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## Socioeconomic effects of migration: Patterns, mechanisms and effects of return migration to Romania

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# **Socioeconomic effects of migration: Patterns, mechanisms and effects of return migration to Romania**

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## **Introduction**

Romanian migration evolved in the past twenty five years as one of the most important population flows in Europe. During the socialist time, migration was relatively small, only some categories of people being able to get out of the country. In 1990, after forty years of strictly controlled mobility, Romanians were at long last allowed to exit the country freely. The Romanian migration grew up in time, augmenting on the previous migratory flows. It was enhanced by the Romanians' accession to the EU and the extended mobility rights Romanians obtained over the years as European citizens. It encompasses different patterns of temporary and permanent migration, return and transnationalism, it is made of high and low-qualified migrants of different social and economic stances, from brain drain to ethnic and labor migrants, petty traders, or beggars.

Due to this complexity and great dynamism in the past twenty years, today it is difficult to provide a comprehensive study of Romanian migration and return. In this paper<sup>1</sup> we will however unfold some of the main patterns of return and migrant entrepreneurship. In the first part of the paper we provide a short analysis of Romanian migration, while in the second part we will deal with some types of return practices that we uncovered during fieldwork in the past ten years. The paper relies on data gathered in five different locales in Romania, three small cities and two villages. In so doing, we aim to unfold patterns that rarely surfaced in studies of migration and return to Romania, highlighting the distinct significance of return migration and entrepreneurship for regions and communities of origin.

## **Main patterns of migration and return to Romania**

Romania is a country experiencing multiple forms of mobility – from permanent migration and return, to forms of temporary return, double migration, short and long-term shuttle migration. Romanians are free movers within the European Union, and mobility became an easier undertaking for young people. In this context, it is difficult and somehow misleading to single out mainly the processes of permanent return while tackling the issue of migration and return to Romania. Thus, we deal with the issue of return in the context of diverse migration practices. Broadly defined, return is understood as “the process of going back to one’s country of origin, transit or another third country, including preparation and implementation” (Cessarino 2006: 4). It relates to diverse groups of migrants in terms of qualifications and education level,

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immigration paths, legal statuses, and duration of migration. It also includes numerous categories, from highly qualified to seasonal migrants, from voluntary returnees to refugees and asylum seekers that are sent back home. One of the ways to categorize this highly diverse and dynamic phenomenon is to use the interplay between the notions of forced / voluntary migration and the forced / voluntary return (Kuschminder and Butcher 2012). One may also distinguish between return-related motivations: professional, family, charity, prestige, or nationalism (Vlase 2011, Vlase 2012). In this paper we identified some patterns of return and focus on motivations of returnees. Relatedly, we aimed at linking these return patterns with returnees' investments, actions, and aspirations.

Return migration may have profound impacts for both home and host countries in spheres as trade, development, human rights, or social security. Current literature points towards the effects of both financial and social remittances on communities and regions of origin. The cases of entrepreneurial returnees are particularly interesting here. Often, financial remittances help returnees establishing new lines of business where migrant entrepreneurs come back with new ideas and levels of professionalism (Batista et al. 2014). For instance returnees in Bangladesh ventured into the profitable palm tree industry that they saw developing in Malaysia (Montefrio *et al.*, 2014). In other situations, migrants come back with entrepreneurial know-how, helping them to acquire better positions on the market. Telling examples here are the returned IT specialists in India or highly qualified in China who take on well positions in these emerging economies (Wescott 2006, Kale and Little 2007). Return migrants can also arrive with new political and social aspirations. Some studies in Romania show that returnees aim at challenging prevailing unequal gender norms or non-liberal political ideas (Vlase 2011, Careja and Emmenegger 2012). In this sense, our interest is not only in unfolding the main patterns and motivations of return, but, where possible, to delineate when migrants value and use social remittances upon return.

Romanian migration is today a very dynamic and highly complex process. In order to analyze meaningfully the process of migration and return, we here distinguish between different patterns of migration: permanent emigration, labor circular migration ending up with settling in host countries (long-term migration), and circular migration (short-term migration). These patterns cannot be strictly delineated, as there are many cases when short-term migration practices can turn into longer-term migration, however we contend that there are substantive differences in what concerns mechanisms and motivations of migration and return. Besides, the distinction is meaningful for the patterns of return to Romania. The economic crisis, both in Romania and Western Europe, influenced significantly the evolution of migration and return intentions. The proposed structuration into permanent, longer-term and short-term migration is meaningful again, as the crisis seems to influence these migration patterns differently.

