "informal" labor markets, the spontaneous strategies adopted by individuals or groups in order to find a job, the condition of work, the ethos of work 3) to study the effects of remittances from workers abroad on local economy development in Romania.

A few words about rural Romanian areas

Romania is a "peasantry country" – more than 47% people live in countryside. The rural Romania is characterized by a high rate of un- and under-employment, survival agriculture, low level of education and health services, informal activities, return migration from urban to rural, less livelihood diversification and poverty.

In official statistics the working population from rural consists of 5.6 millions of people; approximately 4.1 million are people who work in agriculture, 98% from these in private agriculture and just 1% from these are wage earners (80,000 persons). Most of the people in rural Rumania areas are familial unpaid workers. That means that in fact they don't have any kind of financial resources, so they may be considered as belonging to unemployed category.

The lower number of official unemployment, 2.8 % (yearbook, 2002) in official statistics hides a different reality.

"Officially, just 2% are considered unemployed but in fact 90% are unemployed. They don't have jobs but if they have a small piece of land they are considered familial unpaid workers. It's wrong: in fact all they do is to roam the street all day long, there is no work they can take."(Vice-mayor, Tichilesti village, jud. Braila).

On the other hand the rural labor market is unstructured. The State Agency for Labor Force, the private or non-governmental voluntary specialized

institutions are poorly represented at villages level. The local mayoralty or the informal agents try hardly to put face to face the work demands and offers.

The rural labor market has a cert informal character. It developed its own rules, its own channels for transmission of information and its own networks and has a profound oral character.

The causes and motivations for migration

There are different motivations and explanatory factors in the light of major theories of international migration. A lot of studies on migrants stress the importance of economic aspects in building a sustainable motivation for emigration, with assumption that migration occurs from labor abundant to labor scarce countries (as the supply and demand of labor market related to wage differences).

Other theories emphasize the role of relations at international level, such as world system theories advanced by Wallerstein, which explain international migration through the penetration of capitalist economic relation into peripheral non-capitalist societies and its disruptive consequences which create a mobile population prone to migrate.

The newest theories introduce newest elements as prestige and status such as dual market theory and labor market segmentation that explain that international migration is due primarily to pull factors in the receiving country which permit to avoid structural inflation due to the fact that wages correspond to hierarchy of expected prestige and status; the migrants maintain links with the society of origin (from which they derive their status, with stigma and potential prejudice attached to it), the role of household or extended family in the process of initiation and perpetuation of migration which is considered as a source of diversifying income and insurance against a variety of risks (see Massey, 1993), the spatial aspects or the selectivity of migrants – on age, education, occupation, family status, home ownership, race, ethnic origin (see Afoloyan, 2001).

These theories describe the migration phenomena following the logic of push-pull factors in receiving or sending countries.

In this study, in the equation of push-pull and sending – receiving factors, the migrant was inserted as social actor, with his/her own framework of constrains and choices on both scenes: sending countries and receiving countries.

On the other hand the discourse of motivation on migration is different in different moments of migration. The life plan of the migrants is changing all the time. At the beginning of their migratory careers the motivation was clearly definite, during the time the relationship between causes and consequences, between personal explanation for their option on circulatory, definitive migration or for their return in sending countries became more complex and interactive.

"My husband came first, because we couldn't make the ends meet although he worked for an employer in Romania. We didn't want to settle here until 4 months ago. All we thought about was to send money for the children. Now the children are here. We said to ourselves, let's stay a few years and then we will go back. But now I don't think we will ever go back. Maybe only us, not the children. We don't know what the future will be like. (female, age 33)

Most migrants begin as target earners, seeking to earn money for specific goals that will improve their status or well-being at home – building a house, paying for school, buying land, acquiring consumer.

I left [Romania] because it was impossible to have a house of my own there. If I had a place to live there, a point to start, I wouldn't have gone. My wife and me had been working for more than 5 years in the best factories in town. Our situation was way beyond average. But still we had no access to a place of our own. We used to live in a rented room belonging to the factory (male, age 31)

People require resources and connections to engage in international migration.

