

# THEORETICAL COORDINATES ON EXTERNAL MIGRATION AND LABOR MOBILITY

Dumitru OTOVESCU<sup>1</sup>, Veronica DINUȚ<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Professor, Ph. D, University of Craiova (Romania)

E-mail: [dumitruotovescu@yahoo.com](mailto:dumitruotovescu@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup>Ph.D. Student, Doctoral School of Social Sciences and Humanities, University of Craiova (Romania), E-mail: [veronicadinut@yahoo.com](mailto:veronicadinut@yahoo.com)

**Abstract:** *The topic of this article is migration as a social phenomenon, analyzed both globally and in Romania. International migration is today a phenomenon that takes many forms, produces effects and shapes national societies. This phenomenon leads to migratory behavior and globalization, causing essential changes in the traditional way of life. In the contemporary world, international migration is a common reality of everyday life, the variety of forms and causal factors requiring a dynamic analytical approach, according to the particularities of each category of migrants. In this article we will outline the main theoretical coordinates related to external migration, with emphasis on the specifics of the sociological perspective of approaching this phenomenon.*

**Keywords:** *external migration; migratory flow; the Romanian diaspora; migration factors; sociological theories of migration.*

## 1. Introduction

The phenomenon of migration has been studied by various researchers from different perspectives (demography, geography, economics, sociology), developing schemes and theories that try to identify its dimensions. Regardless of the period, migrations from one area to another were made with various purposes, intensities and motivations. The phenomenon of migration raises many problems, as well as the perspectives of their replication are multiple. Migration or territorial mobility of the population is not only reduced to movements from one territory to another, but is a much broader process, which brings into the equation several components and, regardless of the mechanisms that make them functional or that influence their manifestation, generate a multitude of effects.

The changes made are observed at the level of economic, social, political, cultural, religious life. They become known both at the place of origin, from where the potential migrants are to move, and at the place of destination. On the one hand, a “gap” remains, the lack of those left being felt especially by family members and the local community, and on the other hand, in the integration of newcomers in the destination communities, problems may arise at the cultural, housing level. and occupational.

The definition of migration from the perspective of sociology highlights the fact that it is based on economic, social, cultural arguments. Whatever the destination, the migration of Romanians is a topical issue, having the ability to influence the social life in Romania today. In the last quarter of a century, most Romanians have chosen to live in Italy, where there are over one million Romanians and in Spain, where over 700,000 live, according to the National Institute of Statistics. Other countries with a large number of Romanian immigrants are Germany and the United Kingdom.

The phenomenon of mass emigration of Romanians after 1990 caught the attention of several sociologists in our country and one of the semi-effective works is the one elaborated by Adrian Otovescu as a doctoral thesis under the coordination of prof. Univ. Dr. Ilie Bădescu from the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work in Bucharest, this being published in 2008 and republished in 2016 under the title “Românii din Italia”, respectively “Românii din Italia. Monografia unei comunități de imigranți” (Otovescu, 2017).

At the Doctoral School of Sociology of the University of Craiova, an attempt was made to continue the research initiated in Bucharest for the monographic research of the main Romanian communities in Europe and America under the guidance of prof. Dr. Univ. Dumitru Otovescu. The main papers published so far are:

- Adrian Otovescu, Români din Italia. Monografia unei comunități de imigranți (2008; 2016);
- Cristina Ilie, Comunitatea românilor din Spania. Dimensiunile discriminării și tipurile de aculturație (2014);
- Alexandra Porumbescu, Migrația românilor în Germania (2015);
- Wedad Quffa, Migrația românilor în Anglia (2015);
- Cristina Pescaru, Comunitatea românilor din Belgia (2016);
- Adrian Otovescu, Conservarea identității culturale în mediile de imigranți români din Europa (2013; 2017);
- Alexandra Deaconu, Români din Olanda. Monografia unei comunități de imigranți (2019).
- Dan Voinea, Imigranții români din Statele Unite ale Americii (2015);
- Elena Basarab, Români din Canada (2017).
- Alexandra Deaconu, Comunitatea românilor din Olanda (2019)
- Călin Roșu, Români din Austria (2020)

