

Gender and Migration-Driven Changes in Rural Eastern Romania. Migrants' Perspectives

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Abstract: The article addresses the largely debated linkages between gender and migration, on the one hand, and the impact of migration on migrants' society of origin, on the other hand. Based on multi-sited research conducted in a village from Eastern Romania and in Rome (the main destination of the population studied), this paper highlights gender differences in the participation to migration process and in the contribution of migrants to the socio-economic development of their society. Using a qualitative methodology based on semi-structured interviews with migrants and participant observations, the research reveals different meanings that migrants (women and men) invest in their actions (i.e. transfers of ideas, money or durable goods and set-up of small local businesses). This study contributes to the understanding of the gendered contribution of migrants to the economic and socio-cultural transformations of their society of origin.

Keywords: *gender, migration, economic development, local changes, Italy.*

I feel accomplished...If I hadn't had this experience and had not gone abroad, I would have never raised a homelike house in which to lead a decent life, I would have never had this possibility. Wasn't it for Italy, I would have been a have-not. Going abroad also broadened my horizons. I could see the world as it is, and the world is different from what it is like at home. There I could see how people think, I could see their worldview. When you are a domestic worker in Italy, you spend the time in houses of engineers, doctors, and teachers. Can you understand this, that you do not come upon housewives... I had a hard time coming back

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to Romania and seeing how people are biased in their reasoning. Malice, gossip... You can't exchange a word with anybody, because the latter ponders you: why you have this and that... Because people are all pin heads here. (Dora, 34 years old, mother of two children, returned home in 2006 after 11 years in Italy).

Migrants' own assessments regarding changes brought by their experience of migration are often overlooked by researches dealing with the nexus between migration and development. As a consequence, some contradictions are arising from the comparisons between researchers' findings, policy makers' and migrants' perspectives as actors engaged directly or indirectly in the management of migration process in order to enhance the benefits of migration for both destination and origin countries. This paper addresses the need to understand *development* as a more complex issue, beyond purely economic indicators, and to take into account the meanings attached to it by migrants men and women as well. Needless to say, migrants are not a homogenous group from the point of view of their socio-demographic characteristics (gender, age, education level, ethnic belonging, etc.) and therefore their aspirations and the meanings they invest in their actions may have different connotations, according to their various characteristics. This paper addresses especially migrants' gender differences in the study of migration-driven changes in the place of origin. My choice was informed by the research's empirical findings, as well as by the present debates within the international literature in the field of migration and development.

Gender, migration and development

Theoretical considerations

Gender, understood as a 'constitutive element of gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and [...] a primary way of signifying relationships of power' (Scott, 1986: 1067), recently became an important analytical category of many researches in the field of labour migration. As shown by Lutz (2010) and Mahler and Pessar (2006), women have been long-time considered dependent migrants, following their husbands or fathers abroad, and their economic role has been made invisible since many women entered the host country through the process of family reunification and not as economic migrants. Although in the last four or five decades women become as numerous as men migrants (Zlotnik, 2003), it is only starting with 1980s that researchers acknowledge that women not only migrate at the same rate as men, but they also undertake economic active roles during migration and thus contribute to the raising of living standard of their families left behind and to the development of their communities of origin (Sørensen, 2005). Nonetheless, there is little concern within these researches

regarding the wage differences between men and women, the gendered motivations to invest home or the inequalities between households with preponderantly men migrants abroad and those with more women labour migrants.

