

Experiences of migration in Romanian families

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Many studies on external migration from Romania point out the emergence of new migration phenomena like temporary and transnational migration referring predominantly to the community level of Romanian villages. The objective of this article is to bring the social impact of migration to the fore mainly focusing on family life of Romanian migrants with urban residency generating the typology. The starting point of the research were interviews with family members of migrant families¹. Viewed from the theoretical perspective of practice these interviews focused on how family is engaged in the migration process and on structural and functional modifications of family lives due to migration trajectories of family members. Essential elements were the genealogy of a family, its socioeconomic background as well as status and roles of family members. After a brief remark on the context of external migration from Romania and its illustration through exemplary migration experiences the article goes on to explicate several contemporary theories of international migration concluding that they can be faulted for focusing almost exclusively on the explanation of the causes of migration rather than dealing with the social impact of migration.

Objectives

The main hypothesis of this article is that the contribution of contemporary theories of migration to our knowledge of the social dimensions of migration experiences is rather limited. The empirical research was guided by the following group of questions: Which are the experiences made by the different family members? How does the family background influence the decision to migrate and in how far is family life itself altered by migration? Which social and economic family structures are at the bottom of migration experiences? In how far does migration change family relations, education, status,

and roles of family members? How do family networks help to organize migration and which role does the family play throughout the whole migration process? Later on conceptual frameworks of migration are successively and as far as possible included in some of the different dimensions of family life of Romanian migrants.

Methodology

I took interviews with people who have migrants in their families or who themselves gained experiences of migration². At the beginning of each interview I familiarized myself with the mere structure of

a family, outlining a simple genealogical tree of the family. Then I added further structural household data like information about education, occupation, family income and about the migration process. My contact persons described the demographic characteristics of each member of the household, individual motivations for leaving, the amount and frequency of communication and remittance sending. Successively I approximated a more inner-lying band of communication and relationships between the different family members including status and roles, modifications of family relations and the family life as a whole.

Likewise I intended to include into my empirical findings more structural information on the organization of migration, intermediary institutions and networks to get more familiar with the phenomenon on a medium and macro level and to learn more about the general perception on migration. Therefore I took interviews with intermediary institutions like ministries, syndicates and labour agencies³.

Theoretical Premises

During my studies on contemporary theoretical models of migration here in Bucharest I learned more about the variety of concepts, assumptions and frames of reference. These I linked to my empirical findings where it was useful to illustrate their different meanings. When I started my research in Romania the theoretical approach of *transnationalism* was my primordial theoretical background. I recognized a nearly unanimous consensus in literature on transnationalism that nowadays modern technologies of communication and transportation could compensate for geographical distances and persisting physical absence in social relations. For

me this opinion downplayed the consequences of spatial distances for relationships. This scepticism was one crucial reason why I intended to learn more about family relationships and communication between migrant and non-migrant family members. It turned out that the phenomenon of transnationalism did not play such an important role when I worked on my empirical findings because direct correspondence between the country of origin and the country of destination through visits or an intense exchange of experiences was in most of the cases rather limited. Therefore, in this article, I will not go any further into this theory.

The interviewers come from families of a wide range of educational and socio-economic experiences. Although the sample population is not representative of Romania these interviews provided deep insight into patterns of changes in family life due to migration.

Migration in Theory – An Initial Glimpse of Migration Theories

Migration theory resembles more a string of mostly unconnected models and frameworks rather than a continuous refinement of one theoretical branch. This does not mean that theoretical assumptions should be neglected. Rather it is meant as an explanation therefore that an explicit enumeration and presentation of this variety of theoretical models was renounced. In what follows – after we entered into family concepts – we stress the migration experiences of migrant families and integrate and explicate leading contemporary theories of international movement. By illuminating some key assumptions and hypotheses with the help of migration trajectories of individuals and their families we seek to get a better understanding of each model.

Nevertheless, we sometimes recognize how complex migration histories are and that a theoretical perspective only stands for a conceptual framework that mostly reflects empirical findings inaccurate and finally through simplifications.

At last we should specify what we mean when we talk about migration:

“To put it more concrete when we speak about migration we mean all the forms of territorial mobility which might be directly influenced by differences regarding the quality of life and the communication between social groups living in different local communities and which might include a stable or just recent change of residence or labour outside the community of origin”.⁴

In the following this focus on the quality of life and on the differences in modes of communication should come to the fore.

The Family – Introductory Remarks on a Social Construction

To specify our understanding of the term *family* we define the family as a group of people that is united through marriage, filiations or kinship ties characterized through a sense of community, interest in each other and solidarity⁵. Thus, kinship ties form the main characteristics of what we are calling a family. It is a culturally constructed definition.

In order to become more sensitive to the various aspects family life includes we can take a look at the structures and the functions of family life in general. First of all we can state that the structure of any social group depends on the function for which it was composed or organized

for⁶. Structure and function of family ties imply each other. When we speak about the structure of a family we think of permanent characteristics of a family as a whole and we do not focus on individual family members⁷. The family structure can stand on the one hand for the numerical component, the structure of different generations and family roles and the status of each family member⁸. And on the other hand it reflects the division of roles and the exertion of authority in the interior family corpus.

And when we look at the functions of a family we can enumerate interior functions like reproduction, physical, material and emotional wellbeing, protection and security, solidarity and affection. And then we can extend our perspective towards exterior functions like socialization, education and integration into a more extended social surrounding⁹. We want to keep this brief overview over the various features of family life in mind when we go on to deal with the dimensions and the consequences of spatial movements of one or more family members for the family life.

