



OCCUPATIONAL STRATEGIES OF THIRD COUNTRY MIGRANTS ON THE ROMANIAN LABOR MARKET

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Abstract: *The article analyzes how third country migrants in Romania make use of occupational strategies to access the domestic labor market. The analysis develops around formal and informal occupational strategies, the latter ones further divided according to Granovetter's (2018) 'strong ties' and 'weak ties'. Empirical evidence has been collected from the narratives of twenty oral history interviews with migrants in Romania. Results indicate a reliance of third country migrants on formal and informal occupational strategies for securing employment, especially there where the public sector or private businesses fail to create the adequate employment opportunities. Both kinds of strategies are used alike, with the formal strategy strongly depending on education, hard work and free will, while the informal strategy mainly depending on the 'ties'. Moreover, findings indicate that 'weak ties' tend to push migrants towards the secondary labor market of part-time and poorly paid jobs. In addition, research results also spot a tendency of male migrants to easier engage into creating and using either 'strong' or 'weak ties', while female migrants struggle to secure personal connections with the domestic population that might help them find a (better) job.*

Keywords: *occupational strategies, social inclusion, labor market, third country migrants, immigration*

1. Introduction

The Romanian Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has increased the quota of newly admitted foreign workers on the domestic labor market to 100,000 in 2022, compared to 5,500 in 2016, an increase of 1718%, which symbolizes the growing internationalization of the labor market in Romania and the anchoring of the latter in the global labor system (Romanian Government, 2016; Romanian Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, 2021). With a rising number of foreign citizens residing in Romania for numerous purposes (education, work, family reunification, asylum etc.), the local labor market faces new challenges and opportunities alike. While citizens from the EU and the European Economic Space (Norway, Island, Liechtenstein) enjoy similar labor conditions with the

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native populations, people from outside of these spaces have to face more difficult employment processes and, often, restrictive labor legislation due to their non-EU/EES status. Thereupon, in order to find employment and be included on the Romanian labor market, third country migrants (understood as non-EU/EES migrants, as per the interpretation of Art. 20(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, see EUR-Lex, 2016) have to develop various occupational strategies.

The aim of the research is to examine the occupational strategies used by migrants with a third country background to secure labor market inclusion in Romania. After extensive research being carried out at international level in the 1960's/1970's, the sociology of work and occupations received a rather diminished attention after the 1990's, which led Kurtz (2009) to question whether the study of occupational sociology was not abandoned too early. This study is positioned among Kurtz's idea of an untimely abandonment of occupational sociology and carries out an analysis of occupational strategies employed by third country migrants in Romania to find out whether stratification or discrimination occurs from occupational opportunities.

The analysis in the article is created around the formal and informal occupational strategies, the latter being further divided into what Granovetter (2018) called "strong ties" and "weak ties". The paper starts with a theoretical framework on the sociology of occupations, respectively on occupational strategies, and then continues with the discussions around the field research. The field research is based on a pool of twenty oral history narrative interviews with third country migrants residing in Romania. The methodological details of the data collection and analysis are presented in a dedicated section, before the article moves on to the Discussions, where the empirical analysis is backed up by testimonies and remarks made by the immigrants in the oral history interviews. A variety of research studies have dealt with the labor migration to Romania and the social inclusion of migrant workers (Coșciug, 2018; Oltean and Găvruş, 2018), the Social Change Review also dedicating a special issue to "Debating Immigration in a Country of Emigration", mostly concerned with the aforementioned aspect. However, less attention has been paid to the occupational strategies that immigrants – much less third country immigrants – develop in order to secure labor market inclusion, an aspect that this paper attempts to cover.

This paper argues that third country migrants rely on either formal or informal occupational strategies to secure employment, and also that the use of 'weak ties' in order to find employment results in a tendency of pushing migrants towards the secondary labor market. The research question asks how third country migrants make use of occupational strategies in order to find employment? Employment is understood as labor market inclusion that creates the conditions for proper social participation of migrants in the host society.

