



RETHINKING ROMA MIGRATION IN THE LIGHT OF RECENT FLOW OF REFUGEES TO CANADA FROM THREE CENTRAL EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES THE CZECH REPUBLIC, HUNGARY AND SLOVAKIA¹

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The paper presents the research results of a pilot project on the (forced) migration of Roma from three Central Eastern European countries – the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia – to Canada in the course of the last ten to fifteen years. Roma migration is posited as being motivated by various factors that include both discrimination and social deprivation. This premise held by researchers working on Roma migration is backed by the theoretical literature of the sociology and anthropology of forced migration. The paper, however, looks for new approaches (‘mid-range’ theories) with the aim of re-thinking Roma forced migration. The research project delved into the whole migration process through narrative interviews that enable us to find theoretical frameworks that account for more than just the motivational side of Roma forced migration. With a special focus on how migration starts, how it develops and how migrant networks come about through weak and strong ties, we aimed to shed new light on the forced migration of Roma while we raised new questions and hoped to break new grounds for further studies.

Keywords: Asylum-seeking, Culture of migration, Labor migration, Forced migration, Migration industry, Migration network, Negative social capital, Refugee, Weak and strong ties.

Introduction: Old and New Frameworks

The original conceptual framework in which the phenomenon of Roma migration has been traditionally analyzed is based on the currently adopted, scholarly definition of this process; considered a combination of refugee and either labor or economic migration (Klimova & Pickup 2003). Given the fact that Roma migration from the Central Eastern European (CEE) countries, following the democratic transition, took the form of asylum seeking (into other EU countries and into Canada),² the occurrence of these specific migratory movements became a political

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² These are the three most important countries of Roma out-migration/asylum-seeking in the 1990s and the 2000s. Between 1997 and 2005, approximately 12,000 to 15,000 Roma left Eastern Europe. The first to file asylum claims in the European Union countries were Slovakian and Czech Roma, followed by Polish, Bulgarian, and Romanian Roma. Besides EU states (particularly the UK), they applied in Switzerland, Norway, and Canada. Most Roma arrived to Canada from the Czech Republic and Hungary and less from Slovakia. The number of asylum claims

battlefield notably between states and human rights activists. CEE state governments saw Roma asylum seeking as an impediment on their EU accession and the start of trouble in terms of their peaceful bilateral relationship with Canada. The dominant official public and political discourses of immigrant countries following “the ‘asylum crisis’ of the 1980s and 1990s” (Castels 2003b: 179) was dominated by “right-wing politicians and sensationalist media [who] conjured up images of welfare states being ‘swamped’ and national identities being undermined by mass movements of impoverished people from East to West and South to North” (Castels 2002: 1143). The main argument of the three analyzed countries in the 1990s and early 2000s (before the EU accession) was that emigrating Roma were ‘bogus’ refugees and should simply be considered economic immigrants attempting to take advantage of the welfare systems in their host countries (Tóth 2010).

Table 1. shows the trends of Roma migration – both asylum seekers and labor/economic migration – before and after EU accession. In the pre-accession period, emigration into EU countries primarily took the form of asylum seeking and with, basically, only negative results. In contrast, the asylum seekers in Canada had a better chance of receiving a positive verdict. After accession, economic migration to the EU replaced asylum seeking, although it is estimated that the volume of this type of migration from these three countries has been rather limited. Concerning Roma emigration to Canada, the “Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act”, or Bill C-31, introduced in February 2012 and received Royal Assent in June 2012, designated European Union countries as safe thus curtailing refugee claims from these states. The political aim was to ‘protect the Canadian refugee system’ and deter ‘bogus’ refugees and claimants from European countries – as it was openly claimed by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney.

