ALEXANDRA DELIU, *Identity here and there.*
Migration as resource for identity construction,
Print-House Pro Universitaria, Bucharest, 2019

*M*igration is a phenomenon, widely researched by social sciences from different angles. However, this book is not about this phenomenon, but is rather a pragmatic, objective and at the same time subjective introspection of the discourses and narratives of migration, and of how these "stories" shift, in turn, the social definitions. The book proposes a constructivist approach in considering migration and identity as two related concepts and how identities are constructed and, we suggest, reconciled with the realities of rural communities. It basically brings a new subjective perspective and knowledge about assimilation and transnationalism, and relates to issues that are documented at theoretical and pragmatic level, albeit from the individuals' perspective on integration and dealing with political, social or even psychological borders. The volume draws attention and contributes to new knowledge about the shared issues of migrants and stayers alike, leaving open the promise of return migration, while each migrant is faced with new relations and social environments, as well as with new social categories, representing the sometimes looked for or cautiously approached 'otherness'.

Keywords: migration; identity; collective identity; social identity; discourses; narratives.

The book is of outmost relevance in the current context of the wider Romanian society and it succeeds in capturing one of the most known Romanian tragedies of the transition and post-transition period: migration for work of skilled and unskilled workers from all socio-professional categories. One predominant question is the red-thread dominating the book: how does migration impact the individuals from rural communities who found in crossing borders the answer to ensuring the survival of their families, and how these families, sometimes divided between stayers and migrants, have their identities changed, constructed and, we might add, reconstructed permanently over time?

The book is structured in eight chapters followed by an insightful *Epilogue* that stresses again how the red-thread about migration enters the discourse of individuals and becomes a source for defining their own social environment.

The first two chapters are the ones setting the wider framework and are construed as a first section in which the first chapter, *Across boundaries, individuals on the move*, sets the frame for the entire book by relating the story of one of the individuals interviewed. An elderly man, who has had his life "embedded" in migration since the nineties. His story is personal and collective: one of the many examples of people forced by the realities of transition to find ways for ensuring his own survival and the survival of his family. And there is even more: the drama of acknowledging for

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himself, and for how he sees the future that he is the only one to have returned. The children all remained behind, in the other reality, interpreted in terms of how the new skills, experiences, and economic gain were all somewhat overshadowed by personal loss of homeland, understood to be just a piece of the national tragedy of migration.

The second chapter, *Theoretical perspectives on identity and migration, begins* by discussing the ubiquity of the concept of identity and how this makes it easy to relate it to several other notions. It is precisely here where we obtain the fresh perspective in the Romanian scientific literature and knowledge, as the author proposes to look at identity and how the migrant individuals account for their own identity and the identity of the others through the looking-glass of migration which is used as discursive resource. Defining identity is always a debatable and complex issue, and scholarly efforts have provided for a multitude of perspectives, whether we approach individual, collective or social identity. Much harder it is to define how identities are constructed in the context of the current increasing and concerning social phenomenon represented by migration. The links between the two concepts of migration and identity are established inside discourses about assimilation, transnationalism, and otherness. In-depth research has resulted in presenting the prevailing definitions in social sciences, and how these two concepts are at the core of refined research about migration and influence on individual and social identity. The theoretical framework is used as means for analyzing discourses, positionings, and narratives about migration seen as personal experience, and gaining new insights about the social space of the individual, in their rural communities, and how they explain for themselves and for the others matters of general concern: the relationship between individual and state, the varying levels of development of the communities, based on own experiences in host countries and in the country of origin, and how the attachment to the origins and the projection of a future in the community of origin, on return from abroad, is almost enveloping all other migration-related experiences.

The third chapter, *Migration in communities: Seaca and Paunesti,* shows in a comprehensive manner the evolution of migration at the local level, as the results might be extended for wider inferences based on the in-depths analysis. One community, Seaca, is in Teleorman county, in Oltenia, while the other, Paunesti, is located in the county Vrancea from Moldova. Almost in opposite parts of the country, these two communities display simultaneously similarities and dissimilarities of demographic, ethnic and religious order. The chapter shows motivations, conditions and reasonings on which networks in migration are shaped, and how these networks are of different types, and are defined by the types of individuals who form them. It highlights how preferences are built, for certain destinations, based on economic and social criteria, and that patterns built during the transition period and before Romania's accession to the EU are still persistent, as Italy and especially Spain are the most common destinations for people from various regions of the country (Muntenia, Moldova, Oltenia, Crișana-Maramureș). The chapter contains rich quantitative and qualitative data relevant for the intentions of the research. The two communities are analyzed in terms of personal characteristics and attributes that determine the network preferences of the individuals. In fact, in Seaca three distinct networks were identified, and several insights are related to how jobs are taken abroad based on ethnicity (Romanian or Roma), religion (orthodox or Adventist), and gender. Access to labor market is gendered for Romanians (constructions and housekeeping), while Roma individuals are mostly employed in agriculture. Interestingly enough, the ethnicity criteria play a role in migration: Romanians migrated to Spain already in the nineties, while Roma were more inclined in the initial stages to migrate to Germany and Serbia. It also shows the perceptions of the two groups (Romanian and Roma) about the other group and what it gained by migrating. Demographics, living conditions, social conditions and their quality are discussed based on convincing statistical data which also emphasize some relevant discrepancies that might be interpreted from multiple viewpoints. Păunești, the other community, is different in terms of religious affiliation (Orthodox and Old Calendar Orthodox), which plays a role in the migration pattern in Seaca (Adventists were the first to migrate), and also in terms of destination. Here, Germany was preferred in incipient stages of migration (during the nineties), and later on Italy became the main country of destination. The differences between the two communities are striking: Seaca considers migration as the only viable plan, while the community in Păunești perceives migration more as a non-permanent strategy for building resources and increasing economic status. The Păunești community pursues actively, based on two NGOs, to mediate between migrants and stayers and even to provide proper conditions for return, even if in

some cases it proves to be temporary/seasonal. However, the well-documented chapter shows what makes the communities similar: they perceive acutely the economic and social crisis from home, the instability and uncertainty, as opposed to the normality gained in their countries of destination, and the return to the community is perceived as a temporally volatile certainty. Useful insights of the chapter show that the networks of migration – both formal and informal – are built on criteria related to ethnicity, religion and occupational status within the respective community.

