

The Changing Patterns of Romanian Immigration to Canada

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Abstract. This article examines the largely neglected post-1990 Romanian immigration to Canada. During the 1990s, most Romanians selected by Canadian immigration offices were highly skilled, university-educated professionals. As they ignored important details of the Canadian labor market, about three quarters of them became kind of *lumpen-intellectuals*. In recent years, however, Internet-based networks have improved the quality of information available to potential migrants. This and structural changes in the home country are preparing a major shift of Romanians' migratory flow to Canada. In the years to come, it will progressively take the form of circulatory migration currently characterizing Romanian immigration to Western Europe.

Keywords: Romanian migrants, Canada, skilled migration, immigration patterns.

1. Introducing an ignored phenomenon

The Romanian immigration to Canada is an almost unstudied subject. Both academic and general public literatures are quite rich with regard to the overall Romanian migratory phenomenon. Still, with minor exceptions, they elude its Canadian component. It should be added that we are currently witnessing a fundamental change of Romanian-Canadian migration patterns. In my opinion, stable, nineteenth century-type immigration will be replaced in the years to come by some kind of post-modern, circulatory migration, characterized by important flows of return and secondary immigration.

The main goal of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of post-1990 migratory flows linking Romania to Canada. Detailed information concerning little known characteristics of Romanian immigrant communities in this country is provided. As the analysis would be incomplete without paying attention to the above-mentioned change, the final section tries to extrapolate recent trends in order to picture future, fundamentally different, immigration patterns.

The next section describes the Romanian migratory flow to Canada; section 3 depicts widely ignored details of Romanian immigrants' social status. Finally,

section 4 analyses the consequences of this situation and of important structural changes in the country of origin for the future of the migration patterns.

From a methodological point of view, research for this article was rather difficult. Statistics are often incomplete, and secondary sources are extremely poor. Therefore, my work is mainly based on interviews conducted between 2002 and 2005. Out of the 52 respondents, 30 are male and 22 female. Forty-nine earned university degrees before leaving Romania; 42 of those were in engineering. Forty-seven respondents immigrated as skilled workers, two as family. The others entered Canada as foreign workers (2) or illegally (1) before being accepted as immigrants. Most of the interviews (48) were conducted in Montreal. The respondents were chosen in order to be as representative as possible for the post-1990 Romanian migrants to Canada; all left Romania after the fall of Communism. While interviews were informal, they included the same set of questions. In most cases their duration was longer than one hour.

2. The Canadian connection. Romanian immigrants to Canada

Every year, no less than 220,000-230,000 immigrants enter Canada (see Table 1). Their admission is the result of a careful selection process. For English speaking provinces, the selection is conducted by the federal "Citizenship and Immigration Canada". The French-speaking province of Quebec has its own immigration policy. In both cases, immigration procedures are similar. Selection is based on a points system. Each applicant is awarded points on a range of characteristics including education, professional experience, proficiency in English and French, age, and adaptability. Selection criteria and procedure are detailed in guides posted on Internet (see *Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 2005d*; *Publications Quebec 2005*). Most Romanian immigrants selected in the 1990s belong to the category of "skilled workers". This is illustrated by 1996 statistics (in fact, documents published by *Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada* ceased to provide this kind of information after 1996). Skilled workers – who represent most of the "other immigrants" class – make more than two thirds of the total number of migrants. The "family" class represents about 18 per cent, refugees and assisted relatives about 12 per cent, while entrepreneurs, self-employed and investors numbers are insignificant (*Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 1996*).

A useful insight is given by immigrants' intended occupation. Out of 2,386 persons "destined to the labor force", 1,044 (44%) have qualifications in "natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics" (*ibid.*). Interviews suggest that most of them are in fact engineers. As, until 2000, only 3,000-4,000 Romanian immigrants were admitted each year out of a huge number of candidates, selection was very strict. One respondent remembers that he and his wife were one of the only two married couples selected during an entire day of interviews in 1996. There were no unmarried successful candidates that day. This led to a very high quality of selected immigrants. Almost all were university educated (this concerns both members of married couples). Many had distinguished professional careers. One should not forget that Romania used to have a very developed industrial sector, producing everything from cars to ships to airplanes, both civilian and military. In the 1980s, Bucharest alone had nine faculties of chemistry and one of the only four aircraft engineering faculties in all Europe. But in the 1990s, most of the industry went bankrupt. That explains why many of the successful candidates to immigration were highly skilled engineers.

Romania was the country of origin of the most important number of immigrant engineers to Canada in 1992 and 1993 and the third most important in 1994 and 1995 (Slade 2004: 109). This is despite the fact that total number of Romanian immigrants was maybe ten times smaller in comparison to other countries of origin. It was logical for all these university-educated persons to expect finding decent work in Canada. After all, an important reason of their applications' positive assessment was Canada's need of people with their specific professional skills. The only question was raised right before receiving the immigration visa in the Canadian consulate in Bucharest. Immigrants with certain professions were asked to sign a declaration acknowledging the possibility they will not find a job according to their qualifications. However, this did not concern engineers. Furthermore, the formulation of the statement seemed to take into consideration just a remote and unlikely probability. This subject will be developed in section 3.