De Haas (2010) offers a helpful overview of researches on migration and development nexus and the often contradictory findings of these researches. Some findings suggest positive effects of migration through remittances on development (e.g. an appreciation in the exchange rate, support for securing foreign loans, poverty alleviation, the prospects of productive investments), while others highlight the negative effects of remittances (e.g. economic dependency of remittances-receiving countries, conspicuous consumption by the recipients of remittances, rising inequality between households having members abroad and other households), according to different theoretical paradigms which informed social researchers throughout the past decades. The author rightly argues that the main shortcomings of those studies rely on the fact that the researchers consider the migration as an exogenous variable of the social change, instead of addressing the migration as an endogenous component of social transformation. Portes (2010) also concludes that migration is both a *form* of change as well as a *cause* of social transformation, and implicitly of economic development as an aspect of broader social changes: *Migration is, of course, change and it can lead, in turn, to further transformations in sending and receiving societies* (Portes, 2010 : 1544). The author also adds that

the changes may be more important in the countries of origin than in the countries of destination, but the depth and durability of these changes differ depending on the *number* of migrants, the *duration of migration*, and the characteristics of migrant population.

Another shortcoming of these studies concerning the linkages between migration and development is that often researchers embrace different normative assumptions about development upon which they build their arguments of what should be done in order to achieve a certain level of development (Bartram, 2010). Dannecker (2009) also points to a wide shared assumption of migrants' responsibility toward their societies often made by researchers and policy makers in this field. Migrants may not share (or they might even ignore) the views of national and supranational organizations about development. Likewise, migrants' achievement of personal goals might not be in total accordance with local policies aiming to reduce socio-economic inequalities that are often considered as hindering development (de Haas, 2009).

Prior empirical findings

Research findings from a survey carried out on 1128 households from Philippines with members working abroad (Semyonov and Gorodzeisky, 2005) show that women and men choose different destination countries and take on different types of jobs: women usually work as domestics or care workers in countries from Eastern Asia, while men work in manufacturing industries in countries from Middle East and they earn on

average 1.5 more than their women counterparts. Taking into account the larger amounts of remittances sent by men migrants to their families, the authors argue that a great share of inequalities between the families left behind in Philippines may be explained by the fact that some families send more men members abroad, while other families send more women. Migrant women remit on average 45% of their income, while men migrant remit 60% of their earnings abroad. These findings contradict other findings (*cf.* Tacoli, 1999) according to which women from Philippines working in Rome perform economically better than their male counterparts and have a more responsible and altruist behaviour toward their families even after they get married.

Another qualitative research (Suksomboon 2008) sheds light on the economic and social changes taking place in a Thai community through economic and social remittances sent by migrant women married in Netherlands. 'Social remittances' represents 'the ideas, behaviours, identities, and social capital that flow from receiving-to sending-country communities.' (Levitt, 1998: 927). These ideas and behaviours brought by migrants during their visits or when they settle back in the origin communities may also influence the life style of non-migrants belonging to these communities. Suksomboon shows that women, a part from sending important amounts of money home (between 100 and 700 de euro, depending on their incomes in Netherlands and according to families' needs), they also bring ideas and practices reproducing the European life style, and further influencing the marital

selection in the place of origin. In line with Tacoli's (1999) results, this study also reveals that for families in home countries might be more beneficial to have women members abroad due to their likelihood get married in Europe. Their families in Thailand may enjoy therefore symbolic and material benefits. Suksomboon also highlights the financial contribution of these migrant women who invest in local development projects (*i.e.* new schools, hospitals and churches), and these investments bring them social recognition and improve the social status of their families within the community. There are also negative effects of these remittances, as pointed out by Suksomboon: increased competition between families who have daughters married abroad, rising inequalities between households with and without such members, and overwhelming constraints felt by some daughters toward the moral obligation to send money to their parents in order to comply with the norm of intergenerational solidarity widely shared by their community of origin.

Although there is a certain consensus among researchers concerning the fact that men and women do not remit to the same extent and with the same regularity, some issues are still unclear and not sufficiently addressed. For instance, there is little information about the motivations behind the economic behaviours of migrants, men and women, or about socio-cultural norms constraining/enabling some migrants to remit more than others, as well the meanings attached by different categories of migrants to the personal and/or community development. The present paper aims to contribute to the

knowledge of these issues through the analysis of an illustrative case from the point of view of the Romanian labour migration in Italy within the past two decades. Some recent researches (de Sousa and Duval 2010, Rossi and Botti, 2010) already highlighted the importance of remittances by Romanians working in Italy, but they not consider the gender dimension or the migrants' subjective assessments about their participation to remittances.

