5. SOME HYPOTHESES AND QUESTIONS ON THE NEW WAVE OF HUNGARIAN ROMA MIGRATION TO AND FROM CANADA

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Introduction

In our paper we formulate some hypotheses and raise a few questions with regards to what we label 'Roma migration', concentrating on one specific destination, Canada. The paper is based on explorative fieldwork in which families with migrant histories were interviewed in Borsod county, a region from where out-migration has been heaviest in terms of numbers.

Our approach is both anthropological and sociological in the sense that both tend "to emphasize social relations as central to understanding the processes of migration and immigration incorporation." (Brettel and Hollifield 2008: 5). Nonetheless, due to the different historical roots of the two disciplines, migration anthropology usually focuses on the sending or the sending and the receiving ends while sociology on the receiving society and on the process of immigrant incorporation (Brettel and Hollifield 2008). In

that respect we took a more anthropological approach by studying exclusively the sending society. At the same time, we are also more anthropological in our epistemology because we are not focusing on global or large-scale processes but rather on micro-phenomena. Also, "anthropology's focus on culture, which includes the study of interaction between beliefs and behavior, of corporate groups, and of social relationships, has resulted in an emphasis in migration studies on adaptation and cultural change, on forms of social organization that are characteristic of both the migration process and the immigrant community, and on questions of identity and ethnicity." (Brettel 2008: 114) During our fieldwork we examined several aspects typical of anthropological studies: e.g. we looked into social relations and social organizations while studying networks and migration strategies, we explored cultural beliefs and behaviors while investigating motivations for leaving and returning.

The first hypothesis formulated relates to the conceptual framework: how should the phenomenon of 'Roma migration to Canada from Central Eastern Europe' be interpreted? Based on some relevant literature our assumption is that it should firstly be understood as a mix of classic labor migration and asylum seeking (Klimova and Pickup 2003; Brettel 2008). Our second hypothesis is more empirical for it focuses on the Hungarian experience of the recent out-migration process started around 2008 with the lifting of Canadian visa requirements for Hungary. It presumes that in the early 2000s people and families of somewhat higher social status migrated (Kováts 2002) whereas migration from 2008-2009 was different - an additional group, lower-status individuals and families, started to migrate as well.

Under our second hypothesis we set out some research questions, each looking at different aspects of the migration process. Our questions were: What kind of migrant groups can be identified? How can we identify these groups? What pushed low-status, deprived Roma families to migrate? What made it possible for them to migrate? What kind of trends could be seen in changes in migration patterns between the two periods? What are the effects of low-status migration on transnational networks? Why the strategy of 'whole family at once'? What awaits low-status Roma migrants upon return?

In this paper we look more closely at our hypotheses and each of these questions and hope to give some analytical insight into the migration process of Roma to Canada. We emphasize this study is a pilot investigation, making our conclusion more of a synthesis of the relevant questions. This will open up further questions rather than reach any final answer at this point.

Labor-migration trends in Hungary

Emigration from Hungary between the 1989-90 regime change and the country joining the EU was moderate compared to other countries in the region. In contrast to predictions that joining the EU would radically change the situation, labor migration remained rather similar to the previous period. E.g. in Germany, the first target country of Hungarian labor migrants, the number of Hungarians arriving fluctuated as follows: 51,905 in 1999, 55,953 in 2003, 54,714 in 2004 and 56,075 in 2007 (Hárs 2009: 233). Also, compared to other countries from the region, in the post-accession period the proportion of Hungarian labor migrants in the UK lagged behind dominant migrant nations, such as Poland making up 71.3% of all EU-8 migrants in 2007, Slovakia with its 10.5%, Lithuania with 6.8% against Hungary with only 4.2% (Hárs 2009: 235). Surveys into the migration potential of Hungarians also reveal that fewer people consider leaving this country than they do other countries in Central Eastern Europe. In 2005 migration intention of Poles and Lithuanians was the highest among these countries (9.9% and 9.6%), Slovaks had 5.4% and Slovenians 4.1% against Hungarians at 3%. The lowest rate of migration potential was found among Czech citizens, 1.4% (Hárs 2009: 232).

