

GLOBALISATION AND EXTERNAL CIRCULAR MIGRATION. THE CASE OF ROȘIA MONTANĂ COMMUNITY (ROMANIA)

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Abstract

The paper looks at the possible relationships between globalisation (glocalisation) and circulatory migration. The starting premise is that for countries with emerging economies like Romania, foreign investment - as vectors of globalisation - may create an exceptional, multidimensional opportunity for work force occupation. In that respect, globalisation should lead to a decrease in all forms of migration. Our research shows however that in particular situations like that of Roșia Montană community, the real impact of foreign investment on workforce occupation turns out to be less than expected. Thus circulatory migration appears as a strong contender for globalisation while everywhere else the globalisation is being regarded as an alternative to endogenous development.

Keywords: Globalisation, glocalisation, external circular migration, occupation

Globalisation and Glocalisation

As we mentioned in previous works (Pascaru, 2007; Pascaru, 2013), while the definition of the globalisation concept appears to be obvious - as a self-explanatory extension of the root word "global" - a short incursion in the conceptualisation efforts reveals a different story, especially under the sociological perspective. While the pioneers of sociology faced the challenge of contributing to the construction of *national* societies - Van Der Bly noticed - „contemporary sociologists face the challenge of contributing to the understanding and the building of a *global* society” (Van Der Bly, 2005, p. 875). In Romania - Baltasiu states - "globalisation operates with the structures of collective conscience that reference either archetypes or myths, or elements of sensitivity to those" (Baltasiu, 2009, p. 29). The Romanian

sociologist describes globalisation as "a *mental phenomenon* that engages *generator* (the intellectuality in particular), *carrier* (the school, the intellectuality, the media) and *target* (the masses) social structures for a type of message that structures social order overall" (Baltasiu, 2009, p. 29). Globalisation, Schuerkens argues, does not necessarily mean the dissolving of local *life-worlds*, but the interaction with them in a kind of localisation, or *glocalisation* as some of the researches labelled this hybrid mix (Schuerkens, 2003, p. 205). The literature on the subject mentions that the term *glocalisation* has been conceived by marketing professionals in Japan (Wakefield, 2007, p. 8). The debate around the subject include frequent references to the well-known slogan "Think globally, act locally".

At the economic strategy level *glocalisation* connects the mobility of capital investment - which has become more fluid in the recent years - with the immobility of various regional contexts. One appreciates that in this context of increased investment „the immobile regional factors show increased importance”, the notion of *glocalisation* reflecting precisely the regional perspective (Knödler și Albertshauser, 2001, p. 7). Sucháček also stresses that in general „the underlying causes of global processes can always be found in concrete localities” (Sucháček, 2008, p. 12).

The globalisation and the regional and local contexts are connected through what we call the *vectors of globalisation* (Pascaru, 2013). Some materialise as foreign companies that bring with them local- and regional-level investment projects. The vector of globalisation that our research focused on in recent years is the mining company Roșia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC).

External Circular Migration in Romania: Motivations and Community Impact

Circulatory migration - also known as temporary migration - is a phenomenon driven by multiple motivations, most of which were typed by the Romanian sociologist Dumitru Sandu (2000, p. 10) as being: 1) educational only, 2) travelling and educational, 3) working and educational, 4) travelling and working, 5) working, travelling and educational, 6) travelling only, and 7) working only.

From a series of circulatory migration studies, Sandu draws several conclusions: 1) temporary migration abroad clearly comes out as a mobility phenomenon of positive selectivity, the border-crossing subjects displaying an increased human and socio-relational capital; 2) the economic development level of the home county matters, the richer counties generating more migration than the poorer ones (Sandu, 2000, p. 25); 3) while the material capital may significantly influence the achievement of the migration project, the project in itself is insignificantly dependent of material

resources; 4) the migration projects are significantly associated with occupational and entrepreneurial projects, and with projects generated by unemployment or low income challenges; 5) all other factors being equal, the more structured the entrepreneurial orientation, the stronger the rural subjects' drive to look for work abroad; 6) the workplace and the income are the immediate, major objective of the migrant; 7) the extent to which the destination abroad fills not only economic but also socio-cultural needs (in the absence of family constraints at the origin), it may influence a conversion from temporary to permanent migration (Sandu, 2000, p. 26).

The migration, Sandu considers, gives a particular profile to the rural communities of origin. At the level of year 2002, based on the intensity of migration the sociologist appreciates, one could distinguish four types of rural communities, namely having: 1) no migration, 2) reduced migration, 3) mid-level migration and 4) high-level migration (Sandu, 2004, p. 181).

When looking at the consequences of migration, the same author contends that it was to be expected that the circulatory migration from rural communities would contribute to: 1) a drop in poverty in the not-poor areas; 2) the widening of the development gap between the socio-human capital rich areas and the poor ones (Sandu, 2004, p. 181).

Globalisation and Migration from Roşia Montană (Romania) Vector of Globalisation: The Mining Project of Roşia Montană Gold Corporation (RMGC)

The commune Roşia Montană gained notoriety both at home and abroad as a result of the mining project set off by RMGC, a subsidiary of Gabriel Resources of Canada, a good example of a globalisation vector, in our opinion.

