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Costs and Benefits of Labour Migration for Ukrainian Transnational Families: Connection or Consumption?

Alissa Tolstokorova

1. Introduction: Ukrainian “Homo mobilis”

- 1 What are the social reactions of families to labour migration? How are family relations and functions carried out across geo-cultural spaces? Does the phenomenon of transnational family life affect gender relations? The present paper aims to answer these questions looking at Ukrainian transnational families throughout the years of transition from state socialism to a free market economy from the 1990s through the years following 2000. It examines the effect of international labour mobility on principal family functions, analyzes their continuity and disruptions and sheds light on redistribution of gender roles in a transnational family.
- 2 In the Soviet Union, separated from the rest of the world by the “iron curtain”, a possibility to travel abroad was a great privilege, accessible only to select few. Yet, after the collapse of the Berlin wall, the state borders were becoming more and more transparent for average citizens, encouraging greater freedom of movement and an increase in the mobility of the population. Over the last decade, labour migration with the purpose of employment abroad conferred Ukraine with an overall character as a transitional country. It affected all aspects of societal life and made a dramatic impact on the family as a principle institution of social reproduction. Multiple transformations faced by Ukrainian families throughout this period mirrored global trends in the development of marriage and household, and in parallel reflected common European tendencies in attitudes toward kinship and relationships. By and large they stemmed from the socio-economic and demographic hardships of transition to the free market

economy. Financial and material challenges faced by many Ukrainian families were exacerbated by the unsolved housing issue, growing employment insecurity, and increasing social and emotional vulnerability, which led to the development of rather contradictory trends in the development of family and marriage. These unfavorable conditions entailed the instability of households, delayed childbirths, increased risk of marriage dissolutions, etc. Linked with this, new social institutions have emerged, such as the “transnational family”.

- 3 The years of increasing labour mobility were accompanied by growing aloofness in the relations between people, when Ukrainian families suffered in particular from the “lost home” syndrome and collapse of traditional “sweet home” life-style. In these conditions the family acquired a value of the “major space in society in which the individual self could be valued for itself” (Zaretsky 1976: 31).

2. Basic definitions

- 4 In this work a family is defined in compliance with the official definition, stipulated in Clause 3 of the Family Code of Ukraine as of January 10, 2002:
 - 1. A family is a primary and main aggregate of society.
 - 2. A family consists of individuals who share common living conditions, common household, and have common rights and obligations.
 - 3. A couple is still considered to be a family when, on the grounds of education, work, medical treatment, the necessity to take care of one’s own parents, children and other serious reasons, the husband and wife no longer live together.
 - 4. A family stems from marriage, kinship relations, adoption, or other factors not prohibited by the law and not in contradiction with the moral values of the society.
- 5 This paper regards the notion of “a transnational family” in a wider sense than nuclear households and marriage partnership alone, following an approach which considers both intra-and trans-generational aspects of family kinship.
- 6 In terms of its functions, family is understood as a universal social group that plays unique reproductive, socializing and consumption roles in society, and bears responsibility for providing its members with the emotional support that they lack in their public lives, in which they experience alienation (Martin, 1991: 233, 325). Yet the national tradition of Family Studies conceptualises family functions from a wider perspective, reinforcing the nurturing (pedagogical) potential of the family as a major contributor to the formation and promotion of fundamental human values, and as a consolidating force for all its members, enhancing social order in society. Family theory avails of numerous classifications of family functions, based on a variety of identifying markers. Overall, the principle functions that the family serves for society include reproduction, communication and socialization, economic consumption, recreation, emotional and physical revitalisation, social protection and primary social control. All of them correlate, sometimes intersect and overlap. Therefore, for the purposes of this paper some family functions will be grouped together and considered in a combination, as they relate to one and the same aspects of family life. Departing from this framework, the following family functions will be analysed:
 - reproductive;
 - socializing and nurturing with the function of primary social control;

- economic consumption;
- recreational and protective functions.