There are several factors that are traditionally looked at while seeking explanations for migration trends in a country. Economic development and GDP are among the most frequently used explanatory factors. In Hungary, in the 1990s, and especially the second half of the decade, the state of the economy was a good predictor for low migration. Hungary's economic output was comparatively good, accounting for low emigration rates. However, while other countries were catching up economically, migration

rates still remained the same: higher in some other countries, such as Poland or Lithuania and lower in Hungary. Authors point to other factors for reasons "why Hungarians don't (want to) migrate". The moderate unemployment rate had been an explanation until the 2008 crisis, as well as the generosity of the welfare system. "Benefits in Hungary are comparatively generous in terms of child care and social and unemployment benefit, as well as pension." (Hárs 2009: 245) This, as we will illustrate, changed in the second half of the 2000s and became an important migration push factor for various segments of the population including low-status Roma people. And indeed, in the 2012 statistics the migration potential of the Hungarian population showed an important shift from previous data. "Migration potential peaks in 2012", it has never been this high: now every fifth Hungarian plans to migrate either in the short, medium or long term (Sik 2012).

Roma migration trends

Among typical labor migrants it is very unlikely that we find a significant number of Roma given their weak position in the labor market and low level of education. There are some special types of migrants, such as musicians, where Roma may be overrepresented. Low demand for unskilled labor in the target countries explains why asylum seeking was to become a typical migration strategy for Roma from Central Eastern Europe. Applying for refugee status is in most cases the only way for Roma to migrate. Given that the desperate social-economic situation of the vast majority of Roma is accompanied by widespread discrimination, migration push factors are indeed significant for this population (Kováts 2002). However, asylum seeking in European Union countries from Hungary before EU accession was substantially below that from other CEE countries. From aggregated data we know that until 1999 counting Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Hungary together, refugee applications in European states by Hungarians represented only 0.67% of all claims from these six countries (Kováts 2002: 17).

At the same time, an important number of Roma people from Hungary chose Canada as their target country of migration. The number

of refugee claims most often exceeded the number of claims from all other CEE countries in Canada. Added to this, the number of Hungarian refugee claims occasionally, in 2001, 2010 and 2011, led the list of claims for asylum in Canada by originating country, exceeding even such migration sources as China, Columbia, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, etc.[78]

From Hungary, asylum-applying migration started around 1998: "In the late 90's the Czech and Hungarian Roma have discovered Canada. (...) in December 2001, Canada imposed a visa requirement on Hungary. In that same year, Hungarian Roma was the largest group of Refugee Claimants in Canada." (St. Clair 2007) The following data show the gradual and steady rise of the number of Hungarian refugee claims: 10 in 1994, 38 in 1995, 64 in 1996, 300 in 1997,[79] 982 in 1998, 1,579 in 1999, 1,929 in 2000, 3,851 in 2001.[80] Following the lifting of visa requirements, the number of asylum claimants from Hungary started to rise again. In 2007 around 300 people submitted refugee applications,[81] in 2009 2,426, in 2010 2,300 and in 2011 4,423 asylum seekers were registered.[82]

Fieldwork

The explorative fieldwork[83] was conducted in Borsod country in the middle of 2012, just around the time when the Canadian government passed its new refugee bill, Bill C-31, aiming to "crack down on so-called 'bogus' asylum claimants".[84]

78 http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php

79 Kováts 2002: 15

80 http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php

81 http://www.origo.hu/nagyvilag/20111118-hogyan-fogadja-kanada-a-magyar-romakat-riport-torontobol-elso-resz.html

82 http://www.cdp-hrc.uottawa.ca/projects/refugee-forum/projects/Statistics.php

83 The inteviews were conducted by the two authors of the article and by a journalist colleague, Ilona Gaal.

84 http://news.nationalpost.com/2012/06/10/controversial-refugee-bill-set-to-clear-house-of-commons-monday/

Given the aim of our pilot study to formulate research questions and hypotheses for the Roma migration process in general and to Canada in particular based on fieldwork observations and interviews with Roma return migrants, we looked for local communities supplying large numbers of people leaving for Canada in the previous couple of years, and to which some migrants had returned. As indicated above, the county with the highest share of Roma inhabitants, Borsod, appears to be the most affected by Roma emigration. We have to be careful with this statement since we lack statistical data on out-migration. All we have is the mirror statistics of the number of refugee claimants issued by the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada recording the number of people entering the country with the aim of applying for refugee status. Localities supplying emigrants had to be identified from sources other than statistical data. Since our pilot study is primarily a qualitative investigation it seemed legitimate to start with newspaper articles as a source of information and to follow up by the snowball method to find communities where return migrants or families of migrants live.