Table 1. Roma migration trends before and after EU accession, from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary

	EU ³	Canada
Pre-accession		
Cz	Mass migration ⁴ (asylum)	Mass migration (asylum) till 1997 (visa in 1997)
Sk	Mass migration (asylum)	Non significant
H	Non significant	Mass migration (asylum) till 2002 (visa in 2001)
Post-accession		
Cz	Non significant labor migration	Mass migration (asylum) between 2007-2009 (new visa in 2009)
Sk	More significant labor migration	Started in 2009
H	Non significant labor migration	Mass migration (asylum) from 2009 (visa lifted in 2008)

Source: compiled by the author of the paper based on reviewing relevant literature.

from Hungarian citizens went up to 2,300 claims in 2010 and to 4,450 in 2011 and the acceptance rate was around 11%. Given the visa dispute of Canada and the Czech Republic, the number of claims is much lower.

³ The asylum seeking of Roma in Western European, EU member states before accession had been a continuous process, nonetheless, except for few exceptions, all Roma claims had been turned down.

⁴ “Mass migration” is a relative term: “only” a couple of thousands of people emigrated, but the process had important political consequences.

Given the hostile and accusatory dominant political discourse, it was essential for civil rights activists and Roma organizations to construct a counter argument to the ‘economic migrant’ conjecture by emphasizing that, indeed, ethnic discrimination continued to be the major impetus for migration. Yet, in terms of scholarly discourse – from an analytical point of view – making an artificial distinction between migrations fuelled by ethnic discrimination or social deprivation is misleading and theoretically untenable. Indeed, most studies conducted on Roma migration found that individual reasons given for migration encompass both dimensions, as they are hard to separate and, even if you focus on one or the other, actually there are traces of both in the migrants’ accounts (Klimova & Pickup 2003, Vašečka & Vašečka 2003, Kováts *et al.* 2002). Any meaningful analysis would have to take into account these motivations as inseparable. Theoretical and empirical literature on migration underpins this approach. Castels argues that forced migration is understudied by sociologists (2003b) he still purports that “many asylum seekers had ‘mixed motivations’, for impoverishment and human rights abuses went hand-in-hand” (Castels 2003b: 179). The notion of ‘asylum-migration nexus’ is meant to refer to the multiple reasons behind migration wherein the separation of economic and human rights motivations is impossible “which is a challenge to the neat categories that bureaucracies seek to impose” (Castels 2003a: 17). In line with this conceptualization of Roma migration, migration anthropology gives us further theoretical orientation as to the understanding of refugee migration. In migration anthropology enforced migrants (refugees) and other migrants are conceptualized as being the same or at least similar since their experiences show many resemblances, or put it this way: the question arises “weather and how to differentiate between migrants and refugees. The latter are assumed to be people who leave their home region involuntarily, but their experiences, once on board, are not unlike those of migrants with the exception of their inability to return readily and freely to their homeland. [...] [Refugees] can be theorized in much the same way as other displaced peoples” (Brettel 2008: 115).

It was taken for granted that Roma migration should be understood and posited as being motivated by various factors that include both discrimination and social deprivation. This paper engages in creating a conceptualization that focuses on the migration process – understood as displacement of people, that is in our particular case, – as a whole, rather than pinpointing the motivations behind Roma migration. Thus, we hope to have found a somewhat different and new way of understanding Roma migration.

The paper is based on a pilot research⁵ conducted in three migrant/refugee sending (Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia) and one migrant/refugee receiving country (Canada) with the purpose of exploring the families’ entire migratory process: their motivations for leaving, how they find the resources to migrate, life in the destination country, and, in some cases, the process of returning. Besides recording some real life accounts from the migrants (or the narratives from family members who stayed), it was also possible to get insight into how migrant networks formed and how they worked. In fact, the empirical materials gathered from these three countries, although limited in scope and volume, provided enough information to begin developing a conceptual framework that accounts for migration systems and migration diffusion.

⁵ The pilot project entitled ‘Roma Migration to and from Canada’ led by Zsuzsanna Vidra (author of this paper) at the Central European University, Center for Policy Studies consisted of four country case studies (each covering 15-20 in-depth, narrative interviews with returnees or family members of migrants) – the Czech Republic by Jan Grill; Hungary by Zsuzsanna Vidra and Tünde Virág; Slovakia by Elena Gallová Kriglerová and Alena Chudžíková; and Canada by Judit Durst – and of two analytical papers of the legal and political context by Judit Tóth and Antonela Arhin.

