

## Abstract

Some of the main questions that developed in the past fifteen years in migration scholarship were how to understand processes of human mobility in a context of ever-increasing global connectivity and massive social, political, and economic changes following the end of the Cold War. Such general inquiry was not answered into a single and unitary research agenda, but rather transformed into coherent sub-topics. Twenty years of vibrant scholarship resulted in a wide interdisciplinary field where a series of topics were widely discussed, such as migrant transnationalism, migration policies, migration and development. Besides, given the complexity and the dynamic of international migration, migration scholars engaged in broad debates beyond the disciplinary boundaries of the discipline with geography scholars, urban sociologists, and political scientists.

My intellectual engagement in the domain of migration and ethnic studies evolved mostly in the field of Romanian migration, one of the largest and rapidly growing migration flows in Europe. Among the topics I dealt with there are: migrant transnationalism, irregular migration, migration policies and policy impacts, and – more recently – migration and social change. I first asked how shall we understand the Romanian migration and the transnationalism/transnationality of Romanian migrants, given that these migrants are currently free movers in Europe and that this migration developed very much from a networked type of migration into a complex array of individual practices and networks? What would be the proper units of analysis and what type of methodology would require (Meeus 2010)? I therefore argued that a perspective on how social status and prestige are constructed and maintained transnationally would provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the Romanian migration. It would also provide valuable insights into how migration and migrant transnationalism evolves over the years. My approach was thus to analyze how migrants construct and valued their social statuses in a broader perspective - configurations of status - that would encompass migration policies and types of contexts of reception, migrant transnationality, and social relatedness. The approach allows incorporating individual trajectories, networks, and broader social processes into a complex research agenda.

The thesis further focuses on a second set of questions I tackled over the last years. I looked onto the migration of Romania's ethnic minorities. Admittedly, the literature on this topic developed in the past years in relation to the very visible migration of Roma. But some other important flows were not covered adequately, in spite of the theoretical potential that such studies can bring to debates on ethnicity, citizenship, and migrant transnationalism. I therefore concentrated on the study of ethnic Germans from Romania, of Croats, of Hungarians and the Roma. In this respect in the thesis I describe some of the outcomes of my research, showing how ethnicity (as status) influences migration trajectories and migrant sociality. On the other hand, I also showed that in migration ethnicity – as relatedness and representation – is a changing social category.

One last set of questions concentrates on the effects of migration in Romania. Here the thesis encompasses both my academic achievements and future plans. I thus asked what effects migration produced on the Romanian economy and society? Given that migration is a widespread phenomenon in the Romanian society, how can we better address its effects? One answer was to focus on the relationship between migration and development, a topic that gained much prominence in the past ten years. I thus reviewed some of the most discernible effects of migration in a paper coauthored with István Horváth, where we discussed the micro and macroeconomic effects produced on migrant households and on the Romanian economy. My own research in the field focused on some case studies in urban and rural locales, where I used an actor-oriented approach (Long 2001). I published a paper on this issue and I plan to work on other publications. A related agenda is on migration and social change. Here I focused not only on how migration affects origin communities, but how did migration affect different ethnic groups and the interethnic relations between Romanians or Roma. This comparison allows me to

tackle the issue of migration and inequality (even class inequality) showing the mechanisms used by the Roma to react to prevailing social hierarchies (Faist 2012). A transnational perspective of migration will thus allow me to show not only how the Roma and Romanians adapt to contexts of reception, but also what happens when they move away.

I shall conclude that my academic career focused so far on migration and ethnic studies. By the wide research perspective I employed in my research and publications, I tackled broader issues such as migration policies, differentiation theories, transnationalism and globalization, migration and societal change. In so doing I contributed not only to the debates within the field of migration studies, but also on post-socialist transformations, and ethnicity and nationalism. By the range of publications, cooperation with research centers and universities, and the projects I was involved in I aim at further advancing the development of migration scholarship in Romania.