Having concluded from collecting articles from newspapers that Borsod county is indeed a place from where lots of Roma families have left (and to where lots of them have also returned), we wanted to find a small community there in order to conduct in-depth interviews with inhabitants and institutions to map out networks, strategies, tendencies, local reactions, etc. The size of the settlement was important insofar as a smaller community might let us explore more easily how migration is organized on an individual (family) level and on a community level.

Our choice was a village of some 2,000 inhabitants out of which around sixty percent declared themselves Roma in the 2001 census. According to our informants about 30 to 40 families had gone to Canada and only a few had returned at the time of the interviews. In the village we managed to interview family members of migrants still in Canada and one family who had just recently returned. Besides that we talked to Roma representatives as well as to the village school principal. Concerning the socio-economic status of the village, it belongs to the 'most disadvantaged settlements' category, with an unemployment rate of 90%. Poor as it is, the

village population is still stratified; there are families who manage to get by, and there are families who are in a much more desperate situation with no income whatsoever.

During our interviews we came to the realization that the nearby small town pr, networks at home and in Canada, experiences in the target country (ways of managing life, work experiences, accommodation, friends and relatives there, school for children, relations with authorities and institutions, etc.), reasons for return, and life after return. The interviewees were contacted by using the snowball method. Since the migration process affected a rather large proportion of both communities, it was a relatively easy task to find family members with a migration history. The only difficulty we came across was the distrust of us some of them initially expressed. As was later revealed, in some cases people had bad experiences with either the Canadian or the Hungarian authorities that made them reluctant to speak. Most of the interviews were family interviews with various members of the family present. Thus, we managed to have accounts of different experiences, of adults and children as well as of younger and older people. Altogether some ten families were visited in the two settlements.

First hypothesis: Mix of labor migration and asylum seeking

As it was put forward in our first hypothesis, we assume that the current Canadian migration should be understood as a mix of classic labor migration and asylum seeking. Our assumption concurs with the conclusions of a scholarly debate on this issue appearing in Nationalities Papers:

> *"At the beginning of the debate, activists and scholars almost unanimously challenged the portrayal by government officials and media of Roma as economic migrants. However, opinions have begun to polarize in the last couple of years. While some activists and scholars still maintain that Romani asylum seekers leave their countries of origin only because of racism and discrimination, others believe that Romani requests for asylum are also economically motivated. They argue that migration*

> *can be seen as a strategy employed by Romani individuals who turn to Western societies for tolerance in the hope of obtaining a more equal opportunity for personal economic, educational and social development." (Klimova and Pickup 2003)*

Added to this, it needs to be emphasized that in migration anthropology enforced migrants (refugees) and other migrants are conceptualized as being the same or at least similar since their experiences show many resemblances once they are in the new country; refugees, "can be theorized in much the same way as other displaced peoples". (Brettel 2008: 115)

In effect, it would be misleading to handle the issue exclusively as being either one or the other phenomenon since the process contains the elements of both labor migration and asylum seeking. The fact that receiving refugee status in Canada for Roma people is a viable way of entering Canada and staying in the country, does not mean that among the original motivations and the later strategies one cannot find typical labor migration patterns. Asylum or refugee status can be seen as facilitators of labor migration. On the other hand, it would be also a misunderstanding if we excluded the asylum motive from the process. As we will discuss it later, discrimination and different kinds of persecution are indeed among the push factors that help for a decision to leave one's home country.

In the accounts we found different explanations of the original migration motivations that illustrate well the mix of reasons:

> *"Our plan was to return. (…) We wanted a better life, to be able to buy a few things that we need in our household." (Mr. Pál)* [85]

> *"My brother tries to make as much money as he can so that they have something to live on when they come back, to pay back their bank loan." (Mr. György)* [86]

85 Mr. Pál from the village. He had just returned two months earlier from Canada with his family.

86 Mr. György from the village. His brother was among the first ones to go. Later his brother was followed by several of his siblings and their families.

"We have tremendous racism in Hungary. You have to make a hundred times more effort than a Hungarian. I am disadvantaged because I am Roma." (Mr. Görgy)

"Here in the village everyone would like to go. But Canada was the only possibility. Normally, we don't even have money to go to the nearby town to the swimming pool." (Mrs. Márta)[87]

Second hypothesis: different migration waves, different social status of migrants

It was pointed out earlier that Roma migration to Canada could be split into two major periods. The first period lasted until 2001 when Canada, for very much the same reasons that the country later introduced a new refugee law in 2012, imposed visa restrictions for Hungarian citizens. The second period started in 2008 when visa requirements were lifted so it became relatively easy to enter the country and apply for refugee status.