We need to emphasize that the exploratory studies have only allowed us to raise hypotheses and collect sets of questions, rather than come to any conclusions or propose answers.

In order to understand how migration starts and develops in general, we set out on the search for theoretical models dealing with the process. We embrace the warning of Portes by not looking for any ‘grand theory’ of migration but instead apply “a set of ‘mid-range theories’ that can explain specific empirical findings by linking them to appropriate bodies of historical and contemporary research” (Castels 2003a: 27). Our intention with this paper is to take a first step towards re-theorizing the (forced) migration of Roma beyond the so far elaborated models (Klimova & Pickup 2003, Vašečka & Vašečka 2003, Kováts *et al.* 2002) by focusing on various aspects of the whole process, while attempting to pave the ground for further researches by addressing various ‘mid-range theories’.

As Castels suggests (2003a), the understudied field of forced migration should have certain well-focused research topics, one of them being the dynamics of mobility consisting, among other things, of migrant networks, the migration industry and the migration-asylum nexus. The pilot research delved into the details of the whole migratory process touching upon the above issues. This led us to look for some explanatory model that takes account of the various aspects of the ‘dynamics of mobility’. By applying De Haas’ (2010) theoretical work on the dynamics of migration process we can attempt to understand the ‘Roma migration-asylum nexus’ from a different angle by looking at the formation and self-sustainability of migration networks and their diffusion. We posed the questions like: What initiates forced Roma migration to Canada? How does it perpetuate itself? What kinds of network effects are at play? Besides the macro effects of Canadian refugee policies, what determines migration a success or a failure? (Table 2.)

Table 2. Examples of endogenous and meso-level contextual feedback mechanisms (de Haas 2010).

Type	Level	Domain		
		Social	Economic	Cultural
Endogenous	Immediate (migrant group)	Migrant networks, ‘migration industry’	Remittance-financed migration	Transfers of migration-related ideas and information
Contextual	Origin community	Social stratification, relative deprivation	Income distribution, productivity and employment	Social remittances, culture of migration
	Destination community	Patterns of clustering, integration/assimilation	Demand for migrant labor generated by clusters of migrant businesses	Transnational identities, demand for marriage patterns

On the migrant group level, the social feedback mechanism entails the migrant network itself and the migration industry. The concept of ‘migrant networks’ have replaced the notion of ‘chain migration’ used in older works on migration allowing for a more dynamic and complex understanding of the process. It puts emphasis on “the way these develop links between communities at home and in destination areas” (Castels 2002: 1150). Migrant networks are essential elements of any migration moves for they provide lower costs of travel to initiate migration, they make it easier to adjust to the host society such as finding jobs, creating businesses, they facilitate the conveyance of remittances, and they protect from racism and insure community advocacy (Gold 2005). Migration industry that includes all actors who form part of the migration process (e.g. travel agents, lawyers, bankers, labor recruiters, brokers, interpreters, and housing agents as well as human smugglers and traffickers) is a major factor that sustains migratory movements (Castels 2002). In the economic domain, the remittances financing migration are considered to be the main facilitators of the process whereas what plays

an important role in the cultural domain is the information and ideas essential for new migrants. As for the contextual feedback mechanisms, for the origin community we can talk about the social consequences of migration as generating social differences (since migrants become wealthier, this results in a relative deprivation for those who stay behind). This is also related to the economic domain, whereby – as a result of remittances – a change in the income distribution within the origin community could, along with communities’ general relative deprivation, raise the desire to migrate. Social remittances, understood as ideas, behaviors and social capital flowing from one place to another (Lewitt 1998, 2001) do play a role of inspiring migration. In the destination community, it is always an essential question if migrants will settle in clusters that end up with a special social arrangement. At the same time, it is also a question – an important one in the migration process – if migrants have the desire or the opportunity to integrate or assimilate in their host country. Generally speaking, assimilated migrants have less incentive to assist new migrants from their origin community. Additionally, migrant clustering maybe the main reason for increased migrant labor demand, since migrant businesses also emerge in these communities. Finally, it is also yet to be seen how transnational identities develop because it may be a factor in the increase of culturally determined migrant moves (such as more marriages between migrants and members of their origin community).