The Family as Practice

Before we go on to use the term *family* we want to take a short reference to Pierre Bourdieu's theoretical term of *practice*. Regarding family life we might imagine a social space in which people live *a priori* according to certain rules. The assortment of possible types of behaviour is restricted. But likewise the social actor is not totally determined by normative structures. Referring to Bourdieu's concept of practice he or she can still make use of different strategies to fulfil one's own or a group's practical interests¹⁰. Finally, practice becomes the product of strategies gained by a capable use of resources or – in other words – different types of capital¹¹.

Bourdieu distinguishes between four different types of capital: economical, cultural, social and symbolic capital. For our dealing with family we do mostly refer to social capital but we need to keep in mind that none of the different forms of capital does exist alone, they are interdependent and convertible. Bourdieu gives a precise definition of social capital:

“Social capital is the totality of actual and potential resources that are connected to the possession of durable networks of more or less institutionalised relationships of knowing and acknowledging each other. In other words social capital are resources that are based on the belonging to a certain group. Relationships of social capital in practice can only consist on the basis of material and symbolic relations of exchange contributing to their lasting”¹².

Relations of material and symbolic exchange therefore form the backbone of social capital increasing its value due to how far they reach and due to the amount of resources all of its members dispose of¹³.

It is important to mention that family ties are therefore not necessarily ever lasting. The focus on genealogical patterns in the definition of family should not belie the fact that they can be cancelled. Rather, family ties are the product of a continuous process of institutionalisation reconfirming constantly one's mutual acknowledgement¹⁴.

The Family in Migration Research

Family in connection with migration began to be a topic of increased scientific interest when the importance of family ties during the decision process was recognized¹⁵. Family ties stand only for one special

type of relations migrants often support; friendship and being part of the same community of origin may exist as well. Douglas S. Massey concludes:

“Migrant networks are networks, which are sets of social ties formed on the basis of kinship, friendship, and common origin. They link migrants and non-migrants together in a system of reciprocal obligations and mutual expectations. They develop rapidly because the act of migration itself generates network connections; every new migrant creates a set of friends and relatives with a social tie to someone with valuable migrant experience”¹⁶.

Hence, family ties support the process of migration, for they help additionally to reduce the costs of migration.

And another special quality of family ties we need to take into account when we focus on the family is an intermediary level that influences migration. We need to emphasize that family members do not necessarily act in a rational and resource-maximizing manner. Their action might reflect normative structures like ideas, values and beliefs of interfamily responsibility or standards of age and gender. For instance, family relations can lead to increased expectations on the side of the migrant. These expectations might conclude from material support of the family in advance to render migration possible or from cultural, sometimes gender specific obligations vis-à-vis kinship. Therefore we need to consider further sociological dimensions such as the division of labour between gender and generations, status seeking, decision-making and empowerment when we focus on the family¹⁷.

The Case of the Vasilescu¹⁸ Family – The Experience of Migration in the Family Context

Irina is a 23 year old student who lives together with her mother and her grandfather in Bucharest. She was nine years old when her father migrated to Belgium as a political refugee in 1990 shortly after he got married to an old girlfriend. Her grandmother migrated as well. After she left her family and married for a second time she migrated to Germany in 1987, eleven years after her husband's flight from Romania.

Irina's father is well integrated in Belgium in contrast to Irina's grandmother. She mostly depends on her husband's contacts. Every year she and her husband come to Romania for two months. And once every two years Irina, sometimes together with her mother visits the grandmother for the summer vacation for at least one month.

For Irina's mother it was not easy when her mother migrated to Germany. The communication before the year 1989 was a phone call every two weeks. Now they talk once or twice a week. For her it is the feeling to be left behind, for the second time. She was three years old when her parents separated. Her mother migrated when she was 38.

In 1990 Irina visited her grandmother in Germany for the first time together with her mother. For the whole time the grandmother had sent clothes, food, medicaments and money from Germany, even before her own migration and she still sustains the family with money transfers by bus three, four or five times each year. When Irina and her mother came back

from Germany in 1990 Irina's father collected them at the station. He lived together with them for one more week and then he was gone.

For three years she did not know where he was gone and she did not ask for it for she felt that she should not. She thought that something bad had happened to him. After this period she received the first letters and the first telephone calls from her father. They became frequent. For each month she either got a telephone call or she received a letter from him. After one year her father asked whether she would like to obtain the Belgian citizenship as he did three years after his migration. But she refused. She could not imagine staying alone with her father in Belgium for three months to get ready with all the documents.

After this time her father comes to Romania once a year for two or three weeks¹⁹. When they meet in Bucharest they meet somewhere in the city for some hours without her mother. When she got 18 years old and did not need her mother's consent any longer she started to visit her father in Belgium, later together with some friends²⁰. But her father began to play the father role and judged her friends so she stopped to see him every year.

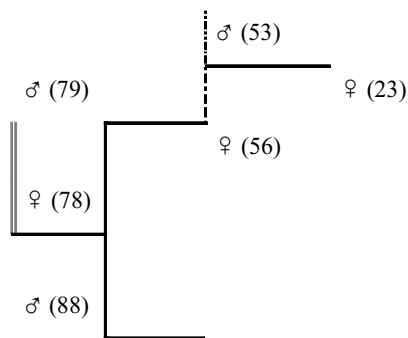
She now feels very distant to him and the relationship became colder. Apart from one mail every two months and a telephone call every two or three months she sometimes gets a present like a computer or a stereo set. Once she asked her father for money for during her childhood her mother did not want to get any money from him, and she received it by money transfer but she felt that she should not have asked for it. Last year her father tried to render a Belgian or Hungarian scholarship for his daughter with the help of his contacts but he did not succeed.

Her father's migration had an enormous influence on how she grew up. Before leaving Romania her father and her mother made all the decisions. After her father's migration her mother and her grandfather were the principal attachment figures for her. At the moment she is an Erasmus student in Germany.