Based on our interview data we formulated the hypothesis that in the early 2000s individuals and families of somewhat higher social status migrated, while from 2008-2009 we see more lower status individuals and families leaving as well.

Stemming from the modernization theory, migration is seen as a flow from rural to urban or, as in our case, from areas with scarce capital and abundant labor to regions or countries with high levels of capital and low levels of labor (Brettel 2008). Low-wage labor migration between these areas has its historical roots and patterns, e.g. "wage labor is viewed by these individuals as offering more opportunities than subsistence farming (Mitchell 1969) and can, in fact, provide the cash needed to succeed in the rural context – to accumulate bride-price, provide a dowry, or buy a home." (Brettel 2008: 118) Indeed, low-status migrants could be easily identified with wage-labor migrants if their motivations, return strategies

87 Mrs. Márta, a young woman from the village with small children. Her brother and his family is in Canada.

and comportments are compared. This conceptualization is valid for the low-status migrants we observed, but it could also be valid for the higher status migrants we described. This draws our attention to the fact that our examples of lower and higher statuses should be handled carefully since the status difference is rather minor in the two types. As we will see from the interviews, higher status can refer to slightly different opportunities and access to resources and networks. E.g. somebody having had the opportunity to be employed in the state sponsored public work scheme for a wage under the subsistence level still allowed him to accumulate enough money to migrate whereas somebody without this opportunity was simply unable to do the same.

While coming up with this hypothesis we examined different questions such as the types of migrating groups, push factors, migration patterns and changes in migration patterns, transnational networks and experiences of return. In the following sections we will examine each of these questions relying on our interviews and fieldwork observation data collected in the two settlements.

What kind of migrant groups can be identified?

Roma migration to Canada, as we have seen, has a history dating back to the 1990s. As is always the case, migration statistics or any exact data on migrants are difficult to collect. Except for Canadian refugee statistics, we have no clear picture as to who are the migrants, how many are they, or where they are from. This is also true of the earlier migrants, the ones leaving before the 2001 visa restrictions. We can, however, rely on some research results of a project conducted by Kováts et al. at the beginning of the 2000s in which various aspects of the Roma migration phenomenon were studied (Kováts 2002). The project identified certain groups as potential migrants. These were mobile communities, families and individuals (musicians, showmen, traders); educated university graduates, young Budapest intellectuals; businessmen; and some refugees from local conflicts. Those who left for Canada in the 1990s or early 2000s could be assumed to belong to these

typical migrant groups. Nonetheless, it was found that a good proportion of the well-off businessmen rarely decided to emigrate due to a lack of business contacts, language skills and other useful knowledge. Underprivileged Roma were hindered by lacking financial means to even make the journey, so emigration remained "a mere desire to many". (Kováts 2002: 24) The new wave of Roma migration to Canada, as we assume, affected, besides all other types, the deprived, underprivileged segment of the Roma population to a much larger extent than before. In fact, this is the main focus of our pilot research: we intend to explain the causes and consequences of this 'new type of Roma migration' characterized by a much larger outflow of underprivileged people than before.

How can we identify migrant groups?

As already indicated, migration statistics are hard to produce, and identifying migrant groups is probably an even more difficult task. Researchers usually use various proxies to assess migration ratios. In case of the Canadian migration process, the task is somewhat easier given the recorded number of asylum claimants. For our purposes we would have benefited however from more detailed data than the number of refugees. From our fieldwork experience we concluded that even without hard data some kind of qualitative approach might help to identify migrant groups.

To delineate migrant groups one way to proceed is to assess the social status of migrants. Since our pilot study focuses on 'new migration', that is the mass migration of underprivileged Roma, we wanted to pick out certain social characteristics that would be more typical of lower status migrants than other groups. We presumed that one good proxy would be to look at what risks migrants were willing to take to engage in the migration process. The idea is that lower status people tend to take greater risks for they have fewer resources. Poverty in general entails greater risks in any social actions than higher social status does.

The major risks we identified are material on one hand, and risks of moral temptation on the other hand. Material risks refer to the financial

resources that one needs to have to make the journey to Canada. Usually whole families with several children emigrated. This meant that the money needed for air tickets far exceeded the financial resources of those families. We have seen several different ways people secured money for the costly journey all involving different degrees of risk-taking. There were families who had made plans well before the journey and saved up money for as long as two years.

> *"I was putting money aside for two years. I had some occasional jobs in Budapest, we worked at construction sites." (Mr. Pál)*

It was nonetheless more common to borrow money from close relatives, distant acquaintances or even people already in Canada.