*Permanent migration* from Romania emerged during state socialism with the migration of ethnic migrants, Germans and Hungarians, brain drain, asylum seekers and family reunions. Thus, during the 1980s, about 290,000 people migrated legally from Romania (Horváth and Anghel 2009). The number of irregular migrants is unknown. During the 1980s people migrated because of the worsening economic and political situation of the country and had no aim to return. The largest group was that of ethnic Germans, about 150,000 people resettled in Germany until 1989. In 1990, when Romanians were able to travel outside Romania, ethnic Germans migrated *en masse* to Germany. This migration encompassed entire German communities, including the elderly, who moved overnight to Germany. Most of them settled permanently in Germany, however many did not pare their relations to their communities of origin, becoming involved in several social projects, such as rehabilitating community churches. In the past years there is evidence that some returned investing in tourism in the romantic region of southern Transylvania, rehabilitating orchards and setting up new businesses in hospitality industry<sup>2</sup>. However, the number of returnees is very limited and there is no evidence of a substantial return of ethnic Germans.

Ethnic Hungarians were the second large group of ethnic migrants. Their migration was segmented. A part of them remained in Hungary permanently, while many others were temporary labor migrants in Hungary. Overall, the number of migrating Hungarians reached almost 180,000 people (Horváth and Anghel 2009). Most of them migrated after 1990. The return to Romania of ethnic Hungarians was also small among those who decided to settle in Hungary. Temporary labor migrants, though, maintained a pattern of incomplete migration over the years. As we will show in the ensuing part, some of them became double migrants at a later stage.

The case of ethnic Romanians' permanent migration substantially differed. During state socialism, people who were able to exit Romania received political asylum in Western Europe and North America. After 1990 permanent migration continued with a substantial component of brain drain. The main countries of destination were the United States, Canada, and several Western Europe, such as France, Germany and the UK (Ferro 2004). Romanian migration towards Canada and United States had a high percent of highly skilled migrants such as IT workers, medical doctors, or students. The United States and Canada selected a large number of Romanian migrants based on migrants' qualifications and education. Until 2000 about 140,000 Romanians migrated towards the United States alone of which 35.9% had tertiary

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<sup>2</sup> See several newspapers reporting on this: <http://www.romanalibera.ro/aldine/profil/oameni-care-schimba-lumea--paul-hemmerth-si-povestea-casei-noah-din-richis-369212>; <http://stirileprotv.ro/stiri/social/comunitatea-germana-din-transilvania-prinde-viata-sasii-stabiliti-in-strainatate-se-intorc-acasa.html>; <http://www.gandul.info/magazin/un-sas-s-a-intors-in-sibiu-dupa-mai-multi-ani-in-germania-ce-a-reusit-sa-faca-intr-un-sat-este-extraordinar-12982723> <http://transilvaniareporter.ro/esential/nemtii-colonizeaza-din-nou-ardealul-toamna-se-numara-afacerile-nemtesti/>

education, which is significantly more than other immigrant groups from CEE countries, such as Hungarians with 30% (Brădăţan & Kulcsár 2014). The brain drain towards Western Europe consisted of students, IT specialists, and medical doctors. Studies on the Romanian migration estimated that around 26% of the Romanian migrants in 2003 (IOM2008) was made of persons with tertiary education. However, it is yet unclear how many of them took on jobs on the primary and how many of the secondary labor markets. Brain drain differed significantly from ethnic migration in what it concerns motivation and mechanisms of migration. If ethnic migrants migrated to the Fatherland as titular co-ethnics and – in the case of Germans - citizens of the receiving countries, qualified migrants had to adapt to countries of destination, test or obtain qualifications on the market. Highly qualified migrants obtained qualifications and good jobs in societies of destination and they usually complained about labor conditions in Romania (Moroşanu 2013) having no aim to return (Ferro 2004). In this case also there is no substantial research on the return of the brain drain, despite the fact that large Romanian companies are sometimes headed by migrants who decided to return and invest in the Romanian economy. As in some other cases, such as India and China (Kale and Little 2007), returnees may play a significant role in emerging economies and they may be able to take on positions in business, set up transnational scientific networks, and enhance professional exchanges across borders.

*Long-term labor migration* represents the most significant part of the Romanian migration in terms of both number and remittances sent back to home communities. In most cases migrants did not aim for a permanent emigration and obtained incorporation mainly into the secondary labor markets of receiving countries. Over the years migrants settled in countries of destination. In the broad lines, this case corresponds to the large-scale migration of Romanians towards Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece but also to France and the UK (Horváth and Anghel 2009). Labor migration emerged from Romania as early as 1990. It was initially made of irregular migrants, pioneers and disguised asylum seekers. In Germany alone, 260,000 Romanians were registered as asylum seekers until 1995 (ibid.). Many of them were sent back. Migrants also moved to France and Israel (Diminescu 2003). After 1997 Romanians started to target increasingly countries from the southern Europe and after 2002 this path of migration grew in size tremendously. Italy and Spain soon became the main attractors of the Romanian migration, each hosting around one million Romanian migrants by 2012 (OECD 2014). In the context of the current economic crisis experienced by countries from the southern Europe, migration halted towards these destinations and reoriented towards northern European countries, including Germany and the UK.