While this model is used to explain the dynamics of the migration process, at least certain aspects of it, De Haas argues that the model remains incomplete because, if all elements are unchanged, then migration would go on “ad infinitum” and the “whole community should end up at the destination” (de Haas 2010: 1599). Or, once they “started, develop their own dynamics and cannot easily be stopped” (Castels 2002: 1150). To account for this weakness, the concept of migration diffusion as well as of weak and strong ties and negative social capital is introduced to explain why migrant networks decline and why migratory trends change in regards to destinations over periods of times.

Using diffusion theory we can identify the ‘pioneers’ or ‘innovators’ – those who migrate first from a community. Given the high risks and costs of migration, these individuals are usually from relatively well-to-do households. They are then followed by the early majority and then by the laggards. The networks evolve, ensuring that the risks and costs become bearable even for those who come from much less affluent households. Border crossing thus becomes available for persons and families with fewer economic resources and lower status (Gold 2005). Or, “non-migrants have access to valuable social capital that can be used to facilitate movement” (Massey *et al.* 1994: 1495). Migration continues until a certain saturation point is reached; that is, when all households intending to migrate have done so. Alternately, the migration pattern may change as a result of competition for jobs in the destination community.

Further to the point that the migration process may come to an end because there are no more who wish to migrate from a community, that all have gone who could or wanted to, it should also be clarified why it does not spread across all segments of society or to the wider community. Here, De Haas insists on applying the notion of weak and strong ties, as developed by Granovetter (1973), as well as the concept of negative social capital, as developed by Portes *et al.* (Portes 1998, Portes & Landolt 2000). Normally, strong ties represent a positive influence, however, in the migration process, they might be counter-productive at some point representing “the other side of embeddedness” (Waldinger 1994). The negative outcomes of social capital include the exclusion of outsiders, excess claims on group members, and restrictions on individual freedoms (Portes & Landolt 2000). It is argued that migration information is spread through the weak ties in a community, whereas strong ties play a crucial role in the actual migration process, especially amongst lower status migrants, the poor, who are otherwise “meant

to stay at home” (Castels 2003a: 16). On the same token, social capital can be paralyzing because it can also be exclusionary. In other words, these ties are double-edged swords because they may provide resources for some but limit options for others at the same time (Gold 2005). When strong ties only help immediate family members for example, the migration process may be halted or altered as no other members of the community, except those who have strong ties (are related) to the pioneers, can leave.

(Forced) migration of Roma to Canada – a new approach

Our endeavor entails an attempt to apply these models of migrant networks, migration diffusion, and the role of strong and weak ties to the Roma migration to Canada relying on the collected interview data.⁶ By undertaking this exercise we hope to come to a more refined understanding of the Roma migration process while keeping in mind the explorative nature of the project. Thus, we will propose some hypotheses that could be worthy of further investigations and testing. The below table (Table 3.) summarizes the findings of the case studies.

Table 3. Endogeneous and meso-level contextual feedback mechanisms applied to Roma migration to Canada.

Type	Level	Domain		
		Social	Economic	Cultural
Endogenous	Immediate (Migrant group)	Some family members/acquaintances already in Canada, Including money-lenders, lawyers, interpreters, social workers, health-care workers, human rights activists	Family/relative remittance-financed migration; Selling all their properties, taking loans	Via internet, Village/community chit-chat transferring migration-related information
Contextual	Origin community	Relative deprivation is at play (earlier migrants bought new homes, renovated old homes, etc.)	Minor impact on income distribution (investing in housing or finance remigration)	Evolving culture of migration social remittances: “we were treated as human beings”
	Destination community	Strong ethnic clustering (accommodation) Lack of social capital: not being able to integrate (not learning English, not having the skills to manage life; strong dependence on migrant network)	Existing migrant business: garbage picking (‘garbicsolás’ in Hungarian) working on construction sites, factory jobs Crucial: success of migration depends on one getting into an ethnic business	Transnational identities are strong