## **2. International migration in the current context**

Migration has become, nowadays, a current phenomenon, closely linked to the social process of globalization. This reality is worth noting, because in the past this phenomenon was considered an exception, an anomaly, in relation to the sedentary condition of human communities. Migration, change of citizenship, repatriation, foreignness are perceived today, following a radical change of attitude, as belonging to the normal, everyday, sometimes causing problems, other times generating new values in a community. The 21st century has also been called the "age of migration" (Castles and Mark, 2009), mainly because there are more migrants in the world today than ever before. The number of international migrants worldwide has grown rapidly over the last fifteen years, reaching 244 million in 2019, from 232 million international migrants in 2013, 222 million in 2010, 191 million in 2005 and 173 million in 2000 (United Nations Unite, 2020: 1). However, the world's population reached a record level of 7.1 billion people in 2018, so this could be an explanation for the fact that the number of migrants in the world has increased. International migration is a global phenomenon in continuous expansion. Migration is both a cause and an effect of the wider development process, but also an intrinsic feature of permanent globalization. Not being a substitute for development, migration can be a positive development force when supported by fair and comprehensive legislation. Increasing global mobility, the increasing complexity of migration patterns and their impact on countries, migrants,

families and communities have all contributed to international migration, becoming a priority for the international community. The global migration system has changed in recent decades in terms of origins, destinations, and the volume and types of migrants. Countries that were once the origins of migration have become destinations for migrants and vice versa. The change of direction of emigration from Europe to America and Australia, mainly during the twentieth century, is probably the most striking recent historical example. At the beginning of the twentieth century, one million migrants a year left Europe, mainly to settle in North America (Timothy and Williamson, 2005). In 2019, the European Union absorbed 1.2 million migrants who settled in the EU, more than the number of permanent migrants in the United States (over one million), which represents a significant change in the global migration system from the last hundred years. After 1989, major changes took place in Romania in all areas of economic, social, political and moral life, these changes had an important impact on family life.

The economic crisis, rising unemployment, declining incomes and rising poverty on the one hand, the absence of viable social protection measures, on the other hand, have triggered at the social level, the belief that it is impossible to ensure acceptable living conditions in Romania. Poverty, lack of employment opportunities or family problems caused massive departures of Romanians abroad, after the fall of the communist regime, in the hope of having a better life. In this historical process of migration, during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the population of Romania was trained, so that, according to some statistics, almost 13 million Romanians live outside the national borders, which represents more half of the current population of our society (Otovescu A., 2010: 635).

After the twenty-five years that have elapsed since the fall of communism, Romanian migration has become a mass phenomenon, with significant implications at the social, economic, demographic, geographical level. The Romanian migration process is not a linear one without changes regarding the purpose of the migration, the destination, the categories of emigrants, the duration, the number of emigrants, etc. If in the first years, 1990-1993, the Romanians of German and Hungarian ethnicity are the ones who enroll in a migration process, in the following years the number of Romanians and Roma who leave their country of residence with the intention of settling in another country increases considerably, the main reason being looking for a job. Among the main reasons for low-skilled and highly qualified emigrants are: work, professional fulfillment, political reasons, family reunification, completion of studies. In recent years, the number of people studying in international universities has increased considerably, mainly under the influence of interuniversity exchanges. In addition to the numerical increase, other changes are registered among the characteristics of the current Romanian migration. The predominantly male migration from the first stage of migration is gradually balanced, reaching relatively equal proportions of the two gender categories. At the same time, the orientation of each gender category is maintained towards certain fields of activity, of men towards constructions, agriculture and industry, and of women towards personal care, housekeeping, agriculture, hotel system. From the temporary migration of low-skilled people, for short periods of time, characteristic of the first stages (1994-2006), there is an increase in the migration of highly qualified people and the extension of the length of stay, to long-term or permanent migration, starting with 2007. Regarding the "brain

drain” or brain drain, certain areas absorb a high percentage of Romanians, such as the medical, IT and research sectors (Sandu, 2007: 23-24).