The fourth chapter is one of the core chapters. With its *Stories of Alterity in Migration* and the interviews on which it was built, it offers a convincing image about the life experience gained by migration as a major change in the multiple perspectives on life that the individuals have. The origin is the recurrent basis on which the groups present the intelligible account of their experience, and it highlights that there is no way of comparing origin and destination as the latter trickles in the discourse based on the emergence of new directions of ordering the social world.

Telling stories of migration: individual narratives of departing and returning continues the almost surgical research into how migrants take the decision to migrate and how they explain in their own terms the experiences gathered, including the ones learned from their peers and neighbors. The chapter helps in understanding migration and identity, and moreover, how migration is defined by those making the decision to look for a better life elsewhere. In discussing about migration, it covers also the other facet – the return of the migrant as either the result of a success story, or of a defeat story. It is here where one can see that migration is a strategy and that individual decisions are based on expectations that touch on the structural issues, especially the economic factors. It shows how individuals change their own experience into a voice for the collective identity which opts for migration based on discourses related to levels of quality of life, status, and the multiple choices that emerge in various circumstances, based on the quality of the relationships between the individual and the state as active actor in the decisions taken in relation to migration.

The sixth chapter, *The Other at Home. Narratives of difference and migration,* develops an in-depth analysis of the way in which the discursive resources are used to explain the pair of opposites migrants – non-migrants. The key factors are the distinction between ways of being and ways of belonging, as means of identifying sameness and differentiation in the new social contexts generated by migration, by working abroad, and how the new insights and experiences contribute to individual identity change that also permeates the collective identity at the community level. It highlights how *otherness,* be it religious, ethnic, and even related to the migration experience in itself, shows how the different understandings about national identities and foreign cultures take shape.

Ethnicity across borders is one of the criteria most employed in differentiating categories of persons and is subjected to the constant impact of migration in the daily interactions within the studied communities The chapter shows how it suffers a process of change at the destination country level. It depicts in no uncertain terms how ethnicity as social border and basis for constructing distinct social categories is actually subjected to consistent, sometimes radical changes, and assists in transforming origin and destination perceptions. Hence, ethnicity is a flexible term depending on the context in which individuals negotiate social positions and social orders, while it continues to play an important role in structuring the social space within the community.

Religious orientation, migration and identity construction shows how different statuses are used differently for both identity construction and social identification, and how belief, be it Orthodox or Adventist, has a role in sustaining migration and providing adjustment opportunities in the country of destination. The relationships between religion and migration are found to be biunivocal based on permanent influences as religion is important in defining the social network on which migration relies, while migration in itself changes to a certain extent religious practices, attitudes and behaviors related to the Church as institution in the case of Orthodox communities, while the Adventist church, as evidenced by the Seaca community continues to maintain influence irrespective of the location: in the country of destination for the migrant, or in the country of origin. The chapter, like all the previous chapters, captures an interesting image about how migrants are interpreting the relationship with others, not only in the strict context of migrating for work abroad, but also in the more restricted context of relating to other migrants from the same community who represent the otherness by being of another ethnicity, by having another religious belief or view on social status and occupation. Thus, specific migrant identities become fluid, subject to flexible changes but ruled by the resources

necessary for preserving the individual and collective identity based on religious criteria that add to this complex image of constructed identity linked to migration.

The *Epilogue* is the ultimate proof that the book, grounded in a solid methodology and statistical approach based on desk data and field research in which the author collected a variety of opinions, definitions, and explanations from the perspective of the Romanian and Roma migrants, succeeded to capture minutely the complex differences between two rural communities impacted by migration. It proves beyond doubt that in spite of these differences there is a shared characteristic of a rich and intense history of migration on which important commonalities emerge about migration practices and resources for migration. The findings might be extended, as the discourses and narratives might be found also in other communities, either rural or urban, as the sense-making process is the same, from the decision to migrate to the one to return, and regarding the experiences related to skills, contact with other work and life cultures, and interactions, while the reasons are a complex mixture of individual options and structural economic reasons.

Migration as a phenomenon is linked to the individual and collective identity which is constructed and shaped by the new experiences gained by migrants and stayers alike, who tend to merge past, present and future in explaining the new identities that are shaped by migration which is perceived as a phenomenon of deep impact on the way individuals relate to their social environment.

The book provides for an insightful and rich reference for scholars, policy-makers, and the general public interested in how migration impacts on each individual and the society as a whole at national level, as it is one of the 'open wounds' of the Romanian society.

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IULIAN STĂNESCU, FLAVIUS MIHALACHE (eds.)
„România rurală în noul capitalism": 1990–2020",
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R omânia rurală în noul capitalism [Rural Romania under the new capitalism]*, edited by Iulian Stănescu and Flavius Mihalache, is a collection of studies that address the multiple transformations affecting Romania's rural areas in the three decades after the fall of communism. The "new capitalism" of contemporary Romania designates a new stage in the country's social and economic development and is set in contrast with the old capitalism of the interwar period. The volume is divided into four sections that analyse different aspects of rural life, such as demography and legal status of rural municipalities, rural economy, quality of life, and social processes.*

Keywords: *Rural studies; Rural economy; Quality of life in rural areas; Social processes in rural life.*

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