2. The Sociology of Occupations

The sociology of occupations (often also presented as occupational sociology) is a branch of the sociology of labor dealing with how the occupational construction connects with and affects miscellaneous aspects of social life, such as family, leisure,

social relations, societal participation etc (Paradeise, 2003; Paugam, 2008). Employment-related aspects are studied in order to seek for connections with social life in general, to find out more about the significance of employment for society or about the relevance and the meaning of having a (specific) job to the lives of people (Bhowmik, 2009; Smigel, 1954). According to Taylor (1968), the study of occupational sociology contributes to a better understanding of society.

Kalleberg and Sorensen (1979: 361) defined an occupation as a professionally homogenous group of people, with similar abilities, competencies and training. Such people thus create an analogous group of (potential) employees who are in search of a job that relates to their skills and training. This congruity stemming from the professional background (consisting of either education and training, or of labor experience gained on the job) creates social power that distances and distinguishes professional groups from each other, thus leading to the social division of labor: different workers with different skillsets will have different employment opportunities. Kalleberg and Sorensen's definition is aligned with Friedmann and Naville's (1961) understanding of the occupational sociology, which the latter ones present as being the study of professional commonalities in terms of occasions of work between diverse individuals. Friedmann and Naville also draw attention that occupational sociology does not have rigorously delimited borders, incorporating a variety of facets that connect labor with social life.

3. Occupational Strategies

In-depth research has revealed the significance of occupational strategies for successful social inclusion and their contribution to meaningful social participation (Wicks, 2003).

At large, occupational strategies can be defined as “the basic professional orientation in which the future professional activities can be embedded” (Stock-Homburg, 2010: 806). In a narrowed down understanding, occupational strategies can also be simply acknowledged as the totality of methods that a job-seeker can use in order to find employment. Studies concerning the occupational strategies of migrants often turn to this narrowed understanding, as it is believed that one of the most important steps for migrants to be included in the host society is to first of all find employment; once employment is found, the migrant might also think about the future. Cohen (2000) also defines occupational strategies from the point of view of social inclusion, namely as a persons' vision of how to integrate in a rapidly changing labor market. In other cases, occupational strategies are also understood as one's strategy to increase his or her autonomy of practice (Protassieff, 2014). As such, occupational strategies can be regarded as professional and social action plans that migrants use to find employment. Because people can use different methods to find employment, occupational strategies can lead to social inequalities and discrimination, as demonstrated by Glazer (1991) and Kurtz (2009).

Broadly speaking, we can distinguish between formal and informal occupational strategies. The formal strategy supposes that the migrant applies for a job by free will and as a response to an open and public job announcement. However, due to restrictive labor legislation, the use of formal occupational strategies often fails, directing immigrants towards informal strategies in order to find jobs and apply for them.

Informal occupational strategies are based on the networking with the social circle. Members of the social network provide hints and help for finding employment. Granovetter (2018) further divides the informal strategy in “*strong ties*” and “*weak ties*”. Strong ties are established with family members, colleagues and a close circle of friends, while weak ties with a more distant circle of acquaintances. According to Granovetter, weak ties prove more efficient in circulating job information and referrals, ultimately in helping one find a job, as strong ties are more concerned with providing emotional support in the private life. Therefore, the absence of weak ties might significantly hinder the occupational mobility of immigrants (Amado, 2003).

Research has also demonstrated that informal occupational strategies prove to be more efficient when it comes to finding employment in the secondary labor market rather than in the primary labor market (Alexandru, 2011). While the primary labor market requires formal education to access well paid jobs with safe working conditions, good job security and potential for promotion (King, 1974; Maxwell, 1987), access to the secondary labor market of low status and poorly paid jobs (in services, retail, manufacturing etc.) is usually intermediated for migrants through weak ties (Miller Jr., 1982; Wilson, 1998).

4. Methodology

This qualitative research is based on twenty semi-structured oral history interviews with migrants living in Romania, conducted between June 2021 and January 2022. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the interviews were carried out online, per Zoom. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed by the researcher. The interviews were held in either Romanian or English, based on the knowledge or preferences of the participants. Table 1 provides a list of the participants to the interviews, with their gender, country of origin, age and employment status at the moment of the interview. The participants are listed chronologically, from top to bottom, in the order in which the interviews have been conducted. For anonymization purposes, the real names of the participants will be replaced by pseudonyms.

