ABSTRACT

OH, THE WEST, THE WEST!
MIGRATION AND ECONOMICAL CULTURE.
THE TRANSYLVANIAN PERSPECTIVE

Key-words: *migration, economical culture, female guest workers, Transylvanian specific, stereotypes, proverbs and idioms, code switching, bi- and multilingualism, return migration*

This book is based on an empirical research which was realized in 2011–2012 with the subvention of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, on the topic of cultural exchange related to migration processes. The main method of data collection was the deep-diving interview. The central questions of the research are the following ones: How do/did the working culture, the views upon economical matters and the system of values related to general principles of life organization change in the case of guest workers from Transylvania (who decided to move back home)? What do Transylvanians take to Western countries and what do they bring home? How could we define the 'Western' and the 'Transylvanian' specific in an interdependent context? Which particularities of the first one are highlighted by the other one? What kind of effect do Western and Transylvanian values and cultural contents have on each other? Do they blend?

The empiric material contains 31 interviews; the average length of the conversations is one hour. The interview subjects are people from Transylvania, of Hungarian or Romanian ethnicity, who have different experiences about migration and guest work. Some of them have been working abroad for a longer time, but they come home regularly; others have worked abroad, but they decided to stop this way of life and to return home (at least temporarily), they are currently living and working at home; others have spent a long time (years or even decades) abroad, but finally decided to return to home definitely. The 31 persons have been working in 17 countries after 1989, among them there are 7 who have been working and living in more different countries during this period.

The book approaches the subject involving interdisciplinary aspects; it is structured in 10 chapters.

The introduction presents the theoretical background and sketches the methodological frames of the research. The chapter **Causes, Aims and Modalities of (E)migration** is dedicated to the description of the particularities of contemporary migration. In concordance with other analyses on the topic (Bodó 2009, 2011), the results of the research confirm that the migration processes in the second decay following the decline of the communist regime in Romania show dif-

ferent tendencies than the ones directly after 1989 and the ones in the late 1990s. This is above all linked to the fact that in the second half of the 2000s the migration has become an usual phenomenon in Transylvania and the attitudes, behaviour patterns related to it show more and more the characteristics of transnational migration (Bodó 2011). It is typical for contemporary migration that the processes are mostly unstructured and not pinned down, they bring with themselves the state of being involved into many different cultural attachments at the same time – and therefore the whole process is, regarding its causes and effects, much more complex and differed than the previous ones have ever been. These phenomena require that we treat the research of 21st century migration as an interdisciplinary field of study *par excellence*, where the approaches focused on economical issues are necessarily completed by other aspects (cultural, symbolic, linguistic ones and, last but not least, the points of view of behaviour science). This topic is even more complex because it also shows the differed nature of processes developing backwards (or 'the other way around' compared to their original direction of enfolding). Our subject also involves the critical rethinking of 20th century migration stereotypes related to the image of Western countries.

After the political and social changes in 1989, a definite discourse of 'switchover to capitalism' has been present in the post-socialist space – and therefore in Transylvania as well. This discourse assigns as an important aspiration and sets as main goal the 'establishment of Western norms' (above all, in economy and working culture) and the 'close-up to civilized Europe'. However, these elements merely give an outline or an abstract model of the West and this can only be filled with meanings during an extended stay and a longer time of working abroad. Once the frame is filled with concrete content, it causes a definite change in the image of the West, as well as in the picture of the own society. This subject is treated in the chapter **Working Culture at Home and Abroad. The (Rather Beautiful) Face of Eastern Europe**. Our results suggest that the description of the Western society presented by Transylvanian migrants is, although basically positive, anything but uncritical. (This comes to be so because the migrants from Transylvania are typically involved in more different cultural attachments at the same time.) From the natural distance between 'us' (the own community) and 'them' (the other, foreign group) results that the interviews – although always mentioning the indisputable values of Western working culture and the efficiency of the Western economical system – emphasise positive aspects (or characteristics that seem 'friendlier' to Transylvanians) about the social reality at home. These are, above all, contrasting some experiences made in Western countries, such as the aggressive concurrency spirit, the excessiveness of material values, the atomized society, or an over-organized time management. Despite the fact that these elements (seen as negative aspects abroad) are more and more present at home as well, the interviewed migrants affirm that they are 'less typical for the circumstances at home' or that they are characteristic 'in another way, in another sense'.