The analysis of the intensity of the Romanian emigration phenomenon showed that over a third of the country's households (approximately two and a half million) had at least one family member who went abroad after 1989. The share of people aged 18-59 who worked in other countries after 1989 is about 12%. Temporary departures for work abroad had a frequency of about 28 per 1000 inhabitants aged between 15 and 64 years. The intensity of the phenomenon intensified especially after 2002, with the liberalization of traffic in the Schengen area for Romanians. In 2007, the phenomenon of temporary work abroad was about three times more intense than in 2002 (Sandu, 2007: 23-24). In the period 1989-2019, Romania's stable population decreased by over 3.1 million inhabitants. Thus, more than 77% of the negative increase of the resident population during this period was determined by the migration process. Romanian migration includes different European and non-European directions. In Europe, Romanians initially turned to countries such as Turkey, Israel, Hungary and Germany, then to Italy and Spain. The non-European states to which Romanian migrants have constantly turned are the United States of America and Canada. Regarding the choice of migration direction, it is influenced by legislation, access to the labor market but also by the level of training of the migrant. It was found, for example, that in Italy and Spain the percentage of low-skilled Romanian migrants predominates, while countries such as Switzerland, Great Britain, Germany, Belgium and France register high proportions of highly qualified Romanians.

### **3. Sociological theories on migration**

Population migration is a complex phenomenon, and its theoretical understanding was not possible through a single theoretical explanation. A. Otovescu (2017) inventories the following theoretical models: The theory of E.G. Ravenstein, Samuel A. Stouffer's theory, Everstt S. Lee's theory, neoclassical economics theory, new migration economics, segmented labor market, world systems theory, migration network theory, systemic theory, cumulative causality, social capital theory, addiction theory, institutional theory, transnationalism. They have been exhibited in various scientific papers at different periods of time. Among the researchers who dealt with the theoretical foundations of external migration are a number of Romanian researchers who analyzed the phenomenon of migration. Sociological theories represent a set of theses that describe and explain a real phenomenon, based on which a certain consequence is deduced (Otovescu A., 2017: 99). All theoretical models try to explain migration, its causes and effects. However, the understanding of the phenomenon cannot be achieved only with the help of a single theory but through a multiple theoretical approach. As for the main factors that influence and determine migration, they are of a social nature, so not individual, they act systematically and manifest themselves both at the origin and at the destination of the flow. When the factors of origin act simultaneously with those of the destination, there is a specific effect of migration called interaction factor. For example, a migration flow can develop between a rural locality and an urban locality when productivity in agriculture increases but the number of jobs in the rural locality decreases and in the urban locality the number of jobs increases (Gorun et al, 2013 : 136).

It seems that the presence of these factors of origin and destination plays a key role in determining migration flows. Thus, there are several types of migration depending on the causal structure of the process:

- *“migration in flow*: social causes at origin and destination; interaction effect between the causes of origin and those of destination;
- *socially determined migration at origin / destination*: social causes of the process at origin or destination; the absence of interaction effects between the causes of origin and those of destination;
- *dispersed migration*: there are no social causes, but only individual motivation of the migration, from the perspective of both the origin and the destination of the trip. ” (Sandu, 1984: 47)

Historically at least, the first theory of migration was formulated in 1885. Ravenstein's theory, seen as a paradigmatic model of migration knowledge, was validated as a theoretical approach that crosses the border of strictly demographic knowledge of the migration phenomenon, opening the sphere of social, multidisciplinary approach. The essence of the theory lies in the 7 laws of migration, some with postulate value, completed with an eighth, formulated 3 years later (Drăguț, 1978: 134):

1. Short-distance migration is more common than long-distance migration; waves of migration move towards large commercial and industrial cities, which "absorb" immigrants;
2. The process of 'absorption' is gradual, with effects progressively felt at a distance from the large centers;
3. The process of "dispersion", as opposed to the process of absorption, means the abandonment or abandonment by migrants of a certain area;
4. Any migratory current corresponds to a migratory countercurrent;
5. Migrants who travel greater distances, go directly to large shopping and industrial centers
6. Urban dwellers are less willing to migrate than the rural population
7. Men migrate less than women
8. All people feel the need to improve their material living conditions.

