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Transnational migrants from Izvorul Crişului

Introduction

Until 1993 Romanian immigrants usually came as asylum seekers into the European Union. After the year of 1993 the political and social transformation of East Central and Eastern Europe led to a crucial modification of migration patterns and migration systems, new patterns of migration have emerged. Since the early 1990s, emigration from Romania has been strongly shaped by temporary, cyclical, and irregular migration (Horváth 2002, Horváth and Ohliger 2003, Horváth 2004, Lăzăroiu 2003, Sandu 2000a: 5–29, Sandu 2000b: 5–52). This newly developed migration system can be characterized as transnational. Such systems, which have been researched for France, Germany, Italy and Israel (Diminescu 1996, Horváth and Ohliger 2003, Sandu 2000), are often based on local networks of circular migrants, often of rural origin.

One of the characteristics of the migration system from Romania (and, in general, from Eastern Europe), after the changing of the regime, lies in the fact that existing patterns of migration cannot be described satisfactorily with the help of current typologies and notions, so the statistic system of registration, which is based on these, does not meet the new challenges. (Massey 2001, Horváth 2004, Massey 2004).

The reason is that the notions we use to characterize these new phenomena were originally introduced for estimating less diverse migration tendencies that existed before the changing of the regime. After the transition, migration patterns diversified, different types of lives appeared among the migrants.

In the present paper I describe a specific type of migration that, in a more simple term, is known as bilocability, and which is defined as transnational migration in the specialized literature. I focus on the sociological description of a Romanian transnational community, namely on the description of migration strategies and economic adaptation forms of the transnational entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului.

The study was sponsored by the Sapientia Foundation. In the spring of 2003 and 2004 I visited these entrepreneurs, and conducted semi structured interviews with them. Beside that my observations rely on restructured, reinterpreted experiences – not strictly speaking professional or scientific ones – gained by frequenting their circles.

My main concerns are not the push factors of migration, in other words, I am not interested in the question of why social actors go abroad. Instead, I am interested mostly in migrational strategies, in how migrants move across different countries, between different socio-cultural and economic spaces, and how they make use in the receiving environment of their socio-cultural and economic capital gained at home.

Following a practice that started back in the 80s, the traders or entrepreneurs go to Budapest each year from Spring to late Autumn to sell their products produced at home. They are in a special situation in Hungary due to the fact that the majority of them are Hungarian citizens and have a home in Hungary while the others have residence permits. The traders or entrepreneurs have founded companies in Hungary where they legally unfold the economic activities, namely

the trade. The mayor of Izvorul Crişului talked about 40 registered and functioning companies of this kind in Hungary, founded by the inhabitants of Izvorul Crisului. From the administrative and statistic points of view, the owners of these companies may be considered immigrants. If we take into consideration their way of living, they cannot be considered immigrants even though as Hungarian citizens they do belong to this category.

The migrational strategy of the entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului

Most of these entrepreneurs became Hungarian citizens in the last five years, but despite these strategies that suggest permanent settlement they cannot be called immigrants because their main migrational goal is not integration into the receiving society. They earn their living by self-employment, as entrepreneurs, and they run commerce or trade based enterprises¹.

The entrepreneurs are in a continuous move between the two countries, between the sending and the receiving society. They have become dual residents: during the business season from Spring to late Autumn many inhabitants from Izvorul Crişului live and work in Budapest, but their winter residence is Izvorul Crişului. In the analysis of their migrational strategies the use of the classical terms of sending and receiving countries becomes problematic, because they move frequently between the two spaces.

According to Horváth (2004: 76), this type of movement is a kind of migration that does not represent a turning point in life, does not require the building of new social relations, and does not mean the end of old ones. Migration in this case is simply an economic strategy, and it does not end (at least not intentionally) in social, political and economic disintegration from the sending country.

The entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului regard their two spheres of life as inseparable. The area of Izvorul Crişului is considered to be "their home", associated with family life, or private life, and the area of Budapest "their place of work"; still, both of these places are integral parts of their lives. "It's like commuting, except we go further" (V.)

According to the way they deal with the geographical or physical spaces and social spaces, we can distinguish between two types of migration theories. The traditional theories claim that people have a relatively settled way of life, and that they live in a national container society.

