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REMUS GABRIEL ANGHEL
ADRIANA DIACONU
ANCA DOHOTARIU
ȘTEFAN DORONDEL
ZSUZSA PLAINER
GABRIELA PRELIPCEAN
RADU-ALEX. RĂUȚĂ
NARCIS TULBURE

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New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania

www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10, Fax (+4) 021. 327.07.74



REMUS GABRIEL ANGHEL

Born in 1970, in Bucharest

Ph.D. in Sociology, University of Bielefeld, Germany (2009)

Thesis: *Better Illegal than Legal? Transnationalism and Status Paradoxes at Migrants from Romani in Nuremberg and Milan*

Researcher, Institute for the Studies of National Minorities, Cluj Napoca

CEU Budapest, M.A. scholarship (1999-2000)

DFG scholarship at the University of Bielefeld (2004-2007)

Marie Curie Scholarship at FIERI Turin (2007)

Conference participations in Belgium, Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Italy,
Great Britain, Poland, Romania, Spain

Articles in the field of migration, ethnicity and nationalism, informal economy

ROMANIA AT ITS BORDERS. MAPPING OUT CROSSING-BORDER PRACTICES

Introduction

Research on societal transformations after the collapse of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe showed the role crossing-border practices played in sustaining the people's livelihood. During state socialism, Eastern European countries were seen as "large scale prisons" where people's mobility was very much restricted; international mobility, such as tourism (to Western Europe and North America especially), migration, or even crossing-border practices, were considered detrimental to the "social order" of the totalitarian state (see Horváth 2008). Nevertheless, after the collapse of the communist regimes, international mobility, migration and also informal trade became alternatives to impoverishment and economic risks. In this paper, I explore how different forms of international mobility developed after 1989. My research is carried out in the region of Bukovina (Suceava county – the Northeastern side of Romania bordering Ukraine), where different types of border crossing practices are described. I conclude by arguing that these practices should not be seen only in terms of interaction practices developing between Romania and Ukraine, but also as everyday practices, a sort of „dispositional transnationalism“, including various amounts of petty trade, border crossing practices and weak institutional cooperation.

Theoretical framework

This research incorporates two different issues of theoretical inquiry: research on border regions and on transnationalism. Research on border regions in Spain (Häkli 2002, Sahlins 1991), Italy and Croatia (Caplan 2002) shows how borders cannot always sever border crossing ties

although they separate politically distinct territories (Hettne 2003). Such research shows how people in border regions share much similarity despite living in different countries. Some other researches (Sahlins 1991) however, show how the drawing of borders followed social differentiation and social conflicts, as it was the case in the valley of Cervanya on the Spanish-France border in the Pyrenees. But most often, regional identities do not fade away once national states impose new borders. Alternatively, borders can also be drawn socially (see Barth 1969) as it is the case of Russian petty traders at the Russian-Turkish border. The opening of borders after the collapse of state socialism in Eastern Europe enhanced petty trade in the region; the presence of Russians in the bazaar in Turkey generated strong stereotypes among local Turks who were regarding Russians' presence as disturbing the local social order (Hann and Hann 1992).

In the Romanian context Chelcea (2002) investigates the role of trade in Romania's border regions during state socialism, where consumption goods were traded in the region bordering Hungary. Additionally, Radu (2009) analyzed the oil traffic to Yugoslavia during the oil embargo. He explored how the embargo was broken by local people trading oil informally and how this endeavour was undertaken with the tacit acquiescence of the state (which he titles called "predatory state").

In Romania, there is first a lack of research on borders and border crossing practices although during the past twenty years the country had significant changes in its border regulations. For almost 4 decades of state socialism Romanian borders were highly controlled, but after 1990 the border regime liberalized and informal trade flourished. A significant change happened after 2007, when, as a new EU country, Romania changed its crossing regulations towards all non-EU countries, while, at the same time, the Western border to Hungary decreased its controlling function significantly. Hence, the impact of Romanian EU accession on border-crossing mobility is underresearched.

Yet my interest is to research the economic practices in the border regions in relation to the changing economies of the Eastern Europe. In most of these countries border trade became after 1990 the one and only way to sustain livelihood for many people. Petty trade became a flourishing economic activity pattern that developed in the whole former communist world after 1989 (Humphrey 2002, Konstantinov 1996, 1998, Wallace 1999). It was related to the changing economies of the Eastern Europe, and also to trade relations. It was not only an economic opportunity, since it also enhanced social relations and made them develop across borders.

Accordingly, some researches (Wallace 2003) emphasize the role of social capital and of networks as they were specifically used by traders to minimize the risks involved by their informal activities.

