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PROFILE OF ROMANIAN RETURNED MIGRANTS

Empirical
study

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Abstract

In the post-communist period, migration of the Romanians became an emergent phenomenon which went through many structural transformations. Within the context of the recent economic crisis and of some unfavourable collective attitudes regarding the immigration in some countries of destination, evidences of the reverse movement, of return of some migrants in Romania have appeared. This paper aims to examine the profile of Romanian returned migrants, with a special view on the returning motivations. Results show that the family related factors have the highest influence in the returning decision among Romanian migrants. Finally, future intentions of the returned migrants confirm the model of the circulatory migration as a strategy of life of the Romanians.

1. Introduction

In the post-communist period, migration of the Romanians became an emergent phenomenon which went through many structural transformations. Within the context of the recent economic crisis and of some unfavourable collective attitudes regarding the immigration in some countries of destination, evidences of the reverse movement, of return of some migrants in Romania have appeared. At the present, the signs of this process are present in many Romanian communities.

The interdisciplinary character and the novelty of the theme of this article shall contribute to a better understanding of the factors which are modelling the decisions of the Romanian migrants to return to their country of origin, in the community they left or to another one. Moreover, the theoretical paradigm that is the basis of this study is the *life-course perspective*, which refers to the study of the chaining of the experiences of individuals during their life and the influence of the institutional, social and economic context on these experiences. This theoretical perspective enriches the study of migration by contextualizing the persons' experiences and by connecting them to past experiences or to other events / transitions from the life of these individuals (growing a family, care of dependent persons – children, grandchildren, parents, the retirement from the active life, etc.).

The theme of research of the returning migration has to be subject to a multidisciplinary study which combines the following scientific approaches:

- the sociological approach – study of the influence of the social climate and of the social relations with the community of origin and with that of destination as regards the returning decision, as well as the social reintegration at the return in country;
- the economical approach – study of the influence of the economic crisis and of other changes appeared at the level of the economic environment in the countries of destination and origin on the returning decision, the destination of the remittances and of the accumulated capital during the migration period, as well as the participation to the economic life and to the labour market after the return in the country;
- the political sciences approach –study of the institutional framework: the integration policies of the immigrants in the countries of destination, the influence on the returning decision, the study of the relations with the institutions at the return in the country;

- the marketing approach –segmentation study for identifying homogeneous categories of returned migrants, relevant for building public policies;
- the anthropological approach –study of the migration experiences, the relation between the economic and social structures, the life phases and the returning behaviour.

2. Theoretical framework

Over time, a variety of theories and explicative models for the international migration were developed. From macroeconomic perspective, the neoclassical theories consider that the gaps of revenues and the differences regarding the employment opportunities between the countries represent the main reason of the migration. The poor match between the demand and the supply of the workforce at national level and the development gaps lead to migration flows. Theories which are based on the micro perspective consider that individuals act as rational actors and decide to emigrate based on a cost-benefit analysis by which they are anticipating the net positive benefits. From this perspective, the returning migration appears as a failure of the migrants that estimated wrongly the migration costs or which have not obtained the anticipated benefits. More recent theories moved the accent from the individual to the household. By sending one or more members abroad, the households can maximize their returns, while minimizing the risks and constraints from local level. From this perspective, the returning migration is part of the strategy of the migrants and their families, which fulfil their objectives. This study uses a similar theoretical perspective for the study of the returning migration, given that the returning decision is taken together with the other members of the household and has as objective the negotiation of the opportunities and constraints experienced by the individuals and their families, either from economic or social point of view or related to various stages of their life (Constant and Massey, 2002).

The social networks increase the access of the individuals to information and opportunities. According to the theories that aim to integrate the macro and micro perspectives, the decisions of the individuals take into account the socio-economic conditions, which are influenced by the national and international policies that must be understood from a historical perspective.

Many studies have shown that the migration tends to be rather temporary than permanent and Mayer and Peri (2009), Dustmann and Glitz (2011) have highlighted the positive impact of the returning migration on the societies of origin. The results obtained so far indicate a

surplus of competencies for the returned migrants. The returned migrants from the Central and Eastern Europe present a higher likelihood to become entrepreneurs than the non-migrants, but also they can remain outside the labour market (Piracha and Vadean, 2010). Cerase (1967) identified four categories of migrants returned in Italy: the migrants who failed; the conservative migrants (they have returned after fulfilling their objective); the migrants who retire from the active life and the innovative migrants (those who aim at investing the capital and knowledge accumulated abroad in their country of origin). Dustmann, Fadlon and Weiss (2011) showed that there is an optimal duration of migration, so as the individuals accumulate sufficient competencies that prove to be profitable at their return into the country. The returned migrants are carriers of tangible and intangible resources.