In the last hundred years sociologists and other social scientists have maintained that social space is a bordered coherent geographical space, a well defined physical surface, which influences and defines the practices of everyday life, the symbolic systems and the social institutions (Pries 2003).

On the other hand, representatives of relativist perspectives interpret migrational processes in a different way. In their opinion, social relations are not confined within a given container space, in a coherent and blended physico-social space, but rather form and arrange spaces and social structures; what may be called transnational spaces. A transnational space is "a social structure evolving as a consequence of such migrant strategies that mix different social spheres, often cross the borders and adapt to an economic intentioned model." (Portes-Guarnizo-Haller 2001).

1 Portes (1996) describes a community which has a similar migrational strategy: "The members of the otavalan community from Ecuador, who migrated to the US, discovered the value of their folk art, and they made use of it in the receiving country. They maintained constant relationships with those who remained at home, to ensure their commodity stocks required for their commerce activities" (Portes, 1996: 74–77).

Those who are researching transnational processes attribute a great importance to the pluralism of local and transnational social connections, social networks, and interactions. These new social ties develop new transnational formations; traditional, bordered and blended physico-social spaces are transformed.

From the transnational perspective the social space is a plural local frame and point of reference which structures the everyday lives of people, their actions, social positions and identity.

The economic structure of Izvorul Crişului, due to its commercial characteristics, makes migration a necessity, and induces this specific transnational migration type. Analyzing this type of migration, the main questions are: i. How do people move between different economic groups and networks, ii. How do they manage themselves in different cultures, different spaces, and iii. How do these entrepreneurs benefit from their home-gained social, cultural and material capital.

Their expanded companies represent the totality of intense economic relations, which go beyond the frontiers. This is why they are incorporated into the economic life of Hungary – their strategy of migration consists of exploring market opportunities. However, their political and socio-cultural integration in the receiving country is less accentuated. There is a complex network, a system of relations that brings together the inhabitants of Izvorul Crişului, who are interrelated in several institutional spheres (family and company, i.e. place of work), and this system offers for these individuals in the receiving country a social environment which satisfies their necessity to belong to a group.

The traders or the entrepreneurs and their families are more incorporated into the social and cultural fields of the sending country; a general phenomenon is their participation in family life, weddings, religious ceremonies and other celebrations in Izvorul Crişului. "...in winter, at the end of October, until November the 10th, everybody comes home (Izvoru Crişului) and up until Easter the whole village is at home."(A.J.)

Besides this, they are usually actively engaged in politics, have party membership, express their political preferences through voting etc. The mayor of the village also belongs to the category of traders or entrepreneurs.

To explain this kind of continuous physical and mental movement between two countries, Massey (2004: 50) introduces the term of incomplete migration. To this category belong those migrants who are always on the move, seasonal workers, and some migrant communities who occupy economic niches in the receiving countries.

I find it important to note that the migrational strategies of the inhabitants of Izvorul Crişului, who make their living also by entering these economic niches, can and must be distinguished – due to their routine of switching places – from the migrational strategies of the more frequently researched and described ethnic enclaves (see Portes 1995: 27–28) and middleman minorities (see Bonacich–Turner 2001: 127–141).

This type of migration practice entails, in addition to mobility, **capacity of adaptation**. The essence of the economic strategies of the entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului is the exploitation of the commerce or trade opportunities, the expansion of their enterprise, and the selection of the receiving country depends on what its market has to offer. Observing their migrational strategies we realize that their sequential and market exploitation-oriented way of life can be characterized by quick and rational recognition and adaptation to new economical contexts. The entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului represent a peculiar model of the economic adaptation of immigrants. The recognition and exploitation of market opportunities that appeared after the 80's in Romania, as

well as rapid adaptation to the changes of the juridical and economic climate of Hungary after 1992, offer compelling evidence of these strategies.

Trade practices during the communist era and the opening of official market places in the transitional era.