Secondly, crossing-border practices could also be analyzed in relation to the growing literature on transnationalism and globalization. The transnational connections (or, “globalization from below”¹) are tied to the changes of capital and to the creation of new economic niches.² Such a perspective argues that, in contrast with the nationally based fordist economy, globalization entails a qualitative shift towards the development of flexible accumulation (Burawoy 2000) that creates new opportunities, often open to transnational economic activities. In a world seeing an increased role of transnational networks and transnational connections, the relationship between states and transnational actors is particularly interesting. According to Castells (1997, 1999) there is growing importance of global and transnational networks, and, simultaneously, a lowering of state control on border crossing social and economic relations. States are no longer seen as the ‘territorial containers’ of societies (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). States are challenged by the growing multiplicity and complexity of the transnational ties and practices. At the “top”, global networks manage the world’s finance and challenge the role of the national states. At the “bottom”, in a world of increasing variety of migrations and of growing number of migrants,³ states are challenged by the difficulty to control the chains and the new forms of migration, and in general the very different forms of transnational dynamics. However, studies on transnationalism explicitly focus on migrants’ practices, networks and their ties established between their origin and reception societies. Authors even speak about transnational social spaces (Faist 1999, Pries 1999) as denser sets of practices where networks and organizations of migrants and non-migrants develop. But the transnationalism agenda did not pay much attention on the transnational practices established in the border regions, and it is in this area that I situate my research

Changing Border Regimes between Romania and Ukraine. An Overview

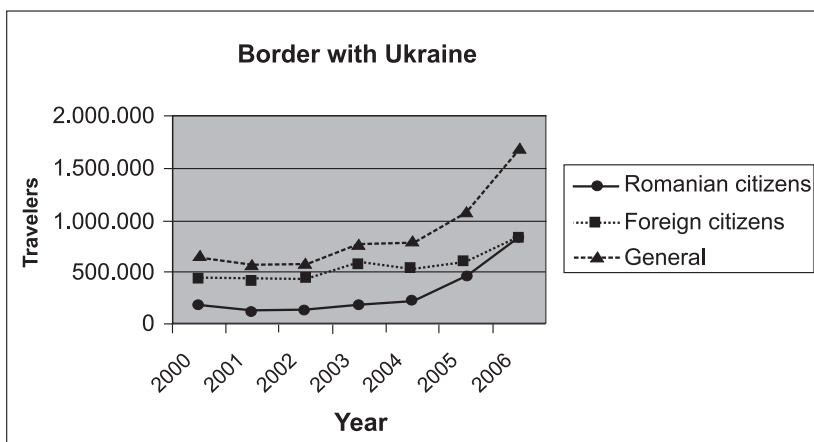
As a new EU country (2007), Romania has one of the largest landline EU external borders. The largest part of the Romanian Eastern border is shared with Ukraine towards the north and southeast, and with the Republic of

Moldova towards the east. This research was undertaken in the region of Suceava in the northeastern side of Romania. The fieldwork was carried out in a few localities in the vicinity of the border: Suceava, the major city in the county, Rădăuți, a smaller town, and Siret, which is the most important border crossing point between Romania and Ukraine.

During the 19th century Bukovina was part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. After 1918 was part of Romania. Before the separation of Bukovina in two parts in 1940, the population in the region was ethnically mixed: Jews and Germans made the majority of the urban population, whereas Romanians and Ukrainians made the majority of the rural population. The capital city of the region, Czernowitz (in German, Cernăuți in Romanian or Chernivtsi in Ukrainian), was known for its multicultural outlook. After the separation from Romania in 1940, there was no ethnic cleansing in the Romanian Bukovina. Both parts incorporated ethnic minorities. Ethnic Germans moved after 1940 to Poland and later to Germany (Castellan 1971), while Jews were exterminated during the Second World War and the rest emigrated afterwards on (Gold 1962). But multiethnicity is still present in the region: there are Romanians and Russians living in the northern part, and Ukrainians and Roma in the south. Today the Suceava County in Romania – known as southern Bukovina - has about 700,000 inhabitants, of which 8,000 declare themselves Ukrainians. Representatives of the Ukrainian associations claimed a much higher number, of about 100,000 people having Ukrainian origin, many of them allegedly having knowledge of the Ukrainian dialect in the region. Conversely, in the Chernivtsi region, the last Ukrainian census accounted for about 920,000 inhabitants, of which 200,000 Romanian speakers (Romanians and Moldovans). This large number of ethnic minorities on both sides of the border created the premises for border crossing practices between the two countries. On both sides of the border, the majority do not speak the language from the other side. In this sense, the members of ethnic minority groups could enhance communication in the border-crossing activities.

In the last twenty years the border regime changed, including agreements and treaties signed by the neighboring states. During state socialism international mobility was severely restricted for Romanian citizens (Diminescu 2003). After 1990 a series of agreements were reached between the two countries. Thus, diplomatic relations were established between the two states on the 1st of January 1992,⁴ after Ukraine declared its independence. A convention concerning the simplified access of citizens living close to the border was signed in 1996.⁵ This act opened

up increasing opportunities for petty traders and those traveling between the two countries. A treaty for cooperation and good neighborhood⁶ and a convention in 2000 concerning common cooperation for custom followed.⁷ Consequently, the border treaty was signed on the 17th of June 2003.⁸ Afterwards another two treaties were signed in 2003 and 2006. The first regulated the travel of Romanian and Ukrainian citizens,⁹ while the second regulated the functioning of the border crossing points.¹⁰ During the 1990s, access of Romanian and Ukrainian citizens in the neighboring country was fairly free. However, after 2004 Romania set up a system of visas for the Ukrainian citizens as a condition for the country's accession to the EU. In turn, the Ukrainian government imposed visa requirements for the Romanian traveling to Ukraine. Between 2004 and 2008 citizens' traveling between the two ex-communist countries was established on a visa-based mutual system. This was established on the 16th of July 2004 by the Ukrainian side and in the same year by the Romania side. In 2008 Ukraine had to comply to the contract signed to the EU concerning the free access of the EU citizens in Ukraine. Consequently, Romanians were exempted from visa requirements. Such structural changes influenced border crossing patterns: border crossing is free for Romanians but restrictive for Ukrainians. This current situation occurs in a context of increasing border crossing between Romania and Ukraine. As the data below shows, between 2000 and 2006 there was an increasing number of travelers crossing the border between Romania and Ukraine. In the last years, rising prices in Romania made trading profitable, so that more and more people tended to cross the border for economic purposes.