Looking first at the immediate migrant group, we observe similar trends in all three countries. Migration to Canada, while being in different phases for each of the three countries (e.g. the visa requirements for Czech citizens (2009) have resulted in a complete drop in applicants from the country, or the effects of the new refugee reform introduced by Canada as of 2012), shows very similar network characteristics. Migrant networks are usually formed with family members or, to some extent, with acquaintances already in Canada. Migrants get

⁶ The interview extracts presented in the paper come from the Hungarian fieldwork study.

monetary help from their relatives overseas – remittance financed migration – so they can buy the expensive airplane ticket. *“My brother in Canada paid for the ticket for my other brother, three years ago.”* In some instances they are expected to pay this back once they arrive and begin to receive social welfare there, but in most cases the new family members migrating receive the help as a gift. This practice is an example of social capital of the altruistic kind whereby resources are granted out of moral obligation and/or solidarity with community members (Portes & Landolt 2000). Oftentimes, it is the family in the home country that helps to finance the migrant’s journey. The network almost always covers the initial costs, however, we have also seen examples of new migrants selling all their property or taking loans in order to have the money required for the move. Family networks, as shown before, function as resources of altruistic social capital, whereas community membership could easily lead to a different kind of social capital, of which the source is instrumental, based on simple reciprocity instead of moral obligation or solidarity (Portes & Landolt 2000). These migrants are usually only community members and are not part of the close-knit family networks. Risk taking of these ‘outsider’ migrants could be accounted for by a heightened sense of confidence in the success of the endeavor and the belief that their weak social ties linking them only superficially to networks will be sufficiently effective to help them once they are in Canada. Just as the ‘rosy picture’ of the opportunities Canada has to offer, often based on a selective portrayal of Canada and the migration experience (leading to misinformation), as revealed in the interviews, could also be associated with the network effect.

Migrant networks go together with what is called ‘migration industries’ (de Haas 2010). In the Canadian migratory process, it was discovered that, in fact, a very effective migration industry has developed in all three countries. For example, in some of the origin community, migrants are helped by entrepreneurs specialized in booking airplane tickets and driving families to the airport. In the destination community, there is a wide array of official (or semi-official) helpers who attend to the refugees (social workers, teachers, interpreters, lawyers, health care workers, human rights activists, etc.). As new information and transport technologies develop, the volume of migration increases (Castels 2002) that affect the cultural domain; networks are sustained by intensive communication between family members via the Internet and migration-related information is spread via Skype and Facebook contacts to immediate group members and then through the village gossip channels to non-immediate group members. *“Friends told us what you have to say when you enter the country. We discussed it over Facebook.”*

On the origin community level, apparently the most important conditions that increased migration came from all the three domains, that is to say that migration was impelled by social, economic, and cultural factors. Socially, living in a segregated community (as most of our interviewees did) was in fact an important condition that determined the desire to migrate. *“My brother tries to make as much money as he can so that they have something to live on when they come back, to pay back their bank loan.”* *“Here in the village everyone would like to go. But Canada was the only possibility. Normally, we don’t even have money to go to the nearby town to the swimming pool.”*

Roma in all three countries emphasized how negatively they experienced the deteriorating interethnic relations. Some interviewees compared their current situation with their socialist past, a time when they had a higher social status and more acceptance in the community. Moreover, the fact that they were confined to live in ‘settlements’ (suburbs, often with the most basic of amenities) without any hope of local improvements or the opportunity to move to the non-segregated parts of the town, constituted further incentive to migrate. The rise and spread of violence as well as political racism and fear from racist attacks were also among the socially

motivated reasons for migration. In economic terms, deprivation was an overwhelming experience everywhere, even if to different degrees. Culturally, the most eminent motivation for migration seemed to be their stigmatized ethnicity, the consequences of which Roma had to face on a daily bases (employment and educational discrimination, verbal and physical racial violence, etc.). *“We have tremendous racism in Hungary. You have to make a hundred times more effort than a Hungarian, I am disadvantaged because I am Roma.”* Some interviewees referenced negative attitudes on the part of the majority society as an important incentive to wanting to leave. One could interpret this as “escaping the (interiorized) stigma,” incidentally further burdened by the majority society blaming them for migrating and accusing them of misusing the welfare system in the destination country, thus, creating a bad image of the home country. The general approach of the majority is similar in all three countries – labeling Roma migration as a disloyal, treacherous deed that the home country is negatively stigmatized by.