The tourism of trade

During the communist regime, and until the beginning of the 90's, the economic activity of the inhabitants from Izvorul Crişului took the form of **trade tourism**. This was a dominant trend of migration, characteristic of several countries from the communist bloc (Hungary, Poland, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria). This meant that people belonging to different social groups, taking advantage of their tourist status, developed illegal small trade activities, turning the juridical relations holding between these countries and the existence of informal economy to their advantage (Wallace–Chmouliar–Sidorenko 2001, Lăzăroiu 2003, Kónsztantinov 2001).

This kind of illegal street trade² could be found in every communist and – after the change of regime – in every post communist country. The tourist traders, using bus lines, and employing guides, sold and bought their commodities in occasional street markets in different countries, and they carried these goods over the borders as personal belongings.

The places of tourism trade frequented by the traders from Izvorul Crişului in the communist era were the Romanian seaside, Piatra Craiului, and the inns and parking places near the international road which connects the Romanian town Cluj Napoca with Budapest, the capital of Hungary. In these places, according to actual legislation, the traders were allowed to sell only self-made commodities.

The opportunities of selling on the market beginning with the 80's were not favourable in Romania and within the "receptive" frontiers of the ex-communist bloc, there appeared the possibility of trade expansion to the west, especially Hungary, where tourism was more developed and as a result, trade opportunities were superior. Due to the allowance of group tourism, and the diminution of travelling restrictions, more and more people joined the system. Trade tourism from Izvorul Crişului in the early 80's was directed mostly to Hungary where illegal marketplaces, the so called come-com-markets opened (see Sik 1995, Sik 1997, Czákó, 1997). In Sik's opinion (1997: 328–333), these marketplaces represent an important effect and heritage of the socialist economy, and are characteristic of almost every communist country.

During this period, not only in Izvorul Crişului but also in other villages from the Călata region and the Mezőség, this kind of seasonal trade migration was a widespread phenomenon as a strategy of life. The inhabitants of Izvorul Crişului took hand made folk products (especially sewn products) over the borders; In most cases these products were declared as "gifts", "personal objects" at the border crossing points, and were sold illegally in different markets, especially in the central parts of Budapest, on the streets, in the undergrounds, in bus stops and in stations, near the places visited by tourists, and in general in the downtown area. The most popular places

2 Kónsztantinov described this black commerce phenomenon in Bulgaria (Kónsztantinov 2001: 31–47). The culmination of the trade tourism in Bulgaria was in the years of 1992–1993, although this trade form between the borders of East and West Europe existed and was extensive in the '80 too. After the events in 1989 Bulgaria, just as the other postcommunist countries, found himself in a substantial economical crisis. The change of regime resulted in mass emmigration. And it had emerged a new group of migrants which began to travel between Bulgaria and other regional commerce centres in other countries, making illegal small trade activities.

included the Buda Castle, the Citadella, Váci Street and its vicinity (Kristóf Square, Vigadó, Deák Ferenc Street, Corsoul Street, Türr István Street, Duna Street etc.). "We first began in the downtown. After that we went to the Citadella, Duna street, Tur Istvan street, Deak Ferenc street, the Vigadó etc..." (T)

In the Izvorul Crişului of the early 90's, due to the change of regime, the commerce of folk art products started to prosper, the activities expanded, and folk art production became a highly profitable industry. The diminution of travelling restrictions, and the introduction of market economy in Romania made it possible for a lot more people to get involved in these kinds of activities than in the 80's, and many more inhabitants of the community became part of the commerce-chain.

The marketplaces of these traders were the same as in the 80's, the traders or tourists did not pay any rent price for the place where they were selling; they did not pay taxes to the Hungarian State for their sales. But these places can be considered marketplaces nevertheless because they represent selling places where the sellers put their products on offer and sellers and buyers met more or less systematically.

This low-level institutionalization was the necessary condition that allowed these trade activities to develop.

In the stories about this kind of trade tourism told by the traders themselves, frequent mention is made of the meetings between Hungarian authorities and illegal traders, with an ever-present feeling of insecurity and fear. The traders often speak about conflicts with the customs officers, and tell a lot of run-away stories about their meetings with police officers. "...You haven't seen such a running in your life. Me and my cousin we fell at each other and fell into a bush and that is how I managed to escape. This was such a shame; even the policeman was ashamed to come after us because everybody was watching him..." (B.I.)