Table 1: List of participants in the oral history interviews and their employment status at the moment of the interview

Pseudonym (Female/Male)	Country of origin	Age at the moment of the interview	Employment status at the moment of the interview
Darcelle (F)	Cameroon	20	Student, unemployed. Has previously had a short, less than a month labor experience at a call center with French language.
Dabir (M)	Yemen	26	In recruitment process with a large multinational IT company. Had two jobs in the native country, at a restaurant and in cosmetics retail. In Romania, had a brief spell of one month and a half at a business

Pseudonym (Female/Male)	Country of origin	Age at the moment of the interview	Employment status at the moment of the interview
			dealing with cryptocurrencies, and then occasional collaborations with movie casting and shooting agencies.
Maashar (M)	Palestine	21	Student, unemployed. Thinking about opening his own business. Previous internship at a marketing agency in Romania. Occasional work at grandfather's furniture store in Palestine.
Amalia (F)	Republic of Moldova	21	Student, volunteer at a student organization.
Ghawer (M)	Lebanon	20	Student, unemployed.
John (M)	USA	55	Working as a missionary in Romania since 1999
Abdul (M)	Afghanistan	20	Student, unemployed, volunteering
Milena (F)	Belarus	36	Unemployed. Worked for two years in a call-center in Romania before resigning to take care of her child.
Stephanie (F)	The Philippines	37	Employed at a call center, after an experience with another call center
Sebastián (M)	Mexico	49	Employed at a call center
Valeria (F)	Republic of Moldova	22	Employed on a project-basis at an NGO. Previous labor experience in Romania at a fast-food chain.
Yardan (M)	Yemen	23	Works online for an international business. Previous work experiences in Yemen and in Malaysia. Internship at a retail store in Romania.
Bhavesh (M)	India	46	Self-employed, runs an international recruitment agency. Previous experience at another Romanian-based international recruitment agency.
Nabina (F)	Kenya	20	Student, unemployed.
Rayya (F)	Iraq	24	Employed as university lecturer in Romania. Worked at an embassy in Irak as well.
Gloria (F)	Dominican Republic	45	Works as nutrition consultant and researcher at a private medical clinic. Experience as medical researcher and medical university professor in the Dominican Republic and in the United States of America.
Ramzia (F)	Sudan	25	Student, employed in a retail store. Worked as university lecturer for one year in her native country before migrating to Romania.

Pseudonym (Female/Male)	Country of origin	Age at the moment of the interview	Employment status at the moment of the interview
Muhammetnazar (M)	Turkmenistan	22	Employed as sales manager and marketing executive in businesses of friends.
Jagdish (M)	Bangladesh	24	Works as delivery boy at an on-demand courier service. Volunteered at the Red Cross in Bangladesh.
Raviraj (M)	Bangladesh	21	Works as delivery boy at an on-demand courier service. Taught private lessons for pupils in Bangladesh.

Source: own compilation of data

The average age of the participants is situated at 28.9 years, hence a young sample, with the youngest participants aged 20 and the oldest 55. The young age can also be the explanation of the fact that, at the moment of conducting the interviews, eight respondents were not employed. Nine females and eleven males responded.

The oral history format of the interviews encouraged participants to present a narrative of their own lives, prior and after migration to Romania. Part of the questions targeting the personal narrative concerned the labor experience of the migrants. The questions prompting participants to discuss about their labor experience were the following:

- What was your first job? How old were you and what did you do?
- How long did you have that job?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What kind of jobs did you have?
- What do you think are your personal skills or characteristics that can help you the most?
- Are you currently employed in Romania? How did you find the job? Was it easy for you to get the job?
- Any challenges that you had on the Romanian labor market?
- What personal skills/abilities do you think can help you on the local job market?
- What are you doing to improve your working condition in Romania?

If respondents opened the subject of labor experience by themselves, the interview was left free-floating with their answers.