3. Effect of Labour Migration on Family Functions: “Poisoned Gift” or “Dream Realized”?

- 7 The key criterion of the efficiency of family as a social institution is how effectively it carries out its principal functions. Thereby, to measure the effect of economic migration on family development it is necessary to first analyse its impact on the changes in family functioning and livelihoods.

3.1. Reproductive function: estimating family fertility

- 8 Reproductive function in this paper is understood as a reproductive potential of migrant couples, or in other words, fertility rate. National findings showed that labour migration creates unfavourable conditions towards reproduction, or in other words is reproductively unfriendly, because it decreases the fertility rate and thus diminishes the reproductive potential of the family. These findings were calculated according to the number of “unborn children” in families of long-term (over one year) Ukrainian migrants (Libanova, Poznyak, 2002: 18). They showed that provided this category of migrants worked in the place of their permanent residence in Ukraine and had fertility equal to the national average among the population of same age group, then in 2000 alone Ukraine could have 4402 more newborns than it actually had. This finding echoes the results of a recent EU project, aimed to study the impact of increasing job mobilities on family life in Europe. It showed that mobility is very difficult to combine with being an active parent, that it discourages family development (especially for women) and can decrease fertility rates (Detlev, 2009).
- 9 Yet it is sometimes argued that low fertility rate in migrants’ families may be attributed to delayed childbirth. There are counterarguments to this claim, because assuming that low fertility is caused by the suspended reproduction, then the mere fact that it occurs particularly in migrant families, and not in others, is significant by itself. If other couples of the same age do not delay the birth of the first child and migrants do – it is a reproductive challenge in itself, considering the following reasons: 1) there is no guarantee that a woman will be able to have a child in later years when she plans it, especially taking into account precarious conditions of migrant life; 2) considering that a divorce rate among migrant couples exceeds the average, there is no guarantee that the couple will stay together by the time when they initially plan to start fertility; 3) couples who delay childbirth, even if they stay together, will hardly have as many children as those who do not delay fertility, because by the time when this couple may have the first child, others may have already the second if not the third; 4) there are indications that the longer migrants stay in the recipient country, the less likely they are to repatriate. In case of separated couples, when one spouse is away for migration and the other stays in Ukraine, in many cases a delayed childbirth is a dream that never comes true, since it is an unrealizable project, because the couples are less likely to unite and have children in the recipient country later in their life, simply because family reunifications among Ukrainians are very rare due to legislative constraints to it. In addition, even if the reunification occurs, it concerns more the reunification of

women with their children, but not so often with their husbands. 5) A final reproductive challenge to migrants involves the case of couples living together in a host country, which has a very prevalence as compared to separated families, because although delayed fertility may of course be successful, there are challenges too. In the first place, Ukrainian labour migrants are for the most part undocumented, and therefore have no legal access to public health-care, which makes childbirth and early child-care a highly problematic venture. Secondly, if a migrant couple has a documented status, then the baby is being born in a destination country, but not in Ukraine. And these couples, mostly young and middle aged, with a baby borne in the country of their actual residence (which often automatically gives him/her a citizenship in the host country) are the least likely to ever return to Ukraine, because they are the most integrated category of migrants. Therefore, even if low fertility in migrant families is connected to delayed childbirth, it does not result in bringing more babies to Ukraine. For example, according to the data of the Ukrainian diplomatic mission in Italy, throughout only the year 2006, in that country alone, over 1700 newborns were registered as Ukrainian citizens (Radio Svoboda, 2007). Considering the increasingly exacerbated political and economic situation in Ukraine, there are no grounds to expect that their parents will be willing to take their babies back home to Ukraine.