Table 1: Number of crossings at the Romanian-Ukrainian border, 2000 - 2006¹¹

As noted elsewhere (Kaiser 2005, Bruns 2009), people in the Eastern Europe often used the borders as resources. Literature on the societal transformations in the region showed that the deregulations of the state and the emerging markets were accompanied by a flourishing informal economy, in which people attempted to sustain their livelihood during the unregulated transition process (Burawoy and Verdery 1999). Research undertaken in different parts of Romania (Chelcea and Mateescu 2005, Crăciun *et al.* 2002, Stănculescu *et. al.* 2007) showed how informal economy was fueled by de-industrialization (Burawoy 1996). In the County of Suceava, the former socialist industry collapsed, and consequently, border-crossing economic activities and later international migration were essential to sustain households' economy. Therefore, this research explores how petty trade was practiced over the years, while also attempting to understand the new forms of cooperation that came into existence since Romania became a EU member.

Petty Trade in Romania's Border Region

During state socialism Romanian citizens were rarely allowed to travel to see relatives living in the Soviet Union. During these years though, an agreement was reached between the Romanian and Soviet authorities allowing, in principle, the crossings for people living on both sides of the border between Romania and the former USSR. De facto, Romanians and Ukrainians were crossing the border rarely.

At that time though, more Poles were crossing it more regularly, during their holiday travel to the Black Sea. Hence, they were the first informal traders in the area, carrying goods to Romania that was already facing deep shortage. Usually, they brought food, and sold it in Romania, in order to buy other products that they would then take back to Poland. Some of the people I interviewed recall Poles' trading abilities and that „they were able to make good business before we even started to think of it“.

Poles came here with small cars. They traveled farther through the country to sell their goods, only a handful stopped here, selling high quality products: clothes and food (Ciprian).¹²

Not even spare parts for the Romanian cars were available on the Romanian market; you always had to improvise something. They brought everything you needed: thermometers, ironing machines and electronics. They purchased here tomato sauce, small boxes, whatever was available here at that time. They were great traders, the Poles, and there were many of them coming here before 1989 (Marin).

According to my informants, many Poles spent their holidays at the Black Sea in Romania or Bulgaria, while also doing a little trade on the side in order to cut the excursions' costs.

Later on, state socialism collapsed throughout the Eastern Europe and the scarcity of goods in the region started to be compensated by the emerging entrepreneurs. Small trade extended to Turkey, Poland, and Ukraine, as people witnessed the first years of new capitalism.

In 1991-1992 petty trade flourished here. Immediately after the Revolution of 1989 you could travel freely to Poland, Ukraine, and Czechoslovakia. For smart people, this was a time of action; one needed only courage and enough information about what to do. Some were able to take risks as they had no family responsibilities. They could win. I saw people trading

from Poland. They were quite unsophisticated at the beginning but after going there ten or fifteen times I saw them changing. Indeed, trade changed these people. One could be “the last in his/hers village”, but after going to Poland or Ukraine, he or she knew how to make money. And those who stayed employed in state institutions had no idea what this was all about (Maria).

After 1989, much of the former socialist industry was still in place but unable to engage in commercial transactions with the other socialist states in the same manner as before when trade was organized and directed by the state. And so, people took initiatives. From the city of Siret for instance, they bought carpets produced in the local factory, and sold them afterwards in improvised markets in Poland. It was a profitable business at that time, since prices in Romania were a few times lower than those in Poland. People traded other goods also, but when the textile industry collapsed in the region, such trading opportunities slowly disappeared.

In Poland we could sell glasses, vodka, toys for kids, fish conserves, these were really good in Romania. And we could bring here USD and DM, hard currency that was missing here (Nicu).

In the mid 1990s informal trade started to be practiced mostly between Romania and Ukraine and trade related traveling to Poland became less frequent. After 1995-1996, Ukrainians started to trade goods too. Furthermore, although their economy entered a process of dramatic restructuring, barter was practiced in large extents. Companies had difficulties to pay their employees, and, instead, people received products their companies produced:

Ukrainians received products instead of salaries. They received underwear, textiles, whatever their factories produced. What would these people do? They came here to sell their products and receive money (Maria).

The permeability of borders after 1990 made possible informal trading activities between northern Romania, western Ukraine and eastern Poland. It allowed people in the region to travel to the neighboring states whenever they encountered economic difficulties. In the 1980s, Poles traveled overwhelmingly, while in the 1990s, Romanians traded in Ukraine and Poland. Ukrainians also moved constantly after 1990. Their mobility to

Romania became restricted in 2004, due to Romania's accession to the EU, but Romanians continue to engage in border-crossing border economic activities. Trading was highly facilitated by the relatively small distances in the region: only 80 kilometers from Suceava to Chernivtsi, and about 450 km between Suceava and the closest cities in eastern Poland.

