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Language editor: Simon Milton
Design: Miklós Szalay
Layout: Melinda György
Editorial office: 1014 Budapest, Országház u. 30.
Address: 1250 Budapest, Pf. 20.
Tel: +36 70 624-7718
e-mail: szociologiai.szemle@szociologia.hu
www.szociologia.hu

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Constrained choices, enhanced aspirations: Transnational mobility, poverty and development. A case study from North Hungary[1]

Judit Durst - Zsanna Nyírő
durst.judit@tk.mta.hu
nyiro.zsanna@tk.mta.hu

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Abstract: This paper aims to contribute to the exploration of the nexus of poverty, migration and development by providing what has been lacking thus far; namely, a close ethnographic portrait, combined with a survey, that interprets the most typical and diverging migration trajectories and their impacts in an economically backward and ethnically differentiated region in Hungary. Building on the inspirational work of anthropologists and mobility scholars who propose to recover a global and multidimensional perspective on transnational movement when exploring the nexus between migration and its consequences for development, we carried out multi-sited ethnography, both in the sending and in the destination localities. We also conducted a survey among migrants who had returned, sometimes temporarily, to their community of origin. Using this multi-spatial approach, we demonstrate the different layers of the migration-development nexus. We argue that, on the global level, receiving countries all benefit from the cheap and flexible labor of poor migrants, be they Roma or non-Roma, skilled or low-skilled mobile laborers. However, on the level of migrant-sending localities, due to the differential migration patterns of local Roma and non-Roma, the developmental effects of the two groups' geographical movement cannot be taken as homogeneous or leveled. For non-Roma families, when men leave behind their wives and children for the sake of financial betterment of their family, there is little developmental effect on community level, but only in a narrow financial sense. However, we argue, drawing on Appadurai's (2004) "capacity to aspire" concept, that for a fraction of some kinship groups of low-skilled Roma who mainly migrate with their whole family, transnational mobility may not be as successful financially as for the non-Roma, although it has future-oriented developmental elements by potentially enhancing capacity to aspire for both migrants and non-migrants.

Keywords: Transnational mobility, migration and development nexus, poverty, capacity to aspire, poor Roma and non-Roma Hungarian migrants

1 Part of the research that produced the empirical material for this paper was supported by a research grant from the Hungarian Academy of Science, NKFIH (K 111 969), entitled "Outmigration from Hungary and its effect on rural societies." The empirical findings in this paper result from the ethnographic fieldwork and narrative interviews conducted by the first author. The analyses of the survey data are the work of the second author.
We wish to thank our two anonymous reviewers for their inspiring critical comments on the first draft of the manuscript. We are indebted to Endre Sik who helped us restructure our survey findings. Thanks also go to Krisztina Németh and Eszter Berényi for their patience and valuable contributions to the final version of this paper. Finally, special thanks go to our Roma friends and research assistants, and the hosting families who made this research possible by opening their homes to us in Peteri, Toronto, and in England, and who let us take part in their everyday lives.

Introduction

"The outmigration from Peteri is not significant," said the mayor of Peteri, a small town of almost 10,000 inhabitants in the economically backward region of North Hungary, to us in the Fall of 2013 when we began our ethnographic fieldwork. He tried to convince us that his town was not the best site for our research as there was not much outmigration from there. By then, half of the inhabitants of the Roma settlement (a segregated neighbourhood on the outskirts of the town with almost 3000 dwellers) had left for Toronto, Canada, and when having been deported or after returning from there, they went on to England.

Although the Hungarians were for long less mobile than their Eastern-Central European neighbors, by 2010 they had "matured for migration" (Sik 2013) according to national surveys measuring the migration potential of the population. Recently, public discourse and academics in Hungary have begun to speak about an "exodus". Since 2010, 500-600,000 Hungarians have left the country to work abroad in the free EU labour market or in North America (Hárs 2016, 2018).

The Roma, the biggest, most discriminated against and socially and economically disadvantaged minority in Hungary, have joined this migration process – although their destination countries are somewhat different (Kováts 2002, Vidra 2013, Blaskó – Gödri 2014, 2016, Vidra – Virág 2013, Durst 2013, Moreh 2014).

There is very little research about the outcome of this nationwide migration process, mainly due to its relatively new development (for the few exceptions, see Váradi 2018, Virág 2018, Németh-Váradi 2018, this volume). We have even less knowledge about the almost "invisible" cross-border mobility of poor people with low educational attainment. These migrants seem to be invisible not only in the context of national survey results in Hungary – according to which the young, educated and professionally or vocationally qualified part of the Hungarian population make up most of the country's emigrants (Blaskó – Gödri 2014, 2016, Hárs 2018) – but their movement has remained broadly unrecognized also by local governments.

The non-Roma Hungarian mayor of Peteri, the "field" of our case study, only knows of a few families from the Roma settlement who tried to migrate to Canada. He does not have first-hand experience about this process however, as he rarely enters the segregated neighborhoods of his town. On the other hand, he has more contact with local Hungarian families. "Unlike these few Roma, Hungarians do not migrate," he said to us, "in their families it is only the men who go to work abroad to support their families back home in Peteri."[2]

2 All the original names of both settlements and individuals used in this paper have been modified because of the sensitivity of the topic. When referring to local communities, both in Peteri and its neighbouring villages or small towns, we use the terminology employed by the locals themselves. In this region where there is a strong binary social order between the Roma and non-Roma population, those who are labeled as Roma according to the politically correct language used throughout the European Union refer to themselves as Gypsies (Cigány), and everybody else – that is, non-Gypsies (Gadzso) – as Hungarian (Magyar). The distinction between the categories „Gypsy" and (non-Gypsy) „Hungarian" has until now been one of the main rules governing interaction and determining social position in rural societies such as Peteri in Hungary (Horváth 2012, Kovai 2018).

Meanwhile the working abroad of Hungarians was seen as a (financially) successful process by the mayor, the migration of the Roma has proved to be an unsuccessful story from his perception.

> *After a year or two, or sometimes three, the Roma families all came back to Peteri. And what did they bring home with them? Nothing. The only thing they managed to achieve with this migration is that their children missed one or two, or sometimes three years of schooling. Because even if they went to school in Canada, they came home knowing nothing. So, we must put them back in the class that they were in when they left. For example, if a child left our school after finishing Year 5*[3] *and went with her family to Canada, on her return, let's say after three years, we have to put her back in Year 6 among twelve-year-old pupils, even if she is 15 (years old). It gives our teachers a lot of headaches teaching these overage children... The Hungarians are more forward thinking. In Hungarian families it is only the father who goes abroad, mainly to Germany to work. The mother stays behind with the children. In this way, the educational paths of these kids do not get interrupted.*

Since 2011 and the beginning of mass out-migration from Hungary, hundreds of families or members of families of inhabitants of Peteri have experienced work-related, trans-national or rather trans-regional (Sik – Szeitl 2015) mobility. During our ethnographic fieldwork, we realized that we were looking at a "migration-rich community" (Pantea 2013) where people have regularly practised various modes of 'recurring' (Limmer et al. 2010) spatial, cross-border mobility during the last ten years with the aim of generating income when opportunities were scarce in the local labour market (Durst 2018). Even the poor with a low (primary) level of schooling and no command of foreign languages of whom textbooks and courses on migration studies speak of as "resourceless" in terms of migration (Castles – Miller 2009, Melegh – Sárosi 2015), have begun to exercise mobility: mostly trans-regionally (mainly to three destination countries) across national borders. Whether these local types of "migration" – or rather call it trans-regional mobilities – have spurred any development or social transformation in the sending community or at least on the individual level of the return migrants and their households is the main question addressed in this paper.

The topic of the relationship between international migration and its effect on the development of the sending, mostly underdeveloped countries (the so-called migration-development nexus or pendulum; Faist 2008, de Haas 2005) has recently attracted significant attention once again from anthropologists and scholars of migration and development studies. There are two main, opposing theses about the direction and nature of the migration and development nexus – although many scholars have recently drawn attention to the multi-layered, multi-level and multi-

3 As children mainly start primary school in Hungary at the age of six in Year 1, by Year 5 they are 11 years old.

directional nature of the relationship (Glick Schiller 2009, Faist 2009, Delgado Wise – Covarrubias 2009). Following de Haas's (2008) review, on the one hand there is "developmental pessimism": scholars who represent world systems theory (Wallerstein 1980) and segmented labour market theory (Piore 1979) argue that migration which is shaped by structural economic and power inequalities within and between societies tends to reproduce these inequalities. These theories focus on "how the powerful oppress the poor and vulnerable" (de Haas 2008:15). Some empirical findings from South-East Europe have argued for the usefulness of these theoretical framework by presenting empirical evidence of large-scale depopulation caused by mass outmigration from certain regions of underdeveloped, peripheral or semi-peripheral countries such as Romania (Horváth – Kiss 2015). Some of these studies, following Bauman (2004), also speak about the predicament of the "disposable mass of global capitalism," among them poor Roma migrants who cannot be considered "transnational subjects… what they have is their sheer labour, that is the raw material that the peripheral countries offer to core states at [a] low price" (Szabó 2018: 223).

On the other hand, in the analysis of the migration-development nexus there is the so-called "developmental optimism" (Skeldon 1997, Kapur 2004), which has significant support from policy-making proponents among the powerful international financial organizations such as the World Bank, and among myriad non-governmental institutions. This developmental optimism celebrates migrants as development agents through the remittances (financial and social) they send home to their "left behind" family members. In this discourse migrants are portrayed as achieving high social status not only through their remittances but also when they return, due to their conspicuous consumption and their construction of big, fancy new houses – the latter being the most common cross-cultural sign of status improvement (Grigolini 2005, Tesar 2016, Toma et al. 2017). This discourse puts emphasis not only on financial returns but also on so-called "social remittances" (Lewitt 1998): the new values, ideas, practices, identities, and knowledge that migrants transfer in the transnational space (Glick Schiller 2009) which connect them to those in their networks who have stayed home. In the optimistic discourse these remittances are thought to be universal and to have a "levelled" positive effect on the social and political development in the sending localities.

There are scholars, however, especially those working in ethnically mixed communities in peripheral or semi-peripheral, post-socialist countries, who draw attention to a differentiated migration-developmental nexus that focuses on social differentiation and the social closure in localities of origin (Anghel 2016, Toma et al. 2017, Toma – Fosztó 2018, this issue). They argue for the need to dissect the consequences of transnational mobility for social transformation and inequality regarding different local returned migrant groups with diverging mobility patterns, even within single localities (Anghel 2016, Faist 2016). Following this line of thinking, Faist (2016: 389) states that the social mechanism of the partial exclusion

of poor return migrants of stigmatized minority background (such as the Roma) is an "antidote to optimistic developmental ideas in the wake of post-1989 migration from Central Eastern Europe."

In this paper, we aim to interrogate both leveled developmental pessimism and optimism and test the validity of differential migration-development interactions in the case of our ethnically mixed settlement. With our survey we explore whether there are significant differences in the migration and remittance-sending patterns of the different local ethnic groups. Through our ethnographic case studies we look behind the survey data and analyse whether the differential mobility trajectories of migrants of diverging social characteristics – that is, of Roma and non-Roma, unskilled and skilled laborers – lead to different developmental effects on the level of individual, household and sending locality.

To address these issues, in the following we first discuss the theoretical framework that we found useful for embedding and explaining our empirical findings. Second, we briefly describe our mixed research methodology, and give an introduction to the research setting, delineating the most typical, socially patterned migration trajectories from the town. Then we present our survey results, followed by the ethnographic findings. Here we use the two locally most typical migration trajectories – those of a Roma kinship group and non-Roma guest workers – as ethnographic cases to explain, supplement, and look behind the survey results. Finally, we conclude the article by analyzing the multilevel consequences of migration from the sending locality.

Theoretical Framework

Poverty, development and the capacity to aspire

Poverty is partly a "matter of operating with extremely weak resources where the terms of recognition are concerned" (Appadurai 2004: 66). For policy makers and development experts, poverty is usually associated with powerlessness, vulnerability and, above all, a failure of aspirations (Ibrahim 2011). Aspirations literally mean "hopes or ambitions to achieve something." An aspiration is defined as "the perceived importance or necessity of goals" (Copestake – Camfield 2010, cited by Ibrahim 2011: 3). For anthropologists, aspirations are seen as part of wider ethical and metaphysical ideas derived from cultural norms: "Aspirations [for] the good life are part of some sort of system of ideas…which locate them in a larger map of local ideas and beliefs"; however, they "often emerge as specific wants and choices" (Appadurai 2004:68). For many poor people, the aspiration and choice to migrate represents a central component of livelihood strategies (Kothari 2002).

Using Sen's (1999) concept of development, according to which development is an increase in freedom (operationalized as capability) that allows people to lead the lives they aspire to, and accepting de Haas's (2005) conceptualization of human mobility as people's capability (freedom) to choose where to live within broader structural

constraints, then we conclude that an increase in the capability for mobility itself is a part of development (de Haas 2008). As poverty scholars have pointed out, the failure of poor people to achieve their aspirations can lead to a downward spiral and intergenerational transmission, the latter reflecting the failure of many parents in poor communities to fulfil the aspirations of their children (Ibrahim 2011). Therefore, some poverty studies suggest, building on Sen's (1999) and Appadurai's (2004) work, that development should be perceived as a cognitive process (Copestake – Camfield 2010).

Poverty scholars have also drawn attention to the issue of the formation of aspiration. Ray (2006) speaks about the concept of the aspiration window and aspiration gap. The former means the individual's cognitive world and what s/he views as attainable, while the latter is the distance between what an individual might aspire to and the conditions s/he finds herself in. Ray argues that aspirations are usually inspired by the lives of similar people or role models within the aspiration window.

According to Appadurai, an important part of development is the empowerment of the poor. Empowerment can be translated as increasing the capacity of the poor to aspire. Appadurai defines the concept of the capacity to aspire as a navigational and cultural capacity of a group, which concerns "how a group (and the individuals in it) succeed in reducing the costs of developing a culture of aspirations by envisioning their future, and their capacity to share this future, through… influencing factors in their physical and social environment" (Appadurai 2004: 59). He goes on to argue that "in strengthening the capacity to aspire…, especially among the poor, the future-oriented logic of development could find a natural ally, and the poor could find the resources required to contest and alter the conditions of their own poverty" (Appadurai 2004: 60). Converging on this line of thinking, recent attempts have been made to theorize migration in the aspirations-capabilities (Sen 1999) framework and conceive of migration as a contextualized social process, and an intrinsic part of global change, social transformation, and development (de Haas 2014). This conceptualizes migration as a "function of aspirations and capabilities to move within a given set of opportunity structures" (de Haas 2014).

Migration, social transformation and the new global labour regime

During the last two decades, the set of opportunity structures for migration has significantly changed. It is a commonly accepted statement that migration is a part and consequence of social transformation (Castles 2010, Portes 2010, de Haas 2010). One part of social transformation that migration processes are embedded in is the restructuring of the global labour market in highly developed countries through economic deregulation and new employment practices such as subcontracting, temporary employment, and casual work (Castles 2010). On the one hand, the search for competitiveness in a globalized economy, combined with demographic change (the aging population in the developed West), are leading to significant demand for flexible and cheap migrant labour. As Glick Schiller (2009) argues, a new, neoliberal

labour regime has been developed. Migrant labour, which is increasingly contractual, meets the need of localized neoliberal restructuring – in the form of "flexible and politically silenced" labor (Glick Schiller 2009: 15).

On the other hand, in less developed countries such as many post-socialist Central-Eastern European (CEE) states like Hungary, the social transformation of the labour market (that is, the massive loss of jobs due to structural changes, including the closing down of industrial factories) further encourages outmigration of "superfluous" former socialist workers (Melegh et al. 2018, this issue), among them the currently unemployed, low-skilled Roma, in search of better lives and livelihoods. These changes in the globalized labour market have fostered new streams of mobility in the direction of the developed Western European countries since the 2004 EU accession, which provided legal rights for residence and work to the newly accepted EU Member States' citizens. However, while the European political establishment celebrates the free movement of goods, people and ideas in the space of the European Union, the mobility regimes of the Member States are rather selective in terms of how they welcome highly educated professionals (the "global talents") but criminalize and hinder the mobility of the poor (Glick Schiller – Salazar 2013). One contradiction in migration-development studies is that while migrant remittances are welcomed and defined as vital resources for poverty reduction, those who send remittances are denigrated as a social threat (Glick Schiller 2009).

This is particularly true in the case of the Central Eastern European poor, low-skilled and especially Roma migrants. Scholars from different disciplines who have analyzed the transnational mobilities of precarious Roma networks emphasize the un/free (blocked or impeded) character of their geographical movement (Yildiz –de Genova 2017, Van Baar 2017, Nagy 2016, Greenfields – Dagilyte 2018, Sardelic 2017, Humphris 2017). Many Hungarian Roma migrants, however, are outsmarting the selective mobility regime (Nagy – Oude-Breuil 2015, Nagy 2016), which has a distorted notion about Roma migration (Kóczé 2017), considering it a "security threat" (von Baar 2017), by employing the tactics of ethnic (Roma) invisibility and playing up their Hungarian identity in public spaces, as one of our case studies demonstrates.

Research methodology

In pursuing the anthropological thread of mobility studies, following mobility trajectories, and studying our moving subjects, we have observed during the past three years two of the most typical and widespread mobility routes of social groupings, especially those of low-skilled mobile Roma laborers from Peteri and its surrounding settlements to their destinations in Canada and the UK.

The empirical findings and the argumentation in this paper benefit from mixed-methods research: we carried out several short-term participant observations and periods of ethnographic fieldwork both in the sending locality (Peteri and its

surrounding settlements) and in the receiving ones (Toronto and an urban city in the UK). We also conducted 120 semi-structured interviews, focusing on life- and migration trajectories with trans-national migrants who had returned to Peteri, or relocated either to Toronto or in England. Among them, 80 interviewees were (self-identified) Roma, while 40 were non-Roma. The participants were selected by using the snowball sampling method, and the selection criterion was that the interviewees should have had cross-border migration experience within the last ten years. The length of the interviews varied between 60 and 90 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Along with the qualitative research methods, and with the help of local Roma research assistants, we also managed to implement a survey in the region among the 642 families who had taken part in any kind of trans-national migration since 2012.[4] We defined the region as the area within a 70-kilometre radius of the city of Miskolc. People from any settlements were subject to questioning, except for those actually from Miskolc. This means that our sample contained only socioeconomically disadvantaged settlements, none of which had more than 33,000 inhabitants. Snowball sampling was applied to select the participants of the research. The selection and the questioning of the respondents was the task of the four local Roma research assistants; that is, the sample is based on their networks, which increased the homogeneity of our sample. The Roma research assistants also helped us achieve another goal of the sample design, namely, the over-representation of Roma migrants. Although the empirical findings of this paper are only valid for the studied social and spatial context, their relevance stems from the explorative nature of the work.

Research setting: different migration trajectories

Peteri is situated in an economically backward county, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (BAZ), in North Hungary, according to the official statistics on unemployment data. (Since 2010, when a new wave of outmigration has evolved, the unemployment rate was around 20% compared to the national average of 10%). This small rural town is itself not considered among the most disadvantaged settlements as designated by a 2015 government order[5] regarding an official, complex developmental index (compiled of different socio-demographic-, housing-, labour market-, local economic- and infrastructure-related indices). However, regarding the other official development measurement, the unemployment index (which defines a settlement as disadvantaged if the unemployment rate of its local population is 1.75 times higher or more than the national average rate), Peteri is indeed a disadvantaged town. Until the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the post-socialist transformation, most local skilled and unskilled individuals (men

4 The advantages and the limits of involving local Roma participants as assistants in the research is discussed elsewhere (Durst 2017, see also Matras and Leggio (2018) for the experiences of the MigRom project).

5 See http://www.magyarkozlony.hu/hivatalos-lapok/c7906e368088af259ea68621e00e02277f38b2ab/dokumentumok/184e1f878cb59cd3f0dc13264dca53efedf79d82/letoltes

and women, Roma and non-Roma), worked in nearby industrial factories. From this state of almost full employment, most of the local population (except the political elite and the the very few people with degrees who had jobs in local government and in schools) have now experienced some period of unemployment. The biggest losers of the transformation in Peteri, as is true of the whole country (Ladányi – Szelényi 2004), are the unskilled or low-skilled Roma with low educational attainment (on average having only completed primary school). Many of them have struggled with chronic, long-term unemployment until recently, when Bosch started to recruit even the unskilled Roma for the least prestigious work on their assembly line.[6]

In Peteri, along with a few other settlements in the region which are characterized by a high rate of out-migration, a "culture of migration" has evolved during the last decade – since around 2009. (See also Hárs 2016 for Hungary). The importance of this culture in promoting cross-border, geographical mobility is documented by scholars (among others, Kandel – Massey 2002). The empirical findings of Massey and his co-author show that, within such communities, transnational migration has become so deeply rooted that the practice of cross-border movement for work has become the norm.

This is exactly the case in Peteri, and especially in its segregated Roma settlements where low-skilled Roma (approximately 3,000 people) live. In the locality of the town, as elsewhere, transnational mobility has differentiated patterns among people of different social (and educational) status and ethnic belonging. At the top of the local social hierarchy are the political and economic elite, who do not migrate as they have reasonably good jobs locally. Neither do skilled Roma workers pursue a cross-border mobility strategy to improve their standard of living; they rather commute weekly (*hetelnek*) either to the capital, Budapest, or to other big and more developed cities in Hungary. Nowadays they can easily find work in the construction industry, organized mostly by informal labour recruiters, where there is a growing shortage of reliable, skilled workers due to the mass outmigration of Hungarian employees (Blaskó – Gödri 2014, 2016, Hárs 2016, 2018). These Roma men prefer not to leave their families behind, unlike many of their Hungarian counterparts of the same vocation. They are also happy with their social status in their own communities and believe that given they cannot speak a foreign language their status abroad would only deteriorate. As one of them explained to us, "Why would I be a nobody in Canada or in England when I am somebody at home in the town and around?"

On the other hand, among the two most typical groups of local migrants from Peteri – that is, unskilled or low-skilled Roma with eight years of schooling, and non-Roma Hungarian skilled laborers –, one can observe enormous mobility. Among the non-Roma, men with vocational training, mostly in their late twenties or of middle age, have been working for different German companies for three to five years already,

6 Since 2008, Bosch, a multinational company, automotive manufacturer, and a leading developer of future technologies, has relocated its operations from Germany to Miskolc, the region's capital city. The Bosch Group was celebrated as the "Workplace creator of the Year" a few years ago in the Hungarian media (Bosch Media Service 2017). Bosch seems to increase its competitiveness in a stagnating European market through capitalising on lower Hungarian wages.

mostly in construction, but some in the food industry. They leave their families (wives with younger children) behind in the hope that they can earn enough money within a few years to pay back family debt, renovate their houses and educate their children. That is, they can "get ahead" financially. The basis of their conscious calculus about the cost-benefit of working abroad is that they can earn a salary four times as high as they could do at home. Those few non-Roma who have no vocation and only a primary school education (as is also the case with the vast majority of Roma in Peteri) also typically migrate to Germany or the Netherlands on their own, using their migrant friends' or nuclear family networks. They take up seasonal work as unskilled laborers.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, but mainly in between 2010 and 2013, the most typical migration trajectory among the low-skilled, poor Roma involved going to Canada and applying for asylum as a refugee, or when being deported or coming back to Peteri due to homesickness or to care for an old parent who had fallen ill, to move on to England.[7] From our interview data as to why they chose their particular destination countries, it was clear that what mostly attracted the Roma to Toronto, apart from the ever growing translocal migration network (constituted by kinship ties), was the country's humanitarian treatment of refugees, who were, among other things, entitled to social provisions that covered at least their housing costs. As many of our respondents articulated, they had fled from racism, hate crime (among others the Roma murders in 2008-2009), and poverty, but as one put it, corresponding with a couple of others, he could not go to other countries, as he " did not have the talent" *(tehetségem)*[8] to start anew, except in Canada. In Toronto I had relatives with whom we could stay in the first few weeks. Here one can start a brand new life in three months – that's how long it takes to arrange your paperwork – , and Canada welcomes the Roma."

For the Roma in Peteri, as elsewhere for low-income families (Stack 1973), kinship network as a form of social capital is the biggest (and sometimes only) "profitable" resource (Czakó – Sik 2003) that can be used in the process of migration. Wherever migrants move to, even if they have no command of any foreign language, due to their kinship ties they are well informed about the income-earning opportunities, and about strategies on how to cunningly overcome unwelcoming, restricting mobility policies (see Nagy 2016).[9] Recently, the most common migration trajectory among the Roma from Peteri is their typically recurring but in some cases permanent relocation

7 To discourage Roma from fleeing to Canada, between 2002 and 2008 Canada introduced a visa requirement for Eastern European citizens. In 2008 this was lifted, but again in 2013 there was a substantial reform of the Canadian system for determining refugees. The reform took place in addition to some political action aimed specifically at the Eastern European Roma who in the political discourse were accused of being "bogus" or "economic refugees" (Levine – Rasky 2016).

8 Our informants' use of the word "talent"should be understood as capability.

9 Those who cannot even rely on the assistance of their kinship networks as a resource for reducing the cost and risk of migration are the most vulnerable among the poor migrants. These are men who have gone through eight years of schooling who became mobile workers after commuting to Germany or the Netherlands on a six-weeks'-work, one-week's-holiday basis, or most recently to Spain to perform, as they say, "even bottom-end labour." Established, organized networks have recently been developed between formal employers in some Western European countries and informal recruiters (who have previously been employed by the former employers) to encourage unskilled people, mostly in an economically vulnerable situation, to temporarily work in these countries by facilitating their travel (using money informally lent by the recruiters, with added interest), accommodation and employment. We carried out interviews with nine of these informal labour intermediaries from neighbouring settlements – from all their clients there were none from Peteri. This clearly shows that potential migrants prefer to use kinship networks to facilitate their work-related cross border movement if they have a choice.

and work-related mobility to some urban UK cities with abundant job opportunities, facilitated partly by kinship networks but mostly by ubiquitous labour market intermediaries. In the following, after presenting our survey results, we explore two of the most typical migration patterns for Roma and non-Roma respectively, with a focus on their interaction with development.

Results of quantitative research

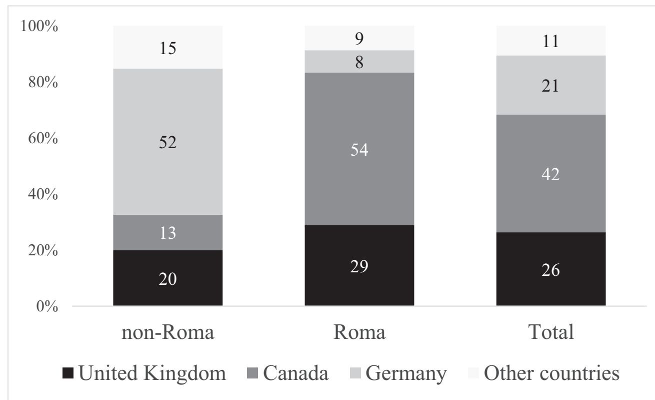
In this section we describe whether there are statistically significant differences in the migration patterns of our Roma and non-Roma respondents by using the results of our questionnaire.

A total of 642 respondents answered the questionnaire, 70% of whom were (self-identified) Roma, while 30% were non-Roma. Men were over-represented both in the non-Roma and Roma sub-sample (see Table 1 in Appendix). Most of the non-Roma (69%) respondents had completed at least vocational training school, while 31% of them had at most a primary school education. In the Roma sub-sample one-third of respondents had (at least) vocational qualifications, and two-thirds of them had a maximum of primary school education (see Table 2, Appendix). Nearly two-thirds of the non-Roma and almost half of the Roma respondents had a permanent job: temporary jobs and unemployment were more frequent among the Roma (see Table 3, Appendix). Seventy-three percent of the Roma and 63% of the non-Roma interviewees had a spouse or partner. The average household size was 4.6 individuals in the total sample, being 3.9 persons in the non-Roma and 4.9 persons in the Roma sub-sample.

We examined whether there was a significant difference between the Roma and non-Roma respondents in terms of which destination country they prefer to move to. According to our results, Canada and the United Kingdom are more popular destination countries among Roma, while non-Roma are more likely to move to Germany and to “Other” countries[10] (see Figure 1). Cross-tabulation analysis was used to study the relationship between the chosen destination country and ethnicity (in another study we carried out a regression analysis that proved that ethnicity is associated with the chosen destination country, even when controlling for level of education (Durst – Nyírő forthcoming 2019).

10 We merged all destination countries into the category of “Other countries” except for the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada because of the low number of cases.

Figure 1: *Chosen destination country by ethnicity, N=640*



The survey results confirmed the experience of the ethnographic fieldwork that there is a difference between Roma and non-Roma in terms of the role of kinship networks in the realization of migration. We found that both Roma and non-Roma respondents relied heavily on their social networks in their migration, although non-Roma mostly received help from their acquaintances and friends, while Roma used their family networks. For instance, most of the Roma respondents moved to settlements where they already had family members, while the non-Roma selected settlements where their friends had been living (see Figure 2). Furthermore, most of the Roma interviewees received accommodation from a family member at the beginning of their time abroad, while the majority of non-Roma interviewees stayed at a place provided by their workplace (see Table 4, Appendix). Finally, we found that Roma respondents typically relied on their family for job-seeking, while non-Roma respondents mobilized their friends in order to find their jobs (see Figure 3).

Figure 2: *Distribution of respondents according to whether family members or friends lived in the settlement the respondent arrived at before the respondent moved abroad, N=636*

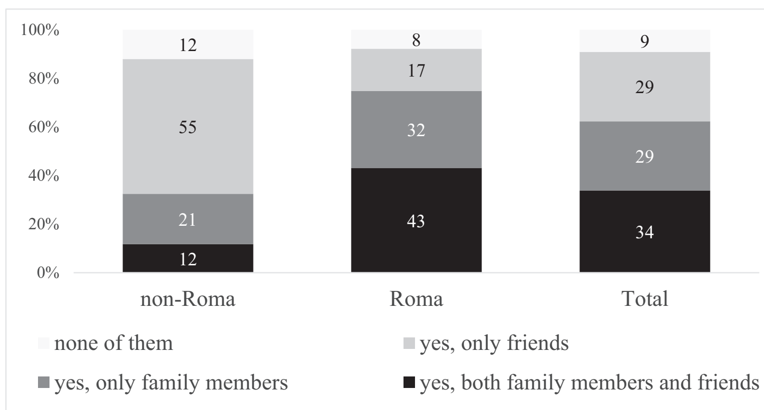
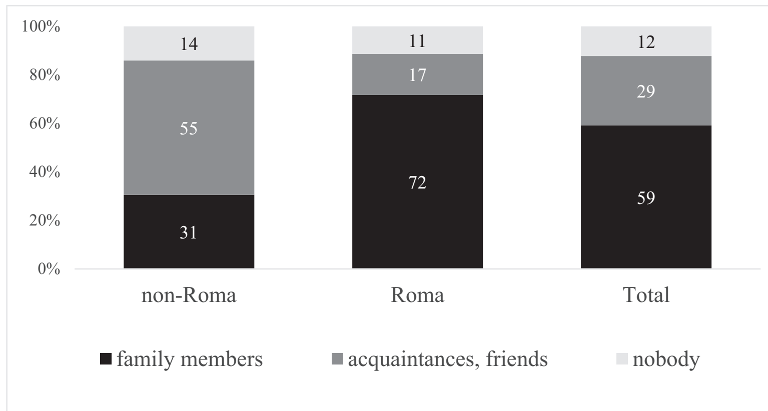
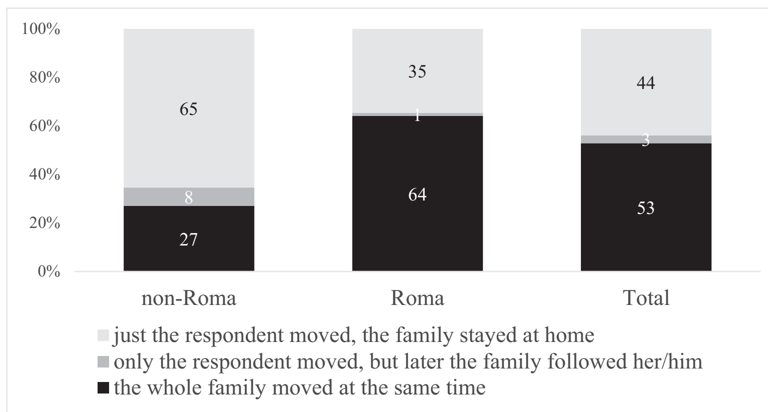


Figure 3: *Distribution of respondents according to who helped them to find a job when they first moved abroad, by ethnicity, N=580*



Another difference between the migration patterns of Roma and non-Roma respondents is that most of the Roma migrants moved abroad with their families, while the majority of non-Roma migrants migrated alone.

Figure 4: *Moving abroad with or without family, by ethnicity (%)*



Regarding the practice of sending remittances, we found that almost the same proportion of non-Roma (69%) and Roma (70%) respondents sent remittances to their home country. However, there were differences between the two sub-samples according to the aim of the remittances, with a significantly higher proportion of non-Roma (40%) sending money to their family members than Roma (31%). Debt repayment was more frequent among Roma respondents (18%) than among non-Roma (9%). Finally, Roma migrants were more likely to send remittances to further their own goals (e.g. home purchase, renovation) compared to non-Roma (44% vs. 35%, respectively) (see Table 5-7, Appendix).

In summary, we found several differences between the migration patterns of Roma and non-Roma migrants. First, regarding different destinations countries; second, Roma respondents mostly relied on their kinship networks in the realization of the migration, while non-Roma migrants received assistance from their acquaintances and friends; and third, their practice of sending remittances were also distinct.

However, as we mentioned earlier, the presented results only describe the first steps of our quantitative research, thus further analysis of the database is needed.

Ethnographic findings

Roma migrants from Peteri with whom we had regular contact through our fieldwork are concentrated in low-wage, low-skilled, labor intensive jobs in a few English urban cities, along with other mobile CEE migrant laborers working in the UK (Ciupijus 2011). For these individuals, "whose bodies are historically marked by their racialized darkness" in their home societies (Grill 2017), moving to the UK provided an escape from ethnic labeling and stigma – although simultaneously exposing them to different categorizations; that is, the inferior label of "Eastern-European migrants" (Grill, 2017) (meaning in many cases, an unskilled, flexible and exploitable work force).

Most of them, even those who had been working in England intermittently during the past few years, offered their labour as agency workers at significantly lower wages than contracted (mainly "native" English) workers on multinational factories' assembly lines in urban cities in the UK (Durst 2018). Part of the social transformation of the "glocalised" (Robertson – White 2007) labour markets in England is that practices of flexibility dominate corporate strategy across many sectors of the economy. At the forefront of these changes is the fast-growing institution of labour-market intermediaries (Enright 2013) that are used by migrant workers to enhance their chances of finding work on an unknown, volatile foreign labour market. For most of our interlocutors, these recruiting, temporary staffing agencies facilitated their mostly temporary but, in some cases, permanent employment – despite the language barrier.

Laló, a 28-year-old man from the segregated neighbourhood of Peteri, can be regarded as a typical low-skilled Roma migrant agency worker with a transnationally mobile life. He finished eight years of schooling and is a father of two young children, aged eight and ten. Laló was twelve when he left the Roma settlement for the first time in his life, for Canada. He had been there with his parents and siblings for two years when his mother decided to come home to look after her terminally ill father. "I think they just missed giving our family a chance," Laló told me when we spoke about his Canadian experience that he still cherishes. When they came home, Laló had to go back into year six of primary school where he had been studying when they left. Local schools in Peteri do not acknowledge school certificates from abroad. Laló, being a big 14-year-old boy, hated going to school and being put back into a class with kids two years younger than him, so his mother arranged for him to be a private pupil. At the age of 18, Laló finished the compulsory eight

years of primary school, thanks to a governmental initiative supporting adult education. He went on to do seasonal jobs locally, got married and had children.

In 2010, when many of his Roma kin and friends from the settlement started to move to Canada again, this time in massive numbers, he decided to join them. In the transnational space (Glick Schiller 2009) created by the constant communication through social media (Facebook, Messenger and Skype chats) between migrants and family members left behind, his aspirations for a better life emerged, to be achieved either in Canada or in England, where many Roma from Peteri had carried on their sojourns after coming home or being deported from Toronto. This second time he spent two years in Toronto and saved enough money from combining "off-the-books" (Venkatesh 2006) casual work with welfare – as many people of a marginal position do all over the world (MacDonald 1994) – to renovate his dilapidated house before he came home. "The heart pulls most of us back home," he recalled, explaining why they returned to Peteri.

After a few months, when the family had spent all their savings from Canada, they went on to Nottingham in England. When we asked him why Nottingham, he replied, as if it went without saying, that: "It's obvious: one goes to cities where one has kin, where the rent (for private apartments) is affordable, and most importantly, where there are jobs." He was first recruited by the agency that his cousin introduced him to and the agency sent him to a pizza factory. But after three months the factory gave up all agency workers, keeping only its own contracted workers as there was low demand on the market for its product. Then he went to Nelson where his other cousin lived, who introduced him to his local agency. There, in a "biscuit factory," he worked as a packer on the assembly line, along with many other Hungarian co-workers. He only managed to work for four days a week, whenever the agency called him, but after a few months, the "work stalled again." Even if Laló moans about the situation that "in England there is only seasonal work," he still considers working there much better than in Hungary.

We met Laló a few weeks ago when he went home to Peteri for a while since his work in the biscuit factory had come to a halt. Laló tried to find a job nearby, so as to be close to his family. He went to Bosch, which had recently become the biggest employer in the whole region, to work on the assembly line. But he could not endure more than four days there. "England is hundreds of times better," he reasoned to me about why he left Bosch.

> *In England there is equality. Over there, when my Polish co-workers once tried to call us "stinking Gypsies" (büdös cigány) and started to bully us, I reported them to my boss, and they got a warning. The next day they apologized. Here in Miskolc [where the factory is situated], a Gypsy is never right. Also, in England, they treat their workers better. Here at Bosch, in your twelve-hour shift, you have two five-minute smoke breaks plus one half-an-hour lunch break. There are women who faint on the assembly line. The ambulance is there daily. And for enduring all that*

> *work, you get a salary of 120,000 forints (appr. 400 euros). You earn four times more for less work under better conditions in England.*

Lależó, like many of his Roma fellows, says that if there were opportunities locally to obtain a decent job with a reasonable salary that one could support a family with, people would not go abroad to work.

> *Why would I go?! Everybody likes to stay around his family, help his parents in their old age. But we have no other choice but to work abroad. It's not only that you can earn four times more in England. But it is also how they treat you. Okay, there is racism everywhere in the world. But in England it is not so bad as it is in Hungary. In England, you are equal, they do not care whether you are darker: you are not a Gypsy here but a Hungarian, a human being. They are only interested in whether you can work hard or not.*

Living and working in England for many years, Laló, like many other Roma return migrants, can no longer imagine himself in the "modern sweatshop" (*modern robot világa*) as he calls Bosch. He intends to carry on with his trans-regionally mobile workers' life, meaning labouring in England for five to six months a year while he is "compelled to do that" (*rákényszerül*).