In these places the traders sold their folk art commodities without the permission of authorities. It was only natural that these illegal marketplaces were in the eye of the authorities, and could not function for a long period of time unless the participants legalized their commercial activities.

Since the early 90's Hungarian authorities imposed restrictions on Romanian migrants in general and on these tourist trade practices in particular. The reason is that the migrants from Romania were redefined by most European states, i.e. they were no longer considered as asylum seekers, but rather entered the category of economic migrants. In addition, as a consequence of economic reforms, the unemployment rates were rising in Hungary, and the Hungarian State had to confront an even more complex problem: the wave of refugees from Yugoslavia.

In this context this kind of trading lost its spontaneity, the sellers were forced to pay rent for their stalls, to get permits to sell their products. This period saw the end of trade tourism. I find it important to mention that the kind of tourist trade practiced by people from Izvorul Crişului and by people from the surrounding villages from the Călata region is slightly different from the tourist trading practices presented in the special literature (Kónsztantinov 2001, Wallace–Chmouliar–Sidorenko 1993, Sik 1997, and Lăzăroiu 2003), because it is not based on the selling of consumption goods, or missing luxury commodities. Its particularities lie in the commerce with folk art producers, in the vast migrational culture of the sending communities, and in the case of Izvorul Crişului, the inherited economic culture specialized in exploiting tourism for decades.

As a consequence of the authorities' restrictions, some of the traders (inhabitants) from Izvorul Crişului decided to legalize their activities in order to maintain their economic activities in Hungary: they obtained residence permits, became Hungarian citizens, founded com-

panies and rented the market stalls where they had been selling their products. Through this legalization process they stopped being illegal tourist traders and became migrant entrepreneurs instead.

This was an important point of departure toward concentrating or centralizing the above presented activities of the inhabitants from the Călata region. The division of work changed both at the state level and in the Călata region. While in the communist era most of the folk art products were produced in the community by the sellers themselves, after the regime change other villages joined the network of manufacturers. The entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crișului concentrated their activities on commerce, on delivering and selling the commodities. The economically central role of Izvorul Crișului in the region can be demonstrated by presenting the business connections of one family enterprise, i.e. their networks of acquiring the goods, their chains of selling and delivering the commodities. As we can see, these networks are more and more expanded. An average entrepreneur from Izvorul Crișului buys his stock from manufacturers from the surrounding villages: Baci, Căpușu Mare, Căpușu Mic, Sâncrai, Inucu, Vistea, and of course from Izvorul Crișului itself. But most of them are in commercial connections with manufacturers or entrepreneurs from all over the country: Târgu Mures, Miercurea Ciuc, Piatra Neamț, Sovata, Corund, Bucharest, and the capital of Hungary, Budapest.

It seems that these traders or entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crișului were the most successful in adapting to the new economic situation, making the most of the opportunities which arose in the transitional period.

Besides obtaining residence permits, founding companies and renting market stalls, an important step toward legalization was the obtaining of Hungarian citizenship. This was especially useful for the entrepreneurs because it facilitated their integration into the Hungarian economy. It spared them from a lot of complicated bureaucratic paperwork, saving them time and money (note that foreign entrepreneurs had to contact the authorities on a monthly basis).

Taking these steps in the legalization process was thus a prerequisite for the success of an enterprise. It was a minimal investment for the entrepreneur to make.

Nowadays the economical prospects in Budapest are not so favourable as they used to be. Selling opportunities are restricted, lots of marketplaces have been abolished by the authorities. So most of the entrepreneurs are beginning to build their markets further West, while expanding and strengthening their home markets as well. It seems that these migrant entrepreneurs are ready to give up their Hungarian status or use it in order to develop their commercial activities (Hungarian citizenship gives them better opportunities for expanding in the West). After all, they are entrepreneurs and if the market conditions change, they can easily adapt to the new context.

An essential source of the adaptation strategy of inhabitants from Izvorul Crișului is the **multiple network**, which is formed by the traders from the sending country and the migrants from Izvorul Crișului.

Social scientists³ interested in the topic of migrant entrepreneurship conclude that it is the use and exploitation of different types of solidarity and resources, the derivatives of these solidarity forms, that help these enterprises function and develop in the receiving countries' unfamiliar economic environment.