In Romania petty trade developed by and large as a kind of individualized practice, with people improving their income by undertaking small trading activities. However, some specialized networks developed over the years, through "professional" traders selling goods from Ukraine in the small markets of Romania's border region, looking for new customers and using retail networks. Of a great importance was the development of the Bazaar in Chernivtsi, Ukraine, the largest city in the region.

Picture 1: The Bazaar in Chernivtsi



The Bazaar is a hub for trade in the whole region, where goods from Poland, Ukraine, or Turkey were traded in large quantities. It has a few thousand small shops selling all sorts of goods: food, clothes, electronics, household equipments, and so on. It is well organized in sections in accordance with the offered goods. Sellers are in general Ukrainians, but when somebody speaks Romanian, traders try to overcome language barriers. The language knowledge of the members of ethnic minority groups – be they Romanian speakers in Ukraine or Ukrainian speakers from Romania, represents a social facilitator of trading activities. People appreciate Ukrainian goods. As some customers consider, “Ukrainian goods are very good, as they still produced their own goods and do not import everything from abroad as Romanians do (Tudor)”. Highly appreciated for its quality, food is often purchased by Romanians: “fish is better in Ukraine, much better than that from Suceava, you can grill it better. And it is not always cheaper, but it is for sure better (Maria).”

They have good food: [meat, eggs, conserves, vegetables], everything you need. I bought once a fish conserve, it was written in Ukrainian. For example, if you have grains of a good quality, and a mill, you can obtain your own wheat. Once I bought 30 kg of wheat from there. They didn’t destroy their food factories and their agriculture to the same extent as we did (Gabriel).

Any juice from there is very good. And you can also find consumption goods as in Romania, for instance all kinds of Procter and Gamble products, exactly as they are in Romania. These are similar, only they are written in Russian and much cheaper as they are here. If you go there, instead of 3-400 RON as it would be in Romania, you could pay only 150-200 RON. It is more profitable (Liviu).

During the last year¹³ prices in Ukraine were about half in comparison with Romanian prices, and consequently trading activity was very intense. But since prices in Ukraine increased steadily, trading profits decreased for unorganized traders: “the Bazaar in Chernivtsi was full with Romanians last year, today they come less”. But even when the price difference is not that big, customers still prefer the Ukrainian goods they are accustomed with.

Picture 2: Sweets and candies in the Bazaar,
praised by Romanian customers for their quality



In Romania petty trade is practiced in Suceava and in small improvised markets in the cities of Siret and Rădăuți, but also in the weekly markets throughout the villages in the region. In such markets there are “Russians’ tables” where goods are sold such as candy, clothes and also household utilities: hammers, tongs, water hoses, small engines, nails, and so on. Some sellers deliver their goods steadily; they rent flats where goods are stored, travel in the region in order to reach their customers. In the last year, prices in Ukraine increased, but traders reduce their profits and kept their goods at a lower price to maintain their customers interested. Over the years people got acquainted with these products so that they want and appreciate them. Even when similar products are available in Romania they still buy “Russian” goods. Customers are town dwellers but especially people living in the villages close to Rădăuți and Siret, having smaller income.

About eighty percent of the people living in the region buy something from the Bazaar (Ana).

And, as Liviu contends,

Customers are village dwellers mostly. People come to Rădăuți from all these villages: Marginea, Putna, and Vicov. In Rădăuți people started also to buy from supermarkets opened in Suceava. But those coming from villages are faithful customers of “Russian” products. My mother is such a person. She likes plastic flowers, kitschy stuff. With little money you are able to buy many things: cheap chemicals, juices, cheap plastic clothes, all sorts of cheap goods. Cigarettes also are Russian brands such as St. George or so. Here there is this poor and alcoholic working class. There are many of them here, and they buy these cheap cigarettes and cheap drinks.

Among the most traded goods, cigarettes and oil are particularly appealing since price differences were really high between Romania and Ukraine. Although the trading of goods decreased, cigarettes and oil remained a very profitable activity despite the restrictions imposed by authorities. Romania’s accession to the European Union brought difficulties to the Ukrainian citizens coming to Romania, who depend on the visa requirements imposed by Romanians.

Now it is increasingly difficult for Ukrainians to get to Romania, they were deeply affected by the changes in border regulations. Before 2004 eighty percent of sellers were Ukrainians, or Romanians selling their goods. In the meanwhile half of them went back to Ukraine. And after 2007 this trading decreased very much (Olga)... Then, some limitations were imposed on imports, since Romania entered the EU. It was easier before when Romania was not a EU country (Liviu).

Research on petty trade in the Balkans shows how people carried out such practices in uncertain contexts. In such cases people rely on networks and social ties (Konstantinov 1996, Wallace 2003) to conduct their economic activities. But in this case, the role of networks is smaller, and one’s own individual actions are decisive. Furthermore, the relatively unclear prices’ development in Romania and Ukraine decreased the likelihood of much standardization. In the past years, whenever price differences grew, trading intensified. When price differences lowered, trading decreased. Trading was used as a strategy in contexts of economic

difficulties. Petty trade was practiced in Romania, Poland, and Ukraine but tended to become a regional practice over the years, goods being traded between Chernivtsi and southern Bukovina.