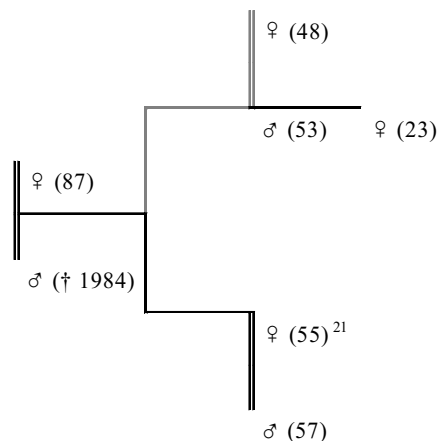
Key:			
	Kinship ties	Separation	This colour stands for migration experiences.
	Marriage	Divorce	

The Family Tree of the Vasilescu Family

The family of Irina's mother:



The family of Irina's father:



Motivation and Decision-Making²² – Migrants and their Families

Motivation

When Monica's mother decided to migrate, the whole family suffered of a financial crisis. Her husband was unemployed and she was a housewife.

Radu's father was unemployed before he got work as an international bus driver between Romania and Italy where his wife was already working as a domestic worker.

Motivations for migration can be various. During this empirical research it turned out that most frequently it existed a *financial crisis* in the family household before migration. In the majority of cases adult family members got unemployed due to far-reaching structural modifications of Romanian labour market sectors and the other family members could not absorb the losses of the family income. This is especially true in cases where female parents were housewives. That way the motivation of migration is to develop a *life-strategy* to sustain the family's well-being also concerning non-material aspects of family life that are connected to the economic survival of the family.

Calculations on income and conditions of employment play a crucial role in mi-

gration research and so in migration theory. For our focus on family life and migration models of decision-making is of more interest so we will take further reference to theoretical concepts of wages and employment in the corresponding paragraph.

Alexandru's father is a specialist in aviation. Abroad he receives a much higher income in his field of specialization.

A further motivation for migration can be a *high level of specialization* and a better income perspective abroad. Especially in families where members got a good education and reached a high level of qualification migration can be linked to labour under the same or even better working conditions with a higher income. This mostly negative effect of migration for the country of origin is referred to as *brain drain*. The labour market of this country is depleted by the departure of its most productive or qualified members. Earlier professional contacts of these to the receiving country before migration can additionally further this effect. Especially before 1989 Romanians sometimes organized their migration secretly with the help of colleagues from other countries.

Nicole migrated to Germany to continue her German and English studies there. She profited from her father's earlier professional contacts with a German speaking country because thus her father decided to send his children to a German kindergarten and to the German school in Bucharest, which finally influenced her decision to study German.

Education can also be a motivation for migration. Especially young people who mostly correspond to the profile of the average Romanian intending to go abroad, apply for training possibilities in foreign countries²³. Additionally, for this group there are many training programmes. The education is oftentimes influenced by their parents' previous decisions on their education. As we have seen, the decision to let one's child attend a foreign kindergarten or a foreign school can significantly influence the further trajectory of a child and can finally lead to the decision to migrate.

Irina's grandfather and Irina's father both pled for political asylum abroad. They both had friends abroad who helped them organize their migration.

Alexandru's uncle migrated for exile to Switzerland together with his family.

In some of the interviews the poor living conditions in Romania before and shortly after 1989 played an integral part in the family's migration history. During this period, in most of the cases migrants left for exile pleading for *political asylum* in one of the nearer western European countries although their foremost motivation might have been based on economic reasons. Again most of the migrants profited from earlier contacts with people from their receiving countries or they had friends from Romania who had already migrated before and who helped them organize their flight. Many of the asylum seekers of this time received the citizenship of their destination country after some years.

Decision-Making – Family as Social Capital

When Monica's brother migrated abroad he first received help from one of his cousins, later of his brother who helped him twice to find a job for several months next to him, so that he was able to live together with his brother's family in Germany. Finally, he migrated to Italy where his mother helped him find a working place.

Distant relatives helped Elvira's father for the first time when he migrated to Germany. Now he works for his brother-in-law who has his own construction company in Italy.

Decisions to migrate and responses to the difficulties of the migration process are frequently made with both the needs and the resources of kin in mind. And the kin group may extend from the city or village of origin to family members already dispersed in different destination countries. This focus on the family unit is rather new. The earlier essential micro-level decision model was that of *neoclassical theory* which conceived migration as an individual decision driven by the motivation to maximize one's income focusing on differentials in wages and employment conditions between the labour markets of the country of origin and the country of destination. Later, sociologists have formulated a new theoretical framework, the so-called *new economics of labour migration*. This new approach, as well a micro-level concept, highlights the importance of larger units of related people for migration decisions. It refers foremost to the capacity of these units to "act collectively to minimize risks and loosen constraints associated with various kinds of market failures"²⁴. It is assumed that

by allocating family members to different labour markets, families could easily diversify their income perspectives.

Many family members of migrant families have mentioned that relatives migrated through chain migration of near and more distant relatives. Thus, migration can be considered as a phenomenon that tends to sustain itself. The sociologist Nancy S. Landale writes about the dynamics of migration processes:

"Each family member who migrates to a destination area reduces the costs of migration for other family members because he or she can provide information, housing, and other opportunities otherwise unavailable to the potential migrant"²⁵.

This tendency refers to the migration theory of *cumulative causation*. The hint to a possible minimization of migration costs in cases of numerous migration trajectories of family members is indeed substantial. On the basis of sophisticated internal family strategies, the economic and material wellbeing can be increased and the risk of mere subsistence reduced:

"The accessibility of migrant networks in turn makes labour migration a very attractive strategy for risk diversification, which is an adaptive response to uncertainty that is open only to households and not to individuals. (...) households evolve strategies not only to increase wealth and income, but to avoid risks regarding their economic wellbeing. (...) They seek, therefore, to diversify risk by allocating household workers to productive activities in different locations (...) "²⁶.