Unlike Laló, some older Roma non-migrants still consider Bosch their only opportunity to find employment. They argue that this is the only local company that offers a chance to make a livelihood even to unskilled people and especially to Roma, who are not likely to find any employment elsewhere in the region because of their low level of schooling and dark skin. In contrast, many return migrants, including Laló, underwent a perceptual shift as a result of working abroad. They have greater expectations now about how a human being needs to be treated, whether Roma or non-Roma.

This self-developmental trait can be traced in the narrative of a few local members of Laló's kinship network from Peteri. Karol, a middle-aged woman of four children, believes that the Roma have "developed since they started to migrate," for the first time in their lives, as they have experienced "what it means to be treated equally, as a human being, and not as an inferior Gypsy." She went to Toronto in 2011 with her husband and kids following her sister's family, who helped them during the first few weeks by accommodating them and by introducing her husband to work in the same carrot factory at which her brother-in-law was a day-laborer.

Karol recounts her family's positive experience during their two-year stay in Toronto.

> *I think that by going to Canada we put something in the hands of our children. First, they learnt English in the school over there. But, even more importantly, by showing them that there is a bigger, different, and better world outside our contained Gypsy settlement, their eyes have opened. They can now compare the life here in Peteri and over there in Canada. They now dare to aspire to have*

> *a vocation with which they will try to find a job abroad. Maybe in England or Germany.*

Nowadays, in the Roma settlement of Peteri, many youngsters, among them Karol's two older children, students at nearby vocational secondary schools, agree with Laló that workplaces such as Bosch do not offer a reasonable opportunity for people who would like to get ahead in life. These teenagers, themselves having spent 1.5-2 years in Toronto on average, are pushed by their parents to obtain vocational skills so they will have a future. They have started to develop bigger aspirations, thanks not only to their own experience abroad but also that of their relatives with whom they are in everyday contact through social media. Karol's daughter plans to be a chef, and her 18-year-old brother a welder. After finishing their vocational training in the nearby town's secondary school and working for one or two years in Hungary to get work experience, they both plan to move to live and work abroad – the boy in Germany and the girl in England. When we asked the girl why she had chosen England, she showed us some pictures of her uncle's house in Liverpool, saying that they had managed to create a much nicer life and even support their daughter's further education by working hard. A life that one cannot even dream of in Peteri.

A similar, frequently told story in the settlement among the local Roma is the success in higher education of the daughter of Laló's relative, Robi. The story of this case has travelled throughout the whole settlement as a good example of "what a Gypsy kid can achieve" if they are in an accepting social environment. Most of Laló's kinship network seem to know, even those who have never actually met Robi's family, how successful their migration has been.

I have now known Robi and his family for years. During my fieldwork in the English city to which they relocated their family to work in a factory to build a livelihood and create a better future for their children, it was obvious to me that they use the strategy of ethnic invisibility cleverly in public spaces in England (see for similar experiences Nagy 2017). Being aware of the distorted media images about CEE Roma migration (Kóczé 2017) – called "Romaphobia" by many scholars (Tremlett et al. 2017) – Robi and his family play up their Hungarian identity in England in certain situations when they need to get better treatment. The following story is a case in point.

One day we accompanied them to the gym in their English city's immigrant neighbourhood, which is populated, among others, by many Romanian Roma migrants. They asked us to help them enrol in the gym. The receptionist found their darker skin complexion similar to that of the Romanian Roma, some of whom are members of the gym, and inquired as to whether they were Roma too. "No, no, no Roma, Hungarian," explained Robi and his wife, almost immediately to the receptionist, articulating loudly their nationalities. Being a Hungarian is of much higher value in England than

being Roma (which word is often confused in English people's minds with the word Romanian; see Guy 2003, Durst 2016).[11]

Robi's daughter educational success, the exact details of which people back in Peteri do not know about, was due partly to Robi's strategic planning as to which school he sent his children to. After learning from their other migrant Roma friends' and neighbours' bad experiences about how "Hungarian Gypsy kids are badly treated by their English teachers in the local school (which is full of the children of migrants) when they are in group," Robi and his wife did not let their kids attend the local school but found another one, although much further from their residence, that welcomed their children as the first Hungarian kids in their institution. The teenage children learnt English fluently and left that secondary school with good experiences. Robi's daughter, Marika, a 17-year-old girl, is continuing her studies at a BTEC secondary school on a business course, which may lead to further education. "This is the first time we had a Hungarian girl in this school," said her form teacher with a kind smile when we accompanied Marika with her mum to a recent parent's evening. "Marika has established a very good reputation for Hungarian pupils. She is industrious, proactive in her studies, and she herself did all the research necessary for her university application next year."

In Peteri, however, non-Roma migrants only got the "rumours public" (Harney 2006, Humphris 2017, Durst 2018) about how successful Robi's daughter is. These stories, mostly heard of through Facebook, or in rare cases due to first-hand experiences on the occasion of personal visits, have been circulating persistently among the Roma in the settlement. They inspire and develop the imaginations of the younger generation of local Roma (migrants and non-migrants alike), encouraging them to form aspirations that they have not before imagined: the thought that such success could be a real possibility for Roma with a poorly educated family background.

Using Sen's (1999) concept of development, we can interpret Laló's and his Roma network's recurring migration (facilitated by the support of their kinship and the labour demand of their destination regions) as an enhanced capability of mobility, and an increasing practice of agency. Their very act of geographical movement, especially trans-nationally, or rather trans-regionally (recently, between Peteri and one or two English cities where they have relatives), against all structural constraints, restrictive mobility regimes (Glick Schiller – Salazar 2013) and despite their lack of financial resources and command of English, can be considered a form of development.

Agency here is understood as both the intention and the practise of acting in one's own self-interest and the interest of one's family or household (Castree et al. 2004, cited by Rogaly 2009, Emirbayer – Mische 1998). In the case of our low-skilled Roma

11 It should be noted though, that not all Hungarian Roma can resort to the tactics of ethnic invisibility. In this very same English city a more traditional Vlach Roma group from South Hungary reside in the close vicinity of a Romanian Roma kin network. The latter are infamous in the neighbourhood for their informal income-generating practices. Because of this particular, denigrated residential address, some highly educated members of this southern Hungarian Roma group complained to us that even in England they couldn't escape the stigma of being Roma.

migrant research participants who live in Peteri, a local society "in which the future has become synonymous with geographical mobility" (Narotzky – Besnier 2014:2), one's agency is deeply connected to one's spatial mobility.

As this case study shows, we can regard labour migration as "an act of hope" (Pine 2014) for people struggling with poverty, such as those in our studied Roma kinship networks. The latter believe that with the blocked field of opportunities in their homeland, the only way to achieve a better life both for their households but especially for their children is to pursue a strategy of cross-border mobile work. We argue that their very act of moving not only involves resilience (Acuna 2016, Levine –Rasky 2016) but is also a small development in itself: an enhancement of their own and perhaps also their network's capacity of aspiring to escape poverty and get ahead in life.

We believe that the thesis that (increasing) mobility in itself can be considered development (see also de Haas 2008) is valid in our case, even if we are aware of the fact that Central Eastern European Roma's mobility is "contained" (van Baar 2017), both in terms of the Canadian asylum-seeking (Ciaschi 2018) and in the European free labour movement context (van Baar 2017, Yildiz – De Genova 2017, Nagy 2018), due to selective mobility regimes. Our Roma research participants' geographical movement as an act of hope is a result of their choice of a mobility strategy – even if this choice is "constrained". Widmer et al. (2010: 114) draw attention to the fact that all seemingly free decisions result from adapted choices within a system of constraints. This is particularly true in the case of our low-skilled Roma migrants whose decisions to migrate are adapted choices to the shrinking opportunity field in their home country.

For non-Roma Hungarians from Peteri, trans-regional mobility, or working abroad (as guest workers), is also a constrained choice, similar to that of many other precarious Hungarian migrants (Németh – Váradi 2018, this issue; Melegh et al. 2018, this issue). However, their migration trajectory is different, and so are the characteristics of their migration network and the outcomes of their geographical movement.

Zoltan's trans-regional work-mobility trajectory can be considered typical in Peteri among the skilled, non-Roma Hungarian men. Zoltan is a 41-year-old carpenter and has completed vocational secondary school. He has been working in Germany for the past three years as a skilled labourer at a local firm in the construction industry. He found his job with the help of an old friend who had worked for the same company. He has been married for 25 years to a saleswoman from Peteri, and they have one daughter, aged 19.

Recalling the reasons he was "compelled" *(rákényszerült)* to find a job abroad to us in an interview, he said that he did it for his daughter.

> *I and my wife concluded three years ago that we must do something to be able to support our daughter's secondary education. That was when I called up my friend to help me to find a job in Germany. We decided that my wife should*

> *stay at home to look after our daughter while she is studying; it is the only way that working abroad is worth it financially… Here in Hungary you cannot earn enough to keep a family. And my daughter's high school was demanding... It was a medical vocational school, where teachers and your classmates expect you to dress properly; there were school trips, extra curriculum expenses, and the monthly travel cost from Peteri to Miskolc [where the school is based]. If one added it all up, the 130,000-forint salary that I could earn in Hungary was enough for nothing. Since I am the man of the house, I had to sacrifice myself for our daughter's future.*

Zoltan has been working for the same German firm for the last three years, six days a week, for 8 - 10 hours a day. He earns 1500 euros (450,000 forints) per month – almost three times more than he used to earn at home, but less than his "native" German workmates earn for the same labour. Out of this sum, he monthly remits 1000 euros (300,000 forints) to his family. His daily menial work is tedious and hard to endure, his housing is nothing compared to his family house in Peteri. He shares a room with two other Hungarian workmates who are there for similar reasons as Zoltan. On their only spare day, Sunday, they do not want to do anything but cook, eat and have a rest. Zoltan can only get a one-week holiday once every four months, when he goes home to Peteri to see his family. "I do not carry on with this working abroad, away from my family, from any sense of pleasure *(jókedvemből)*," he said to us last time we met, a few days after Christmas when he was back home for a couple of weeks due to the winter closure of his company.

> *I do it for my family to get ahead. Since I've been working abroad we have managed to renovate our house and bought a new car. But I do it mainly for my daughter's future, for her to have a better life than we have. Although she misses me, she knows that it is out of necessity, a constraint (kényszer). Yes, it is a constrained choice (kényszerű választás) of my wife and me. I must take this job in Germany which pays three times more than I can earn in Hungary if we do not want our daughter to have such a hard life as we have had. What can one do if he has no other choice but to work abroad where his labour is decently paid? I cannot imagine myself coming back to Hungary and working again for ten hours per day for 130,000 forints. And I am pessimistic about this situation changing in the near future. I am not alone in this opinion. So many people leave Peteri to go abroad, be they Roma or non-Roma, to create a better livelihood for their families.*

The downside of Zoltan's working abroad, in his account, is that he feels that he and his wife have become alienated for the last three years.

> *It is not the same between us as it used to be before I left. Even my daughter feels this. It was, however, our mutual choice, so I am hopeful that my marriage will survive this period, me being away. One has nothing more important than their child and her future... I'm happy to see that my daughter is making progress with her studies; she is now in higher education, training as a medical masseuse. She*

> *sees her future as working abroad later, as she says, because with her qualification she can earn six times more than in Hungary. I understand her intentions. Since she has studied that much and since I have invested so much money in her studies, and I have sacrificed myself and my marriage for this, I would like to see that it is worth it. That she can get ahead in life.*

Zoltan's labour migration strategy can be considered typical among the many Hungarian skilled laborers in Peteri. For them, labour migration is a constrained choice – a deliberate and conscious strategy, that is, however, strongly limited by structural constraints. Namely, by the lack of jobs with a decent salary in the proximity of the home town, enough for one to support a family according to family members' aspirations. Zoltan's and his other guest-worker mates' remittance-sending strategy aims to contribute to the financial betterment of their nuclear families and to facilitate their children's further education. In their narratives about their migration history, the word "sacrifice" comes up often. This is a household livelihood strategy which has a very narrow developmental effect, and mainly in a financial sense. It cannot also be considered a transnational life in the sense that recent migration studies argue. Namely, that in the new globalized world there is a "transnational turn" and the lives of migrants are increasingly characterized by circulation and simultaneous commitment to two societies and to adopting transnational identities (Glick Schiller et al. 1991, Guarnizo et al. 2003, Vertovec 1999, De Haas 2005). For Zoltan, as for many of his local friends in similar social circumstances, Germany represents a place where they do not want to integrate but rather to work to earn enough money to make a better life for their families they have left behind. However, this household-level financial advancement ("development" in the narrow sense, as international financial institutions understand it) does not seem to lead to development in the migration-sending community level. Not only due to its huge social price in respect of the decline of his marital relationships. Zoltan, along with his other co-guest workers, also do not plan to invest in any local businesses or enterprises at home except in his children's education (however, his daughter also plans to work abroad after getting qualifications in Hungary).

Zoltan's case, along with that of many other Hungarian skilled labourer migrants from Peteri, supports another observation. Namely, that the nature of the migration-development nexus is fundamentally contingent on more general developmental conditions in the sending region (De Haas 2008). In other words, development in migrant-sending localities is a prerequisite for return and investment (De Haas 2008). As Zoltan put it: "There is no point in investing in a life at home in Peteri. I cannot imagine myself coming back and working for that small amount of money again. I do not see any sense in returning. Only if the situation and the economy improves. But I am rather pessimistic in this regard. I think we are the victims of the system in Hungary."

Migrants as "agents of development"? Remittance-sending behaviour in Peteri

As we have shown earlier, according to our survey results most migrants from Peteri send remittances to their hometown. However, there are differences among Roma and non-Roma remitters' practices regarding how this money is spent. On the basis of our interview data we can add there are also differences in the amount of regular or less regular monthly remittances.

From our ethnographic fieldwork it is clear that migrants' remittance-sending patterns are linked to their migration patterns. First, to the conditions they experience in their destination locality (see also Glick Schiller 2009). Second, to the characteristics of their migration (for example, whether they moved with their nuclear or extended family, or they left behind other family members).

In Peteri, according to our interview data, non-Roma Hungarian skilled migrant workers, similarly to Zoltan, send remittances home of significantly higher amounts than Roma low-skilled mobile workers. While the members of the former group regularly send most of their monthly salaries back to Peteri to their wives (on average, as the wives we interviewed reported, around three hundred thousand forints), the low-skilled Roma, the majority of whom move together with their whole families, send only small amounts home. The conditions they experience in their destination countries do not make it possible for them to remit regularly. In Canada, many of them spent huge amounts of money on lawyers to help them navigate the very complicated asylum-claiming legal process. In England, unlike in Germany, employers do not provide them with accommodation, therefore they need to spend a good portion of their salary on renting a flat. Although many of them are entitled to housing benefit due to their low income, this form of government aid has constantly been cut back for migrants in recent years (see also Greenfields – Dagilyte 2018). Therefore, it is no wonder that, unlike the non-Roma, low-skilled Roma migrants do not remit on a regular basis but mostly only to help in crisis situations concerning their non-migrant extended families (for medicine or hospital treatment, to buy wood for heating a house during a cold winter, towards the cost of surgery of an ill child within the kinship, etc.). However, those Roma in Canada who plan to come back in the near future to the settlement send regular smaller amounts (less than one hundred thousand forints every few months) to a trusted close family member's account (mainly their parents') for the purpose of renovating their own houses on their return.

For non-Roma skilled laborers, their remittance-sending practices have developmental effects, but mainly in financial terms, associated with materially getting ahead. Their families use the remittances to refurbish their houses, educate their children, repay debt and increase their consumption (see also Váradi 2016). However, this material advancement comes in some cases at a huge price. Fathers who are away for three to five years, and who visit home only for one week every eight weeks, can only take part in the lives of their children and wives through regular Skype conversations. Divorces occur due

to these long-distance relationships. As one of the local Hungarians said to us when we asked whether he was planning to work abroad, he would never do that without his family, as "it is like the life of the lorry drivers. Out of ten, six are divorced."

For low-skilled returning Roma migrants, not only is their migration pattern different but also its financial outcome. In a financial sense their transnational mobility is not as profitable and rewarding as it is in the case of non-Roma Hungarians. Many of them say that they feel that they "are stuck," or "spinning around in one place" (with their "constant wandering" *(kóborlás)*, referring to their recurring work abroad. The majority of them, however, mention that they would never have dreamt of owning a house if they had not gone to Canada (or England). They all stated that from low-paid, menial wage labour one cannot send home remittances to other extended family members, or only in situations of crisis. However, one should also see that their trans-regionally mobility strategy helps them and their close relatives to get by in the shrinking opportunity field in Hungary.

Conclusion: Exploring the migration-development nexus in Peteri

Based on our empirical findings, we argue for the differential developmental effect of migration regarding Roma and non-Roma migrants or trans-regionally mobile workers in the context of the small rural town of Peteri. Our survey results support the hypothesis that local differentiation (in our case, based on ethnicity) between different social groups has a significant effect on the pattern and organization of their diverging migration trajectories. We found several differences between the migration patterns of the Roma and non-Roma migrants in our studied locality. First, the two groups choose different destination countries. Second, Roma respondents from Peteri mostly rely on their kinship networks in the realization of their migration, while non-Roma migrants receive assistance from their acquaintances and friends. Third, their practices of sending remittances are also distinct.

In addition, our ethnographic findings, through exploring both the causes and consequences of the local population's migration, have delineated the mechanisms through which different migration patterns produce different impacts at the individual, household and local community level.

While our findings support the differential migration-development interaction thesis, they reject purely pessimistic developmental ideas common among researchers who study Roma return migrants in residentially segregated sending communities in post-socialist Eastern and Central Europe (for Romania see Szabó 2018, Anghel 2016, Horváth – Kiss 2015). Our North Hungarian case study draws attention to the fact that the impact of migration in the case of poor Roma migrants and their non-migrant networks is more complex than suggesting it only served to reproduce their poverty and inequality. Along with some prominent labour geographers' attempts (Rogaly 2009) to focus on the low-key and often invisible ways by which people with very

limited material means practise agency and rework their positions to make a more viable life (Butler 2004) – one, that is in their view, worth living –, we have shown that even those migrants who returned to the segregated Roma settlement in Peteri, with just enough savings to renovate their dilapidated houses, and whose migration stories appear unsuccessful in the eyes of their local mayor, have experienced a kind of development. Their enhanced practice of agency – the very act of the geographical movement –, especially trans-nationally, or rather trans-regionally, against all structural constraints, and restrictive mobility regimes, coupled with a lack of financial resources and command of English, can be considered a form of development.

However, we must add that, up till now, only on an individual level can we see social development, and only in the case of a small fragment of the local Roma community. This development can best be tracked on a cognitive level as a perceptual shift, as the cases of Laló's and Karol's teenage children with their growing "aspirations window" have demonstrated.

On the contrary, for a larger segment of the Roma community, going on to generate income or work in Canada and in England, this was just another workplace where they did not even learn the language, and their children were too small to benefit from a more inclusive and equal education system. These Roma migrants' social interaction was confined to the circle of Hungarian, and, in particular, Roma migrants and they did not benefit from their migration in more than a narrow financial sense – if at all. (This same statement applies to those non-Roma Hungarian men who have been working in Germany during the last few years).

On the downside, concomitant to the cross-border or trans-regional mobility of Roma families, is that much of their children's primary education was interrupted. These children, faced with the lack of a national re-integration program, have dropped out of school, finishing only eight years of study at an older age, if at all. However, we might say cautiously on the basis of our interviews that the Roma children who migrated together with their families seem to have paid less of a price for the move as regards their psychological well-being than those who were left behind by their migrant parents.

From our empirical findings, explored in this paper, a couple of statements from the current academic literature about the nexus between migration and development can be supported. First, that the nexus should be analyzed at different analytical levels as it is muti-layered, and multi-directional, and that the transfer of resources should be explored as a two-way flow (Delgado Wise – Covarrubias 2009, Faist 2009). Exploring the consequences of Peteri outmigration from a global perspective which addresses the movement of people and profits across national borders (Glick Schiller 2009), it is clear that the Peteri migrants, be they low-skilled Roma or skilled non-Roma laborers, are not only remitters but also contribute to the development of the receiving countries "through their capital accumulations... by their transference of their 'surplus population'... as an overall cheapening of the workforce" (Delgado Wise

– Covarrubias 2009: 85). Our case studies have shown that one of the roles that Peteri plays in the global economy in recent years is providing cheap and flexible, mobile laborers for global assembly lines.

Second, the stories recited above can also be read as a case in point that underdevelopment is a catalyst for migration to developed countries (Delgado Wise – Covarrubias 2009). However, we would not call it "forced migration," as Delgado Wise – Covarrubias denominate it, nor would we label it "involuntary mobility," as some anthropologists do (among others, Nagy – Oude-Breuil 2015). Rather, we would view it as a result of "constrained choice."

On the regional and national level, the mass outmigration of locals from Peteri (along with many Hungarians) has indirectly contributed to the increase in labour demand and therefore of income for those who have stayed in their hometown. As the local Roma recall, there was no precedent to what is happening now: "Bosch sends free buses to almost every nearby settlement for its commuters, even if there are only two workers in one village, as there is such a shortage of laborers." Many non-migrant Roma who used to previously complain about not being able to find any jobs on the formal local labour market because of their low level of schooling and dark skin (a hint as to the labor market discrimination against Roma in Hungary, see Kertesi 2005) are now employed by Bosch, or currently work as unskilled day laborers in the construction industry.

On the local level, in the settlement of Peteri, out-migration, or rather trans-regional work mobility, similarly to informal income-generating practices, has a "buffer function" (Portes 2010) in terms of alleviating poverty, mainly through migrants' remittances. This is true for both Roma and non-Roma, skilled and unskilled, returned and current mobile workers' households.

All in all, we conclude that in the context of the economically disadvantaged rural town of Peteri, migration has a different developmental effect on the groups of its most numerous migrants, the precarious Roma and non-Roma households. Non-Roma Hungarian skilled labourer, the so called new European guest-workers, through their regular monthly remittances, justify their stays abroad as helping their families to get ahead, but mostly in a material sense. In contrast, in the community of the low-skilled Roma we see some real developmental impact in the sense of increased capabilities (Sen 1999) and, on the cognitive level, in the sense of empowerment (Appadurai 2004). Return Roma migrants seem to achieve much less migration-induced financial advancement than their non-Roma skilled local counterpart. Unlike in other countries (for Romania see Tesar 2016, Toma et al. 2017), in Peteri, no conspicuous houses have been built to show their return migrant dweller's migration-induced increased status. Returned Roma trans-nationally mobile workers have not (yet) managed to move out of their segregated neighbourhood, either, unlike successful migrants in other CEE countries.

However, we consider the low-skilled Roma's very act of moving (out of their confined, geographically and socially segregated settlement on the outskirts of Peteri) not only as a form of resilience (Clave-Mercier – Olivera 2018, Durst – Nagy 2018) but as a kind of development – in the sense that the former are increasingly putting into practise their freedom (albeit constrained) to choose where to live and work, and that they have taken a step towards enhancing their own and also their network's capacity to aspire. Having said that, migration has not only empowered Roma individuals to dare to aspire higher. There is also the hope that the enhanced aspirations of return migrant teenagers, through their networks which comprise their migrant and non-migrant kin and friends, and which are reinforced by their everyday contact through social media, might contribute to the strengthening of their community's capacity to aspire (Appadurai 2004). If this happens, there is a chance that these young adults will indeed be able to "get ahead," and to escape poverty should socio-political and economic circumstances change in Hungary.

Appendix

Table 1: *Distribution of respondents by gender and ethnicity (%)*

	non-Roma	Roma	Total
	N=190	N=452	N=642
women	28,9	38,5	35,7
men	71,1	61,5	64,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 2: *Distribution of respondents by education and ethnicity (%)*

<table>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>non-Roma</td><td>Roma</td><td>Total</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td></td><td>N=189</td><td>N=452</td><td>N=641</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">no more than primary school education</td><td>less than primary school education</td><td>4,8</td><td>9,1</td><td>7,8</td></tr>
<tr><td>primary school education</td><td>25,9</td><td>57,7</td><td>48,4</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">at least vocational education</td><td>vocational qualification</td><td>51,3</td><td>28,1</td><td>34,9</td></tr>
<tr><td>at least high school education</td><td>18,0</td><td>5,1</td><td>8,9</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="2">Total</td><td>100,0</td><td>100,0</td><td>100,0</td></tr>
</table>

Table 3: *Distribution of respondents according to whether they have a job and by ethnicity (%)*

	non-Roma	Roma	Total
	N=177	N=418	N=595
permanent job	66,1	49,3	54,3
temporary job	14,1	19,9	18,2
no job	19,8	30,9	27,6
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 4: *Distribution of respondents according to who provided them with accommodation when they first moved abroad, by ethnicity (%)*

	non-Roma	Roma	Total
	N=180	N=437	N=617
family members	25,6	66,6	54,6
acquaintances, friends	6,1	9,2	8,3
workplace	46,1	11,2	21,4
rented apartment	20,6	7,1	11,0
other	1,7	5,9	4,7
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 5: *Sending remittances to accomplish their own goals (e.g. house renovation) by ethnicity (%)*

	non-Roma	Roma	Total
	N=190	N=452	N=642
no	64,7	55,8	58,4
yes	35,3	44,3	41,6
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 6: *Sending remittances to family members by ethnicity (%)*

	non-Roma	Roma	Total
	N=190	N=452	N=642
no	60,0	69,2	66,5
yes	40,0	30,8	33,5
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

Table 7: *Sending remittances to pay debts by ethnicity (%)*

	non-Roma	Roma	Total
	N=190	N=452	N=642
no	91,1	82,1	84,7
yes	8,9	17,9	15,3
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0

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Returnees and their neighbors: Migration of the Romanian Roma, networks, social distance, and local development[1]

Stefánia Toma – László Fosztó
s.toma@ispmn.gov.ro, l.foszto@ispmn.gov.ro

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Abstract: Migration has a significant impact on the home communities of the migrants through financial and social remittances. There is an ongoing debate about the effects of migration on local development between proponents of approaches inspired by "development optimism" on the one hand, and those that are focused more on the negative consequences. Our study is focused on the ways mobile Roma are repositioning themselves within two ethnically mixed localities in Transylvania. Returnees take advantage, reorient and navigate between local social categories, challenging them to rely on the resources at their disposal to improve the situation of their families and communities. Social networks facilitate migration and also serve as support for the renegotiation of social categories at home. We distinguish between two main patterns of network development. On the one hand there are localities where network ties crosscut ethnic boundaries and facilitate intense exchanges and communication between different segments of local society. In the other case, network ties tend to be tight between members of the same ethnic category, but ties that cut through ethnic boundaries remain weak. We discuss the implications of these patterns for the local development paths of the home localities of the migrants.

Keywords: Migration, Networks and Categories, Social Distance, Local Development, Roma in Romania

Introduction

The demise of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the expansion of the European Union in the region created the conditions for a new wave of migration. Emerging east-west migration have contributed to a renewed scholarly and public discussion not only about the future of the EU as a political and social project, but also about the impact of massive population mobility on social inequality and development in the eastern part of the continent. During these debates, the demographic and socioeconomic development of the states on the eastern

1 The research leading to the present publication results from the research effort "MigRom – The Immigration of Romanian Roma to Western Europe: Causes, effects, and future engagement strategies," a project funded by the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme under the call "Dealing with diversity and cohesion: the case of the Roma in the European Union" (GA319901). We are grateful to two anonymous reviewers as well as to Judit Durst and Krisztina Németh for their editorial comments and patience.

periphery of the EU, Romania among them, is rarely presented in an optimistic light (Horváth – Kiss 2016).

This developmental pessimism dominates most of the analyses regarding the migration and return of the most impoverished Eastern European social groups, Roma among them. A large part of the scholarly literature concerning the migration of Roma highlights the limitations of European citizenship regarding the effective protection of the rights of the most vulnerable during their sojourns within the European Union (van Baar, Ivasiuc, and Kreide 2019), and demonstrates that their social mobility is stalled in their destinations and that their exclusion continues or even intensifies after they return home (Crețan – Powell 2018). Moreover, there is cumulative evidence of the failure of policies promoted by the EU to combat discrimination and facilitate social inclusion or community development among the Roma "on the ground" in the context of their home countries (FRA 2018). Most of this literature highlights how persisting social exclusion of the Roma hinders socioeconomic development in Romania and has only contributed to the "racialization" of the Roma (see Yıldız – De Genova 2018).

In this article we challenge the approaches that argue that the intra-European mobility of the Roma has only worsened their exclusion by showing that the effect of mobility is multidimensional and goes beyond mere economic changes and exchanges. Focusing mostly on a comparative discussion of two ethnically mixed localities in Transylvania, we argue that migration and return have far more diverse local effects due to a specific combination of economic and non-economic factors that are able to produce social transformations. We highlight the role of non-economic factors, such as hierarchically organized ethnic categories, the social distance between these categories, and the existence or scarcity of social networks and exchanges that crosscut ethnic boundaries, in order to show how they also shape the different paths of local development. We propose a typology of the development paths in ethnically mixed localities, aiming at creating more nuanced approach to addressing changes in social relations induced by migration. The empirical data presented here emerged from the MigRom research project (see Matras – Leggio 2018).

The paper is structured as follows: first, we present the research design and provide a short literature review about the existing research and quest for conceptual tools for our analysis. We then introduce the data from the field-sites, followed by a discussion of the findings.

Research design and methods

The ethnographic and statistical data presented in this study come from the MigRom project. As the Romanian partner of this collaborative project we selected five localities – three medium-size towns and two villages, covering different regions of Romania – in order to investigate the local effects of migration of the

Roma communities. We employed mixed methodology, using both quantitative (surveys) and qualitative (ethnographic fieldwork and conducted qualitative interviews) research between 2014 and 2016 in all the localities.

We designed a survey using two questionnaires. First, we used a household survey to elicit basic demographic data and present questions related to the migration experiences. This form was used in as many households as possible.[2] Second, on a sample of Roma households we applied a more detailed questionnaire about income types and spending in the households, remittances, utilities, housing conditions, migration history and intentions, destination countries, social networks, and relations with local administration. This questionnaire was carried out on a sample of the majority population in the two villages as a control group – including an additional block of questions on social distance, everyday attitudes and contact between members of different ethnic groups. The fieldwork for the survey was organized during the winter months (November-February) to ensure we could reach migrants involved in circular migration. We worked closely with both local Roma and non-Roma research assistants at every phase of the research. We followed the same principles as in the case of the majority sample regarding eliciting attitudes towards the Roma.[3] This study is focused on the two villages from Transylvania.

Literature review

While there are recurrent discussions about the migration–development nexus and different approaches fluctuate between developmental optimism and pessimism, it is important to identify how additional resources brought in by mobility are distributed and invested (de Haas 2010). It is worth considering the classic example of the half-full or half-empty glass, and identifying how local society pours and filters “the liquid” (material and non-material resources) through the channels of social relations. Development, broadly defined, is the cumulative result of social changes through which improvements in the economic and social context can be observed at a local level, and in which different types of resources are mobilized. The local articulation of social change depends both on local social divisions and the context in which it occurs. Ethnic categories historically play an important role in the production and maintenance of the inequalities between different segments of local society (Roma/local majority).

In terms of conceptualizing the role of categories in producing and maintaining social inequality, the work of Charles Tilly has inspired recent theoretical

2 In the villages we tried to undertake a community census, but we can only approximate the size of the Roma population in both cases as we could not reach those households whose members were abroad for a longer period of time. Thus we collected data on 1041 persons in Baratca and 672 in Bighal. In our reports and articles we use pseudonyms for the localities to protect the identity of the communities.

3 We are grateful to our research assistants and research participants in all localities for the help they provided during these months and for accepting us into their day-to-day lives.

discussions. Tilly summarized the structure of the main elements of his relational theory of inequality[4] in a short article published in Anthropological Theory:

> Controllers of valuable resources who are pursuing exploitation or opportunity hoarding commonly invent or borrow categorical pairs, installing them at dividing lines between greater and lesser beneficiaries from products of those resources. In this broad sense, inequality by gender, race, ethnicity, class, religion, citizenship, lineage, and many other categorical principles follows common causal patterns. Explanation of inequality and its changes must therefore concentrate on identifying combinations and sequences of causal mechanisms – notably exploitation, opportunity hoarding, emulation, and adaptation – within episodes of social interaction. (Tilly 2001: 368)

For the purpose of our study, as well as more generally for migration studies, the concept of opportunity hoarding provides an important theoretical point of entry. Rogers Brubaker suggested in his critical review of Tilly's theory that opportunity hoarding by "categorical bounded networks" should be further refined:

> [T]he notion of "categorically bounded networks" conceals a tension, joining elements with quite different logics that may work separately in practice. Categories are defined by commonality, networks by connectedness. Categories are classes of equivalent elements; networks are sets of relationships. Category members are not necessarily connected to one another, and relationally connected people need not belong to the same category. Definitionally positing "categorically bounded networks" as the agents of opportunity hoarding elides the difference between network-based and category-based modes of social closure and forecloses the question of whether, when, and how categories of difference are involved in insiders' efforts to monopolize goods and opportunities. (Brubaker 2015: 16)

Many forms of categorical exclusion were delegitimized in most of the societies of the Western world (and beyond) during the second part of the twentieth century; formal social mechanisms which produce or maintain inequality based on categories like sex, ethnicity/race, and religion are illegal in all European countries today. However, one particular form of categorical discrimination has remained largely unchallenged: this is discrimination based on citizenship (Brubaker 2015: 45).

A large part of the literature about the recent mobility of the Roma has its focus at this level: it discusses issues connected to the process of European enlargement, the extension of EU citizenship, and the consequence of this in core EU countries. Several thematic issues of journals and an edited volume have covered the issues of the emergence of European policies and the local context of Roma migration with particular focus on the destination countries (Clough Marinaro – Sigona 2011;

4 A full elaboration of this theory may be found in Tilly's book Durable Inequality (1998).

Sigona – Vermeersch 2012; Nedelcu – Ciobanu 2016; Yıldız – De Genova 2018; Asztalos Morell, Greenfields – Smith 2018; van Baar, Ivasiuc – Kreide 2019). There is broad agreement that the European Union follows the blueprint of a "neoliberal" project (Sigona – Trehan 2009), a logic that on the one hand promotes a free flow of capital and labour, but also builds obstacles against the poor and underprivileged to prevent their mobility. Moreover, these populations (in particular the Roma and Muslims) are racialized, and their exclusion is more severe than before (van Baar 2017).

Case studies demonstrate that, along with the extension of EU citizenship, the categorization of citizens is undergoing changes that render large numbers of migrants undesirable in their destination countries. However, these processes of categorization do not stop Roma from migrating and this has led Nicolas De Genova, one of the most fiercely critical voices of this citizenship regime, to concede:

> [W]e are reminded that, no matter how abject their citizenship, and no matter how effectively un/free their mobility, as EU citizens, many Roma migrants nonetheless appropriate their putative right to 'free movement' and migrate in order to realize their various aspirations and ambitions for a way of life free from the asphyxiating constraints of their racial subjugation 'at home.' (De Genova 2019: 38)

Local studies approach the mobility of "new EU citizens" from a different angle and focus on the categorization and repositioning strategies observable on the ground within the communities. They reveal that Roma individuals and communities do not subject themselves passively to the home conditions, but rather use their mobility to challenge and overcome local categorical hierarchies. Similarly to these ethnographic case studies from Transylvania (Cingolani 2012; Anghel 2016; Voiculescu 2004; Kinda 2011; Peti 2017; Szabó 2018) and elsewhere (see the thematic double-issue of Intersections edited by Durst and Nagy 2018), we describe the agency of the migrants, and their strategies of resisting and challenging the existing local order in their quest to improve living conditions. Repositioning strategies take many forms, from more isolated and individual to more widespread within the home communities (Szabó 2018: 220; Kinda 2011; Kiss – Kiss 2017; Kiss 2015), and can be accompanied by challenges to the local hierarchy, the crossing of ethnic boundaries, or exiting altogether and migrating permanently (Anghel, forthcoming).

One particular set of repositioning strategies triggers spontaneous residential desegregation processes. Using resources from their migration, Roma acquire houses or plots, move to central locations in the localities, or build their own large houses. Similar developments occur among ethnic Romanian migrants, since they also move to more prestigious spaces and build bigger houses. However, the case of Roma houses or "palaces" is peculiar, since they attract much criticism. Based on their urban fieldwork in Timișoara, Reșița, and two other smaller settlements in

the Banat, Crețan and Powell argue that Roma, despite being "wealthy" and owning large houses in the city centre, still cannot escape group stigmatization (Creţan and Powell 2018). Others view the conspicuous architecture as a way for these Roma to formulate claims to citizenship (Tomlinson 2007), while others wonder if these constructions become "magnets for hate" of the local majority (Nemeth and Gianferro 2009). It is noteworthy that "Roma palaces" are not randomly scattered but clustered in localities distributed all over Romania (Gräf 2008). Their emergence is connected to the internal structures and ideas within the particular Roma community (Tesăr 2016; Benarrosh – Orsoni 2015) and their relationship to the local majority.

Speaking about the role of networks, Maria-Carmen Pantea highlights their importance as informal "migration infrastructure" (Pantea 2013). Péter Berta focused on a highly mobile Roma group and their ways of accumulating relational capital and cultivating networks that enable them to practice intermediary commerce (Berta 2014). Similarly, the migrant Roma described by Cătălina Tesăr (Tesăr 2011; Tesăr 2016) use their mobility abroad to maintain their cultural autonomy in the communities of origin. These later cases could be seen as coming closest to what Charles Tilly called "categorically bounded networks;" however, in these cases the economic strategies of the groups rely on maintaining ties outside the community. Roma moving between different locations manage to keep apart spheres of production and consumption; in their productive activities they depend on outsiders, but they still celebrate their putative independence in the spheres of consumption and ritual (Stewart 1997).

There is a set of network ties that systematically crosscuts ethnic categories: these are informal relations with particular members of the local majority who represent or work within local institutions. Often, the effective operation of social rights depends on these networks. In addition, institutions legalize dwellings, issue permits, or extend communal infrastructure, which activities are crucial in creating the legal frame for local development.

Local networks maintain the heterogeneity of the population within the broad category of citizenship. These are framed by different local institutions, in particular churches, as already described (Fosztó 2003; Kinda 2007; Fosztó 2009), while the translocal role of these networks during migration has also been highlighted (Peti 2017; Lipan 2017).

