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Leaving or staying ? The Dilemma of the Romanian Immigrant in Italy

– A study on the Social Representation of the Reflux of the Romanian Labor Force

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Key points of the presentation

1. Short history of the Romanian emigration in the past two decades

2. Social Representations Theory and the study of Romanian emigration

3. Methodological aspects of my research: *hypotheses, variables, population, instruments, method*

4. Results

5. Conclusions

Short history of the Romanian emigration in the past two decades*

- Three main waves of Romanian post-communist emigration could be identified:
  1. 1990-1995
  2. 1996-2001
  3. 2002 – present

- Four main paths of migration were discovered:

  1. „the relatives path" specific for those who left to work in Spain

  2. „friends and relatives path" specific for the road to Italy

  3. „friends abroad path" is taken by those going to the neighboring countries like Turkey and Hungary

  4. „intermediating agencies from Romania path" with a major role in the departures to Germany, Israel and Greece.

*The data are taken from a research conducted by Soros Foundation for an Open Society – *Temporary Living Abroad: Romanian Economic Migration 1990-2006*. Bucharest, November 2006 (our translation)

- Five main countries of destination in the first wave:
  1. Israel (a fifth of all departures)
  2. Turkey
  3. Italy
  4. Hungary
  5. Germany
- Two more favourite countries in the second wave (Italy became most attractive, Israel went second and the Romanian emigration doubled):
  1. Spain
  2. Canada
- Choices of emigration in the third wave – 2002 until present times (Israel is no longer a specific destination for Romanian workers):
  1. Italy is preferred in 7 / 8 historical regions of Romania
  2. Spain is the favorite destination for the Southerns (Muntenia)
  3. Hungary remains popular in Transylvania
  4. Germany is still attrractive to South-South-Easterns (Dobrogea)

Psycho-socio-demographic profile of the emigrants (1)

- 1st wave - it prevaled the model of leaving without support or help from someone (dangerous illegal adventure). Only 22 % of those who left for work that time received help. As the number of departures and the people who left grew, the personal networks extended. At the beginning, the core of migrants was assured by married men, with high school or trade school diploma, from the urban areas, around 30-54 years old.

- 2nd wave – the phenomenon doubled and 40 % of the migrants got help, women emigrated in larger numbers.

- 3rd wave – Working abroad became a mass phenomenon which tripled comparing to the prevous stage and 60 % of the migrants got help. The number of women emigrating abroad tripled, the village people equaled the city ones, the unmarried increased in numbers by 4 times, and the secondary school graduates increased by 8 times. The emigrants with a university diploma and the ones having hungarian nationality reduced considerably. The young people aging 15-29 both rural and urban who emigrated increased in numbers.

Psycho-socio-demographic profile of the emigrants (2)

- The persons who only intend to emigrate to work abroad but have no structured plan nor accumulated any kind of resources to materialize the intention of leaving are mostly young urban men with income and social networks above average, but frustrated by their financial status. Moreover, they manage in Italian. It's a sort of migration out of frustration, unstructured at the project level. Those manifesting it are not poor. They have a relatively good financial situation but a higher level of aspirations. This is why their frustrations are more emphasized. Their destination is mainly Italy.

- The ones who started to accumulate resources for departure – money, relations, ensuring a job and a place to stay at destination - are also young people with good networking skills and social capital. Their specificity resides in having working abroad or being part of families with experience in migration abroad. They know Italian or Spanish.

- Those having plans but no arrangements made are also young men who had worked abroad. Their resources to manage there are slim – they don't know foreign languages and have no special connections.

- It results that the degree of structuring the intention to leave for work abroad depends mostly on the social networks and the knowledge of foreign languages. The previous experiences of migration are enabling factors also for developing foreign languages and social networking skills.

Facts that contributed to the research

- Occupations abroad were mainly in constructions for men (98%) and in the household for women (88%), increasing from 7% in 1996-2001 to 28% after 2001. In agriculture, 72 % were men and 28% were women. Household activities tripled among the total works that Romanians do abroad between 1990-1995 and 2002-2006.

- Illegal work is conducted mostly by housekeepers (78%) and agricultors (56%). Romanians worked illegally mostly in Turkey and Italy. Legal work is specific for those who went to Germany, Greece, Israel, Canada and United States. Occupation in Spain was mostly illegal, but the difference between legal and illegal was smaller comparing to those working in Italy and Turkey.

Social Representations Theory in the study of Romanian emigration

Why choosing SRT for studying the content and the implications of the concept "Returning home of the Romanian workers in Italy" ?