Finally we should mention that the decision to migrate is not always discussed with family members and thus migrants do not always demand for any help from their families. Sometimes

migrants, especially when they are the first ones of their families, leave their families without telling them. In these cases migrants might fear their families' reactions. They might be afraid that their families could keep them from migrating or they might be so close to other family members that they are afraid of hurting them²⁷.

Alexandru migrated to France after his mother died from cancer. Even though all the other close family members had already been in France, it was not his wish to leave Romania for the relationship with his father was not good. His father left Romania when he was five years old and in the meanwhile he had seen him only once a year. Finally it was his father who decided that he should come to France and stay with him in Paris. So his decision to migrate was not taken voluntarily and he felt very isolated during his stay in France. Two years ago he went back to Romania to finish high school and to study there.

For Nicole it was her stepfather who played an important role in her decision to migrate abroad :

And your principal motivation of migration was to study there?

Nicole²⁸: *Well, it was like this : My mother married again, two years after my father's death in 1993. And it was more or less okay. There were, to put it more roughly, differences in their education. My stepfather had studied as well but... I don't know. It was a rather rural family, after all. Basic educational things were missing. And this became more and more clear. They finally got divorced two years ago.*

And the fact that there was someone new in the family influenced the decision to migrate?

I cannot really complain, but as a teenager I didn't have many liberties. But it didn't put a stamp on me for my whole

lifetime. I didn't become a worse person. But in the end there were a lot of conflicts. It was an essential reason for my decision to leave.

But the relationship to your mother didn't get worse?

No, I don't think so. But later I explained to my mother that this was one reason for me to go.

Your mother married again when you were twelve or thirteen.

I was thirteen.

And it was an enormous change for you? There existed many reasons for discussions?

Yes, more or less. I was a rather quiet child. I didn't discuss a lot. My sister is different in this regard. I tolerated this. But when you get older... I thought when I finish my studies I will be 24 and where to move? If you have such a big house in Bucharest it would not be reasonable to rent a flat.

And there was simply the wish to leave?

Yes, but as well to show I can make it on my own. I can manage this somehow. And some time I will cope with it.

We have seen that the participation of non-migrant family members in the decision of migration, or better, the participation of more persons than just the potential migrant in the decision-making is included in the set of theoretical models. But we may ask what can be said about family decision-making beyond economic calculations which are always linked to these assumptions? What do we know about migration decisions that evolve out of a family dissent or which were made with a negative assistance of another family member as we have seen in the brief introductory examples? Or what do we know about the decision-making within

the family concerning the destination country when the political respectively the security status of a country, for example, does not correspond with inner familial responsibilities and security needs²⁹? Here the topic breaks out of economic tintured theories of material exchange and well-being and additional interdisciplinary theory concepts of interfamilial emotional processes are useful.

Migration and its Impact on Family Relations, Communication and Remittance Sending

Migration can influence family relations in many respects and some of the most common forms for migrants to stay in contact with their families are communication, visits and the flux of remittances between migrants and their families.

In particular the latter is often stressed in scientific texts highlighting material and economic exchange between countries of destination and countries of origin. As it was proved earlier, remittance exchange from migrants in foreign countries to Romania is in fact a relevant source of hard currency for this country and the transfer of money has become much easier. But not all migrants are sending money home nor do those who do send equal amounts of money. And indeed migration can have an important impact on material and economic aspects of family life between both countries. But the importance of sending remittances to the migrant's family members remaining in Romania raises the question of how the relationship between migrant and non-migrant family members influences the sending of remittances.

The researcher Sarah A. Blue presents a theoretical model on the basis of structural and behavioural determinants of remittance sending for understanding the motivation of transfers between migrant and non-migrant family members of the nuclear family³⁰. She distinguishes between altruistic motivation to increase the wellbeing of family members, self-interest to purchase goods in order to maintain status, and mutually beneficial arrangements as part of a household diversification strategy to increase alternate resources of income. Further coordinates of interest in this theoretical model are the gender of the remitter and the time period away from home which can both play a role in these relations of material exchange³¹.

And migrant-non-migrant relations additionally include aspects apart from the family's economic life, for migration does not only refer to material aspects. Non-material, social family resources and social remittances³² might circulate as well, in both directions. Information flows or assistance with residence can create the possibility for potential migrants to leave their destination countries. Additionally, the possible economic dependence of the family left behind can enhance the migrant's status and the power of settling family disputes or deciding over future investment. This tendency can be further strengthened, for migrants can be highly selective in what they let their families know and might talk positively only about their new living conditions seeking to further enhance their family status. When the dependence of family members increases, the migrant's power in the family is likely to grow. Nevertheless, this describes only a possible modification of family relations due to migration. The process of migration, more generally spoken, might lead to various forms of new dynamics in the distribution of power

and status in family relations of migrant families³³.

Direct and indirect communication through visits, telephone calls and e-mail correspondance are the principal form of contact between migrants and their families. Sometimes they depend on the working conditions of the migrants:

How do you communicate with your migrant family members?

Monica³⁴: *Approximately every week. Either on Saturdays or on Sundays. Well, more often on Sundays because on this day my mother does not have to work. And in the evenings on Sundays she calls me and we regularly talk for half an hour. But for one year she worked in a family where she lived as well and there she was not allowed to call, so she only wrote e-mails.*

To my father who still lives in Romania I talk more scarcely, mainly every two weeks. And to my brothers I talk as well nearly every week.

(...)

And how did the relations between the family members change?

At the beginning, when my mother came back for the first time after two and a half years, it was quite strange to talk to her. We talked to each other before every week but it was not the same. Now I'm very close to my mother, we nearly talk about everything but for a period of nearly three years it was not a very intimate relationship. When she came back to Romania the second time we became closer. And now every year I visit her in Italy during summer for two months. Last year we worked together in Italy for this period. I think our relationship became normal.