Research frame

Italy – main destination of Romanian labour migrants

Italy and Spain, traditionally known as emigration countries until 1970s, are in the present the most important destination countries of labour migrants in Europe, Romanians being the most numerous migrant community in these countries. According to SOPEMI (2010), our registration system underestimates the number of persons who leave the country in order to seek job opportunities abroad since an important share of these persons do not inform the Romanian authorities when they leave or when they settle abroad. The number of Romanians in Italy it is estimated at around 1 million (Caritas-Migrantes, 2010). Other sources indicate similar estimates. According to SOPEMI (2010), Romanians make up the largest immigrant community in Italy, and the evolution of gender composition shows an increasing feminization of Romanian migrant flows to Italy. Since 2008 Romanian women are exceeding their male counterparts in Italy.

The present study is based on a research undertook in Eastern Romania in a region where people are mostly oriented toward Italy as destination for labour migration (Sandu, 2007). Figures are only part of this reality of these communities which are presently undergoing demographic, socio-economic and cultural transformations more or less observables, whose depth and durability are not yet known. The meanings migrants attach to this emergent realities are however important to explore in order to understand the depth of these undergoing transformations. This paper aims therefore to examine these transformations brought by migration in origin communities through the analysis of interviews with migrants (men and women) belonging to a rural community from Eastern Romania.

Data and methods

The research rely on multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995), in which the researcher follows the object under scrutiny (*follow the people*), in order to understand the extent to which different socio-economic contexts affect migrants' practices and behaviours and the way in which the migrant actors respond to new constraints and opportunities. I have carried out fieldworks in a Romanian village (Eastern Romania) as well as in Lazio, the region which surrounds Rome (host Italian provinces of Genzano, Veletri, Albano) in 2000, 2003, 2006 and 2010. Long-term participant observations in migrants' community of origin enabled to understand the way of using remittances from Italy, the nature of investments made by

migrants in building new, the changes in gender and intergenerational relations underpinning these types of investments. In addition, data gathered through semi-structured interviews brought information about socio-economic situation prior to migration, family situation, gendered access to the resources (i.e. money for tourist visa, information about labour opportunities, etc.) enabling migration, creation of kinship and ethnic migrant networks, migrants participation to labour market in Italy, motivations to return in Romania. I have conducted 52 interviews, out of which 20 are realised between October-December 2010 with migrant returnees lately settled in their village. The mean age of interviewed returnees is 39 years old, women being slightly younger than men. On average, they lived in Italy for ten years before returning home, men having a longer migration experience than women in the sample of returnees. In order to protect migrants' identity I have used pseudonyms. The analysis of interviews was done after *verbatim* transcription of interviews and through the identification of key themes established previously. These themes refer to socio-economic remittances, migrant's family situation, family members left in the country, the orientation toward society of origin/destination, migrants' assessments with regard to the achievement of their projects during migration, satisfaction with living standard upon return, evaluation of changes in local traditions. The most important gender differences that appeared in the analysis are synthesised in the following sections.

Gender and participation to labour migration

The growing difficulties raised by the post-communist transition in Romania lead many people to choose migration as a strategy of life (Sandu, 2000). The migration toward Italy begins in 1992-1993, according to our interviews and participant observations. Other destination countries like Turkey and Hungary were in the meantime explored by some young single men migrants from rural communities of Eastern Romania. These countries were considered rather as a test for potential labour migrants because they were considered easier to reach for their geographical proximity and lower travel costs, but also because people tested their capacity to adapt to a new culture, to a new work ethic thought as different from the local one. Once someone proved capable to adapt to such an experience, it becomes easier to take the decision to explore other remote destinations, as Italy:

First, I went first to Turkey for six months, in early 1996. It is there that I saw the way people work abroad. At the beginning I was afraid that I could not eat their meals, but I have soon understood that their meals are better than ours, I mean they cook lighter food. Then I saw that I have survived to hard work on a construction site. I went to a site where there were other young men from here who have been in Turkey before and I said to them: *listen, men, take me with you because I want to come in Turkey me too!* So I choose first Turkey because I wanted to see if I can

make it, and because it wasn't so expensive to go there and in case I was not capable to adapt I could soon return... One usually goes in Turkey for 60 days, so every two months one should return and then go back again if he wants. It was hard the first two months; I did not understand a word in Turkish. Little by little I began to write in Turkish ... (Ivan, 47, single, high school graduate, went to Italy in 1997, returned in 2009, interviewed in November 2010)

Unlike men from this region, women begin to migrate later on and are generally excluded from migratory selection to countries like Turkey and Hungary. In order to reach Italy, women need to overcome many constraints: lack of economic resources to buy a tourist visa, a common procedure before 2002, as well as limited access to migrant networks (Vlase, 2006) and local stereotypes concerning the inappropriate or immoral behaviour of migrant women. The freedom of circulation granted to Romanians travelling in Schengen area in 2002 and the extension of migrant networks lead to increased opportunities of women to leave the country and to have access to information and jobs in Italy, especially in domestic services (i.e. housekeeping, care work or babysitting):

Now women go for Italy also because lately it became easier for foreign women to find a job there. Now, when you leave the country you know what's there. My younger sister was already in Italy. She is 33 years old and she works as domestic *live-in* and she lent me the money needed to

obtain a tourist visa. Now I have to repay her the loan of 1600\$. Now you can have a round trip with only 200 Euros, but I have left before 2002. (Ana, 40 years old, married, mother of 4 children, interviewed in the place of origin to 22/12/2002).

The feminisation of Romanian migration is an undeniable trend today. Despite their later participation to migration process, and their shorter migration experience in Italy, women play an important but often ignored role in social and economic remittances directed toward their families and communities of origin.

Meanings of economic and social remittances

Since the early 1990s, the Romanian financial remittances, whether by formal or through informal means (by relatives or fellow villagers who came to visit families) have improved the quality of life of families left behind, as it was revealed through long-term participant observations direct in home communities. These incomes have not only improved living conditions of families in the country (houses were repaired, they were provided with new equipment, with appliances, new houses were build¹), but enhanced the access to public services (health, education of children) and consumer goods (clothing, footwear and food). However, frequency, types and uses of these remittances take different meanings depending on gender. Their analysis allows a better understanding of the relationship between migration and its impact on development.

Emancipation as an outcome of migration in women's narratives

Throughout the interviews carried out with migrant women working in Italy, most often in domestic services, the most important place is taken by the significance of their social remittances. Paradoxically, at first sight, despite the low status assigned these jobs (without full recognition and characterized by relatively low remuneration), women attach them preponderantly positive meanings that can be interpreted as various senses of emancipation. One of the most spread meanings refers to the enlargement of knowledge experiences. For instance, there are strong evidences throughout the observations and the interviews with women, that migrant women highly value some ideas, identities or practices brought by their migration experience. As Dora put it in the excerpt of the interview reproduced in the argument of this paper, an important achievement of her migration in Italy, a part from the material ones, is represented by her new 'horizon of knowledge'. Close contacts with the Italian upper-middle class families (*of engineers, doctors or professors*) for whom she worked enable her to cross the social boundaries of her origin. Romanian migrant women selectively take on new ideas and identities from those families. This aspect was also highlighted by Gallo (2006) for Indian immigrant women in Italy. The contrast outlined by Dora between the societies of origin and destination is meant to put more emphasis on the personal value she invests in these social remittances. This has a special importance for her new social position within the community of origin against

which she considers to distinguish herself through moral conduit and a superior way of thinking. Another illustration of emancipation achieved through social remittances refers, in Mioara's view, to the fact that now she places herself at the same level with people from developed countries. In other words, the woman thinks that she learnt new skills that help her progress and overcome the under-development (here understood as backwardness or lack of sound thinking):