> *"My brother in Canada paid for the ticket for my other brother, three years ago." (Mr. György)*

Saving money all alone seems to involve less risk than borrowing money from someone for the simple reason that if somebody is capable of collecting this huge amount he is probably somewhat better-off than if somebody has to rely on external help. However, paradoxically, saving corresponds to a higher level of risk whereas borrowing may match reduced risk. This is mainly because the way a migrant gets access to the amount of money needed for the journey is indicative of the degree of her/his embeddedness in different types of networks. As already pointed out by Kováts et al. (2002) many of the migrants relied on the funds of those living in Canada to be able to start their journey. It was found that in the new migration wave the same process is still at work; many of the potential migrants receive either the whole amount or part of it from their relatives or friends in Canada that they are supposed to pay back after they get there. Or, the family back home makes the effort and collects the money for some family members or even for a nuclear family (e.g. a young parent with small children) so that they can migrate. Receiving money from abroad is at the same time the first act of assistance that one can count on in the migration process. So saving alone is truly a sign of more effective self-reliance but in

migration, at least the type we observed where mainly poor people were concerned, networks are more valuable than individual resources.

The risk can also be high from relying on networks but only if one happens to fall prey to a delinquent network. Mainly in accounts of returned migrants we heard stories of people becoming victims of moneylenders (usurers). They received financial help for their journey but were never able to escape their debts while in Canada. Without being able to assess how widespread this type of dependency is, we can surely say that there are different forms of networks and the moneylender type is only one of them. Most likely if one comes from a village or community where people are entrapped by usurers then this tight network will not let them get free of these entanglements even when migrating.

> *"There were people who tricked others, they invited them to go to Canada and then they used their credit cards and they cheated with them." (Mr. Pál)*

Nonetheless, for anyone in an underprivileged social class, migration entails a huge risk. Either saving money alone or borrowing it, all families left without anything (sometimes even selling all their furniture or even their houses) while knowing that they might have to return. None of them had any idea of how they would manage their lives if they were forced to return or they came back voluntarily.[88]

There can also be a risk of moral temptation. Often people did not deregister when leaving the country,[89] and they continued using the social assistance system, e.g. taking family allowance payments. This put them in danger of being penalized upon return. For various reasons, people did not deregister, mostly because they had no information on their obligations. At the same time, this small amount of money still came in handy occasionally in Canada. One woman told her rather humiliating story. When she came back from Canada with her husband, she was immediately transported

88 See later section on return experiences.

89 According to the rules, a citizen entitled to social assistance is obliged to deregister if he or she leaves the country for more than three months.

from the airport and taken into custody. She was released next day and fined the amount she had taken without entitlement, plus of course an extra penalty payment.

From better to worse: What pushed low-status, underprivileged Roma families to migrate?

Our next question addresses the 'push factors': what were the most important reasons that could explain the new migration wave of Roma to Canada and what could account for what we called the mass migration of the underprivileged? For that we will outline some important social and political changes with a focus on the most deprived social classes.

The situation at the turn of the millennium differed from the previous decade. In the early 2000s there was increased economic growth after the economic crisis of the 1990s and the political regime change. The economic boom was marked, among other factors, by growing foreign investment. Multinational companies (MNC) hired extra unskilled workers. Although these MNCs typically did not locate in the most underprivileged areas such as Borsod county (the major geographical area of out-migration to Canada), Roma from disadvantaged areas were able to work in other parts of the country. Many of them who had some funds to move migrated from the region to find work at these MNCs (Virág 2010). In addition to relative economic growth and extra employment for a certain layer of low-status, unskilled people, public and political discourse was far less anti-poor and anti-Roma than it later became.

Compared to the early 2000s several other changes have occurred that may be among the push factors. To name a few, we should look at the transformation of the welfare system with its increasingly anti-poor tendencies, ethnic conflicts, reactions by the political elite, and the rise of the far-right and growing racism.