With my brother it was the same; at the beginning there was a distance between us when he came back to Romania for visits. But in the last years we saw each

other more regularly. At the beginning it was very difficult for me to talk to him on the telephone. Now I got used to it and I can talk to him on the phone as if he were next to me. I don't feel the [geographical] distance when I talk to him on the phone. At the beginning it was like this: yes I'm fine, it's raining, we didn't talk about personal things. It was strange for me to talk to him on the phone but I got used to it and our relation became normal.

Irregular employment and live-in work³⁵ sometimes render communication and visits impossible. Especially for migrant domestic workers calling relatives abroad is sometimes not allowed because it is considered to be too expensive. Only e-mail contact is tolerated. Furthermore, relatives in Romania occasionally do not have their own telephone to receive telephone calls. Apart from the fact that telephone calls mostly range only between five and fifteen minutes once a week or every two weeks. This way day-by-day affairs mostly get discussed with other family members or friends that are closer. Additionally, betimes smaller children are not used to talk on the telephone and they need some time to learn that it can be a device to exchange not only news about how they are and what they do, but as well to exchange emotions in a comparable way like in situations of direct personal contact.

And when dealing with forms of communication we should also keep in mind those cases in which migrants left their families without saying a word about their plans. Here, to re-establish contact with one's family can be extremely difficult. More often than not migrants suffer from grievous feelings of guilt and the longer they break the ties with their families the more difficult it gets to build up new contacts. They might start with a letter

for they are afraid to talk to their families on the telephone. Likewise, it is not easy for the family left behind to re-establish any contact. For a long time migration and thus communication with the migrant family member might be connected to a former traumatic, angst-ridden state of bereavement.

Migration and its Impact on the Family Structure

Irina's grandmother migrated to Germany in 1987, eleven years after her husband escape from Romania.

Monica's brother had a German girlfriend since long time ago. Every summer holiday she came with her parents to stay in their summerhouse in Romania. Five years ago he migrated to Germany and married his girlfriend; he now has his own family in Germany.

When their mother began to work abroad, conflicts between their parents began to grow. Since they could not see each other for two and a half years for she worked illegally they finally got divorced half a year later.

The social structure of families can change through migration. Members might begin to play a different role or they have to fulfil several different roles that had been shared with or had been occupied by migrant family members prior to their migration so that they have to fill this vacancy. And families can be separated through migration and later be unified again. Or on the one hand new members from abroad can join the family through marriage and thus the size of the family extends. On the other hand, family ties between family members may break up through divorce. In particular in cases of

migration trajectories with long periods of irregular employment visits to the country of origin might be impossible and this can give rise to a process of alienation between spouses.

Additionally, relationships with more distant relatives can intensify³⁶. Especially when nuclear family members are totally dispersed to other countries and do not visit their family members left behind, contacts with other more reachable relative families might become closer.

Migration and its Impact on Education and Occupation Child Rearing

Irina was raised by her mother and by her grandfather, who had already raised his own two children on his own when he got divorced from his wife :

How did your father's migration influence your education ?

Irina³⁷ : My grandfather was a physician and I decided to study medicine, too, but after one year I broke off. Maybe, if my father had stayed with us I would not have made the decision to become a physician because in this respect he was much more relaxed, he took life easier. But after my father had left, my grandfather became a model for me.

Your grandfather was like a father for you ?

Yes.

And did your mother and your grandfather quarrel a lot concerning your upbringing ?

No. He was the man in the house and he was a very ambitious person. And he wanted me to be very ambitious, too, all the time. He wanted me to take part in competitions, to be the best in school. When my father had been at home, it was

much more relaxed: to be the first was not necessary, to be the second was absolutely ok, and to be the third was sufficient. So this made quite a big difference in how I grew up. When my father had been with us we played much more, there was more fun and relaxation. After he had left there was much more work and ambition.

And it was not difficult for you to accept your grandfather?

No, because he had stayed with us since I was born. He had always been there while until his migration my father had always had his own flat. He had lived with us, but at the same time he had always had his own apartment. Two weeks he lived with us, one week he stayed alone in his flat. My grandfather had always been important for me and when my father had left he was the only man at home and he even became more important for me. (...) Before, my father and my mother made decisions with the help of my grandfather or my grandparents or someone else. After my father's migration it was my mother and my grandfather who made decisions with the help of others. My mother made everyday decisions like what to eat, what to do and where to go for the holidays and my grandfather made long-term decisions.

Andrea and Constantin migrated to Germany five years ago. Together they have a small daughter who is nine months old. Andrea still has a part-time and Constantin a full-time employment so that their mothers came three times to Germany to look after their grandchild for periods of six to eight weeks each time.

In her case study, "The Transnational Villagers", about a transnational community between Boston (USA) and Miraflores

(Dominican Republic), the Sociologist Peggy Levitt gives an idea of how relationships between children and their parents and roles of the different generations in the family can change due to migration³⁸. Children are often left behind by their migrant parents, who cannot visit them very frequently. Then they stay with their grandparents. By this families get more extended and usually more distant relatives get closer to one another. Nuclear family boundaries become more fluid. Likewise, as we have already seen, communication, mostly through telephone, does exist. And although there is always something missing, parents and other migrant family members play a role in making decisions and negotiating relations of power. They might be regarded as being always reachable. Nevertheless, this situation of child rearing can hardly grant an enclosing satisfying emotional condition of childhood. Even though on the one hand older children might be put in charge of their younger siblings, so that they learn earlier to take responsibility for their younger siblings, on the other hand these fluid family arrangements can weaken authority for clear attachment figures are missing. It might stimulate the process of building up a latent image of a "generalized adult" leading to the unpleasant and confusing feeling for the child that there is not really one person generally in charge of him or her. And for the parents, this can cause the problem that demanding respect from their children gets nearly impossible.