3.2. Function of economic consumption: happiness economy?

- 10 It must be admitted that this function is significantly benefited by economic migration, because remittances allow to increase the family budget and to advance their material well-being. Accumulations made through international employment are used primarily for family consumption, education of children and housing. By estimates of Ukrainian realtors, around 60 to 80 % of remittances are invested into real estate property. To a much lesser extent, they are invested into small family businesses, mainly because Ukraine has few economic incentives for such enterprise. According to self-assessments of labour migrants' households as of 2002, 41,1 % of interviewees reported that migration enabled them to tangibly increase their family welfare, 43,1 % admitted their material and financial situation was but "somewhat improved" due to remittances, while 8,8 % of households claimed that foreign employment did not entail any changes to family well-being. 63,4 % of families acknowledged that labour migration enabled them to reach high economic status, while 13 % of migrants estimated their material situation as poor (SIFY, 2004a: 19).
- 11 Statistics confirm that consumption patterns in transnational families are more varied than in families of similar social and educational status, working in Ukraine. For example, their households are better equipped with modern furniture and amenities, they own more cars and consumer goods, etc. (Malynovska, 2004). Thus, if in 2003 in Ukraine there were only 13 video recorders per every 100 families, in transnational families this index increased to 55. There were 2 microwaves versus 25 respectively, PCs: 2 versus 24, cars: 16 versus 36. Responders to sociological surveys acknowledged that 55-60 % of these goods were purchased from remittances. Results of an all-national sociological survey confirmed these findings. It showed that families with migrant members owned more modern commodities as compared to other families, in the following proportions: every-day ware: 2 to 3, computer equipment: 2 to 5, stereo and video appliances: 1 to 8 (SIFY, 2004a: 19).

- 12 Some experts consider this data sufficient to claim that external economic mobility enables transnational Ukrainian families to perform the function of economic consumption better than other categories of families. Yet this argument seems simplistic and superficial, in that it limits the family function to the material and financial well-being of family members, but ignores such components of family economy like joint household management and financial strategizing, distribution of household labour, provision of economic security to family members etc. These aspects of economic consumption of the family can hardly be carried out successfully in conditions of long-term absence of one or more adult family members. Thus, while labour migration may enhance the financial stability of the household, it also has a reverse negative effect by way of managerial and strategic deprivation of the family economy.

3.3. Function of socialization, nurturing and primary social control: promises and risks

- 13 It is commonly acknowledged that family is a central and powerful agent in the socialization of children. There are indications that the role of the family as an institution of primary social control significantly decreased over the years of transition to the free market economy. Therefore, how this function is being performed in a newly emerged category of transnational families is dubious in that it can have both positive and negative effects, depending on the character of migration (short-term or long-term) and on the situation in the family: whether all family members live together in a recipient country, whether one or even both parents are separated from children, and in the latter case if there are other family members to take care of children staying at home.
- 14 Indeed, taking into account that the economic function of the family may benefit from migration, it is possible to claim that children in transnational families have better financial opportunities to receive quality education, for example, to attend private schools and colleges where they have access to more advanced social milieu (more intellectual, creative and ambitious school setting) and better conditions for intellectual development, i.e. for learning foreign languages, fine arts and music, to acquire computer literacy and skills. Otherwise, even if they study at public schools, children of this category, being financially better off than their peers, may have higher self-esteem since they have possibilities not always accessible to others, such as more pocket money and fashionable commodities, like expensive mobile phones, stylish clothes and accessories, computers, Internet and software, video-cameras, sometimes even their own cars. Teenagers have wider possibilities for socialization, since they can afford to attend costly youth gatherings or sport recreation centres, all of which raise their social status and contribute to higher social capital as compared to other teenagers.
- 15 The reverse side of this socio-economic well-being is that in conditions when one or both parents are missing from home, children lack parental attention, love, support and encouragement and, no less important, guidance and control. It is especially hazardous when children are left behind in the care of distant relatives, older siblings, neighbours or even alone. Such practice is rather widespread in Western regions of Ukraine, where external economic migration is especially large-scale. For example,

according to a sociological survey, which studied a situation of Ukrainian females working in Italy, 94 % of interviewed women left their children behind in Ukraine. Most often children stay with their fathers, but in families of lone mothers or both parents working abroad, 66 % are left behind in the care of grandparents, and 33 % more stay unattended. In the West of Ukraine these children are referred to as “Italian children”, because they are children of labour migrants, who managed to secure long-term employment abroad, not only in Italy, but in other West-European countries too, and who send back home high remittances. While being significantly better off than children of parents working in Ukraine, these “Italian” boys and girls are deprived of natural experience of family socialization. They lack pedagogical guidance, emotional and spiritual support and often get into the category of “problem children”.