Taking notice of the feminization of international migration, which has become obvious at the turn of the millennium (according to statistics, today the half of the

migrants are women), the chapter **Transylvanian Women Abroad** discusses the issues of female guest workers. Our starting point is that the tasks of Transylvanian women who decide to work abroad mostly consist of household chores (cleaning, cooking) and elderly care, this chapter focuses on this type of work and the specific cultural exchange related to it. We present these feminine tasks in the frames of the notion *global caring chain* (Hochschild 2000, Parrenas, 2001). Particular for the caring chain is, on one hand, that it reveals and also reproduces a whole series of social inequalities, on the other hand – as the metaphor of the chain plastically suggests – that it means a double-directional emotional and moral burden accompanying the work, which emphatically affects the women who are in the middle of such a chain. A typical phenomenon related to this topic is the export of Transylvanian specific into the emigration. This means that many Transylvanian women care abroad for elderly people – originating from Hungarian, Swabian, Saxonian or Jewish communities – who left Transylvania themselves or who have been taken to other countries by their children. These seniors feel like home thank to the Transylvanian specific provided by the female guest workers, and for these women it is a significant advantage that they can use their mother tongue at work. Therefore, in this kind of caring chain the Transylvanian culture itself plays an important role. Regarding all the mentioned aspects, we can affirm that the particularities of female guest work (the widespread task of elderly care, the extension of active working age, the presence of typically feminine networks within the system of migration etc.) place the changes of social structures in a new light, which can be defined by many aspects relevant for gender studies.

The chapter **We Reap as We Sow – Economical Culture within the Language** is a sociolinguistic analysis of the research results, regarding the linguistic structure of social systems and linguistic codes concerning 'usual' and 'expected' (economical) behaviour patterns. We must remember that the definitive part of social norms regulating everyday behaviour does not derive from the individual experience but from a collective 'knowledge and wisdom supply' – and the individual has access to this one through the language. "What a language contains and expresses, is the opinion of the community speaking that language, therefore the language is able to regulate, to direct or to restrict the individual behaviour just as any social relation or social institution does" (Péntek, 2004). In this context the socialization into the world of the mother tongue or into the understanding usage of more languages represents that personal experience background which carries an abundance of references and offers orientation for the everyday decisions. The system of linguistic tools has got a crucial role in the group dynamics as well: code switching and register change, modality and intonation can express identification or sympathy towards a definite group, but it can also mark (in some cases, very clearly) the boundaries and barriers between the groups. In our analysis we discuss three forms of linguistic expression: code switching and its functions in delimiting groups; the ironic modality; the contextual particularities of proverbs, idioms and compendiously formulated wisdom. These elements usually complete each other (ex. code switching often contains irony); their abundance and comp-

lex tools demonstrate the incredible dynamics of language usage that builds up social reality.

The chapter **Migration multilingualism** puts sociological aspects forward and discusses how migration in a multilingual migration space can produce different linguistic phenomena and behaviour patterns. The sociological aspects of migration multilingualism direct our attention towards some learning strategies, language-usage practices and linguistic attitudes. These are most probably less relevant for foreign language teaching, but, as they are closely linked to the nature of multilingualism, can offer a brief insight into rather hidden dimensions and more complex functions of the language. Such a function would be the role of language (or of languages) for the self-positioning of individuals and defining relations in space: Who am I, X. Y., in country A., city B.? Where am I? Analyzing the social and socio-psychological functions of linguistic factors opens a much wider perspective than only defining them as a mere condition of working abroad and attributing it only (economical) instrumental role. Our results demonstrate that the language(s), near the qualities and functions that can be described using economical categories, have got a lot of integrative and excluding social roles which are generally relevant for the human behaviour, and as such play a significant role for the self-positioning in a foreign cultural environment.

The following chapter, **Migration Space. Change of Location – Turn of Approach** is dedicated to the changes in the system of values that happened during the stay abroad. We operate, among others, with subjective aspects of the topic, regarding the emotional perception of spaces (Tuan, 1974). According to our study, the sum of experiences gathered abroad outlines a post-material system of values, which immanently contains economical approaches as well, trying to answer the following questions: What is work? What is the use of money? What is the aim of human activity? How should we live, how should we manage the goods? It is very interesting that this system defines the time spent abroad as a value: form the Eastern European perspective it is considered an advantage if someone has "seen the world" and has encountered the Western economic and cultural space. The travelling experience related to this is as well a plus. The system of values is restructured in the light of these experiences and it exceeds the chase for material goods, trying to find the self-realization in other domains and other possibilities for the human being to develop himself. Human relationships and social connections are being highly appreciated. Nature is being refilled with value: the protection of resources becomes important and many migrants rediscover the natural beauty, the iconic landscapes of Transylvanian identity. We actually have to do with a system of values centred on the experience and real living of life. Elements like providence, gathering material goods, as well as excessive consumption (waste) go to the background. The place of rational/sustainable future planning is taken by the development of social dimensions. Non-material values enjoy a clear priority. It is important that time is being restructured and used in another way than before. The perception of space is dominated by freedom: anyone can freely choose and change the place where he lives. The fact that migration pro-