Finally, a third main pattern may be discerned for the case of *short-term labor migration*. These are cases of incomplete (or circular) migration, where migrants have limited employment in countries of origin and destination. Migrants' main aim is to complement household incomes with earnings obtained in countries of destination.

This case applies to Romanian temporary labor migrants in Germany, or to new migratory destinations such as Austria (Croitoru 2013). In a limited extend, such migratory practices accompanied the large scale migrations to Italy and Spain (Ciobanu and Elrick 2008, Anghel 2013).

All studies on return migration to Romania focus on longer-term and short-term forms of labor migration. At the moment there is no clear evidence on the number and proportion of return migration to Romania and comprehensive estimation is hard to be undertaken. Besides, studies do not differentiate between return and forms of circular migration, where migrants returned home for a while and migrate again. Thus the real rates of return in some studies tend to overestimate the phenomenon. One of the first extensive studies on return migration to Romania (Ambrosini et al. 2012) argues that Romania is rather typical in what authors conceived as typical return rates in Central and Eastern European countries. The study argues that the median return rate was close to 1 out of 2 migrants, while in other CEE countries it was 1.12 out of every 2 migrants. This implies that every second migrant would return within a decade after the first departure, a surprisingly high figure for the Romanian migration. However, data was gathered in 2002-2003, which corresponded to the increase of Romanian migration and orientation of migration from destinations such as Israel, Turkey, or Hungary, to Italy and Spain. Given that particular context, the return rate at that time was pretty high as Romanians were not able to settle in countries of destination. This state of affairs changed afterwards, as Romanians tended to settle abroad in the following years.

In another study, Mara (2012) contrasts the Romanian migration to Italy before and after 2007. One of the main conclusions was that, while the first group migrated with longer term migratory plans, the later had no predefined migration plans. This had deep implications on the return potential: migrants with long term migration plans tended to prefer returning home than to re-migrate to another country while migrants with no long-term plan preferred to migrate further on. This debate on return intentions became more significant in the economic crisis context. Rolfe et al (2013) highlighted the role of the economic crisis in shaping Romanian migrants` return intentions. A survey on return intentions of Romanian migrants living in the Madrid area at the beginning of 2007 (ENI) found that 7% of the respondents wished to return while in 2008, one year later, a different survey conducted in the same region found that a share of 71% of Romanian migrants wished to return. Intention to return, still, does not mean return for good: out of 71% wishing to return, 42% declares they want to return very surely and 13% surely. 14% declared they had the intention to return within a year, 33% within 2 to 5 years, and 15 % in more than 5 years. Another author (Marcu 2011) points out that the likelihood to return to Romania was associated with migrants having relatives back home. Thus, these striking results provided by these studies using data from the same migrant community, point towards the deteriorating economic standing of immigrants in some West European countries and the radical shift in their return intentions.

Despite the increasing intention of Romanians to return home from countries affected by economic recession, several studies found that there is no clear evidence of large-scale return (Bărbulescu 2009, Eurofound 2012). A number of factors significantly alter migrants' returning decisions: migrant women had employment in care cleaning and were less affected by the crisis (Stănculescu et al 2011, Eurofound 2012, Mara 2012). At the same time, Romania also experienced a strong economic crisis that affected the labor market. Facing lack of opportunities back home, migrants opted to live in the host countries in more precarious conditions - using their savings, being supported by family members, or accepting weak payments or informal jobs. In many cases, migrants decided to migrate to other West European countries less affected by the economic crisis (Ferri and Rainero 2010, Eurofound 2012). Thus, rather than generating massive return, the main effects of the economic crisis resulted in decreasing migration towards southern European countries, accelerated foreseen return, and increased circular mobility (Rolfe et al. 2013, Eurofound 2012, Mara 2012).

The number of returned Romanians (including temporary movers) was estimated at about 20% in several regions of Romania. Stănculescu and Stoiciu (2012) thus found that between 2009 and 2010, 26% of the surveyed households in these regions had at least one migrant and 4.5% of them at least one returnee. The same study unfolds that the migrants who worked in agriculture tended to return more than the others (with a rate of 2.6 times higher). As well, return rates were higher in poor regions that experienced higher migration rates. The result is counterintuitive, as one may expect that richer regions would attract more returnees. However, this may be explained for instance by the later migration of those from poorer regions, by weaker access to the labor market, or by the employment abroad (a higher tendency to work in agriculture). In addition, the Eurofound (2012) study found that Romanians from Italy and Spain tended to return more and that men returned more than women. Also, migrants over 45 tended to return more, as well as the low-qualified ones. Family reasons were mentioned by 73% of the returnees as the main return motivation. Among the returnees, one in five had the intention to remain at home permanently while over half had the intention to migrate again (ibid.). Finally, returnees mention the adverse economic and social context of the home-country. Whereas men complain about labor opportunities, women complained about weak employment chances, that they are left to household duties, and adapt to gender inequality (Vlase 2011). Considering the lack of employment opportunities in the home country (Stănculescu and Stoiciu 2012), entrepreneurship appears as one of the main option for the returnees (Eurofound 2012). Thus, in the paper we distinguish between different types of return practices related to local economic opportunities and migrant entrepreneurship.