- 16 Therefore, the negative effect of economic migration on family relationship is that it loosens kinship ties, leads to emotional distancing and even aloofness between close relatives: on the one hand between marriage partners, on the other hand between generations, i.e. between migrants, their children and elderly parents. In turn, damaged family connections often entail dissolution of marriages and ensuing divorces, which in turn increase the risk of children's social abandon and criminality, and the neglect and lack of safety for aged family members.

3.4. Function of recreation and protection: no joint time leads to joint loss

- 17 This function implies that the family serves as a source of vital energy for its members, enabling them to sustain physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual health. On a larger scale, there is increasing appreciation of the fact that in conditions of growing aloofness in society, the family is seen as a “safe harbour” for people, a place where they seek psychological support and understanding, where family-specific synergy helps to mitigate economic hardships.
- 18 In a traditional family, recreation is “family produced and family focused” (Martin, 1991: 325). Yet how recreation is generated by a modern transnational family, in conditions of the fragmented lifestyle of its members, largely depends on the family's situation. It works differently for migrant members and for those left behind. Particularly, as mentioned above, financial opportunities for quality leisure and recreation are better for home-staying members of transnational families, who also face lower poverty risk, have better housing conditions and higher access to quality health-care than other categories of families of similar social standing. At the same time possibilities for health-care, recreation and leisure are often far poorer for family members employed abroad. Surveys show that short-term or medium-term (one year or less) migrants largely do not spend much on leisure and recreation, because their principle goal is accumulation for remittances. The same holds true for their residence conditions, considering that labour migrants tend to choose the most low-cost housing which enables them to save for remittances. Furthermore, many of them are used to very poor housing conditions at home, which is why they estimate positively even overtly inappropriate, sometimes even inhuman housing conditions, significantly below accepted standards in recipient countries. Thus, Britain was shocked by breaking news about the death of a Ukrainian migrant worker at a London restaurant, who lived

illicitly in the restaurant cellar, in life-threatening conditions, in order to not pay the rent for housing.

- 19 Health-care is also a challenging issue for labour migrants, considering that the majority of them work abroad illegally and have no health-insurance. Very often migrants, especially males, work in conditions of high physical pressure, sweat-labour, in conditions that are health-hazardous and even life-threatening, such as in the construction industry, chemical production, sailing, etc. Employers are not disposed to invest in the creation of a favourable work environment for undocumented migrants, which leads to numerous traumas, injuries and even deaths. This entails tangible deterioration in the health conditions of Ukrainian migrant workers (Lakiza-Sachuk, 2001). Thus, it is reported that Ukrainian women-migrants, upon returning home after work in Italy develop a so-called “Italian syndrome”, which refers, aside from physical ailments, to paranoia, agoraphobia, aggressiveness and other mental disorders. Some women suffer from spinal injuries from having to lift disabled or elderly clients. Furthermore, durable absence from home and “fragmented” family life-style often leads to unsafe sexual behaviour, entailing complications of the reproductive health of migrant workers.
- 20 Most importantly, recreational and protective functions of the family imply in the first place a possibility for family members to have joint recreation and leisure, to seek from each other emotional and spiritual support and protection, to rely on one’s dear ones in hardships and crises. This becomes impossible in conditions of long-term or frequent absence from home of adult family members working abroad. Therefore, this function of transnational family is also severely hampered by migration.
- 21 Furthermore, it is essential to consider that circular labour migration to Western Europe is largely illicit. Therefore opportunities for either “joint conjugal migration” or “classical reunification” trajectories of migration (Wall, Nunes, Matias, 2005) are, in the case of Ukrainians, comparatively rare, although possibly increasing more recently¹. This is why most often Ukrainian migrants arrive to target countries alone, leaving their marriage partners and children either at home in Ukraine, or even in a third country, thus separating kinship members. For example, the study on CEE migrants in the UK (Markova, Black, 2007) reported that some groups of migrants came to the UK without their partners, which was especially widespread among Bulgarians and Ukrainians. Partners of one in five Ukrainians lived outside the UK in a third country (20 %). A partner living not in Ukraine, but elsewhere, is probably a more common situation for migrants from Ukraine than for other CEE countries, because of absence of legal mechanisms for family reunification. A case of such “separate” migration, although followed by family reunification, was described by Portuguese researchers (Wall, Nunes, Matias, 2005):