I sold all I had earned in 5 years to buy a 1500 marks visa and I left. (male, age 35)

There is no direct link between poverty, economic development, population growth, and social and political change on the one hand, and international migration on the other. Poverty reduction is not in itself a migration-reducing strategy. (see Nyberg-Sorensen; Van Hear; Engberg-Pederson, 2002)

The motivations for circulatory migration and definitive migration are very different.

If at the beginning of migration, the actors want to earn money, during the time they penalize the whole improper and unpractical mechanism of labor market from sending country as: the level of income, the unfair distribution of plus value between owner, managers and workers, the right for free days or for holidays, the unprofessional attitude of managers, the corruption at all levels, the bureaucracy, the unreasonable work contracts.

On the other hand they find a lot of irregularities on the labor market on the receiving countries, but these are more acceptable.

The most frequent situations are:

- First, very often they don't have the work permits (*targetas de trabajo*, in Spanish) and they work on the black market, without any official instruments to constrain the employers to respect the work contract, but still they agree to work because they receive a lot of money comparing with the country of origin. ("We work as slaves from dawn to dusk for a few penny, but anyway it's more than we could earn in our native country.")

- In a second phase they have the correct documents, official work contract and they accept to work even they feel they are discriminated (“you can see it in their [Spanish workers’ and employers’] eyes that they don’t consider you an equal”, male, age 35)

But most of the migrants are very satisfied with the conditions of work, with their earning, with their rights.

Other motivations for migration are likely to include:

- laws and policy in both countries

I have chosen Spain because I learned that it was the only country in Europe where in a few months I could get a permit to stay until a court sentence would be issued either to grant me residency or to expel me. The Rroma people I came with declared that they are persecuted in Romania because of their ethnic origin. (male, age 29)

- information and information flows (which may be accurate or not)

They come to Spain because they are not informed. They have received a fake phone number to call when they get here, and so they arrive and sleep in the streets, in the railway stations. The little money they had is spent. 5-10 Romanians come every Sunday to our association with the same story. (Leader of Romanian Migrants Association, Barcelona)

- chain migration effects, at ethnic group, local/village or family level),

In 2000 I came to Spain because in Italy we were alone. My cousins were in Italy, they moved here and we followed them. (male, age 28)

I came because my husband came 4 months earlier. (female, age 28)

I gave up school and I followed my boyfriend. (female, age 25)

- transportation and transaction costs, capital constraints (which may influence potential migrants’ ability to pay transport costs),

My parents sold their cow and gave me the money to pay for the transportation. (male, age 24)

Other factors that amount for the decision to migrate are what Glover & others (See Glovers & others, 2003 p.15) describe as “almost anything else that affects the desirability of living/working in the destination as opposed to source country” - as the educational, health and political system.

With the money from Spain I managed to keep my eldest son in school in Tg. Mures, because the school in our village is very bad. (female, age 38)

The health system is weak, all corrupted. In Romania all is arranged if you have the money, it is corruption everywhere. If you receive a ticket but you know somebody, you will get away with it. (male, age 33)

After the revolution, we waited for 10 year to see something changing. I was 20 back then, now I am 30 and I achieved nothing. I wasn't able even to earn enough for the daily living. In Romania, one can achieve something only if he steals, sells drugs, from prostitution, or if he works for the government – people with nothing sacred. We, who are Christian people, we cannot. (male, age 30)

Among Romanian migrants to Spain there are a lot of persons who were small entrepreneurs in Romania, and they accuse that Romanian business environment is very corrupt, inefficient and restrictive.

I used to have a counter in the market in Romania. I worked there from morning till night and barely earn enough to live, my wife and me. (male, age 34)

I had a firm in Romania, 2 cars and a house. Here I have a 8 hours/day job and a motorcycle, but I wouldn't change my life here with the one I had in Romania. All day long I had to bribe to make things work. I had no time for my family, for the children. Here I have a normal life, I am more relaxed. (male, age 40)

I used to have a shop in Romania, I sold it and I came here with my two children. A person of good faith wasn't allowed to make money back there. Everybody expected a bribe, the police, the mayor, the health department, the tax collectors. (male, age 31)

Migration strategies

It seems that movement of capital, goods, and information, however, has been liberalized to a larger extent than the movement of people, whose mobility continues to be heavily regulated. While national borders are being constantly crises-crossed by processes of communication and exchange, the actual bodily movement of people remains restricted. (Nyberg-Sorensen; Van Hear; Engberg-Pederson, 2002).