5. Discussions

The oral history interviews revealed that third country immigrants employed occupational strategies to overcome social barriers set by their non-native status (i.e., by the non-fit of third country job-seeker and the legislation of the Romanian labor market), which restricted their job opportunities and job options for meaningful

participation on the local labor market and, implicitly, in society. These strategies helped the migrants become better included in the Romanian host society. With regard to Berry et al.'s (2002) four possible socio-cultural responses of out-groups to in-groups, it can be said that all migrants interviewed harnessed the potential of the occupational strategies to find a job and improve their ties with the local society. In none of the cases did the interviewed immigrants report to have completely abandoned their own socio-cultural identity (assimilation), become marginalized or separated from the welcoming society. On the contrary, Raviraj (Bangladesh) mentioned how participation on the labor market has helped him and his friend learn more about the Romanian people and society:

“[While working,] we already learned shortcuts in the city, we learned about consumer’s preferences, about people’s tastes”.

One of the findings of the research was that third country migrants developed occupational strategies shortly after migration, in their first months or weeks of their stay in Romania, which indicates an awareness among migrants of the importance of having a job for proper social participation. In most of the cases, migrants used informal occupational strategies, as very often, the formal strategies proved their limits because of the complex and restrictive procedural and legal barriers set by the Romanian labor market. What many migrants complained about during the oral history interviews was the reluctance of companies to employ internationals due to the supplementary paperwork that needs to be done.

Employment becomes even more complicated for migrants with only a temporary residence, especially students. According to Art. 3, Chapter II, Section I of the Government Ordinance 25/2014 of 26 August 2014 regarding the employment and secondment of foreigners on the Romanian territory, “*foreigners holding the right of temporary residence for studies may be employed in Romania only with an individual part-time employment contract with a maximum working time of 4 hours per day*”. Muhammetnazar (Turkmenistan) recalls his difficulties in finding a job and admits that, the reason he accepted to participate in the oral history interview, was to express himself about these difficulties:

“To be frank, it was a disaster, and it still is. Why I did accept your invitation to join this interview is because I want to express myself about the difficulties we face, especially in the job market, after we graduate or while we’re studying as a foreigner. Of course, there are some political and some cultural things, but it is very difficult as a foreigner to position yourself in the labor market here, and it’s not just me. It’s very difficult to find internships, very difficult to find jobs because most of them require full time position, and legally, as a foreigner studying in Romania, you have a part time permit allowance to go to work. It is very hard and companies just reject your application because you’re a part timer. And, as you can imagine, it was a disaster. It was very hard for me to find part time jobs. The only options you have – doesn’t depend in what background you study – is just to work at call centers”.

Most of the migrants who found jobs by using a more formal approach did so mainly in mid- to large-sized multinational companies operating in Romania, which – thanks to their size, organizational structure, organizational and legal competencies, budgets etc. –

are more prepared to take on the challenge of going through the bureaucratic procedures with the governmental institutions in order to employ migrants. Indeed, several of the migrants interviewed worked for multinational companies, being employed after following the formal procedure of answering to a public job opening, applying for the job and being interviewed, but all of them were past their thirties and had already accumulated labor experience when they migrated to Romania, an advantage that counted for their employers. However, for students, as Yordan (Yemen) – himself having done a paid internship with a multinational conglomerate in Bucharest – tries to tone down the negative situation that third country nationals are exposed to,

“It’s easy to find work, but it’s not easy to find a good work, or a good job”.

Gloria’s occupational strategy, although not easy, was effective for allowing her to work what she wanted to work. Unlike many migrants, Gloria used a formal occupational strategy. A highly-skilled trained medic with vast professional experience gathered in her native country and abroad, Gloria could not find employment in the Romanian medical sector, because the public sector rejects foreign-breed doctors and the private sector does not make it easier either, by refusing to acknowledge study diplomas obtained outside of the European Union. Asked to reflect on how come it was so difficult for a trained professional like her to find employment in Romania and how she eventually managed to obtain a job in the Romanian medical sector, Gloria stated:

“The truth is that Romania does not recognize diplomas. Otherwise, I did a nutrition course and it was good that I did it because I found a job as a nutrition consultant. In this capacity, I can participate in various kinds of medical work that I had done in the Dominican Republic as well: research, nutritional consultations etc.”