The couple obtained their tourist visas through a travel agency and decided that it would be better if the wife (P.) migrated to Italy, to work as a domestic employee, while the husband went to Spain, to work in the building sector. P. went by bus to Naples with other Ukrainian women; her husband and his brother took another bus with Ukrainian men, but arrived in Lisbon instead of Madrid, as promised by the agency. After a 3-month stay in Naples, with no work contract and a traumatic experience as a domestic employee, P. came to join her husband in the Algarve where they both found work in an agricultural cooperative. Six months later they decided to try to move to Lisbon, where they shared a flat with her brother-in-law and his wife. P. was the first to get an employment contract, in a cleaning services firm; her husband found a job as a metal worker (his profession) shortly after. By

the end of 2001 they both had residence permits and went to Ukraine during their holidays to fetch their daughter.

- 22 However, such a “happy-end-migration” accompanied by family reunification in a third country is not a common practice. Experts argue that fragmentation became a way of life for such families, where separateness as an obvious outcome of migration is no longer seen as a temporary transition state, but rather as a new lifestyle (Suleymanov, 2007).

4. Redistribution of gender roles in a transnational family: the care industry

- 23 International agencies, like the UN, IOM or ILO, estimate that women make up almost half of the world’s migrants, reaching 51 % in more developed regions (UN, 2006), and the share of women in the total estimated migrant stock is growing – in 2005 it had increased by almost 3 % as compared to 1960.
- 24 In Ukraine migration flows are increasingly gender-specific. Migration to some countries is predominantly female. For example in Spain women currently make up to 65 % of Ukrainian labour migrants, in Greece – 75.5 %, in Italy – 90.2 %. According to data of 2002, females comprised over a half of those involved in petty trade abroad (53.6 %). Outmigration to other countries is favoured by males. Thus, in 2001, 80.6 % of Ukrainian migrant workers in Poland were men, in Portugal – 68 %, in Russia – 60.4 %, in Germany – 60.0 %. However, gender composition of migration flows is marked by high dynamism and changes over time depending on the economic situation. For instance, lately a feminization of migration has been observed, particularly for the accounts of increased outmigration of females to Mediterranean countries.
- 25 Migration experience encouraged redistribution of traditional gender roles in the family. According to the Ukrainian Ombudsman (2003), in many countries Ukrainian men usually work as builders, drivers, mechanics and fitters (Russia, Poland, Portugal, Ireland) while women are more often employed as office cleaners, domestics, factory workers, nurses of the elderly or dancers in restaurants and cafes (Greece, Italy, Portugal).
- 26 It is noteworthy that the research on a gender dimension of labour migration and, particularly, its impact on family welfare, have not yet attracted close attention from the academic community in Ukraine. Furthermore, there is an apparent overall lack of gender-disaggregated statistics on labour migration, either legal or unauthorized. For these and other reasons, the current section is grounded primarily on the analysis of various secondary sources, received mainly from the media and occasional research papers spotlighting gender issues in particular, largely in a regional perspective.
- 27 It is argued that one of the major impacts of economic migration on family change is the empowerment of women and a transformation of the patriarchal “gender contract” in the direction of more egalitarian relationships between the sexes. This concerns families with migrant females or migrant males. Women’s remittances reduce gender inequities in transnational families and make a tangible impact on redistribution of gender roles in favour of women. However, in families where women remain behind while their husbands or children migrate, transformations of the traditional gender order is also observed. Females often have to take over new roles and assume

responsibility or decisions affecting the social and economic well-being of their households. In such cases they may move away from situations where they lived under traditional, patriarchal authority to situations where they are empowered to exercise greater authority over their own lives (UN, 2006: III). It signifies that women may assume a decision-making position and thus a traditional male gender role in the household.

