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# THE MONOGRAPHIC RESEARCH OF THE ROMANIAN DIASPORA

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**Abstract:** *The process of immigration of the Romanians in Europe and America aroused the interest of some researchers, especially in the field of sociology. It is underlined the contribution of a series of professors and PhD candidates from the University from Craiova, who made sociological investigations on the communities of Romanian immigrants from Italy, Spain, France, England, Germany, Holland, Belgium, USA, Canada. The base of these researches was the monographic theory and method. The sociological perspective of examination was combined with the statistical and anthropological ones. The field details were gathered through a questionnaire and an interview. It is shown that 20%, up to 25% of the Romanians from other countries confessed that they do not intend to return to their own country.*

**Keywords:** *the Romanian Diaspora, the monographic research, the value of the empirical research, the consequences of emigration, the protection of the immigrants.*

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## 1. Introduction

For a long time representing just the interest of the journalists, the Romanian diaspora has also aroused, especially since 2009, a huge amount of interest within the world of the politicians from our country. Thus, we remember that the vote of the Romanians from abroad made the difference between the two candidates, running for the presidency of Romania, at the elections from 2009 and 2014.

The interest that some specialists and scientists showed for the study of the communities of Romanians from abroad increased considerably, after 1990, due to the amplification of the emigrant fluxes from Romania. The successive waves of citizens, who left the country, definitively or temporarily (only to work and earn money and then return to the country), implied millions of people, forming another Romania, outside the national borders and reaching, according to our estimations, almost 5 million people.

The main points of attraction were, on one side, the developed countries of the Occidental Europe, and, on the other side, the most advanced countries from the European continent, the United States of America and Canada. This situation leads us

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to the noticing of two forms of manifestation, on addressing the external emigration of the Romanians: *the Romanian Diaspora from Europe* and *the Romanian Diaspora from America*. Such a reality constituted the basis for the initiation of a scientific research project, of the Romanian emigrants from the two continents, within the Doctoral School of Sociology, within the University from Craiova. This way, it is explained why the authors of the systematically elaborated works, on the theme of the external migration, are either professors, or PhD candidates at sociology, in the already mentioned institution.

The Romanian diaspora from Europe was to be investigated, through a series of ten works and the Romanian diaspora from America, to be explored in two works. Thus, it was triggered a sociological research process, of the Romanian immigrant communities, from the following countries:

- Spain;
- France;
- England;
- Germany;
- Holland;
- Belgium;
- Austria;
- Greece;
- U.S.A.;
- Canada.

To these, there are added the results of our own research, made on the communities of Romanian immigrants from Italy (2006-2008) and the changes produced in the cultural identity of the Romanian immigrants from the Occidental Europe (2011-2013). On the whole, we can evidence a number of 12 works, which were based on the knowledge of the Romanian external migration problems, a process that started in 1990. Among the papers, there were published, up until today, 7 books.

- *The Romanians in Italy*, 2008; 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2016 (Adrian Otovescu);
- *The Romanian community from Spain*, 2014 (Cristina Ilie);
- *The Romanian community from Belgium*, 2015 (Cristina Pescaru);
- *The Romanian migration in Germany*, 2015 (Alexandra Porumbescu);
- *The Romanian immigration in England*, 2015 (Wedad Quffa);
- *The Romanian immigrants from USA*, 2015 (Dan Voinea);
- *The preserving of the cultural identity within the Romanian immigrants from Europe*, 2013 (Adrian Otovescu).

Moreover, we evidence that it has been finalised a work addressing *The Romanian immigration in France*, 2014 (Radu Riza) and two more have been prepared, to be maintained as dissertations: *The Romanians from Canada* (Elena Basarab) and *The Romanian community from Holland* (Alexandra Deaconu).

Therefore, until today, the sociological research of the Romanian immigrants referred to 9 European developed countries – Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, Holland, Belgium, Austria, Greece (being published 6 monographs) and two American countries – USA and Canada (a monograph being also published). To the 11 researches, there is also added the one based on the identity reconstruction phenomenon, of the people who left Romania. So far, there have been published 7 books: 6 about the Romanian communities from Italy, Spain, England, Germany, Belgium, USA and a book referring

to the metamorphosis of the Romanians' cultural identities, from the countries where they arrived.

## 2. The methodology of research

At the basis of the sociological researches, there was a specific pattern of approaching the Romanian emigrants. Thus, in the elaborated works, we also meet a presentation of the migration phenomenon, from the global, European and national point of view, along with a brief exposition of the main sociological theories, which explain the process of migration among the people on the globe. The work is continued with the empirical investigation of the immigrant communities, according to several aspects: that of the historic stages of emigration from Romania; the demographic, social, economic, cultural, religious characteristics; the relations with the native population and the other immigrants; the integration in the foster society and the communication to those remained at home etc.