## **Case studies and used methodology**

The paper relies on fieldwork carried out in five Romanian locales in the past ten – fifteen years. All are located in the Western part of Romania. All these localities experienced migration and return. Two of these locales, Borșa and Sebeș, are towns of about 30,000. Turda is a town of 50,000. Zăbala and Carașova are villages of about 3,000. Sebeș is an industrial town that received massive foreign investment in the past ten years. It is a multi-ethnic town, with Romanians, Roma and Saxons. Turda and Borșa experienced very strong economic downturn in the 1990s, being today de-industrialized. Turda had steel, glass and cement industry during state socialism, whereas Borșa had mining and forestry industries. Turda is a town with sizeable Hungarian and Roma minorities, while Borșa is an isolated town inhabited mostly by ethnic Romanians. Zăbala, in eastern Transylvania, is a Hungarian village with sizeable Romanian and Roma communities. Carașova is an isolated village in the southern Carpathians inhabited by ethnic Croats.

From all these places people migrated to work towards different destinations. From Sebeș, Saxons migrated to Germany at the beginning of the 1990. Later on, towards the end of the 1990s, significant labor migration of ethnic Romanians emerged towards Spain. After 2005-2006, the poor Roma started to migrate to different European destinations in search for work and petty informal activities. Migration from Borșa originated twenty years ago mostly towards Italy. Some moved to the UK and Belgium. Borșa is a town with very high migratory rates, estimates of migration ranging between 50% and 70% of the total labor force (Anghel 2013), wherefrom most of the youth migrated. Turda also experienced mass migration, the city losing 30% of its population after 1990. It is located close to Cluj-Napoca, the second largest city in Romania and one of the most important economic centers of the country. After 1990, people migrated first to Germany and Hungary. These migrations were made of ethnic migrants, Germans and Hungarians. In the 1990s labor migration oriented towards Israel and Turkey. After 2000 migration was primarily oriented towards Italy and Spain, however people migrated also towards other West European destinations. From Zăbala, Hungarians and the Roma migrated first towards Hungary. Later on, after 2007, Romanians and Hungarians started to move to other destinations such as Germany or Italy. From Carașova, people moved first to Serbia. Later, between 1993 and 2005, people moved to Croatia, receiving the Croat citizenship. After 2007 they started to migrate towards Austria. Ethnic Croats and Hungarians first moved as ethnic migrants towards Croatia and Hungary.

By employing such a variety of cases we aim to contrast return practices in urban and rural settings. We compare migration and return from de-industrialized and industrialized urban settings (Turda and Borșa against Sebeș), with very high and average rates of migration (Borșa against Sebeș) and rural settings with agriculture and without agricultural activities (Zăbala against Carașova). In this way we try to build up a more comprehensive image of return migration to Romania, a phenomenon that is not yet apparent and it is difficult to grasp in its complexity.

	Urban	Rural
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Economic decay	Borșa, 30,000. de-industrialized, isolated	Carașova, 3,000 isolated, no agriculture
	Turda, 50,000 de-industrialized, not isolated	
Industrialized/economically viable	Sebeș, 30,000 highly industrialized	Zăbala, 3,000 agriculture, touristic area

Table 1: selected case studies

The research consisted of fieldwork that was carried out in all these locales. Fieldwork in Zăbala lasted about one year between 1997 and 1998, as well as in the autumn of 2012. The fieldwork in Carașova was carried out between 2010 and 2012 and lasted four months. The research in Sebeș was conducted between 2013 and 2014 and lasted about four months. The fieldwork in Borșa was carried out between 2005 and 2007 and lasted six months. The research in Turda and Sebeș is ongoing. In all these locales, fieldwork consisted of qualitative interviews, participant observation, and triangulation. When available, we relied on secondary sources and other research that was carried out in these locales and regions. Although each research had different research design and aims, interviews' structure was similar in all these places, as we captured migration stories and return history, including businesses obstacles and opportunities.

### **Patterns of return migration**

Among the return patters we unfolded while conducting research in the aforementioned locales there were: returnees that turned into entrepreneurs, returnees that took on jobs in Romania, and temporary movers, people who migrate temporary but whose families reside in Romania. Some entrepreneurs were able to utilize the potential of Romanian communities abroad and connected Romanian communities abroad with Romania. Others were able to become transnational entrepreneurs, people able to operate on two markets at the same time, in Romania and abroad. Those who decided to rely on the Romanian market were surviving entrepreneurs, usually able to cover their living expenses and own small companies, and developing entrepreneurs, able to employ a larger amount of people and further develop. Among the returnees we differentiated between those who came back for good and others who maintained temporary practices abroad or became double migrants. Heretofore we will present and analyze these patterns, ending up with a general conclusion on return to Romania.