As Table 1 shows, Romanian annual immigration to Canada is not impressive. It represents only about 2 per cent of the total. Still, between 1995 and 2004 Romanians were the first or the second most important group of immigrants from Europe.

Table 1. Permanent Residents of Canada with Romania as country of origin

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
Permanent Residents-Total	212,869	226,073	216,038	174,200	189,966	227,465	250,638	229,040	221,355	235,824
Romanian Permanent Residents-Number	3,851	3,670	3,916	2,976	3,467	4,431	5,588	5,688	5,465	5,655
Romanian Permanent Residents-Percentage	1.8	1.6	1.8	1.7	1.8	2.0	2.2	2.5	2.5	2.4
Romanian Permanent Residents-Rank	14	12	12	15	14	11	8	7	8	8
Rank Among European Countries of Origin	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	2	2	1

Source: Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 2004a; 2004b.

The 2001 Canada census reports about 60,000 Romanian immigrants in Canada (see Table 2), out of whom more than half had come after 1990. More than half were located in Ontario and a quarter in Quebec.

Table 2. Immigrants and non-permanent residents of Canada born in Romania and period of immigration (2001 Census)

	Total	Immigrants	Before 1961	1961-1970	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-2001	1991-1995	1996-2001	Non-permanent residents
Canada	61,330	60,165	7,155	2,305	3,645	11,890	35,170	15,135	20,040	1,160
Ontario	34,360	33,725	3,450	1,335	2,145	6,715	20,075	8,140	11,935	635
Quebec	14,805	14,505	1,270	675	950	2,770	8,840	4,195	4,645	300



B.Columbia	6,215	6,135	1,005	150	315	1,250	3,410	1,565	1,850	80
Toronto	21,140	20,805	1,225	810	1,550	3,900	13,315	5,050	8,265	340
Montreal	13,310	13,100	1,225	670	840	2,365	7,995	3,760	4,235	215
Vancouver	4,850	4,795	390	95	235	1,035	3,035	1,340	1,695	50

Source: Statistique Canada 2005.

Asked about their choice between, mainly, Ontario/Toronto and Quebec/Montreal, many respondents identified the language they speak better (English or French) as an important factor. Besides that, some had believed Toronto offers better employment opportunities while others wanted to take advantage of the faster procedures of Quebec's immigration services (less than two years in comparison to three years or even more for the federal immigration office). In general, respondents consider Quebec's immigration policy more permissive than that of the federal authorities. This is presumably a consequence of the fact that Romania is one of the few countries of emigration where French language is widely, if not very well, taught at school and French culture is traditionally very influential. During interviews, a certain pattern of immigration related to regions of origin could be identified. It seems the bulk of Romanians in Montreal come, in relatively equal proportions, from Bucharest and from Transylvania. Ontario, on another hand, seems to attract immigrants from all over Romania.

It is interesting to compare the perceived image of Romanian immigration to Montreal and Toronto. In the French-speaking city, Romanians represented the fifth to eighth immigrant flow for most of the 1997-2002 period. In 2002, they provided almost 8 per cent of the total number of newcomers (Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 1999; 2002a). In Toronto, the usually more numerous Romanian immigrants were submerged by other groups. 2001 is the only year when they got the tenth rank. Each year, Romania was the origin of less than 2 per cent of the total number of Toronto immigrants (Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 2002b). The obvious consequence of this distribution is the uneven visibility of Romanian communities in the two cities. The smaller group of *montréalais* Romanians already represents an important and well-known component of their city's *mosaïque ethnique*. In Toronto, the more numerous Romanians tend to play a marginal role in comparison to other massive minority groups.

Speaking about visibility, the spectacular but secondary aspect of Romanian illegal immigration to Canada has to be addressed. Geographical conditions protect the country against undesired visitors. Except illegal border crossing from the US (which few migrants choose), the other only way into Canada is through the risky crossing of the Atlantic in a container shipped to a Canadian port. Each year, 25 to 30 such clandestine passengers (some of them Romanians) are identified in Halifax (*Métro* 2001). It seems most Romanians desperate enough to take this chance use the Livorno-Montreal route (Cristea 2002). But there is a real danger of death, mainly by suffocation and starvation. The only respondent who lived through this experience had friends who died during the voyage. This is discouraging enough to keep the flow at an extremely low level.

