

BOOK REVIEWS

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The Temporary Settlement Abroad: Economic Migration of the Romanians: 1990-2006 [Locuirea temporara in strainatate. Migratia economica a romanilor:1990-2006],

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The book coordinated by professor Dumitru Sandu, *The Temporary Settlement Abroad: Economic Migration of the Romanians: 1990-2006* approaches the issue of the *migration of Romanians abroad particularly after 1989*, not that of "any times". The present volume, recently published in our country in November 2006 represents a valuable research report published in Romania with the support of the Open Society Foundation Bucharest, a study made by a team coordinated by dr. Dumitru Sandu, professor at the University of Bucharest, Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance. The team of researchers, teaching assistants and sociologists have gathered, analysed and interpreted data by national polls (1400 persons investigated) and at a micro-regional level (800 households of migrants) within the month of August 2006-Gallup Organisation. The study is based on a research, the current approach of which focuses on six main aspects, i.e. the *number* of people leaving and returning home; the *social profile* of these people (who they are), *the procedure* as such (referring to leaving, employment procedure abroad and the foreign environment), the *space of circulation* (wherfrom and whereto); *motivation and follow-up*, i.e. why do these people leave and what the consequences are for themselves, for the communities, regions or country and to the destination and finally the *time*, namely the variations on stages of migration for all above-mentioned aspects.

The topic of the present book, in short, is about the **causes** and **consequences** of the **labor migration abroad, after 1989**. It is a well-known fact that after 1989, finding a workplace beyond the country's borders has meant for the Romanians, a main concern, an exploration both in the geographic sense and also in the social sense of the word. This implied strategies, risks, a resource waste in order to enter a different world, remote and unknown. It implied, as well, a process of searching for national spaces, different from one period of time to another; by oneself or with the family, through legal, illegal or semi-legal ways, with interruptions and recurrings – all these covered by successes and failures – having various meanings and implications from migrant to migrant, according to one's own scale of the person assuming this challenge.

At the heart of the migration issue lies a strong motivation, the strong wish of reaching a world the person has had no access to and for which the information around the respective person is scarce. The authors identify two extremes related to this: on the one hand, there is the situation in which there is only the wish of reaching the respective country, whilst on the other hand, besides this, there are also material and social resources, as well as knowledge for reaching this aim. Shortly stated, this refers to the situation in which one earns much better and in a much shorter period of time than at home. The opposition identified by prof. D. Sandu is not that between *poverty* and *richness*, but rather between what I *do have* here and what I *might have* if for a while I could earn more. Thus the motivation and follow-up of the action, for what it has been and what there would be, are the main concerns, and also perspectives at the level of the current Romanian public space as well as of the present book.

Next the approach attempts at correctly identifying the consequences and estimating the future characteristics of the phenomenon, which supposes a detailed examination of the tendencies already registered, analysing the temporary settlement abroad in stages.

From the perspective of the temporary settlement abroad, the economic aspect of migration is viewed at, as well as the social one, by the causes and its consequences. Issues such as living abroad, finding a place to live, social interactions, cultural frameworks in different localities – are all aspects that contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon.

Two micro-regions have been taken into study at the level of the country, i.e. two counties in the south of Romania, in order to make a thorough study of the

social situation at the origin, for two of the major destinations of the Romanian emigration – *Italy* and *Spain*. The present research is a complex one, in which the data about the international migration have been collected both in the country and abroad, by micro-regional research (3 regions in Romania); by qualitative research at the level of six communities in the country and four communities abroad, interviewed persons and persons intending to leave abroad – potential migrants. The opinion polls on micro-region and the in-depth interviews were performed in the month of August, the time of the migrants' return in the country of origin for the holidays. The cross-border small traffic was also studied, taking into study in this respect a third micro-region.

Carrying out the research on multiple levels and fields is a consequence of the way in which the temporary migration field is structured from Romania abroad. The authors have concluded that although after 2001 the destinations of labor migration are mainly Italy and Spain, the fluxes are still unstable. There are multiple actors involved: individuals, families, communities, regional networks, NGOs, etc. The percentage of illegal migration is probably significant and to a great extent the employment in the countries of destination are still clandestine.