1. It is one of the most *comprehensive* theories in Social Psychology, covering many aspects like

   a. Social thinking – structuring, organizing and emphasizing the *cognitive contents* of large groups of people, which is a very important asset in order to identify the core elements related to the object of research when wider populations are involved.

   b. Emotional responses – the associative technique involved in the SRT's quest for central elements of the representation allows the respondent to express the *emotional contents* of the notion in question, resulting in a complex explanation of the SR object.

   c. Behavioral predictions – the theory is based on the principle of Subject – Object – Alter, which implies – along with the the cognitive and the emotional aspects – the *behavioral responses* regarding the object of research. Based on those responses and the qualitative methodology that is used, the researcher may discover the motivations and the intentions of the participant regarding that object. Of course, the researcher has different quantitative methods at his or her disposal to further test the previously made discoveries.

2. It is one of the most *flexible* and *integrative* theories in Social Psychology, allowing the researcher to

    a. <u>combine different methodologies</u> (qualitative, quantitative) in order to better understand the object of research, in this case a controversial phenomenon that is explored in the eventuality of its happening: *"the returning home of the Romanian workers in Italy"*

    b. <u>combine different types of information</u> from *psychology* – social, clinical, educational, work psychology and human resources – *politics, economy, anthropolgy, advertising, PR, journalism* in order to collect data and understand the mechanisms underlying the process in question, a complex phenomenon rooting in and deflecting on many aspects of the social universe

    c. <u>address to different categories of population</u>: laymen, researchers, professionals in many areas of expertise, being interested to make the results of the research known and used by as many people as possible in order to bring my contribution to re-balance the internal labor market and the Romanian families.

Methodological aspects of my research
Hypotheses

General hypotheses

- SR of the Romanians working in Italy regarding *the permanent returning home of the Romanian labor force abroad* will reveal differences comparing to the SR of those who had already returned and to the SR of those who had never left abroad to work.

- All SRs will share some common central elements.

- Having in mind the **objectives** of the research (*identification of a psycho-sociological pattern* and of the *motivational triggers* to return, *exploring the SR* of return revealing its *delicate issues*), we will identify significant differences regarding the psycho-sociological profiles, the emotional and motivational factors and the controversial aspects implied by the SRs of every category of participants.

Specific hypotheses

- SRs of *returning home* carried by all the participants will resemble in the importance given to the *family*, the possibilities to find *work* and the possible obtainable *income* in Romania.

- We will ascertain significant differences between the populations of the Romanians working in Italy and the Romanians who had returned regarding the *comeback*, in the way that besides the common central elements, the first one will mention the feeling of *longing* (*homesick*), while the second (having the longing aspect covered) will be preoccupied by the efficient management of the income obtained after so many years of hard work (*investment*) and will also be concerned about the *health* problemes emerged from the constant effort and conditions of labor.

- We will ascertain significant differences regarding the *comeback* between the populations with personal experience in migration (1 and 2) on one side and the directly uninvolved population of those who had never emigrated to work abroad (3) on the other side, in the way that the differences between the first two and the third will be more significant than the differences among the two populations with experience in migration.

- There will be significant differences between the SRs carried by women comparing to men of all three studies.

- There will be significant differences regarding the SR of *coming home* among the five age groups of all the three studies, meaning between the 18-25 year olds (1), 26-35 (2), 36-45 (3), 46-55 (4) , 56 and above year olds, respectively (5).

Variables

- Independent variables (common to all three studies)

I.V. 1: *sex* – masculine (1) and feminine (2)

I.V. 2: *age* – 18-25 (1), 26-35 (2), 36-45 (3), 46-55 (4), 56 +(5)

- Dependant variables

D.V. 1 (study no. 1): *the SR of the Romanians who work in Italy regarding the permanent return of the Romanian labor force abroad.* We reached this representation using an associative task, participants being asked to reveal the first 5 words or expressions that popped into their minds about the investigated concept. Afterwards they were asked to rank these 5 words or expressions according to their subjective importance, justifying in the end the choice of every one of the 5.

D.V. 2 (study no. 2): *the SR of permanent returning home of the Romanian labor force abroad carried by the Romanians who already made this step, coming permanently to Romania.* We used the same instrument, but the introduction was adjusted to the investigated population.

D.V. 3 (study no. 3): *the SR of the Romanians that have never emigrated to work abroad regarding the permanent return of the Romanian labor force abroad.* We also adjusted the introduction for this specific population.

- Why not I.V. 3 – implication in the act of emigration (present, past and never) and a single study? Why 3 different studies? – The meanings and the implications of several words are in opposition from one population to another *(money and work)*, blending them together ignoring the specificity of the 3 different contexts could alter the understanding of the phenomenon.