The other end of the visibility spectrum is represented by Romanians coming to Canada with a work permit. There are very few of them, as Canadian law gives priority to hiring of Canadian citizens and residents. However, they do exist. One of the respondents earned a Ph.D. (in engineering) in the Netherlands and obtained a work permit allowing him to become a professor in a Canadian university. A small number of IT experts were recruited by companies in Ontario (see Nedelcu 2003). Another category is represented by female "exotic dancers" working in the Toronto area. If the total number of Romanian foreign workers in Canada is not available, on December 1, 2004 there were 367 female foreign workers of Romanian origin (Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 2004d: 71). However, such temporary residents usually apply for permanent residence and join the legal status of regular immigrants.

As a general conclusion, Romanian migration to Canada is the opposite of that directed to Western Europe. The overall flow is much smaller. Today, there are about 80,000 Romanians in Canada, in comparison to a million in Italy and half a million in Spain. There is a very strict selection. In Canada, most Romanian migrants are university educated, which is by no mean the case in Western Europe. The legal status is completely different. On one hand, specific conditions make illegal immigration insignificant. On another, immigrants become permanent residents from the very moment they land. Three years later, they can apply for citizenship. Combined with geographical isolation, this favors the settlement of migrants and their integration in the Canadian labor market and society. There is no circulatory phenomenon similar to that dominating Romanian immigration to Western Europe.

Nevertheless, this general picture neglects some major aspects of the day-to-day life of Canadian Romanians. They are analyzed in the next section.

3. Promised land's dark side. Canada's Romanian *lumpen-intellectuals*

The absence of scientific work related to the Romanian-Canadian migratory phenomenon is surprising. On the contrary, there is a good reason for lack of more general texts. Such narratives (travel books, *mémoires*) can only be produced by immigrants. Or, as this section will show, most of them are not at all proud of their new transatlantic life. It is wiser, they think, to keep for themselves certain unpleasant details. Hence the silence.

As I have shown in the previous section, in the 1990s, most of the Romanian immigrants to Canada were university educated; a majority were engineers. Once in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver, their main preoccupation was to find a job. In principle, most Romanian university degrees are recognized. This does not mean there is no problem. A very grim picture of the subject can be found in the article *La grande moquerie de la reconnaissance de diplômés*, published, in French, by a Romanian newspaper of Quebec City (Cristea 2005). But engineering degrees earned in best Romanian universities are in better position. In fact, respondent engineers accepted as immigrants to Quebec had their diplomas positively evaluated by the Quebecois Order of Engineers while still being in Romania (they paid a fee for this individual evaluation). On the basis of a scale of equivalence, such diplomas allow their owners to continue their studies in Canadian universities. To these recognized degrees, immigrants were adding seven or eight years of professional experience required by immigration services when selecting candidates.

Still, only five to ten percent of university-educated Romanian immigrants (mostly computer programmers or engineers specialized in computer-related fields) find a job in accordance to their qualifications. Of course, this is an approximate value. There are no available statistics on the subject and I did not have the means for a large-scale survey. However, my interviews suggest 5-10 per cent is a realistic figure, even if some respondents considered it too high. The main obstacle in finding an appropriate job is lack of Canadian professional experience. University-educated immigrants entering the country are caught in a *cercle vicieux*: in order to become Canadian engineers, they are asked to prove they have already

been, for one year, Canadian engineers. This is how the huge majority of university-educated Romanian immigrants became low skilled workers or shop assistants. Interviews show that an engineer is easily hired as a low skilled industrial worker in the field in which he earned a university degree. Sometimes, if he is lucky, he might be promoted and become a technician. But he will never be able to work as an engineer. In Montreal, many interviewed former engineers became *concierges*. This has very little in common with the signification of the same word in other parts of the world. It is a mix of building manager, janitor and plumber whose wage is lower than that of a low skilled industrial worker.

Obviously, immigrants trapped in such jobs are desperate to recover their previous social status. Basically, there are two strategies they can choose. The first is to continue their studies at graduate level. This is difficult enough for persons having finished their studies seven or even ten years earlier. Furthermore, it requires a minimum of two years (and usually more) during which their only source of income is a very modest scholarship. If they have children, this is an impossible choice. The other solution is to work as a *bénévole* (that is, unpaid) for one year. In Quebec, an immigrant engineer typically takes courses and passes exams in order to become a member of the Order of the Engineers. Then, he asks the Order to help him find a *bénévole* engineer job. One year later, he finally has the required Canadian experience and can search a normal, paid job. In certain provinces, the very admission into the order is conditional, under a form or another, by this one year Canadian experience. Therefore, the immigrant has to find himself the unpaid job. However, in both cases, the problem is to live on social security for one year or more. For a married couple, the solution is to have the other member of the family working in an unskilled, low-paid job. But if they have children, it is doubtful they will make it for one year.