The main objective, systematically considered by the members of the University from Craiova, was to accomplish a panoramic image of the Romanian immigration to Europe and America, the two continents concentrating most of Romanians who left abroad, after 1990. In order to fulfil such an objective, there were first examined the communities of Romanians from those countries that played continuously an attractive part, for Romanians. It must be underlined that the term *community* was used preponderantly in an anthropological/sociological respect, of population that share the same language, has common origins and history, was formed and shaped within the same national culture, which has the same traditions and customs. Due to the fact that the Romanians from the researched foreign societies do not live in territorial communities that are compact, homogeneous from the ethnical point of view (as *China Town*, for example), but they are spatially spread, there could not be operationalised the acceptance of territorial community, but only that addressing the cultural, historical and geographical belonging.

Each work, from the series of those referring to the *Romanian Diaspora from Europe*, offers us details on a community of Romanian immigrants, from a country or another, and, in the same time, it represents a "window", widely open towards the understanding of the Romanian migration phenomenon at European level. The cognitive approach had, as main ground, a theoretical-methodological principle, specific to sociology, that of *entireness*. Its application, in the research, meant that the Romanian migration phenomenon, to a certain European country, cannot be understood and explained, unless it is related to all the immigrants from that society, and, the latter one, to all the migrants that exist on European and world level. Therefore, in this context, the official statistical data have been fully rendered valuable, especially that provided by the National Institutes for Statistics, by *Eurostat* (that refer to all the 28 states members of the European Union), and by the *International Organization for Migration*. The process of migration was treated as a global dimension one, as it is demonstrated in the structure of the monographic works.

The analysis of the Romanian immigrants from Europe and America was usually conducted from a triple perspective: statistical, sociological and anthropological. The

sociological approach implied both the presentation, done by the researchers, of the actual theories that explain the phenomenon of international migration and the assuming of a certain leading conception, mostly systematic, of the migrant networks. The theoretical approach was accompanied by several empirical researches, within the migrants from Italy, Spain, France, Germany, England, Belgium, USA, Canada etc. The field research started from certain studying hypotheses, and they were carried out according to the structure of precise plans of investigation, specific for the sociological thinking. The general premise from which it was commenced, presented emigration as an ambivalent phenomenon, meaning that it has both positive and negative consequences. The positive and the negative character can be judged according to the direct relation to migrant persons and the countries from where they left or where they arrived.

In order to gather the field information, generally, it was resorted to the poll, based on a questionnaire, and the structured guided interview, which allowed the obtaining of quantitative and qualitative information. The studied population was made of Romanian immigrants, aged over 18 years old, of both genders, with different levels of education etc. The territorial dispersion of the inquired subjects imposed the use of exploratory samples, the subjects being selected according to the opportunities of finding them, in the host countries. The collected information, and the measurements, validated on those batches of immigrants, led to the unravelling of new aspects and to the formulation of facts, drawing of conclusions, essential for the understanding of the way of thinking, the motivations, the behaviour, the interests and expectations, characteristic for the groups of Romanian immigrants, from the European societies, which adopted them, on longer or shorter periods of staying.

In the empirical research of the Romanian immigrant communities from Europe, there was generally adopted the monographic method, which did not exclude the use of other methods too, specific to sociology, such is the typological method (on which base, there were established the types of migrants, their problems and communication channels etc.), the comprehensive method (essential for the deciphering or understanding of the emigration reasons and the refuse to return home etc.), the method of case study, the comparative method, the method of observation, the functionalist method etc.

### **3. The value and the use of the empirical investigations**

If the sociological theories have an essential role in the general explanation of the external migration phenomenon, the field researches evidence concrete data and particularities that, in their absence, it would be impossible to characterise the groups or the categories of immigrants from one country or another. Such substantial information can be related to the culture from which the immigrants come, their religious beliefs, their attitude towards the work, their conception on addressing the life and their fellows, the moral values that they cherish, the customs and traditions that govern their marriage and the family life, the perception of some ethnic minorities, the meaning they give to their own life, within the new society, in which they made their living etc. The empirical investigations are extremely important, because they show precise data,

indispensable for the discovery of the efficient means of intervention in critical situations, of monitoring the immigration phenomenon.