During the years the restrictive policies transformed Europe in a real “fortress” (Avci, McDonald, 2000) Conventional wisdom holds that in liberal industrialized countries, times of economic recession and high unemployment create pressures for restrictive immigration legislation, proposals which will be supported by trade unions as a means of safeguarding their interests.

A lot of voices declare that in fact the European Union member states can restrict but cannot control international migration (Geddes, 2001) and that the migration from east to west is a normal and natural way to harmonize the mentality of the people from the larger Europe.

In fact there are two levels of opposite interests of two important actors: the states and the labor market. The state organizations want to keep the control of border while the labor market, which has its free rules and mechanism, push up in order to attract young, qualified and chipper brains or black collar migrants.

On the other hand, in central rural Europe (like Romanian rural areas), there is a relatively low political, social and economic activity among inhabitants, low percentage of people belong to formal organizations. Most rural inhabitants do not trust political, administrative, or economic institutions and feel they have no influence on the course of events in their own country. When the institutions of the state – industrial protections, separate workplaces, regulated markets and a tightly organized agricultural system – collapsed, what was left was this private, domestic, or invisible or hidden world. (see Pine, 2001)

Both this factors (the restrictive legislation and the withdrawal of the state in eastern Europe) create the condition for the emergence of a lot of informal or illegal channels which adapt themselves in a natural way on the new challenge of migration phenomenon. Recent studies on migration emphasize the centrality of family and kin networks in migration decision and behavior (Davis-Root; De Fong, 1991)

Between 1990 and 2002 the Romanian border was closed, the legislation permitted to Romanian citizens to enter in European Union countries only with a visa.

If the official organizations do not respond in a constructive way to the highest demand for migration, the social actors invent alternative and informal institutions in order to follow their interest as follow:

- illegal border crossing

My husband tried it several times. He tried in 1987, he managed to get to the Serbs, but he was sent back (I heard that the Romanian fugitives were sold back to Romanians in exchange for salt)

In 1988 we were caught again and we served our time in prison. In 1989 we made it. We ran separately. He was the first, then me. I ran alone. I crossed the Hungarian border. I slept for a week between the borders. Alone. I had little food. Than I crossed the border at night. I talked with a German driver, me and the wife of an engineer. He agreed to take us across the border and so we arrived in Staumark where Ion was already in a camp. (female, age 40)

- paying for a “calauza”

I found somebody who could cross me the border illegally. The visa was more expensive than this solution. (male, age 33)

- buying a Schengen visa from the “black market” (in Sibiu or Bucharest)

I paid 1500 German marks for the visa. Some people I knew in Bucharest helped me with the visa for Germany. (male, age 30)

- using the friends or kin relations from Germany (especially people from Transylvania)

Some friends in Germany sent an invitation for my husband so he could go (female, age 27)

- using the right for asylum, especially Rroma people

First time I went to Austria. I requested political asylum. (female, age 40)

The Rroma people I came with declared they have been persecuted in Romania because of their ethnic origin. They asked for political asylum but I didn't because I am Romanian and I wasn't persecuted. (male, age 33)

Between 1990 and 2002 a lot of kinship and friendship networks were built in relation with the Romanian migration to Spain. The first role of these networks was to inform people from Romania about the migration strategies. People from Germany and France (especially Romanian but even German people originating from Transylvania) became the first “station” in the way of the Romanian migrants to Spain. The second major role was to support with money and advices the newcomers. The third aspects is that the pioneers of migration – how they call themselves, who already have “targetas por residencia y trabajos” assured the newcomers places for living and introduced them to the black labor market.

After 2002, after the liberalization of the borders, this network became weak and faced helpless huge mass of Romanian migration. The tendency was to become more selective and more impermeable for most of the new migrants. The core of each network is a pioneer, because only he has the legal condition for renting an apartment. So, few months after liberalization, a lot of Romanians leaved in crowded apartments, three or four families, more than 10 persons in two or three rooms.

Therefore the network became saturated and the tendency is to reduce itself, to became more family oriented, to close for the latest migrants. The consequences were that they suspended a part of remittances for Romania and began to decline their open attitude for the sending communities.