Because her job applications were rejected in the proper employment path due to cumbersome legislation that does not recognize third country diplomas, Gloria initiated and pursued an own occupational strategy, which saw her actively engage in taking specialization courses in Romania (in spite of her already existing qualifications), which, eventually, helped her access the Romanian medical labor market and continue doing what she did before migration. In Gloria’s case, her occupational persona – her professional background and her desire to continue doing what she did before emigration – strongly influenced the occupational strategy. Gloria created a formal and not necessarily easy occupational strategy which saw her invest her personal resources in doing a course that opened up opportunities for her and helped her live a life in Romania that offered her a purposeful and gratifying life, yet only after having to overcome initial occupational challenges and barriers.

The fact that a university professor of physiology and pharmacology with experience in teaching and research accumulated at Rochester University and Columbia University in the United States of America could not be hired in the Romanian medical system due to legal-procedural flaws that did not recognize her study diplomas and work experience abroad, is an indication of the occupational barriers maintained by the Romanian labor market; in order to combat these, migrants often have to develop their own occupational strategies or to resort to informal ways of gaining access to the labor market, which cost them additional energy, time and money.

However, Gloria's quest for a better occupational position does not stop here, a proof that immigrant's occupational strategies are "gradually refined over time" (Wicks, 2006: 267). Aware of her worth, formation and position, Gloria declared at the moment of the interview that:

"Next year I will take my citizenship to open my doors, my gates, as you say."

Gender Occupational Segregation Induced by Informal Ties

Many of the immigrants interviewed reported to have found their jobs through informal occupational strategies, confirming Granovetter's (2018) stance that labor advancement comes along with the proper 'weak ties' (and a proper timing, might be added). The conducted research also proved Granovetter's idea of the strong ties' failure in providing adequate support for employment, due to two main reasons: first, that the migrants did not have an extended strong tie network in Romania; second, that many of the migrants interviewed complained about the inability to approach local people and create strong ties with them.

The strong tie networks of the interviewed migrants were often reduced to the spouse and maybe one or two closer friends. Another interesting aspect to notice in connection to this issue is a gender stratification to the detriment of women, such as Stephanie (The Philippines), Milena (Belarus) and Ramzia (Sudan), who complained about having communicational problems even with the family of the spouse or their in-laws.

Stephanie (The Philippines): *"It's hard for me to really get to know somebody. I know they can speak English, but it's very challenging for me to get to know them better as a person, as a friend. So, a relationship at work is okay (n.a., with work colleagues), but to be friends like in super-friends is hard?"*

Milena (Belarus): *"I have acquaintances, but I can't say that they are very close friends, who would call me often, day by day as back home, to ask me how I am. It's not true friendship. I have a fairly close Romanian neighbor, but she is not a friend to whom you can be one hundred percent open, to talk about your problems, to discuss?"*

Ramzia (Sudan): *"I did not make a lot of friends here in Romania?"*

Such inability acts as detrimental for migrants seeking employment. On the other side, men found it easier to create both strong and weak ties, which also helped them find employment, such as in the case of Bhavesh (India):

"I used to go to the house of my mother in law, and she used to teach me [Romanian] also. Going to the house of mother in law for almost two months and learn from her two hours every day, I think that was a great help for me. [...] I will say the most important thing [for labor market inclusion] is the language?"

With the help of his mother-in-law, Bhavesh managed to learn Romanian, which then opened lots of occupational opportunities for him. In the end, with the help of the Romanian learned from his in-law, Bhavesh was able to venture into entrepreneurship

and opened a head-hunting company that brings Asian workers to Romania. For Bhavesh, the language is a key business asset, as he is able to intermediate between employers and workers. The importance of knowing the language is also noticed by Sebastián (Mexico):

“Here, to get a good job, you need to speak the language, because mostly if you don't speak Romanian, you're bound to do call center work”.