### **Returned entrepreneurs: transmitters, brokers, innovators**

Studies of migration and return emphasize that often, migrants aim at becoming entrepreneurs, that their initiatives produce long-lasting economic effects. In Romania also, Toth and Toth (2006: 49) has stressed that migrants have much higher propensity to become entrepreneurs than non-migrants. However, in spite of the large amounts of remittances to Romania and of business intentions, the entrepreneurship of returnees is not a widespread social practice. As a matter of fact, the number of those able to adapt and remain as entrepreneurs on the Romanian market is rather small (Vlase 2011). On the other hand, there is a significant role of returnees in the diversification of consumer markets and businesses in different places in Romania. As we will here see, returnees may act as “transmitters” of economic ideas and modes of doing business, or as economic innovators. In this part of the paper we will distinguish between different types of economic initiatives of returnees that unfolded during the fieldwork. Some entrepreneurs maintained transnational connections attempting to use the economic opportunities both in Romania and abroad, while some others attempted to establish themselves mainly on the Romanian market. In the first case returnees are active economic actors establishing themselves on a wide European market of goods and services. In the second case returnees address the needs of the local Romanian customers. The following sub-categories thus became meaningful: for the first case returnees took the role of transnational connectors and transnational entrepreneurs (Ambrosini 2012, Portes et al 2002). In the second case, they were broker-type investors, survival, and developing entrepreneurs. We will analyze these categories in the following.

*Transnational connectors.* In this category we recast the economic initiatives of those returnees who utilize the circuits of goods and people between Romania and Western Europe. Very often their customers are from the communities of Romanian migrants abroad. In most of the cases returnees made use of their previous migratory experience: language knowledge, knowledge of the Romanian and West European economic contexts, and the accumulated financial and social remittances. Some people from Sebeş, Turda and Borşa were involved in transportation of people and goods. In Sebeş, some returnees established a company carrying migrants and packages between this southern Transylvanian location and Madrid. In Borşa, some had smaller minibuses with which they were regularly carrying goods. In these contexts such businesses were rather small and run informally. In Sebeş one such company diversified its offer and developed into a medium-size food producer selling goods on the Romanian and Spanish markets. Other food producers (specialized in Transylvanian smoked meat and sausages) were also able to venture into such ethnic businesses for Romanian migrants. In all cases we encountered, meat and sausage producers benefitted from the growing market of Romanian migrants residing abroad, who, having more financial power than people in Romania, seemed to be better customers. At the same time, their businesses developed locally also due to the growth of the Romanian economy and consumption market. In some cases, such agro-businesses benefitted from the EU support as entrepreneurs were able to

access financial schemes to develop their companies. Informal manpower companies and migration brokers are sometimes made by returnees. In Sebeş some returnees had a manpower company bringing Romanian workers on the British labor market. The same was in Borşa, where, between 1990 and 2002 the visa industry flourished. There, in many occasions, migrants themselves mediated jobs and travel to Italy.

A second broad category that unfolded during the research is that of formal and informal traders. In Zăbala a group of Hungarian Roma specialized in informal trade on Central and Eastern European markets. They started their enterprise in Hungary reselling Chinese goods and over the years changed their line of business towards selling carpets first in Croatia then later in Poland. The business is small and run informally, however these traders were able to specialize on the Central and East European markets. A more sustained trade is that of second hand goods. It encompasses trade of clothes, sport equipment, furniture, but also of second-hand cars, mostly from Germany. If the former produce small economic incentives for returnees, the later might offer larger amounts of resources. In Turda, there is a significant group of people involved in the trade with second-hand goods imported from Western Europe. Due to the strategic position of Turda within the region and the country, and the existing strong connections with Western Europe via the Romanian diaspora living there, the trade with second-hand goods flourished in the last decade. Especially the trade of second-hand cars turned into a very profitable business that, despite the fact that was run informally, produced large benefits.

In all these cases, transnational connectors acted as innovators rather than transmitters of economic ideas and practices. Their customers were Romanians residing both in Romania and abroad. These returnees were able to capitalize, though, on their migratory experience, turning the migration experience into a business asset. Secondly, many of these businesses were run informally and were of a small scale. Of these businesses, the businesses with food, formally run, and the trade of second hand cars, run quasi-informally, were the most profitable.