One of the most significant scientific contributions in the field of the Romanians migration is represented by the studies coordinated by Sandu (2010). The sociologist theorized migration as being a behaviour of social choice and a strategy of life. His studies showed that the circulatory migration of the Romanians cannot be explained otherwise than "*specified*" and "*in the system*", which is contrary to a "*global*" and "*atomic*" approach. This study starts from these conclusions, aiming at analysing the characteristics of the returning migration of the Romanians, related to perceptions of the socio-economic conditions specific to the communities of destination and of origin, as well as family factors related to individuals' life. Another scientific reference relevant in this field of research is represented by the contributions of Rostas and Stoica (2006). The two authors have elaborated a valuable collection of oral histories of male and female migrants of various ages, which present a variety of migration experiences (working in the IT, agricultural, homecare sectors, etc.). Anghel and Istvan (2009) combine the theoretical approach and the study cases in order to analyse the migration culture in Romania and the sociological and political significance of this phenomenon. Authors are preoccupied by the link between migration and social change, exploring multiple aspects and manifestation of this relationship. Recently, Vlase (2013) carried out a complex ethnographic research both in Romania, as well as in Italy. The author followed the path of the migrants from Vulturu village, in order to explore the gender dimension of the returning patterns. The study results highlight the different strategies of the men and women to manage the imperfect economic reintegration in the communities of origin.

This study starts from the theoretical aspects and the above mentioned scientific contributions, in order to contribute to a better

understanding of the returning migration that takes place at the crossroad of the economic and social factors with the personal aspirations and which has important effects on the individuals and on the communities.

3. Research methodology

The international migration represents an emerging phenomenon, which is on the public and political agenda of the developed and developing countries. This phenomenon presents various forms and characteristics which vary in time and space. After the emergence and installation of the economic and financial crises, more and more evidences of the returning Romanian migrants appeared. Unfortunately, evaluations regarding the number of the Romanian migrants are not very precise. In these circumstances, the estimations regarding the rates of returning of the Romanian migrants are very difficult to be made.

This study regarding the returning migration of the Romanians is based on the analysis of 2 sources of data:

[1] The INCSMPS study (2014) regarding the impact of the remittances on the education of the children with parents abroad – the survey was carried out among 300 households, out of which 124 respondents declared that they lived abroad in the last 10 years. Data were collected in August 2014.

[2] The INCSMPS survey among 205 migrants returned in Romania (individuals that lived for a time abroad, but which came back from various reasons). The interviews had in view to collect information related to the migrants' experiences and motivations, aiming at highlighting the way in which the economic, social, institutional and cultural framework has influenced the returning decision. The interviews were carried out face-to-face, at the home of the respondents in December 2014.

4. Results

Distribution of the Romanian migrants who returned to the country of origin by reasons of return indicates the existence of a typology of migrants. Thus, 11.3% of the surveyed returned migrants have come back due to the fact that it was impossible for them to find a job abroad. Together with the migrants that could not manage with the money gained abroad, those that have not found a job, form the category of the migrants that failed from economic reasons. Another group of migrants (21.8%) have returned to Romania because they fulfilled what they have proposed when they left abroad. These migrants, after they have reached the objectives set at the moment of their migration abroad (for example, savings for certain purposes), come back to the country of origin to the previously held statute in the community of origin

or have access to a higher position, facilitated by the human or economic capital obtained abroad. Also, more than half (58.1%) of the returned migrants to Romania declare that they came back to be with their family. In this case, the factors that influence returning decision are related by events occurring in the family (for example, the birth of a child, of grandchildren, etc.) or certain needs that are specific to the phases of the migrants' lives. Finally, 28.2% of the migrants returned in Romania to live among their peers. These results outline the main factors that influence the decision of the Romanian migrants to return to the country: economic factors, which are related to the access to jobs abroad, social factors which refer to the ascendant social mobility expected following the migration, family and cultural factors (Table 1).

