

The life of transnational families in Romanian villages

Phd student Viorela Ducu
Babeş-Bolyai University
Romania

Field research

- The research took place during the summer of 2008 in four villages in Romania: Mociu, Parva, Dumitra, Feldru.
- Starting from these communities, migration is directed especially towards Spain and Italy, but also to Great Britain, Ireland, Germany and Greece.
- The participants were members of transnational families – migrants and non-migrants – and key persons – representatives of the local authorities, of NGOs, teaching staff.
- 34 individual and 6 group interviews were taken.

Active Transnational Family Relations

BETWEEN migrant AND 'non-migrant' kin

In the analysis of my research results I follow the model proposed by Baldassar et al. (2007), emphasizing the caregivers' role and the perspective of people at home in the case of migrant mothers in Romania.

Transnational caregiving

- **Type of care:** there is a permanent exchange of moral, emotional, practical and personal support among migrant women, caregivers at home and children.
- **Modes of care:** Transnational communication (mobile phones and internet) and frequent mutual visits
- **Patterns of care:** to have a legal representative to provide care for the children at home is very important both in daily care, but especially in crisis situations.

Capacity (opportunity)

Through work abroad, migrant women ensure financial resources that allow the family access to communication technology and transportation. Women caregivers possess the time for direct caregiving towards children

Obligation (duty)

- Migrant mothers in Romania confront a stigmatizing discourse claiming that they “abandon” their children, highlighting the general expectation that they be “good” mothers.
- We can find this discourse both at the macro (national and international mass media; authority actions and even NGOs), meso (representatives of local NGOs, social workers, teachers, even women whose husbands are migrants), micro (family members) levels

Negotiated Family Commitments

- The quality of **kin relationships** is crucial for the success of the transfer of care.
- Migrant mothers usually receive a **license to leave** from the members of the family since in their case migration is indeed a way of survival of the family.
- Grandmothers on the mother's side usually take over the role of care provider, the husbands being less involved.



Negotiated Family Commitments

Life cycle/course: The transfer of care for the children takes place both when there are young and adolescent children in the family, but also in the case of young adults who can continue their studies at a university at a Romanian university due to the financial, emotional and moral support received.

Negotiated Family Commitments

- The kind of care differs depending on the type of migration
- Migrant mothers have an identity rather oriented towards the homeland since Romanian migration is a sensitive issue in Western Europe
- The departure of mothers is much better accepted by these communities than in the case of migrant mothers from cities, since these villages are themselves transnational communities through the great number of migrants, most adults able to work having left abroad.