The five typologies of migrants - defined according to the distance and duration of migration - local, short-distance, long-distance, stage and temporary, represent the contribution of the same Ravenstein to the knowledge of migration. The criteria that operated in defining the above-mentioned typologies proved to be perennial, being capitalized by contemporary sociology. Subsequent complex historical and social changes led to challenges to Ravenstein's laws. Subsequently, Lee's theory, published in 1966, focused on the influences of 4 categories of determinants of migration - factors associated with the area of origin and destination, respectively, obstacles between the two areas and factors of a personal nature. As A. Drăguț (1978) appreciated, the theory identifies notable differences between these factors, in terms of how to intervene. For example, the information about the destination area is incomplete or inaccurate, generating a degree of both mystery and uncertainty. Another example of the difference is the one associated with "life cycle stages" which makes young migrants, with low baggage of responsibilities, including family responsibilities, overestimate the migration target, exaggerating the benefits at the expense of inherent negative factors associated with the destination. From the perspective of the impact of the emigration decision, Lee appreciates that the impulse to leave is the result of the oversizing of the negative action of the factors associated with the area of origin, compared to the natural, inertial tendency of the emigrant. In addition, the much more subtle and

difficult-to-quantify influences of personal factors are analyzed, the sometimes decisive influence of emotional behavior, which makes it easier or harder to cross the threshold of the emigration decision.

The types of barriers and obstacles that are developed and overcome during the migration act are also taken into account. This theoretical approach makes indisputable contributions to the knowledge of migration, by capturing some essential aspects such as:

- *the volume of migration* - with determining variables such as zonal and demographic diversity, emigration or immigration difficulties, the impact of economic fluctuations, economic and social dynamics as a factor promoting mobility and migration with a pro-migration effect;
- *flow and counterflow* - analyzed from the perspective of "flow efficiency" - with the identification of both pro-flow variables (dominance of negative factors in the area of origin, easy obstacles to overcome, economic expansion of the destination) and those of flow decrease (absence significant gaps between origin and destination, economic recession of the migration destination);
- *characteristics of migrants* - defined in the light of seven hypotheses: the selectivity of migration depending on the influence of positive or negative factors associated with areas of origin and destination which is transposed into either positive or negative selection, the degree of positive selection is proportional to of the difficulty of the obstacles to be overcome, the selection imprints migrants, both influenced by the positive factors of the destination and negative of the area of origin, in the characteristics of migrants coexist both the imprints of origin and destination.

Appreciated under the phrase "general scheme", Lee's theory aligned with the gravitational models of migration, is "an important landmark in the multitude of theoretical research on migration and its social context" (Drăguț, 1978).

#### **4. Conclusions**

Most explanatory theories of migration have given the greatest importance to the role of economic factors in triggering and conducting the process. Although classical theories such as gravitation or the "push-pull" model are often opposed, being considered to be rather "descriptive or classifying schemes" (Sandu, 1984, 12-13), they are enriched and adapted to concrete situations. Current is to analyze migration either through the prism of theories that explain the emergence of the phenomenon (eg the theory of neoclassical economics, dual labor market theory, the new economy of migration, the theory of world systems), or through the prism of those who follow its development (eg. network theory, institutional theory). These theories are not excluded, they are not annulled, but rather they complement each other, offering multiple explanations on the phenomenon and this especially because the respective approaches refer to different reference levels: macro (societal), meso (community) and micro (individual / family).

Currently, labor migration has taken on new dimensions and the negative effects have appeared especially on the structure of families, intra-family relationships, psychological development of children. According to data provided by the National Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights, an institution that has the role of

monitoring this phenomenon, at the beginning of 2016, in Romania there were over 82,464 children without one or both parents, who went abroad to work. Of these, 26,406 came from families where both parents worked abroad, 47,154 came from families where one parent had gone to work abroad and 8,904 from families where the only supporter had gone to work abroad. Another 2,500 children were included in the social protection system. Romanian migration, in the form in which it is known today, is a relatively recent one, but it has significant influences on the current Romanian society, as a whole.

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