The analysis of the factors that influence the returning decision to the country shows that the family factors are the most important. Thus, the return to the family remained in Romania and elements linked to the children or grandchildren education have the highest average scores of importance. Health status has medium high influence on the returning decision, especially for those close to the retirement age. Afterwards, the economic factors are mentioned, especially the characteristics of the economic situation in the destination country and, to a smallest extent, the economic situation from Romania. Other factors of average importance include the housing situation in the country where the migration took place and the immigrant status. Ranked on the last place are the cultural factors, as the influence on the returning decision (Figure 1).

When leaving abroad, about 88% of the migrants intended to return to Romania. So, even if this information is retrospectively collected and it is affected by certain limits (the bias generated by the respondent need to reduce the cognitive dissonance), the high share of those that left with the intention to come back, shows that the returning migration is part, to a great extent, of a strategy of life that aims at minimizing the risks, at the same time with maximizing the benefits, taking into account the factors of the economic, institutional, cultural context and the individual, family factors.

On the other hand, 66% of the returned migrants declare that they intend to leave abroad for work or for studies. This fact supports the migration theory as strategy of life, respectively the model of the circulatory migration.

Unfortunately, even if the great majority of the Romanian migrants have worked or studied abroad, only 15% declare that they have used to a great and to a very large extent the knowledge and competencies acquired abroad. From this perspective, the category of the innovative migrant that returns to the country of origin in order to capitalize the capital accumulated through

migration doesn't seem to be very wide spread among the migrants returned to Romania.

In order to characterize the migrants' profile, their attitude towards the various elements that indicated the openness / appetite to migration was analysed. The beliefs of the interviewed migrants strengthen the major role of the family factors in the returning behaviour. Also, the feeling of affiliation to the community of origin plays an important role in the modelling of the returning decision. Compared to the other elements towards which the migrants attitudes are more crystalized, the belief in the beneficial effects of migration for job and studies abroad and the belief related to the possibilities of adaptation to the foreign societies are less homogeneous at the migrants sample level.

5. Conclusions

The returning migration is a less known and understood phenomenon in Romania. The way of action and the interconnection of the various modelling factors regarding the returning decision represent an area of interest that is included in the research topic regarding the relation between migration and social development. The analysis made in this article shows that the family related factors have the highest influence in the returning decision among Romanian migrants. Secondly, the feeling of affiliation to the community of origin and the belief that the greatest achievements can be obtained in Romania are important factors of the returning decision. On the other hand, although the migration of Romanians is eminently economic, the economic factors (the effects of the economic crisis in some of the countries of destination) present a moderate influence in the returning process of the Romanian migrants. Finally, the obtained results confirm the model of the circulatory migration as a strategy of life of the Romanians.

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Appendices

Table No. 1

“Which were the main reasons for which you decided to return to Romania?” (non-cumulative %)

I haven't found a job abroad	11.30%
The money I gained abroad were not enough for daily survival	0.80%
The money I gained abroad were not enough for a decent life	2.40%
The working conditions were too difficult	9.70%
I have reached what I have proposed when I left abroad	21.80%
I couldn't adapt to the living conditions abroad	8.10%
I returned to be together with my children / family / spouse	58.10%
I have returned to be among my locals	28.20%
Another reason	16.10%