In 1996, not long after the existing state-owned mining company begun massive layoffs, the Toronto Stock Exchange listed company Gabriel Resources Ltd. of Canada affirmed its interest in continuing the exploitation of the gold reserves in the area. To that purpose the Romanian joint venture Euro Gold Resources S.A. has been formed between the parent company and the state, which would subsequently be renamed Roşia Montană Gold Corporation or RMGC in short.

During the first stage of operations (1997 through 2002) the company undertook exploration work for reserve assessment together with archaeological research required by the particular cultural patrimony of the area. During this stage the company employed local workforce to that purpose.

Throughout the two subsequent stages (2002 through 2004 and 2006 through 2008) the company acquired several state and private properties in the area based on *Resettlement and Relocation Action Plan*, allegedly in

accordance with international standards. As a result, a good proportion of work-able bodies migrated out of the village.

In December 2004, the company started the environmental certification process, but failed to secure government approval to this day.

According to the 2006-2007 social impact assessment study of the University from Alba Iulia, over 2300 jobs were to be created during the construction stage, with an additional 880 in the exploitation phase, the majority of which were to be filled by local inhabitants. The wages were expected to be double that of the national averages. Private business in the area resulting in additional employment was also expected to be stimulated, together with micro-crediting programs for small enterprises (*Studiu de impact economic și social al proiectului Roșia Montană*, 2007). One should mention that in December 2011 RMGC logged over 3500 job applications nationwide²⁴.

Not having achieved environmental approval, the project failed to start even the construction phase, all forecasts mentioned above being off.

During this time, RMGC management did not forget to repeatedly evoke a socially responsible way of conducting business, approach that would have ensured community access to some of the benefits of the project. Jobs were one of the most important benefits expected by the community, RMGC claiming itself to be a loyal employer to the community in which operates. Thus for equal qualifications the company claimed to favour local workforce (Rachieru et al., 2010, p. 41). The locals' perception of the hiring practices was different however, as our research will show.

External Circular Migration as an Alternative to Globalisation: A Qualitative Research

Starting from the theoretical and factual premises mentioned above the authors undertook a qualitative research study in Roșia Montană in the period of March through May 2015. Thirty semi-structured interviews were taken with those locals who have experienced migration in the last 10 years.

The interpretation of the results raised some challenges, one of which having been signalled by Sandu in a 2010 work proved quite true: "One of the big provocations in this field of research is the extreme diversity of life situations within the field of migration. Accordingly, the information brought in the field of knowledge is also extremely diverse." (Sandu 2011, p. 11) Aside from this obstacle, the research allowed us to draw some interesting conclusions. A first observation is that most interviewees invoked economical and financial reasons for migration. Economic reasons were

²⁴ See also „Istoria proiectului Roșia Montană”, available at <http://www.rmgc.ro/proiectul-rosia-montana/istoria-proiectului-rosia-montana.html>, accessed May 2015.

sometimes connected to the future of their offspring or of their siblings, or to the intention to raise a family. For those highly qualified, the reasons had more to do with trying new work experiences. Also worth noticing were also the cases where the reason to migrate was family reunification abroad.

The destination countries of first-time migrants were Spain, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Greece, Holland, The United Kingdom and France. Motivations for choosing one country over another had first to do with the existence of already consolidated social nets. What appeared to matter secondly was the presence of some family members. There were also respondents that declared having nobody to support them in the country of their first migration. As to the advantages of working abroad there were some respondents who claimed they couldn't find one. The majority of the subjects remained in the same country of destination, the motivations of the few that switched it having to do with language barriers and with lack of workplace diversity.

For some subjects integration felt easy, being facilitated by a good knowledge of the language and by the existence of a Romanian community of support. In some countries like Germany, integration was claimed to be difficult by many.

Staying connected to the family behind was frequent, most means of communication employed between two visits at home being the telephone and the internet (Facebook, Skype, Viber, WhatsApp).

The familial impact assessment of migration could be done based on the majority of the subjects' declarations that they were not worried of possible family problems, although they heard of such problems in other families. Most answers indicated an assumed degree of risk, unavoidably associated with a decision to leave. The ones that recognized the existence of family problems referred to the relationships between spouses. These types of problems have likely been anticipated by those who left together, husband and wife to work abroad.

The proceeds of the employment abroad were mostly claimed to be used to renovate an existing home, building a new one or opening a business at home. One respondent claimed to having done both a house renovation and setting a business. Young respondents frequently declared buying a car.

As to the permanency of the migration, most respondents said they did not intend to take residence and planned to return home, the reasons behind the decision being diverse.

Out of Sandu's previous findings (Sandu, 2000) our research confirms the following: 1) in the case of Roşia Montană the migration projects also associated significantly with *occupational projects*, with entrepreneurial projects and those projects confronting unemployment and low income, many of the subjects invoking such reasons; 2) jobs and income

were indeed the major immediate objective of the Roşia Montană respondents.