The sociological field research are able to unravel such precious data, which the administration of the localities, with lots of communities of immigrants, can render valuable, in different pragmatic circumstances, avoiding or preventing some inter-ethnic or inter-cultural conflict relations, of drawing up some efficient educational and employment, social assistance etc. programmes. The dialogue with the immigrants, through the questionnaires or guided interviews, cannot be replaced by a statistical evidence, as rigorous as it would be, because the language of numbers is not able to replace the meaning of words or to decipher the feelings of the inquired subject. The same way, no theory would be able to depict, due to its general character, a personal, subjective feeling. For this reason, the feeling of disorientation of a young Romanian immigrant, who worked in London, is suggestive, when asked by a reporter, returned from our country, what he was feeling like, in the capital of England, offering a surprising answer: “How should I feel? When living in my village, I knew that the Sun always rose from behind the mountain. Here, it rises from everywhere and from nowhere!” Such examples prove how conclusive the case studies can be, despite their descriptive character, and, nonetheless, they attest the necessity of the empirical, field investigations.

## 4. Conclusions

As concerning the sociology of migration, it has been frequently used the technique of the questionnaire, both for the gathering of information from the abroad population and from their relatives who remained in Romania. Without the data collected through questionnaires, the the knowledge regarding the Romanian Diaspora might be limited to language of numbers (provided by certain statistical institutions) and to the confusions created by the discordances and discrepancies, often met between them (according to the probity of those who provide them) or the different and contradictory impressions of some observers, who place their intuition above the documented judgement and concrete investigation. For example, the fact that, in 2015, 28,000 Romanians applied for the Visa Lottery, in order to obtain the legal right to go to USA, is an incontestable truth, but the reason for wishing to leave the country, what they will do there and generally, which is their future life strategy, we will know only if we interview them individually, within an examination register, specific to sociology.

It has to be underlined that the information collected from the interviewed, through the questionnaire and the guided interview, clarifies a lot of answers, to some of the most important questions that we ask, on addressing the people who left Romania (temporarily or definitively), to work and live on the territory of other countries:

1. *Who are the people who left our country?* (the age category, occupation/profession, level of instruction, marital status, size of their family, rural/urban region, dwelling, county and region where they come from);
2. *Which are the main reasons for the leaving abroad and under what circumstances, was the decision made?*

3. *How did they travel (individually/ in group) and by what means of transport?*
4. *Whether they were helped by somebody, when arriving at the destination, to find dwelling and work?*
5. *If they work in the same field and they have the same profession/occupation that they used to have in Romania?*
6. *How do they evaluate their income obtained in the foster country, as comparing to Romania?*
7. *How do they regard the citizens from the host-country and the working relations, the connections with the other immigrant co-nationals?*
8. *Which are the main personal/family difficulties that they face in the new society and for which one would they expect help? (learning of the language, quality of their work, rent, children's education, treatment at the working place etc.)*
9. *What changes have occurred in the mentality, behaviour and cultural identity of the immigrants, after arriving in the host country?*
10. *How do the Romanian feel amongst the foreigners, which is their affective condition, what brings them satisfactions and harmony or what bothers them constantly?*
11. *Generally, how do they consider to be socially integrated in the community from the host country? (if they have friends, acquaintances, normal social life or they are overwhelmed with solitude and homesick);*
12. *In what way do they communicate frequently, with the family members that remained in the country, former colleagues, friends, relatives?*
13. *Which is the destination of their earnings obtained abroad?*
14. *What life plans does the immigrant have for the future, do they intend to remain definitively abroad or to return home for good? etc.*

We know that the Romanians who left abroad do not always experience a comfortable state of mind (often missing their families and the place of birth), that certain co-nationals have not managed to become employed or involved in the social life, a situation that episodically attracted unjust discrimination and repudiation manifestations, along with the hostility of certain politicians or media institutions (in countries as Italy, France, England). Despite the temporary harsh conditions, many Romanians succeeded in building successful careers abroad, almost all of them are satisfied with their life there, as compared to that from Romania. Thus, when they are asked whether they are willing to return home, they almost invariably answer: "why?" or "what for?", "for unemployment or badly paid jobs?". Consequently, a significant share of the Romanian immigrants, between 20% and 25%, as shown by the data of certain researches, decided to remain definitively in their second country, which they chose for both working and living, for their own and for their families' safety.

Due to the discriminatory manifestations and the adversities, which the Romanian immigrants were subjected to, in Italy, France, Spain and England, in the past years, they need an increased special protection from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, which, through the diplomatic means at disposal, has the possibility to become involved more actively and with more motivation, for fighting the hostile attitude and defending the rights of our citizens, who live and work in other countries (Otovescu-Frăsie, 2008).

The odyssey of the Romanians who left abroad represents a disturbing component of our contemporary history, from the last two and a half decades. The works about the main communities of co-nationals from Europe and France offer us convincing data and significant landmarks, for understanding their destiny, in a troubled and constantly unsecure world.

The phenomenon of individual and collective emigration often implies major risks for the life of the citizens, involved in the search for a better and more secured world, especially during the clandestine travelling, between the native countries and the ones of destination, when, frequently, victims of the human trafficking and transportation accidents are registered.

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