Integration of Romanian migrants into “official” and “informal” labor markets

Particularly in the context of the European Union integration policies for immigrants, these persons should live up to the same democratic principles that are invoked for the political integration of the Union. This suggests a European agenda for harmonizing the legal status of third country residents and their access to citizenship.

Integration can be understood in three different ways: as inclusion of outsiders or newcomers into an already established society, but also as cohesion, as the internal integration of that society itself that makes it a stable and bounded social entity. (Bauböck, 2001)

Different terms such as ‘inclusion’, ‘incorporation’, or ‘settlement’ have been suggested to replace the discredited concept of ‘integration’. These may serve to

describe certain aspects of the process through which the migrants become a part of the societies they have entered.

The next paragraph will describe the spontaneous strategies adopted by individuals or groups in order to integrate themselves on a specific part of the social life: on labor market.

It is a well-known fact in migration theory that there is a mismatch between the official labor market policies and realities (see Peixoto, 2001). In Spain, the state policies forbid the economic agents to use illegal migrants.

During the years there were a few regularization which granted the enactment of „Ley de Extranjeria”(Ley Organica 7/85): in 1995 (44000 illegal immigrants were regularized), in 1996 (around 14000 illegal immigrants were regularized), in 2000 (116,000 illegal immigrants were regularized). (see Carella and Pace, 2001)

Anuario Estadístico de Extranjeria, Ministerio del Interior shows that in 2001 there are around 25,000 Romanians with legal status (2,2% from total immigrants from Spain)

Table 1.

year	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Number of Romanian immigrants	1,386	2,385	3,543	5,082	10,983	24,856

Source: Anuario Estadístico de Extranjeria, Ministerio del Interior, 2001

The demand of the economic agents, especially in construction, for qualified and cheaper black collar migrants put a constant pressure on the “comunidades autónomas y las organizaciones sindicales y empresariales” to raise the number of legal migrants.

The employers need work force; there is a battle between the government and the employers. The employers need qualified work force, but the government is against a large number of migrants. (male, age 33)

The employers are very happy with the arrival of the migrants. We are a work force easy to handle and manipulate, because we accept any condition of work, we accept long hours and low wages. The like us. (male, age 34)

The main used strategies for finding a job are:

- the legal Romanian workers recommend their relatives or friends

I found a job thanks to my brother (male, age 33)

A Romanian family that owned the house we lived in helped my husband to find a job (female, age 25)

Now I work as truck driver. I found my job through people I met in Spain and talking with my cousins. (male, age 28)

- using the information from newspapers or Internet

I used to find free brochures with job offers in the shops. I used to call and the first question was: "do you have the papers? When you will have the papers call again". I also tried with the Internet (male, age 28)

- through official agency, or religious groups from Spain

I also tried with an agency. They saw I could speak Spanish a little but they never called me, they never answered. (female, age 35)

- the migrants approach a Spanish person on the street or in shops, start a spontaneous dialog asking for something to work

Returning from shopping I met a person on the street and I asked if he has something for me to work. He invited me to his restaurant and the same day I started working. I worked there for one year. (female, age 40)

My husband would take a day off and we went to the bars asking if they have a job for me. The first woman I worked for as housekeeper I met by asking the shop assistants. I asked her to find me other houses to work in . In one month I began working for her neighbor 2-3 hours per week, for one year. (female, age 33)

- through informal and "Mafia-like" structures. Carella (2000) identified two different model of distribution: the metropolitan model (migrants living in big cities as Madrid) and the „Mediterranean eastern" model identifies immigrants living and working in Catalonia as well as in Comunidad Valenciana and Andalusia. The wide spread model is not as common as in Italy. Foreigners are more highly concentrated in Spain and this allows the shaping of mafia-like structures of authority.