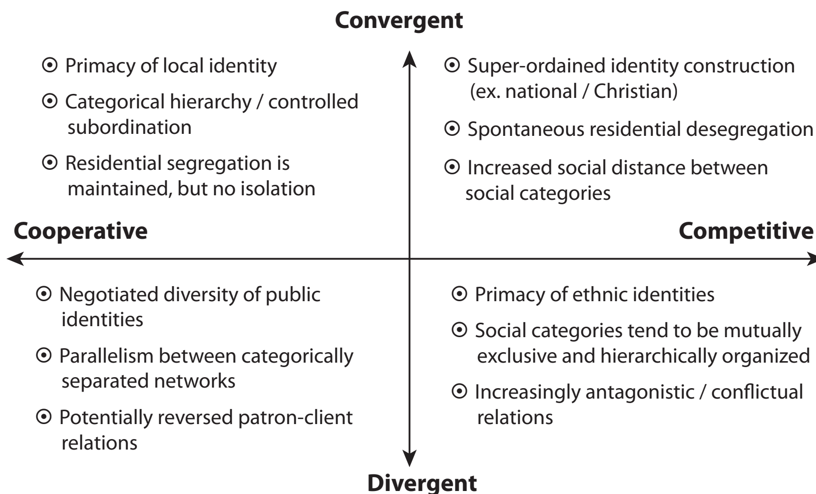
In our previous publications (Toma – Fosztó 2018; Toma, Tesăr, and Fosztó 2018) we described and analyzed the emergence of migration among the Roma segments of population inhabiting ethnically mixed localities in Romania. The migration of the Roma in increased numbers started later than the migration of other Romanians. Local ethnic relations and, in particular, the social distance between Roma and the majority has an effect on how migration networks develop (Toma and Fosztó 2018). Taking our argument one step further, we show below how the local context can shape the effects of return. We argue that in localities with

rather heterogeneous populations, as is often the case in Transylvania, shifting networks and the negotiation and re-negotiation of local ties and categories should be discussed as part of the local development process.

The communities in transformation

In order to analyze the role of the categories and networks that produce and maintain social inequality during the migration process we will look at the case of two field-sites. Starting from the processes described by Charles Tilly as opportunity hoarding through "categorical bounded networks," we problematize the relationship between networks and categories following the suggestion by Rogers Brubaker. Our empirical case exemplifies the dynamic processes that not only rely on the existing categorical divisions within the localities, but also shape the potential development paths of the communities of origin. In one of the cases the developmental effect of migration fosters more *convergent* social categorization, while in the other case it reinforces more *divergent* interpretations that challenge the preexisting categories. Accordingly, social networks develop either in a more encompassing manner or narrow down along categorical distinctions (represented by the vertical axis of the figure below). The migration-induced transformations can produce rather competitive relations, but can also encourage cooperation. Here we understand competition and cooperation in a broad sense that is not limited to economic behavior; it rather represents a general attitude of acceptance or contestation of locally imposed symbolic hierarchies and categories (represented by the horizontal axis).

Figure 1.: *Migration-induced development paths in ethnically mixed localities*



Baratca and Bighal are villages of between 3000 and 3500 inhabitants. Hungarians form the dominant local majority in both cases and there is a significant Roma population (about 35% of the total inhabitants of Baratca and around 20% of Bighal). The Roma in both localities are engaged in rather intense international mobility. Most of the Hungarians in Baratca belong to the Lutheran Church, while Roma are traditionally Orthodox Christians but have increasingly converted to Pentecostalism in recent decades. They speak exclusively Romanian as their native tongue. In Bighal most Roma are native Romani speakers, also proficient in Hungarian and Romanian. Traditionally, Roma and Hungarians are members of the Reformed (Calvinist) Church, but more recently membership of neo-protestant groups (i.e., Pentecostal and Baptist) has increased among the Roma community.

The localities are situated in relatively well-developed counties in Transylvania – Baratca in Brașov county and Bighal in Sălaj county (Benedek, Cristea, and Szendi 2015: 25-26; Teșliuc, Grigoraș, and Stănculescu 2016:274). Nevertheless, according to the Atlas of Rural Marginalized Areas the rate of marginalization of above 24% in Baratca corresponds to severe marginalization, while in Bighal the rate of marginalization falls between 6.1 and 12%, which roughly corresponds to the county average.[5]

Our field research confirmed these data.

The competitive architecture of Baratca

When approaching Baratca by car or by train one inevitably observes the poor and segregated area on the fringe of the hill with scattered one-room wooden or cob buildings. There are no paved streets leading to the hill settlement, and practically no access to basic infrastructure (running water, electricity, a sewage system). There are also some newly renovated or unfinished and relatively bigger houses on the main (national) road. These are houses that used to be the property of local Hungarians, bought by better-off Roma families who managed to save enough money by working abroad more or less regularly.

The first interviews revealed that Roma started to migrate due to the declining local formal or informal employment opportunities. They used to be employed as non-specialized or qualified workers before 1989 in nearby industrial centers, but these dissolved soon after their privatization following 1990. Others were agricultural workers, who now occasionally rent plots of land from the villagers and garden them. Approximately 60% of the surveyed households (households number 240 in total in Baratca) had one or more household members working abroad after 2007, while none of them had migration experience before that year.

5 These indicators of marginality are built by using data about human capital (such as education level, health, and family size or number of children), employment situation and housing situation (Teșliuc, Grigoraș, and Stănculescu 2016, p. 21).

We documented the case of Skinny during our fieldwork in the village. This case can be seen as an example of a successful migrant career:

> Skinny, a young Roma man, was the pioneer of looking for opportunities in Great Britain, and considered that it was more convenient and worthwhile for the family to stay together there, so he took his whole family. Slowly, through him more and more people from the extended family, and later from the community, started to make use of his network relations in London. He became the job intermediary for this network, invested in renting accommodation in London and then sub-renting to his co-villagers. Soon, the demand grew considerably, therefore the transportation businesses invested in regular bus connections between the village and London and Paris,[6] making it easier for the locals to travel, but also to send smaller or bigger packages.

Most of the investments go into buying consumer goods, making improvements to homes, or acquiring new houses. For many families these are the urgent demands, while only a few families have managed to use financial remittances to start a business.[7] One family invested in agriculture, renting plots in the village or in the nearby village and buying 50 sheep. Some other families invested in opening small shops ("magazin mixt") in the close vicinity of the segregated neighborhood, to the deep discontent of a middle-aged, non-Roma woman who used to have a similar small shop right in the center of the village. She complained that after the opening of large shopping malls with a huge diversity of merchandise, the local majority population changed their shopping habits, buying everything in the city. Before migration started, she could rely on the shopping demand of the Roma, but now "those five Gypsy shops have taken over all the clients." They have the relative advantage of being closer to the settlement, and make offers adjusted to the needs of clients and offer informal credit to reliable customers.

Some admire the skills that the Roma have acquired during their trips abroad while working in constructions. These masonry skills are most visible in the segregated neighborhood where huts are gradually being replaced with small, but modernized brick houses. This is the neighborhood where change is most noticeable for the locals, as the appearance of new buildings contradicts the stereotype of the Roma as negligent with their environment. Consequently, it is recognized that the mobility of Roma produces changes in local society through their making use of social and financial remittances. We may expect that these

6 We should mention here that the migration network to Paris has a different development history.

7 Describing pessimistic views of migration and development studies, de Haas (2010:236) mentions that there is a widespread tendency to artificially differentiate between "conspicuous consumption" and non-productive spending of remittances and productive investment of money. Nevertheless, Conway & Cohen (1998:28) underlined that in the case of poor households/communities the importance of consumption expenditure should not be underestimated. Similarly, investment in health and education should also be defined as productive investment.

changes go beyond the immediate familial context, impacting the broader community, including non-migrants (Taylor – Dyer 2009; Elrick 2008).

> *They come home with quite a good amount of money, they buy houses and cars here, so you can already see that there is another mentality, they think differently. Of course, there are also those who go and do the same things that they used to do here, begging or stealing, and with this of course they darken the situation of the others (…) For us as a commune and community, I consider that it is a good step that they are going to other worlds so that they can see these other worlds; they come home with a different mentality. (Representative of local institution, an ethnic Hungarian man)*

Improvements are apparent not only in terms of the material situation but also in terms of this "different mentality" – what we could call social remittances (Levitt and Lamba – Nieves 2011; Levitt 1998). "Seeing other worlds" is highlighted as an opportunity for learning new things and broadening the perspective when returning home. Another interlocutor explained in more detail the changes she has observed, and even distinguished between segments of the community:

> *(…) and you can see the difference here in the village as well because they go abroad, and you can see it in the houses. (…) there are two communities... there are the very poor, who do not have anything, but there are also those who are better-off. They have houses following the style they saw abroad, with a large living-room, in which the kitchen is combined with the living-room – the majority of them have it like that, they have big rooms and bathrooms. So they have [these new living] conditions, and you can look at those who have [such] conditions [and see] that they wash themselves, they aren't like they used to be before. But those who don't want to do this – because there are those who don't want to – they learned this [these earlier habits] and stay like this, [they] have houses of 16m^2 and live even ten persons or even more in a single room. (Representative of institution, ethnic Romanian woman)*

Nevertheless, these changes are not perceived equally positively by all segments of local society. The beneficial effect of migration is recognized, but in the meantime the stereotypical representation of "the Gypsies" (what the locals call the local Roma population) is also reiterated. Some Hungarians complain that the Roma families who move to more central spaces in the village "invade the village," ultimately becoming the dominant population. A parallel process is that the increasing number of Roma who declare Romanian ethnicity during the national census make local Hungarians even more anxious, as revealed to us by the local census-taker. Regionally (in Brașov county) Hungarians are a minority and are aware that their local political dominance is rather fragile. The most characteristic response of the majority to the rise in visibility of the Roma and their physical proximity is increased social distance. Our attitude survey revealed

that more than 60% of the non-Roma sample from Baratca state that they would not even accept Roma as citizens of the country. Virtually no respondent would accept Roma individuals as family members (1.1%). This categorical refusal contrasts strongly with results from Bighal: there, roughly half (48.9%) of the majority sample expressed a willingness to accept Roma as family members, and not a single respondent said that they should be excluded from Romania (see details in Toma and Fosztó 2018).

Cooperative exchanges in Bighal

The migration of the Roma in Bighal in Sălaj County follows a rather different path and the effects of return are also different. As the general data show, the rate of marginalization in Bighal is considerably lower than in Baratca, and this fact is apparent immediately when entering the village. On one edge of the village there is a Roma-only settlement, but in a different location there is an ethnically mixed neighborhood. Generally, the locality gives the image of a developing village; at least as concerns public investment into infrastructure. The national road crossing the village is maintained, there are well-groomed green areas, a recently built and enlarged administrative office, and a new kindergarten. Soon one learns that in a relatively short time after a new mayor was elected, even more public money was invested into different domains, also benefiting the segregated Roma community. This settlement, in contrast to Baratca's Roma neighborhood, shows clear signs of planning. It includes rows of relatively bigger houses, and courtyards with fences. There are some gardens with signs of subsistence agriculture. On the margins of this settlement a number of social houses were built during the 1990s as part of a project. One of the buildings functions as a community center that also has public bathing facilities. During the last two years (2016-17), the mayor's office has started to pave the sidewalks in the Roma communities.

Traditionally, the local Roma used to be brick-makers, supplying the market demand of the region. Later, during the socialist period, some of the Roma – while also continuing to produce bricks – were employed in small factories in the nearby towns, while others worked in a local agricultural cooperative or on farms in the west of Transylvania. After the dissolution of the agricultural cooperative and re-privatization of the land, the Roma continued to work on the fields for local owners as day-laborers. Some others found informal employment in construction and in households. The economic crises in the middle of the 2000s represented a serious setback not only in terms of the job-market, but also of opportunities for investing to earn a more or less regular income. The migration of the Roma started in this period and, similarly to in Baratca, approximately 60% of households have migration experience abroad following 2007. Nevertheless, a considerably higher percentage of households (87.2%) declared that they spent money resulting from

the migration of household members. Thus, they are able to cover most of the basic needs of the family. Many others had the chance to invest in a long-cherished dream, or plan improvements to their houses in the neighborhood (a new room or bathroom, improving the roof of a building, building a fence, or changing the gate of a courtyard, changing windows or doors, connecting to the water and electricity supply or sewerage system).

A wander around the fair (a tradition with roots dating back as early as the fifteenth century) that is traditionally held every first and third Wednesday of the month is a good occasion to feel and experience how migration is a constitutive part of local lives. Although local fairs have declined in national and regional importance, they are still busy events where, beside buying, selling, negotiating or just simply browsing, you can meet with fellow villagers and talk about important things and exchange information. In the usual hubbub, amicable and curious questions are raised regarding the migration and work experience of others. Answers fly around in a casual way that afterwards becomes a good basis for gossip with neighbors or relatives, or formulating appreciative or condemning assessments of one's success or, on the contrary, failure. It was on one of these days that we joined a Roma family (husband and three children), under the leadership of Maria (a woman in her late 30s), going to market to buy the immense amount of vegetables needed for the traditional *zacuscă*[8] that is usually prepared for the winter period.

At home the men prepared the vegetables on a stove in the courtyard, and the typical hurly-burly started. Women from the neighborhood (Roma and Hungarians alike) dropped by and stayed for an hour or two to help with cleaning the grilled vegetables. Being late autumn, a period when some of the men were still abroad, the wives of the former were waiting for their return; they discussed new migration routes or opportunities for the coming year. Raising the issue of money was inevitable, as some were concerned about the amount of money their husbands would bring home. Would it be enough to cover their plans for improving their household's lives? Some complained that the hourly wage of seven euros is rather low, and it is not enough to make it worth staying in Italy any longer; others replied that it is still more advantageous and safer to do this than to go to Hungary or the Czech Republic to work in agriculture. The women commented with amazement that a male from the community chooses to stay at home, claiming he considers the former wages too low. Another woman said that in Poland the salaries in the construction industry had also dropped recently. Now her husband receives only 1300 euros/month. They are planning for him to try his luck in Italy next year, hoping that despite the deprecating gossip, salaries are still much higher than in Central-Eastern European countries.

8 A very popular vegetable spread in Romania, variations of which can be found throughout the Balkans and Turkey.

The women were well informed about migration-related opportunities, networks and risks. They appraise what is worth doing and what would not be good enough for their households. They were planning to invest the money – besides the usual spending on daily needs – in building an additional room as the children were growing. The roof of the house also needed improvements. Others wanted to change a fence, or to build a bathroom. Schooling "eats more and more money as the children grow."[9] Another woman – the health mediator for the Roma – warned about the negative side of having access to more money from migration: not everybody is careful spending their money; some of the men have serious issues wasting it on gambling machines or have drinking problems. The more they earn, the more they spend on these "stupid things." Locals – Hungarians and Roma alike – are very critical about the way money is spent, both when abroad and after it is bought back home. Irresponsible expenses (spending too much money on expensive food and drink abroad, or gambling) are the target of intense gossip.

Challenging social and ethnic categories

While in Baratca the main way to display the wealth of the household and success in migration was related to the house – newly built or re-furnished –, or in some cases the launching of a small business, in Bighal the marketplace is a space and occasion for evaluative chats and displaying success. The fair traditionally has a strong interethnic character. It is an arena where the habitual stereotypes of the majority regarding the Roma can be slowly dismantled and deconstructed ("Finally, the children were dressed in clean clothes!"..."You bought a whole sack of eggplants, you must be a good housekeeper!"..."Can they afford a coffee-machine?"..."Ah, your husband is abroad? Good for you!") Nevertheless, the fair is more than simply a moment or a place for displaying status. It is also the place for encounters and where information-exchanges regarding job opportunities happen.[10] We can contrast the intensity of these local exchanges with the relative isolation of the two communities in Baratca. There, the lack of opportunities for interethnic exchange and shared events that could facilitate these exchanges redirects resources from mobility into more non-verbal displays of status such as the built environment.

In other contexts though, ethnic categorization and stigmatization proves to be more resistant to challenges due to its situational character, as in the following case of racial stigma (Goffman 1963):

One afternoon we were sitting in the kitchen of a local Roma family in Bighal. We discussed experiences of mobility, and how migrants cope with the external

9 The education of children is a recurrent topic in discussions.

10 Informal exchanges of information can help individuals in their job searches, especially if they lack the necessary educational level or professional skills to obtain employment on the formal job market (Sanders et al. 2002: 282).

perceptions they encounter during their stays abroad. Our host, a jovial Rom in his early forties, told us the story of his interaction with a Hungarian brigade with whom he engages in seasonal migrant labor within Romania, but also occasionally abroad:

> *We went to Hungary to work on a construction project there. After the work day [had finished] we had a beer together and the Hungarians started to talk to each other, complaining: "If we are at home, in Romania, we are called 'bozgori' by the Romanians [an insulting and derogatory term for Hungarians] so one has to stay silent. When we come here to Hungary, they [the Hungarians from Hungary] call us Romanians. You cannot feel good anywhere. Our host laughed at them: "You see – I do not have this problem. When I am home they call me 'țigan' and that's it. When I am here in Hungary they still call me cigány!"*

This episode exemplifies that ethnic and national categories do not offer constant shelter from denigrating ascriptions. Situational stigmatization is not limited to the Roma; others are also subject to stigma, like the Magyars ('Hungarians') from Transylvania in this case. The inconsistencies in these ethno-national categorizations remind them of the social insecurities involved in the mobility process.

This episode can be also a reminder that both groups (Magyars and Roma) are part of a larger political space; they are Romanian citizens within the enlarged European Union. When travelling to Hungary, local Magyars are reminded of their differences, which bring them symbolically closer to the locally rooted categories. Migrating as part of a mixed network has benefits for both Magyars and Roma in terms of sharing the migration experience and being able to closely negotiate their interpretations.

In contrast to this example, migration sustained by ethnically separated networks, as happens in Baratca, increases the divergence in local negotiations of social categories. Mobility unsettles locally rooted social categories in the communities of origin. Returnees challenge the local order and express new forms of belonging, so stay-at-home members of these communities are faced with these challenges. Roma from Baratca can claim "Romanianness" with more confidence after their western European sojourns, since in many cases this identification is accepted as their main identity in the destination context. These claims, validated by their symbolic social ascension within the village, feed into the challenges to the old hierarchy of categories which are perceived by local Hungarians as signs of their growing insecurity within the village.

To make things appear worse, the local effects of the "securitization" of the Roma migrants within the western member states of the EU appear in rather palpable forms.

During out fieldwork, locals told us about an "internationally organized" event within the segregated Roma settlement of Baratca which happened before we

started our fieldwork. Our field assistant who was involved in this event explained to us that this event was an "awareness raising seminar" organized by the police with the collaboration of their colleagues from England. This seminar took place after the first significant wave of outmigration of Roma from Baratca reached England. Migrants were very visible on the streets of the English city and were begging, so the police forces decided to visit their home community and inform them that they do not welcome begging, and that this activity even borders on illegality in England.

After this first wave, migrants reoriented their activities mainly to construction work and other menial jobs using the opportunities offered by their consolidating migratory networks. Still, local Hungarians perceived the visit of the British police as just more proof of the "illegal activities" of Roma migrants abroad and reinforced their anxiety related to their Roma neighbors.

Another specific form of coping with stigmatization is born-again Christianity after the religious conversion of the Roma to neo-protestant denominations, most typically Pentecostalism. The related churches are present in all field sites, and we could observe their influence in terms of how they offered a new outlook on personal identities, but also by offering entry into a super-ordained category that could transcend local ethic categories and lead to the subordination of the converted.

Development paths: the mobilization of diversity

Contrasting the developments in these two villages within the broader framework of the processes that can be observed in other localities, we can distinguish between situations where the developmental effect of migration is perceived in a more *convergent* manner versus places where the influence of migration creates more *divergent* interpretations that challenge the hierarchy of categories. We can distinguish two dimensions of these developments. On the one hand there are the more *cooperative relations* maintained by ethnically mixed networks, as opposed to more *competitive relations* between increasingly separated networks (see Table 1).

Cooperation and competition not only unfolds between individuals, but between different segments / networks of local society, and our observations are focused at this level. When social changes in a locality point in a *cooperative-convergent* direction, conforming to "others" does not necessarily involve the abandonment of ethnic belonging. It can take the form of negotiating a social identity that is considered adequate and is mutually accepted by each segment of the local community. In this case, being part of an ethnic group and displaying one's ethnic identity can remain at a secondary level of importance. The focus is placed on the well-being and the maintenance of a relatively peaceful coexistence in the locality. This requires that local actors concur regarding aims and priorities, and they can be induced and reinforced by local institutions. Nevertheless, we should underline that, in our

case, because the local ethnic groups are hierarchically defined, or Roma are even stigmatized, these social relations are never mutually equal.

Table 1. Conditions for cooperative / competitive local social relations and their connection to categorization processes

Social relations / Identity formation	Cooperative	Competitive
Convergent	-non-exclusive rather "hyphenated" identities - dense everyday contacts and prevailing interethnic networks - involvement of local institutions	- identities appear mutually exclusive - low degree of cooperation across categories - low involvement of local institutions
Divergent	- identity as valued diversity empowerment - physical separation does not mean lack of social relations - everyday contacts continue - interethnic networks are a resource	- increasing social distance - physical separation, no contact - group antagonism - assumed identity as threat to others

Bighal is a locality that can be best described in terms of cooperative social relations, but there are also signs of developing divergence in the local social categories. Compared to other localities, Bighal emerged as having a high level of acceptance of differences, or in other words, the social distance between different ethnic groups is rather reduced (Toma and Fosztó 2018). This does not mean that we cannot find there a variety of stigmatizing situations and prejudiced attitudes, or even discriminatory behaviors towards the Roma. Still, everyday contacts prevail, Roma accept the public dominance of the Hungarian language, and there are also rather intense symbolic and ritual exchanges mediated by local institutions (for example, common religious denomination). Among our Roma sample, 44.4% of households have at least one Hungarian godparent. There were no open or violent ethnic conflicts in the village. Migration patterns are defined by these local relationships, involving migration through interethnic networks, often even in ethnically mixed groups.

During the past years, the investment of remittances has contributed to the overall betterment of Roma neighborhoods in Bighal. These developments, complemented by the recent infrastructural investments of the local authority, have contributed to the stability of life in the neighborhood, also meaning that residents did not express a desire to "move out." Living in the neighborhood – while in some cases considered a stigmatized territory – does not necessarily

involve social marginality and segregation, compared to many other cases. One of the possible bridges for overcoming the undeniable reality of living in an ethnically segregated area is becoming an active member of the local community through different channels.

Changes in the ethnic landscape of the locality – including improvements in the Roma neighborhood – are not perceived by the local majority as a threat to their own identity or space. Among those members of the majority who have more or less daily contact with local Roma, relationships are mostly defined in terms of trust and mutual respect and avoidance of conflict; and more than that, belonging to an ethnic group – while remaining important – is of secondary importance. Still, there are signs of diverging identity constructions enacted through cooperation between different groups. The local community – Hungarians and Roma together, with the support of the local administration[11] – obtained funding for a cultural project that involved the acquisition of "traditional ethnic costumes" for the Roma dance ensemble. Local Roma had no memory and could not find evidence that their ancestors had dressed in ethnically distinguished clothing. Still, everybody agreed that such costumes should be produced for the dancers. This official encouragement of a public display of ethnic difference – even if an invention of new traditions – can be seen as *cooperative divergent* process. However, it may also be recognized that designing the costume involved a balancing act, since local Romungre do not want to dress in the long colorful skirts of the "more traditional" Corturari Roma who live in the neighboring village. In these cases, for the local Roma (who are Romungre or *magyarcigányok*), belonging to dual ethnic categories (Roma and Magyar) is not exclusive. Even if there are moments when social/ethnic identity becomes more divergent and the importance of group membership increases, maintaining contacts is constant and identity construction is rather cooperative, strengthening and reinforcing common belonging.

In contrast, Baratca can be seen as site of *competitive social processes involving divergent social categorization*. Returnees increasingly challenge the local hierarchical ethnic order, refusing to be seen as stigmatized Roma and channeling their material resources into promoting residential desegregation. The woman shopkeeper we described earlier complained that the relationship between the locals and the Roma had deteriorated lately and they were increasingly alienated from each other, as more and more families move "into the village." An elderly woman, a former primary school teacher, stated that "The mayor is too much of a gentleman. The Gypsies are generally kept tight, but not controlled enough." This "loss of control" also implies to others that they cannot rely on the labour of Roma as before. We overheard the following statement in a bar from a middle-aged and older man who were organizing their work: "We will have problems when

11 The mayor is ethnically Romanian and speaks Hungarian very well.

we need to load the cart as we do not have neighbors – only the Gypsies." While it may be an implicit assumption that when more difficult jobs arise around the household and an extra hand is needed, you may ask your neighbors to help, in this case, interaction between ethnic groups is increasingly difficult and Hungarians maintain a very high degree of social distance vis-a-vis the Roma.

Roma in Baratca prefer to assume a Romanian identity during the population census and in their public interactions. This makes local Hungarians anxious, as they see their status of local majority threatened. However, this does not mean that the local ethnic Romanians have significantly different attitudes toward the Roma compared to the Hungarians. This feature of the competitive-divergent scenario reminds us of the difficulty of overcoming the consequences of "exclusionary closure:" when members of one ethnic group try to monopolize opportunities and resources for members of their own group (Waldinger – Lichter 2003: 98). Open confrontations also occur: we witnessed a scene at the Social Department of the Mayor's Office: a well-dressed Roma man was informed that his social benefits had been cut because he was working abroad and he no longer qualified for them. He got very angry and raised his voice, annoyed because he was aware that many families who are involved in migration do not lose their benefits. At one point he yelled at the (even angrier) social worker that: "You are not respected, because you don't respect us!" Claiming Romanian national identity is one form of creating respectability.

A closer look into aspects of cooperation and competition within local society and the social categories the different segments negotiate reveals a more complex picture. In Baratca, in addition to the dominant processes along the *competitive and divergent dimensions*, there are features that could be classified as *competitive-convergent*. Roma have not only opened businesses and moved inside the village, but have started to use traditional Hungarian funeral signs (so-called *kopjafa*) in their own cemetery, adding Romanian language inscriptions to them. However these signs of convergence are not viewed approvingly by the local majority: "They have the nerve to do that!" (*Erre van eszük…*). The new gates in front of the renovated houses resemble Saxon-style entrances, and local Roma buy furniture from the most expensive company – a Hungarian woman observed with slight jealousy when talking to us. The dominant climate of competition and the perceived threat of "the emerging other" overshadow these incipient signs of convergence or even are seen as illegitimate appropriation. It is not only interpersonal relations that are challenged by the Roma returnees in Baratca.

They pride themselves on their improvements to their homes and repeatedly call on local authorities to expand the communal infrastructure to provide them with services. Those who build their small new brick houses on the top of the hill within the segregated Roma settlement create the relevant installations within their houses in the absence of a proper electricity or water supply and consider

this the first step towards development, thus it is now it is the turn of the mayor's office to do its part. Whether local authorities decide to follow the path opened by the returnees or prefer to concentrate investment into different areas remains an open question at this moment.

Conclusions

We started this article by considering that the increased mobility of the Romanians has an important financial and social impact on the home communities. Romanian Roma started to participate in this mobility relatively later, but by the time of our fieldwork in the area we could observe patterns of intense migration and return. We focused on the ways in which mobile Roma communities are repositioning themselves within two ethnically mixed localities in Transylvania. Returnees take advantage, reorient and navigate between local social categories, challenging them by relying on the resources at their disposal to improve the situation of their families and communities. These changes can be described at the level of segments of local society, composed not only of communities but also the networks that facilitate migration and also serve as support for the renegotiation of social categories at home.

We distinguished between two main patterns according to which networks develop. On the one hand there are localities where network ties crosscut ethnic boundaries and facilitate intense exchanges and communication between the different segments of local society. Roma and their non-Roma neighbors often share their migration experience and its interpretation. The other pattern is rather different: network ties tend to be tight between members of the same ethnic category but ties that cut through ethnic boundaries remain weak. The social distance between the categories is kept considerably higher in the second case.

The role networks play is important in the reorientation of the returnees: on the one hand there are attempts at categorical redefinitions that challenge local ethnic hierarchies, or even reverse the old patterns; on the other hand, the order of categories remains or is even reinforced. More precisely, ethnically mixed networks enable individuals to transcend categories in particular types of exchanges. The ways of repositioning of the mobile Roma within local society have consequences for the development paths that local society might take.

Focusing on the non-economic resources that are available (skills, networks, and social categories) the paths of development can be described along two axes: on the one hand, more *cooperative vs. competitive* social relations and the reinforcement or emergence of more *convergent vs. divergent* social categories. Along these dimensions we can interpret the different processes generated by mobility which are heterogeneous (i.e., can move in different directions), but some dominant tendencies were distinguished at the two field sites: Baratca seems to be dominated

by competitive processes coupled with the development of more divergent social categorizations. This is observable in the reconfiguration of the built environment, as more and more returnees renovate and repaint their houses and move to more central areas in the village. This spontaneous residential desegregation goes along with increased social distance between the Roma and their Hungarian neighbors who look anxiously to the future of their local community. At the other field site, Bighal, social development is less divisive; we describe this in terms of cooperative relations and convergent social categorizations. There is no fear of "the other" in this case, and social distance is reduced. There exists a large variety of ethnically mixed encounters, while residential segregation remains in place.

The heterogeneity of the Roma population is an important condition in orienting these development paths. In the two cases that are compared the Roma are rather similar demographically (relatively younger, less educated, and more impoverished) and have different cultural profiles (languages spoken, religious belonging, and ritual exchanges with the non-Roma). Local majorities are also diverse. Taking into account our findings in the other MigRom field sites, the diversity is even wider. In the Transylvanian localities there is a Hungarian majority, but in the southern Romanian site we only find Romanians and different Roma categories. We found that repositioning is present amongst the Hungarians as well (even if identifying this was not the analytical focus). Still, the direction of local development can be interpreted within this framework which offers a chance for a more nuanced interpretation of local effects than previously proposed models of "racialisation" suggest (Yıldız – De Genova 2018).

The role of local institutions and, in particular, the local administration in shaping the direction of local development must be highlighted. Mayor's offices can take a leading role in the modernization of more underdeveloped parts of the locality and a proactive stance by providing infrastructure and communal services. They can also assist by fostering the most effective investment of the resources that "pour in" from the migration of the less well-off members of the locality. If they can do this consciously, we may hope to see that local migration's half-full glass is not spilled.

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Abandoned Hungarian workers and the political economy of care work in Austria

Attila Melegh – Dóra Gábriel – Gabriella Gresits – Dalma Hámos[1]
melegh@demografia.hu, gabriel@demografia.hu, vadasz@demografia.hu hdaly6@yahoo.com

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Abstract: In an era of globalization, the institutional system of mass migration is being substantially reorganized: its intensity and the variation in its forms are increasing. Global production chains combine diverse areas and different forms of work with varying wage levels by forming worldwide networks. In the Eastern European region, the growing level of emigration and relatively low fertility are leading to population loss. Hungary is not among the Eastern European countries with a high level of emigration; nevertheless, it faces serious challenges, particularly in some regions where after the transition losses of jobs were massive, and a greater proportion of people live under the poverty line than the national average. Our analysis is based on interviews, containing narrative and semi-structured parts, among domestic workers working mainly in Austria and Germany. The paper reveals possible causal mechanisms and the political economic structures behind this type of labour migration. We seek to understand how migration-related decisions are embedded in a global and highly unequal economic order.

Keywords: labor migration, rational choice, historical-structural analysis, domestic work, working class

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In an era of globalization, the institutional system of mass migration has become substantially reorganized and its intensity and variation are increasing. Globalization can be interpreted as a cycle of capitalism in which the increasing freedom of movement of capital maintains free trade, which in turn enables mechanisms of reproduction that in turn reorganize global manufacturing and service industries and move them to new territories. As a part of this process, global production chains combine diverse areas and different forms of work with varying wage levels within worldwide networks. In addition, the freer movement of capital and labour also affects welfare and social systems by depreciating and partly eliminating welfare services and "surplus" wages (i.e. rents) in the case of richer Western nations/societies, as well as

1 The research this paper refers to was carried out by a research group within the frame of the Hungarian Demographic Research Institute (HDRI). The field work, the interviewing, and the related research were managed and to a very large extent performed by Dóra Gábriel who published key results of the research in a HDRI Research Report (Gábriel 2018). The professional leader of the research was Attila Melegh, who wrote the below text based on his own analysis of the interviews, and from new analytical perspectives Gabriella Gresits contributed to this text through her specific analysis and together with Dalma Hámos participated in the research and analysis through her work on the narratives and biographies in the interviews.

the socialist Eastern Bloc. In the frame of a neoclassical macro theory of migration, Szelényi and Mihályi, for instance, argue that migration has facilitated the reduction of "rents" (i.e. unearned income of individuals due to privileged global positions) from European workers. At the same time, these geographical areas have been significantly transformed demographically. Since the 1980s, Western and Southern Europe has counterbalanced low levels of fertility by increasing migration rates. In opposition to this tendency, in Eastern Europe growing levels of emigration and a rapidly aging population coupled with relatively low fertility rates are all contributing to population loss. It is highly likely that a demographic crisis will evolve given that in certain countries the active population will not or will hardly exceed the number of people born in the country but living abroad and the number of dependent elderly people. Thus, Western European governments that are anxious about maintaining welfare services are seeking well specific working populations for their corporate spheres by extracting migrant labour from areas that themselves face major demographic problems (Melegh 2016, 2017). As a result of this, new cycles are opening up in the global economy in which wage differentials play a very important role.

Hungary is not among the countries with very high levels of emigration in Eastern Europe (according to the UN, almost 7 percent of the population born in Hungary live outside the country; UN 2017); nevertheless, it faces serious challenges, particularly in those regions where after the transition job losses were massive and more individuals live below the poverty line than the national average. The targeted area of our research, Baranya County in Southern Transdanubia, is one such deprived region. Its industrial capacity – mines, the main manufacturing enterprises, and textile plants – have been closed down and have not been replaced by more significant industry, as opposed to, for instance, the Northern regions of Transdanubia. According to the regional inequality indicators, a major part of the region is seriously disadvantaged, and faces social problems related to poverty and employment (Obádovics et al. 2011).

The research problems and related theoretical frameworks

The present analysis is based on interviews with narrative and semi-structured parts conducted among domestic workers who work abroad. These people count as short-term circular migrants as most have spent more than three months abroad at least once, their gainful and principal employment is abroad, and they have left and returned to Hungary several times, with a cumulative time living abroad exceeding a year and, in some cases, even years (UN 2016). Thus, they constantly live in a transnational space, albeit without giving up their stable residence at home. It is also important to note that these migrants are the older age groups of the potentially active workforce, and in some cases are even beyond retirement age. Thus they also represent the phenomenon of "care drain" as they are not available to take care of other family members. They are also people who face the relatively high risk of not finding a job

due to their age. Thus, our group is rather special in the sense that they represent a somewhat specific group of circular migrants who are not younger members of the workforce, unlike most other migrants. (Blaskó – Gödri 2014)

In order to reveal the potential causal mechanisms and links to political economic structures behind these forms of labour migration through the analysis of interviews, we need to clarify what theoretical and methodological frameworks are appropriate for this purpose. In this analysis we argue that in the case of such types of circular migration, we need to utilize various perspectives (household economics, and the role of historical macrostructural factors) to understand the complexity of the process as presented by individuals and families. We also claim that in these complex and historically contextualized processes, neoclassical, micro-level rational decision-making is just one, specific perspective that is associated with specific conditions if interviews are analyzed. We also investigate what structural factors and what elements in the life histories of interviewees might have led them to construct their perspectives.

Throughout the research, one of our main goals was to reveal how care worker interviewees who come from a relatively depressed region present their decisions in a complex way in qualitative interviews about their life histories. We were particularly interested in how the global and highly unequal economic order appeared in these texts and narratives (Parreñas 2011, Sarkar 2017). Moreover, we were eager to see under which conditions the individual stories of care workers actually fit the rational choice framework, and when they opt for work abroad.

In doing so first, let us clarify how the approach of rational individuals can be operationalized and criticized and how this issue is described in the Hungarian literature on emigration, especially concerning the migration of domestic workers. According to Massey and his colleagues, the basic assumptions of micro-level neoclassical theory are the following (Massey et al. 1993): “Costs” should not exceed “profits” in the long term; migrants are required to make individual decisions on the basis of expected individual benefits. In addition, it is necessary for them to have information not only about the cost of being abroad and wages in the target country, but also to realize and evaluate the total cost of migration at home. The total cost should include all material and non-material costs (including “forgotten” material costs, the extra costs of family members left behind, the costs of emotional distress), and such circular migrants should strive to maximize profitability in the long-term. They also have to choose a country according to these rational calculations. Thus, in the interviews we looked for evidence (ideas and formulas) in migrant workers' argumentation that they had engaged in such general calculations. We also examined in which interviews this phenomenon occurred and in which interviews it did not, and in what contexts.

The theory of rational choice has been widely criticized by researchers. According to Portes and Böröcz, it involves a post-factum approach that cannot explain the degree and direction of migration between individual countries and differences in

the willingness of individuals, at least in the sense that we cannot predict migration in cases of similar benefits (Portes – Böröcz 1989). In the criticism put forward in the theory of the new economics of labour migration, the emphasis is placed on the fact that migratory decisions are not made by isolated individuals, but by households and families who, through a wide range of activities, try to minimize risks and pool incomes from different sources. Very importantly, the household economic approach also argues that the gains of migration are much less decisive and much smaller in reality than expected (Massey et al. 1993; see also Szelényi 2016). Thus during our analysis we made a special effort to cross-check the calculations of the interviewees (in the form of a complex Excel sheet containing data about costs and benefits) and to identify which cost elements were mentioned and which elements were "forgotten" in order to analyze calculations beyond data about wages.

In thinking about actual cost-benefit calculations, we should also point out that joint family activities can have micro-economic consequences; namely, certain familial work and social activities do not have a price and thus cannot be taken into account as wages or costs. Thus, instead of maximizing "profit," a family may follow inner feelings about "self-exploitation," as Alexandr Chayanov specified in the 1920s (Chayanov 1966). It should be noted that the relationship between these Chayanovian insights and the new economics of labour migration has not been systematically utilized yet. All of these analytical perspectives deal with "forgetting," and partly "hiding" costs (see Nagy et al. 2012). Costs may be hidden because the additional family labour of maintaining a household strategy is not counted as a wage or cost, thus in this micro-economic frame it is not possible to calculate "net profit," thus a feeling of being exploited may guide economic-migratory manoeuvring. All these considerations are extremely important to us, thus we sought to identify in our interviews when this feeling of making a "sacrifice for the family" occurred, and how it was related to interviewees' life histories.

Concerning joint familial decision-making, in a novel way we also used Tamara K. Hareven's notions of the conjunction between individual, family, and industrial cycles, according to which decisions are not born only as part of an individual cycle, but the family life cycle also plays an important role by interacting with the industrial cycle – namely, with wider cycles of economic requirements and necessities (Hareven 1982). The huge role of family and household decision-making mechanisms has also been widely demonstrated historically and over geographically wide areas (McKeown 2004, Stark – Bloom 1985). Following these considerations, these life cyclical linkages were also observed in interviews when we analyzed how the life cycles and biographies of family members were interlinked with the life histories of the families and macrostructural changes. For instance, we analyzed how individual events affected family life, and how work abroad fitted into these developments. One example of this is the labour migration of a female partner after a male partner becomes sick or loses

his job during an economic transition. We also analyzed in which cases do linkages between various life cycles become evident.