Shopping in Ukraine

A second type of border-crossing activity is shopping in the Bazaar of Chernivtsi. Shopping is usually undertaken by dwellers of border cities and villages. Between these localities and Chernivtsi there are only 60 km, in comparison to 40 km, which is the distance to Suceava. Thus, it really makes no difference whether one goes shopping into a city or into the other.

I know many people who go shopping in Chernivtsi at the Bazaar. They go there as if they went to the mall in Romania. The distance is of about 60 km. They load their cars with goods and come back later. You cross the border and you have to bribe the custom officers and the border control. It is called “the tradition”, amounting to five Hryvnia¹⁴ for each of them. They buy food, fuel and cigarettes. Some even go there weekly with a lorry and load them with fuel. Afterwards, they have sufficient for their own use (Liviu).

In the following I will describe how shopping in Ukraine was once undertaken.

A day at the Bazaar

We went in the morning to buy some 50 kg of sugar for Nicu’s bees. He said that going to the Bazaar is more profitable than buying the sugar from a normal shop in Romania. The trip to the border was very short. At the Ukrainian side the crossing was easy and “standardized”. To get to the other side, about 10 Grivne (about 1 Euro) were informally requested from each passenger. We crossed the border and headed to the Bazaar in Chernivtsi.

The Bazaar is very large as it comprises goods of all sorts and clustered in different sectors. After finding sellers of sugar negotiation was quick and easy. The price was just half the price in Romania. The Bazaar is very big so that we had further opportunity to go shopping. We walked and suddenly

Nicu saw a sawing machine. "It is good for me, I may need one home". "In the 1990s, Russians had products of poor quality", he said, "but now they are able to produce machines with the same quality as in Romania". Only the price is half. We went further to the food section. Candy was quite different from those in Romania, so that we tried some. Their quality made people buy more. We headed to the instruments section, where Ion needed some small drills for his drilling machine. Before leaving the Bazaar Nicu stopped to buy three cartons of Ukrainian cigarettes. We then returned to Romania. Close to the border Nicu bought fuel for the car, much cheaper than in Romania. The trip was profitable for Nicu and Ion and Ion planned to buy a sawing machine at the following trip to Chernivtsi. The cost of the trip was covered by the savings realized from cigarettes only.

Shopping in Ukraine is an individual practice and does not necessitate the use of social networks, or social capital. It is undertaken by people in accordance to price differences in Ukraine and Romania. My interviewees considered that it decreased from the previous year, when "the whole village was in the Bazaar every weekend". Different from petty trade, undertaken for business purposes, shopping in Ukraine was undertaken by people in order to lower households' costs or to buy some goods usually harder to find in Romania. People valued Ukrainian goods. "Different from Romanians, Ukrainians still have their own products," they say. They value more these goods than those existing in the Romanian supermarkets, although they consider that, in the end, they all have the same quality. On the other hand, others said that it is mostly older or poorer people that bought these Ukrainian goods. For them, they are kitsch and have a poor quality, but their price made them attractive. A main change in this border crossing individual trade process was the imposition of entry visa requirements for Ukrainian citizens. Consequently, their border crossing decreased. If initially people on both sides of the border were involved in this process, today the crossing of Romanian citizens prevails.

Regional Migration

I presented so far two activities, petty trade and shopping in Ukraine, in order to introduce the main economic border-crossing activities. Both had a lot of variation over the years, generally affected by economic opportunities and people's access to the other country. Petty trade for instance boomed at the beginning of the '90s but slowed down afterwards to a constant

level. A third type of border crossing practice, but having long-standing effects, is migration. In the last seven years, Romania became one of the main source countries for international migration in Europe. Its experience to regulate or control migration is very limited and its migration policy is only incipient. After 1990 we saw quite a *laissez-faire* and lack of clarity concerning border-crossing control. Until 2004 there was unrestricted access of Ukrainian citizens to Romania and of Romanian citizens to Ukraine. But Romania's migration policy changed afterwards under the influence of European Union integration. One of the main conditions for the country's accession to the EU, Romania had to strengthen border control and limit the irregular migration transiting the country.

Migration theory waives between demand and supply explanations. On the one hand, supply explanations stress that there are causes in migrants' origin contexts that made people leave. Such factors could be wars, impoverishment, natural disasters, ethnic or racial conflicts, and so on. This view focuses on the fact that migration is organized by migrants' networks. These networks develop until they reach maturation and are able to perpetuate migration disregarding the changing structures of opportunities that migrants encounter (Massey 1998, Faist 2000). On the other hand, the demand-driven explanations stress that it is precisely the labor demand in the reception countries that cause and maintain migration. An alternative explanation to the dominant network-based approach, but not excluding the use of migrant networks entirely, is one emphasizing the fact that institutions and brokers of migration facilitate migration to a large extent (Krisman 2005). States are important actors that drive and control migration. They facilitate migrants' mobility, allowing or restricting migrants' access into the country, as well as access to rights and benefits.