cesses are tendentially not pinned down is related to this approach of space. A smaller group of the interviewed migrants states that "they still go abroad for work"; they do not exclude the possibility to stay abroad for the rest of their lives, but they do not reject the opportunity of coming back either. However, most of them "would not prefer to go abroad anymore". The migration is in both cases unclosed, the plans regarding the future are not clear. This vagueness and uncertainty is most probably influenced by the fact that these people are (on a personal even) not yet prepared for the return, but also by the indefiniteness and ambivalences of the perspective of (re)positioning oneself at home.

The last chapter – **Those Who Return and Those Who Come: (Re)discovering Transylvania** – presents the results of a supplementary study, realized in 2014/2015; the research is marked by a *change of perspectives*, as long as we are trying to answer the following questions: How does the Transylvanian economical and cultural milieu appear in the eyes of those persons whose migration follows the "opposite" direction, compared to the contemporary migration en masse towards the West? What is that Transylvania like that encounter those people who return to the region after a longer time, being part of the second or third generation of families who have earlier left it, or come to establish here with their spouses and family members born in the West?

The empiric material contains four detailed case studies: there are three families in which one of the spouses was not born or not grown up in Transylvania and an entrepreneur originating from the region, third-generation member of an emigrant family. We asked them about the background of their decision to settle here, as well as about their experiences and their image of the Transylvanian society. Our results show that coming or returning to Transylvania is a carefully prepared decision and the factors that influence it are different from the ones well-known as determining and motivating the migration towards the West. We deal here with a phenomenon of "rediscovering Transylvania", a post-material system of values again, as well as with an image of one's professional future in which the notion of *work* is defined far wider than a possibility to earn money.

However, this also means that those who come and those who return to Transylvania do *not* fit into the local labor market; they are mostly individual entrepreneurs, self-employed or freelancers instead. Although they consider Transylvania an interesting, exciting region worth discovering, but they do not consider the economical and administrative/official environment particularly attractive. We can affirm that they are rather familiar with the Western economical and social setup. Therefore their description about the Transylvanian society is more complex than the one provided by people who are coming home after a certain period spent in the West, for instance, as guest workers. Due to their cultural patterns and socialization, as well as to their situation on the labor market, they do not become an organic part of the social texture in Transylvania. Their attachment to Transylvania is therefore of specific nature: they relate not only to this region, but also to different transnational diaspora-networks, hence for them *home* can mean or means more homes.

The main conclusions of the analysis are summarized in the chapter **Economy and culture: (friendly) neighbourhood. Final words**. It is an essential conclusion that the cultural dimension of economy, the cultural conditions of development cannot be neglected in any country or society. This concerns the everyday orientation in another (foreign) country, as well as the conception of local regional development. The mentality, attitudes and individual or familiar plans are decisive for the success or failure of an economic system. Life plans do not only suppose interests, but also personal and individual motivation; motivation means – as a web of values and firm beliefs, attachments and goals, visions etc. – a definite conception of the future, which is, in its whole, culture-based (Marga, 2009). Development is in all societies the result of human spirit and human work, and the society is kept together by the culture: by life forms which are at the same time economical management forms.

We must admit that, similar to the differenced values of the West, the Central and Eastern European specific is also differenced. There are universal human values related to honourable and trustworthy work, to community life; individual and collective realizations based on them can offer any community a healthy image of the self. The one-layered approach, idealizing or stigmatizing entire regions cannot be persuasively argued for. The present analysis formulates – through the example of multicultural, polyphonic and multiple-layered Transylvanian specific – a criticism of the narrow-sighted approach.

Economic activity is based in all times on the human factor. Development has obviously got natural, technological and material conditions, but its main moving force is still the human creativity and innovation. We believe that migrants – although their way of life establishes many customs and fads that can be locally perceived as foreign – can contribute with their personal experience to the solution of old and new problems of economy and society in Transylvania.