Beyond micro theories, there is also a need to look at macro-level changes, and how they are incorporated in the interview texts and individual life histories and whether they are used as an alternative to rational familial and/or individual decision-making, even over a longer time period. World system theory emphasizes the external environment and its systemic change in its criticism of neoclassical frameworks. This we consider important because, as a prerequisite of migration, it emphasizes that world economic impacts (such as the collapse of socialist industry) must first uproot people from their ”traditional” lifestyles, and that some of those who are thus affected will leave (Sassen 1988, Melegh 2013, Melegh 2015). In our analytical perspective the mention of macrostructural changes and historical links by interviewees cannot be ignored during the exploration of possible chains of causality in the interview texts. In other words, we also sought to look at particular and historically evolving social relations that produce the conditions among which individuals manoeuvre, and thus make migration highly likely, and how this phenomenon appears in interview texts. We also analyzed in what interview texts and in what circumstances these linkages arise.

The Hungarian literature on emigration tends to accept the rational choice hypothesis in terms of longer term migration (Blaskó – Gödri 2014, Hárs – Simon 2015) although scholars who work on the migration of domestic labour emphasize additional factors.

After conducting an analysis of the short-term, cyclical migration of domestic workers, Váradi and her colleagues came to a partially different conclusion (Váradi et al. 2017). The authors believe rational considerations are important, but they also emphasize the relationship between agency and structure, and the role of “forced” decisions. They argue that life situations make the combinations of aspirations and capabilities specific, and emphasize the role of networks.

In her complex analysis Turai refers to the links between individual and family cycles and the role of the economic decisions of a family in her research based on more than 200 interviews conducted among domestic labour migrants from Hungary, Romania and Moldova. It is worth citing here a longer argument of hers that indicates the complexity of causality which includes an assessment of what motivations are seen as legitimate:

> *Concerning the causal mechanisms of migration, mostly material motivations are visible or they are made visible. Livelihood constraints, unemployment, debt, housing, and home purchase are economic needs that play an important role in the decision of the family to incorporate migration into their future strategies. […] Financing children’s higher education, family reunion, wedding, nesting, repayment of foreign currency loans, purchase of cars, supporting grandchildren etc. are strong arguments for participating in the global labour market. However, it has become obvious during the fieldwork that the mention of these causes is strongly related to their social*

> *legitimacy. In the social acceptance of migration, financial problems are seen as legitimate factors: if somewhere material problems emerge, action becomes necessary and positive content is associated with those [who act]. Financial problems can also derive from non-material family crisis situations. The reduced working capacity of the spouse, a broken partnership, or an inadequate contribution from an alcohol-dependent husband to living costs are such situations in which women have to cope with extra burdens. Divorce, the burdens of one-parent households, and housing problems put extra burdens on certain segments of society who have limited access to resources anyway. Private affairs without material consequences are also part of mobility motivations. Foreign absence can temporarily solve a permanently disorderly and chaotic partnership situation in a social environment where divorce is negatively evaluated or when there is family pressure not to do so or a husband's aggression rules it out. (Turai 2018: 151-152)*

Based on the above considerations, in the analysis below we focus on these issues and explain how the historically determined, gendered political economy of reproductive work is viewed and understood by the interviewed group (Parreñas 2001, 61-79, Turai 2018).

Research methods

The empirical research took place between March and August 2016. The research involved 21 interviews[2] in total. Following the theoretical and methodological approach of the FEMAGE project (Kovács – Melegh 2007), we applied a combined interview technique. At the beginning of the interviews, we asked the respondents to tell us their stories of how they became caregivers. Afterwards, we asked them to talk more about those biographical elements that were not narrated in a detailed manner. The narrative part of the interview was followed by a semi-structural part that addressed issues relating to studies, previous work, family background, the decision-making process of migration, working abroad, wages abroad, social status and future plans. The period of interviewing was influenced by the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and 2016, accompanied by a powerful socio-political debate; thus, we included questions related to opinions about the arrival of asylum seekers in our interview guide. The interviews were analyzed using the method of objective hermeneutics, namely, we systematically reconstructed the structure of interviewees' life histories based on the first narration (to see the key structures of self-representation and the complex motivational aspects freely presented), and then we carried out analysis also based on biographical elements (Rosenthal 1993, Kovács – Melegh 2000). For the later analysis we used the information found in the narratives and also in the structured parts of the interview to identify the types of such biographies.

2 For information about the respondents, see Table 1. Interviews were conducted by Diána Árki, Dalma Hámos, Dóra Gábriel, Gabriella Gresits, Attila Pirmajer and Eszter Ungi-Nagy.

We also conducted four partner interviews. At the beginning of these interviews, the partners of care workers were asked to relate the stories of how their partners/spouses had became care workers abroad, and then we used the same structural interview guide. In interviewing partners we wanted to address the issue of how "left-behind" relatives interpret and narrate the familial aspects of migratory decisions. An interview was also carried out with a labour migrant who later established an agency for the foreign employment of care workers, which gave us insights into the functioning of the relevant labour-market segment from the point of view of an agent, the role of whom is becoming crucial in building migration infrastructure (Xiao-Lindquist 2014).

Our fieldsite was Baranya County, chosen not only due to the fact that it is an economically depressed region of the country, but also due to the Swabian ethnic groups living in some of its areas. We assumed that in this part of the country, based on the presence of a long-standing ethnic network, the number of elderly care workers commuting to Austria and Germany would be numerically higher. We applied the snowball method to identify our respondents.

Wages and benefits

Concerning the motivation for migration, the most common claim is that it is worth working abroad due to the wage differentials. Looking at the interview texts closely, we can see that after all social and pension contributions and travel expenses are covered, the interviewees earn approximately 600-800 euros of net income per month in the given migratory space (see Appendix 2). This amount is typically earned through shift work (the time of which generally increases as time spent in this career increases).[3] It is very important to note that respondents mention their daily wage for the shift period, but very often it is only revealed later that the stated amount also includes the period they are at home. Anna,[4] for example, proudly says that she earns "57 euros" or "17,000 forints" daily, but if we do all the calculations, including deducting travel expenses and social insurance, her net monthly salary is about 450-500 euros. In the case of Anna, a lower-class Roma woman, this illusion of higher earnings can be interpreted as her having a hierarchical expectation of work in the "West" that legitimizes her leaving. Moreover, the feeling can be also perceived that she, as a lower-class rural person and a Roma woman, was also able to achieve financial success (Durst 2013, 210, 217-220).

It should be noted that the initial wage or retirement/social benefits in Hungary that our interviewees received (if any) was usually worth 150-300 euros, so the 600-900 euros (converted into a monthly amount), and the frequently mentioned 700-

3 In other cases, they work in monthly shifts and earn proportionally more. However, the increase in salary must also include budgeting for a whole month of staying at home between shifts, and must cover regular (housing) expenses when migrants are abroad.

4 For detailed information concerning the wages and expenses of the respondents, see Table 2.

euro salary of a care worker (including accompanying meals) is significantly higher. In this respect, the neoclassical expectation of wage differentials playing a crucial role in this migratory space prevails according to the interviews. However, the migration process and its political economy are far more complicated, and ignoring the other factors creates a misleading picture. This is why it is worth carrying out a more complex analysis to fully understand this mass social action, the related social relationships, and their historical and structural determination.

One of the most interesting observations from the interviews is that people talked positively and openly about wage and non-material benefits in their narratives when their background and work careers were stable.[5] Such interviewees opted for migration very often after retirement, and they evaluated the available opportunities positively. This is how Lídia explained her decision:

> *Well, after retirement, then after three weeks? ... I said that being constantly at home is so tedious, all the domestic work. And then I decided once to try it – either it would work or not… It is not just about the money. It also motivates me, as you can help the grandchildren more, but the work itself and the beautiful places, and it's not so boring when one comes home for two weeks, then it's different again, different here and different there. There are also nice and good things there, and at home too. I like doing it. Really. (Lídia, 67)*

It is important to notice that in this case we do not simply see the story of an individual seeking to maximize her income, but the story of an aging but vigorous grandmother, already with stable living conditions, who mainly wants to help her grandchildren. However, even in her case we can identify factors that go far beyond the neoclassical framework. Both her and her husband's Swabian origins played a major role in their foreign labour, such as the husband's formerly (ethnic-kin-organized) period of work as a stonemason in Germany. The following case also shows the complexity of the problem, and the necessity of the integration of new factors and analytical levels.

A former hairdresser, Csenge, states very firmly that she had a very low salary at home, which is why she had to leave. However, her income considerably increased after commuting abroad:

> *Good. So, in fact, I came out to Germany because I was working as a hairdresser and we were earning very little. The more clients we had, the less we were earning... And then I went to work in the vocational school, to the kitchen, and the work was very hard there too, and everything, and, well, I thought that many people go abroad, I should try. And I tried, and I got an extraordinarily good job, I was there for six months, but not like six months in a row, but two months there and two months here, because my husband was at home and he was sick and that's why I had to come*

5 Somewhat similar observations have been made by Váradi et al. 2017, who emphasized that young people see migration as an opportunity. It is not clear though if the same perspective would remain after a longer period of struggling to find a job.

> *home. I was well paid, of course, compared to what I earned at the hairdresser's, five times, ten times more, if I can say that. (Csenge, 74)*

The interviewee exaggerates when she says that her new salary of 600-700 euros per month was five or ten times more than her original salary, but clearly it increased considerably. She started her job after having retired, during which time her earlier period of work (which lasted for 35 years) was gradually devalued in terms of income, and her salary even diminished towards the end of her career. This latter factor also affected her retirement income. Thus, the structural transformation (as we return to later, involving the devaluation of the related service sector) had a significant impact on the course of her life. In addition, her husband's illness and his relatively quick death at the beginning of the migration process could also have represented a financial crisis which increased her willingness to migrate, or maintained it. However, it is important to note that Csenge was in a stable situation and was able to experiment, not being in real need. Perhaps this might be one of the perspectives that can be employed when attempting to describe wage differentials clearly. It can be hypothesized that some interviewees talk about "profit maximization" and "utilizing wage differentials" who choose to migrate among relatively stable circumstances.

Another perspective arises: when a crisis occurs, and then this social action will have a different meaning. A widow, Beáta, does not mention wages.

The interviewee starts her story by talking about a period of unemployment and migration after a longer period of struggle, thus in principle her narrative accords with the neoclassical theoretical perspective, as she was significantly able to improve her situation. Meanwhile, we should see that her work history reveals long-lasting efforts to find a stable job, and note that Beáta had only short-term jobs, which may indicate that her migration in 2009 was not only the result of a quick decision; she had to be uprooted first. Beáta's daughter also went abroad in the same year. This was probably a coordinated crisis measure that did not reflect the respondent's income maximizing intentions as she did not really want to go, but she found she had to give up "home". Moreover, the main concern for her was occupational security. In her narrative she is truly disappointed, and specifies that job stability was a crucial factor in her migration narrative.

> *I think it came when (I was) unemployed. Or... not for the first time. So you do not know what to do. Yes, if at home I had a job that fitted me, I'm sure that I would not go away. And that's what I say, until this day I say that if I could get a job at home that was certain... but you cannot find it in this world, I'm sure, I do not believe in this anymore. To be at home... sure. This option has already gone for me. (Beáta, 56)*

For this group of cyclical labour migrants who were socialized under state socialism the security of jobs was important. This preference is also consistent with the fact that in Hungary the general appreciation of job security was higher than that of wage security among manual workers (Burawoy 1987). The disappearance of this

security may be a factor behind mass migration, which is evaluated negatively by the interviewees.

The motivation of avoiding working for low wages is also present in an interview with an unskilled worker, Anna, as mentioned above.

Nonetheless, when analyzing the rather long first narrative closely and carefully tracing all the follow-up answers, we find that her motivation includes a lot more factors involving pressure for a longer period of time. Also, according to an interview with her husband, who started the narrative interview by mentioning these elements, one of the most important factors is that the family started a small business during the transition from state socialism. After the breakup of the collective farm, they failed in this entrepreneurial attempt, which led them into serious debt. This debt was further increased by various members of the family who had entered into a very serious debt trap by the end of the 2000s. The crisis was further deepened by the serious illness of the husband, which led to his dismissal and receipt of a disability pension. So the change of regime resulted in breaking point, after which loans covered the gap between incomes and needs for a while. The job in Austria has actually consolidated a longer-term crisis, thus the process is an extended one. Anna also explicitly raises the issue of the reference point for wage differences, since while the wage advantage exists today, the interviewee did not consider it valid; the salary from the poultry processing industry in the 1980s was the best she had:

> *Yes, yes. In the poultry processing plant, because they sent people away. There were three shifts there. From 6 a.m. - 2 p.m, from 2 p.m - 10 p.m, and from 10 p.m. - 6 a.m. in the morning. We had to work in three shifts. But it was good. That wage was worth more than any you can get now. It was better than anything, since because its [relative] value was greater. (Anna, 53)*

The devaluation of the wage advantage in the above-mentioned example also occurs in many other cases, such as in the case of Katinka. Katinka can also see that instead of the 100 euros payment for public work in Hungary, the monthly salary of 400-450 euros she earns while abroad is a major step forward, which she accepted because her son who lives at home does not have an income. It is an important consideration nonetheless that she perceives her migration as being forced, and finds the cost of it to be very high, and the amount of so-called "clean" money [net earnings] as not very good:

> *The money, that is. Because if there was a job here, I'm sure I would not do this [go abroad]. For sure.... So, I'm sure that I would not go. Sorry.*

When discussing wage advantages, we should mention one of the additional advantages; namely, the Austrian pension. Obtaining a pension from abroad is an important element in the calculations of care workers, which is why the legality of their work abroad is an important question. Is it declared to the public authorities? During our interviews, several respondents expressed disappointment about the fact that they would have been due an Austrian pension a long time ago if they had not started to work illegally. More interviewees reported that after five years of

employment in Austria they expected a pension of around 30-60 euros per month, which increases in proportion to the number of years of employment.

Constrained labour and becoming uprooted

Mahua Sarkar has written a very important study on Bangladeshi migrant workers working abroad in which migratory processes and various institutional processes blur the line between free labour and forced labour (Sarkar 2017). It seems that East European women are also reporting about how they have become uprooted and how this has led to "voluntary" labour abroad.

The narratives of Csenge, Anna, and Katinka have already indicated the role of an accumulation of disadvantages produced by the transition to capitalism, and during their migration stories they return to describing the shock caused by the change of regime and to the radical transformation of local economic structures at that time. The massive corporate bankruptcies, particularly in the textile industry, and the system of unfavourable loans and other structural constraints all point to the external mechanisms of the globalization process.

Katinka draws attention to the importance of her former employment in a glove factory in the 1980s, which, though it damaged her eyes, still provided her with a stable livelihood. In the early 1990s the wages and opportunities at the factory were declining due to huge global competition. It is also apparent that after this episode the interviewee could not really recover and got into serious difficulties as a worker, even leading to her exclusion from the social benefit system.

> *I commuted to the glove factory to work for 23 years. Then I could not tolerate this physically, my eyes went really bad and my husband said that I should not continue. Actually, I had been already working at home, I received a [sewing] machine at home, but in the countryside there were things to do in the vegetable garden during the day, there was the family, there were two little children – three-and-a-half-year-old twins – and then my husband said there was a bus attendant job in the neighbouring village. That the kindergarten kids needed to be watched, and my husband told me to go there and do it, it would be better. I listened to him, hmmm, but the money was too little, they counted only four hours, and the money was not enough. Then a German flower shop opened, and I went there, and then it went bankrupt, and I could not find a job because I was over forty, with a rural background, and I was not hired any more. Then I had a long period of unemployment and claiming benefits. When this (Inter)City railway job started, I came here, I got hired to clean; I had a permanent nightshift here, while we were getting divorced. And then we got the money in hand and I did not pay the tax on it, but I invested it in the house.... Then they dismissed me saying that they could not hire entrepreneurs who had public debts. But everyone had public debt! [smiles]. Ahm... so, not just me, almost everyone had. And I could not get any benefits like that, because entrepreneurs do not receive any benefits.*

> *Then there were some occasional jobs such as cleaning in the construction industry, illegally.... So, I was sent away. And this friend told me, she convinced me to leave from here because, because I would see how good it can be. (Katinka, 61)*

It is also important to know that the shock of the regime change led to an earlier migration attempt in Katinka's life history and also in other cases, but paying agency fees proved to be problematic at that point and migration was not accomplished.

This early experiment also shows that at that time the "infrastructure of migration" was relatively undeveloped compared to the circumstances today (Xiang – Lindquist 2014).

This early attempt occurred during the first wave of emigration that started in the second half of the 1980s and which appears in the Austrian and mainly German statistics (Melegh 2015), and it was just an initial reaction. The initial shock was not enough to produce migration in the sense of the "uprooting" process described by world system theory (Sassen 1988, Massey 1993). It happened more slowly, when the "struggle," the almost constant crisis caused by disadvantageous circumstances, became permanent, at least according to the testimony of these interviewees.

Fanni also talks about a similar shock during the change of the regime and also points at an additional crisis in 2008 when she launched a small business with her husband, and how the related family crisis led to the decision to migrate for work:

> *Well, I was working as an administrator at the state farm in B. before I finished... in '70..., from 1974, I worked there for 17 years, then the farm, privatization came, then it finished up unfortunately. We would have never believed that such a big state farm, where 1000 people were employed, could suddenly... this was not so, we did not believe that it was happening. We were even happy that it was so good for us, we did not have to go to work, you were unemployed for a bit, but then you got the surprise that this was it – it really is, what will happen now? A few months, and then what will happen? Because if you were on the treadmill, it was so good, you rested a bit, you were at home – and afterwards? It was a great shock. (Fanni, 60)*

It can be stated that both the interviewees report and their biographies show that the radical transformation of the external environment at the time of the collapse of state socialism in the given migratory space uprooted people from their former stable positions and resulted in a long-lasting period of insecurity as reported in their interviews. We can also call this process becoming "disembedded" from a customary and stable situation, as Hann would call it on the basis of the conceptual framework of Karl Polanyi (Hann 2018). This feeling of being uprooted for a longer period can lead to such narrations as the former ones, as opposed to stable life histories. In these cases, migration can be interpreted as a long-term response to insecurity. In other words, transformations driven externally from the point of view of the local community are taken into account and perceived in the narrations. According to the interviewees, the latter created constraints over time, which processes may

have involved several coercive mechanisms, at least according to the interrelations observed in the interviews.

In the interviews, one of these mechanisms of insecurity (as we have already seen above) is the decrease in wages and even the non-payment of wages: These problems, together with the deterioration of other circumstances (debts, deterioration in health, etc.), actually led to a pre-migration crisis which cannot be interpreted as migration generated by low wages, but by constraints of livelihoods and precarious states (see for example Szépe 2012). This is well illustrated by Ilona's case. She describes in her own words how, following the example of her sister, she escaped from a very hard situation.

> *I went abroad after working in catering, then my husband became very ill and had to sell the business after 23 years; that was the [breaking] point, and after that it was hard to find a job again. And then, I was originally from the village, but the point of the whole thing was that we were searching, and then I settled in a place, in a (good) bakery. I was a shop assistant, a bakery shop assistant, so I worked like a slave... since I did not get paid, I did not get days off, I did not get money on days I did not work, so I thought that was it. In the meantime, an acquaintance said that one could go to work to Germany, as I had intended to do before, and at the age of 50 I went to Germany to work on a 'Hof'. Afterwards, I said I would not go anymore, as it was slavery at that time and it was very, very difficult. I lost 24 pounds [in weight] in the three months, I broke my knees, so long, it did not matter, it was over, and then my sister who was already working in Germany as a nurse [carer] said 'Ili, this money could be earned more easily' (hmmm), and then I started to work as a nurse. (Ilona, 57)*

In this case, the escape was from one vulnerable situation to another, when the interviewee engaged in care-work after experiencing very harsh working conditions.

Similarly, Diana interprets her migration in the 1990s as a case of being hit by a crisis. For her, the constraint was the crash of the social system following the introduction of the so-called Bokros package, named after the minister of finance of that time. During this period of "shock therapy," certain stable elements of the social welfare programs were cut or reformulated. Therefore Diana, who slowly became an agent organizing care-work, explained the changes in her migration steps and commuting in relation to the emerging economic hardships. She also confirms this from her role as an agent who made use of these factors:

> *Because unfortunately in Hungary, no matter how much you work, you cannot make enough money. I just don't wonder that many of them leave their home country, and many of them just wander, which is a very bad thing. They will not come back, because if they move out, the whole family will move out.* (Diana, 41)

According to Diana, it is not wage differentials and wage maximization that matter, but the fact that financial insecurity leads to mass migration. Feelings of economic insecurity also become dominant in the interviews when interviewees report to struggling with other crises, the most important of these being connected

to the family. Vivien interprets her own story quite dramatically and recounts how she was forced to leave not only because of vulnerability and insecurity at work, but also due to a sudden family crisis.

Well, it's been a long time since one bought a house in cash, it's impossible, we don't earn so much in today's world. I had a job in the catering industry, I worked down here in the pub for a while, also before and after my daughter's birth, but on the one hand working conditions changed a lot, the salary became very low. I was almost never at home – as you might know, in catering there are no weekends, no holidays, nothing – I was not at home, I was not paid, and in the end I had to do everything, so the line had been crossed. I quit, but work was needed. Then, my mom. She was an alcoholic and she was in very bad shape so I took care of her, but she needed support, although she was working at the local government, but it was not enough for anything. Then I worked for Eckerle for a while, this company produced gadgets, but I did not feel okay, so I finished after three months. Meanwhile, my mother moved away because I wanted to control her drinking, but she drank, so we did not understand each other, and when she moved home she managed to get so drunk that she died. So, to tell the truth, I had no money for the funeral, so one week after her death I left, because there was no choice, I had to pay for the funeral, and when I came back after the first two weeks, we buried her. So, I left to go abroad exactly because there was nothing for covering this. (Vivien, 27)

In this case, additional factors, namely former migration patterns, social ties and former migratory networks, played a role. Before her migration Vivien's mother had also worked harvesting asparagus in Germany, and her brother had worked abroad as a stonemason. This explains why these family members could leave in the given situation, but not others (Portes 1995, Portes – Böröcz 1989, Gödri 2010, Blaskó – Gödri 2014). Thus the case involved not only a need to reduce costs, but migration was probably one of the (often postponed) solutions. Almost all the interviewees drew attention to the role of historical and ethnic networks. These also involve regional characteristics, such as the Swabian-German relations that already existed during the time of state socialism and which impacted the lives of interviewees (Blaskó – Gödri 2014, Feischmidt – Zakariás 2010, Váradi et al. 2017, Gábriel 2018). Thus ethnic and migratory patterns in the migratory processes are also major structural factors in migration, which according to the interviewees become factors with a direct impact in serious crisis situations (Feischmidt – Zakariás 2010). In fact, such a coexistence and correlation of factors can be observed in other cases of financial insecurity; for example, when crisis occurs due to debt.

Similar to other factors, the crisis can also be connected to the factor of age, as the interviewees repeatedly indicated that they could not find any work at over 50 years of age. Age-related discrimination was also a factor, in their opinion.

Divorce plays a role in many cases... so if someone has just divorced, many of them are with children, they have to be cared for, and it is typical that the children of

caregivers [who go abroad] are the youngest children, who are in the third or fourth year [of school]. I heard about one who was two years old. I have a care-worker now where the child is younger, another is starting school now. Variable. Variable. So this is a problem. The older age group is just before retirement and they cannot get a job in Hungary at the age of 55-56. (Diana, 41)

To sum up, the above interviewees do not portray themselves as free and rational decision makers. In their reports family crises are the key factors, related to various wider structural causes and changes (see also Váradi et al. 2017). It is important to note that the "crisis narratives" in themselves could also be a legitimating tool in a discursive space that does not support migration, as found in earlier research (Kovács –Melegh 2000, Turai 2018). It can also be argued that migrant workers try to justify their moves through such crisis narratives. This fact may also play a role, but it must be pointed out that the above-mentioned coexistence of multiple biographical events suggests that these crises are not (or only partially) re-evaluations, or means of legitimizing decisions in hindsight, but refer to real and serious hardship.

Ignoring costs, and the family economy

One of the last elements in the micro economics of migration in any given space is that interviewees often ignore a significant number of costs (e.g. they do not take into account the fact that they are providing a 24-hour service when they talk about wages), or they do not associate their work with other "costs" and "benefits"; namely, their micro-economic calculations are not complete. They treat the fees of brokers relatively consciously, and the receiving families or agents handle insurance and travel expenses.

One of the most important elements regarding the "forgetting" of costs is that interviewees rarely mention the fact that they are not able to take their family members with them, and members cannot get jobs in the same place. This situation is largely incompatible with information about wages and conditions, as the agent of the caregivers explains:

Many people call me, saying that 'I want to do care work, but I want to go with my husband.' Of course, I'm not partner to these things. First, I don't deal with organizing this, that someone gets a job in the same city, in the same place. I would like to tell you that we recruit people for this intensive care through partnerships. In Austria we send people directly to families. So I cannot find a job for someone's husband, and in such cases I tell them [the applicants] that they should try elsewhere. There is no way to do that... We send people abroad, not families. (Diana, 41)

The difficulty which is touched upon above indicates that these costs are not accounted for but become a part of familial self-exploitation, in the sense that Chayanov used the term in the case of peasant economies (Chayanov 1966). If taken into account these costs would significantly reduce the "competitiveness" of net

salaries of 140-240,000 forints which migrant workers try to boost via "forgetting" the time they spend at home between shifts. The dilemma of how to reconcile one's duty to care for one's own dependent parents with care work abroad is regularly seen in the literature, but often forgotten.

Similarly, work-related health problems and their consequences can also be added to the costs. Serious work-related acute and chronic illnesses are reported by the interviewees, although their consequences are scarcely mentioned and they are not included on the migratory balance sheet.

Katinka lived in a house in a forest with her patient, where she had to work and sleep in a temperature of 13 °C due to poor insulation. The cold temperatures played a role in the emergence of inflammation and benign tumors, which trouble her during her everyday life. Réka talks about a herniated disk and recurrent panic disorder:

> *Due to necessity... In 2005, I went to Tirol, I worked in a four-star hotel as a maid. In October 2009, I went home, (I was) burnt out, sick, with a herniated disk. I could not get a job at home, I set up a business, I made frames and cleaned with my mother, the two of us. This was my job for two years. Then the jobs ran out because people saved money when they could. I've been working my whole life and I won't be a parasite... Then in 2008 I changed my working schedule, which was then not seven months, but only three-and-a-half or four-and-a-half, but in 2007 it became clear that I had a panic disorder due to stress. But at that time it didn't occur to me that a doctor would be needed, and I had no idea at all that this was the case, [that this was why I was getting dizzy], I got sick: I slept and kept on going.... (Réka, 54)*

To sum up, some of the costs and difficulties of working abroad arise from sharing in the household. The leaving behind of one's own family is constantly forgotten, or the situation is considered only as the difficult and inevitable consequence of the migration situation. In other words, the strengths of family relationships, the work itself, the distinctions between work and health impacts handling the two separately all hide some of the costs and thus make jobs abroad less "profitable." This "ignorance" of interviewees was also due not only to family microeconomics but also to the desire to show that that they were being successful in managing very difficult situations or unprivileged social positions.

The organization and institutionalization of labor migration among care workers

One of the most important issues concerning transnational care work is the fact that among many migrants who work abroad, including many of our respondents, the arrangements do not involve free, non-commodified-type agreements between two households, where one household shares its income with the another to get certain activities done. Therefore, such care-work it is not a "traditional" form of work, and is distinct from the classical, commodified wage labour described by Marx or Karl

Polanyi (Polanyi 1844/2001, 76; Szigeti 2017, Turai 2016). It involves transactions not only in the informal market or outside of the market, but a form of institutionalized market where very often, and very importantly, a profit-orientated agency network utilizes wage differentials and the welfare benefits given by the receiving state, and brokers obtain a significant share of the rent (unearned income) from migration. Principally, it is the receiving state and booming recruitment activity that capitalize on hierarchical wage relations and extract the rent from a globally unequal system. Thus this activity and the activity providers become (using Polany's term) fictitious commodities and part of the multiverse of global work (see for the role of "migration infrastructure," Xiang – Lindquist 2014, 123-125; for global work, van der Linden – Roth 2013, 448, 457, 458; for fictitious commodities, Polanyi 1944/2001, 75, 79). Thus, from the perspective of the theory of migration, this mass process cannot be described as merely a mechanical product of the decisions of migrants, as assumed by scholars that promote neoclassical models to explain migration. In many respects, the process is driven to a large extent by demand, and a specific set of agents; namely, it should be seen as a type of segmented labour market model (Parrenas 2001, Turai 2018, Massey 1993, Gábriel 2018). Our interview with an agent illuminates the process of objectification ("human trafficking") and also the logic of payments, which reveals (through a process of magnifying benefits again) that a monthly wage of only 700 euros may be obtained (based on 24-hour service for the period of work), after travel costs and social contributions in the host country are paid for. The following is what our agent interviewee says about this process:

> *In Austria in competing companies people have been quasi-trafficked; they treat nurses [carers] like... they mediate, and they pay wages that simply [would not be paid] in the normal process of labor recruitment.*

It should be noted that on a macro level, it is also clear that, due to uneven exchange between the two countries, Austria skims off a significant social transfer as it earns hundreds of euros per month and per capita per migrant worker from the Austrian social and retirement scheme, as under the relevant rules hardly any benefits must be paid to them (five years of employment and a higher contribution into the system are required before any serious retirement benefits can be obtained).[6] Thus, some part of the financial payment made by the host state (550 – 1100 euros per month) is also recouped by the host state, while due to "care distraction," vacant care worker positions, and absent roles within the family in the sending countries, deficiencies may arise in connection with care (Turai 2018, 182–190).

The interviews with the migrant labour agent are also very informative as the agent also "forgets" to mention her own fees, although these sums can be huge. In many cases, at least in this migratory space, these costs are paid by the host family, but it frequently occurs that the workers themselves have to pay 100-200 euros per

6 On a macro level see: https://g7.24.hu/elet/20180102/az-osztrakok-kiszamoltak-mennyit-hoz-nekik-egy-bevandorlo-es-mennyit-visz-egy-menekult/ (Last download: 2018.05.27)

month (110,000 forints annually), or 10 percent of their salary. This sum is usually not included in the often-mentioned net salary of 700 euros per month, but it is sometimes debited from the net wage. In exchange, the interviewees receive not only addresses from the agent but they are also assured that in the event of their or their shift-partner's illness (absence), they will not need to organize a substitute. Thus, the situation clearly shows the existence of a secondary, private redistribution system, as national social services do not cover these labour relations.

Competition among labour migrant groups

Based on the interviews, we can state that the related wages are only relatively high before the full range of accounted- and not accounted-for ("forgotten") costs are considered (24-hour shifts, and all the physical and psychological hardships, particularly among aging, 50-60 year-old women). One of the reasons for this is that, in the given migratory space, host families are likely to try to manage within the limits of the state benefit they receive for elderly care as described above (i.e. they try to keep the gross labour costs of care work to less than 1100 euros), and to finance only the smallest part of the cost of care from their own pockets. Obviously, the situation is variable, and while there are families which treat care-workers humanely and fairly, there are also very unpleasant families that try to save every penny. Via this benefit system the Austrian state generates demand for migrant labour from low-income countries; labour that is also an important and indispensable part of the social care system in the sending society. Therefore, the process involves the conscious, state-supported use of wage differences, so we should not speak about the functioning of a neoclassical market model of supply and demand. Without this benefit-driven demand, there would not be such massive migration within the given migratory space.

Wages are kept low due to another mechanism as well. This is wage competition between various labour migrant groups. Competition is linked to the employment of cultural prejudices against "problematic" groups of workers (regarding such competition, see Feischmidt 2004 and Feischmidt – Zakariás 2011; with a focus on Eastern European care givers see Turai 2018, 11). The cost of this competition is borne by the migrant groups as a from of externality of the market system, and can involve direct financial losses for the migrant labourers. Moreover, financial disadvantages can also be indirect: in such fragmented labour market segments, rivalry certainly reduces the ability of migrants to enforce related interests concerning working conditions in a diverse and fragmented social space (Hoerder et al. 2015, 5-20). This rivalry, which reduces not only employees' but also agents' commission and income, was explained by the agent we interviewed as follows:

> *I have the minimum wage here, I do not even get this; last month, this month my salary was 79,000 forints, and I have been doing this for five years. This is not going well, even with us [agents] anymore, so you have to know that we – from our*

partner company's commission, and the families... the family will pay us the monthly commission as long as our service is used. So many families, many families would be needed to be make a profit, and then after taxation I would be able to make a living. Because if I earn ten million (forints), half of it goes to the state as tax. And how can you produce ten million extra a year, when I need almost 500,000 forints a year to rent [the office]? Forty-five thousand forints is the rental fee for this office that needs to be paid. The wages have to be paid, I pay almost 100,000 forints in social contributions each month. Then, the wages and other things, I count all of this... to have ten million extra, I would need so many families. There is a great deal of competition, as I said, a good deal of competition, it's very competitive. Well, nearly 400 companies are registered in Austria, not to mention the Polish, and I am not speaking about the Romanians, Bulgarians, Croatians, and Hungarians, these five countries, neighbouring countries, with hundreds of companies, recruitment companies specialized only in elderly care. In Romania, in only one county, we have less than a quarter [of employees] in five counties than in Romania from one county. There are plenty of agencies, lots of people who deal only with elderly care. They mean competition not only for us as a company, but also for the employees, both for the employers and the employees. So the Slovaks, Polish, Romanians are the biggest competitors in the field of 24-hour care in Germany. (Diana, 41)

Beyond the "normal" entrepreneurial complaints about costs and the lack of profit, we can clearly see that there is a need to increase the number of clients as much as possible and that the number of competing agencies and the labor force they control serves as a factor in controlling wages. This section of the interviews gave clear signs that one of the factors that maintains high levels of migration is the development of the "migration infrastructure" and the dramatic increase in agencies, as Xiang and Lindquist also argue concerning this era of globalization (Xiang – Lindquist 2014, 123-125). This situation is also recognized by the interviewees.

A care-giver also talked about the same phenomenon. They put it the following way:

Then Ukrainians come, Poles, there are a lot of Poles out there, Romanian girls, Romanian girls undertake [this work] for very little money, because there is absolutely no opportunity to work in Romania. (Fanni, 60)

Due to the institutionalization of this competition it is not surprising that interviewees also feel that their position is important to them. This competitive struggle and its ideology are well illustrated by the fact that almost every interviewee talked about the refugees who had appeared in their destination space in a particularly negative way. The disapproving attitudes in the interviews were not only due to the perceived or actual social costs of people arriving from elsewhere, but also originated in perceptions about work ethics and the hierarchical position assigned by host society to caregiver migrants and incoming groups in relation to the locals. Nonetheless, the above-described political economic mechanisms are not necessarily related to the perceived positional insecurity of the East European migrant workers. Lídia, one of

the most positive workers who looked for nice places where she could work outside of home, says the following:

> *I do not really understand this now. Everyone is already coming. It is not true that all of them are refugees due to wars. And they have so much money, and I can see that in Austria. There, there are a lot of them in Leoben, and I was there as the middleman called [am asylum seeker] to help a stonemason, because they live there and were moved there. He [the asylum seeker] said he receives meals all day, receives breakfast, lunch and snacks, gets coffee, gets five euros, and just something; he's a waiter, he does not work. (...) It's awful that they're loud, we see them, they are moved into such large houses – I do not meet them by the way, but we can see them there. And they're really grumbling there, because they have got smartphones, they get a flat, but not any kind of apartment but a big detached house, their children get their food in the school for free, and the families are supposed to get 1,500 euros of pocket money.*

The interviewee is not worried about actual competition with her, but just about the welfare benefits the asylum seekers receive (i.e. the rents they are required to share).

Sometimes the link between feeling "disembedded" and complaints about "refugees" is apparent. Réka, representing one of the interviewees who has encountered a lot of hardship in terms of health, family and jobs, quite openly links the local welfare system to support for refugees, which also shows the rivalry among the groups. In addition, she also involves her hardships in her complaints.

> *Well, if we let them in, Hungarian woman will start to think about how many babies they will have to deliver.... Many of them cannot even read or write, what will happen if they start to reproduce themselves? Let's see, these refugees, they come with four or five children, these children must be fed, dressed, educated. I almost died when I tried to educate my two children by myself. Should I work for others' children?! The Austrian pension has not increased, they raised the Austrian pension only by 0.8%, hundreds of euros a month. For one person. Who would like to work to support them? Come on! (Réka, 54)*

To sum up, transnational elderly care is organized as part of an institutionalized, hierarchical competition which significantly determines the wage and cost conditions of care work, and the type of demand that is generated. These institutional frameworks are constantly influencing and at the same time sustaining and facilitating the process of mass migration, which, as such, can hardly be thought of as the mechanical result of aggregated rational/welfare decisions, as we demonstrate through our interviews and the reactions of interviewees.

Conclusions

The interview texts we have analysed are rich sources for understanding how interviewees construct their own very complex perspectives of migration and work

abroad, which are reactions to cultural patterns and their own life histories embedded in larger-scale social changes. In our qualitative sociological research we have tried to understand and identify the internal mechanisms of these "ideational" processes as complex reactions to past and present circumstances. We have also tried to show what new perspectives need further analysis on a larger scale – or should involve going beyond interviews – to obtain a fuller reconstruction of the process itself.

As evidence from the interviews indicates, the short-term circular migrant labour of care-worker commuters is often embedded into perceptions of a highly institutionalized hierarchical order within historical structures and processes and in gender-fragmented migratory spaces. Even if the interviewees dwell on numerous labour-market-related or familial crises most of them do not see themselves as individuals seeking benefits in a rational manner. The perception of making rational choice plays a role only when the interviewees have memories of a longer-term, stable job. In other words there were only a few interruptions in the employment history they recall. Thus, on the basis of the interviews we conducted, the decisions themselves are presented as being more complex than neoclassical theory assumes, suggesting that wider, historically developing structural causes and social changes may also play a major role by laying the ground for socially contextualized migratory decisions. The interviews suggest that when analyzing such processes it is pertinent to look at longer-term historical causes of migration and possibly even at the structural changes of previous decades. If interviewees report to having experienced multiple crises in their life (work, family, debt, etc.), and this knowledge is coupled with a pattern of outmigration by other family members or by individuals from a closer network then it seems, we need to take a longer term historical perspective. With further research we may thus develop a new understanding of this type of migration and constrained short-term cyclical migrant labour and we can reconstruct the experience of abandoned workers in post state socialist Hungary.

The targeted group itself might be important, since it is likely that former working class people, unskilled and semi-skilled workers in the various declining professions deserve special attention. Qualitative research can only argue that a systematic connection is possible between the effects of globalization and migration. Thus, some of the women who are leaving a labour market that is declining due to globalization occasionally try to find employment in the service industries, while eventually they enter into this global labour market through utilizing certain family, ethnic and local patterns and relationships, especially when after a longer and more stable period they become vulnerable financially for a longer period of time. The issue is not the coexistence of different forms of work and inequalities, as suggested by the critical literature on global labour (van der Linden 2013). Here, in the given migratory space, these different forms of work and the related inequalities can be linked by a historical logic, as we learn from the interviews. The migrant women we interviewed had stable jobs in late state socialism which were later ruined by the globalization of the textile

industry or other declining or very competitive service industries, and then a longer struggle started. Some of these workers have moved slowly from the marginalized sectors into global care work: this is how they become transnational actors.