*Transnational entrepreneurs* are those migrants who, developing small-scale businesses abroad, aim at doing the same in Romania. In some cases returnees aim to resettle in Romania, but because they operate in a scarce or unpredictable market, they have to maintain business or work relations abroad. In Borşa, for instance, a number of migrants returned between 2005 and 2007, opening construction and interior design companies. They started to construct houses for the migrants residing in Milan in a time when the Romanian market was in a rapid expansion and prices were growing fast. This was a fortunate moment, as the Romanian real estate market was booming and the construction sector expanded tremendously. Prices multiplied several times between 2000 and 2007, most construction companies being in a state of euphoria. In Borşa, migrants' companies offered their services to the large pool of Romanian emigrants who invested their remittances in erecting houses. However, as the fieldwork unfolded, entrepreneurial returnees in Borşa tried to maintain their work and business connections in Italy. As some said, the Romanian market was too

unpredictable and would remain the same in the future. As a matter of fact, they were right in doing so. After 2009, the economic crisis stroked Romania strongly and the construction market has fallen, forcing some of these returnees to re-migrate to Italy. Such entrepreneurial initiatives were more general in Romania. Before the economic crisis migrants invested large amounts of remittances; in 2009 alone they remitted 9 billion USD. Houses construction was reported in most of the studies of Romanian migration (Anghel 2008, Troc 2012, Cingolani 2009, Girigan 2011), with significant differences between the urban and rural locales – 11 % against 17 % - (Grigoraş 2006). This investment enthusiasm however stopped when Italy and Spain experienced economic crisis. The level of remittances has fallen to less than half in the following year and migrants' investments in Romania dropped.

*Investment brokers* were migrants and returnees who invested most of their remittances in Romania undertaking risky acquisitions. In Borşa, migrants acquired land and properties that lost much their value over the years. Houses construction in many parts of Romania was such a behavior: migrants investing much of their remittances in very large houses are actually losing in case of sale. Besides, very many of them will not make use of these houses during the year, they becoming often status symbols with less practical use. In our case studies, returnees used these houses for themselves. However, as these investments were large, their ability to invest in other businesses actually decreased. In Sebeş, this was different: where some small investors invested their remittances in opening up small businesses in the hospitality industry rather than in houses. Migrants from Borşa invested also in real estate and construction parcels in large Romanian cities. They were often successful when their investment multiplied. In this category we consider also returnees who invested their funds in risky or uncertain enterprises, or when investment was not prepared and was actually not profitable. This was with migrants who constructed big houses and hotels for touristic purposes in places with not sufficient touristic potential, such as Borşa, where the number of tourists is generally low. Studies on return migration in Romania argue that many returnees aim to invest in agriculture (Vlase 2013). In the past years agriculture and food industry became profitable due to EU subsidies and access to the wide European market. In some places though, agriculture remained unproductive due to the low land quality and land fragmentation (Careja and Andreß 2010, Vlase 2013). In such cases, failures were generated not by the lack of economic opportunities, but by the returnees' careless planning and investment; it was often influenced by the investment and remittance enthusiasm present in the Romanian economy just before the current economic crisis.

*Survival and developing entrepreneurs* are those returning with financial and social remittances. They develop businesses back in Romania and rely on the Romanian market. Very often this is made of surviving entrepreneurs. In Caraşova returnees started to construct and rehabilitate the homes of their co-villagers. They worked informally or had very small enterprises. Their customers were made by local families

where women started to migrate to Austria for care work and invested their remittances in renovating and constructing houses. In Zăbala a small group of returnees who worked in agriculture in Switzerland opened up small agricultural companies, usually working medium-size plots of land. Their businesses are not very profitable: they owned a few tractors and were able to cultivate plots of 20 to 40 hectares of land. Some of them were also involved in breeding cattle. Their Swiss experience helped them improving their farming and breeding techniques, however they were not able to obtain higher profits due to small selling prices and low productivity. In Sebeş some returnees from Germany and Spain opened small companies in furniture and construction. They argued they obtained qualifications on Western labor markets, making them highly competitive locally. As Horst, a carpenter from Sebeş argued, in Romania he had no real competition. He used to work in Germany where he owned a small company and had a number of clients. His small business worked well, but decided to return for family reasons. Upon return, he considered he had no real competition, coming with the qualifications and equipment from Germany. Ion came back from Spain with his brother and opened a small company in construction. They brought a concrete mixer and take on jobs in the surrounding area. Such businesses are small and these returnees aim at no further development, but at making their ends meet.

In Borşa and Sebeş former migrants opened up cafes, restaurants and pizzerias. In Borşa returnees from Milan opened up some pizzerias but such businesses were profitable especially during summers and winters when migrants returned from abroad and spent much of their remittances there. In Sebeş though, the hospitality industry is profitable along the year. As the city experienced economic growth, peoples' purchasing power increased and consumption grew. The opening of the new Italian and Austrian factories, as well as the new Daimler factory, brought more consumers, including a small expat community and qualified workers who commute to Sebeş from the surrounding area. Returnees who came back from the UK and Greece, and some Italians were thus able to open up new restaurants, diversifying the local offer.