On the basis of interviews, I assess at 10-15 per cent the proportion of Romanian immigrants who succeed in getting a Canadian degree or the one-year Canadian experience. Adding the 5-10 per cent who find a job ("by pure chance", as several respondents put it), a total of about 25 per cent recover the social status they had in their country of origin. The rest, a massive 75 per cent, have to abandon any hope and adapt to a way of life they could have never imagined before immigrating. Of course, I do not claim that these figures are extremely accurate. They only reflect the situation that my respondents, their relatives and close friends could describe in detail. A large-scale survey might lead to different

results. Still, I do not expect errors to be important. Absolutely all respondents stated that a huge majority of university-educated Romanian immigrants to Canada could not take advantage of their Romanian degrees.

One question, which may arise at this point, concerns the comparison with native Canadians' difficulties to find jobs corresponding to their university education. Of course, such difficulties exist. But they differ in nature and scale. As I showed in section 2, most of the university-educated Romanian immigrants are engineers. This is equally the case of my respondents: there were 42 engineers out of a total of 52. All had their Romanian degrees easily recognized. Still, less than 10 per cent could find an appropriate job. On the contrary, *all* Romanian engineers who continued their studies in Canadian universities found a job and started to work as engineers. I speak here not only of my respondents, but also of their relatives and friends. It is true that they spent some time before being employed, sometimes had to move to another city, and in certain cases the wage was not as high as expected. In other words, they faced the same difficulties as native Canadian graduates. But these difficulties cannot be compared with those of university-educated Romanian immigrants who could not continue their studies in Canada or afford one year of *bénévolat*.

In fact, in their case the obvious question is "why do they stay in the new country?" It is logical to think that, confronted to a dramatic professional downgrade, they should simply go back home and restart their previous life. There is a very simple explanation. Most immigrants sell their house when they leave to Canada. The money is spent for the travel and settlement. When they realize there is no chance to get a decent job, there is no money left. If they return to Romania, there is no way to buy a house. Or, rents are extremely high due precisely to the fact that most people own their house. Even if they recover their previous jobs, it would be extremely difficult to pay rent. And, of course, everybody will know they have miserably failed. That is why, until recently, almost nobody went back. Adapting to a new, diminished social status, three quarters of the Romanian university-educated migrants turned into a *sui generis* kind of *lumpen*-intellectuals trying to convince themselves their *déclassement* is not so terrible, after all.

Of course, everybody has relatives and friends in Romania asking details about Canadian life. But distances are huge, communication difficult, visits improbable and easy to discourage. It is very tempting to replace a humiliating reality with a more advantageous picture. That is how families find out "they are

OK", "they have good jobs", "bought a car," etc. A respondent gave an example illustrative of this situation. One of his university-educated acquaintances had immigrated from Romania to Manitoba, telling everybody she was working for a brokerage firm. After some years, he immigrated to British Columbia and started sending her emails. He repeatedly and insistently asked details about her job. It was only after a long time – and probably fearing a possible visit – that she finally admitted she was simply cleaning the floor of that brokerage firm.

But such details are never revealed to friends in Romania, who receive an idyllic picture of immigrant life in Canada. Combined with aggressive advertising by Canadian immigration offices, this maintained and developed the myth of professional accomplishment and high living standards. For years, thousands of qualified Romanian professionals crossed the ocean convinced of their bright Canadian future. When they finally found out about the "Canadian experience", it was too late. Interviews revealed very many such personal stories. The most extreme case is that of a young woman who, while in Romania, decided Canada was the country of her dreams. She even earned a M.A. degree in Canadian Studies. The logical next step was to go see the dreamed country *in situ*. She immigrated to Montreal and, two years later, was working in a supermarket as a shop attendant. She had no apparent chance to find a job more appropriate to her qualifications.

Obviously, this situation creates a state of malaise, if not revolt, among university-educated immigrants. Some respondents went as far as making very aggressive statements about those responsible, in their opinion, of their *déclassement*. However, this is a marginal attitude. Most *lumpen*-intellectuals seem to be resigned to their fate, as day-to-day surviving is more important than protest. Many seem to start believing distorted information initially fabricated for relatives and friends back home. The typical statement is "my wage as a *concierge* here is bigger than my former engineer wage in Romania" (which is true in absolute, but not in relative terms. Cost of living is also much higher in Canada than in Romania). Many point to better public services now available to them. This is especially true for public health services, whose situation in Romanian is bad. Interestingly, Canadian education for children is also often mentioned. It is hoped it will allow the second generation of immigrants to recover the social status lost by their parents. Most if not all Romanians in Canada insist on having their children university educated, despite the significant material sacrifices it implies. The social upgrading

of their children is seen as a *revanche* for their own immigration-related misfortunes.