Next we shall examine the connections between migration and globalisation in the case of Roşia Montană by viewing globalisation from the perspective of its major vector, RMGC.

RMGC and the Migration Alternative

In order to identify the connections between the activity of the mining company and the Roşia Montană inhabitants' decisions to look for work abroad we asked the question "What was the RMGC situation when you left?"

A number of responses referred to RMGC not having appeared in the area or not having made any hiring at the point of respondents' leave to work abroad: *"In the period when I left abroad, there was no hiring at RMGC for they did not approve some of their projects, they didn't have the authorisations to start working and they had no work for the people... What they were doing was something to do with cleaning around the waters."* (M[ale], 49 [years old]).

For other migrants, the hiring was insufficient: *"They were doing little hiring, but I didn't want to work for them anyways. The situation was unclear; people were saying they were not getting their environmental permit."* (F[emale], 63).

Some of the respondents referred to a period in which not only the company was not hiring, but they were actually laying-off: *"They were not hiring anymore. They even laid-off the ones that were there..."* (F, 47).

A reason for discontent was the hiring practices of the company: *"Some were being hired, others were being fired, one did not know anymore what was happening there. Favouritism was at home, they hired only who they felt like."* (F, 42).

The wages at RMGC were not attractive: *"I had neighbours working for RMGC, but they were not well paid, for they were only hiring unqualified workers."* (F, 46).

An important factor influencing the decision to look for work abroad was the uncertainty revolving around the RMGC project: *"When I left things were uncertain, but you heard most [people] saying that works will start and they will create jobs... I left abroad and I said to myself I'll wait and see what they'll do."* (M, 46).

Representations about non-migrants

An important question in our study was aimed at understanding the migrants' representations of the decisions of those that stayed behind. Some respondents considered that those that chose to stay and preferred to work for

RMGC had some advantages: *"Those that preferred not to leave the country and work for RMGC had something to gain in not being stressed and staying close to the family, they kept control of the family at all times"* (M, 49).

Other saw those who stayed and worked for RMGC as having lost something: *"I have some acquaintances that still work there, but they live in fear after two restructurings done in the past year. Emotionally for those that stayed [was better] but financially, compared to the wages in Romania was mega-better [abroad]."* (M, 57).

The re-launching of the RMGC Project and Stopping the Migration?

Another point of interest in our study was the extent to which a possible re-launching of the mining project would have a significant impact on international migration from Roşia Montană.

Some interviewees declared that at least some of the migrants would return, the main motivation being the family left behind: *"I suspect there will be some persons that will want to return to their families. It's a tough life abroad!"* (F, 42).

Others were categorical in believing that even if re-launched, RMGC would not constitute a powerful attraction anymore: *"The ones I know would never go back to RMGC. They were disappointed by all that happened. So many families were left dry, without any source of income."* (F., 32). *"I say that no one will give away the bird in the hand for the one on the fence. As long as there is opportunity one will work abroad, and when there isn't anymore, one will return home."* (F, 42).

One respondent raised some more complex issues of trust in RMGC and in the government who should have approved the project: *"The ones that would return are those that have work-related problems overseas, that is the firms have financial problems and they risk loosing their jobs. Giving up the salary there and returning to RMGC a person wanting to earn something would not do. Similarly, the people would not return since "The Gold"²⁵ is no more a guaranty as long as the government does not step in and start the project."* (M, 57).

Conclusion

As we mentioned, some of the migrant respondents stated that RMGC was either not present or it was not hiring when they left for work abroad. Other migrants, who left at a later time, stated that the hiring was insufficient. And others again described a period during which the company not only was not hiring, but was actually laying off existing employees. One reason for discontent was the hiring practices of the company. An important

²⁵ Local slang for RMGC.

factor in the decision to leave was the uncertainty surrounding the whole project.

Another issue of interest was the migrants' representations of those who stayed behind. Some held the view that those who stayed, preferring to work for RMGC, had some advantages, like remaining close to their families. Others considered a loss the fact that out of those initially hired by the company, very few kept their jobs in the long run.

The last of the questions in the interview tried to assess the extent to which a re-launch of the mining project would impact the level of migration out of Roșia Montană. Some showed willingness to return, motivated primarily by the need to reunite with their families. Others categorically denied any interest, based on the past record of the company - record which also raised more complex trust issues in both the company and in the government's position on it.

One general conclusion may raise the awareness of the limits that the power of globalisation may be bound by in solving local community problems. And that notwithstanding the suspicion that such private vectors may be more interested in profit, rather than in dealing with such problems. Additionally we consider that one could talk of certain autonomy of migration as social phenomenon. Social networks, local and individual needs that continuously grow due to the constant social reconstruction determine a certain dynamic in the process of migration, regardless if some original causes of migration have been eliminated since.

In the Romanian rural space, and probably not only, the development is an identity-competitiveness phenomenon. Each actor, each family try these days to do more or achieve more than their neighbouring family. The availability of work abroad constitute a strong anchor of support towards that end and, in the short time at least, appears more reliable than the frail offer brought by some of the vectors of globalisation.

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