Romania's migration policy was created, but it was mostly limited to the issues of EU's border control. Two specific tasks related to this policy were the fight against irregular migration through controlling irregular entries and the development of an asylum seekers policy. No real public discussions or parliamentary debates were devoted to this issue, and the legislation was adopted through government regulations. The Romanian Migration Office was created, a government body created to manage migration issues in Romania. Legislation for third country nationals was adopted and infrastructure developed, such as the erection of several camps for asylum seekers in Timișoara, Bucharest, Șomcuta Mare and Rădăuți. However, the funds backing the policy were scarce even for the small number of asylum seekers at stake. For Ukrainian citizens, the

adoption of the migration legislation had direct consequences, by making entry into Romania more difficult.

In Suceava county alone records show about 1,000 migrants, most of them coming from the Republic of Moldova. Migration from Ukraine was weak, although it may potentially develop in the future. Nevertheless, throughout time, migration to Romania developed. Hence, there is migration of ethnic Romanians¹⁵ from the Chernivtsi region who chose to come to Romania after 1990 and there is marriage migration of Ukrainians, mostly women, coming to Romania. As this fieldwork revealed, migration is not a mass phenomenon, since the number of immigrants is small.

The reasons for Ukrainian migration varied over the years. As my interviewees recall, Romania was in a worse economical situation than Ukraine in the first years after 1990. The country was experiencing a period of drastic shortages and decreasing living standards. But, in the late 1990s, Ukraine's economy went into a very deep crisis. After 1996-1997, it often happened that people hadn't received their meager wages. In the Chernivtsi region, salaries of 40 to 50 Euros were standard payments at that time. Ethnic Romanians came first to study in Romania and then extended their stay, taking positions in the local labor markets. Some interviewees came from some Romanian villages that are close to the border and their family ties were not severed by migration as they pay regular visits to their relatives in Ukraine. They saw migration as fairly easy, although not without difficulties:

Those who arrived here were called "Russians". The adaptation here was difficult, some went back. Those who came here as students, went to high schools and universities. They adapted better here and you cannot distinguish them on the street (Alexandru).

After coming to Romania, they decided to stay inasmuch their professional careers could be better in Romania. They brought their families with them.

The marriage migrants I interviewed, arrived as petty traders and afterwards moved permanently to Romania. Ana is one of them. She comes from the northern part of the Chernivtsi region. She graduated university and started teaching in school. She has a child but her earnings were not enough to cover their living expenses. She then started trading between Ukraine and Romania.

I never thought of coming here when I was a student. But at the school I worked in, I received no money so that I was forced to start trading. I already had a child. I first sold goods here (to Romania, n.a.) and afterwards I bought a table here in the market. I had a child and I had to earn money. Afterwards, I met my future husband, who is a Romanian. We got acquainted to each other, and then we married. I got two other kids with him. Initially I spoke no Romanian, but I learned it afterwards. Now I have a place here in this market. With what I earn I am able to raise my children; I earn pretty well today (Ana).

Ana resells goods purchased from the distributors' shops in the Bazaar of Chernivtsi. She does not shuttle between Romania and Ukraine, but only receives these goods from other Ukrainian resellers. She does not hold Romanian citizenship but feels well integrated. She argues that cultural differences are insignificant in the region, between people living in the northern and the southern part of the border. For her, migration was easy; she had Romanian friends and she was also able to keep her ties to Ukraine.

The second case is Olga. She is also engaged with trading goods in the market, but in a different city than Ana. She is married to Ioan, a Romanian Ukrainian. She received graduate education in Ukraine but was forced to start trading because of the lack of economic opportunities in Ukraine. Olga's knowledge of Romanian is poor as she can communicate to Ioan in Ukrainian. Similarly to Ana's case, Olga considers her migration project easy and social integration unproblematic. Other ethnic Ukrainians from Romanian villages close to the border married women from Ukraine; also, there are marriages of students coming to Romania. However, as my interviewees consider, there are also some cases of Romanian citizens moving to Ukraine where their spouses could have better economic or social position. Ethnicity plays a special role in migration as it facilitates the formation of new social ties across the border and encourages kinship ties to develop. Marriage migration did not require initial knowledge of Romanian for potential migrants, but it rather assumed its subsequent acquisition. Furthermore, ethnic Ukrainians have some special rights in Romania, as they are members of a recognized national minority. There are schools and churches in the Ukrainian language, newspapers and ethnic associations. Furthermore, there is a sizeable Ukrainian community in the region and the presence of newcomers is not negatively typified by population.

There is no labor migration at the moment although there are significant wage differences between Romania and Ukraine. Moreover, there is strong migration towards Western Europe and in Suceava scarcity of labor increased in the past years. A few years ago there was a tiny temporary labor migration of Ukrainians in agriculture but, after 2004, after the coming into existence of the visa agreement between Romania and Ukraine, migration ceased: "There were cases when Ukrainians arrived for agricultural works. This was when we needed people to harvest the potatoes. They were also coming with sowing machines. Afterwards they ceased coming, because they needed visas".

Today migration from the northern Bukovina is directed towards Western Europe where access is still very difficult and also towards Russia (especially Moscow). In this context, if wages' difference will grow between Romania and Ukraine regional labor migration may emerge especially in agriculture, where, at least in Romania, labor scarcity deepens.