Of course, social *déclassement* is by no means specific to Romanian immigrants. Nor is it limited to one specific Canadian province. A variety of sources show all university-educated migrants to Canada face the same problem. In October 2005, Montreal's *The Gazette* presented the case of an Argentinean family (a corporate lawyer, speaking four languages, and a dentist, with three children) attracted by "very aggressive" advertising of Quebec's immigration office in Buenos Aires. They were assured their professional credentials would be accepted on the basis of reasonable tests and fees. Two and a half years later, the former lawyer was working, mainly nights and weekends, in a call center, and lost hope of improving his situation. "Today, he feels trapped in a life he would never have chosen if he had known what he does now" (Bagnall 2005). In June 2005, *The New York Times* described two similar cases. The first was an Indian researcher with a Ph.D. earned in Germany, two published books and teaching experience in an American university, who immigrated to Vancouver. The second was an Egyptian gynecologist now living in Ontario. Both were unemployed and desperate about their future (Krauss 2005). Internet sites like www.notcanada.com describe Canada as "A land of shattered dreams". They list "Top Eight Reasons NOT to Immigrate to Canada", with "No Jobs" in the first place:

Yes, coast to coast, there are no jobs. Immigrants are highly qualified (MD's, PhD's, Lawyers, Engineers etc.) but they are driving taxi cabs, delivering pizza's or working in factories. Even people with bachelors degrees from Canadian Universities cannot find jobs after graduation. This is the tragedy associated with immigration to Canada. I feel sorry for those immigrants who are stuck in Canada for the rest of their lives. It is indeed a very sad and hopeless future (<http://www.notcanada.com>).

This site presents individual testimonies covering all Canadian provinces ("I have an MBA degree and speak 5 languages and find myself working in the kitchen" - R.B., New Brunswick; "I am extremely frustrated in my job search here, feeling completely useless and marginalized despite my significant qualifications and experience", Shery A., Alberta, etc). Another Internet site, www.canadaimmigrants.com, even asks visitors to sign a letter demanding "to be compensated for all the time you were unemployed or underemployed in Canada" (<http://www.canadaimmigrants.com/Compensation.asp>).

More scientific studies have also been produced. An M.A. thesis is even entitled "*Qualifications alone will not get you the job you want: Integrating into the Quebec labor market with foreign credentials*" (Mansour 1997). Several surveys confirm difficulties encountered by university-educated immigrants. In 2002, Boyd and Thomas found that "*a male engineer from Yugoslavia who speaks English at home and has been in Canada for eight years has a 55 percent likelihood of working in an engineering occupation or management in Canada*" (quoted by Slade 2004: 109; my italics). It should be noted women constitute an important part of Romanian immigrant engineers and almost no Romanian speaks English at home. These elements further decrease probability of finding a job. A survey published in 1998 by Basran and Li examines 404 Asian immigrant professionals in Vancouver. 88 per cent of them had been practicing professionals in their home countries. However, only 19 per cent were working as professionals in Canada and 79 per cent reported difficulties in having their credentials recognized (Slade 2004: 109). Several other surveys presented by Bonnie L. Slade (2004: 108-111) identify a lack of Canadian experience as the main barrier in obtaining an appropriate job by university-educated immigrants.

Official Canadian statistics and analyses frequently explore "*The deteriorating economic welfare of immigrants and possible causes*" (Picot 2004), sometimes dramatically asking "*Will they ever converge? Earnings of immigrants and Canadian-born workers over the last two decades*" (Frenette and Morissette 2003). It is on the basis of 1996 Census statistical data that most relevant quantitative estimations have been made. For example, Peter S. Li found that native-born white men earned about \$9,000 a year more than immigrant degree holders. Native-born visible minority men earned about \$8,000 more than immigrant Canadian degree holders and immigrant mixed-education degree holders of the same gender and origin, but \$14,000 more than immigrant foreign-degree holders. Native-born white women earned \$42,449 a year, while immigrant Canadian degree holders and immigrant mixed-education degree holders earned about \$33,000 a year. White female immigrants with foreign degrees earned about \$30,770 a year (Li 2003: 119). Equally based on 1996 Census data, Jeffrey G. Reitz evaluated the total "immigrant earnings deficit" for the year 1996. It amounts to \$15 billion (Canadian), of which \$2.4 billion is related to skill underutilization, and \$12.6 billion to pay inequity (Reitz 2001: 347). These are the amounts immigrant



workers would have received if employed and paid according to their skills and qualifications.

Of course, moral considerations are inappropriate. The Canadian labor market does not care about money lost by immigrants. However, there is another aspect. Underutilization of tens of thousands of university-educated immigrants implies clear losses for the Canadian economy. If immigrants lost \$2.4 billion due to skill underutilization, it is logical to believe an even higher amount was lost by companies, which might have used those skills. Canadian authorities are perfectly aware of the situation (excerpts of an interview on this subject with former Immigration minister Joe Volpe can be found in Krauss 2005). They realize that immigration services make costly efforts to bring highly skilled professionals into the country – praising the human capital thus acquired by Canada – just to see them turned into janitors. Recently, some measures were taken in order to improve immigrants' professional integration. The 2005-2006 Report on Plans and Priorities of Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada states that a coordinated strategy to integrate foreign-trained Canadians and immigrants into Canada's labor market was developed in 2004 as part of the government-wide initiative to address interrelated barriers that prevent immigrants from rapidly and successfully integrating into the labor market (Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada 2005c).