Finally, parents cannot make up for the time they have lost with their children and the great geographical distance between the different family members might only reflect the difficulties between parents and children in communicating with each other, by the way relationships between siblings who are located in different countries can

change as well. Regardless if telephone rates are quite expensive or relatively cheap it can exist a level of insecurity in this mode of communication. Are instructions really carried out? Are the children really feeling good when they say so? Or do the children threaten their grandparents to tell their parents something they should not have heard? Or maybe grandparents are too tired, to go through everything again when caring for their grandchildren?

And non-migrant family members can provide assistance in child rearing in the country of destination, too. Especially when migrant parents are both employed and have small children for whom they still cannot apply for national caring assistance through kindergartens or nurseries they might appeal to relatives from their country of origin for additional help. Thus their own parents or siblings come for longer visits to look after the children.

Education³⁹

Monica's brother finished secondary school in Romania. Then he migrated to Germany to live together with his German girlfriend whom he knew already from her holiday visits in Romania. In Germany he studied foreign languages. He finished his studies one year ago.

Migration can have various influences on the education of family members. Mostly it leads to an improved economic situation of the family so that investment in education and human capital gets easier. Parents might work abroad to sustain their children's education in Romania or migrants themselves might profit from different or supplementary training programmes in other countries completing their qualifying skills. And in other cases setting up one's own family in another country might enlarge the migrant's educational prospects abroad.

But not always does this shift from one educational system to another happen voluntarily. Especially for children this change is sometimes problematic. Either their parents decide for them to leave or children decide on their own to follow their parents because they want to stay with them or they are curious about a new country but do not know much about the possible difficulties this can imply. Language problems and difficulties in understanding their new surrounding can lead to disorientation and frustration. In addition, the relation to their parents often changes for in a lot of cases they toil under hard working conditions and do not have time for their children or they are overstrained with the situation and act as if nothing had happened. In other cases children might realize that their family life differs from the one of other children they get to know and for that reason separate themselves from their parents.

Migration trajectories, especially these of children, have many unknown quantities and here only a sample of experiences can be given. But also for adult migrants, even if they have children on their own who already left their parents' house, migration can stand for a life period full of new beginnings, new orientations and new negotiations of one's own role and status in the family unit.

Occupation and Working Carriers

Monica's mother was a housewife before she migrated to Italy. Now she earns her own money with skills she learned and practised when she lived with her family in Piatra Neamţ. Herewith she makes her own living and she is even able to financially support her daughter, who is a student in Bucharest. Two years ago she got divorced from her husband.

Elvira's mother was a housewife as well, before she followed her husband to

Italy. Now she found labour as a domestic worker and stays together with her husband in Italy.

Occupation and working carriers of migrants can stand in close relation to family life in Romania when they directly have an influence on the role and the status of the migrant in the family and thus on the distribution of roles and statuses in the whole nuclear family. As repeatedly mentioned financial crises in the family household often form a key motivation for migration and therefore strategies get invented to activate all the available resources to receive new sources of additional income. In this context working carriers of family members can obtain new dynamic force and gender relations can be newly defined.

Especially women who stay at home as housewives living according to a gender-specific role model that defines reproductive tasks nearly exclusively to the woman and productive labour to the man appear to form a high potential of temporary, sometimes seasonal migration. This coheres with the high demand of labour force in the reproductive labour sector in western and central European countries. In migration research the concept of *segmented labour market theory* reflects this cause of international movement. It argues that especially demand of labour for unskilled work at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy that is not attractive for native workers is filled with the importation of migrant workers⁴⁰.

Many Romanian women are domestic workers abroad or work as chambermaids and doorkeepers in hotels along the Mediterranean Sea in Italy or Spain. And in Romania their husbands and children are left behind managing the household on their own by learning how to cook, how to wash and how to clean up. Besides the

transfer of reproductive tasks, migration of female parents, who oftentimes function as intermediate contact persons between the different generations in the family body, can make new paths of communication and negotiation between the remaining family members:

How is the atmosphere now when the whole family comes together?

Radu⁴¹: *There is much more joy and much more understanding. The atmosphere now is much more positive and optimistic. Relations are much more calm and controlled in comparison to four or five years ago. We all have made our own experiences, everyone has his own role. And we all come together with the different roles we play in the different countries and different regions where we live. My mother has made new experiences and she has changed and my father has changed as well because he now lives alone. He gained new responsibilities in the house. He learnt how to cook. Before migrating my mother did it all by herself. When my mother comes home he washes the dishes, he cooks, he cleans the house. And my mother was very amazed when she saw how he had changed. And he is much more calm in comparison to before, much more controlled. And he feels more responsible. Before her migration my mother had to manage the household. Here in Romania women usually make the food, tidy up and take care of the children.*

Usually, the husband gives orders or well, he is occupied with the labor and the wife takes care of the household. Now my father is alone at home and he has to manage everything on his own. He changed his behavior.

And what about your mother? Maybe, before her migration she was the centre of the family, she coordinated family life. Did this change?

Relations, attributions and roles changed in our family. Before, my mother had a lot of responsibilities especially in the household. Now her attributions got reduced. What I want to say is... When my mother comes back for visits the first days she behaves according to her roles she has in Italy. Roles she has to play when she works in Italy. After some time she changes her behavior and adapts to her more traditional role in the household she had before. She begins to relax from the role she plays in Italy and comes back to her old role. The first three or four days she is Italian then she becomes more and more a traditional Romanian housewife. And when we talk on the phone she plays her Italian role. And when she talks on the phone with Italians she is like an Italian.

And her consumption habits changed as well, when she cooks for Christmas for example?