This painful process of structural transformation could be the space in which individual interviewees manoeuvre. The changes they have experienced and the forces uprooting them produce a lot of bitterness among them, whilst the transnational life and entering the global market have also brought inner joy and satisfaction to these women. In the meanwhile, their situation has only partially improved, and their vulnerability may have just been restructured, thus overall we are witnessing the personal records of the reproduction of various subordinated positions.

We could also reconstruct from these interviews that some of the costs of these decisions or work abroad are hidden even to the interviewees themselves, which situation we hypothesized to be linked to the structures of family economies which follow a different logic than "profit-making" organizations. Their prime motive of the former can thus be the level of subjectively felt self-exploitation as described by Chayanov and as originally applied to peasant families. But it seems that migrant labour to large extent controlled and organized by the family and not the individual may have some elements of the model described by Chayanov. This model and several other mechanisms (such as migrants trying to show the positive outcome of migration, or even an improvements of status) can lead to the "suppression" of some costs which makes the analyzed decisions even less "rational" in an individualist sense. Thus, on the basis of our research it can be claimed that the household economics model may be a key model in such analysis as middle aged and elderly family members also react to a combination of individual and societal level changes, including declining health, various family crises involving divorce and debt, and the loss of jobs. Along these linked cycles they manoeuvre, most probably trying to minimize their losses and risks as far they are able to do so in a highly competitive sphere of work. Surely this situation needs further research using data and observations that goes beyond the interviews we have analyzed in a specific region.

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Appendix

Table 1.: Selected demographic and employment characteristics of interviewees

Interviewees in the research sample

Code	Name	Age	Marital status	Shift Rotation	Status
D01	Anna	53	Married	4 weeks	Active
D02	Beáta	56	Widow	2 weeks	Active
D03	Diána	41	Married	2 weeks	Manager, former care-worker
D04	Gáspár	56	Married	-	Husband
D05	Csenge	74	Widow	4 weeks	Former care-worker
D06	Katinka	61	Divorced	4 weeks	Active
D07	Ilona	57	Married	4 weeks	Intermittent
D08	Lídia	67	Married	2 weeks	Active
D09	Franciska	43	In relationship	2 weeks	Intermittent
D10	László	73	Married	-	Husband
G01	Juliska	62	Widow	4 weeks	Active
G02	Timea	48	Divorced	4 weeks	Active
G03	Vivien	27	In relationship	2 weeks	Former care-worker
G04	Réka	54	Divorced	2 weeks	Active
G05	Fanni	60	Married	4 weeks	Intermittent
A01	Borbála	68	Married	4 weeks	Active
A02	József	74	Married	-	Husband
H01	Margit	60	Married	3 months	Active
H02	Ferenc	61	Married	-	Husband
R01	Emma	68	Divorced	2 weeks	Former care-worker
E01	Edina	57	Divorced	2 weeks	Active

Table 2: Wages and some of the reported costs of care workers employed abroad
Wages earned abroad, and reported costs of labor migration

Code	Wage abroad	Travel expenses	Commission fee	Contributions (to state) paid abroad	Total amount after deductions (as calculated by interviewee)
D01	1596 €/4 weeks (57€/day)	95€/ each way, pays for herself	None	570 €/ three-months' social security (pays for herself)	900 €
D02	Not mentioned	60€/each way, family pays	Not mentioned	social security (family pays)	Not known
D03	clients: 770 € minimum/2 weeks	Pays for herself	Not mentioned	social security (paid for herself)	Not counted
D05	1200 €/4 weeks	Family paid	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not counted
D06	1100 €/4 weeks (40 €/day)	Family pays	180 euros, family pays to the agent. 250-400 € for one offer	Not mentioned	150,000 Ft
D07	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	10% of salary	Not mentioned	Not known
D08	700 €/2 weeks	Family pays	Not mentioned	182 €/month social security (family pays)	700 €
D09	Not mentioned	Family pays	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not known
G01	Not mentioned	Pays for herself	Not mentioned	Non-legal (no social security)	Not known
G02	1000 €/4 weeks	Family pays	100 €/month	Not mentioned	900 €
G03	700 €/2 weeks	Pays for herself	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not counted
G04	Germany: 1200 €, then Austria: 1030 € /2 weeks	100€/way	108,000 Ft /year	200 €/month social security (pays for herself)	700 €
G05	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	No social security	Not known
A01	1500-1600 €/4 weeks	Pays for herself	None	No social security	Not counted
H01	800 € /not known	Family pays	None	No social security	Not counted
R01	Not mentioned	Pays for herself	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not known
E01	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not known

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Development in the context of care migration from rural Hungary: An agency-based approach

Krisztina Németh – Monika Mária Váradi
nemeth.krisztina@krtk.hu, varadim@mta-rkk-tko.hu

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Abstract: This paper aims to create a better understanding of the interplay between structural constraints and individual agency in the process of international labor migration based on empirical evidence collected in Hungarian small towns and villages. Drawing on Amartya Sen's capability-based concept of development, and a theory of agency elaborated by Emirbayer and Mische, the paper focuses on live-in care migration as a specific form of female circular migration from Hungary to Western European countries, and highlights the varying and dynamic nature of migrant women's agency within the complexity of structural constraints. The object of this paper is twofold: first, it compares and systematically analyzes Hungarian migrant elderly care workers' coping strategies in the face of constraints set in the global context of care work. Second, it aims to provide a comprehensive theoretical framework based on the concepts of agency in which diverse empirical findings – human games within a host household and narratives problematizing these specific social roles – can be interpreted. Our empirical evidence shows that human games and tactics are triggered precisely by structural constraints; they are directly inspired by limitations. Although these tactics are potential tools for enlarging individual room for maneuver situationally, they evidently cannot alter structures. The asymmetry of structure and agency is clearly demonstrated in the fact that the overwhelming majority of Hungarian care workers describe individual gains from their jobs as fragments of development. These fragments reflect not only structural constraints, but also highlight potential gains from this specific type of circular migration, pointing out that the concept of "remittances" is more complex than a mere increase in financial stability.

Keywords: migration and development, care migration, agency, tactics, narratives

Introduction: Migration, Development and Agency

In the debate about the nexus between migration and development, the emphasis has been placed on financial remittances and the contribution migration makes to economic progress on a national level and to income-generating capacity on a household level (see de Haas 2005; de Haas–Rodríguez 2010; Kapur 2004). From this one-sided, instrumental, rather utilitarian perspective about migration and development, the complexity of the social, cultural, political, and gendered impacts of migration on the lives of migrants and their family members cannot be grasped. The limited understanding of migration and development can be overcome by drawing on

Amartya Sen's notion of development, conceptualized as "a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy" (Sen 1999: 3). Sen operationalizes these freedoms by using the concept of human capability, which he defines as "the capabilities of persons to lead the kind of lives they value – and have reason to value" (Sen 1999: 19).

Drawing on Sen's concept of capability, Hein de Haas (2014) interprets migration capability as people's freedom to decide where to live, irrespective of whether they aspire to leave or to stay, as their freedom to control their own lives. To develop a meaningful understanding of agency in migration processes, de Haas proposes a meta-theoretical conceptualization of "migration as a function of aspiration and capabilities to migrate within the given set of opportunity structures" (de Haas 2014: 4). As he points out:

> Because people have agency, their mobility is also a potential force for structural change, because it can play an important part in altering the social and economic conditions in both sending and receiving countries. (...) However, it is important to emphasize that all migrants face structural constraints and (that) the degree to which they can exercise agency is fundamentally limited. This also limits the extent to which migrants can bring about structural change (de Haas 2009: 2).

This paper aims to create a better understanding of the interplay between structural constraints and individual agency in the process of international labor migration based on empirical evidence collected in Hungarian small towns and villages.[1] We will focus on live-in care migration, a widespread form of female circular migration from Hungary to Western European countries, because of its specific features which highlight the varying, dynamic nature of the agency of migrant women within the complexity of structural constraints.

In the research on international care migration, the agency-based approach is anything but novel. In her seminal book, Rhacel Salazar Parreňas explored the means by which Filipina migrant domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles resist or negotiate the effects of the structural "dislocations" they face in their lives in both cities (Parreňas 2001). Helma Lutz emphasized in her book on the "new maids" of Europe that migrant care workers are "not puppets" of economic and social constraints, but "human individuals seeking to improve their living conditions across frontiers" (Lutz 2011, 24), and also analyzed the strategies and tactics migrant domestic workers adopt to achieve (relative) autonomy and self-determination in their relationships with employers. In accordance with Lutz's analytical approach, Tünde Turai considers Hungarian migrant elderly care workers in different countries as active and influential actors maneuvering within structural limits and controlled social spaces (Turai 2017, 2018).

1 The project "International Migration from Hungary and its Impacts on Rural Society" (2015-2018) was funded by NFKI/OTKA (K 111 969). Research team members were Judit Durst, Katalin Fehér, Krisztina Németh, Monika Mária Váradi (principal investigator) and Tünde Virág.

Drawing on this theoretical and empirical background, the object of this paper is twofold: first, we will compare and systematically analyze Hungarian migrant elderly care workers' experiences, coping strategies, and tactics within the constraints set in the global context of care work. Second, we will provide a comprehensive theoretical framework based on the concepts of agency and tactics in which diverse empirical findings can be interpreted.

Context, Methods, Scope and Limits

Selection of the research sites[2] was based on prior research experience. We had previously built contacts with respected local people, mostly women, who helped us to find interviewees involved in international labor migration. This support seemed necessary for overcoming the potential distrust of interviewees stemming from the sensitivity of the topic of migration and their vulnerability, given that many of them worked informally. We conducted a total of 250 semi-structured interviews at three different research sites with international labor migrants and their family members, as well as with local stakeholders and experts. From all the interviews, 25 were conducted with women who were working as live-in migrant care workers in Austria and Germany at the time of the research, or had done so at a previous time.

In order to understand the migrant trajectories of Hungarian elderly care workers, it is important to emphasize that the context of migration from Eastern and Central European countries differs from global patterns of transnational care migration. In this region, shorter geographical distances as well as national and European-level migration regimes trigger a specific circular migration pattern organized in a shift rotation system in two-, four-, or six-week periods (Lutz–Palenga-Möllenbeck 2011, 2012, 2016; Palenga-Möllenbeck 2013, 2014; Turai 2017, 2018). Shift-based care work also shapes transnational family ties and parenting strategies (Lutz 2011; Turai 2018). Due to the shift rotation system, migrant elderly care workers maintain a more balanced life between their workplace in host households and their families at home than migrant women from "developing" countries who spend long years working abroad, often without visiting family members left behind.

Compared with the literature on international care migration (Parreňas 2013; Lutz 2011; Fedyuk 2015), the striking feature in the Hungarian case is that among women who decided to go and work abroad, only a few had small children (see also Turai 2018). It seems as though migratory decisions in Hungarian families conform to rather traditional gendered roles in the nuclear family.[3] Consequently, most of our interviewees migrated to perform care jobs only after their children had grown up

2 The scope and scale of the research sites were not equal across settlements. Although we began our fieldwork in two small towns and one village located in different regions of Hungary, we soon extended the research to the surrounding settlements following the networks of our interviewees.

3 Analysis of the Hungarian census of 2011 shows that it is mostly men who work abroad, usually circulating between the host and origin countries (Blaskó–Szabó 2016).

and left home. As a result, the overwhelming majority of our sample of women were middle-aged or even of retirement age. All of our interviewees had worked for years or decades as employees of local/regional enterprises, factories, or in services, and only a few were qualified in health and social fields. Because of the lack of professional training and expertise in care work, they could only rely on their personal experience to guide them in caring for elderly and sick people. In addition, most of them could not speak the host language at all when they began working in German-speaking households. As our empirical evidence shows, elderly Hungarian care workers rarely made an effort to improve their language skills in order to become more competent in their host countries. The main reason behind this phenomenon is that the women involved in circular care migration did not aspire to settle or re-unite their families in the host countries. They decided to go abroad as care workers not because of any personal aspiration to do so, but because of the existential crises faced by their families – unemployment, decreasing incomes, and indebtedness – and the fear of impoverishment.

Interviews were conducted when the women were at home (between two shifts). Although we also planned to ask the husbands of the former about their own experiences, emotions, and opinions about their wives' migration, we had very little success. We were only able to speak with three men (two of them were present during the interviews with their wives), while in other cases we could not speak to them because of their reluctance to participate (Turai [2018] reports the same situation).

In this paper, we follow two strategies for analyzing our empirical evidence. Instead of providing case studies of women's entire migratory history, we explore the *common patterns of* migrant elderly care workers' perceptions and interpretations of their controversial situation. We crystallize and synthesize their experiences and modes of operation as the *tactics* and *narratives* they use to resist, negotiate and adopt to the effects of their dislocations. In the last part of the paper we analyze two specific types of narratives (*housemaid and self-development narratives*) by describing certain cases in more detail. These examples also reflect the limits of their agency in the host households.

Theorizing agency: perception, problematization, tactics, and narratives

We interpret our empirical findings through the conceptual framework of agency developed by Emirbayer and Mische (1998), which allows us to focus on the *perception*, the *framing* of everyday experiences, and the *problematization* of elderly care-giving as a social role. Given that all these cognitive processes require significant mental activity and strongly influence action, they are elements of agency. They are also the preconditions for the negotiation of this specific role, and consequently have the potential to create greater room for maneuver for elderly care workers in the host

households. For the analysis of these efforts and games (see Kordasiewicz 2016), we used de Certeau's notion of *tactics* (de Certeau 1984) as an inspiring tool for scrutinizing migrant women's multi-layered experiences and their reactions to their positions.

Human agency is *temporal*: it is simultaneously embedded in the past and present and oriented towards the future. The agentic orientation can dynamically shift in terms of action through the selective re-activation of past experiences and patterns of thought that stimulate practical evaluation or judgment of the present situation, or facilitate the development of alternatives by the projection or imagination of the possible future outcomes of the action. Although habituated, routinized action is overwhelmingly oriented toward the past, even the employment of repetitive practices and know-how requires cognitive effort throughout *typification,* since there is never a perfect match between schemas and actual situations. *Problematization* "requires the contextualization of habitual practices within the concrete circumstances of the moment" (Emirbayer–Mische 1998, 997). The perception of situational settings and the capacity to frame by characterization presupposes the mobilization of past experiences. Since emotions and cognitive efforts are intertwined, "perception is a complex response of the entire personality" (Nussbaum 1986, 309, cited by Emirbayer–Mische 1998: 998). The *practical-evaluative* aspect of agency is predominantly oriented towards the present, and enables actors to react to the contingencies and ambiguities of the present situation and/or to intervene. *The projective character* of agency is dominant in an action orienting toward the future, and is exercised by imagination and "role-experimentation" (Emirbayer 1998, 996; Goffman 1956). These experimental or "local actions" (Emirbayer–Mische 1998, 1001) are based on the recombination of existing schemas and models, which allows for the performance of a role without long-term engagement or the claim to canonization (Emirbayer–Mische 1998).

The notion of tactics highlights how agents creatively play against the routine modes of the exercise of power and control mechanisms, and gain inspiration by their everyday practice and thereby practical sense. Although de Certeau tacitly shares Foucault's vision of social reality penetrated by power, he emphasizes individual agency and the potential for resistance. "The goal is not to make clearer how the violence of order is transmuted into a disciplinary technology, but rather to bring to light the clandestine forms taken by the dispersed, tactical, and make-shift creativity of groups or individuals already caught in the nets of 'discipline'" (de Certeau 1984, xiv-xv).

A deeper examination of everyday practices reveals how the determining power of structures can be temporarily eased by creative improvisation. Tactics are calculated in the sense that they cannot rely on "proper" resources (controlled space, or institutions). They must be operated by the creative combination of heterogeneous elements of dominant structures. Consequently, a tactic is an intrinsically temporary and unfinished synthesis; that is, a way of making, or the "art of making" (de Certeau 1984).

Tactics are created against the predominance and determining power of the structure (de Certeau 1984). While they inherently involve a spirit of resistance and innovation, they must also encompass some level of adaptation to hegemonic structures in order to be successful. Agents adapting these tactics wish to play them out for a moment by unexpected recombination, or unanticipated improvisation. Although the relationship between employers and migrant live-in elderly care workers is based on mutual dependency, it also includes multiple asymmetrical, unbalanced power relations. Living and working in "other's places," care workers are restricted to exercising their agency in rather indirect ways: by manipulating situations or performing hidden forms of resistance. Consequently, in this analytical framework *tactics involve human games and struggles for the control of spaces and situations, for shaping relations, and for establishing a clear system of obligations and competences* which define their role as care workers and also require complex boundary-making processes in the host households.

Beyond their improvisations or practices of adapting to enlarge their room for maneuver, migrant care workers' narratives crystallize their experiences retrospectively, which helps them to re-interpret their social role and to typify their position while changing from family to family. Migrant women's *narratives highlight the dynamics of perception, framing and interpretation through problematization*, and link different dimensions of time.

Although tactics give intrinsically rapid feedback about challenging situations, their adaptability depends on their availability. The more often the common stock of knowledge is mobilized – meaning the more often experiences are recalled and shared with others – the more available and adaptable they are (de Certeau 1984). Narratives as crystallized experiences gain their reproductive potential through performance and narration, but they can be future-oriented as well if we consider their potential as a transformative power. The narrative dynamics of *role-taking* or *role-distancing* reveal not only the perception and the framing of elderly care, but also the potentialities for resistance and changing future aspirations. Migrant care workers' tactics and narratives, whether understood as a diagnostic or prognostic function, reveal Hungarian rural women involved in international care migration much more as active agents than as passive individuals completely determined by micro- and macro-level economic and power relations and systems of dependency.

Live-in elderly care in host households as arenas of agency

As Emirbayer and Mische (1998) assert, the more complex the relational setting is and the wider the range of possible factors that come into play, the more likely the provocation of communication and (self)-reflection which makes actors negotiate

their situation or generate alternatives.[4] Domestic work and elderly care, especially the live-in forms, are situated at the intersection of traditional and modern female roles. Paid domestic work involves many ambiguities and paradoxes. The "commodification of care" (see Anderson 2004; Rivas 2004; Parreňas 2001) on one hand provides an opportunity for migrant women to undertake a paid job, while on the other hand it (re-)produces the complex system of global economic and gender hierarchies by reinforcing the need for traditional female work and the dependency of migrant care workers' families on remittances (Parreňas 2001).

"The global re-division of women's traditional work" (Ehrenreich–Hochschild 2004: 11) has led to the "feminization of migration," further deepening many dimensions of inequality and pitting modern female roles against traditional ones (and vice versa). The "new gender arrangement" (Friese 1996, cited by Lutz 2011, 10) exempts Western women from unpaid, low-prestige and invisible reproductive (house)work by relegating all these duties to migrant women, reproducing the multi-dimensional inequalities and dependencies within these households (Lutz 2011). It may create hierarchical relations between employer and employee, and reinforce traditional (gender-based) patterns of the division of labor instead of cooperation based on mutual respect (Ehrenreich–Hochschild 2004).

Care work inevitably includes elements of emotional work (see Parreňas 2001; Lutz 2011; Hochschild 2000). The very presence of care workers in foreign households represents a "care-drain," which causes a "care deficit" in the family left behind. Domestic work is "a 'labor of love' and a 'labor of sorrow'" (Jones 1985, cited by Parreňas 2001: 120), since care work undertaken in the host family constantly reminds these women of the painful choice between their family's financial and emotional security, and recalls the pain of family separation. Domestic work demands a continuous response to the diverse needs of the person being cared for, and also requires all-day availability and preparedness, which isolates women and encloses them in the household.

Moreover, housework and caregiving are relatively undefined social roles. However, they can hardly be detached from the role of their historical precursor, the housemaid. This historical-cultural heritage, together with the changing transnational context and a struggle for professionalization and *formalization,* is a seedbed of further uncertainties, contradictions and frictions (see further: Lutz 2011; Németh 2016). The low prestige of reproductive work is stigmatized even now. Stigmatization stems from the housemaid's role and vulnerable position within the patriarchal family model in which "service was infiltrated by relations of personal dependency" (Gyáni 1983, 22). Informal jobs and illegal immigration status still increase migrant workers' vulnerability, especially in the case of caregivers who live in

4 David Stark (2009) demonstrates in various case studies how different "orders of worth" or modes of thinking trigger creative frictions that stimulate innovation in various fields. He reveals that certain economic organizations in fact exploit ambiguity and dissonance, transforming them into creativity and innovation.

the host family's private space (Rivas 2004; Lutz 2011). Moving into the employer's private household, however, also involves further contradictions since it might be a seedbed of exploitation and abuse, or a place of shelter and satisfaction of basic needs. Besides overt degradation, moderately changing but persistent forms of social or racial stigmatization are still adapted in both the global and regional context. Coping with (potential) stigma requires significant cognitive and emotional effort, as well as bridging cultural differences by adapting to the host family's needs and everyday routines.

The persistent ambiguities, contradictions and frictions stemming from this specific social role stimulate negotiations about the role and its content (i.e. tasks, competencies, and responsibilities), and trigger tactics (active or passive forms of resistance and imaginary or real role experimentation). Elderly care workers may take advantage of these inherent paradoxes, but at the same time these ambiguities also indicate the limits of exercising and expanding agency within this context. The intersection of household and family and traditional and modern female roles increases the complexity of the situation, requiring boundary-making mechanisms and the management of emotional tensions resulting from a demanding but low-prestige job. All of these factors make the host household an arena for agency.

Spatial dimensions of agency

Emotional tensions do not only stem from family separation and the demanding character of the job, but from the interplay of individual aspirations and structural constraints. Parreňas (2001) uses the notion *dislocation* to grasp the inherent difficulties and strains related to the contradictory class mobility of Filipina migrant domestic workers in Rome and Los Angeles. Dislocation in a *social* sense refers to these usually highly qualified women's feelings of being forced to undertake such low-prestige, stigmatized jobs to maintain the financial stability of the families they have left behind. Additionally, domestic work is considered to be a "natural" female job which does not require any specific qualifications. The experience of *de-skilling* as a loss of competency is deeply intertwined with the decline of former social status, while improvements in financial situation – the higher salary earned as a domestic worker – provides primarily material compensation. (As we also see below in Agnes' narrative, dislocation in terms of *de-skilling* was the most frustrating and degrading experience among professionally trained and experienced nurses who began working as live-in elderly caregivers.)

Dislocation also denotes a *loss of home*. Habitual aspects of agency are related to well-known places where repeated actions, habits and routines provide the actor with a feeling of control (Emirbayer–Mische 1998). Consequently, well-known places are constitutive parts of identity through emotional bonds to place (*place attachment*, *place identity*): they are sites of developing agency where the individual feels safe and

confident. In contrast to this, a loss of space can cause a temporary loss of agency, as well as distress, crises, and disorientation. Loss of space and relocation affects primarily social identity and demands the "fitting" of the new place into the frame of the old place, maintaining continuity throughout diverse psychological processes such as effects, orientation, systematization, categorization, manipulation, memorization and recollection (Dúll 2015 a,b).

Consequently, individual agency is embedded in both the social and private space. The home and private sphere are places for creating emotional and social bonds, and are ultimately sources of self-esteem and positive personal identity. Moving abroad challenges these spatially and socially embedded relations, and makes the host household a place (an arena) for building up personal autonomy through claiming a private place within the house. These efforts are manifested in boundary-making processes and human games that are played to gain control over at least a small part of the other's private space. The control of the outside *social* space encompasses various processes such as "taming the unknown" by adoption of a daily routine, and inventing places for socializing. In this sense, meeting points or community places do not simply dissolve loneliness and isolation, but are the preconditions for any kind of coordinated social action.[5] Consequently, isolation involves significant emotional work while it continuously menaces the subject by narrowing social ties and contacts.

Hungarian elderly caregivers in our sample often complained about feelings of isolation, confinement or even boredom that they had experienced while being "locked-in" to host households. Kata cared for an old man who had had both of his legs amputated.

> *His daily routine is strongly regulated, in fact, I cannot go out and leave him alone. I do not like to talk to him, because he is always telling the same stories. I am bored. In the evenings I Skype with my boyfriend, and in my free time I play on the internet, watch films and series. But you can get bored with this too, there are no series I did not see in these four years.* The old man goes to sleep early, but "*I do not go out, I do not like to walk around in strange places. I rather stay at home all the time, waiting for the three weeks to pass.*

Elderly Hungarian caregivers have very limited opportunity to discover the places where they work or create spontaneous social encounters, even when they work for years in the same households. Their daily routines allow them only a small amount of free time (if any), restricted to short encounters in shops and on the streets. The possibility of such social contacts is also limited by the fact that most Hungarian care workers work without legal permission in Germany, and thus carefully avoid spending too much time alone in public spaces. Occasional neighborhood

5 Housemaids in this sense were highly separated and atomized in the past because they lived in separate households. This spatial setting, among other factors, prevented almost any kind of collective action (Gyáni 1983). Parre as used the term "hidden transcript" to refer to the discourses that Filipina domestic workers maintained outside of their employers' homes. As she points out, there are different sites in Los Angeles and Rome (such as churches, community centers of the Philippine diaspora, buses, and magazines) where migrant Filipina domestic workers "brew tactics" for negotiating their everyday experiences, challenges and strategies (Parreňas 2001: 194).

relationships or spontaneous encounters with other Hungarians working in the same area show precisely how narrow, homogeneous and fragile these social contacts are. Due to circular migration, workers usually do not aspire to build up deep contacts with Hungarian migrant communities, and do not wish to be integrated into host countries. Given that they are constantly moving between the sending and the host countries, they need a special kind of (limited) support, which includes emotional support and the sharing of information. Access to the telephone, the internet and Skype are important matters which contribute to the maintenance of social and family ties and prevent total isolation.

However, there are some "extreme" examples of expanding one's agency in the host household. Lena, one of our interviewees, took care of an old woman for five years in a small town in Germany. Lena was able to capitalize on her communication skills, personality and endurance. She organized a place for other Hungarian care workers on the terrace and in the basement of the host house where they could smoke and drink coffee together, and built up many social contacts that allowed her to undertake short-term, occasional jobs in addition to full-time care, such as cleaning or mowing lawns for other families once or twice a week. She used her free time to do other jobs and save more money. However, the precondition for this large-scale room for maneuver was the fact that her employer and other local contacts were of Hungarian origin and there was no language barrier between Lena and them. Another precondition was the tolerance and the mental and physical state of the old woman, who did not require all-day care and attention. As Lena summarized her exceptional situation: "*We were allowed to do everything, there was no other place in the world like this*."

Agency is strongly attached to the household as a site of privacy, while elderly care can be characterized by the "absence of privacy" (Parreňas 2001:159). The host households are "other's places" (de Certeau 1984) where employees need to find a place for themselves, but in doing so can mobilize a very limited range of their own resources. Consequently, everyday actions and even possible resistance must be performed and developed in a setting defined by asymmetric power relations. Tactics in this sense are the "power of the weak" as they exploit and recombine separate elements of dominant power structures through unexpected, innovative reactions and improvisations to enlarge the horizon of action and room for maneuver.

Playing with roles – tactics

In most cases, elderly care is not restricted to the task directly connected with the old *person*, but demands a holistic approach that improves the recipient's well-being, including working with the human body, nurturing and reacting to the other's emotional, social and mental needs, tidying his/her personal environment, and running the household. The situation is even more complex when more elderly people and their family members live together. The presence of a paid employee represents

a paradox: it reflects a deficit of care, but may lead to a surplus of "housewives" at the same time. The female employer (the person being cared for, her daughter or daughter-in-law) probably has her own "housewife" routines, ideas of order, values, expectations and competencies, but these are partly delegated to the employee, who in turn brings her own routines and preferences into the setting. Thus, housewife routines, competences, and systems of expectations must be negotiated or divided up. Consequently, human games usually aim at negotiating the roles and struggling for the recognition of individual merits and competencies. Given that these women can usually mobilize a limited range of skills, their room for maneuver, their autonomy, and even one potential source of positive self-esteem might be at stake when negotiating competencies related to the role of housewife. The question here is who makes decisions about everyday shopping and food budgets, or whose needs and tastes must be taken into account and which cuisine or diet is to be followed. Enlarging competencies as a housewife, nevertheless, can be a controversial strategy, since the "overplaying" (the exaggerated performance) of traditional female roles can easily become a seedbed for exploitation, which partly stems from the reproductive character of housework and partly from the dominant historical pre-figure of the housemaid (Gyáni 1983; Czingel–Tóth 2014).

> At her first workplace, the aforementioned Lena could overcome the distrust of her employer by overplaying her housewife competencies. As she said: "*She was a sweet, nice, small aunt, but as I firstly recognized, she did not love me, she was German, and said 'nicht gut Frau' [not a good woman], because I could not speak German. Then I said Damn your mothers!, you will see. And [I cleaned the windows], washed and hung all the curtains. Then I was good. Everything was good. The whole family loved me.*" Recalling her experiences in different households, Lena emphasized that she always used her housewife competencies, especially cooking, to "tame" the families of the elderly person being cared for. This meant cooking lunch every day, for example, even for those family members who did not live in the household of the cared-for elderly person. Although she likes to cook and proudly considers the daily visits for lunch as recognition of her competency as a housewife, the fact is that cooking for the whole family was not originally a part of her duty. Since there was no legally recognized work contract (only a verbal employment agreement) she had no other opportunity but to satisfy the new demands of her employer's family.

The negotiation of competencies is even more complex when human games involve the search for balance in personal relationships instead of one-sided dependency. Elderly care does not simply involve a vulnerable household worker, but often an old, ill, often bed-ridden, physically dependent person, who is also fighting the loss of their own competencies and to maintain agency. While complex and professional care must reflect these personal problems and help the elderly to maintain their skills and capabilities, it remains a crucial question whether the mutual negotiation of agencies

is a zero-sum or a win-win game between two vulnerable people. Consequently, intimacy and care can be an arena for relative empowerment as well as abuse. Caregivers can cause harm intentionally or unintentionally.

> As our interviewees attested, it was a permanent challenge to tame the unpredictably aggressive behavior of the elderly who suffered from dementia. Some of them tried to attenuate or deflect this aggression through "*clowning,*" humor, and laughter, while others emphasized feelings of empathy and compassion for patients suffering from dementia. However, there were also women who answered aggression with aggression: "*When he hit me, I hit back.*"

One woman, who often changed workplaces, said: "*Every time I decided to leave I did not say anything to anyone.*" This is a typical "white lie"; the caregiver promising that they will return to their workplace from home when the time for their shift starts. But ultimately they do not, because they can easily find a better place. Leaving without any warning may help care workers to cope with changes, but can cause uncertainty, emotional distress and a loss of trust for the elderly. There are further examples of unbalanced relationships: infantilization may occur when an old person is handled as a child due to their dementia and loss of capabilities. However, if a mental disorder prevents the building up of contact with the elderly, it increases the social isolation and frustration of the caregiver. Successful mutual negotiations are marked by instances when situations of vulnerability dynamically change in interpersonal relations, increasing self-reflection and leading to the mobilization of personal skills (including caregiver competencies as mother, (house)wife, etc.).

> Some interviewees referred to the cared-for elderly as "Oma" or "Opa" – "*I care for her as if she were my grandma*" – re-positioning themselves in these relations as a grandchild, irrespective of their actual age (there were a few cases when the care worker was older than the cared-for person). Others reformulated the mutual but asymmetrical dependency between the care workers and the cared-for persons: "*You should keep a distance, but it is impossible in an atmosphere of intimacy like when you wipe her bottom – it is like the relationship between mother and child.*"

This dynamic may simultaneously link elderly care in the realm of *personal attachment* (perceived as friendship or familial kinship) and *work* as (friendly) professionalism (see: Parreňas 2001, 2004; Kordasiewicz 2014).

Juggling with roles – problematization in narratives

Games played to "manipulat[e] circumstances to turn [them] into possibilities" (de Certeau 1984, ixx) are even more complex when they are performed as roles to be systematized and accepted. When the role itself is at stake, no temporary ("Pyrrhic") victories are "proper." Claims may become holistic (even if the process is only partly conscious): for example, balancing asymmetric relationships or re-framing elderly care

as a job in the familial context. There is the potential for resistance in both the silent but persistent rejection of stigmatization and oppressive working conditions, on one hand, and the hidden transformation of roles by changing the practices (tactics) and narratives on the other. From a theoretical point of view, tactics in this context are manifested as *role performance* or *role distance* in the Goffmanian sense. Role-performance fundamentally means taking on a role, at least temporarily, without totally identifying with it (*role-enactment*). Role-distance is used when someone wishes to express at least some doubt or disagreement with expectations related to the role, or wants to demonstrate that they are not entirely engaged in role-taking for various reasons (Goffman 1959).

Kordasiewicz (2014) analyzed two strategies of Polish migrant women working in Napoli: *professionalization* is based on the re-framing of household work, including elderly care, as a profession. This framework enables migrant women to express their needs and interests as employees, emphasizing their wish for their working conditions to be regularized. It also facilitates a decrease in their personal dependency within the informal, intimate sphere of the host family. Overall, it is an active but *defensive way* of dealing with potential oppression and exploitation (Kordasiewicz 2014), while it shapes not only the perception of a job but the aspirations and even narrative accounts of workers. *Personalization* can be considered a withdrawal from asymmetric power relations by emphasizing personal relations and a struggle for equality and distance based on mutual respect.

However, Polish women working in Napoli found it unacceptable that their "overt degradation" was masked in the discourse of "*fictive kinship*" that appealed to their sense of loyalty. This strategy is based on the declaration that the elderly caregiver is a quasi-family member. The main function of this approach was to legitimate overwork by integrating carers into the familial system of unreciprocated duties and services without any remuneration or respect. This is rather manipulative rhetoric from the host family, since it indeed integrates the worker's role into the informal hierarchy, which is hard to control (Kordasiewicz 2014). As Parreňas (2001) also noted, there is a wide consensus in the literature that the perception of domestic workers as "one of the family" reproduces unequal, hierarchical power relations. However, domestic workers might also be interested in maintaining this self-identification in order to upgrade their low and dependent status in the host family (Parreňas 2001, Lutz 2011).

> When some of our interviewees confidently stated that they were treated as family members, they confirmed this claim by mentioning that their presence and work were appreciated, and that they ate and spent coffee breaks at the same table as their employers – "*Because I was a family member and not a maid.*" They also told us stories about gifts received from their employers on their birthdays and Christmas, or chocolates, toys, and clothes sent by the employers to their children and grandchildren. From the point of view of our Hungarian interviewees, having a "good workplace" typically means being considered one

of the family. This discourse glosses over the status of elderly care workers as paid domestic employees and their vulnerable position in the respective host families.

However, we also identified certain fragments of the counter-discourse of "true love," which inverts the discourse of fictive kinship from the perspective of the caregiver: "In my opinion, nobody loves the people we are caring for. I must also love them. Because nobody loves them – even if they have a family." In this discourse, the emotional ambiguities and tensions inherent in the role and position of the care workers within the host families are reflected in a way that provides them with a sense of moral superiority, since they offer more (true) love than the real family of the cared-for person.[6]

Turai (2014, 2018) identified three types of discourses among Romanian and Hungarian women from Hungary, Romania and Ukraine working as elderly caregivers in Hungary, Italy and Israel. Hungarian women working in Israel represent their experiences through an *exotic discourse*, while the *ethnocentric discourse* was organized along with ethnic Hungarian identity, as well as geographic and cultural proximity to Hungary. The *victimhood and suffering discourse* emphasizes Romanian women's experiences of family separation and exploitation in Italian host households and reveals their coping strategies.

In our research, elderly care workers represented themselves through two specific narratives. The *housemaid narrative* as well as the *self-development narrative* share commonalities with the aforementioned strategies and discourses. One of their main functions is to interpret *retrospectively* the contradictory class mobility and ambiguous status of domestic workers at the intersection of family and household. Creating a more or less coherent narrative also enables them to systematize their everyday experiences and mitigate ambiguities by re-framing the experiences and the perception of this role. Problematization of the role eventually facilitates adaptation.

The housemaid narrative

The housemaid narrative can be considered a rhetorical tool for expressing or releasing tensions originating from this specific social role. This narrative's primary function is to articulate (possibly repressed) emotions such as anger, disappointment and frustration stemming from *dislocation*, ambiguities of contradictory class mobility, and the pain of family separation (see Parreňas 2001, 2004).

It also reveals how the perception and the (re-)framing of experiences work throughout the problematization of the role of domestic worker. Since concrete emergent situations and models stored in the common stock of knowledge never completely match (Emirbayer and Mische 1998), the analogy in itself demonstrates how the dominant historical pre-figure of the housemaid is used for interpreting the

6 Unconsciously, the discourse of "true love" reflects the concept of "emotional surplus value" developed by Hochschild (2000).

role of the former, and how it helps to articulate problems, needs and expectations relating to their actual jobs. Due to the stigma related to the figure of the housemaid, *role-enactment* in the sense of role fulfillment is hardly possible. The function of the housemaid narrative is not even about *role-taking*; on the contrary, this rhetoric aims to increase *role-distance* through problematization (Németh 2016). Role-enactment would also mean that one is totally absorbed by the role,[7] immersed in the totality of informality, which may even prevent the taking on of other social roles (Kordasiewicz 2014). Therefore, the role-dynamic is a crucial issue for these women who want to represent themselves not only as employees, but also as mothers, wives or competent housewives, as well as human beings in host households, emphasizing that they do have a personality beyond these roles. Consequently, dealing with social isolation is of special importance from their point of view, as are self-defense mechanisms against being neglected in the presence of family and excluded from communication. This is *non-person treatment* in the Goffmanian sense (Goffman 1956; Kordasiewicz 2014; Parreňas 2001, 2004; Turai 2018).

> The metaphor of housemaid was reflected by most of our interviewees (see also Turai 2018),[8] but only a few of them used it deliberately while describing their position. One of the former was Agnes who, following retirement, began working abroad as a caregiver because of financial difficulties. In Hungary, she was trained and worked for long years in social services and health care, and thus found it degrading that in most cases the families of the elderly she cared for did not need or appreciate her professional knowledge and skills. In her narrative, the figure of housemaid was clearly linked to her social dislocation as a professional caregiver and served to increase role-distance. The employer family wanted her to do everything around the household and on the family farm without remuneration or any appreciation of her overtime work. "*The maid is expected to work as a stupid animal.*"
>
> In her narrative, the metaphor of maid was also used for those women who allowed themselves to be exploited instead of developing resistance and defending their own interests. Now, Agnes has finished working as a care worker abroad.
>
> When we met Ilona, a woman of about 80, she had been working for 10 years in Germany. She decided to migrate because she felt morally obliged to meet the needs of her family; she helped her daughter to pay back her debts, financed the studies of her grandchild, and supported her poor relatives. She planned

7 Elderly care might be a total social role: the absence of privacy and autonomy, the informality, the requirement for day-and-night availability aggravated by emotional involvement, and the mix of hierarchy and intimacy may limit the caretaker's autonomy. Most menacing in a total social role is that the personality may be dissolved by role-expectations (Kordasiewicz 2016).