Briefly, migration is weak between Ukraine and Romania and consists of marriage migration and the movement of Romanian ethnic migrants from Ukraine. There are no networks of migration. Some marriage migrants were first petty traders selling Ukrainian goods in Romania, some others came to Romania for better professional careers. However, stronger migration is unlikely to develop unless wages in Romania increase and visa requirements for the Ukrainian citizens become less strict.

Developing Institutional Ties.

The New EU Neighborhood Policy and Some of Its Effects

So far, I presented the transnational practices developed by individuals in Romania's border region to Ukraine. Most of them were practices "from below" that people sustained in order to adapt to the changing economies of their countries. In the case of migration too, economic factors were important, but there were also some non-economic factors, such as marriage. But after Romania's accession to the EU there was a set of institutional cooperation enhanced by the EU policy "from above" towards the EU neighboring countries. Accordingly, within the framework of EU neighboring policy, funds are provided to enhance partnership between institutions in the EU bordering regions. The EU framework aims at enhancing cultural and economic activities, but not all institutional

cross-border cooperation can receive such funds. In the region where I conducted my fieldwork, there were already partnerships, such as school cooperation, school visits and school exchanges, cultural activities such as meetings of Bukovinians, and religious pilgrimages. However, the EU's policy is strictly directed towards enhancing economic activities. In the following I present two such funded projects.

Cooperation in tourism in the region received funds as this could potentially have long-lasting economic effects. Funds are provided to entities from the EU countries only, but they have to cooperate with organizations and companies from the neighboring non-EU countries. All funds should be spent on the territory of the EU, in this case in Romania. This actually makes the participation of the non-EU organizations everything but very profitable. Their main gain is the participation in such projects, and eventually the acquiring of new customers for companies.

Only the Romanian partner can undertake financial activities in these projects, this is what EU wants. The Ukrainian partner institution cannot receive funds, Ukrainians cannot be paid. They received only training, access to know-how on project management, travel to Romania and participation in such projects (Radu).

A major obstacle is language. Romanians do not speak Ukrainian and Ukrainians do not speak Romanian, so translation is often needed. This task is realized through the participation of ethnic minorities (especially Romanians from Ukraine) in such projects or through hiring professional translators. Such projects realized through top-down fund allocations are at the moment in initiation phase and although money was received their effects are very small.

Effects are small, now we mainly build networks and partnerships. But in these crossing-border partnerships we could make some money. We did a first step, to establish personal communication, to break the stereotypes from both sides and to get to know each other. Indeed, we benefited more than Ukrainians did. But there is a potential in such projects, and we communicate well as cultural differences are very small (Radu).

One of these projects project aims at promoting ecological tourism in protected areas of the Carpathians. It first defined four areas in the Suceava County (Romania) and tries to develop the infrastructure and services

necessary in order to receive foreign tourists interested in animal watching, Nordic walk and ecological tourism. The project is organized by the University of Suceava and has the indirect supported of World Wildlife Fund, one of the worlds' largest NGOs involved in environment conservation, with over 90 offices and activities run in 40 countries. In Romania and Ukraine, WWF promotes the preservation of biodiversity in the Carpathian region, running projects in protected areas and preserving wildlife in the Carpathian region, housing the largest population of brown bears, wolves, chamois and lynxes in Europe. As they are the richest area of biodiversity in Europe, Carpathians became a priority of the organization.

The project managers defined four tourist parks in Romania. The project aims to develop activities and tourist lanes in these four protected areas in the Suceava County, involving NGOs, activists, and mountain rangers. As these projects have economic outcomes, they try to sell the tourist packages to tourists from the Western Europe and Romania. Packages contain ecotourism and cultural tourism activities, showing the potential tourists the popular culture and trips to the medieval monasteries from the region. Having developed a diversified and attractive offer, promoters seek to develop alternative solutions of local development where tourism is not detrimental to biodiversity, preservation of forests and wildlife. It is not aimed to be not a mass tourism, however the resources gained from such activities would offer jobs in the region.

WWF trainers provide information to the personnel involved in the project on the management of similar projects. Ukrainian partners are involved in trainings only. They themselves will be able to apply to funds offered by the EU, but at the moment such funding schemes are functional for Romanians only.

The second project I looked at tries to develop cultural tourism in Romania and in Ukraine, in both parts of Bukovina. Both regions have a tourist offer and they are visited by a large number of tourists. Southern Bukovina has a large mountain area including the tourist resorts in Vatra Dornei and the Moldavian medieval monasteries, included in the UNESCO world cultural heritage. Northern Bukovina has a mountain area with tourist resorts and ski facilities, as well as the city of Chernivtsi, known for its former multicultural life. The usual offers of the touring companies in Romania include mainly visits to the medieval monasteries, whereas those in Ukraine include visits to Chernivtsi and the Carpathian mountains. Promoters of this project try to extend the tourist offer of both parts to include tours in the other part, thus enriching the offers of the touring

operators in both Romania and Ukraine. The project aims to develop this concept with tourist activities related to the traditional culture of the area. Different from the first project, where most activities were realized in Romania, in this project activities are carried out in both countries. No major investment is needed, as the project uses the existing facilities and companies on both sides. Funds are spent in Romania to undertake the organization and the run of the project. However, if successful, the project would equally help Romanians and Ukrainians. Both projects are at their initiation phase and their results are still unclear. Their results, if positive, could involve a limited number of persons. A major difficulty of running these projects is the language barrier, to which one can add the visa requirements for the Ukrainian citizens traveling to Romania – a potentially stronger barrier.