For example, while I was working there for an Italian family who faced some problems I have come to give them advices on how to solve them, me, who at the beginning only received advices from them, now, I was in a position to coach. (Mioara, 37 years old, mother of two children, returned from Italy in 2007, interviewed in the place of origin in November 2010).

However, despite material and symbolic benefits migrants and their families obtain from such remittances, sometimes they are critically assessed in the societies of origin. There are also situations in which these new ideas and practices encounter opposition from other household members in the village. For instance, in the case of young families who seek to adopt a more egalitarian division of domestic chores, visits in Romania sometimes prove to be occasions for conflicts and debates over the way in which things should be done, as Emilia put it:

We were taught that in a household the mother should do all the domestic chores, but today people have changed. I had problems

when I was home because I was used in Italy to ask my husband to help me do one thing or another, like making a coffee or suspending the laundry. My family, especially my grandmother, asked me: *How can you tell your man you to do that for you?! (Emilia, 25 years old, married, interviewed in Italy on 3.03. 2003)*

Egalitarian division of domestic work between spouses is considered as a main indicator of gender equalities in developed countries, while it is far from being a norm in Romanian rural communities where asymmetric power relations between men and women or between generations prevail. Therefore, when migrants attempt to balance this gendered division of labour, they may be criticized or sanctioned. Upon return in Romania, partners usually take on traditional family roles: women as caretakers and men as breadwinners. Women may therefore wish to postpone their return since there the social control of origin community or of the extended family is weak, and women may have more space for renegotiation of their position and duties within family: 'My husband is easy to manipulate by his relatives or his pairs. In Italy he used to help me especially with childrearing duties, as we have to do this by ourselves, but he immediately changed these habits upon return and now act according to village's mentality.' (Elena, 40 years old, mother of two children, returned in 2006, after 11 years in Italy).

Gender and economic remittances

In what concerns economic remittances, women send money or in-kinds

remittances especially to children left in the village, and sometimes to their parents when those latter have urgent needs, like health related problems. This way of women's participation to economic remittances is found is also common in Albania where especially men send remittances to their families, while women send money just 'for a coffee' (King *et al.*, 2006). Rural Romanian and Albanian societies share many similarities with concern to the household organisation according to which women join husbands' families after marriage and have limited power of decision-making in almost all issues. Women's work and their incomes during migration are channelled toward men's families and only little parts (if any) toward women's families of origin. Other scholars (Sana and Massey, 2005) emphasised the role of household organization and its gender relations in shaping economic remittances.

During the first years of migration in Italy the financial or in-kinds remittances were regular, but as migrants brought their children in Italy or begun to set on a return project, these remittances have become less regular:

At the beginning I was sending regularly packages, gifts, I was buying everything children wanted, I could not say no. My elder daughter was very pleased when she was receiving something from Italy: clothes, phones, food, sweets. I was sending packages every two weeks. (Parascheva, 43 years old, returned in 2008, after 5 years in Italy, interviewed in October 2010)

It is difficult to have accurate estimate of remittances sent by women and men based on interviews declarations. The amounts indicated by migrant returnees refer to the volume of savings invested in houses or in little businesses in construction, agriculture or trade. On average, during 9 or 10 years spent in Italy, a family brought approximately 90.000 Euros in Romania. Although women have an important contribution to these savings, they do not enjoy full recognition at least for two reasons. First, in Italy the spouses often have an arrangement in which women's incomes (usually thought secondary in rapport with men's incomes) is spent on current living in Italy, while men maximize their savings in order to transfer them in Romania. This kind of arrangement underlies a specific temporary migration pattern in which families aim to save the maximum the sooner. Since women provide for their families in Italy, they will not have personal savings upon return. Second, although women are aware of their personal contribution to the achievement of family goals, they are likely to minimize it in order not to undermine men's authority or their breadwinner role. There are evidences of this assumption in some of our interviews with women returnees. Elena explicitly put it in the following excerpt of the interview:

My husband depends very much on me, but he wouldn't ever admit it. As for me, I don't want to show it to him because I know this will bother him. He relies so much on me in thinking, money-wise, in all he does. But his masculine pride won't let him admit that all we have, we have it because I have

sacrificed everything. (Elena, 40 years, mother of two girls, returned in 2006 after 11 years in Italy)

This may seem astonishing, but self-sacrifice for the interest of family is found as one of the main characteristics of women's identity in Romania, as shown by Chytкова (2011) in her study on consumer behavior of Romanian women in Italy. Bearing this in mind, is difficult to determine the share of economic remittances sent by women. Indeed, although Elena doesn't deny her contribution to the wellbeing of her family, she clearly explains that she can not fully enjoy or make acknowledge since this would result in conflicts between partners that could threaten the family's cohesion. New gender roles performed during migration may be in contradiction with local social norms of the society of origin, further generating conflicts between household members.

Beyond this controversial issue of whether women remit more or less money than men, one may however acknowledge that remittances play a crucial role in improving the quality of life of many households in Rural areas in many life domains (i.e. health, living conditions, children's education, investments in local enterprises), even if all these may not yet represent strong evidences of a sustainable development and some local economic practices may discourage migrant returnees who wish to invest, as it is shown in the next excerpt from an interview with a returnee investor:

I do not agree with this unfair competition in our village, I mean I have bought 20.000 Euros a plot

of land to build my own warehouse, as I saw in Western countries. In addition I have further invested 20.000 Euros in this (warehouse) building, so I have spent 40.000 Euros in total and I cannot admit that someone who also sells construction materials to do it on the on the public road, without investing in an appropriate space for such an activity'. (Ion, 36 years old, single, returned in 2006 after 13 years in Italy).

Apart from this unfair competition between migrant returnees and non-migrants, the former category also considers that in the village people have not an work ethic that could enable development like in Western countries:

What I have appreciated, in general, in Italy is that Italians are very hardworking. Here, when someone starts soaring, you have to stop working because either there is a a holiday or comes a Saint, and so on, so you can't work neither at home because your neighbor sees you and that's not good. Italians say that in agriculture and in construction one only stops working when it's raining and not because there is St. Marco or St. Andrei ... (Vasile, 41 years old, married, two children, returned to the country in 2004, after 10 years in Italy, interviewed in December 2010)

Changes brought by migration at the economic level are undeniable. Migrants, especially men, make investments that revitalize village's economic life but these changes are unlikely to affect social norms and

values underlying the economic organizations and economic roles. As shown by Black *et al.* (2003), compared with non-migrants, migrant returnees are more likely to invest in order to create new job opportunities for themselves and for other family members or friends. Women, unlike men, don't have the possibility to invest since they don't possess savings. Moreover, their work experience in Italy as domestic servants did not lead to new valuable skills that women returnees might transfer and convert in remunerable activity in their community of origin.

Family life upon return

At the family level, migration is likely to induce more durable and deep transformations. The rural household was usually composed by two nuclear families, that is parents and the family of their youngest son sharing the household resources. Members' freedom in the decision-making process and their access to material and symbolic resources are not however equal regardless of gender and age. For instance, men are usually allowed to sell some of households' goods in case they need a certain amount of money. Today, household organization witnesses transformations in intergenerational and gender relations. Many households are becoming nuclear families. Migration provided young families with the means of building their own homes. Traditional house heritage by youngest son is no longer the rule and it is sometimes challenged by young men migrants:

What is there to inherit from

my parents?! These ideas are so old fashioned, it is not working like this anymore, that I'm the youngest and I should inherit the [parents'] house and land. What shall I take? The chickens and their coop?! (Ion, 36 years old, single, returned in 2006 after 13 years work experience in Italy).