An interesting aspect revealed by the researchers is that in the view of one and the same person, one's own experience of migration appears as being different. Upon destination, with relation to the foreigners and with other migrants, the discourse is one, focussing on problems incurred and on the tension of the interaction with the new way of life, whereas upon returning in the country, it is another one, focussing on the success obtained, self-fulfillment through migration, particularly on consolidation of status by discourse. The information obtained is very different and the facets of the phenomenon very mobile, being difficult to be perceived fully unless one travels to all places, both in the country of origin and that of destination. The authors conclude that it is a "still a mosaic-type migration, a magma-type migration that cannot be comprehended unless *read* on multiple levels, both at the origin and destination countries and with the help of data from opinion polls and interview data, with community histories and individual ones".

Generally speaking, studying the phenomenon of the Romanian emigration abroad is at present in an exploratory phase, inevitably. Investigating the phenomenon in the country of destination, aiming at establishing a link between the situation *here* with the situation *there*, the migrants with non-migrants, the

ones having left the country yesterday with the ones leaving today is a novel project, implying both risks and advantages. Referring to consequences of the temporary living abroad, there appears to be a dominant opinion according to which the phenomenon is "good", beneficial, since it reduces poverty, leading to a migrant's possibility of buying a house, a new car, a better school for the children and even to a business. Last but not least important, *a change in mentality* occurs, with an increased focusing on work, risk taking and new professional skills acquired, to mention but the most relevant ones.

The shortcomings of this wide-scale phenomenon in Romania lie in more and more obvious disfunctionalities, both at the level of the family and at the level of the community: more frequent divorces, children left alone without parents, with all risks associated to this loneliness, increased criminal offences, human trafficking, drugs, old age population in villages/the rural area, enterprises and regions lacking skilled personnel and many more.

All in all, the present research aims at undertaking a minute and detailed social, sociological and anthropological observation of the world of migration, good or bad for some or others, perhaps good for the moment and bad later or viceversa, as the author very well points out, from a multiple perspective and to study the same petty fact of life many-sidedly.

In terms of structure, the volume comprises *four sections*. **Part one:** "*Exploring Europe through the migrations for work*" aims at being a global descriptive approach, a perspective in space, at the origin and destination countries, having as a length of time the 1990s until the present. The **second part:** "*Consequences and projects*" refers to both consequences and perspectives associated to migration, it does not have a comprehensive span, but has a wide area: incomes and investments from migration, entrepreneurship, mentalities, family relationships, communities and life plans. The **third part:** "*Regional-community dimensions*", comprises research focussing on community-regional areas: Vrancea (Romania)- Rome (Italy), Teleorman (Romania)-Spain, Eselnita-Orsova-Negotin-Dusanovac (Serbia). This part comprises case studies which are detailed and comprehensive. The final **appendix** presents essential sections from a questionnaire filled in with data and the response occurrences. The role of the experience of living abroad is emphasized in the tables, in differentiating the behaviours and opinions.

Conclusively, Romania has obviously evolved after the 1990s from an economic and political point of view differently from Serbia and Croatia and other states in ex-Yugoslavia, where many Romanians have earned their living. Although compared to these countries, Romania has become a member of the European Union with full rights, the Romanians still leave abroad in order to find – according to the author – the illusion of the “European” work places, actually a “bleak or black economy which makes more happy or unhappy, accordingly, the families and the communities of origin”. Introducing the visa requirements for some countries and abolishing them for others and the recent adopting of the new Customs Code of Romania have triggered important changes in the transnational mobility of various kinds particularly of the Romanians in Serbia [the authors point out]. Not only were there registered changes in the transnational fluxes of goods and persons, but also there is structurally modified the socio-economic landscape of the communities of destination and origin. Securing the external border of the European Union remains, in the author’s view, a controversial process and negotiable among various categories of actors involved, which could unexpectedly lead to the development of informal structures organized based on the resources of the state.

The present volume is invaluable for understanding the phenomenon of migration in Romania after 1990, based on important and rich data collected and motivated by the challenge of the issue and the interest of the research team that has contributed to this work. The thorough method of investigation is a multi-faceted one, compelled to observe the same minute fact of life from a multiple perspective, extremely useful, novel and precious for nowadays Romania.