Both projects are run in Romania and most results are to be expected here so that Ukrainians benefit less from them. They cannot be paid, as Romanians can. Their benefits are to get a Romanian visa and be part of some projects that would eventually work. The institutional framework set up by the EU does not provide a new structure of opportunities to develop solid steady institutional crossing-border relations. And it does not create equal partners on both sides of the border since Ukrainians are structurally disadvantaged in comparison to Romanians. But if successful, these projects may continue working over time, potentially leading to deeper collaboration.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study had the aim to map out and discuss the border-crossing practices between Romania and Ukraine, in the region of Suceava (Romania) – Chernivtsi (Ukraine). On the Romanian side, these practices include petty trade, shopping, weak but emerging migration, and an array of cross-border partnerships supported by the EU. The creation of EU financial schemes for cooperation in the border areas, the imposition of visa requirements to the Ukrainian citizens and the elaboration of a migration policy in Romania upon European model leads to the emergence of formal border-crossing practices and are detrimental to informal practices. However, informal petty trade and shopping play a much more important role in comparison to the formal activities in a context in which the EU funded projects have weak effects.

Petty trade was widely used in the region in order to overcome economic difficulties and the downward spiraling of regional economy. It was intensively practiced during the 1990s between Romania, Poland and Ukraine and then continued mostly in Bukovina. Intensity of informal trade varied as the prices of goods in the two countries changed over time. Currently, food, oil and cigarettes are traded or bought by people from the Bazaar in Chernivtsi. They later sell these goods in Romania, or use them for their household needs. Romania's accession to the EU imposed visa restrictions for the Ukrainian citizens thus limiting the number of those involved in informal trade. Shopping in Ukraine is widely spread among Romanian citizens, as it is very profitable for people in the border region.

The economic situation in Romania improved and offers better living opportunities than in Ukraine. Furthermore, the country's accession to the EU opened up new opportunities for economical advance in the region and there is potentially growing migration. Currently, migration policy regards mainly asylum seekers and there is no massive ethnic, or labor migration in Romania. It deals with securing the borders and limiting the entry of transiting irregular migrants. The current research showed the easy integration of migrants from Ukraine in Romania and the ways in which these migrants maintain their social ties in their origin country.

Finally, EU funded projects are seen as developing institutional bridges between Romania and Ukraine, although they are in a nascent phase. They may evolve over the years, since the EU's neighboring policy towards Ukraine is likely to continue. There is indeed an economic potential in developing tourism in the region, and people on both sides of the border can benefit from it.

In conclusion, the paper unfolds the weak development of transnational practices, the random use of networks' ties involved in these practices and the strong role of top-down national and EU regulations imposed on them. In contrast to the relevant literature on economic globalization and transnationalism, stressing the often decreasing role of the state in regulating transnational flows, this study shows the important role that states and EU structures effect on crossing-border practices. Petty trade boomed when states were weak and passed through the economic restructuring of the 1990s. It helped people to overcome economic difficulties. But petty trade tended to decrease as the border control strengthens and economies recovered.

NOTES

- ¹ The term is used by Portes (Portes, 1996) to describe the transnational economic enterprise that use the niches created by transmigrants. He considers the emergence of these enterprises tied with the logic of capital development in the global era. In his view, this is a new form of economic activity and these enterprises act as globalizing actors, but “from below.” In the same perspective can be regarded the transmigrants that maintain strong ties with their home societies.
- ² See for instance Portes (Portes, 1996).
- ³ At the moment there are about one hundred million migrants throughout the world. See Lucassen and Lucassen (Lucassen and Lucassen, 1997).
- ⁴ <http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=5750>.
- ⁵ Convenția între Guvernul României și Guvernul Ucrainei privind trecerea simplificată a frontierei de stat comune de către cetățenii care domiciliază în județele și raioanele de frontieră (Ismail, 29 martie 1996).
- ⁶ Tratat cu privire la relațiile de bună vecinătate și cooperare între România și Ucraina (Constanța, 2 iunie 1997).
- ⁷ Acord între Guvernul României și Cabinetul de Miniștri al Ucrainei privind asistența reciprocă în domeniul vamal (București, 19 iunie 2000), www.mae.ro.
- ⁸ Tratat, între România și Ucraina privind regimul frontierei de stat româno-ucrainene, colaborarea și asistența mutuală în problemele de frontieră.
- ⁹ Acord între Guvernul României și Cabinetul de Miniștri al Ucrainei cu privire la condițiile călătoriilor reciproce ale cetățenilor (Kiev, 19 decembrie 2003).
- ¹⁰ Acord între Guvernul României și Cabinetul de Miniștri al Ucrainei cu privire la punctele de trecere a frontierei de stat româno-ucrainene (Kiev, 2 februarie 2006). In Romania this has enforced by the HOTĂRÂRE nr.675 din 24 mai 2006. http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htp_act_text?id=73188, downloaded at 16.12.2007, 15:17.
- ¹¹ See Kindler and Matejko 2009
- ¹² In this text I use false names of my interviewees.
- ¹³ 2008.
- ¹⁴ About 40 Eurocents
- ¹⁵ See Brubaker (1998) for a larger theoretical inquiry.

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