8 According to Turai (2018), the ambiguity characterizing the work and position of elderly caregivers is reflected in the confusion with which her interviewees tried to identify their status. The women used terms such as "family member," "maid," "nurse," "relative," "worker," "friend," "guard," and "master" to describe themselves. She found that the most frequently mentioned was that of "maid" ("servant" or "slave") which was most often reflected even in cases associated with the work and status of caregivers when not used to describe their own work and position (see details: Turai 2018, 111-131).

to return home for good. She reported an experience of non-person treatment when she was not offered a drink at a family event while sitting at the same table as the host family. "*It was Christmas Eve, the son and daughters came to visit their mother. Everyone but me was offered champagne. It was so humiliating – not that I like champagne, but I was sitting there to help the aunt to drink. And neither the daughters nor one of the grandchildren said, 'pour a drink for Ilona'.*" Her housemaid narrative was built not only around her humiliating position as care worker but also her vulnerable situation in her own family. She felt that her family members (tacitly) expected her to work abroad without respecting her advanced age because they needed her earnings.

Similarly to the aforementioned victimhood and suffering narrative (Turai 2014, 2018), the housemaid narrative emphasizes the structural constraints, economic pressure and hardship which push women into this job. However, this does not necessarily mean that these women are totally passive in their roles as care workers.[9] The narrative is in fact an example of active, but mostly hidden resistance, since it is used to express a rejection of subordinated situations and exploitation, a refusal of undefined competencies and unlimited tasks, and of working day and night. This rhetoric exploits the power of stigma to express a rejection of exploitation and deskilling. Non-person treatment or the experience of exploitation trigger the metaphor of housemaid, but, as in the case of Ilona, it may uncover inter-generational conflicts within the worker's own family, mutual dependencies, and the pain of self-sacrifice for other family members.

The self-development narrative

The housemaid narrative is far from being universal, but a complete self-development discourse is even more rare (see also Turai 2018). However, rarity does not necessarily undermine the relevance and explanatory power of these narratives. In many cases, narratives thematized individual harm and suffering without using the *housemaid* metaphor, while fragments of (self-) development – that is, individual or family gains from circular migration – were more often displayed. Various fragments of self-development discourse made the whole narrative more open and proactive. The interviewees referred to financial and social remittances encompassing improvements to living conditions, material goods and skills thereby obtained, strategies for adaptation, and various tactics for overcoming problems as evidence for development in the sense of expanding freedom. Besides efforts to secure financial stability, maintain the social and economic status of the family and facilitate the next generations' mobility, they pointed to the skills they had obtained (limited language skills, bits of know-how), changing values, and moreover, a kind of openness toward the world and an increased level of spatial mobility. Some women showed their ability

9 Emirbayer and Mische (1998) also emphasize that "empirical social action will be never be completely determined or structured. (...) There is no hypothetical moment in which agency actually gets 'free' of structure." (Emirbayer–Mische 1998: 1004).

to entirely re-frame unfavorable situations related to the role of care worker, and emphasized the power of negotiations and prudent but persistent manipulation of circumstances.

The most powerful form of resistance seems to be the *self-development narrative*, which highlights how people exercise their agency by *projectively* orienting towards the future, while recollections in interviews also encompass and systematize past experiences. The re-composition of experiences can give a hypothetical resolution to current problems through role-experimentation. In this sense, these narratives are not simply imaginary tools of agency, but "provide maps of action," as Ricoeur states (Emirbayer–Mische 1998, 989). In this way, they might become a possible tool for resistance by rejecting subordination or inventing new frames of perception.

> Ditta, a middle-aged woman, went to Germany to save only enough to buy a family car. After a few months this goal was achieved, but she decided to continue her work as a caregiver, and [at the time of interview] had been working abroad for six years. During her first experience she had faced enormous difficulties – "*I cried so much*" – but she had learned how to "tame" the shouting patient until she recognized that "*The elderly need someone to help.*" Since then, Ditta's aim has been to find the perfect way to meet the elderly's diverse personal needs. She was not content with everyday practices, so she began to study, and is now qualified as a social and domestic care worker and is also trained in pedicure, manicure, and massage. She said, "*Ten years ago I had not thought I would find the job I love to do in elderly care.*" For her, caring for the elderly had became a "*nice profession,*" and now she works in the elderly care home in her village in Hungary.

The self-development narrative in its most developed form makes not only role performance but even *role-enactment* possible throughout the complete re-framing of the perception of care work. Consequently, the self-development narrative is independent of the metaphor of housemaid, which is exactly how it changes the evaluation of elderly care. Changes in perception and evaluation, as the case of Ditta shows, can lead to the (partial) re-formulation of the whole life story which articulates the aim of the migration. In the most elaborate narrative of this type, elderly care becomes a real profession, a "calling," and a tool for self-development through learning and obtaining new skills. In other words, care work performed in foreign households becomes the aim of migration and provides freedom in the sense that Sen defines it: it is the capability of living a valuable life even in a situation defined by structural constraints. This type of narrative involves the core elements of both *personalization* and *professionalization* strategies, as it represents elderly care as a professional way of reacting to one's complex needs while keeping personal relationships balanced. It is regulated by distance, but also emotions.

The fact that self-development narratives are independent from housemaid narratives does not necessarily mean that everyday practices do not involve at least

some elements of tactics. This contradiction still implies that asymmetrical power relations underlie the determining power of structural constraints and shows precisely the limits of exercising agency in this specific context.

Limits of agency

Non-professional elderly care workers have a limited set of assets and skills to mobilize in the elderly-care work personal relationship; it is indeed their interiorized pieces of know-how and certain elements of traditional female roles that they can use. Because of the inherent contradictions in paid care work and a lack of proper language skills, our interviewees tended to express their care and attachment through touching, caressing, goodnight kisses or gestures of care such as cooking, dressing, or shaving their elderly charges. All these limitations may trigger overplay (exaggerated performance) of the caretaking role.

In those cases when caretakers lack professional and language skills, *role-overplay* can be manifested either in emphasizing personal attachment or a strategy of overwork. The latter is primarily used to prove personal qualities by highlighting caregiver and housewife competencies, and may even trigger competition with other caretakers. At the micro-level, this strategy is an important characteristic of the Eastern and Central European context of care migration: in the shift-work system, elderly care workers are substituted when they return home, which can lead to competition that emphasizes individual performance and the interests of the working pair instead of their cooperation. At a macro-level, competition is even sharper between care workers who come from different Eastern and Central European countries. There is a labor surplus on the European domestic and care work market, so employers can easily select between care workers and choose the “cheaper” ones. Hungarian migrant care workers often complain that women from Romania, Poland or Ukraine take jobs with lower wages and longer shifts. They tend to downplay their vulnerable situation by creating symbolic boundaries, emphasizing their superiority to the “dirty,” “lazy” and “unreliable” Romanian, Polish and Ukrainian caregivers. The creation of moral superiority is one of the most prevalent self-defense mechanisms in this context, played out against either a replacement person or a care worker from a different country (see further: Parreňas 2001; Turai 2014, 2018; Melegh et al. 2018). From a social-psychological point of view, this moral superiority is provoked by asymmetric power relations or stigmatization, while it is manifested in overplaying of roles. Indeed, the creation of moral superiority can be considered the fragmentation of stigma (see: Goffman 1956; Kovai 2017), which implies that individuals attempt to maintain their self-esteem by emphasizing their competence and deflecting stigma to other caregivers. This strategy, played for temporal or personal recognition, may result in increasing exploitation through the carer’s undertaking of an unlimited range of tasks to prove their qualities by role-performance. While the “fictive kinship”

strategy is adapted by the host family to extort the greatest amount of work without proportional remuneration (Kordasiewicz 2014). The strategy of overplaying is rather self-exploitative as it has its own stake of self-representation and self-defense.

Although various tactics are adopted in response to overwork and exploitation, this tactic is performed in order to gain respect. However, it is somehow "*distorted*" and counter-productive, since it may trigger a tendency to self-exploitation, even if the fundamental motivation of the tactic is to enlarge one's room for maneuver by the temporary subversion of the hegemonic order (Emirbayer–Mische 1998). Even if the most elaborate self-development narrative featured stories about at least the temporary or the "strategic" acceptance of subordination. Ditta told stories about how she "tamed" elderly men and how she made efforts to find out their uncommunicated needs and wishes. Her repertoire of "taming" included responding tenderly to verbal aggression, tolerating shouting or even outbursts, and coping with the (temporary) rejection of her personal presence and help by the ill elderly person.

The strategy of "*taming*" as an "extreme case" (Takács 2017) therefore highlights the limited range of assets that may be mobilized and the limited room for maneuver in this context. It also points out that it is an intrinsically double-edged strategy which usually does not challenge but rather reinforces elements of the hegemonic order and expectations related to the traditional female role. The overplaying of a role by self-exploitation reveals the inherent limits of playing with traditional female roles either in host households or in this specific segment of the labor market, aggravated by mostly temporal and informal home-stays and harsh competition between employers (Melegh et al. 2018). Besides other and more direct tactics that are performed to evade structural constraints, these "*distorted tactics*" – irrespective of their *situational* success – show the hard barriers to playing with traditional female roles and the limits of exercising agency in the context of domestic care. Our empirical evidence shows that even if migrant Hungarian care workers become the breadwinners in their households, this fact does not alter their traditional gendered roles and role expectations regarding the gendered division of labor in the families. Nor does the traditionally gendered and undervalued care work performed in foreign households challenge patterns of traditional (power) relationships, either in the host families or in their own families.

Finally, one additional note should be made regarding the limits of agency of the migrant caregivers. Care workers always have the ultimate choice to leave "bad places" or even "good places" when they have the chance to find better ones. Because their (mostly illegal) employment is based on verbal agreements, they can leave without risking their reputation and will always be able to find new workplaces due to the continuous demand for care on the labor market. However, the possibility of leaving and changing their workplaces does not alter the structural constraints and contradictions inherent in their status as care workers.

Conclusion

Agency cannot be interpreted by itself; it exists in a dynamic interplay with structure. It is, like tactics, inherently situational. Our micro-level approach aimed to grasp different manifestations of agency in the context of domestic care based on the systematization of literature and our empirical evidence. Our empirical evidence shows the (limited) power of tactics and narratives at a micro-level, but also implies macro-level structural constraints; that is, the limits of agency.

Live-in elderly care is deeply embedded in the systems of global economy and transnational migration, and is also located at the intersection of traditional and modern female roles. Consequently, it reproduces the need for undervalued and underpaid female jobs in both sending and receiving countries, as well as in the sending and host families, and reinforces the overlapping patterns of constraints and dependencies that exist from micro- to macro-, and even global levels. With regard to the agency of migrant Hungarian care workers, however, we emphasize the uniqueness of the Eastern and Central European context which defines a specific room for maneuver shaped by regional peculiarities.

In analyzing agency we have seen that *tactics* are dominantly present-oriented, inherently temporary, and unfinished. They may, however, have a hidden transformative power through the cumulative effects of unintended consequences. Narratives are more future-oriented, and they may have some transformative power through *problematization and role-experimentation*. While the *housemaid narrative* aims to create distance between live-in elderly care and its dominant historical pre-figure – the housemaid –, the *self-development narrative* makes role-enactment possible through the complete re-framing of care work; it can also reformulate the life story in relation to scrutiny of the aim of migration.

Human games and tactics are triggered by structural constraints; they are directly inspired by limitations. Our empirical evidence shows that *human games* and *tactics* are potentially tools for enlarging *individual* room for maneuver *situationally*, but they evidently cannot alter structures. The asymmetry of structure and agency is clearly demonstrated in the fact that the overwhelming majority of Hungarian care workers were able to describe the individual gains of this job only in terms of *fragments of development,* while consistent and complete *self-development narratives* were extremely rare.

These fragments, however, highlight possible gains from this specific type of circular migration which are more complex than the improvement in the situation of the migrant workers or an increase in their financial stability. They specifically refer to social remittances in the larger sense: (limited) language skills that are obtained, acquired know-how, moderately changing values, increased openness toward the world, and an increased level of spatial mobility. These fragments of development not only open narratives toward the future by scrutinizing the experiences of *agency,* but may also challenge the one-sided conception of development and offer alternative ways to interpret migration and development. The analysis of interviews also highlights

that, despite the overlapping structural constraints, live-in elderly care may increase control over one's life and provide an opportunity to enlarge one's freedom in the sense that Sen develops it: freedom as the capability of living a valuable life even in a specific and limited situation.

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Spending like a state: (In)formal credit, the local government and the rescaling of insecurities

Alexandra Szőke
szoke@rkk.hu

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Abstract: This paper examines informal credit practices in a remote Hungarian village. It explores the central role informal credit plays in people's present and future social security as they strategize about using various resources amid large-scale unemployment and limited local resources. It furthermore explains the reasons for the local prevalence of the former, the ways such credit is used by individuals and families vis-à-vis other informal and formal arrangements, and how the users are morally judged. The analysis puts special emphasis on the links between individual practices of informal credit, the distributional practices of the local state, and broader socio-political tendencies. In doing so, the study reveals that the indebtedness of the local government and its short-termist distributional practices on the one hand, and the indebtedness of local unemployed people and the short -termism evident in their spending on the other can be linked to the same phenomenon; namely, the rescaling of insecurities.

Keywords: informal credit, state restructuring, local government, social security

[*Exciting, frightening music plays*]... Little birds happily chirp in a nest of straw, but suddenly the nest breaks and one falls. The fallen bird, chirping with fear, tries to climb back into the nest with no success. A big scarecrow appears, looming over the birds, it moves towards the broken nest; the birds chirp anxiously... [*the music suddenly changes into a relaxed and comforting tune*]... The scarecrow takes his hat off, carefully creates a more stable nest inside his hat, placing the fallen bird back into the new and safer home... "If you only need a little more, don't hesitate to call Evident"[1] – purrs the voice-over as the TV advert ends. Evident, which was set up in 2001, is the biggest private loan company in Hungary. Its success lies in offering, according to their website, "short-term, small-scale loans for customers with no guarantor or financial coverage."[2]

Another quite different "advert" appeared in several places across Budapest before the local government elections in October 2010. Featuring a picture of a mosquito in

1 The name of the company is anonymized; the pseudonym is borrowed from Judit Durst (2015a).
2 This was particularly true during the time of research.

the middle of a red circle, firmly crossed out with a red line, the poster, which was part of the campaign by the far-right political party Jobbik, asked, “Do you also want to put an end to parasitism?” Although the imagery was utilized by an extremist political force, it resonated with the predominant sentiments of many.

Eight years have passed since the appearance of these two events, yet the processes that they signify have only intensified. The main line of division, on which the Jobbik election poster visibly played, has become even stronger. It is located between those who have permanent employment and hence contribute (or have contributed) to the “common good” as “good tax-payers,” and those who live from social transfers, and hence are the “parasites” of the system. The social policies of the current conservative government, which clearly favour those with regular employment, and redistribute from the poor to the rich, have only exasperated this situation, making the distinction between deserving and undeserving citizens even stronger (see Ferge 2017). The latter are left without any or very little assistance, and face the curbing of social rights and increasingly punitive measures (Szikra 2014), further exacerbating feelings of insecurity. The value of different welfare transfers has not been increased since 2008, while the criteria for receiving means-tested benefits has become stricter, reducing the number of recipients. Moreover, the central state has considerably reduced its role as a welfare provider, with insecurities notably affecting a much wider circle, and the most marginalized long-term unemployed are left, for the most part, to look after their own.

The popularity of Evident and similar credit companies is more closely related to the above-described processes than first might appear. At the time of research, Evident had 225,000 customers,[3] predominantly from poor rural areas, without permanent income, and who were stuck in spirals of indebtedness (see Miklósi 2006; Durst 2015a). Amid ongoing discursive (re)negotiations that focus on which citizens are deserving or undeserving of state support, the possibility of obtaining social security has altered significantly. This is especially true in rural areas, where the changing role of agriculture and transforming ownership relations have significantly altered the access of different groups to productive resources. In many places this has resulted in a massive reduction in available jobs. Further to this, while in the early 1990s the political economic transformations brought new opportunities, more recently many remote rural areas have increasingly been faced with limited or no external investment or funding, and the shrinkage of services and lack of institutions leave the oft-changing state-run “public work programs”[4] as the only larger employer (Velkey 2017).

In these places, smuggling, collecting wood and mushrooms, reliance on “loan sharks” or the buying of food on informal credit in shops can be of utmost importance in the social security arrangements of large segments of the population (cf. Messing–

3 According to statistics on their website.

4 This is a scheme that links the receipt of social aid by the unemployed to attendance in publicly organized communal work. It involves low-skilled temporary jobs provided by local governments, paying salaries below the minimum wage, financed primarily from central government budgets. It was first introduced in 2009 and has since become one of the main government measures for tackling unemployment.

Molnár 2011; Durst 2015a). While all these strategies might not be available in every settlement, in Tiszacseke,[5] a remote village in North-East Hungary, some of these practices are widely present. In fact, half of the regular customers of local shops buy on informal credit on an everyday basis. Furthermore, advances on aid and public-work-related wages are regular occurrences at the local government, and many locals report they have taken Evident loans multiple times in their life.

Throughout my study, I use the concept of informal credit to describe all moneylending arrangements which do not abide by any institutionalized, legally binding format. In this paper I particularly focus on two forms: arrangements in local shops between shopkeepers and their customers, and arrangements at the local government between the mayor and social beneficiaries/public workers. What is particularly important about these two forms of credit is that no interest is charged, and they are so frequently used in the village that they have become part of the regular household budgeting of many locals.

In addition, I discuss some of the ways these informal practices are linked to the regular use of Evident loans, which were particularly prevalent at the time of research in the village. Even though this is not an informal practice, the credit constructions and the logic and the conduct of the company's local employees were often strongly connected to usury and the activity of loan sharks by the villagers, especially because most villagers used the "home service" credit package whereby an agent personally brings the loan and then collects the installments from the customer on a weekly basis. While there are no loan sharks in the settlement, Evident loans were discussed as a kind of usury and were often only used as a last resort if one could not turn elsewhere. As I will later show, the intensified use of this formal practice can be linked to the same broader socioeconomic transformations that exacerbated the frequent use of other informal credit options in Tiszacseke.

The paper examines the role that these widespread practices of informal credit and Evident loans have in the social security arrangements of the inhabitants in the village: What are the reasons for their prevalence? How are they used by individuals/families vis-à-vis other arrangements and how are they judged in the local context? The analysis highlights the multiple connections between individual practices of informal credit and the distributional practices of the local state, underlining that they are all related to the same broader phenomenon: the rescaling of insecurities.

Informal credit, state restructuring and social security

Anthropologists have long been concerned with various credit practices (cf. Peebles 2010), emphasizing that debt cannot be reduced to mere economic relations; it also involves social relations loaded with and constituted by moral values and obligations

5 All names in the text are anonymized, and pseudonyms are used for the names of the settlements.

(see e.g.: Gudeman 2001; Hann – Hart 2011; James 2014; Durst 2015b). Furthermore, different meanings can be attached to debt, which, while constantly negotiated by individuals, is also strongly connected to local contexts and structural constraints (Guérin 2014). Informal credit relations have been increasingly examined along these lines and my analysis adds to these efforts.

Informal lending has been an important constituent of local socioeconomic relations in different historical and geographical contexts (see Latea – Chelcea 2003; Graeber 2011). However, its current form and prevalence in Central and Eastern Europe is strongly related to the socioeconomic transformations of capitalist restructuring accompanied by the more recent withdrawal of the state from some of its social functions (Latea – Chelcea 2003; Messing – Molnár 2011; Durst 2015), which has particularly strongly affected remote rural areas. In these places the disappearance of former employment options, the gradual erosion of the means of commuting to industrial jobs, the break-up of collectives, the transformation of land ownership and more general access to land, and the changing productivity of agriculture has resulted in the narrowing of local resources and intensified people's anxieties and feelings of insecurity both about their present and future situation. At the same time, informal practices, including accessing credit, have gained renewed importance among people's coping strategies.

Ethnographic work that strictly focuses on informal credit practices and their link to the survival strategies of the poor in Hungary is still very limited (with only a few exceptions, such as Messing – Molnár 2011; Durst 2015a, 2015b). However, these studies focus, for the most part, on usury, (an exception in the field of sociology is the recent PhD dissertation of Gosztonyi [2018]). Undoubtedly, usury is one of the most dominant forms of informal credit in poor rural areas, although other forms of the latter, such as buying on credit in shops or taking advances on social benefits, appear similarly significant for poor households that are trying to cope with multiple insecurities. Latea – Chelcea (2003) discuss the sudden rise and new form of such practices in rural Romania that accompanied post-socialist restructuring. In the former case, cash scarcity affected a much wider segment of society and was related to continuously delayed payments of all kinds (credit from banks, taxes from firms, wages from firms/state, and social transfers from the state) that permeated the entire economy.

While the situation is somewhat similar in Tiszacseke, there is a crucial difference. In the Romanian example, precisely due to the dominance of a "delayed payment economy" and a widespread shortage of money at various levels, informal credit was a socially accepted practice based on strong communal ties and thus was also given to people who were tightly linked to the local community, (i.e. not only the long-term unemployed and poorest inhabitants, but also pensioners and low-wage earners). In comparison, the people who participate in these transactions in Tiszacseke (and similar villages in Hungary, as shown by Kozma et al. 2004; Virág 2009; Messing – Molnár 2011) are usually marginalized; they are less advantageously positioned

in local social structures and networks, hence are left with very limited resources to draw on. What is more, buying consumer goods on endlessly renewed credit is considered shameful and invites the moral judgment of the local majority with regard to consumption practices, financial management, and the lifestyles of the users of credit, despite being common practice among the local unemployed (Szőke 2012).

While the importance of informal credit for the survival strategies of the poor is often discussed, no systematic effort has been made to analyse these practices within the wider social security arrangements of individuals/households. According to Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, a broader anthropological understanding of social security should go beyond formal institutional provisions and include all forms of state and non-state, formal and informal arrangements, practices, relationships, ideologies, policies and institutions that are utilized by individuals, groups or families to overcome present and future insecurities related to their existence (1994: 4). According to this approach, people make various arrangements and draw on different resources in order to cope with present and future insecurities, often rooted in past experience. Accordingly, insecurities are not only material but are often experienced as feelings of anxiety rooted not necessarily in actual present needs but rather linked to the possibility of having such needs satisfied in the present or the future. As Franz and Keebet von Benda-Beckmann put it, "the most devastating uncertainties concern people's most basic needs: food, shelter, health and care; and in connection with them the experience of destitution, of a sudden loss or severe reduction of the means of existence and of access to other people or social institutions which might provide help" (1994: 7).

Analyzing informal credit relations by deploying the above social security approach leads to two important results. First, we can uncover the complex and multiple connections between these individual credit practices and the distributional practices of the local state, which although important is usually overlooked. Second, it furthers current efforts which highlight that, contrary to the dominant view, taking on informal credit without financial coverage is not due to "irresponsibility" or "bad planning" inherent to the poor, but rather is related to particular socioeconomic situations and larger structural processes that push the responsibility of dealing with insecurities down onto individuals, families and localities.

The political economic transformations after the collapse of the socialist regime in 1989 triggered a substantial restructuring of the state in Hungary. They entailed, among other things, the decentralization of welfare provisions, changes in financing and the institutional frames of development, and the setting up of autonomous local governments. As a result, local officials along with a number of regional, micro-regional, civic, and – with EU accession – supranational actors gained prominence in mediating access to various resources (Szőke 2012).

However, state restructuring did not mean the hollowing out or withdrawal of the state (cf. Goodwin – Painter 1996; Peck and Tickell 2002; Brenner 2004), but rather the reorganization of the spatial scales on which regulations, welfare and responsibilities

are constituted. It involved the devolution of a large number of responsibilities from the central state to local authorities, as well as to individuals and their families. Actors at these scales are increasingly encouraged to look after their own needs and contend with the aggregated effects of political economic restructuring, while central financing and welfare provision are continuously shrinking. As part of the neoliberal restructuring process, there was a move to fight against perceived dependency on state assistance, the introduction of workfare measures, and the narrowing of social rights (cf. Peck 2002; Castel 2005; Clarke 2005). This was particularly apparent at the time of and immediately after the 2008 economic crisis in Hungary. Whereas current waves of re-centralization, ongoing since 2010, have taken away many of the former powers of local authorities, they still bear a large part of the responsibility for dealing with unemployment, poverty, and related social tensions, while the centrally allocated means of doing so have been continuously reduced (Ferge 2017). Similarly, the individualization of social problems coupled with the punishing of poverty has further intensified (Szikra 2014 ; Ferge 2017).

These ongoing undulations of state restructuring have significant impacts on the ways people can make arrangements for their present and future social security, drawing on and strategizing between both formal state provisions and arrangements with relatives, neighbors, NGOs and religious organizations, among others. I describe these broader processes as the "rescaling of insecurities," which refers to the relegation of certain (often formerly centrally provided) securities to the level of local government or individuals/families (often with no parallel financial coverage), but also the structural constraints emanating from capitalist state restructuring that are fundamentally changing the ways in which individuals, groups, and organizations can mobilize their efforts and resources to establish their social security. This paper deals with one particular aspect of this phenomenon – the ways local families, on the one hand, and local government, on the other, try to cope with the concomitant insecurities. As will be seen below, the two issues are closely interlinked.

The research context

Tiszacseke has a young population: most of the 1600 inhabitants are of active age and the number of children is relatively high. One quarter of the local population are considered to belong to the Roma minority. Unemployment has seriously affected the area, especially since the closing of the manufacturing branches of collectives and due to the decline of the agrarian sector. There are only two large enterprises, both in the nearest small town, but only a handful of people from the village work there. The region preserved its predominantly agricultural orientation even during socialist-era industrialization, during which a large number of people commuted to other regions and within the area for their livelihood, or worked in local collectives. After the local cooperatives were dissolved, many lost their employment opportunities and the

possibilities for commuting were severely disrupted, which also contributed to the high unemployment rate in the area.

Currently, the local government is the largest employer, operating numerous institutions such as a school, kindergarten, and assistance for the elderly. Besides these opportunities, the few larger farm owners employ two-three regular workers and rely on further seasonal laborers for a few months a year. There are also a few small family businesses in the village, such as shops, pubs, a hairdresser, a restaurant, a few guest houses and a camping site. Thus local employment opportunities are scarce and for many are restricted to seasonal agricultural labour in orchards or cucumber fields.

I have had more than a decade-long involvement in the village, during which time I returned several times for shorter and longer research visits. However, most of the material I use in this article is based on nine months of ethnographic fieldwork spread between two visits from July 2009 to August 2010.[6] The research[7] involved repeated semi-structured interviews with all important state officials in the village, all the shop-keepers, and a total of 60 in-depth interviews with local inhabitants. These focused on their interaction/relations to local state officials, their social situation (sources of living, position in local society, relations to other groups/locals), and their practices or strategies of establishing their own and their families' social security. In addition, I regularly made ethnographic observations in shops, as well as in various local state institutions such as the mayor's office and various sites of public work, and frequently accompanied the nurse and the family assistant on their family visits and became part of the everyday life of numerous families, observing their practices and everyday conduct. Through these observations and interviews I gained access not only to the ways locals describe their practices, motives, values and relations to each other, but also how these interpretations relate to their actual everyday conduct of using credit, making calculations and plans for their immediate or far future, earmarking money according to the source of money and spending purpose, and reproducing or negotiating public norms about deservingness and undeservingness. While I had access to most of the actors involved in the credit relations I describe in the article, my material on Evident is restricted to how the company is interpreted by local customers, local state officials and using online material.

"It's not possible to live from this" – Individual insecurities

The number of people who have had no permanent employment for a long period is very high in Tiszacseke. According to the local government, 90 percent of the active aged population are affected. Many live on social transfers (among which childcare and family benefits constitute a large part) and from wages for public work. Since

6 The ethnographic present described in the text refers to this period.

7 The research was conducted within the frame of a comparative research project called "Local State and Social Security in Rural Hungary, Romania and Serbia 2008-2011" based at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, funded by the Volkswagen Foundation.

the 1990s the mayor has organized a large-scale public work program, employing 200-240 beneficiaries[8] yearly, long before the nationwide 2009 "Road to Work" program saw similar practices throughout Hungary. He considers it one of his major responsibilities and an important way of preventing people from falling into deep poverty and curbing a rise in usury or crime (Szőke 2015).

The local government is the only large-scale employer in the village and public work has substituted permanent employment for many locals for over two decades. In several cases it has become a permanent job for participants; numerous informants reported that they have worked in the program continuously for over ten years, albeit on short consecutive contracts. It also involves a wide range of people, from unskilled to qualified, from fresh job-seekers to aging inhabitants, and both men and women. Another significant factor is that great emphasis is put on equally employing Roma and non-Roma inhabitants, who usually work together in both skilled and unskilled jobs, although the Roma are more frequently found in the latter. This effort also relates to the fact that in the village both groups are equally affected by the widespread unemployment.[9]

In addition, seasonal work in agriculture, tourism or opportunities in the "informal" economy (such as reselling goods brought from Ukraine, smuggling petrol, or doing small-scale informal repair work) can bring additional resources to many families. A growing number also engage in cucumber cultivation, which brings some extra income during summer months. Apart from this, families in which there is one or more unemployed member receive the social benefit of 28,500 Ft a month, which since 2010 has only been available to one person per family and has since decreased to 22,800 Ft. In such cases, the other adult members a) receive childcare allowance; b) are taken onto the public work program and receive the minimum wage[10] for a few months, which also counts in terms of the number of days in employment that can result in higher unemployment benefit; c) receive a pension (or usually old-age assistance); or d) do not receive any social aid. However, due to the encompassing public work scheme in Tiszacseke, the latter cases are relatively few, although they still exist.

Most people in permanent employment in the village receive the minimum wage. Even in families where one member works in a local state institution, the other member(s) are often unemployed or only have irregular income from small-scale selling of fruit, unofficial repair work, or periodic involvement in public work. However, those unemployed villagers whose partner has a stable job and regular source of income are still in a somewhat better position than those who do not have such an option. The former can find small jobs here and there through the network

8 At the time of the research an average of about 80-120 people were usually employed for 3-6 month periods, thus the programme overall affected over 200-240 people yearly.

9 For more details on the local public work program and its effects, see Szőke (2015).

10 Its value has changed several times since the time of research. Currently, the public work wage is around 60% of the minimum wage.

of their better positioned partner, whose connection to a local state institution provides access to several other resources, including information about temporary job opportunities, occasional work at local government assets, or in private houses/ gardens, and free goods distributed among local state employees. Such free items can include regular food from the institution's kitchen, used furniture or leftover building material, or house furnishings from the renovation of institutions, and were often mentioned as a big bonus for those who work in or are connected to people working for local state institutions.

Moreover, their partner's stable income also makes the family eligible for bank loans. A better social position in local society – here meaning that one has friends or members of one's extended family in long-term employment or in other strategic positions (i.e. close to the mayor or other officials) in the local social structure – also contributes to social security. This can secure support, information, and access to other resources from parents, colleagues or friends who are likely to engage in long-term reciprocal relations of mutual help. This was mentioned often by several families; the sentence "you can never know when you yourself will need help" was a frequently used explanation for such mutual help relations. At the same time, this might not be available so easily to (or often even known about by) those families in which all members rely on benefits or occasional earnings, hence have narrower networks and less intense contact with people in strategic positions.

The case of the local family assistant, Szerénke, is one such example. Her husband has been unemployed for several years, only doing occasional jobs as a welder. However, she has been employed since she finished college, first in the nursery, and then in the local social service office. For that reason, her husband was never taken on for public work, as according to the mayor their situation was not so bad with one regular earner in the family. But Szerénke can participate in village festivals on a regular basis, from which all officials take home a large amount of free food, and she gets additional food vouchers at her workplace. Her husband has undertaken several repair jobs for other officials and local government institutions. And, more recently, he became employed in the water company for a short-term period when they needed an extra worker, with his personal contact with the dam keeper, another well-embedded person in local society, securing the job.

In spite of officially relying on only one minimum-wage income for years, the couple have managed to finance their child's higher education and language exam, buy a larger house with a bank loan, and live a relatively stable life in the village – i.e., they do not have debts in shops, they do not rely on (but also could not receive) benefits, and they do not have problems with paying their bills. Furthermore, they sell apples from their half-hectare orchard every autumn which brings in some additional income; they have a web of relatives and friends with whom they are in a close helping relationship, and thus during the harvest they do not have to pay helpers. However, in return they also do the same for those who have helped them, or return the favour

in other ways, such as through electrical repair work. Such arrangements appeared to be very prevalent in the village with families or individuals that are socially more advantageously positioned having a much wider network and access to a greater variety of resources.

A different villager, Éva, and her husband were out of regular employment for over four years, as were many of their friends. Éva used to work for one of the local shops, but after she reached the end of her maternity leave, she was not taken back. Then the couple decided to have a third child, and she now receives child support and has been unemployed for over seven years. The couple grow cucumbers, and last year Éva worked as a day labourer for a few days in orchards, but she could not find other employment opportunities. Her husband used to work for one of the largest landowners in the region but had been poisoned with pesticides, and since then could not find regular employment. He was engaged in "small business" (i.e. "getting, reworking and reselling stuff") as well as working as an agricultural day labourer whenever possible. He was finally taken on for public work in Spring 2010 for six months. The couple bought their house with a loan through a social scheme which they are still repaying, continuously rely on credit in shops, and often struggle to pay their bills and other household costs (for example, when their washing machine broke). They find it especially difficult in the winter months when there are reduced opportunities for seasonal work or additional jobs.

The situation of these two families is in many ways typical of others in Tiszacseke regarding social security; the example of Szerénke for those who work in official, long-term employment, and Éva for those who rely on social benefits and irregular, often unofficial labor opportunities. According to my field experience, as well as the accounts of local social workers, the main dividing line in local society in terms of social security arrangements does not unfold along the usual ethnic lines (between Roma and non-Roma) as often mentioned in relation to poverty in the context of Hungary, but rather between those with permanent employment on the one hand, and those who only have occasional jobs on the other and thus who rely on public work or social aid.[11] As the two above-described stories show, having a regular wage does not necessarily mean receiving a larger income, but it offers a kind of security, allows future planning, and gives access to a wider range of resources than small irregular jobs. Linda, a local mother, summarized the problem thus:

> *You cannot save up from social aid. [The related amount] 28,500 Ft is hardly enough to live on. And the banks don't give credit to you unless you can prove six months of employment. Also, public work… some are taken on for years and years non-stop, you can see, but my husband wasn't called in to work for ten years, only now they gave him three months of work. And again, for three months you cannot ask for bank credit, and even if they extend his contract and he can stay for another three to four months,*

11 This is, of course, not to say that racism plays no role in securing permanent work in the village or in the region.

it won't be enough. They will give a new work contract for the new period. So again, we can't go to the bank. How can one advance then? It's impossible, it's impossible… I would also like to renovate my house, of course I would. I also don't like to live like this – do you think I do? But I can't, this social aid is only just enough to live on.

Having a regular income makes saving possible, even if with difficulty, and above all it permits some sort of future planning. The latter is almost impossible when inhabitants are exposed to continuously fluctuating and shrinking social benefits or constantly shifting public work schemes, both of which have changed multiple times during past decades. In addition, one cannot plan when engaged in agricultural or minor manual jobs, especially when many orchards are increasingly remaining untended due to the low price of fruit, or employ Romanian laborers from across the border at a lower wage. As the lives of the above families show, when you only have a very small income, which is hardly enough to satisfy your most immediate needs, the practice of economizing to obtain future rewards remains only an idea. The mayor very acutely summed up the issue:

When they come to me and complain that they don't have enough money, I tell them "what do you want? How come you cannot live from 28,500 Ft?!" And then I tell them, "you go and buy some bread every day, that's 310 Ft," because here the cheapest bread costs 310 Ft per kilo, not 160 Ft like in the city, so that's 10,000 for a month. Then you go and buy a bucket of fat, which is 2500 forints, that's again 10,000 Ft a month, and then I tell them, "at least you won't starve." But then I pause. Because what am I saying?! We are already up to 20,000 Ft, and they have only bought bread and fat for the family. The rest they pay the bills from, and that's it, we haven't done anything yet, just eaten. So, I stop, because what can I tell them?! I also feel that something is very, very wrong.

The instabilities and insecurities caused by financial poverty, the impossibility of future planning due to frequent central changes in social benefits and public work programs, and the dependence of families on the discretionary decisions of local officials are visible in people's living standards; for example, with regard to house renovations and investments in furniture or other household goods. One crucial practice that is only undertaken by those without regular employment is buying everyday goods on credit. My interviews reveal that regularly buying on credit in local shops is considered to mark this dividing line between those who have regular jobs and those who do not. The shameful situation of having to rely on credit is strongly connected in the minds of locals to unemployment and a reliance on social benefits. This situation was also reflected in the account of the head of elderly assistance program when she talked about her earlier experience of being unemployed, and the feeling of insecurity and shame that had accompanied it:

I was also unemployed and my husband too. So, I know. My colleague, Szerénke, doesn't know yet, that's why she cannot value her job. She was always in employment. I was unemployed for several years before I started to work here… And my husband

> *also didn't have a job at the time. So, I know how it feels.... It was horrible. Constantly waiting and hoping that one of us at least will be taken on for public work. And then you never know for how long or when it will happen. So, you had to do all sorts of things. Many times I went and did the worst jobs, like shoveling snow or collecting rubbish from the street. And I did it for very little money, because if you didn't, you might not be called in for better jobs when there was a chance. So now I really appreciate my job, because I know how it felt to be so insecure. And OK, it still happens sometimes, because it happens to everyone here, but my biggest fear is that I will have to "go on the list" (iratkozik[12]) again. I'm trying everything to avoid this.*

However, even though such possibilities can easily threaten everyone in Tiszacseke, as the above account shows, most people in permanent employment or with regular income such as a pension have a rather negative view of the practice of regularly buying on credit. The nationwide discourses about being lazy, over-spending and thoughtlessly buying "luxurious goods" (such as cola, crisps, or cigarettes) are so deeply inscribed that even personal experiences do not contravene them. It is these nationally dominant images that are also used by many in Tiszacseke to delineate those who are "deserving" and "undeserving" in the local context. Similarly, having many children in poor families is often evaluated as a strategy to "take as much out of the state as possible"; i.e. to give birth to children in order to receive family support and numerous child benefits.

Many inhabitants with permanent employment even believe that the various benefits the unemployed receive amount to a greater income than their minimum wage. These opinions, however, reflect more the injustice that those in permanent employment (who as noted above receive only the minimum wage) feel towards those who receive several benefits and are without a job, than the actual amount the latter receive. Rather, it reflects broader social tensions and feelings of injustice towards the redistributive logic of the state, and deep-rooted public sentiments also enhanced by current social policies concerning the stigmatization of benefit users as "misusers" and "parasites" on the state. Such tensions between those who work in low-paid jobs and those who are long-term unemployed are especially high in areas with poor economic assets and scarce opportunities like Tiszacseke.