Generally speaking the whole political elite (both left and right) has become more anti-Roma and anti-poor both in discourses and policies in the course of a couple of years. Regarding some of the welfare measures,

the mid-2000s saw an attempt on the part of the government to launch policies to alleviate poverty (e.g. family aid programs, launching of the child poverty government policy, a child poverty model program).[90] It is doubtful if we can speak of failure, but politically it came to be seen as a misconceived political strategy to tackle poverty in that pro-active way. Slowly the dominant political discourse assumed that poverty alleviation programs increase welfare dependency and generated conflicts between the working poor and social-aid beneficiaries. The socialist government (2002-2010) decided to stop the program and replaced it with the 'Pathway to Work Program', a public work scheme that obliged social-aid recipients to take up public work at the local government to ensure their entitlement to social aid. The 'Pathway Work Program' was further developed in a more punitive direction under the consecutive conservative government that came into power in 2010 (Ferge 2008, Kérmer 2008, Váradi 2009, Csoba 2010); the new government initiated and launched more and more anti-poor policies, e.g. reduction in job-seeking aid,[91] preconditions for social aid,[92] maximized amount of social aid per family.[93]

At the same time it is also true to say that the nature of ethnic conflicts has changed in the last 5 to 10 years. Until the mid-2000s inter-ethnic conflicts had been typically between institutions and local communities. From 2006 Roma as individuals started to feel more unsafe and insecure, even in danger when the far-right and its paramilitary organization, the Hungarian Guard, came into being and started organizing marches in local communities where significant number of Roma lived. The aim was to intimidate and threaten Roma inhabitants and generate local conflicts

90 www.gyerekesely.hu

91 From 2011 job-seeking aid has been granted for 90 days instead of the former 270 days. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110830_kozmunka_kisokos_segely_kontenervaros

92 As a precondition of social aid and wage supplementing benefit, local governments can insist claimants keep their house and garden tidy. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110830_kozmunka_kisokos_segely_kontenervaros

93 Local governments can determine a maximum amount of social aid per family, and it cannot exceed 90 percent of the wage received in public employment. http://hvg.hu/gazdasag/20110830_kozmunka_kisokos_segely_kontenervaros

between Roma and non-Roma. The Hungarian Guard, under a different name, is still organizing its paramilitary demonstrations. The purpose of the marches is to help the far-right to gain political support by enhancing fear and fuelling local conflicts. The political elite and institutions are slow to react. They even play a cynical role by not taking action against these clear cases of hate crime. In addition, in the history of post-communist Hungary, starting in 2008, a series of racially-motivated violent attacks were committed against Roma leading to 6 deaths. Many claim that the rise of the far-right was a consequence of the reluctance of almost of the entire political elite to implement measures to stop the spread of hate crime. Moreover, by letting racist discourse become part of the mainstream or even nurturing it themselves, the elite contributed to the overwhelmingly anti-Roma political atmosphere (Vidra and Fox 2012).

What made it possible for them to migrate? The role and nature of networks

We have already discussed some aspects of assistance networks especially in the initial phase of the migration process. They are essential both in helping to start migration (raising money for the journey, providing information on applying for refugee status) and to manage life in Canada (emigration authorities, welfare issues, accommodation, school, translators, etc.). As was recorded in the earlier wave of Canadian migration, networks already started to emerge and played similarly important roles in helping migrants to leave and to settle in the target country back then (Kováts 2002) as in the later wave.

Presumably, the second wave of migration characterized by a bigger outflow of more underprivileged Roma needed more extended networks. It was noted in 2000 that "the poorer the person's or family's conditions are, the more important the lack of funds will be as a hindrance" (Kováts 2002: 23). The statement is still true today with an important change, namely that many of the new migrants come from extreme poverty and the lack of funds should in theory be an unmanageable hindrance to all

of them, while they somehow make their way to Canada. This makes us believe that networks have become tighter and more reliable. As a matter of fact, based on observations, it is possible to say that the networks are actually the original community networks and very often they are based on family contacts. One other phenomenon at play is the earlier migration experiences of relatives or just village and neighborhood acquaintances. In the researched town an important number of people had already been to Canada in the early 2000s providing not only a migration pattern but also important networks. Many of them became second-time migrants in the recent wave as well.

One additional factor could have been decisive in generating an increased ratio of emigrating underprivileged people. That is the digital revolution and globalization often mentioned by migration researchers: "The technological revolution, which has facilitated travel and communication across national borders, also supports the maintenance and expansion of transnational social networks created by the migrants themselves." (Heisler 2008: 92)

We observed that families of migrants in Canada keep close and intense contact with their overseas relatives via the internet using e.g. Facebook. Transnational networks have become easier to operate with the new technology.

> *"Friends told us what you have to say when you enter the country. We discussed it over Facebook." (Mr. Pál)*

Very importantly the families we came into contact with belong to the studied category, the underprivileged Roma. They live in very poor conditions, often in dilapidated, run-down houses, without proper heating. Nonetheless, the internet is available in some of the households, and if one family has it then the whole neighborhood has the opportunity to have access to it. Moreover, children can have access to internet at school as well. Oftentimes, internet access had been installed as part of the "wireless village" program to take internet use and computers to poor villages and neighborhoods.