The original conditions in the sending community change as a result of migration and this, as is claimed by the model, influences what turns the process take. Looking at the Canadian migration process, it is clear that relative deprivation gradually become a factor that spurs further migration. In Hungary, there had been migration in the early 2000s and those who came back invested in their houses, a visible sign of the success of the migration for the whole community. Similarly, in Slovakia, improving housing conditions was one of the major goals all migrants wished to achieve and those who had already gone were sending money back so that their half-built houses could be finished in front of the eyes of the whole community. Meanwhile, the actual economic impact of migration (for instance, on income distribution), could be assessed as minimal for several reasons. First of all, remittances or the savings of returnees are mainly invested, as we have seen, in renovating one’s house or buying a new one. This, in itself, does not result in any change in social stratification or income inequalities with regards to the original conditions. Improvement of one’s housing conditions will not change one’s social status with regards to the majority: this can only change if one moves from the segregated settlement to the center (or mixed areas). However, this does not happen, at least it did not happen in the Hungarian and the Slovak cases we observed. However, the betterment of their housing conditions can lead to a somewhat better social status within one’s own community. Also, savings are sometimes used, as in the Czech case, for financing remigration, although that does not in itself result in upward social mobility. It can be concluded that migration, even if it is a success in economic terms, does not result in change in social status: those who had been better-off are usually more successful in their migration than those who come from somewhat worse situation, and the balance seems to be the same even after a considerable migration has happened in a community.

Concerning the cultural domain, we observe some elements of the ‘culture of migration’ (Massey *et al.* 1993) evolving in all the three cases. We define ‘culture of migration’ as “migration-affected cultural change [*that*] can further strengthen migration aspirations along established pathways in communities and societies that can become obsessed with migration” (de Haas 2010: 1595). “Social remittances are likely to reinforce these processes and can even lead to a shift in preferences or a ‘culture of migration’, in which increasing prestige is attached to migration” (de Haas 2010: 1608). In general, the context of Slovak Roma’s migration experiences is relatively important given their history: Slovak Roma migration to the Czech Republic in the aftermath of displacement of ethnic Germans and additional migrations throughout socialism. One may argue that the previous migratory experience of some Roma showed the rest of the community that migration abroad is a viable option for improving one’s dire living conditions, to some extent they may have drawn on past experiences for this

conclusion. Slovak Roma have migrated to the Czech Republic, other EU countries (before accession), and to the UK (after accession). Although Roma in Hungary and in the Czech Republic have less of a migratory past, the migration experienced in the observed Roma communities suggests an emerging culture of migration. In both these communities, some families had been to Canada or the UK. This can lead us to formulate a question: is repetitive migration an illustration of the emergence of the ‘culture of migration’?

One of the widely shared common experiences in the three countries that we might denote as an important social remittance is the cultural encounter with Canadian multiculturalism and tolerance. All interviewees expressed their amazement that they were “treated as human beings” and felt “safe and respected” without being stigmatized or discriminated because of their ethnicity. *“There, everybody makes you feel that you are a human being. Wherever we went, any official place, you are welcomed politely in that nice and rich country. You can sit down, they respect you and they offer you coffee. There, human beings are human beings indeed. Since it is an immigrant country. They don’t know Gypsies.”* This experience seemed to have a great impact for everybody interviewed and may be assessed as an upcoming significant element in the culture of migration, a future core incentive for moving.