Population	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Total/criterium
Women	154	151	189	494
Men	149	149	163	461
18-25	51	48	72	171
18-25 Women	25	22	32	97
18-25 Men	26	26	40	92
26-35	66	62	80	208
26-35 Women	31	31	31	93
26-35 Men	35	31	49	115
36-45	66	74	80	220
36-45 Women	31	35	43	109
36-45 Men	35	39	37	111
46-55	65	59	80	204
46-55 Women	36	34	36	106
46-55 Men	29	25	44	98
56 +	55	57	40	152
56+ Women	27	27	21	75
56+ Men	28	30	19	77
Total / study	303	300	352	955

Instruments

The 3 different populations were questioned using 3 instruments:

- **An associative questionnaire**, asking the participants to write down first 5 words or expressions regarding *the returning home of the Romanians working abroad*. Afterwards, in the spirit of the instruments frequently used for the investigation of the SRs, the participants had to *rank* the words from task 1 according to their subjective importance and finally to explain them in a few words, to *clarify* their meanings.

- **An advantage/disadvantage questionnaire** in order to find the deeper meanings of the *returning home*, the pros and cons and the possible tools to attract the labor force back to Romania in a few years, when the ravages of the economic crisis begin to fade.

- **A motivation questionnaire** intending to discover the identification of the main motives that could determine the return of the Romanian labor force abroad. This instrument requires opinions regarding the possible motivations that those who work in Italy may have to come back home for good, explaining these reasons in a few lines.

Method

- The three different populations (Romanian workers in Italy, Romanian workers from Italy who have returned home permanently and Romanians that had never worked abroad) were investigated simultaneously (in March-May 2010) using the corpus of three instruments (associative, advantages/disadvantages, motivations).

- Several field operators were necessary for the study conducted in Italy, and only one in Romania – all the operators followed the instructions and the deontological conduct of field research.

- A few modifications had to be made comparing to the research report at the beginning of the PhD, being necessary to adapt to the field situation

a. *some variables were removed* because the participants were reluctant to respond (details about their location or other socio-demographic or financial information)

b. *some populations were considered redundant* – for example

   i. *the family members*, considering that the non-migrants have at least one family member or a friend who went to work abroad and

   ii. *the Italian population* was not investigated anymore due to the fact that we considered it should be a comparison between different Romanian populations, but in the future an extension of this study in this direction could reaveal very interesting data

c. we did not conduct *exploratory interviews* anymore, having at our disposal a vast literature in the field, press included and

d. we did not *test the results in an experimental way*, …yet!

- The data were processed using the EVOC 2000 programme, revealing the most probable central elements of the representations which will soon be put through a centrality check.

Results

The general output of the elements with the biggest probability of being central

Romanians in Italy			Returned Romanians			Non-migrants		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	96	1,594	**Family**	106	1,500	**Family**	161	1,354
Money -	65	2,154	Money -	94	2,000	Belonging	107	1,570
Work -	63	2,349	Health	87	2,023	**Investment**	99	1,960
Home/house	45	2,156	Work -	86	1,942	Health	70	1,543
Investment	39	2,349	**Investment**	68	2,000	Money +	69	1,478

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central
among women

Romanian women in Italy			Returned Romanian women			Non-migrant women		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Money -	35	2,057	**Family**	64	1,453	**Family**	89	1,348
Work -	27	2,037	Money-	46	2,109	Belonging	59	1,525
Family	25	1,320	Work -	45	1,978	Investment	56	2,089
Home/house	21	2,476	Health	45	1,978	Health	41	1,561
Poverty	15	2,400	Investment	29	2,138	Money+	36	1,472

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among men

Romanian men in Italy			Returned Romanian men			Non-migrant men		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Money -	30	2,267	Money -	48	1,896	**Family**	72	1,361
Work -	25	2,480	**Family**	42	1,571	Belonging	48	1,625
Family	22	1,227	Health	42	2,071	Investment	43	1,791
Home/house	19	1,684	Work -	41	1,902	Money +	33	1,485
Longing	15	1,867	Investment	39	1,897	Health	29	1,517

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among 18-25

18-25 Romanians in Italy			18-25 Returned Romanians			18-25 Non-migrants		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Friends	15	2,467	*Education*	25	2,400	**Family**	30	1,300
Money -	10	2,000	Investment	18	2,000	Belonging	21	1,524
Family	10	1,100	*Money +*	16	2,2125	Investment	21	2,143
			Family	15	1,200	Money +	17	1,412
			Muncă +	10	2,400	Abandoned children	15	2,467