What kind of trends could be observed in the changes of migration patterns?

It was pointed out that migration patterns are equally important in understanding migration trends. From our fieldwork data we made a few deductions about our main research focus, low-status migration. Studying migration patterns may give us some additional insight as to how low-status migrants leave their home country despite financial and other hindrances. We use the term migration patterns while we refer to certain social practices. Massey et al. (1994) talk about the "culture of migration" meaning that moving and returning might be deeply rooted in the social practices of a given community. From our fieldwork observations it is hard to assess if we could describe these patterns as being embedded cultural patterns. Nonetheless, the dynamics of how migration waves occur might indicate some aspects of it.

Our assumption is that migration patterns have both a social and a geographical aspect. According to our observations there is usually a specific direction of social patterns in migration trends: the move is from higher status to lower status that is applicable in both a geographical and a social sense. First, usually people living in higher status localities, e.g. bigger cities or towns, have the possibility to migrate and people in lower status localities, such as small villages follow only later. Similarly, first people from higher status families can mobilize enough resources to migrate whereas lower status families have this chance only after enough information has been spread and enough networks have been established. In certain sense we can call this 'migration pattern flow'. Using this idea of 'migration pattern flow' helps us understand why certain migrant groups behave the way they do, or in our case why and how low-status people migrate.

During our fieldwork we came across the phenomenon of some families migrating from the researched town in the early 2000s. These families came back and some of them left again (and many of them have returned since). This could be labeled as yo-yo migration (Margolis 1995), a phenomenon that many researchers described in various geographical regions and social settings while observing the characteristics of return migration (Brettel 2008: 117).

We can state that in that town – and in that specific neighborhood that we studied – a certain migration pattern existed. In fact, those families that had an earlier migration experience were indeed better-off compared to the rest of the community. Their well-kept houses were located in the more decent part of the neighborhood and as we found out, some were also in a rather good social position (entrepreneur, minority politician). The fact that they had been in Canada at the beginning of the decade was common knowledge and a reference point in the neighborhood. Anybody asked would know who these families were. Some of the people leaving in the second wave apparently had lower status and had to rely on the networks and information provided by the earlier (usually somewhat better-off) migrants.

We also observed migration pattern flows from a higher to a lower status locality. In the nearby village migration started only in 2009, and nobody in the early 2000s had been to Canada. In fact, in the accounts of our interviewees the researched town served as an important point of reference. While explaining how the first migrants decided to leave, it was mentioned that they saw reports on TV about refugees in Canada from that town and from Miskolc. Nonetheless, we assume that there were no direct contacts with the people from the town for they had a very bad reputation in the eyes of the villagers, perceived as delinquents:

> *"Lots of people have gone from that town, they left their houses behind. But they screwed it up in Canada, they have broken into houses there." (Mr. György)*

What are the consequences of low-status migration with regards to transnational networks?

Low-status migration, as we have seen, probably has to rely on networks more than other types. Not only is the beginning of the migration process heavily dependent on the help of overseas relatives or friends but also all the following steps require special local knowledge (besides the language) without which one cannot get by in Canada. From our interview data we made some observations regarding how transnational networks work and what consequences this may have on low-status migration.

One of our assumptions is that earlier migrants – those arriving in the first wave and earlier in the second wave – had better opportunities in certain fields than those who came later. One of the areas where they definitely had an advantage was the labor market.

> *"We tried everything that other Hungarians who came earlier had done. But the newcomers didn't have so many opportunities." (Mr. Pál)*

People with refugee status can apply for work permits[94] and work legally in the country. However, since most of the people arriving in Canada do not speak the language, this option is almost entirely useless for the majority of them. It is rather networks that may help people find some kind of job. These could be either legal or illegal depending on the network.

> *"It is very difficult to find a job without speaking the language. (…) Circles of friends and relatives who had already been there for a longer period of time could work, they took their friends to work, and they took responsibility of them." (Mr. Pál)*

One typical work our interviewees recounted is "garbage picking", an activity that is not a legal job but not illegal either. You need a network for that, car, information, etc. This activity was recorded equally in the first migration wave as typical "work" done by Roma refugees in Canada (Hajnal 2002).