Young women are also willing to separate from their parents-in-law. Pauli (2005) among other scholars, shows that daughter-in-law and mother-in-law cohabitation in patriarchal societies is most often felt by the former as a situation of isolation and exploitation. Her marital, social and economic behaviour is always under the scrutiny of her in-laws and she needs to adjust to their expectations. Issues like the number of children the woman wants to bear, children's upbringing and so on are often beyond her own decision. One of migrant women interviewed in Italy in 2006, mother of three children, who was living with her mother-in-law before migration, characterized that period of cohabitation in the following words: ,if I had killed someone I might not get a heavier sanction than that of living with my mother-in-law for 13 years. It was worse than the prison ,. By separating from their in-laws, women hope to reach more independence in leading their lives:

I said *yes* (I marry him) but I'm not going to live with his parents as he was going (in Italy). There was no sense for me to go to live with them because, at that time I didn't know but I found it out later that his parents didn't want me (as their daughter in law). Then, later on, he sent me money

to his parents in order for me to join him in Italy, but they gave me no money. And then I asked *why*, what was happening and he had to say it to me. He wanted to protect me, to avoid suffering. Then, when he saw that his parents continued like this, he decided to send me the money, I mean (he sent it) to my father. (Emily, 25 year old, married, interviewed in Rome in March 2003)

Out of 12 women returnees interviewed, seven women live with their husbands and children as nuclear families, four women have new houses raised near the old ones in which only one parent-in-law is still living, and the last interviewed woman live with her own parents, as well as with her husband and children, in parents' house she renovated with money from Italy. We can therefore notice a diversification of residential patterns of migrant's households, and furthermore, a certain transformation of gender and intergenerational relations within these households. The new migrant's homes become the space within women decide on their own how to use it and how to arrange furniture and carpets often brought from Italy; this can further be interpreted as an expression of women new identities. Migration not only made possible for families to have their own home, but it also lead to greater freedom of young persons to choose their partners. If in the past, marital selection was closely monitored by parents who paid attention to the similarity between symbolic and material assests of households meant to be related through a marriage, today young persons may choose

their spouse more freely. Although migration is decided at the family level, there are many examples of conflicts, because not all family members have converging interests. There are indications that intergenerational and gender relations are changing as a result of the economic opportunities of migration. The ease with which women find a job in Italy gives them financial independence and allows them to negotiate their own position in the family, relationships with spouses, parents or in-laws. Their economic role is a new element, since most women in rural areas of the Eastern region were formerly housewives or seasonal workers, low remunerated, in agricultural cooperatives. Influence of the host society and close contact with the Italian families they work they worked for led to the reinterpretation of gender roles, usually to the benefit of women.

Changes in gender relations and marital selection are already documented in international literature indicating similar trends to those described in this paper. For example, Belanger and Linh (2011) show that migration of young women in Vietnam increased their chances of marrying a foreigner, regardless of socio-economic situation of their families of origin. There is a sizable share of mixed marriages between Romanian women and Italian men. This marriage pattern is much more widespread than that of marriages between Romanian men and Italian women. According to ISTAT, 2,300 marriages were registered in 2007 between Romanian women and Italian men, while only 123 Romanian men married Italian women during the same year. The same intermarriage

pattern applies to almost all ethnic immigrant communities in Italy (i.e. those with an immigrant husband are only a tiny fraction of those with an immigrant wife). However, compared with Albanians (the second largest immigrant group in Italy), where the proportion of mixed marriages of the first type represents 45 percent of the Albanian–Italian marriages in 2007, Romanian (husband)–Italian (wife) marriages barely represent five percent of mixed marriages. We may speculate that there are different incentives for Romanian migrant men and women regarding cultural and social adjustment to Italian society. This question needs further investigation, as our research sample contains little information on this issue. But there are reasons to expect that new ideas about marriage and new definitions of gender roles pervade the communities of origin as a result of women's growing prospects for choosing non-Romanian husbands.