In addition to the particularly benevolent social policy of the local mayor, there are certain additional resources that the officially unemployed can turn to. One of these is small-scale agricultural production, mostly cucumber-growing for those who do not have additional resources to invest in anything larger, or who have not inherited much land. In terms of area, cucumbers can bring in as much as 1800-2000 Ft per square meter if the soil is good and the weather is favourable. Accordingly, for 600-800 square meters of cucumbers, which is the most common size of plot in Tiszacseke, one can earn more

12 This is a local expression used to describe the situation when someone asks a shopkeeper if they can be written onto the list of debtors, but it also became a local colloquialism to express the entire phenomenon of buying on credit. As such, it not only describes one particular instance, that the interviewee here mentions that may still often happen to anyone, but rather a continuous regular and prolonged practice, when debts can never be fully balanced.

than 1.5 million Ft in a season. Even in less favourable conditions growing cucumbers can bring in at least 600-800,000 Ft for 3-4 months of work. Even if one deducts the initial loan given by the wholesaler[13] and the smaller investment into nets, sticks and additional treatment materials, people can augment their income by a significant sum. However, the work is very intensive, and involves a minimum debt of 150,000 Ft for 600 square meters that needs to be paid back to the wholesaler once the cucumbers start growing. Furthermore, cucumbers are very sensitive plants that are easily affected by the weather and various diseases, so one can end up with a debt at the end of the season. All the above factors therefore make cucumber growing an attractive yet risky option.

As mentioned above, people living from an irregular and small income can ease their situation by purchasing goods on credit from local shops.[14] According to one of the biggest shopkeepers, 50 percent of her customers regularly buy on credit. Another recently opened shop offers credit to every customer without exception and without limit as a customer attraction strategy. Thus, by the second month after opening, many people were shopping there, accumulating as much as 30-50,000 Ft debt per month. Those who regularly buy on credit balance some of their debts at the beginning of each month after receiving their social benefits or public work wage, but the next day come again and ask if they could buy on credit. Borrowing from family or friends, another form of informal credit, also plays an important role in local social security arrangements. However, this is mostly limited to small sums and occurs during exceptional events or crises such as sudden sickness, the death of a relative, the threat of being refused informal credit at one of the local shops due to a large outstanding balance, weddings, baptisms or school graduation parties. Similarly, the mutual practice of borrowing everyday food products such as flour, sugar, coffee and cigarettes is also important in times of need (for example, when credit in shops is frozen when the mutually agreed limit is reached). Of course, such practices have long existed. However, the regular use of credit in shops, Evident loans, and advances from the local government are relatively new, and are more closely linked to ongoing socioeconomic transformations.

The dilemma of the shopkeeper, Evident, and their best customers

"You cannot refuse to give bread or milk to a mother when you know she has three children," explained Kati, the owner of a shop located near the main road in the village,

13 This involves a formal arrangement whereby a farmer signs a contract with the wholesaler. The wholesaler pre-finances the initial plants, the nets, sticks and pesticides which are given to the farmer at the start of the season. Once the cucumbers finish growing, the farmer delivers them to the wholesaler, who first deducts the initial loan from the price to be paid for the cucumbers. Only once this debt is balanced does the farmer get the money for the cucumbers delivered to the wholesaler. In some cases, other constructions also exist, mostly based on long-established personal trust relations (e.g. by gradually deducting the loan from each batch of cucumbers delivered throughout the season, so the farmer can receive some money for the very first batch delivered to the wholesaler).

14 There are a total of five grocery shops in the village, and they all sell on credit to a number of customers.

> *...[but] it is a different thing if they ask for alcohol, then I often don't give credit. But, for example, for cigarettes, I do. I somehow think it is not my job to teach people what is good or bad. But they often buy other goods too. When they ask me if they can get another 1000 Ft credit, and I tell them "yes," thinking that they will get some yogurt or some bananas for their children and they will eat better, then they go and buy tomatoes for 800 Ft per kg. In winter! Even I don't buy them in the winter! Or the Bonduelle tinned corn which costs double the price of the other type. Then I get very mad. But I still give the credit to them... what can I do?!*

As she went on to explain, it is mostly larger families with many children who rely on credit. Elderly people are too ashamed to ask, even if they need it. However, these large families are considered "the best customers," even if they buy on credit, because they shop daily and for numerous goods. While elderly people usually just buy bread and milk (as they grow vegetables and keep livestock in their gardens), larger families usually buy several things to cook with; meat from the freezer, vegetables, washing powder, sweets for the kids and soda such as Sprite or Coke. "If it weren't for them, we might close the shop," admits Kati. Other shopkeepers also felt they were in a way forced to offer credit to these families (cf. Latea and Chelcea 2003), otherwise they would lose their biggest and most frequent customers, even if this means they only get a part of their money back and always with some delay. As one shopkeeper put it, "we know that eventually they will pay for it, otherwise they won't get more credit. And if they don't pay here or the other shops, eventually no one will give them credit, then they can go to the city. They will see who gives them credit there!"

Through the continuous giving of credit, the shopkeepers bind their customers to their shops. Indeed, this is a part of some shopkeepers' strategy for dealing with local competition. As Angéla, a 43-year-old mother of four children, explained in regard to the newly opened shop which started to attract customers by offering unlimited credit,

> *...The first time I just asked for 1000 Ft credit, as I didn't have enough money with me for the washing powder. I forgot to buy it at the nearest city. We usually go there when we get social aid and shop for the whole month. Then the next day I went to the shop again, and he [the shopkeeper] said I could shop some more if I needed to, he'd just write it on the list. So, I bought cola, the expensive one, not the cheap one, some crisps, and some cigarettes and some other stuff I don't remember, food to eat. I didn't really need all that, but since he said I could buy things.... I know it was wrong. We usually don't drink Coca Cola, just the cheap type. But he said I could get more credit, so I bought it. It all came to over 8000 Ft, so then I owed 9000 Ft. By now, I owe over 30,000 Ft, and I don't know what will happen, because it's only the beginning of the month, and we [the family] only have 120,000 Ft altogether. If I pay this debt, and buy our monthly food for 60,000 Ft, there are still the bills, and we will have nothing left. Then I will have to buy on credit again.*

Shopkeepers[15] entangle some of their regular customers in webs of attachment and deepening debt. Customers feel they can take more and more goods. Even though they cannot balance their debts now or in the foreseeable future, they nevertheless keep on buying and, as they do so, any reservations they have about being in debt evaporate, as they return each month to pay off some of the debt, and also take a little more (cf. Latea – Chelcea 2003). Another, much larger creditor, Evident, works according to an alarmingly similar logic.

In answer to my question about what happens if individuals suddenly need larger sums (in the case of sickness, for a flat renovation, or for a new electrical appliance, etc.), Sándor, a charismatic member of the Roma local government, answered without hesitation, "we call Evident." In contrast to a bank, this loan company offers credit to people who have no secure income or guarantors. He went on to explain,

> *They ask for almost 100 percent interest, it's like usury, nothing different. A person comes as soon as the next day after you call, asks about your income. You tell them you only get the 28,500 Ft of aid, and family benefits. And then he gives you the money as soon as the next day, he brings it to your house. Then you have to pay back some part at the end of every week. The agent from the company comes to your house and asks for your weekly instalment. It is just like the loan sharks. The only difference is that it is legal, it's a company. And they really give credit to anyone, it doesn't matter if you don't work or have no salary, just your social aid and the family benefits. … I was also in it [borrowed from Evident], twice. It took me two years to get out of it. But I had to take it. Once I took 60,000 Ft for the funeral of my aunt, and once another 30,000 Ft – we needed it for food, there was no other option then, nowhere else to go. I paid the installments for two years, often I had to borrow from friends to pay them, and still didn't manage to clear my balance… It really is the last option – you only go there [borrow from Evident] when there is nowhere else to go.*

Evident is often the only option (apart from loan sharks) for those without a permanent job if they want to obtain larger sums of money. At the time of the research, the company offered loans of up to 220,000 Ft even to people whose sole income was social aid or public work, and often asked for 80-100% interest on short-term small loans through the home service scheme.[16] While it was not detailed as such on their credit scheme table, a closer look showed that if one took 100,000 Ft credit over a 30-week instalment period, 153,000 Ft would have to be paid back. Over 60 weeks the sum could amount to 177,750 Ft, which could further increase if the client failed to pay back the amount by the end of this period, which often happens. This

15 The perspectives and motives of the shopkeepers are also multiple; however these did not constitute the focus of my research. Yet it was often said that selling on credit is not advantageous to them, and in most cases ends up in losses, thus they need a minimum number of cash-paying customers in order not to run at a loss. However, the former reasoned that in a locality with a limited number of cash-paying customers, offering credit was needed for survival, as eventually most credit is balanced, even though only in small sums and stretched over an extended period. Giving credit furthermore binds customers to the shop; the loyalty of customers (in terms of where they bought, and what) was a constant topic of shopkeepers during my research.

16 This service is used by the majority of clients from poorer and/or rural backgrounds as it does not require a bank account and assistance is offered with all related paper work, arranged directly at the home of the customer.

situation changed slightly with the 2014 regulation on credit rates, and the company has also changed its credit profile, although its most often used services still target the "unbanked."

Buying on credit and borrowing from Evident entangles people in circles of debt with little possibility of repayment in the near future. What is more, constantly offering new credit without ever expecting full repayment incites further consumption – this has parallels with the logic of giving credit cards or large bank mortgages to clients without comparable guarantees, discussed extensively in relation to the 2008 global crisis. Whereas some of these options (i.e. buying on credit or taking Evident loans) may be vital for securing the present and future needs of many families, in the longer term it appears that such practices are strategies for dealing with the insecurities generated by structural processes at higher levels.

Delineating various reasons for the current spread of consumer credit, Rona-Tas and Guseva (2018) argue that the current culture of consumerism fueled by advertisements and cultural messages incites various classes to go into debt to ensure their status quo, which they can only reach by upscaling their consumption. The authors explain that, following the neoliberal turn, "curtailing social programs and government spending amounted to pushing the problem of demand management onto [...] households, which had no other choice but to deepen their reliance on consumer credit" (p. 57), creating a second form of exploitation. In Tiszacseke, this is also partly true. Elsewhere I argue (Szőke 2012) that the seemingly luxurious or irresponsible spending of the poorer segments of the village is in fact a way to renegotiate their social belonging and counteract dominant notions about deservingness.

The local government, and informal credit

Buying on informal credit appears to be entangled with the practices of the local government in several ways and on many levels. The first and the most obvious is that the mayor himself also engages in distributing informal credit of a type. Advances are frequently given from the public work wage and then deducted from the public work salary at the end of the month or over consecutive months if the advance is large. Numerous workers told me that this option was of great help to them. Undoubtedly, it is sometimes used to save families from immediate crises (for example, surviving until the next payment if every other resource is already used up), meaning they do not need to go to loan sharks or Evident, where high interest would be due on the sum they borrow. In these cases, only a few thousand Ft is advanced that is usually spent on basic necessities such as food, or is used in case of sudden sickness or severe indebtedness to balance some debt.

Of crucial consideration here is that the local government could distribute a one-time benefit called crisis aid[17] meant exactly for such situations. However, according to local statistics and personal accounts, very few people have received it in past years. The social service clerk explained that officially it can be given, but since it should be covered entirely from the local budget, they cannot distribute it frequently. The case was similar with funeral aid, which could be also distributed from the local government budget. Thus, in the few cases when it was given, it was usually given in the form of credit (i.e. deducted in small installments from the applicant's aid or public work wage). Thus, due to limited local government resources, advances on the public work wage partly fulfilled the same role as crisis aid, although in the form of credit.

Nevertheless, these advances were typically taken for a larger sum (80-160 thousand Ft) and, similar to the income from growing cucumbers or day labour, were used for larger investments that could not be realized from the low public work wage/ benefits. Most often the money was used for renovating houses, building bathrooms, or taking the first steps towards cucumber farming.[18] The importance of these advances was emphasized by many, because it is not possible to obtain bank loans for such investments based only on a public work wage[19] or social aid.

Renovating houses has an importance that goes beyond increasing the immediate comfort of families. A significant portion of the unemployed families had had their children placed under supervision (*védelembe véve*) at one point, which means that the child protection officer visited them on a weekly basis, monitoring the parents' child-raising practices, financial background and, above all, living conditions. These supervisory orders were usually due to cases of under-age pregnancy, parents' suspected alcoholism, or, most frequently – as the child protection officer put it – "financial circumstances that threatened the well-being and desirable living conditions of the children."

On the various occasions I accompanied the child protection officer and the local nurse (*védőnő*) on these visits, the houses were inspected for heating facilities, the presence of windows and doors (that were often missing), and clean rooms with proper walls and beds (preferable separate ones) for children. If the family failed to remedy at least some of these shortcomings over a period of time (usually one year), they were threatened with the permanent removal of a child or children. Whereas such extreme measures were only taken four times in the period 2005-2013, the threat was extensively used by local officials and discussed in families thus threatened, and was

17 Since the 2015 changes in the social aid system, crisis aid does not exist any more, but a new benefit called local government aid (*települési támogatás*) may be awarded which now substitutes crisis aid, regular social aid, funeral aid, and irregular child protection benefits.

18 For more details about the earmarking of different sources of income and the values attached to them, see Szőke (2012).

19 Even those who are employed more or less constantly in public work as regular employment are taken on through short-term contracts which would not make the earner eligible for bank loans. This was explained to be a major barrier to making larger investments by many informants.

thus often mentioned in considerations about house renovations. Similarly, being selected for public work often involved a discretionary decision by the mayor about who was deserving and who not, something which was often influenced by other local state officials' opinions and information about the applicants. Keeping one's house tidy or trying to "manage on one's own" by, for example, growing cucumbers or undertaking small renovations and repair work on a house played an important part in this.

Though many people spoke in positive terms about the advances, some of the officials had serious reservations. Advances do not follow legally regulated structures (they are based on informal arrangements, but still have to be financed from a very strict, pre-calculated carefully balanced monthly budget). The local government struggled to carry out many of its tasks, as is often the case in remote villages with small assets and large social expenses, and was even forced to switch to heating the school and nursery with wood for two consecutive winters in 2009-10. Moreover, the local government has been struggling with the repayment of large bank loans, and often refused locals' requests for emergency benefits, as mentioned above.

These practices of the local government can be associated with the indebtedness and spending practices of local needy on another level too. Namely, both seem to be linked to larger political economic phenomena that increase the insecurity of individuals/families and local authorities. Due to the devolution of responsibilities in the field of welfare, with no matching financial support, this is felt particularly by those who are least advantageously situated in the present structures, both at the level of individuals and the local government. The one-hundred-million forint deficit with which the local government starts the year cannot all be covered from local income as resources are scarce and the number of taxpayers (and enterprises) is limited.

This is a problem faced by many local governments across the country: either some institutions are closed down and local services abolished (which many local offices are reluctant to do), or the local government relies on newer and newer bank loans to make up its budget deficits. The indebtedness of the local government sector rose from 14 percent in 1991 to 70 by 2010 (Vigvári 2011:69). After local resources from selling local government assets were exhausted by the end of the 1990s, local governments increasingly started to rely on loans to compensate for the decreasing central contributions and lack of monetary resources (Pálné Kovács 2008). Thus, by the end of 2000 indebtedness on a mass scale had occurred (Vigvári 2011:71), a fact which became particularly apparent as the central financial deficit after the 2008 Hungarian economic crisis was pushed down particularly effectively to the local scale.

Due to the continuing devolution of welfare provisions, local governments are also pushed to deal with the social consequences of capitalist restructuring, such as unemployment, social and ethnic tensions and poverty, on their own. The local government in Tiszacseke, due to the lack of appropriate financial coverage, has to resort to rearranging its targeted grants within its budget and to take on large

debts to maintain local institutions and services. Thus, in order to maintain a large and expensive public work program, which the mayor argues is key to keeping social tensions in check, it often uses money from central grants that is targeted at other mandatory tasks. Crucially, however, it is not within the local government's power to create and maintain employment or to fundamentally change the long-term local socioeconomic situation of the settlement. In the same way, local unemployed inhabitants have little power to fundamentally change their situation and escape the spiral of indebtedness and poverty. There are temporal similarities between the local government and those who buy on credit in shops; i.e. both focus on the most urgent matters, and invest resources into "fire-fighting," rather than trying to make investments for the future.

Last but not least, the local state plays an important role in local informal credit practices in another sense. Several shopkeepers in Tiszacseke explained that they do get back some of their credit at the time of the payment of the public work salary. In addition, they added, it is best when many people are taken on for public work, because then less credit is asked for, and more of it is balanced each month. However, since public work programs have been more or less continuously operating for many years, shopkeepers are for the most part confident that these debts will eventually be repaid.

Conclusions

The neoliberal reforms, privatization, disappearance of employment opportunities and decreasing involvement of the central state in providing social security has led to new forms of insecurities in people's lives. At the same time, discourses of self-help and the repeated individualization of social problems, along with the increasing withdrawal of the central state from welfare provision, have also meant that the responsibility for finding solutions to socioeconomic problems and the consequent socio-spatial inequalities have been devolved to local and individual levels. These processes have only intensified since the period when most of the above research was undertaken. The central state has further delegated its former responsibilities of providing and allocating social benefits to local governments (with the 2015 transformations of the social aid system) and strengthened punitive elements (Ferge 2014), abandoning an even larger segment of society (and villages), whose fates are now left entirely in their own hands. However, the lack of resources, due to decreasing central support and a lack of local assets, poses a problem in terms of tackling these insecurities, and often pushes both local governments and individuals to deal with them by finding immediate solutions, such as loans from Evident, bank loans, or informal credit in local shops, rather than by making long-term arrangements.

Whereas to some degree the above-discussed processes have exacerbated anxiety and feelings of insecurity for many different groups in society, in the context of the

village the long-term unemployed are undoubtedly the most significantly affected. Furthermore, as the study has revealed, different groups can draw on very different resources and practices to cope with these insecurities. Informal credit and Evident loans constitute an important part of the social security arrangements for people who face unemployment or irregular employment and have limited access to other resources through local ties to strategically positioned persons.

The different formal and informal practices that people use for their social security arrangements are strongly intertwined. As this paper has shown, formal and informal credit permeate different practices, ranging from cucumber-growing through house renovation to everyday consumption, and are used to deal with various insecurities related to child protection, crisis situations, and negotiating social belonging. As such, public norms of deservingness strongly influence who can access different resources and in what ways.

Similarly, local governments like the one in Tiszacseke have also become increasingly indebted as they struggle to reconcile socioeconomic problems and carry out their mandatory duties in the face of a lack of appropriate resources, which makes long-term future planning/investment and structural changes unimaginable. The mayor believes that providing a certain level of social security through public work employment is an important job of the local government. However, in the face of shrinking central funding and the disadvantaged position of the village, it can only do so by taking away resources from other institutions and, for example, by offering advances on benefits instead of one-off aid in crisis situations. At the same time, it is due to the wide-scale public work programme that shopkeepers feel confident that the debts of their "best" customers will be balanced, and that, for the most part, loan sharks cannot be found in the village. However, as has been shown, even among the poorer groups this does not mean equal access to resources, as local advances and admittance to public work are largely dependent on the discretionary decisions of local officials, who are themselves influenced by public views about deservingness. Both the poor unemployed villagers and the disadvantaged local government are attempting to navigate a moral field of acceptable spending and informal credit practices amid the rescaled insecurities that permeate the present and possible futures of remote Hungarian villages.

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Commuting to segregation
The role of pupil commuting in a Hungarian city: between school segregation and inequality

János Zolnay
jzolnay@gmail.com

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Abstract: The paper is written to foster understanding of the function of primary school pupils' high commuting rate in Hungary's towns and cities and its role in the process of school choice. Based on two studies and on data collection covering all primary school pupils in the city of Pécs, I analyzed the pattern, direction and success rate of pupils' efforts to find higher quality schools than their district schools. The aim of the study was to unpack the "commuting games" of the primary schools. Results indicate that, in contrast to national trends, the commuting rate of low-status and Roma primary school pupils is also very high within the city. However, while most of the commuting pupils have managed to enrol in higher quality schools than the ones in the catchment area of their homes, the majority of low-status and Roma commuters appear to be attending lower quality schools than those close to their homes, because prestigious schools informally deter them. My findings challenge the literature which claims that the selection mechanisms of public education are predominantly regulated by the mutual choices of prestigious schools and high-status pupils. Schools and their local or central maintenence agents are unable to control the processes against the background of a centralized system.

Keywords: educational segregation; selection; pupils' commuting; spatial and educational inequalities

Introduction[1]:

The right-wing liberal concept of society and the reforms that it has inspired are often criticized for creating and introducing a quasi-market system in education (van Zanten 2008). The per-capita-basis allocation of school budgets and other resources encourages schools to consider students their most important resources. This results in competition with two meanings: the aim of "first order" competition is to enrol as many students as possible in order to maximize resources, while "second-order competition" is aimed at enrolling the students considered the most academically able so as to enhance the school's prestige (Gewirtz et al 1995). The possibility of

1 The author thanks Erika Csovcsics and Ágnes Gosztonyi for their generous help and Gábor Havas for his valuable comments on the first draft of this paper.

school choice necessarily exacerbates inequities everywhere as it pushes schools to sort and select students (Musset 2012).

Nevertheless, the quasi-market system of Britain and the USA which is based on free parental choice and indirect state control should be compared cautiously to the education liberalization that ensued the post-communist transition in countries such as Hungary (Kovai – Neumann 2015). In the communist era, the admission quotas of secondary schools were predominantly determined by the annual decisions of the government, and influential state-owned factories continuously and successfully lobbied for the majority of students to attend vocational schools after finishing their primary education. The post-socialist liberalization of school choice had a significant inclusive effect because secondary admission quotas were no longer determined by the government. However, until the nationalization of schools in 2013, extensive secondary expansion had concealed growing between-school inequalities within public education because, due to a co-financing system, school-maintaining municipalities had had a vested interest in maximizing the number of secondary school students and, as a consequence, the proportion of pupils from secondary grammar (*gimnázium*) and secondary vocational schools (*szakközépiskola*) that were enrolled steadily increased (Fehérvári et al. 2010). Furthermore, the massive expansion of secondary education greatly improved the chances of disadvantaged and Roma pupils entering into secondary education.

At the same time, the fact that social background significantly determines educational outcomes in Hungary clearly originates from a regulatory system based on unlimited free parental choice at all levels of schooling, the unregulated and informal competition of schools for students, primary schools' informal admission practices, and a diversified school system. One of the main reason for early tracking is that students can apply to eight- or six-year secondary grammar schools at the ages of 10 and 12. In this system, one's school performance and educational chances are predominantly determined by early school choices to a much greater extent than in most OECD countries (OECD 2015). The *weak capacity of the educational system to compensate for pupils' disadvantages* resulted in the fact that in 2005 nearly 20 percent of the year's cohort left public education having completed no more than eight years of primary school, despite the compulsory school attendance age having been raised from 16 to 18 years in 1996 (Kertesi –Varga 2005).

Given these circumstances, educational authorities cannot uphold a stable and inclusive education system. Depending on their perceived particular interests, schools and parents will undermine its stability.

It is highly doubtful whether a *targeted* voucher system would be capable of counterbalancing the effect of private schools (Hsieh – Urquiola 2006; Fiske – Ladd 2000). Educational systems based on free school choice are often described as "*universal*" voucher schemes whereby all students are provided with a symbolic voucher which can be "redeemed" at any school in the country, although only district

schools are obliged to admit pupils without further consideration (OECD 2017). Accordingly, parents choose primary schools for their children based on the schools' perceived quality and social composition. They can put their children's names down for any school they choose to, but pupils only have to be accepted by their catchment area schools. Beyond that, however, it is up to the individual schools, which act within the limits of the places they have available, to decide whether to accept children from outside their area. On the other hand, schools are not only interested in maximizing the number of students, but also in improving or at least defending their prestige and local status by admitting presumably well-performing students. The mutual choices of middle-class parents and prestigious schools[2] necessarily leads to the unequal distribution of educational services.

Approximately 13-14 percent of students in Hungarian primary schools are Roma (Papp Z. 2015). It is a crucial and open-ended question whether the mutual selection process is basically “colour-blind”; that is, if the ethnicity of students adds to the effect of the ESCS[3] of Roma parents being lower than average, and if their children's abilities and performance will subsequently also be below average. The literature implies that this is not the case; instead, the symbolic significance of ethnicity is far greater and non-Roma parents simply do not wish their children to attend the same schools or at least the same classes as Roma kids (Kemény et al. 2004; Dupcsik 2009). In the former case, the mutually presumed and perceived ability spectrum of schools and children would result in steady balance and student commuting trends would be predictable.

This dilemma is particularly significant in Hungary, because the impact of parents' ESCS on the educational performance of students is higher than in most OECD countries (Csapó et al. 2014; Radó 2014; Ostorics et al. 2016) and therefore, according to my research experience, the impact of the social background of families is an essential factor in the selection criteria for school principals.

Roma pupils' performance in reading may be explained explicitly by their social status, and their performance in mathematics only slightly lags behind that of non-Roma pupils of similar socioeconomic background. On the other hand, their dropout rate from secondary and vocational schools is significantly higher than that of non-Roma pupils of similar socioeconomic background, and they are less likely to continue their education in secondary schools than their non-Roma peers of similar abilities and results (Kertesi – Kézdi 2010).

High commuting rates are a characteristic feature of public education regimes based on free parental school choice. The high proportion of primary school students who opt for schools outside their catchment zone has been demonstrated in several previous studies[4] (Havas – Zolnay 2011). It has always been clear that pupil commuting

2 I define parents as middle class if they have an opportunity to choose from the best, or allegedly best schools for their children. I define schools as prestigious if they have the opportunity to admit the best, presumably most academically able pupils.

3 Index of Economic Social and Cultural Status.

4 The commuting rate for primary school pupils who leave their local catchment area was 64 percent in larger Hungarian towns, and only 36 percent opted for their catchment zone school.

is inherently unequal because pupils of higher status are significantly more likely to commute.[5] Kertesi and Kézdi (2009) found a strong positive association between the number of schools in a vicinity and the commuting rates of middle class children,[6] but the fundamental significance of commuting was only proved by their research on the educational policies of 100 towns and cities in 2011. Their hypothesis was that in Hungarian towns and cities the ethnic segregation of primary schools is strongly related to the proportion of Roma pupils attending primary schools, the segregating or integrative nature and effect of local educational policy, and the amount of residential segregation. Survey results confirmed the first two hypotheses, but, astonishingly, found that *residential segregation has NO direct impact on level of school segregation*. There is also a significant association between the level of local educational segregation and the commuting rate of high-status students. This means that the *commuting rate is so high that it can neutralize the previously assumed impact of residential segregation on the level of school segregation* (Kertesi – Kézdi 2013). Accordingly, the selection process is predominantly *regulated by the willingness to commute of middle-class students*.

Main research questions

The novelty of my study is that it attempts to map and interpret the trends and direction of pupils' commuting across catchment areas in a large city for the first time. This article is based on three comprehensive periods of data collection[7] conducted in 2007, 2009 and in 2014 in all primary schools of Pécs. Data collection concentrated on the presumed motivation, direction, and the success of different pupil groups in commuting, the commuting balance of the catchment areas of primary schools, and the "commuting games" of schools (Neumann – Zolnay 2008; Zolnay 2010). The research questions of my third and second survey were designed to take forward the above-mentioned nationwide representative survey conducted in 2011 (Kertesi – Kézdi 2013).

Therefore, my core research questions concerned whether the vast majority of commuter pupils really manage to attend higher status schools, and *whether only a small proportion of low-status pupils commute to schools outside their catchment area*. More generally, the study focused on whether the school selection process is *regulated predominantly by "white flight";* that is, the mutual choice of prestigious schools and high-status pupils. If white flight does not exclusively regulate the commuting process, nor indirectly shape the selection mechanism of public education, then two relevant

5 In urban settlements, less than 25 percent of lower-status students (whose mother's education lasted a maximum of eight grades) commuted to a school other than their catchment school, while in the case of higher-status students (whose mothers had completed 12 grades or more) the rate was 50 percent.

6 In towns with only a few schools, fewer than 20 percent of middle-class students commuted. In towns with 10 schools, the proportion was over 40 percent, and 60 percent in towns with 40 schools.

7 The first study was conducted in the framework of EÖKiK (Public Foundation for European Comparative Minority Research), while its successor, CEC (Civitas Europica Centralis Foundation) (http://www.cecid.net/en/about-us), supported the second study.

additional questions must be raised. How can we characterize the commuting *patterns of different pupil groups,* and how *successful are the former in their efforts to find and enrol in schools better* than their own catchment schools? What kind of *school strategies* can be identified in terms of the *balance of their commuting inflow and outflow,* and what kind of strategies do schools use to improve their positions and enhance their real or perceived interests?

I used the school's results in the National Assessment of Basic Competences as an indicator of school quality. I do not suppose that the majority of parents are well aware of the National Competence Assessment scores of primary schools, not to mention their added value indexes, but I do contend that parental choice via pupil commuting can be approached by taking a rational choice perspective. Consequently, I assume that the school choice of Roma parents is similarly driven by the motivation of finding primary schools perceived as better quality.

Methods

The study included all primary public schools and all pupils attending the public primary schools of Pécs.[8] I collected data about the number of all pupils from each school, grade and class, specifying disadvantaged and multiply disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs, pupils with learning difficulties, and pupils perceived as Roma by the schools. Thereafter I identified the catchment area of each pupil.[9] This database allowed me to map the commuting patterns of school catchment areas for each pupil group. I could assess which schools attracted commuting pupils in each category and where these pupils commuted from. I ranked the primary schools based on the data from the national competence assessment which allowed me to assess the success and direction of pupil movements in each pupil category and the bargaining positions of the schools.

The criteria defining the categories of disadvantaged, multiply disadvantaged pupils, pupils with special educational needs, and pupils with learning difficulties are statutory. Roma pupils are not registered officially and formally but the researchers' experience is that principals are acutely aware of who is Roma; likewise, non-Roma parents are keenly aware of alleged ethnic proportions, irrespective of the self-identification of pupils. Tolerated ratios vary city-to-city and even by neighbourhood. In assessing the proportion of Roma pupils, I used the method of expert classification.

Besides quantitative data collection, I conducted detailed interviews with school principals about their schools and pupils and concerning the local educational bargaining in which they are involved.

8 In 2014, approximately 7800 pupils attended the 17 primary schools of the city.
9 I collected data anonymously, and data analyses were performed on aggregated data sets.

The priorities of the city's educational policy

In recent decades the city's education policies have been driven by *two consensual core principles*. The municipality *yielded to the pressure* of middle-class parents who wished to enrol their children into the *most prestigious schools of the city, and year after year permitted these schools to launch as many first-grade classes as possible, taking into account the building's capacity*. Furthermore, the municipality which operated the schools wanted to prevent the development of serious segregation across schools and *periodically closed segregating schools* or ghettoizing school branches. Following the closure of the latter schools in 2007, the scale of segregation decreased for some years, but after a while the proportion of Roma pupils started to grow in certain schools until it reached a level at which white flight occurred. *Outsourcing segregated primary school to church maintenance* in 2013 has become the *third element* of the city's educational policy. Urban planning considerations usually do not significantly impact educational policy decisions due to the characteristics of the social history of cities (Erdősi 1968; Márfi 2005).

Results

Segregation and commuting trends in Pécs

The city has a significant Roma population of Beash (archaic Romanian-speaking) and Vlach (Romani-speaking) origin. During the communist era, most Roma families aimed to comply with forced assimilation requirements to such an extent that they exclusively talked in Hungarian with their children, so their native languages have almost totally vanished. Among primary school pupils, the proportion of Roma is 11 percent, which rate has been constant for a decade. The proportion of pupils with special educational needs was also 11 percent in 2014, of whom approximately 57 percent studied in mainstream schools while 43 percent attended special remedial schools. The proportion of pupils with learning difficulties studying in mainstream schools was 9 percent (see Table 1).

Table 1: *Different pupil groups in the primary schools in Pécs (%)*

Pupils	2007	2009	2014
Disadvantaged pupils		29	23
Roma pupils	11	11	11
Multiply disadvantaged pupils	4	6	4
Pupils with special educational needs			11
Pupils with learning difficulties			9

Sources: EÖKiK and CEC data collection

Following a period of sharp increase, the extent of ethnic segregation has declined significantly in state schools in recent years (see Table 2 and Table 3). The commuting rates for primary school students slightly differed from the data measured nationwide.

The rate of commuting students was similar but, unexpectedly, *the proportion of multiply disadvantaged students and Roma students attending primary school outside their catchment area was significantly higher* than the average rate observed in large towns (see Table 4). However, surprisingly, the commuting rate of low-status students increased during the period when school segregation declined.

Table 2: *Average dissimilarity index of Roma pupils measured in each grade in 2007, 2009 2014 in Pécs*

Year	Average dissimilarity index (DI) of Roma pupils measured in each grade
2007	0,04-0,05
2009	0,08-0,09
2014	0,05-0,06

Sources: EÖKiK and CEC data collection

Table 3: *Distribution of Roma pupils in classes according to the proportion of Roma pupils (%)*

	Proportion of Roma pupils			
Year	0-25%	26-50%	51-75%	76-99%
2007	45	34	18	3
2009	42	28	20	10
2014	36	44	14	5

Sources: EÖKiK and CEC data collection

Table 4: *Proportion of commuting pupils in different pupil categories in Pécs (%)*

	Proportion of commuting pupils		
Pupils	2009	2014	Except those who attended special schools in 2014
All pupils	58	58	54
Disadvantaged pupils	52	53	50
Roma pupils	39	51	42
Multiply disadvantaged pupils	37	37	29
Pupils with special education needs	n.a.	72	35
Pupils with learning difficulties	n.a.	60	60

Sources: EÖKiK and CEC data collection

School types based on the inflow and outflow rates of different pupil categories

We identified the catchment area of commuting students and defined several school types on the basis of the inflow and outflow rates of different pupil categories.

We called those schools "*undesirable schools*" which have fewer students, fewer multiply disadvantaged students, and fewer Roma students than the proportion living in the catchment areas; in other words, the commuting balances are negative in the case of each student group. Apparently, all pupils, including prestigious and low-status students, are equally trying to escape from these schools. The illusory confidence of school principals that their positive relations to their neighbourhood might enhance their prestige is groundless; undesirable schools only manage to raise their student numbers when the maintainer "outsources" educational segregation by transferring the maintenance and the financial sources to a church, or, less commonly, to an NGO. Such undesirable schools should be obliged to enrol all students living in their catchment area even in the latter case, since in principle no one is compelled to attend a church-maintained school. But if there is a less prestigious (church-maintained) school nearby, undesirable schools make every effort to "persuade" the highest proportion of Roma families to choose the former because they wish to demonstrate that they also have the potential to select children.

We call "*ghetto schools*" those primary schools which have fewer students overall than those living in their catchment area but in which multiply disadvantaged and Roma students are over-represented in comparison to their representation in their catchment area. The student commuting balance is negative in total, but in the case of multiply disadvantaged and Roma students, the rate is positive. In other words, these schools are undesirable to primary school students in general, but they are quasi "attractive" to low-status students who practically have no choice in the school market. Ghetto schools are aware that their existence depends on the inflow of multiply disadvantaged and Roma students from outside their catchment area. Therefore they cannot afford to reject anyone.

We term "*selective schools*" those primary schools which overall have more students than those living in their catchment area, but fewer multiply disadvantaged and Roma students compared to the proportion expected in light of their catchment area. The student commuting balance is positive in total, but for multiply disadvantaged and Roma students the rate is negative. These schools are very attractive throughout the city, but nonetheless they reject many students who live in their catchment area whom they should be obliged to enrol without any further consideration. In practice, they do this by indirectly discouraging them and persuading them to choose other schools. A significant proportion of multiply disadvantaged and Roma students are rejected and displaced to less prestigious primary schools elsewhere in the city. Besides their quality and specialist curricula (for example, bilingual education), an important part of their hidden portfolio is that they can "guarantee" that middle-class children will not have Roma, or very poor classmates. "Selective schools" have few or no ties to the

neighbourhood, or may even seek to reduce their relationship with their immediate residential environment to a minimum. Their actual enrolment district is the whole city, and they can place anyone.

We use the term "*attractive schools*" for those primary schools which have more students and more multiply disadvantaged students and also more Roma students than their expected numbers in light of their catchment area; here, the commuting balances are positive in the case of each student group. These schools are attractive to all pupils, including prestigious and low-status students.

Pre-selective school: Twenty years ago, two schools and five pre-schools launched a joint preschool-primary school programme. Connecting pre-school education groups and primary school classes, the same teachers (who hold dual teacher-kindergarten qualifications) teach children from the age of three to ten. The main purpose of this programme is to facilitate the transition of children from preschool to primary school. However, the prestige of the two primary schools has started to diverge and it has become more and more important into which of the five preschools children can be enrolled because preschool choice determines in which school a child can continue their studies.

Table 5: *Distribution of pupils among different types of primary schools: inflow and outflow rates of different pupil groups in Pécs in 2014 (%)*

	All pupils	Disadvantaged pupils	Roma pupils	Multiply disadvantaged pupils	Pupils with special education needs	Pupils with learning difficulties
Undesirable schools	18,8	21,3	31,0	45,1	20,9	22,2
Ghetto schools	6,8	10,1	18,8	14,4	6,0	8,5
Selective schools	27,3	13,5	3,0	2,2	8,2	22,0
Attractive schools	23,6	25,8	15,5	3,7	10,0	22,2
Outsourced segregated school	1,0	3,7	10,5	3,9	6,8	16,1
Pre-selective school	15,6	18,7	8,0	19,1	1,8	5,8
Special school	4,7	2,6	10,1	10,2	43,3	0
Other schools	2,2	4,3	3,1	1,4	3,0	3,2
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Sources: Data collection by CEC

We divided the city's primary schools into quintiles based on their national competence assessment performance. *Highly selective schools* are located in the highest quintile. The primary schools ranked into the second quintile cannot be categorized clearly, but in general they can be described as *slightly undesirable*. *Attractive schools* fell into the third school quintile; and *undesirable schools* fell into the fourth school quintile, while the lowest quintile contained the *ghetto schools*.

Table 6: *Distribution of Roma pupils across school quintiles of The National Competence Assessment in 2014 (%)*

	All pupils		Roma pupils	
	Living in catchment areas (%)	Attending schools (%)	Living in catchment areas (%)	Attending schools (%)
1. (The highest)	11,6	20,2	10,1	2
2.	28,4	26,2	11,3	8,1
3	9	20,6	8	19
4.	19,9	17,1	41,3	29,8
5. (The lowest)	21,1	11,3	23,5	30,9
Pre-selective school	10,2		5,7	
Special school		4,7		10,1

Sources: Data collection by CEC

Commuting games in the city

Each school assumes that the size, social composition and urban status of its catchment area decisively influences its prestige and position in the local educational market. Based on the finding of a survey that assessed the educational policy of 100 cities and towns in 2011 (Kertesi – Kézdi 2013), this false assumption can be considered the fundamental "spatial perception" of primary schools which largely determines their enrolment policy. Three corresponding institutional strategies can be identified in Pécs.