> *"They find brass in the garbage. People put it outside in front of their houses and then they go and find it and sell it for a good price. They take friends and relatives with them. They know where to find the garbage places." (Mrs. Ildi)*[95]

> *"Besides their jobs they go to pick garbage. This is not theft. From one family six of them go and they make enough money for a month in one weekend." (Mr. György)*

94 http://www.settlement.org/sys/faqs_detail.asp?faq_id=4000556

95 She is a woman from the village. Her family members are in Canada.

There are also people with legal jobs where they do not have to speak English. We heard of factory jobs as well as work in construction. One of the men from our researched village started an enterprise and established a network of his relatives and fellow village people.

Why do we think that those arriving first, without networks, have better chances to engage in some money-making activity and thus ensure a better outcome to their migration adventure? One of the explanations is that social networks get saturated; people will maybe help their closest relatives but will not assist their fellow village friends or acquaintances once they feel they have to be at the service of too many.

> *"My other brother couldn't go, the tickets would have been too expensive. Those already there, should they pay for all others? We are ten brothers and sisters. You have to decide if you help all your brothers, also the hell-raisers, or you spare money for yourself, so when you come back in five-ten years your kids will have money to live on. My brother helped the others but I saw he had enough. He would have been much better off if nobody had followed him. They held him back. He gave them over a million*[96] *that he will never get back." (Mr. György)*

As a consequence, a competitive situation evolves where the least experienced and the least embedded are the ones who lose out. They tend to perceive everything in a very negative light. One of our interviewees who had no close contacts had to tackle hardships all alone that made him give a negative account of everything they went through.

> *"Nobody helped us. They [acquaintances] put us up, but they did not help with anything. We had to find a translator, we just met one by accident. He's been there for forty years. We had to pay him, 50-100 dollars for a couple of sentences. He helped us with arranging the official papers. The people we stayed with were not relatives, they were just from the same village. They were in a more advantageous*

96 App. 3,300 to 3,600 Euros.

> *situation but they did not share any information with us. (…) We didn't even know how to pronounce street names. It was tough, especially the first two months." (Mr. Pál)*

A further explanation relates to the social status of the migrants and its consequences on how they succeed in their migration endeavor. The lower social status somebody has the more he or she lacks cultural and economic capital. These disadvantages determine their life chances not only in their home country but also in the new target country.

The lack of cultural capital prevents them from learning the language, or makes it extremely difficult for them. Without language skills, managing life, including finding a job, is almost doomed to complete failure except if one remains in a helpful network.

> *"You can't work. We didn't learn the language. We couldn't go to school because of the distance. We had to get up at 5 and got back home at 5 in the afternoon. (…) After two months we didn't go to school any more, we already wanted to come back." (Mr. Pál)*

Most of the families arrive with no money in Canada; they might not have sold their house but almost certainly all their furniture. The lack of economic capital and financial resources leads to the same "fatal dependency" on networks. They are fully reliant on the networks yet since these are already saturated. Therefore only very close – immediate family – networks are apparently helpful. Those without such contacts are surely among the ones who interpret their migration as a negative experience.

Why the strategy of 'whole family at once'?

We should mention one more phenomenon that differentiates low-status from higher status migrants. Earlier migrants usually had the strategy that could be described as the classic labor migrant strategy whereby the head of the family and some male members went first to collect viable information on the possibilities and conditions that one had to face

once in the new country (Kováts 2002). In fact, we observed that when migration starts in a new community, such as in the small village where we did part of our fieldwork, then the early birds, the pioneers, go and actually follow the above pattern. The males go first and are then followed by their families.

> *"My brother collected the money, he had a friend there, a family. He went alone to sort out the financial situation so that the family doesn't have to live on welfare. (…) His wife followed him one year later." (Mr. György)*

They are gradually followed by more people and they, as we could see, had lower social status. Lower status migrants, as was observed, tend to go with their whole family. Paying for the journey of families with three or more children requires a huge effort since the plane tickets themselves cost a fortune. The question arises then why these very poor families believe that going together is the right choice to achieve their migration expectations. The first obvious answer is that the classic labor migrant strategy is simply unrealizable for there are definitely no funds to undertake more than one journey. The 'all at the same time strategy' is built on the assumption that refugees are entitled to welfare but only a big family with three or more children receives enough to live on. It was often said in the community that "no way to manage with only one child!" From this respect it is indeed a rational strategy.

> *"It's not worth being there with one child only. My other brother has one kid, they can hardly survive. Especially since there's been a cut in medical aid." (Mr. György)*