Conclusion

With few exceptions (Dannecker, 2009, King *et al.* 2006, Rahman, 2009), researches in the field of migration and development do not deal with gender differences and the meanings women and men invest in their social and economic remittances. This paper examined the gendered participation to remittances sent by Romanians migrants in Italy and illustrated the various senses given by men and women to the definition of personal/ community development. While the majority of scholars analyse development through purely economic

indicators – poverty alleviation, decreasing economic inequalities, share of remittances in GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and balance of payments (Dăianu *et al.* 2001) - I have considered helpful to examine the socio-cultural dimension of such remittances in understanding the development process linked to migration. The actors in the process of migration, women and men, understand and interpret development in different ways and at different levels (i.e. personal, family, community), and this influences the development outcome itself, as shown by Dannecker (2009) for migrants originating from Bangladesh. In the case under study here, it is shown that development is most often understood by women in relation to evolution their personal situation (higher level of aspirations, broadening cultural horizons, new practices of identity), while men often link development to local economic practices considered often as an obstacle to development. Regularity of women's financial remittances (or in-kind remittances: clothing, furniture, appliances) depends on the number of children left behind in the care of grandparents or other close relatives. From this point of view, our results are closer to those illustrated by King *et al.* (2006) than to those of Suksumboon (2008), who highlights the duty of women migrants toward their parents.

The way in which migration affect household organization in the place of origin it is also an indication of transformations in gender and intergenerational, and therefore an additional evidence of the fact that development could not be addressed only through the study of economic indicators. Another notable result

of this research is that it sheds light on the reasons of 'invisibility' of women's financial remittances from Italy. Although Sandu (2010) already stressed the gender differences in earnings of Romanian migrants, another factor that contributes to differences in remittances between men and women is represented by gender norms in the society of origin. Therefore, since men are considered the leading providers of means for livelihood in the community of origin, they feel obliged to comply with this norm and send more regularly and larger amounts of money. This would not be however possible without women's financial support in Italy. However, women's contribution is not totally acknowledged in the place of origin.

Although the present study can not claim that offers an exhaustive discussion of changes driven by migration in Eastern Romania, it nevertheless brings an important contribution to the knowledge of less discussed aspects of the way migration affects gender relations and participation in socio-economic remittances. It would not be reasonable to claim that we can capture all social, economic and cultural changes occurred in recent years since many of these changes do not have immediate and visible manifestations. Romanian society, overall, undergoes multifaceted transformations as a result of migratory movements of the last two decades. Romania is however a country with recent tradition of international migration, and different studies in various communities like Borșa in Maramureș (Anghel, 2010), Marginea (Suceava) and Focșani (Vrancea)

(Cingolani, Piperno, 2006) represent, from this point of view, attempts of mapping local transformations brought by migration. The present paper brings some innovations by taking gender as constitutive element of Romanian migration process, and by addressing development of the society of origin through migrants' perspectives. In addition, this study is based on a longitudinal research carried out through fieldworks in both countries. Taking into account that Romanian migration still witness growing complexity of flows and destinations, is premature to make claims about the durability of changes highlighted here. As Portes (2010) shows, it is

important to consider the migration process in its development along two or three generations before to assess the stability and the depth of changes. This study, along with others studies covering different regions of Romania, is useful in further endeavors to trace the changes brought by migration.

Notes

¹ From 2002 to 2010, local authorities issued 605 authorisations for new buildings in the village under scrutiny. Out of these, 356 were completed. According to local civil servants' declarations, most of these new buildings are owned by migrants. The village comprises 3300 households.

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