Many migrants find employment as call-center operators thanks to the fluency in their native languages. After the accession to the European Union on January 1st, 2007, Romania developed to a sought-after destination for IT services, Business Process Outsourcing, and call center support (Pop et al., 2013). The cheap labor and the proficient foreign language skills of the native population became Romania's competitive advantages in the international quest to attract foreign investments (Dumitrașcu, 2015; Soul, 2019; Stegar, 2018). Foreign businesses were relocated to Romania, many of them call-centers, which resulted in an increased attractiveness of the Romanian labor market for migrant workers or foreign-born residents as well. Yet the standardized call center work often means easily accessible but highly demanding (oftentimes leading to overwork and exhaustion) and low-paid jobs, with few career advancement opportunities. On the one hand side, call centers operating in Romania provide an easy access to the labor market for young migrants (often being their first ever work experience), but on the other hand side, these are labor-intensive business models with rather poor remuneration and part-time contracts.

Sebastián and Bhavesh found it easy to practice the language with members of the family or with neighbors than did Stephanie, Milena, or Darcelle, which also indirectly impacted upon the former's ability to find employment. Unlike Stephanie and Milena, Sebastián mentions that:

“I get along really well with the two neighbors that I see every day when I go to [the supermarket] to buy something. Normally I stop and chat a little bit. I have friends. Most of the friends that I know here are because of my wife. And we keep in contact. At least once a month we try to get together and do something”.

Sebastián's ability to access a social network via the spouse proved impossible for Stephanie and Milena. Darcelle, as well, mentioned that: *“I don't have close friends from Romania”*. Obtaining tips for employment becomes difficult the more limited the social network is.

The research also confirmed Granovetter's (2018) point that weak ties prove more useful in accessing jobs than strong ties do. However, in the cases of both Ramzia and Valeria, the weak ties made connections to labor-intensive, part-time weekend jobs on the secondary market. For Valeria (Republic of Moldova), a 'weak tie' working at a migrant NGO made the connection to a fast food chain:

“It was easy for me to get hired, it wasn't a problem. I was hired in 2018 to 2019 [...]. It wasn't hard for me to get hired because, again, [the person working at the NGO] helped me. I had to work four hours a day on Saturday and Sunday”.

While for Ramzia the employment hint came from an international friend, for Valeria it came from a native citizen who was involved in an organization offering support for immigrants. In neither of the cases, however, as with Darcelle, Milena or Stephanie, did the tip come from an unconditionally established relationship with a native citizen.

The importance of weak ties was also highlighted by Abdul (Afghanistan):

“[Friends] helped me a lot. They helped me in every aspect of my life in Romania. If I wanted a job, they offered to help with the job”.

Access to the Primary and to the Secondary Labor Markets

With few exceptions, there where the informal weak ties proved useful in accessing a job, the migrants were directed towards the secondary labor market. Studies demonstrated that migrants are usually channeled towards the secondary market, where they tend to be stuck with low wages and low occupational mobility (Durand et al., 2016; Mar, 1991; Massey et al., 2016). However, it has to be mentioned that the migrants interviewed for this research were part of the higher tier of the secondary market (middle upper class), with better payment and career opportunities.

For accessing the primary labor market, informal occupational strategies proved rather un-useful, the access mainly depending on the migrants’ own efforts to improve their employment conditions, such as in the case of Gloria, who free willingly pursued a specialization course, or of Rayya, who completed her PhD. Rayya is one of the rather few migrant examples who managed to access a position with the help of strong ties, at the recommendation of her faculty Dean and only because she was already active in academia, where she proved her worth over time:

“I found the job at the university after one year from staying here in Romania. When I was having my PhD presentation, the Dean was sitting there and he said, you know, we need some professors to teach in English so, what do you say? I told him, yes, okay”.