In Sebeş, two other returnees from the UK and Germany were more successful; they were able to develop middle-scale businesses, one in the hospitality industry and tourism, while the second in the leather industry. The owner of the tourism company offers foreign tourists, mostly Germans, qualified guidance and accommodation. The second returnee worked many years in the leather industry in the UK, having business partners from the Latin America, especially Brazil and Argentina. After 1990 he returned to Romania and opened up a company that now employs about one hundred employees. Sixty km away from Sebeş, close to Sibiu, another person from Sebeş, a returnee from Germany, opened a quality hotel. In the cases we mentioned here, returnees claim the stay abroad helped them acquire resources and valuable information on how to run their businesses. Besides, knowledge of German was important for the returnees involved in tourism with German tourists. Accordingly, we

may distinguish between survival and developing entrepreneurs (Oțeanu 2007). While survival entrepreneurs were only able to make ends meet, developing entrepreneurs were able to develop and employ local people. This distinction is meaningful for returnees in Romania. Whereas in many cases returnees were able to become survival entrepreneurs, cases of developing entrepreneurs are seldom. In our research, we met such cases only in Sebeș, a town offering a more developed local economy.

### **Return of longer-term Labor Migrants**

In Sebeș return is recently noticeable and international migration lowered significantly. Although the return is not large, both processes signify a radical change of migration process that was particularly strong a decade ago. In Carașova also, people worked in Croatia for more than ten years. Later on, men came back to the village and women started to migrate to Austria working in care and cleaning industry. In Zăbala, men and women worked in Hungary when the economic opportunities in Romania were very scarce. After 2004-2005, Romania started to offer some more opportunities and the wage differences between Hungary and Romania lowered. In that context, many preferred to not continue working in Hungary and stayed home. In these cases, two different patterns seemed to emerge: first, there were long-term labor migrants working in West European countries who tended to return. Secondly, there are migrants who went to other Central and East European countries, here ethnic Croats and Hungarians, who migrated first to their Fatherlands and returned to Romania. Simultaneously, migration to other Central and East European countries strongly decreased or reoriented towards West European destinations, as in both rural contexts migrants started to go to Austria and Germany. One exception is with some returnees in Zăbala who ceased going to Hungary and worked in Zăbala for very poor salaries.

Migrants coming back to Sebeș took on jobs in newly-opened multinational companies or in local Romanian companies. In these cases migration to Spain helped people to acquire enough resources to build houses. Upon return, they reported they fulfilled some of the aims of migration, such as improving the living conditions by constructing and renovating houses. In some of the cases we encountered, the Spanish real-estate crisis hit the migrants, and they were forced to return. In one of the cases migrants bought a flat in Madrid, but when the crisis came, he was unable to cover the mortgage any longer. In some other cases, returnees reported weaker payments, and that they were no longer covering the living costs in Spain. Due to the existing labor opportunities in Sebeș, migrants had no difficulties in finding new jobs at home. Most jobs were paid under the average Romanian salary, but those with good local connections were able to obtain better jobs. Even in these cases, returnees were dissatisfied by the local wages, but they had to accept them as they had no other solution abroad. They considered themselves old enough to

migrate again to other destinations, that they fulfilled some of their goals, and considered that things will go better eventually. Alexandru is such a returnee. He lived in Madrid, Spain, for about ten years and came back when he lost his job and was heavily indebted. A few years ago he worked for a fast-food distributing sandwiches around Madrid and his family had a very well living standard. At that time, he bought a flat, whose mortgage was about 1,000 euros/month. When the crisis stroked Madrid, his company failed and he had to find another job. The payment was lower and did not afford the mortgage. Losing his flat and having some family problems back home, he decided to return. Back home, he got employment at a newly –opened plant. His wage was well under the Romanian average salary, however he hopes for future increases and values the stability of his job.

In some other cases, return was accompanied by migrants opening-up small businesses where other returnees could find employment. In Borșa, this was one pattern of return. Some migrants or former migrants opened up local companies in construction and hired some returnees. As we stressed before, the large wave of migration opened up a series of temporary opportunities in Romania, however, as the flow of remittances decreased and migrants completed the construction of their houses, such small companies often failed. Local conditions seemed less appealing for migrants not only in terms of actual earnings but also in terms of insecurity. Prior to 2009, the year when the crisis hit Romania, there were migrants in Borșa who returned, obtaining employment in the small but profitable local businesses. At that time, the labor market witnessed shortages and workers' rewards were satisfactory.

However, the crisis hit particularly strong Romania. Payments decreased and the number of jobs available on the market also decreased. Similar developments occurred in many regions of Romania dependent on migrant remittances. The real estate market attracted migrants' remittances and created many jobs (Pop 2006). But when the flow of remittances dropped from 9.3 billion USD in 2008 to 3.9 billion USD in 2011 (Goschin 2013), real estate investments suddenly dropped. In such contexts, people continued migrating to West European destinations, even when countries of destination suffered as well.