Yes, she knows much more names of dishes, she knows the Italian way of living, the Italian mass-media, she has her own TV. She knows Berlusconi and the stars. And when she is at home she tries to bring both roles into balance.

(...)

How did the relation between your parents change?

They communicate more objectively, they talk more about important things. They both have their own attributions and responsibilities. They no longer have a simple traditional domestic relation.

And the relation is closer now?

There still exists a relation, they both phone each other nearly every day. My mother has gained more authority. Before, my father commanded and my mother did as he wished. Now, my mother, because she earns her own money and more than my father, has gained more rights and

power, my father's authority got reduced. Now there exists an equilibrium of power between both. She gained more rights and more respect.

Gender relations can change as well. Contributing to the family income or sometimes providing the family income all alone might bring the woman into another relation with her husband and children. Even though her labour tasks might not differ very much from those she fulfilled before her migration, she now increases the economic capital of the family unit and this can lead to more respect, authority and rights and can equilibrate the power relation between all. Therefore, migrant women might change their ideas about women's roles in their country of origin in response to their more active engagement in the workplace. In the long run, this can help build up an over-generational process of emancipation of women and to increase the level of equality between men and women.

Conclusion

So far we can resume that some relevant approaches to deal with migration on the family level already exist. We have seen that family ties can work as a network and explicate this referring to the concept of different kinds of capital, especially *social capital*. We can link these forms of capital to the actor-related framework of *practice* implying the usage of certain *strategies*. Furthermore, we can refer to more economically biased models of migration that allow a family perspective on migration, such as the theory of *new economics* and the assumption of *cumulative causation*. Herewith we gained some important tools to deal with phenomena that meet the eye when we look at family lives and family histories of migrant families.

Likewise it has become clear that most of the migration theories are predominantly limited to the explanation of the causes of migration to the detriment of the social impact of migration.

It turned out that motivation and decision-making of migration on the family level do not necessarily imply calculations on (family) income and material benefit nor do they always take place with positive reference to family relations. Migration can sometimes be considered as a liberation from family ties and in cases of involuntary migration family members might conceive their family's social capital as a constraint to leave their country of origin. Relevant to this we additionally want to appeal for a generational approach to migration experiences on the family level.

Moreover, we have seen that migration can have an impact on the structure of a family. Referring to our understanding of family as relations of material and symbolic exchange we can conclude that experiences of migration continuously modify resources of family relationships. In this context we have gained an insight in different types of communication and correspondence. Communication between migrants and their family members left behind is contingent upon the migrant's labour status; illegal employment is likely to render regular contact more difficult. Additionally, apart from the migrant-non-migrant contact, here social and material remittance sending and its dependence on the closeness of family ties is of special interest, migration of family members can lead to a new organization of family life. Therefore, migration research on the family

level should take family life before, during and after migration into account.

Education and child rearing of family members in the sending and in the receiving country often change as well. On the one hand migration can directly elevate the migrant's education due to supplementary training programmes abroad and on the other hand non-migrant family members might profit from migration through an increase in the family budget for educational expenses. And with respect to child rearing, altered family arrangements differently shape childhood with clear emotional consequences.

Finally, we have seen that migration research on the family level also needs to take gender aspects into account. Migration experiences of female family members are likely to change woman's status in the family. Through external labour migration women often significantly contribute to the family income. Hereby and through their mere absence in the household which obliges the remaining family members to manage the household on their own, women oftentimes renegotiate the distribution of power and gradually receive more respect and authority in the family unit.

Migration transforms family life. And the social impact of migration on family life is both positive and negative, because the effects of migration experiences are highly dependent on the family context they are embedded in and herewith on the different stages of the life cycle the family members represent. We should pay more attention to this multifaceted field of research and find strong conceptual devices that help us to frame it.

Notes

1. The term *migrant family* stands for a family that had or still has at least one family member abroad for a minimum time period of one year.
2. Altogether I took interviews with family members of eight different migrant families from Roman (Neamț), Piatra Neamț (Neamț), Galați (Galați), Ploiești (Prahova), București (-), Craiova (Dolj), Alexandria (Teleorman). The interview partners were all between the ages of 22 and 29 and of originally urban residency in Romania. They all were either students or had already finished their studies. Their parents were partly from rural regions but had moved without exception to urban centres. Regarding the parents education some had graduated from school after eight years and others had finished their studies.
3. I took interviews with representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, the Ministry of European Integration, the Delegation of the European Commission, the syndicate Cartel Alfa and the labour agency Obiettivo Lavoro.
4. Sandu, Dumitru. (1984). *Fluxurile de Migrație în România*. București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 24.
5. Voinea, Maria. (1993). *Sociologia familiei*. București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 111.
6. Bourdieu, Pierre. (1987). *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 299. [*Le sens pratique*].
7. Voinea, Maria. (1993). *Sociologia familiei*, București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, 112.
8. *Ibid.*, 112. Roles always exist in connection with a certain status. In a married couple, for example, it stands for the behaviour of both spouses according to the position they possess in the hierarchy of their marriage including corresponding rights and obligations.
9. *Ibid.*, 44-51.
10. Bourdieu, Pierre. (1979). *Entwurf einer Theorie der Praxis*. Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 77.
11. *Ibid.*, 100. [Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique].
12. Bourdieu, Pierre. (1992). Die feinen Unterschiede. In: Steinruecke, Margareta (ed.). *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht*. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 63.
13. To receive a strong relationship of mutual material and symbolic exchange a minimum of homogeneity and closeness is needed. Family ties are fitting into this feature because they are usually very tight and full of trust and solidarity and time, effort and resources invested can be cashed in later in the form of help and advice or financial assistance. Especially in cases of irregular migration social capital can be of enormous importance.
14. Bourdieu, Pierre. (1992). Die feinen Unterschiede. In: Steinruecke, Margareta (ed.). *Die verborgenen Mechanismen der Macht*. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag, 65.
15. Pries, Ludger. (1996). Transnationale Soziale Räume. Theoretisch-empirische Skizze am Beispiel der Arbeitswanderungen Mexico-USA. In: *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 25 (6), 465.
16. Massey, Douglas S. (1990). Social Structure, Household Strategies and the Cumulative Causation of Migration. In: *Population Index*, 56, 17.
17. Wallace, Claire. (2001). Conceptual Challenges from the New Migration Space. In: Wallace, Claire and Stola, Dariusz (eds). *Patterns of Migration in Central Europe*. New York: Palgrave, 51.
18. This chapter reflects experiences of migration of an exemplary migrant family. It illustrates how family life can change due to migration. I took the interview about the Vasilescu family with Irina (23) in Romanian.
19. The last time he came to Romania was in September 2002. He now comes nearly every two years. He doesn't have a lot of holidays, only three weeks every year. One year they go to Spain and the other year they come to Romania.
20. All she knows about her father and her grandmother she describes as general ideas. The family members left in Romania do not know the details, she says.