6. Conclusions

This paper asserted a reliance of third country migrants on formal and informal occupational strategies for securing employment. The findings of this study confirm Granovetter’s (2018) idea of a higher efficiency of weak ties for finding jobs. Some of the interviewed migrants found jobs based on referrals from acquaintances, yet it has to be mentioned that these referrals mostly directed the migrants towards the secondary labor market. An explanation therefore can be that the migrants’ social network of acquaintances is largely restricted to very few other migrants, who are not really well connected into the labor market, yet who are willing to help. Even more help might be offered by domestic acquaintances, however many of the migrants reported that they had difficulties in establishing close friendships with Romanians. To increase their chances of employment, among others, migrants should try and enlarge their informal network of acquaintances. In such a case, migrants would improve their labor and also societal participation. Especially there where the business or the state fails to provide sufficient opportunities, migrants should turn to their free will and network of social relationships.

Another important finding of this research was that the primary labor market (medicine, academia, research, high-tech etc.) was mainly accessed via formal occupational strategies, with migrants putting in personal efforts to obtain the job, while access to the secondary labor market (part-time jobs in call centers or labor-intensive services etc.) relied on the weak ties of the informal occupational strategies. Formal strategies proved more efficient in the case of liberal professions and when the migrants sought employment in multinational companies, the latter being open to international workers and having professional and large enough HR departments to take the burden of the supplementary paperwork required by the public authorities for allowing the employment of migrants.

Following Kalleberg and Sorensen's (1979) idea of professional homogeneity, it can be said that a considerable part of the migrants interviewed found employment in call centers of business process outsourcing businesses. Although call center operations cannot really be considered a profession (such as medics or professor), they still represent an occupation sought-after by migrants. Occupational strategies for taking up a call center position are reduced to a minimum. Because of the widespread availability of call center jobs in Romania and the ease of employment (minimal standard requirement of fluency in a foreign language, with or without former labor experience), occupying a position in such a business often relies on the mere free will of the migrant to apply for the job. The downsides, however, are the poor payment and the lack of advancement opportunities, thus pushing migrants into the depths of the secondary labor market.

By the ease of access, call center jobs contribute to facilitating the inclusion of migrants in the host society, yet while it also mostly confines them to that position. For being in the books for accessing better paid jobs, migrants need to develop a set of occupational strategies. The strategies met in the historical narratives of the interviewed migrants were:

- (a) finding employment rapidly, in a matter of a few weeks after migration, so as to accumulate the necessary professional experience to qualify the migrant for a superior position;
- (b) actively participating in specialization courses or professional reconversion courses;
- (c) gradually refining one own's occupational strategies over time;
- (d) obtaining citizenship to have equal rights with the domestic labor supply;
- (e) using 'weak ties' to obtain tips and hints about available jobs;
- (f) using 'weak ties' to learn the Romanian language so as to be able to compete with the local labor supply for better jobs;
- (g) accessing short-term, part-time internships while still young, so as to accumulate labor experience that can prove helpful during screening and recruitment processes;

- (h) volunteering with NGO's (prior or after migration) for the same purpose of gathering labor experience;
- (i) completing academic degrees (bachelor, masters or doctorate) for increasing employment chances.

In terms of Glazer's (1991) idea of social discrimination stemming from occupational opportunities, the oral history interviews revealed several discrimination patterns that occurred among third country migrants seeking employment in Romania:

- (a) discrimination between students and workers with accumulated labor experience;
- (b) discrimination between migrants able to use Romanian language against those not speaking Romanian;
- (c) discrimination between migrants mastering (Romanian and) several foreign languages against those not knowing foreign languages;
- (d) discrimination between migrants with short term residency permits against those with long term residency permits;
- (e) discrimination based on the type of the short-term residency permit held by the migrant (for employment, secondment, for family reunification, for studies etc.);
- (f) discrimination based on accomplished degree and qualifications (i.e., medics having more problems in finding employment than migrants with studies in economics and business administration, IT and computer sciences, or linguistics and philology);
- (g) discrimination based on the amount of time having been spent by the migrants in the host society;
- (h) gender occupational discrimination, with women having more difficulties in establishing weak ties, but especially strong ties, than men do.

Future research might focus more on the primary and secondary market dichotomy, on what specific occupational strategies are prone to either of the cases, or on what impact the language skills briefly described in this paper have on accessing the labor market.

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