## **Temporary movers**

Between 1990 and 2002 Romanian citizens needed visas in order to travel to the EU countries. For many migrants residing irregularly in Western Europe, their travel back home was seen problematic as the return to the West entailed high costs and often, risky strategies. The lifting up of visa requirements in 2002 created new patterns of Romanian migration. As free movers in the European Union, Romanians started to employ a plethora of temporary migratory strategies. Migrants were able to return at will and re-migrate with ease. Temporary migration practices flourished, people migrating, returning, and re-migrating with ease. In the cases we analyzed, we distinguish between some different patterns. In the first case, there is the case of

double migrants, people who migrated towards one destination and changed the destinations afterwards.

In Caraşova, the return of men from Croatia was accompanied by the migration of women to Austria (gender replacement migration). Given the fact that the local context offered few income opportunities due to the economic decay, temporary migration remained the most sustainable source of income for people living in this mountainous area. In Zăbala also the return from Hungary was followed by migration towards Germany, which offered much better wages than the ones in the local agriculture. In both cases people migrated in the 1990s towards Central European destinations, but after 2005-2007, these destinations became less appealing. In Croatia, large-scale infrastructure projects were completed and men were not able to find employment any longer. In both countries, Croatia and Hungary, salaries were no longer motivating people to go there, as the differences between the Romanian salaries and the earnings abroad strongly decreased.

Secondly, there was the case of temporary migration as a process generated by large-scale migrations. Here there were cases of migrants who worked temporary abroad but maintained their residence in Romania. In Borşa, many people had friends and relatives in Italy and due to these connections, they were able to travel from time to time abroad working in agriculture, industry, or construction. In such cases, they maintained employment in Romania, however they were able to be away a few months a year. Thirdly, there were temporary migrants who employed temporary migratory practices over a long period of time, and migrated towards one constant destination country. Often, men migrated and worked in agriculture and in constructions, whereas women took on jobs in the care industry. In Zăbala men started to work a few months a year as cattle breeders in Corsica and in slaughterhouses in Germany. In all these cases, there were no plans and perspectives for settling abroad, but of temporary employment contracts. Such temporary migrations do not actually describe phenomena of return migration, as temporary migration is a form of migration and not of return. However, as far as migrants maintain their residence in Romania and may change their migratory dispositions if conditions improve at home, we decided to analyze these also. Secondly, in the cases of double migrants, even if migrants decided to re-migrate, they did not settle abroad during the years of first migratory destination. Finally, by studying these practices we were able to provide a more comprehensive image of return, investment initiatives and temporary migration of Romanians.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

The analysis unfolded that, in all locales we studied, the number of return migrants was actually small and there was substantial number of temporary migrants. Analytically it is hard to definitely separate the two categories; however it appears clear that the return of long-term migrants is less significant in terms of numbers.



Temporary practices continued to attract Romanian migrants in most locales, as local employment conditions are still unattractive in comparison to temporary labor in the Western Europe. This situation, though, differs from the situation before the crisis, when many Romanians aimed at staying longer in countries of destination; today migrations are rather short and households no longer change the residence to destination countries. On the other hand, as the research unfolded, returned of long-term migrants is very significant in terms of effects, as most entrepreneurs were actually long-term migrants or persons whose initial migratory projects were of permanent migrants.

Secondly, the economic crisis affected the migration and return of Romanians. It first produced a stop and reorganization of migration from large-scale labor migration towards Italy and Spain to more temporary migratory practices towards countries from the northern Europe. Besides, neighboring countries from the Central and Eastern Europe were no longer considered attractive by migrants who stopped going there. Thirdly, some migrants returned and took jobs on the local labor market. This occurred in Sebeș, the only town that experienced consolidated growth in the past ten years, and in Zăbala, where returnees impoverished. In Sebeș returnees were middle aged, usually above 35.

Entrepreneurship seems to be a favorite avenue for longer-term migrants aiming to return. They may be transnational connectors, whose customers are Romanians abroad, and local developing and surviving entrepreneurs. Transnational entrepreneurs who aimed at having businesses both in Romania and abroad were involved in construction, but due to the shrinking of the Romanian market, many of them cancelled their businesses in Romania. Survival and development entrepreneurs operated in domains such as agriculture, tourism and the hospitality industry, furniture and leather industry. In all the cases we encountered, returnees reported that migratory experience learned them how to run such businesses. In these domains the number of developing entrepreneurs was actually very small, most of them were actually survival entrepreneurs. Returnees were also involved in informal and quasi-informal trade. The most profitable is the trade with second-hand cars, a business that is run semi-informally. Due to the development of this market, this domain offered many opportunities for returnees. The trade with other second-hand goods is also practiced but produces fewer benefits.

Finally, only in one locale some people became involved in trading in other countries; we consider this pattern exceptional. In terms of business model, traders differ from the other entrepreneurs. If the former are rather transmitters of ideas and practices of doing business, the later are innovators who attempt to create successful strategies by using opportunities at home and abroad. Returnees' entrepreneurship in all its forms does not have the capacity to employ returnees in large numbers; these entrepreneurs actually try to carve their niche in a rather poor and unstable environment. They become though, role models for other people from the same locales or for those abroad, who aim at returning at some point in time.

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