This strategy focuses on four key areas, the first being "foreign credential assessment and recognition". Unfortunately, three years later there are no visible results. There is a simple explanation. Government measures can be effective in the field of university degrees official recognition. But, as the example of Romanian immigrant engineers shows, this is not enough. The real obstacles are created by the labor market itself. Canadian employers do not accept foreign-educated engineers, and no federal or provincial action can force them to do otherwise. Some incentives may help, but on a small scale. What is needed is a change of mentality, which might take a generation to become effective.

In fact, a different approach could be adopted in order to make things simpler. Once in Canada, most Romanian immigrant engineers become janitors or low skilled workers. One might think of simply bringing janitors to work as janitors, low skilled workers to work as low skilled workers. Canadian immigration services would simplify their costly recruiting activities, spending less money. Immigrants wouldn't be frustrated by their *déclassement*. Everybody would be satisfied. This is, however, a very improbable perspective. The Canadian immigration policy has

already been reoriented. The new Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, which became law in June 2002, states that one of the objectives of this Act with respect to immigration is "to promote the successful integration of permanent residents into Canada, while recognizing that integration involves mutual obligations for new immigrants and Canadian society" (Department of Justice Canada 2006).

Unfortunately, immigrant selection criteria perpetuate the previous situation. The new assessment system awards 25 points for education (out of a total of 100; on September 18, 2003, the pass mark was 67). A secondary school educated candidate is awarded only five points. A bachelor degree brings 22, and a master's 25 points (<http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/l-2.5/SOR-2002-227/218282.html#rid-218283>; <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/skilled/assess/index.html>). Therefore, a university-educated candidate is awarded 17 to 20 more points. It is obvious that his or her chances of being accepted are much higher than those of less-educated candidates. Consequently, an engineer is always preferred to a *concierge*, even if the latter, and not the former, is needed in Canada. The present situation will not change unless the logic of immigration procedures is fundamentally modified. But this is impossible without a rethinking of the overall Canadian immigration policy. Nothing suggests such a move will take place in the foreseeable future.

Some steps were however taken by the Quebec immigration authorities. In October 2006, scores for a limited number of professions that do not require university education were increased while less or no points were attributed to university degrees in certain fields (<http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/publications/fr/divers/liste-formation.pdf>). It is improbable that holders of university degrees in chemistry or biochemistry, which still receive the maximum score, will ever find a job without the required Canadian professional experience. But, overall, the number of frustrated highly skilled immigrant professionals will clearly diminish. Nevertheless, this is true only for French-speaking Canada and cannot change the situation of present immigrant *lumpen-intellectuals*.

During the interviews, I tried to find out respondents' personal opinion on this paradox. Why a country like Canada, in clear need of *concierges* and low skilled workers, made costly efforts to recruit Romanian engineers who can only become victims of *déclassement*? This question was asked to all respondents. Most of them were simply puzzled and unable to find a reasonable answer. But some formulated

two tentative explanations. For some respondents, having university-educated janitors, low-skilled workers and shop assistants simply improves the quality of immigrant lower classes. Such people will work hard and send their children to university. Their previous status will keep them away from dishonest or illegal activities. Neither they nor their sons will go burn cars in the street, as it happened in autumn 2005 in Paris. As one respondent put it, "in Canada, an immigrant university diploma is no more than a guarantee of future clean police record". The alternative explanation is related to the 25 per cent of university-educated Romanians who, on my interview-based assessment, succeed in restoring their previous social status. Even if three quarters of the incoming highly qualified professionals are *de facto* lost, the remaining quarter contributes to Canada's economic prosperity, and probably compensates the costs of overseas recruitment.

There is, however, a major problem concerning Romanian best-qualified professionals. During the 1990s, most of them were engineers with five-year university studies in Romania who decided (or, rather, were forced) to continue their studies in Canada at the master's and Ph.D. level. Out of those completing a Ph.D., most, if not all, find a job south of the border and definitively quit Canada. One respondent who was preparing this move indicated that higher American wages are one reason. But he would not do it for money alone. In fact, it was his way of protesting against the treatment he had received in Canada (he had to live for more than seven years on desperately low scholarships, while in Romania he had occupied a highly respected and decently paid management position). In his words, "Canada cannot ask loyalty from people treated as I have been". Nevertheless, Romanian immigrants who earn only a Canadian master's degree and those who have the chance of getting a job with no Canadian studies at all are less able to find jobs abroad. Consequently, they stay in the country and contribute to Canada's economic growth, probably justifying efforts and costs related to the recruitment of a number of immigrants four or five times bigger.