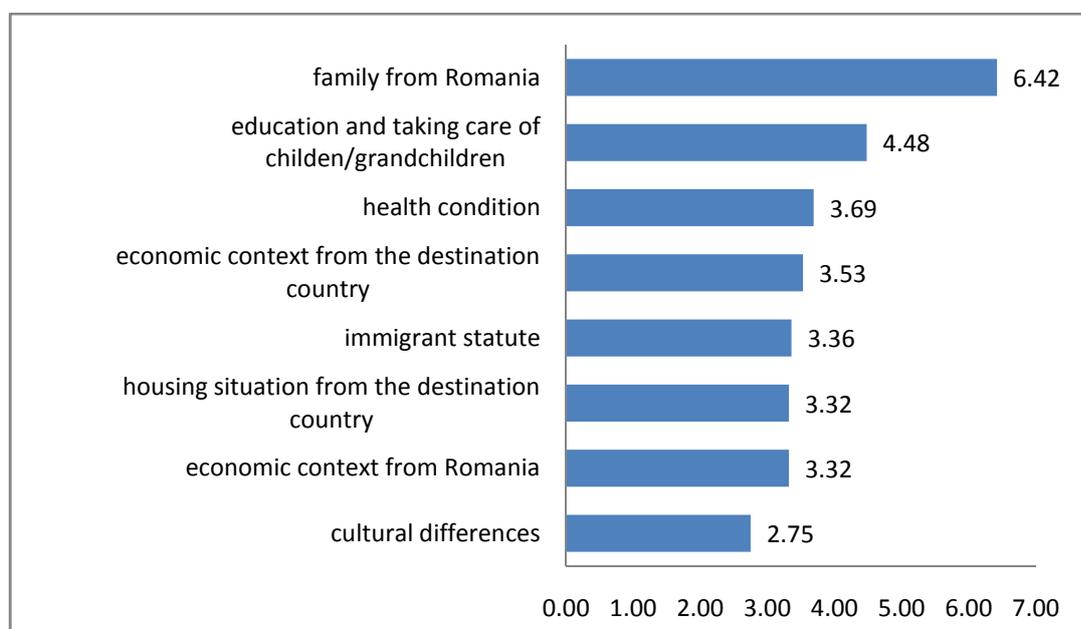


Figure No.1 “On a scale from 1 to 7 (1=not at all; 7=very much), how much have weighted the following factors when you have decided to come back to the country?” (average values)

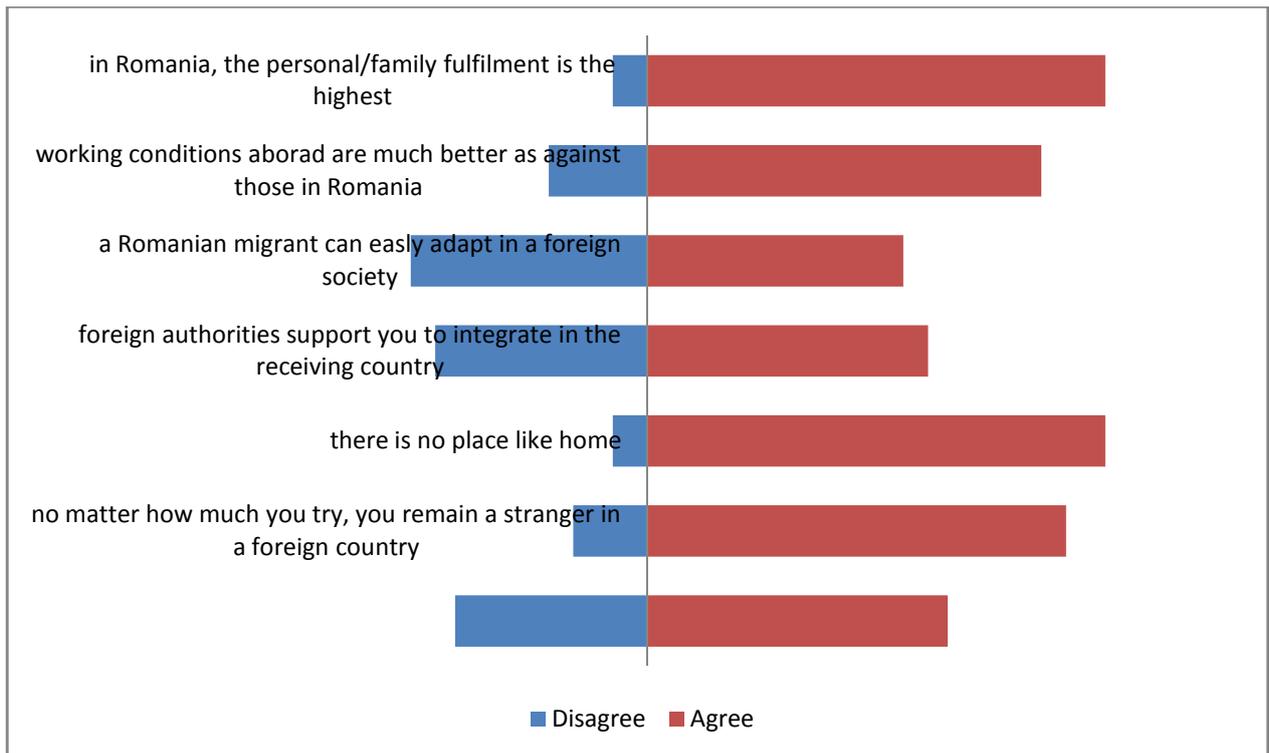


Figure No.2 Attitudes towards migration (%)