3 Bonacich (2001: 127–141), Portes (1995: 1–41), Wiegand (2001: 141–155), Portes–Sensenbrenner (2001: 105–127), Portes–Guarnizo–Haller (2001), Guarnizo (2003).

The traders and entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crișului are concentrated in a common market location in Budapest. This closeness in space, their common work and their common origin results in intensive interaction between them. These migrants maintain their home relationships; they interact through many institutions and in many life situations. They have a network that may be characterized by hierarchical market relationships, and includes transporters, manufacturers, sellers and entrepreneurs who all come from the same region and are not only in official and commercial relations, but are also friends, relatives or acquaintances.

The exploitation of this network by the entrepreneurs is an efficient strategy because this way the migrant entrepreneurs save important resources, mainly material ones, they save money.

This network is also the basis of other important cost-saving and adaptation strategies. By adapting to the Hungarian economy and aiming for higher profits, the entrepreneurs constantly change their positions on the axis of formal vs informal economy (by this I mean illegal work, illegal transport of goods, selling goods of bad quality, sale without invoices, etc.). The condition of running the companies under these circumstances is the exploitation of the network described above; this is the only way they can avoid conflicts with the Hungarian authorities. For example, within this system there are people who are on good terms with the authorities and they are informed very soon about the prospect of inspections. They in turn inform all other entrepreneurs about these inspections.

In the network of entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crișului we can find a few bigger concentrations of power. By this I mean those entrepreneurs who began their trade or commerce activities in the 80's. They are the leaders, having managed to make significant fortunes, and they have superior market connections. Due to these advantages, they can gather key structural information faster than the others; and as they have more financial and social resources, they can easily strengthen their central market positions. We can understand these position-managing processes, and uncover the network hierarchy involved, by taking a look at their positioning in space, in the marketplaces. The streets and the stalls of the market have their own hierarchy, which is known by all members of the network. Their positions depend on the intensity of tourism on that part of the town, and on the period of time in which they are allowed to stay open each year. This period varies in most of the cases. There are streets where one can trade for only a short period of time, during the Spring markets, and during the Christmas markets. But there are streets which are open for markets all year long. The firms who rent the market stalls are not owned by the entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crișului, but their relations with the representatives of these firms are decisive factors in determining their positions in the marketplace and, we can safely add, in the hierarchy of the activities. The leaders have their "own people" at the "right places" in the offices of the local government, and they get the most profitable market positions. These are the entrepreneurs who "matter", who possess a lot of material and social capital and who can influence the activities of the others. The leaders are in a well defined patron-client relationship due to their economic power over the others and also due to the "bills of exchange" accumulated by them by helping out other members of the network. Due to this relationship the leaders can imply rules, and other members or entrepreneurs have to be loyal to them because they are indebted to them (I do not mean only financial debt, it could also take the form of information, advice, relations, etc.).

Besides control over material resources, the advantage of joining this type of migrant economic organization, i.e. the migrant network lies in **imitation**. The commercial model is already in place

when the new member arrives, which reduces time and costs of gathering information, simplifies the calculus and, from the beginning, defines the kind of activity that must be developed.

The culture of the entrepreneurs

The decisions making systems of these companies are influenced by various expectations and social obligations. These migrant enterprises work deeply embedded or enrooted into the sending community.

In Izvorul Crişului we are faced with a community with a long history of trading culture that had developed for decades, in which the entrepreneur's behaviour changes according to competition on the market, by adapting to the system of rules, and to the opportunities the market offers. The village has a large strata of traders. In 2003, 200 family associations were registered at the Town Hall of Izvorul Crişului. Besides these, there are two bigger companies, one with 40 and the other with 30 employees.

In Izvorul Crişului the model to follow is that of the good trader. Key values and norms include managerial ability, the skilfulness. The youth grow up with this mentality, they are socialized into this system, and the majority of them become entrepreneurs.

Nowadays the community offers a specific model of trader or entrepreneur for the villages from the neighbourhood and concentrates all trade activity in the region. This geographic distribution of work has several reasons. The practice of mobile activities and the roots of the market's orientation in most of the villages of the Călata region had been formed by the end of the last century. This idea was expressed by Jankó János (1993) in his monograph of Călata, written in 1892.