4. Winds of change

Misinformation kept Romanian migration patterns unchanged for a decade. But this could not last forever. In fact, a major shift is currently taking place. One factor of change is the cumulative effect of migration itself. Between 1991 and 2001, the number of Romanians in Canada more than doubled. This

means the number of potential sources of information doubled, too. More important, a revolution in communications is under way. New technologies allow much better contacts between migrants and relatives or friends back home. In 1997, the cost of phone calls from Canada to Romania was three Canadian dollars (plus taxes) per minute. No wonder few low-paid immigrants spent hours talking long distance. But, in ten years, prices decreased 77 times. Today, one has to pay only 3.9 Canadian cents (plus taxes) a minute.

However, this is nothing in comparison to the tremendous impact of Internet. This powerful instrument (with its different components: email, information web pages, forums, chat, voice communication) started to be used by Romanian immigrants in Canada precisely in order to break their isolation. Mihaela Nedelcu (2003; 2004) makes an extremely interesting analysis of this phenomenon: "the propagation of a culture of mobility was in this case formalized by concentrating resources in the virtual space" (Nedelcu 2003: 333). This led to a visible increase of social capital within Romanian communities in Canada and helped develop their identity. To give just an example, the same author mentions the creation in Toronto, in 2001, of a Romanian school due to Internet forums discussions (*ibid.* 2003: 336).

Nevertheless, field research suggests that Internet use had for a long time very limited results in connecting Canadian Romanians with the majority of prospective immigrants. The explanation is simple: during the 1990s, Internet development in Romania was slow and difficult. It was only in 2003-4 that high speed Internet became available at affordable prices. However, even today, most Romanian "high" speed connections are no better than decent Canadian dial-up connections. Still, in 2003, Romania ranked 53 out of 165 countries, with 179 Internet users per 1,000 people (compared to 491 in Canada, 361 in France and 263 in the Czech Republic) (<http://www.nationmaster.com/country/ro/Internet>). This is enough to allow large-scale access to Romanian-Canadian Internet sites, whose number is rapidly growing (a list can be found at <http://www.aboutromania.com/roworld.html>).

Asked about their main source of information on immigrants' life in Canada, almost all recently landed respondents answered "Internet". They claim the picture they got at first look was quite puzzling. Half of the texts posted on the web describe a *lumpen*-intellectuals-populated inferno. The other half depicts a paradise of skyscrapers and icy lakes (one should notice the two images are not



necessarily incompatible). But all sources make it very clear that foreign university degrees are useless and have to be replaced with Canadian ones. This is the essential piece of information Romanian immigrants lacked in the 1990s. Once advised on this point, many potential migrants make Internet contact with Romanians in Canada. They get involved in forum discussions, use email, chat or voice communication. They make new friends whose advice they can trust. Consequently, those who persist in their decision to migrate to Canada are better prepared to confront the harsh realities of immigrant life. But most highly qualified, university-educated potential migrants realize Canada is not their promised land. Or, recent structural changes in Romania create new alternatives.

The main cause is Romania's adhesion to the European Union (EU). Consequences include increased capital investments in Romania, which triggered significant economic growth. For potential migrants, access to EU labor market has already improved. In the following years, freedom of movement of the labor force will be progressively extended to all EU states. The present massive migration directed to Italy and Spain will probably encompass all Western Europe. My own estimation is that, six to ten years after adhesion, Romania's population will reach an historical minimum of 15 million (compared to 22 million at present, out of which 3 million to 4 million are already part of circulatory migration).

These perspectives make a university-educated potential migrant think twice before choosing Canada. He or she can cross the ocean and very probably become a *lumpen-intellectual*, spending the rest of his or her life as a *concierge*; or join the circulatory migration to Western Europe, accepting equally unqualified jobs *for some months per year* until wages in Romania reach a decent level. The second choice also includes a *déclassement*. But it is a temporary one. Consequently, there is no wonder the *bassin de recrutement* of Canadian immigration services visibly narrowed. Unlike in the 1990s, they are now forced to select many immigrants with no university degrees. In 2007, all newly landed respondents insisted on this point. The times when best-qualified Romanian engineers crowded in front of Canada's consulate in Bucharest are gone.

There is another consequence of this change. In the 1990s, return migration was nonexistent. In 2002, a married couple giving up and going back to Romania became widely known because of this unusual act (Mureseanu 2002). However, today almost every respondent personally knows, or at least has heard of, somebody who took the same step. In 2005, a respondent gave me a list of five

of his Romanian friends who had returned to Romania. Return migration is favored by better information available to new migrants. Knowing the risks involved, they are less enthusiastic in selling their houses in Romania and therefore keep open the option of return. Progressive economic growth back home and opening of European Union's labor market will clearly accentuate reversed migration.