21. Irina's father has one sister. She married in Pitești. After the death of her father, her mother moved from Bucharest to Pitești.
22. This chapter presents only a selection of possible motivations and steps of decision-making reflecting the empirical material the article is based on.
23. As of February 2005, 9% of households, or approximately 650.000, reported at least one member working abroad, with an average of 1,3 family members per household. This accounts for approximately 850.000 adult Romanians. The average Romanian migrant is preponderantly male, between 15 and 44 years old, lives in an urban region, has high school and vocational school education and is a well-educated non-manual and skilled worker. IOM (2005), *Risks of Irregular Migration to EU Countries 2003-2005: What has changed?* Research report in preparation of a nationwide information campaign.
24. Massey, Douglas S. (1998). *Contemporary Theories of International Migration*. In: Massey, Douglas S. et al., *Worlds in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*. Oxford: Clarendon Press Oxford, 21. Potential migrants, for example, sometimes can only cover the financial costs for migration with the help of other family members' partial payment.
25. Landale, Nancy S. (1997). *Immigration and the Family: An Overview*. In: Booth, Alan, Crouter, Ann C., Landale, Nancy (eds). *Immigration and the Family*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. 283.
26. Massey, Douglas S. (1990). Social structure, household strategies and the cumulative causation of migration. In: *Population Index*, 56, 17.
27. Mihail did not tell his family when he migrated illegally from Galați to Lyon with the help of his friend Mario who was from Galați, too. After two weeks, they arrived in Lyon and Mario talked to his parents. This way Mihail's parents finally got informed as well.
28. Nicole (24) from Bucharest left for Germany four years ago to continue there her studies in German and English. In the meanwhile she broke off her studies and married in Germany. When she came to Germany one of her cousins was already there. The interview was held in German.
29. Elvira's father worked temporarily in Israel between 1995 and 2000. Then the whole family decided that staying longer in Israel was too dangerous for him, that is why he continued to work abroad in Italy.
30. Blue, Sarah A. (2004). State Policy, Economic Crisis, Gender, and Family Ties: Determinants of Family Remittances to Cuba. *Economic Geography*, 80 (1), 64-65.
31. In this article we only want to mention this theoretical model to further link the aspect of sending remittances to relations between family members.
32. Social remittances are a conceptual tool including ideas, behaviors, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving- to sending-countries. See: Levitt, Peggy (1998), Social remittances. Migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. In: *The International Migration Review*, 32 (4), 926.
33. Especially in cases of migration from a rural background, family members and the wider social context of the community can exercise a big influence on the migrant's symbolic, social and economic capital in the region of his origin. See: Roberts, Kenneth D. Morris, Michael D. S. (2003). Fortune, Risk and Remittances: An Application of Option Theory to Participation in Village-Based Migration Networks. In: *The International Migration Review*, 37 (4), 1252-1281.
34. Monica (23) from Piatra Neamț. Her father migrated temporarily to Turkey between 1994 and 1996. In 2001 her mother migrated illegally to Italy; therefore she could not visit her family until she got an employment contract. One of her brothers migrated definitely to Germany. The second brother migrated illegally several times. Recently he was caught at the frontier; now he is not allowed to leave the country for five years. The interview was held in Romanian.
35. *Live-in work* signifies that the domestic worker lives at the working place. Here the migrant does not have to search for accommodation but meanwhile it can be taken for granted that

- the employee is all the time available; so, the domestic worker has only little or no private life.
36. Elvira attained a closer relationship with her uncle's family than she had before her family's migration. On celebration days and nearly every two weeks when she looks after her parents' apartment she visits her uncle's family that lives 40 kilometres away from there. Likewise did the relationship with more distant family members, who are now in Italy, become more distant.
 37. See in this article: The case of the Vasilescu Family. The interview was held in Romanian.
 38. Levitt, Peggy. (2001). *The Transnational Villagers*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 74-83.
 39. This subdivision in child rearing and education reflects the differences between the German terms *Erziehung* and *Bildung*. *Erziehung* stands more for the inner-family education while *Bildung* signifies the education at school and the further qualification process.
 40. Massey, Douglas S. (1998). Theories of International Migration. In: Massey, Douglas S. et al. (eds), *Worlds in Motion. Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millennium*, Oxford: Clarendon Press Oxford, 28-34. In this context we need to take into account that the growing demand of labour in sectors of the labour market that are feminized encourages women to become migrants. Therefore it is time to take gender much more into consideration and to include it in theories of migration.
 41. Radu (23) from Roman is a student in Bucharest. His mother migrated to Italy in 2001. His older brother migrated to Spain in 2000. His sister is a student in Iași. The interview was held in Romanian.

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