In order to account for feedback mechanisms, it is necessary to also study the destination community. Migrant ethnic clustering within destination communities is a well-known phenomenon. Depending on the type of migration, migrants tend to live and work together, thus, creating new communities. Ethnic clustering could be best observed amongst the Hungarian Roma migrants in Canada, given their number and the size of the community. Due to the social housing situation and network dependency, many new migrants end up in the same blocks of flats or in close vicinity to one another. Given their low status and the lack of the necessary cultural capitals, many of the low status, late adopters, or laggards, have little or no chance to integrate. Although attending language courses is obligatory, most adults find it very hard to go back to school and they do not learn English at all. *“You can’t work. We didn’t learn the language. We couldn’t go to school because of the distance. We had to get up at 5 and got back home at 5 in the afternoon. (...) After two months we didn’t go to school any more, we already wanted to come back.”* This strengthens their dependence on networks and is one reason why ethnic clustering is, in fact, important – especially for low status migrants.

There are several factors that determine whether migration will be a success or a failure. For most migrants, integration is simply not possible. This is not merely due to their instable legal status – whether they can stay or not – it also depends on whether or not their networks help them get access to some ethnic business (Gold 2005) that in case of the low-skilled Roma in Canada includes garbage or scrap metal collection, construction work, factory jobs, etc. *“They find brass in the garbage. People put it outside in front of their houses and then they go and find it and sell it for a good price. They take friends and relatives with them. They know where to find the garbage places.” “Besides their jobs they go to pick garbage. This is not theft. From one family six of them go and they make enough money for a month in one weekend.”* State welfare can provide enough financial support for sustaining a family, however, it is impossible to building any savings. Migration is only successful if one can return with some savings. This is well illustrated in the Slovak case where those returnees from Canada who came back with nothing were seen as failures by the community and blamed for not working hard enough. External or network effects have not been considered in these narratives.

To understand the dynamics, or changing of migration patterns and migration diffusion, weak and strong ties as well as the negative effects of social capital need to be taken into account. As we mentioned, migration diffusion starts with pioneers or innovators leaving a

community. *“My brother collected the money, he had a friend there, a family. He went alone to sort out the financial situation so that the family doesn’t have to live on welfare. (...) His wife went one year later.”* They are followed by late adopters, coming from less well-to-do households. A study done in 2000 by the International Organization for Migration on Roma migration from Slovakia (Vašečka & Vašečka 2003) indicates that migrants tended to be Roma with an above-average education and social status (the ‘winners of socialism’). A similar trend was likewise observed in Hungary (Kováts *et al.* 2002); Roma involved in the earlier phases of migration were usually from merchant or musician backgrounds and some segments of these migrant populations tended to be wealthier and more educated. Considering the Canadian migration diffusion, it was found that people from relatively wealthier households migrated first. In addition, among the early migrants we find more individual or small group migration, whereas among the late adopters there are usually more families migrating together, a pattern noted in all three countries.

Concerning risks and costs, pioneers have the greatest advantages and disadvantages. However, compared to other forms of migration, the risks are relatively low, since social welfare will cover immediate costs. So, it seems that pioneers in Canada had a better chance of succeeding than late adopters did. From all accounts, it can be deduced that job opportunities on the low-skill labor market are although not so scarce but for lack of social and cultural capital they are hardly accessible for low-skilled laggards, this creates a greater reliance on strong networks. *“It is very difficult to find a job without speaking the language. (...) Circles of friends and relatives who had already been there for a longer period of time could work, they took their friends to work, and they took responsibility of them.”* As previously mentioned, these networks do exist and do provide income resources for some people. Oftentimes, it is the pioneers who become the ‘bridgeheads’ (de Haas 2010) of these migrant networks and they can even be the generators of some of the new migration by sending money back or providing loans to aspiring migrants. These networks seem to be rather small and weak and tend to saturate quickly. Thus, ‘bridgeheads’ quickly become ‘gatekeepers,’ sometimes causing further hindrances for new migrants that may slow down their migration process. *“My other brother couldn’t go, the tickets would have been too expensive. Those already there, should they pay for all others? We are ten brothers and sisters. You have to decide if you help all your brothers, also the hell-raisers, or you spare money for yourself, so when you come back in five-ten years your kids will have money to live on. My brother helped the others but I saw he had enough. He would have been much better off if nobody had followed him. They held him back. He gave them over a million⁷ that he will never get back.”* However, the process does not appear to diminish and die off. Since these networks are based on strong (usually family) ties and are exclusionary towards others (even towards people from the same community), there could be many of these networks functioning side by side. In fact, as extended families continue to migrate and they join in on the networks of close ties, still more migration could happen – except when external factors, such as the Bill C-31, create impassable barriers.