It is perhaps useful to remember that this phenomenon has in fact a long history. One century ago, Eastern Europe was the origin of important migratory movements targeting America. But few realize the magnitude of return migration. As Table 3 shows, between 1908 and 1923, only one tenth of the Bulgarians, Serbians and Montenegrins going to the U.S. settled there. The rest, an unbelievable 89 per cent, came back. For Romanian and Hungarian migrants, only a third became Americans. Two thirds returned home.

Table 3. Migration between the United States and Eastern Europe, 1908-23

Nationality	Immigration into U.S.	Emigration from U.S.	Net gain	Emigration / Immigration
Bulgarian, Serbian, Montenegrin	104,808	92,886	11,922	89%
Hungarian	226,818	149,319	77,499	66%
Polish	788,957	318,210	470,747	40%
Romanian	95,689	63,126	32,563	66%

Source: Wyman, 1993: 11.

Of course, there are important differences between 1908 U.S. and 2008 Canadian immigration processes. One century ago, all Romanian migrants were low skilled workers. Today, many of them (if not most, as during the 1990s) are highly qualified. But this can only encourage their return migration, as definitive *déclassement* in Canada can be avoided due to the visible improvement of labor opportunities in Romania and/or EU. Therefore, it is logical to expect Romanian immigration to Canada to take, at least in part, the form of circulatory migration already in place in relation to Western Europe.

Taking advantage of migrant networks built with the help of Internet-based communications, immigrants will continue to cross the ocean hoping better knowledge of local conditions will improve their situation. But this will not be the definitive step it was for Romanian migrants in the 1990s. Rather, it will be a tentative, exploratory move. It might become permanent if decent working



conditions are available. But confronted with *déclassement*, newcomers will have no reason to stay. Like their forefathers one century ago, they will simply go back and, perhaps, try a new migrant experience in Western Europe. In certain critical domains – IT, for example – Canada will still be able to attract highly qualified specialists, provided real professional perspectives are available. But even in this case, the closer and more familiar European Union might attract a majority of Romanian immigrants.

The shift of immigration patterns will have a major impact on Romanian communities in Canada. Since 1990, they were in a process of progressive growth and consolidation. Migrants' settlement was, in most cases, definitive. Communities were therefore stable. Increased numbers implied increased contacts and development of social capital within these groups. Links with the home country were, *au contraire*, progressively diminishing, even for persons who had come to Canada only eight or ten years earlier. Future newcomers will most probably bring here the circulatory logic of present Romanian migration to Western Europe. They will rely on networks linking people in Canada, Romania and the rest of the European Union. The relatively stable, nineteenth century-type Romanian communities of Montreal or Toronto will face a new, revolutionary challenge. For their new members, they will be less a final destination than a stop in a possibly longer journey.

5. Conclusions

Romanian immigration to Canada is currently turning from a classical, nineteenth century-type process to a twenty-first century, post-modern phenomenon. During the 1990s, migrants' actions were perfectly explained by the micro version of neoclassical theory. They decided, individually, to immigrate to Canada in order to take advantage of wages five to ten times higher. But this rational choice process was plagued by distorted information on the openness of the Canadian labor market. Once in place, many of them found the "Canadian myth" of professional accomplishment and high living standards is just a mask hiding the reality of *déclassement*. Three quarters of highly skilled, university-educated Romanian immigrants became, for the rest of their lives, low skilled industrial workers, *concierges* or shop assistants. These resigned *lumpen-*

intellectuals form the majority of Romanian communities in Quebec, Ontario or British Columbia.

However, development of Internet-based means of communication, economic growth in Romania and, essentially, progressive opening of European Union's labor market create conditions for a fundamental change of immigration patterns. Following a process best captured by migration networks theory, diffusion of Internet allowed the creation of transnational networks linking actual and candidate immigrants. Within these structures, newly created social capital provides trust and information absent in the 1990s. New migrants are now fully aware of the real perspectives in Canada and can optimize their choices.

The first consequence is related to the structure of the migratory flow. Fewer university-educated Romanians decide to cross the ocean, risking to become *concierges* or low skilled workers. Canadian immigration services facing this situation have to select increased numbers of less-skilled professionals. The second consequence is more fundamental. Since 1990, Romanian immigration to Canada was definitive. Despite *déclassement*, newcomers had little alternative. They settled and became part of stable, nineteenth century-type Romanian-Canadian communities. However, in the near future, this pattern will be more and more challenged by new professional opportunities in Romania and the European Union. Disappointed immigrants will simply return home or continue their migration to Western Europe. One century ago, two-thirds of the Romanians migrating to the New World returned home. There is no reason for the present unsuccessful immigrants to do otherwise.

In the years to come, patterns of Romanian immigration to Canada will become similar to the circulatory movement linking today Romania and Western Europe. A significant return- and secondary migration will connect Romanian communities in Montreal, Toronto or Vancouver to the home country and the EU. These communities will stop being islands of a dispersed archipelago, transforming themselves into elements of an active, transnational continuum innervated by multidirectional human flows. In a way, it is only then they will become part of the post-modern world.

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