Balogh and Fülemlé (1998: 157) explain the economic prosperity of Izvorul Crişului also through the processes of industrialization and embourgeoisement of the 19th century and through the economic infrastructural capacity of the area.

In the process of transformation into a trade centre, some advantages possible to rationally calculate played an important part even in the context of the 19th century and opened the gates for prosperous trade. An infrastructural advantage is the closeness of the village to the market of Huedin, which is situated on the main road that links Cluj-Napoca with Budapest.

From the point of view of the agrarian industry, the region had unfavourable characteristics, as a consequence of the poor soil (strongly eroded, mostly on the hill). Hence, agrarian production with high investments produced but little profit, which was not sufficient for the support of the families. These circumstances triggered a process of migration to Austria from the 19th century, which later on created the opportunity of producing folk art objects for trade.

The creation of the tradition, the folklorism played an important part in the economic rise of Izvorul Crişului and the Călata region and offers an explanation for their economic specialization. High culture discovered folk culture and its inherent values, and as a result of some initiatives from this sphere, there was a boom of folk art industrial networks and handicraft in the 19th century. During this time, through "creation of tradition" mechanisms, the goods from Izvorul Crişului came to have a symbolic value, representing authenticity and folk character in the opinion of the buyers. Nowadays there are many manufacturers making profit from the same capital of authenticity through folk products.

Summary

Commercial activities of traders and entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului are integrated into a specific economic organization. Despite strategies of legalization, it is not a type of migration oriented to immigration. Unlike other forms of migration, it is not a unique and irreversible act. Much rather, for these people it is a way of life, a long-term process with an unpredictable ending. This economic system reveals us that work and entrepreneurship for these migrants represent a way of living.

The acts of migration of entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului are deeply rooted in economic structures specific to the sending region. The migration strategy of this group of traders or entrepreneurs is based upon the exploitation of the sending and the receiving culture's opportunities and resources. These entrepreneurs from Izvorul Crişului come from a society that has a highly developed culture of trade and financial administration, as well as a model of behaviour a rational entrepreneur should follow. This system can be characterized by the marketing of cultural tradition, and of inherited customs, and depends on a network of acquisition and entrepreneurs, based on trust, friendship, kinship, solidarity.

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Összefoglalás

Tanulmányomban egy olyan migrációs típus leírására vállalkozom, amelyet egyszerűbb kifejezéssel kétlakiságnak, szociológiai terminussal transznacionális migrációnak nevez a szakirodalom. Érdeklődésem középpontjában a kalotaszegi régió központjának számító Körösfő lakóinak Magyarországra irányuló migrációs gyakorlata áll.

Az általam vizsgált körösfői migráns vállalkozók gazdaságilag a kibocsátó társadalomba mélyen beágyazva működnek, és ez a közeg egy olyan gazdasági szervezetet hozott létre az idők folyamán, mely eleve megköveteli a migrációs folyamatot.

A körösfői kereskedő/vállalkozók migrációs gyakorlata egy sajátos gazdasági szervezkedésbe beágyazott, és a nagyfokú, a migrációt látszólag véglegesítő – legalizáló stratégiák alkalmazásának ellenére sem kitelepedésre irányuló gyakorlat, migrációs típus. Ez a kereskedő, illetve vállalkozócsoporthoz migrációs stratégiája a különböző kultúrák közötti mozgás és ezek a kultúrák erőforrásainak, lehetőségeinek kiaknázására van beállítva. A körösfői vállalkozók fejlett kereskedői kultúrával és pénzgazdálkodással rendelkező társadalomból származnak és mindezek mellett a kibocsátó országban kialakított tradíció, hagyomány marketingesítése, gazdasági értékesítése, racionális vállalkozói magatartás jellemzi őket. Ez a szervezett gazdasági gyakorlat olyan beszerzési és vállalkozói hálózatra támaszkodik, mely a bizalom, a szolidaritás és a rokonság, barátság intézményén alapul, fennmaradása a hálózatként való működésnek, az ebből származó erőforrásoknak köszönhető.