There was a gang of gypsies from Bucharest. They had papers, they came many years before, and they would take advantage of people like me. They would find jobs for us, take us there by car and drive us back at night. We couldn't work on our own. We wouldn't be able to work on our own. All the Romanians there did it. And the police knew. We paid them, not a percentage, we were forced to pay them. About a quarter of one day's earnings would go the gang. (male, age 28)

These young girls or the younger kids going blindly in Spain are usually taken by the gangs from Romania and forced to steal or to prostitute. Some of them begin to sell drugs. One guy from my village sent his brother home because he had begun to sell drugs. From what I heard, he also started to consume. (male, age 33)

Migration, remittances and development

Migration and development are linked in many ways. (see Nyberg-Sorensen; Van Hear; Engberg-Pederson, 2002)

The theories about migration and development range between two positions:

- the *migra-euros* (following the concept of Jorge&others, *Migradollars and Development: A Reconsideration of the Mexican Case*, 1996) the remittances lead to a cycle of economic dependency that discourages autonomous development of sending communities. From this point of view migration is a palliative that improves the material well being of particular families but does not lead to sustained economic growth within sending communities: the earnings are spend on current consumption – family maintenance, health, home construction, remodeling and the purchase of consumer goods.
- and the opposite one that in fact the *migra-euros* serve as an engine of economic growth. Migration must be regarded as one of the most important agents of social change in contemporary development countries and a powerful catalyst of economic development (in fact the consumer spending has strong multiplier effects) (Durand; Parrado; Massey,1996)

The qualitative data revels few characteristics of romanian migrant remittances

- the amount of remittances is not very high
We couldn't send very much because we had to keep a reserve here, in case anything happened. And anyway life here is very expensive. (male, age 33)
- the remittances have a clear destination
We used to send money every month to support the children in school in the city. (female, age 35)
- after the family is united, the remittances for Romania are stopped
I sent money while my wife and kids were there, now I don't, my mother has her pension and all she needs (male, age 50)
- the migrants who become legal begin to think about investing in the new country
Until 4 month ago we didn't want to stay. All we thought about was how to send more money for the children. Now we think how we can build a future for them here. (male, age 37)
- after the liberalization of the borders, the flows of remittances decreased dramatically
After January 2002 my brothers came and I couldn't send anything anymore. They didn't have jobs in the beginning and so I had a lot of expenses (male, age 33)

- foreign labor and hard currency remittances carry considerable honor and prestige in sending communities

They are from a good family. They have somebody in Spain. They grew stronger. (male, age 50)

Conclusions

1. Migration process is in fact a game of work demand and offer, following “natural” laws. The actors have both common and private interests. The permeability of the borders should answer to the needs of the labor market.

In Spain there are “social voices” (like the Association of Romanians from Barcelona and the Association of Employers from Catalonia) that begin to rise asking for the legalization of migration. A policy adapted to the new realities is needed both in the country of origin and the target country.

2. The first wave of Romanian migrants moved to Spain having in mind a period of time in which to make more money than they could earn in their community. Then they begin to use the new society they now live in as a standard, the links with home community weaken and the frustrations of integration begin.

Most of the migrants started as circulatory migrants in search for work. During time they reject the whole mechanism in their sending countries, they choose to settle in the receiving countries and to “to live in the easiest way”.

3. During 1990-2002 the illegal migration of Romanians to Spain was sustained by informal transnational networks of mainly legal migrants. The main connections in the networks, the ones that sustained their functionality, were the legal Romanian migrants from Germany and the legal and illegal migrants from France.

4. A job abroad is not perceived as low status, no matter what kind of job it is, because the migrant does not see himself as being a part of the receiving society. Rather he sees himself as a member of his home community.

At individual level, migration means for most of the people extreme experiences, irreversible decisions, important trauma like departure from the loved ones, unfamiliar culture, climate, and religion, (see Olesen, 2002) combined with the usual conditions for migrant labor, namely racial, ethnic, and other forms of discrimination, and xenophobic attitudes in receiving countries.

5. Free movement of people from 2002 diminished the importance of the informal migration networks. Now they are in the process of self-demising. The massive migration after 2002 altered the relation of the migrants already settled in Spain with their origin communities because the criteria by which newcomers were filtered before receiving help from the network became very severe. Before 2002 there was certain openness towards people belonging to the origin community, after 2002 this relationship started to grow cold and the contacts become less often.

community, after 2002 this relationship started to grow cold and the contacts become less often.

6. The possible winners of the Spanish policy regarding the migrants after 2002 are the circulatory migrants with work permit clearly defining the wage, the working and living conditions. The diminishing of the transnational informal networks leaves room for the formal ones, where the leading actors are economic agents and governments both in the origin country and in the target country. This should orient the elaboration of the migration policies towards the control and coordination of this new actors' activity.

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