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 18-25 women

18-25 Romanian women in Italy			18-25 Returned Romanian women			18-25 Non-migrant women		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	10	1,300	**Family**	10	1,300	**Family**	16	1,313
Longing	8	1,333	Money+	9	2,222	Investment	16	2,375
Education	4	2,250	Investment	9	2,000	Belonging	14	1,286
Money-	3	1,333				Money+	7	1,286
Poverty	3	1,667				Health	7	1,857

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 18-25 men

18-25 Romanian men in Italy			18-25 Returned Romanian men			18-25 Non-migrant men		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Friends	8	2,500	*Education*	11	2,182	**Family**	14	1,286
Money -	7	2,286	Investment	9	2,000	Money +	10	1,500
Family	6	1,833	*Money+*	7	2,000	Belonging	7	2,000
Social change Intervention	6	2,500	**Family**	5	1,000	Abandoned children	7	2,429
Education	5	1,600	*Work +*	5	2,200	Investment	5	1,400

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 26-35

26-35 Romanians in Italy			26-35 Returned Romanians			26-35 Non-migrants		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	18	1,444	**Family**	22	1,545	**Family**	44	1,386
Home/house	11	1,909	Investment	21	2,000	Belonging	26	1,538
Foolishness	10	2,400	Money +	18	1,944	Investment	24	1,917
			Work +	18	1,722	Money+	16	1,538
						Health	11	1,636

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 26-35 women

26-35 Romanian women in Italy			26-35 Returned Romanian women			26-35 Non-migrant women		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	10	1,300	**Family**	12	1,417	**Family**	27	1,444
Money -	5	2,000	Muncă +	9	1,556	Belonging	16	1,375
Education	5	2,000	Investiție	8	2,000	Investment	12	2,167
Poverty	5	2,000	Money +	5	2,000	Money +	11	1,545
Social change Intervention	5	2,200	Social change Intervention	4	2,250	Health	7	1,571

The output of the elements with the biggest probability of being central among the 26-35 men

26-35 Romanian men in Italy			26-35 Returned Romanian men			26-35 Non-migrant men		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	8	1,625	Money +	13	1,923	**Family**	17	1,294
Home/house	7	1,571	Investment	13	2,000	Investment	12	1,667
Foolishness	5	1,600	**Family**	10	1,700	Belonging	10	1,800
Money -	4	2,000	Work +	9	1,889	Money +	5	1,400
Marriage	4	2,000				Health	4	1,750

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 36-45

36-45 Romanians in Italy			36-45 Returned Romanians			36-45 Non-migrants		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	23	1,478	Money -	25	1,920	**Family**	36	1,472
Work -	21	2,238	**Family**	23	1,304	Belonging	23	1,522
Money -	20	2,150	Work -	20	1,850	Health	18	1,611
			Health	17	1,941	Money +	16	1,438
			Investment	15	1,739	Investment	15	2,133

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 36-45 women

36-45 Romanian women in Italy			36-45 Returned Romanian women			36-45 Non-migrant women		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Money -	15	2,000	Money -	15	1,993	**Family**	18	1,389
Work -	14	2,000	**Family**	12	1,333	Belonging	10	1,600
Family	7	1,571	Work -	12	2,000	Money +	8	1,250
			Health	9	2,000	Investment	8	2,000
			Investment	7	2,286	Health	8	1,750

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 36-45 men

36-45 Romanian men in Italy			36-45 Returned Romanian men			36-45 Non-migrant men		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	16	1,438	**Family**	11	1,273	**Family**	18	1,556
Investment	7	1,857	Money -	10	1,900	Belonging	13	1,462
Work -	7	2,714	**Investment**	8	1,250	**Health**	10	1,500
Health	6	2,167	Work -	8	1,625	Money +	8	1,625
Money -	5	2,600	**Health**	8	1,875	**Investment**	7	2,286

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 46-55

46-55 Romanians in Italy			46-55 Returned Romanians			46-55 Non-migrants		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Work -	20	1,900	Work -	28	1,929	**Family**	31	1,323
Money -	19	2,053	Health	27	2,481	Investment	29	1,759
Family	19	1,895	**Family**	23	1,783	Belonging	23	1,696
			Money -	22	1,955	Health	20	1,350
						Money +	13	1,538