Preventive strategy: Schools situated in slum areas want to avoid a further increase in the proportion of Roma pupils and therefore the possible closure of even less prestigious schools nearby seems to be the greatest threat to them. They generally consider the size of their catchment zones to be irrelevant.

The municipality attempted to close a segregated ghetto school located near the largest shanty town/segregated area of the city several times, but the preventive strategy of the neighbouring schools proved to be successful: the school principals worried about the consequences and successfully lobbied the municipality to prevent this occurring. One year before the nationalization of primary and secondary schools, the mayor of the city made it clear that the ghetto school was to be closed soon unless the school principal "found" a church or a foundation that would be willing to take over the maintenance of the school. The school principals approached the local pro-government MP to intervene on their behalf. The MP was happy to help, and "convinced" the Roman Catholic Church to take over the school's maintenance despite its former reluctance. *Segregation outsourcing* became a new, previously unknown element of local education policy. The surrounding schools were thus able to avert the

"threat" that pupils of the ghetto school might "overwhelm" them, but each school's status continued to deteriorate. The number of pupils declined drastically; the proportion of Roma and multiply disadvantaged pupils increased, and more children living in their vicinity seemed to prefer other primary schools. Nonetheless, these schools sustained their strategy.

Manoeuvring astutely in local politics, school principals of two "threatened" *undesirable* central institutions were successfully able to prevent the proposed closure of their small, segregated branch schools, but nevertheless they could only slow down the outflow of students from their catchment areas, and did not manage to stem the further decline of their status. Gentrification of local neighborhoods did not increase the school's attractiveness either.

A significant number of commuting multiply disadvantaged and Roma pupils living near undesirable schools enrolled into ghetto schools. These schools are "the winners" of the "commuting game" – but only as long as they are indifferent towards the social and ethnic composition of their schools. The continuous decline of these schools' prestige and their student population may induce a change in their strategy. The largest ghetto school in the city desperately tried to improve its music education to make itself more attractive, and also attempted to introduce a selective admission policy. However, they lacked the preconditions for selective recruitment and their student numbers further decreased. Finally, the school principal and the maintainer chose to invite the Roman Catholic Church to take over the school. In this case, the final aim was not to "outsource" segregation (the proportion of Roma pupils was about 23 percent and the school is far from being segregated), but rather to displace low-status pupils and to increase the school's prestige. However, due to this the "preventive game" of the surrounding schools has restarted.

Isolation strategy: Highly prestigious schools with catchment areas that also comprise slum neighborhoods or disreputable streets wish to further decrease the already low rate of pupils living in their vicinity and to isolate themselves from their urban environment even more. In the case of a school closure nearby, their aim is to minimize the number of students they have to take in.

The largest segregated school was situated close to the historic centre of the city and its catchment area was adjacent to the catchment districts of the two most prestigious primary schools that were also comprised of slum neighborhoods. The two prestigious elite schools successfully isolated themselves from their vicinity; nevertheless, they were anxious about the eventual closure of the segregated school. That fear proved to be irrational due to the extremely low proportion (10-26 percent) of pupils of the latter living in their vicinity. However, these schools consider each other as mutual rivals.

Pécs was the European Capital of Culture in 2010,[10] and a major construction project started not far from the segregated school. A concert hall and a cultural centre were built, and the famous Zsolnay porcelain factory was converted and rebuilt as a cultural and educational complex. Currently, it accommodates several departments of the University of Pécs. However, on three sides the whole neighbourhood is surrounded by urban slums and even miserable Roma settlements. It was evident that the gentrification of the surrounding neighbourhood would start soon and a decision about the immediate closure of the segregated school was motivated by urban planning considerations. This was the only occasion when a primary school closure was firmly incited by urban planning goals.

The splitting of the catchment area and the allocation of pupils who had been attending the segregated school was the subject of *a kind of a barter deal.* The two high-prestige elite schools did not have any other choice but to acknowledge and accept that they had to share most of the catchment area of the former segregated primary school, but they were not willing to enrol and accommodate the Roma pupils of the area. These schools were convinced that they simply could not afford to admit Roma pupils at all due to their exceptional prestige and high reputation. They assumed – not without reason – that they would be able to refuse or avoid admitting any undesirable pupils living in the slum area associated with their catchment area, just as they had earlier.

On the other side of the historic city centre, relatively far away from the closed, segregated school and situated in an old and beautiful building, there is a primary school that was threatened with closure due to a drastic decrease in the student population. This school received the pupils from the closed segregated school in the hope that it could thereby stabilize its position. These expectations were met only partially, because having been made aware of the decision, almost as many pupils left the school and chose to enrol elsewhere as many pupils arrived from the segregated school. The proportion of Roma pupils was not higher than 25 percent, but this proved to be more than the amount that the middle class was willing to tolerate in this urban environment. Moreover, the newcomers were stigmatized merely because they had attended the "ill-famed" segregated school. However, this game is also full of uncertainties. As the number of pupils continuously declines, closure of the school is just a matter of time. In this case, the "barter deal" might backfire: the two highly prestigious schools that shared the catchment area of the former segregated school will still be forced to admit pupils living in the slum neighbourhood.

Area-enlarging strategy: Primary schools situated in socially homogeneous neighborhoods, usually in the middle of large housing estates, attempt to increase their catchment areas when a neighbouring school is closed or when catchment area boundaries are being redrawn.

10 Three cities were chosen to be the European Capitals of Culture in 2010: Essen, Pécs, and Istanbul.

In Pécs, housing estates are socially more homogeneous than neighborhoods that encompass older buildings, suburbs, former miners' colonies, or poor Roma settlements. The primary school situated in the southern part of the largest of the giant housing estates has a specific position. Fifteen years ago, the school moved towards specializing in the inclusive education of pupils with special educational needs and learning difficulties. As a result, the number of pupils and the school's prestige declined steadily. The catchment area of the school comprises a village-like neighbourhood where some wealthy carter Roma families[11] live. Even though the proportion of Roma pupils is not higher than 13 percent, the school's reputation is very poor and nearly 70 percent of pupils living nearby have opted to attend other schools in the inner part of the huge housing estate, about eight to ten bus stops away. Recently, the school drastically changed its enrolment policy and attempted to improve its image by refusing to admit pupils with special needs living outside its district. Other school principals in the area of the housing estate shuddered nervously due to the influx of pupils arriving from the former school.

Before nationalization, the municipal maintener decided to close the smallest school in the giant housing estate and to split its catchment area among neighbouring schools. These neighbouring schools competed fiercely to add as many streets and blocks as possible to their district. Their area-increasing strategy was just the opposite of the isolation strategy of elite schools. All three large rival schools have maintained their positions during the last decade and the vehemence of the struggle over the streets is hard to understand, even when all three schools are recruitment rivals. The vast majority of pupils of the three schools commute and live outside their districts. Two of them have entered into an informal coalition and agreed to split some nearby streets, but in vain. Eventually, they both lost out on the "area-enlarging game." The largest, most influential complex which includes not only two primary schools but also five kindergartens and several secondary institutions obtained the majority of the "disputed" area.

However, for pupils it remains uncertain whether the decision is favourable, because the two primary schools belonging to the complex have a single catchment area, and they operate pre-selection practices. Thus, the educational trajectories of children are largely determined by their kindergarten choice at the age of three.

The direction and success of pupil commutes

I measured student mobility in two different ways. First, I measured in the case of each commuting pupil whether they attend better or worse schools compared to their catchment schools by ranking the city's primary schools based on their schools' national competence assessment performance data (I took into account their average results in the previous three years).

11 Transporters of coal, building material or furniture by horse cart or lorry.

Most of the primary school pupils commute within the city and the majority of them attend better quality schools than their district schools. On the other hand, low-status commuters' efforts to find a better school than their district school is *not only unsuccessful, but the majority of them end up attending worse quality schools than their respective catchment school*. The failure of this commuting strategy is most striking in the case of Roma commuters, especially considering that 51 percent of all Roma pupils commute and opt for a primary school other than their catchment school. But even if we disregard those Roma pupils who attend the city's special school, 42 percent of Roma students still commute. Only 22 percent of commuting Roma pupils have managed to enrol in better quality schools than their district schools, 62 percent of them have chosen worse quality primary schools, and nearly 17 percent have been diagnosed as pupils with special educational needs who must not study in integrated, mainstream classrooms.

Table 7: *The commuting direction of pupils into schools ranked by schools' results in the national assessment of basic competences in 2014 (%)*

	Attends better quality school than district school	Attends worse quality school than district school	Attends special school	Total
All pupils	52,8	40,8	6,4	100
Disadvantaged pupils	45,4	51,7	2,9	100
Roma pupils	22,2	61,0	16,8	100
Multiply disadvantaged pupils	24,0	53,0	23,0	100
Pupils with special education needs	24,9	23,8	51,3	100
Pupils with learning difficulties	48,0	52,0	0	100

Sources: Data collection by CEC

Second, I divided primary schools into quintiles based on their results in the national assessment of basic competences; this assessment is administered by the government annually (I took the average of the previous three years).

According to their motivation or compulsion; direction and success, we divided commuter pupils into several groups.

Pupils who successfully flee from low-status schools:

These pupils commute because they wish to attend better quality, more prestigious schools than their catchment school, and these families are not willing to accept Roma children as classmates or schoolmates. Their motivation can only be precisely described by the concept of "white flight."

Pupils who successfully retain their high status: These pupils commute because they prefer to attend a prestigious school, although their catchment school is equally prestigious.

Unsuccessfully fleeing pupils: These pupils commute because they wish to attend a better, more prestigious school than their catchment school, but they ended up enrolling in a school whose quality is as poor as their catchment school.

Pupils excluded from a low-status school who enrol in segregated school: These pupils commute because they were "persuaded" to opt for a segregated church-run school instead of the district school which would be obliged to enrol them without any consideration.

Pupils excluded from high-status schools: These pupils commute because they were "persuaded" to opt for a much worse quality school instead of the prestigious district school which would be obliged to enrol them without any consideration. The most surprising and shocking finding is that families freely choose much worse quality schools than their catchment schools, and thereby opt for schools with significantly worse educational opportunities for their children. It is quite easy to exert pressure by indirect means on poor and ethnically stigmatized families with low self-esteem who cannot assert themselves sufficiently, and to "convince" and "persuade" them to make extremely disadvantageous decisions on behalf of their children.

Table 8: *The commuting direction of pupils according to school quintiles in 2014 (%)*

	All pupils	Disadvantaged pupils	Roma pupils	Multiply disadvantaged pupils	Pupils with special educational needs	Pupils with learning difficulties
Successfully fleeing from low-status schools	41.4	30	13.8	13	13	34.3
Successfully retaining high status	14.1	12.6	4.9	4	4.5	12.2
Unsuccessfully fleeing from low-status schools	4.7	3.4	7.4	18	3.1	4.2
Excluded from prestigious schools	22.3	24.4	40.5	27	19.4	34.1
Attending special school	6.4	3.9	17.7	23	51.3	0

Sources: Data collection by CEC

Conclusion

The majority of commuter pupils in Pécs end up in higher status, better quality schools. However, my findings did not confirm the nationwide urban trends that just a small proportion of low-status pupils commute (Kertesi – Kézdi 2013). In the examined city it is not true that the selection process is dominantly influenced by the "white flight" phenomenon, or in other words, by the mutual choices of prestigious schools and high-status pupils. In addition, the displacement of poor and Roma pupils from prestigious schools is an equally important factor in urban segregation.

In an urban environment, the higher the prestige of the school, the greater the geographical scope from where it can recruit pupils. This is exactly the opposite of the findings in the British literature which describe how the most popular schools have the smallest catchment areas (Hamnet and Butler 2010). The more selective a school is, the more it displaces the unwanted, the poor, and above all, Roma children. But while the undesirable schools try to maintain ties with their catchment area and hope that the gentrification of neighborhoods will increase their prestige, selective schools attempt to diminish all ties to their surrounding environment.

Not only do the school maintainers and the recently created central educational authorities have limited opportunities to keep the process under control, but school strategies are also uncertain. Even if it is assumed that school principals are accurately aware of the commuting balance of their own school and other schools' catchment areas for each pupil group, their different perceptions of residential environments hinder the stabilization of pupils' distribution among schools. In this respect, "bounded rationality" means that the unpredictability of pupil recruitment compels primary schools to do everything at all cost to attract more pupils who will presumably enhance their reputation, and to refuse those who might spoil it. The extreme selectivity of Hungarian public education is a self-perpetuating process not only in terms of parental choice, but also in terms of school enrolment policies.

Large-scale educational commuting fragments the urban space: boundaries cannot be drawn on a map because they are variable in the case of each school and each pupil. Any educational policy which uses regional targeting is bound to fail. The education map of the city is thus "illegible."

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Incumbent party support and perceptions of corruption – an experimental study

Zoltán Kmetty
zkmetty@tatk.elte.hu

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Abstract: In the recent national election in April 2018 in Hungary, the incumbent party (Fidesz) won again. During the campaign period, some of the media were full of stories about the scandals and corruption affairs of Fidesz. However, election results showed that these scandals did not decrease incumbent party support. What is the potential explanation for this? During the election campaign, we conducted an online survey experiment in Hungary, giving different treatments to respondents within the different sub-samples. The former were asked to read an article about a relevant corruption affair connected to different political actors. Our main hypothesis was that if people hear about scandals related to the government, support for the incumbent party will decrease. Results of the fitted logistic regression models suggest that information about incumbent-related corruption scandals did not affect voting for the incumbents. The most interesting result was that dominantly pro-government media consumers were more likely to vote for Fidesz after treatment compared to the control group. We thus think that the selection of information, the perceived credibility of sources, and information processing were influenced by partisanship. In a natural reaction, partisan respondents recalled their party identity and tried to respond to questions from the related viewpoints.

Keywords: corruption, information hypothesis, trade-off hypothesis, incumbent support, experimental research

Introduction

The negative effects of political corruption are widely known. Overall, it decreases economic performance and weakens trust and confidence in institutions and the government (Mishler – Rose 2001, Anderson – Tverdova 2003). Widespread malfeasance can create significant disillusionment with the whole political system (Seligson 2006, Olson 2014). One the one hand, if people do not believe they can change a corrupt situation, electoral participation may decrease (Manzetti and Wilson 2007), while on the other hand, corruption may also lead to mobilization against the incumbent party (Kostadinova 2009).

Eastern Europe is a good area to examine how corruption affects political participation and the electoral arena. Between 2000 and 2010 corruption and scandals were a major issue in 70 percent of the elections in this region that were analyzed and the typical Eastern European voter perceives that their politicians are more likely to be corrupt than in the rest of Europe (Klasjna et al. 2016). Based on Transparency

International's Corruption Index, Hungary is one of the most tainted countries in this region as far as corruption is concerned (Jávor – Jancsis 2016). Hungary was thirty-ninth on the list in 2007, and had slipped to sixty-sixth by 2017.[1] National elections were held in Hungary on April 8, 2018. Fidesz, the right-conservative party, has been in power since 2010 in Hungary and in the last few years the media has reported on several corruption scandals involving the ruling party. Even the son-in-law of the Prime Minister was accused of corruption in a European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) report related to suspicious procurement activities.[2] The opposition parties have tried to build their election campaign around this government malfeasance, and in social media these accusations have generated a lot of discussion (Index 2018). After a very intensive campaign, the turnout rate in 2018 reached 70 percent (the second highest since the regime change in 1990). However, this high participation level was not the result of a mobilized opposition but rather to the unexpectedly strong turnout of incumbent supporters. Fidesz received nearly half of all votes, and benefited from an increase in the number of voters by 5 percent, or 400,000 people. Why is it that the corruption accusations did not harm the incumbent party? One possible explanation is that due to the highly centralized pro-government media system in Hungary (Bajomi 2013), some voters live in such a closed media bubble that they did not hear about these scandals in the news. Another explanation is that incumbent voters evaluate corruption as irrelevant because of their own personal gains or an overall positive evaluation of economic conditions.

Based on an online survey experiment conducted before the election, we tested whether information about the government and the scandals involving Fidesz politicians might decrease support for the incumbent party. In this paper, we present the result of this survey experiment and offer a possible explanation for the unexpectedly high level of support for the incumbent party.

Theoretical Background

Corruption can be hard to quantify, and it is also hard to identify its exact boundaries. From a theoretical viewpoint, we can distinguish between experiential corruption and perceived corruption. The prior is usually connected with minor or petty issues, while the latter is the consequence of grand corruption scandals (Ruhl 2011). There is some evidence that experiential corruption might have a greater effect on political behaviour than perceived corruption (Klasjna et al. 2016) but the latest results in Hungary have proved that perceived corruption plays a substantial role in voting behaviour (Kostadinova – Kmetty 2018). Thus, in this paper, we focus on perceived corruption.

1 https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview

2 For more details see, for example: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/feb/12/how-hungarian-pms-supporters-profit-from-eu-backed-projects

The relationship between perceived corruption and political participation is highly controversial. Perceptions of corruption may boost participation aimed at removing incumbent parties from power, but a high level of perceived corruption might also make the incumbent party's supporters unsure about the value of their votes. Widespread perceptions of malfeasance can also decrease trust in the whole political system and can cause massive withdrawal from voting. Overall, these complex mechanisms might balance each other out (Kostadinova 2009).

But how do supporters of an incumbent party deal with the corruption affairs of a government in power? There are two alternative hypotheses (Winters and Weitz-Shapiro 2013): one is the information hypothesis, while the other is the trade-off hypothesis. As opposed to experienced corruption, political corruption is not part of everyday life. If voters are not aware of politicians' malfeasance, they might easily support the party again in the following election. Media investigation of political corruption requires plenty of resources, and a lack of the former might leave corrupt activities hidden. In addition, the source of the accusations counts. If incumbent supporters do not trust sources, they might also mistrust their information. However, if they receive credible information about corrupt activities, they might withdraw their support. This so-called information hypothesis has not been clearly supported by experimental studies that focused on this issue, but more papers have backed the hypothesis (Ferraz – Finan 2008, Chong et al 2011, Figueiredo et al 2011, Winters – Weitz-Shapiro 2013) than have rejected it (Banerjee et al. 2010).

The other possible explanation focuses on the overall advantage of supporting the incumbent party. Even if the pro-governing party voters are aware of the malfeasance of the politician they support they might evaluate this as irrelevant when they cast their ballots. Many reasons can be listed here to support this behaviour. If overall economic conditions are good in the country and it is on a solid path of development, the governing party can withstand even the biggest corruption scandal. This is also true if incumbent party voters feel that the other parties are also corrupt, and thus perceive that corruption is the nature of politics and it is inevitable that there are corruption scandals in a long-term government cycle. It is also possible that voters will not punish their party if they also obtain private goods from the current system (Manzetti – Wilson 2007). Several studies have supported this trade-off hypothesis (Rundquist et al. 1977, Manzetti – Wilson 2006, Banerjee – Pande 2009), but there are contradictory findings too (Winters – Weitz-Shapiro 2013).

When analyzing the effect of corruption scandals, it is also crucial to understand and consider how people get their information about politics and public life. The Hungarian political media is polarized and strongly allied along partisan lines (Szabó and Kiss 2011). The Fidesz government controls a strongly centralized media system which continuously echoes their messages (Bajomi 2013). The country is highly polarized (Körösényi 2013), the distance between government and anti-government supporters is very wide, and political homophily (Kmetty – Koltai 2012) is very strong.

All these factors increase the chance of that "opinion bubbles" will form. Recently, many scholars have talked about such opinion bubbles (Iyengar et al. 2012), which refer to the fact that people watch/read/listen to only those channels that are in line with their own political views and where they find only similar opinions to their own. This homogenous opinion milieu significantly decreases the quality of political orientation and increases the distance between political sides. Such a fragmented political field can strongly hinder political information flow (Pariser 2011). Such a political and media space might prevent voters from getting information about scandals released to the other side of the political field.

In this paper, we test how polarized media consumption affect incumbent party support when voters are confronted with information about real scandals.

Hypotheses

Following the unexpected election results in Hungary, we tested whether the information hypothesis is relevant in Hungary regarding corruption issues and incumbent support. We hypothesized (H1) that if people hear about scandals related to the government (negative framing of Fidesz), support for the incumbent party will decrease. This is a classic test of the information hypothesis (Ferraz – Finan 2008, Chong et al. 2011, Figueiredo et al. 2011, Winters – Weitz-Shapiro).

Since the media is very polarized in Hungary, and Fidesz has taken over a lot of media sources in recent years, we might assume that some voters have not heard reports about government-related malfeasance. Based on this, we hypotheses that support for the incumbents of those who consume dominantly pro-government media will be weaker (H2).

The first two expectations were built on the information hypothesis. However, we wanted to test whether the trade-off hypothesis holds as well. In H3 we hypotheses that Fidesz corruption treatment would not affect those who were satisfied with their own living conditions (H3a), and/or those who perceived a high level of exposure to the corruption of the opposition parties (H3b).

Design of the experimental surveys

During the election campaign, we conducted an online survey experiment (Mutz 2011a). The survey was administered[3] between December 12, 2017, and January 10, 2018, four months before the general election of April 8, 2018. The sample size was 1000 respondents; the survey was representative for Hungarian internet users aged 18 or older.

3 A professional polling company (Marketingcentrum) conducted the survey using their own online panel commissioned by the Centre for Social Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences..

The survey was broken down into four sub-samples (see Table 1) each of whose respondents we gave different treatments to. The former were asked to read an article about a relevant corruption affair connected to one of three political actors. We chose scandals which had been heavily cited by news channels within the last one year. The present Hungarian political arena is dominated by three political entities (Kovarek and Soós 2017): Besides the incumbent party (Fidesz), there is a (formerly) extreme-right party (Jobbik),[4] and a fragmented left political coalition with three bigger parties: the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP), Demokratikus Koalíció (DK), and Lehet Más a Politika (LMP). We chose one scandal connected to Fidesz, one scandal connected to Jobbik, and one connected to MSZP. The fourth sub-sample was the control group which did not receive any treatment. The stories involved real scandals, and the articles were based on published news (we simply shortened the texts).[5]

Table 1. *Structure of the questionnaire design*

Fidesz corruption treatment (N=255)	Jobbik corruption treatment (N=253)	Socialist party (MSZP) corruption treatment (N=247)	Control group (N=245)
Questions about corruption			
Questions about party support and political participation			

After the corruption treatment, respondents were asked to evaluate the level of corruption in Hungary, the dynamics of the spread of corruption, and the exposure to corruption of each party. After this block of questions, respondents provided information in response to standard political survey questions such as voting intention, party support, party sympathy, etc.

Analytical strategy and variables

In the analysis, we fitted multivariate statistic models using the dependent variable incumbent (Fidesz) support. We measured Fidesz election support with a dummy variable based on the "Which party would you vote for?" question. We coded "1" those who said they would vote for Fidesz, and the others "0". As the dependent variable has two categories, binomial logistic regression models were used in the analysis.[6] To present the results, we calculated the average marginal effect (AME[7]) of the explanatory variables. The AME helps to overcome the problem of interpreting

4 Jobbik has started to move to the centre from the right over the last few years.
5 For the corruption treatment condition, see the questionnaire.
6 To test the robustness of our models we calculated all of the models with a linear predictor too. Results were the same as in the case of logistic regression models.
7 We used the statistical programme R's margins package (Leeper 2018) to calculate the AME.

interaction terms in logistic regressions. To test our hypothesis, we fitted several models with different independent variables.

In Model 1 (M1 – for testing H1) the incumbent corruption treatment (ICT) variable was used as an independent variable besides the control variables. The ICT variable was coded with two categories: “0” – control group or other party corruption; “1” – corruption treatment related to Fidesz corruption.

To test the effect of selective media consumption (M2), we added a composite media orientation variable to the first model with two categories: “0” – dominantly not pro-government media consumption, “1” – dominantly pro-government media consumption.[8] To test H2, the interaction term of the ICT variable and the media orientation variable was added to the model.

To test the trade-off hypothesis (M3), we added two additional variables to the M1 model: opposition parties’ corruption exposure (an 11-category scale ranging from “not corrupt at all” (0) to “very corrupt” (10)) and the financial situation of the respondent’s household (5-category scale ranging from “we live in financial deprivation” (1) to “we live without financial worries” (5)). The interaction term of these two latter variables with the treatment variable was added to the model to test H3.

To control the basic demographic variables, gender, age-cohort (three categories) settlement type, and education (four categories) variables were included into the model. One-quarter of the sample read about a government corruption case, while one-quarter of them did not read anything (the control group). The other half of the sample was asked to read a news article about scandals involving other parties. To control for this effect, two additional dummy variables were included in the models: Jobbik corruption treatment and Socialist party corruption treatment. The descriptive statistics for the variables are available in Appendix Table A1.

Results

The first regression model (Table1, M1) contains the three treatment variables as dummies (the control treatment group was the reference here), the pro-government media consumption variable, and the demographic variables.

8 In the first step, we created four variables:
Watch pro-government television channel news (M1, DunaTV, Tv2)
Watch anti-government television channel news (RTL, HírTV, ATV)
Read pro-government newspapers and news sites (Origo, Lokál, Magyar Hírlap, Magyar Idők)
Read anti-government newspapers and news sites (Index, 24.hu, HVG, 444, Alfahír, Kuruncinfo, Magyar Nemzet, Népszava, Vasárnapi Hírek)
We coded as “dominantly pro-government media consumers” those who:
Either watch or read pro-government media sources and do not watch/read any anti-government media sources.
Watch and read pro-government media sources but do not watch and read anti-government media sources together.
To categorize the sources, we used a classification by Mérték Média Műhely: www.mertek.eu.

The model was significant (Chi-square sig=0.000), but overall explanatory power was quite low (Cox-Snell R Square: 0.074): only the settlement and media consumption variables had significant effects. Fidesz had higher support in the county seats and the other cities compared to the capital city of Budapest. The media consumption variable played the strongest role in the model (based on Wald statistics): those who dominantly watch and/or read pro-government media sources support the incumbent party 30 percentage points more based on the marginal effects. The incumbent corruption treatment variable was not significant, and thus the information hypothesis did not stand in terms of the whole sample. This represents a rejection of H1.

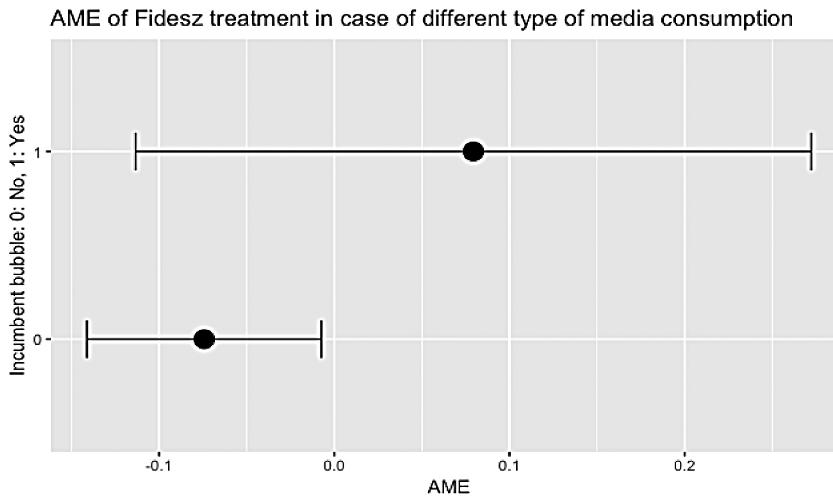
Table 2. *Binomial logistic regression models. Dependent variable: incumbent voting*

	M1			M2			M3		
	B	Sig.	AME	B	Sig.	AME	B	Sig.	AME
Constant	-2,543	0,000		-2,453	0,000		-5,615	0,000	
Gender	-0,152	0,391	-0.020	-0,157	0,376	-0,021	0,096	0,615	0,013
Age: 18-34	-0,119	0,594	-0.015	-0,138	0,539	-0,017	-0,397	0,102	-0,051
Age : 35-49	0,12	0,563	0.016	0,094	0,651	0,013	-0,074	0,738	-0,010
EDU4 - ISCED categorization	0,195	0,116	0.026	0,199	0,11	0,026	-0,05	0,713	-0,007
Settlement: county seat	0,556	0,047	0.067	0,532	0,057	0,064	0,538	0,07	0,062
Settlement: other city	0,589	0,026	0.072	0,567	0,033	0,069	0,668	0,018	0,081
Settlement: village	0,503	0,082	0.06	0,496	0,085	0,059	0,806	0,009	0,101
Treatment: Fidesz	-0,362	0,145	-0.048	-0,657	0,026	-0,051	-5,932	0,005	-0,087
Treatment: Jobbik	-0,343	0,166	-0.045	-0,349	0,154	-0,046	-0,341	0,189	-0,046
Treatment: Socialist	0,062	0,792	0.008	0,05	0,83	0,007	-0,044	0,862	-0,006
Dominantly pro-government media	1,602	0,000	0.291	1,379	0,000	0,295			
Treatment: Fidesz * Dominantly pro-government media				0,993					
Opponent party's corruption exposure							0,277	0,000	0,05
Treatment: Fidesz * Opponent party's corruption exposure							0,461		
Financial situation of the household							0,384	0,002	0,06
Treatment: Fidesz * Financial situation of the household							0,304		
Model test (Chi2)	0,000			0,000			0,000		
Cox and Snell R2	0,074			0,078			0,098		

To test if Fidesz corruption treatment played a special role within different segments of media consumption groups, we added the interaction term of pro-government media consumption and ICT. In this model (Table 2 – M2) the significance level of the ICT variable declined to under 0.05 in a negative direction, meaning the treatment decreased incumbent support. In the case of the non-linear models, the standard calculation of the significance level of the interaction term is biased (Ai-Norton

2003) so we omitted it from the tables. It is not easy to understand and interpret an interaction term, so we plotted the AME of the Fidesz treatment variable in different media environments (see Figure 1). Those respondents who did not read/watch pro-government media have a negative average marginal effect, but those who live in incumbent media bubble have a positive effect.

Figure 1.: *Average marginal effect of Fidesz treatment in the case of different types of media consumption*



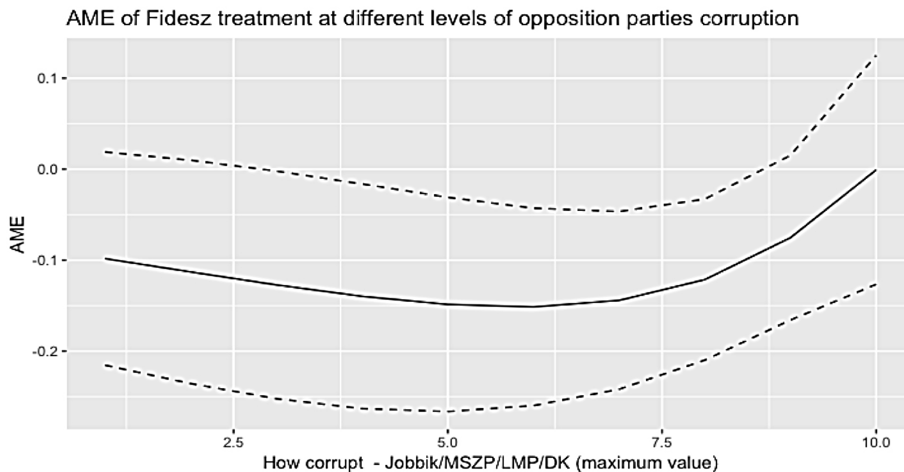
We expected that the corruption treatment would decrease Fidesz support within the population who watch and/or read mostly pro-government media, but the findings contradicted our expectations. Fidesz support was even higher in the former group. This suggests rejecting the information hypothesis, and raises the question why we got the entirely opposite result to the one we expected. We come back to this point in the discussion.

Our last hypothesis involves the trade-off hypothesis. We expected that individuals who live in good economic conditions (H3a) and/or those who feel that the opposition parties are (also) corrupt (H3b) would resist the ICT. We tested these hypotheses (H3a, H3b) in Model 3 (Table 2 – M3). This model had the greatest explanatory power (Cox-Snell R square=0.098). To test H3 we needed to focus on the interaction terms.

The Fidesz treatment group's AME value for different levels of economic situation was quite uniform with very limited variation, so we rejected H3a. The interaction of Fidesz treatment and the opposition party corruption variable was more interesting. Figure 2 helps us understand the mechanism here. The ICT did not affect those who assumed that opposition parties are corrupt, but for those who did not associate

opposition parties with strong corruption, ICT decreased level of support for Fidesz. This result reinforces Hypothesis 3b about the trade-off effect.

Figure 2.: *Average marginal effect of Fidesz treatment on perceptions of different levels of opposition party corruption*



Discussion

Fidesz won the recent election of April 2018 in Hungary, and was able to increase their proportion of supporters and absolute numbers of voters compared to four years ago. During the campaign period, some parts of the media weres full of stories about the scandals and corruption affairs of Fidesz which generated an extremely high level of interaction in social media (Index 2018).

An OLAF report was released about the possible corruption exposure of Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's son-in-law (István Tiborcz). Another emblematic government figure, Zsolt Semjén, was accused of accepting a high-value invitation to a hunt financed by an entrepreneur. Photos of their hunt in Sweden (the shot reindeer was transported by helicopter[9]) dominated the media for several days. However, election results showed that these scandals did not decrease incumbent party support. What possible explanation is there for this? There is evidence from other experiments (Klasjna – Tucker 2013) that in countries where the perception of corruption is very high, new scandals or accusations do not change anything. As people already have negative opinions about the whole system, and all the parties, they use different criteria when they choose between parties. This claim is somewhat similar to that of the trade-off

9 For the whole story, see: https://budapestbeacon.com/semjen-might-have-illegally-downed-a-reindeer-in-sweden/

hypothesis which was partly accepted in this paper (H3b). Our results showed clearly that those who felt that other parties are also corrupt supported Fidesz at the same level in the treatment and the control group. In opposition to the trade-off hypothesis, we therefore reject the information hypothesis. The ICT did not affect voting for the incumbent (H1).

The most interesting result came from the analysis of the media consumption effect. We hypothesized that the support of those who watch/read dominantly pro-government media sources for the political incumbents would weaken after the ICT. The results showed just the opposite tendency: dominantly pro-government media consumers were more inclined to vote for Fidesz in the ICT groups than in the control group. What might have happened here?

There is a growing body of literature that deals with the mechanisms behind partisan identity (Janky 2018). Partisanship may influence the selection of information, the perceived credibility of sources, and information processing (Mutz 2011b). If a voter receives information which is not in line with their partisan identity, they might refuse to pay attention to it and start collecting counter-arguments (Bolsen et al. 2014). As a natural reaction, the partisan respondent recalls their party identity and tries to answer any question from this perspective. The literature calls this "motivated reasoning" (Leeper – Slothuus 2014). Bechtel et al. (2015) found in an experimental study conducted in Switzerland that media-framing associated with immigrants alienates different political sides as it leads to recall of the partisanship identity of respondents. We might assume the same process in the case of ICT. Those who dominantly watch/read pro-government media sources receive a comprehensive narrative about events in Hungary. This is a relatively small group (15 percent of the sample), but the proportion of Fidesz voters is above 40 percent within this group (but only 13 percent of the rest of the sample). When these individuals read a framing that is different to the one they are used to hearing, their political identity starts to work, and they start to defend their political side. This is a very important finding because it might help with understanding why previous experiments and research have produced mixed results.

There is other possible explanation for the weak mobilizing effect of ICT. Overall perceptions of corruption are very high in Hungary, with all parties considered to be corrupt by 70 percent of all voters (Kmetty 2018). When corruption is so widespread, voters might feel hopeless about changing the situation. As fighting corruption requires collective action, people have to believe that others will also fight against corruption. Without this, corruption cannot be a defining phenomenon behind political behaviour.

It seems that, despite growing access to online space, media consumption is heavily defined by partisanship. Real news and fake news are not always easy to differentiate. Politicians have started questioning the truth promoted by media outlets. Trump

does this in the USA, and Viktor Orbán does the same in Hungary. This may have serious consequences for media consumption and media evaluation. From a research perspective, this is an important challenge. When testing the type of treatments that we did in this study, we should monitor not just the media consumption of respondents but also the evaluation of different media sources from the perspective of trustworthiness.

In our experiment we used real scandals and conducted our survey during a campaign period. In a politically more stressful period such as this, recall of partisanship identity may be much stronger than in a calmer period. Further research is needed to understand this mechanism better.

Appendix

Table A1.: *Descriptive table of main variables*

Variable	Response categories	Frequency (%)
Party support	Other party, does not vote	82,3
	Incumbent party	17,7
Media orientation variable	Dominantly non pro-government media consumption	84,6
	Dominantly pro-government media consumption	15,4
Gender	male	47
	female	53
Age (3-cat)	18-34 years	25
	35-49 years	28
	50+ years	47
Settlement	Budapest	21,2
	county seat	23,7
	other town	32,1
	village	23
Financial situation	we live in financial deprivation	4,9
	we have financial problems every month	14,6
	we make ends meet	42,8
	get along well financially	32,9
	we live without financial worries	4,8

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CONTRIBUTORS:

Judit Durst
durst.judit@tk.mta.hu
HAS Institute for Minority Studies
University College London Anthropology Department
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.
14 Taviton Street London WC1H OBW

László Fosztó
l.foszto@ispmn.gov.ro
Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities
400697 Cluj-Napoca, Gavril Muzicescu 5. Romania

Dóra Gábriel
gabriel@demografia.hu
Hungarian Demographic Research Institute
University of Pécs
H-1024 Budapest, Buday László utca 1-3.
H-7624 Pécs, Ifjúság útja 6.

Gabriella Gresits
gresits@demografia.hu
Hungarian Demographic Research Institute
University of Pécs
H- 1024 Budapest, Buday László utca 1-3
H-7624 Pécs, Ifjúság útja 6.

Mária Dalma Hámos
hdaly6@yahoo.com
Partium Christian University
410209 Oradea, Primariei 36. Romania

Zoltán Kmetty
zkmetty@tatk.elte.hu
HAS Centre for Social Science CSS-RECENS
Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Social Sciences
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.
H-1117 Budapest, Pázmány Péter sétány 1/a

Attila Melegh
melegh@demografia.hu
Hungarian Demographic Research Institute
Corvinus University of Budapest
H- 1024 Budapest, Buday László utca 1-3
H- 1093 Budapest Fővám tér 8

Krisztina Németh
nemeth.krisztina@krtk.hu
HAS Institute for Regional Studies
Centre for Economic and Regional Studies
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.

Zsanna Nyírő
nyiro.zsanna@tk.mta.hu
HAS Institute for Minority Studies
Centre for Social Sciences
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.

Stefánia Toma
s.toma@ispmn.gov.ro
Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities
400697 Cluj-Napoca, Gavril Muzicescu 5. Romania

Alexandra Szőke
szoke@rkk.hu
HAS Institute for Regional Studies
Centre for Economic and Regional Studies
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.

Monika Mária Váradi
varadim@mta-rkk-tko.hu
HAS Institute for Regional Studies
Centre for Economic and Regional Studies
H-1097 Budapest, Tóth Kálmán utca 4.

János Zolnay
jzolnay@gmail.com
Eötvös Loránd University Faculty of Social Sciences
H-1117 Budapest, Pázmány Péter sétány 1/a