All this said, however, it is also very easy to be without a network. One may find themselves going to Canada as a result of the weak tie effect – as stated earlier, information tends to flow through weak ties – but end up in a situation where, once they arrive, they have no strong ties to help them get established. *“Nobody helped us. They [acquaintances] put us up, but they did not help with anything. We had to find a translator, we just met one by accident. He’s been there for forty years. We had to pay him, 50-100 dollars for a couple of sentences. He helped us with*

⁷ Approximately 3,300 to 3,600 Euros.

arranging the official papers. The people we stayed with were not relatives, they were just from the same village. They were in a more advantageous situation but they did not share any information with us. (...) We didn't even know how to pronounce street names. It was tough, especially the first two months." These migrants often become what we might call failed migrants: those who get in a situation temporarily or are worse in the long run than they were in their original situation. Failed returnees in all three countries face very similarly difficult situations. Sometimes they had sold their house, so, they have nothing to return to. *"You sold everything and it won't pay back. We paid 1400 dollars for rent and from the welfare we had 50-100 dollars left. (...) We could spare some money because we didn't pay last month's rent, but we needed this for returning to our village."* They move in with relatives, or move to new localities; sometimes they come back more indebted than they were before. Further, if they did not deregistered from the local welfare system before leaving, they may have to face the legal consequences. In all three countries, the hostility of the community elite (e.g. mayor) can make reintegration difficult. All in all, some of the returnees suffer from multiple disadvantages at the end of their migration journey.

Conclusions

Using a multidimensional approach, this explorative project aimed to raise new questions about the Canadian (forced) migration process for Roma from the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary. Our premise was that 'Canadian (forced) migration of Roma' should be understood as a process motivated by a mixed set of factors and, from an analytical point of view, it should be studied as neither refugee nor labor migration but as a compound of both. Based on this premise, the project set out to apply a conceptual framework that accounts for the entire migration process and aims to gain further insight into how it starts, how it develops, and what role networks play in the whole process.

By applying de Haas' migration system model, we were able to show that this migration displays similar, but sometimes differing, trends and patterns than other migrations. In regards to the similar trends, we observed that the ways in which this migration developed was very much like a 'classic' labor migration process: transnational networks were formed and functioned over space and time, remittances were sent (thus, generating more migration), migrant clusters were established in the destination country, etc. On the other hand, there were important differences that are worth pointing out. Most importantly, the way migration started was influenced both by the existence and influence of the migrant networks and by the fact that welfare was provided for refugees in Canada. This meant that a wider social stratum – including lower status, underprivileged migrants who could not have been able to undertake other forms of migration – had the opportunity to participate in the process.

As a general pattern, we could distinguish the pioneers from the laggards. In all three cases, pioneers were migrants who were from wealthier families and many had earlier migration experiences; they were the ones who would leave, come back, and some would try to leave again. The latter were often the failed migrants, those whose either voluntary or forced return left them in a more desperate situation than they had been in before leaving.

All in all, it can be argued that the relatively low costs and low risks of migrating to Canada spurred old, and motivated new migrants alike to leave their home country. The effects of this are yet to be seen. We remain, now, with a host of unanswered questions: will some of the failed migrants become recurrent migrants, due to their positive experiences (despite unsuccessful endeavors, some still managed cultural or social accumulation)? Will migrants returning from

Canada again set out for other destinations (given their accumulated social, economic, and cultural capital)? Will the impact of migration on the origin communities have a lasting effect in terms of establishing migration patterns?

It is our hope that the research and analysis presented here brings to light a fresh approach to the subject of Roma migration, inspiring a new generation of work to develop around the framework with which we worked. We look forward to future researchers both building on our growing list of questions and finding answers to some of the above-stated ones.

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