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 46-55 women

46-55 Romanian women in Italy			46-55 Returned Romanian women			46-55 Non-migrant women		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	9	1,889	**Family**	15	1,867	**Family**	17	1,294
Money -	8	2,000	Health	13	2,077	Investment	17	1,824
Work -	7	1,429	Work -	12	2,083	Belonging	14	1,857
			Money -	10	2,200	Health	13	1,308
			Home/house	4	2,250	Money +	8	1,625

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 46-55 men

46-55 Romanian men in Italy			46-55 Returned Romanian men			46-55 Non-migrant men		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Work -	13	2,154	Work -	16	1,813	**Family**	14	1,357
Money -	11	2,091	Health	14	2,857	Investment	12	1,667
Family	10	1,900	Money -	12	1,750	Belonging	9	1,444
Longing	6	2,667	**Family**	8	1,625	Health	7	1,429
Home/house	5	1,600	Poverty	6	2,833	Money +	5	1,400

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 56+

56+ Romanians in Italy			56+ Returned Romanians			56+ Non-migrants		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	20	2,650	Health	38	1,737	**Family**	20	1,200
Home/house	12	1,583	**Family**	23	1,565	Belonging	14	1,571
			Money -	13	2,154	Health	11	1,545
			Work	10	2,100	Investment	10	2,000

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 56+ women

56+ Romanian women in Italy			56+ Returned Romanian women			56+ Non-migrant women		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Family	14	1,571	Health	21	1,952	**Family**	11	1,182
Home/house	6	1,883	**Family**	15	1,267	Health	6	1,500
Recreation	5	2,400	Money -	7	2,286	Belonging	5	1,600
Friends	4	2,200	Work -	7	1,857			
Risk	4	2,000	Longing	4	2,000			

The output of the elements
with the biggest probability of being central among the 56+ men

56+ Romanian men in Italy			56+ Returned Romanian men			56+ Non-migrant men		
Element	Freq.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank	Element	Fr.	Rank
Longing	11	2,182	Health	17	1,471	Belonging	9	1,556
Home/house	6	1,333	**Family**	8	2,125	**Family**	9	1,222
Family	6	1,833	Money-	6	2,000	Investment	7	2,000
Retirement	5	2,600	Investment	5	2,000	Money +	5	1,400
Investment	4	1,250				Health	5	1,600

Conclusions (1)

- The hypotheses – at this stage - are confirmed:
  - we can identify *significant differences* between the SRs of the 3 populations
  - we can also identify *common elements of the core:* **family** in every possible category, money (- or +), work (- or +), health and investment partially.
  - We can find the terms longing and home/house in the 1st population (in Italy) but not so much in the 2nd (returned) – confirmed; the 2nd is more concerned about health issues than the 1st – confirmed; but both populations are equally preoccupied by investments, not only the 2nd – partially confirmed.
  - The SRs of populations with experience in migration *differ more strikingly* from the SR of the non-migrant population than between themselves – *confirmed* because while the first two pointed out the concerns about finding work and the drastic decrease of income in Romania, the non-migrants expressed quite the opposite, saying that the ones who return will find a good job easily due to their experience and even create jobs for others, moreover they are convinced that they will come back with a lot of money, having their future secured.
  - We can point out significant differences between some groups of women and the similar groups of men at all three studies – partially confirmed
  - We discovered significant differences between the 5 groups of age at all three studies – confirmed

Conclusions (2)

- Observations

  o Young people (18-25) who had returned already did it because they are interested in *education*, wanting to achieve a better social status and more self-esteem. They are also preoccupied by *social change* and *investments*, expressing the necessity to actively contribute to improve the socio-economical situation in Romania (including the mentality).

  o The little elder ones (26-35) who had concluded the age of study, point out the "*foolishness*" of returning to Romania – they probably achieved a better status abroad; but they value *education* and they still keep in mind the idea of *social change* and the necessity to *invest* in Romania in order to progress.

  o As age increases, the optimism regarding the return of the labor force from abroad drops, and fear of *poverty* and *unemployment* goes higher.

  o The non-migrants are confident that all Romanians should feel at home in Romania, but it is not the case for a lot of the ones who left…and for some of those who had returned and now regret it.

   Before the economic crisis, in December 2007, a survey affirmed that "1 of 3 emigrants intend to return to Romania in the following 2 years, 23% intend to start a business   in Romania, 31% want to build a house in Romania and only 21% plan to remain in Italy in the next 2 years". In June 2010, "more than 60% of the Romanians working in Italy would like to settle down permanently in the Peninsula", according to the Caritas Confederations of Romania and Italy.

  Since may 2007 – when I applied for the PhD with this topic – many things had happened that constantly changed this anticipatory representation which never got to cristalize yet.