- 28 In Ukraine there are regions where labour migration has a marked female profile, as for example in rural Western areas, due to increasing outmigration of women to domestic work in Mediterranean countries, primarily to Italy. Preference for Italy as a target country is connected with religious issues, given that traditional families in the rural West are characterized by strong Catholic attachment. The process of feminization of migration correlates with the global restructuring in the international division of labour, which followed the dissolution of the socialist system, and the emergence of globalized service industries built upon the service sector, which has traditionally exploited women's labour (Tolstokorova, 2008).
- 29 As F. Degiuli shows, in reference to industrially developed societies (Degiuli, 2007: 193), the combination of increased women's participation in the labour force, a dramatic aging of the population and the deconstruction of extended and even nuclear families have left a great number of countries with what is being defined as "care deficit" (Hochschild, 1997) which has created a demand for care services. This bolstered the rise of a large informal "care economy" served mainly by women. Due to the outflow of women to the so-called "care migration", many families in West Ukrainian villages lost their female members of working age, who found employment in Italy as care-givers. Demand for female labour in Italy is very high as a result of decreasing availability of care-givers. According to statistics (cited by Degiuli, 2007) in 2005 around 25 % of the Italian population were in their 60s and around 14.7 million senior people required care services. Meanwhile, data for 2006 shows that around 46.7 % of Italian women participated in the labour market. That is why employment of Ukrainian women in the Italian care economy has largely a full-time character. At the same time, males from West Ukrainian villages can only count on less profitable seasonal employment in agriculture or construction in Russia, Poland, Portugal or Spain, and there is also an increasing internal demand in these professions in big Ukrainian cities. Thus, adult members left behind in rural families of Western Ukraine are mostly males.
- 30 Facts reported in the media evidenced that the impact of the female profile of labour migration on West Ukrainian rural families is changing the nature of masculinity (Cherninska, 2007). It turned out that males from these regions refused to accept available local employment even when the remuneration offered for their work exceeded average income rates in the capital city of Kyiv. Public hearings, jointly organized by local administrations and private businesses, demonstrated that males were reluctant to work even for high salaries in their home regions, because remittances they receive from their migrant wives exceeded by far the wages offered by local employers. Instead, some husbands of migrant women found the roles of child-minder and home-makers acceptable for themselves, although largely only for the period that their wives were missing from home (Yarova, 2006). Sometimes together with homemaking they get involved in small commerce or petty-trade and take over responsibilities as executive managers in businesses, owned and financed by their migrant wives. This means that in compliance with a new "gender contract" in these

families males are ready to accept subordinate positions of executive agents in a family business and to acknowledge women in the role as bread winners and household managers, provided she is away from home, thus publicly demonstrating deviance from patriarchal values and traditional gender roles. It is particularly noteworthy, given that in similar situations of females as bread-winners in Russian urban families, which are traditionally more egalitarian, males refused to openly acknowledge their wives as major household providers (Mescherkina, 1999).

- 31 Another aspect of gender role transformation in a transnational family is what is being referred to as “changing gender consciousness of migrant women’s children” (Cherninska, 2007). It is primarily reflected in social immaturity and consumerist attitudes of children, especially teenage sons, toward their migrant mothers, whom they often treat as “private ATM machines”, and in their dependency on female labour as a normal practice. Especially worrying in this respect is social immaturity of migrants’ children, including lack of will to acquire survival skills, a tendency toward anti-social behaviour, like drug-taking and alcoholism, or indifferent and irresponsible attitudes toward their own future careers. For example, they have a tendency to give up university studies, thereby wasting fees paid by remittances from their migrant mothers (Tolstokorova, 2008).
- 32 Taking the cue from T. Cherninska, the unfavourable situation for children’s upbringing in transnational families signifies that fathers generally have not adapted to the new rules of the gender contract accepted in migrant families, which obliges them to assume the responsibilities of child-carers and housekeepers. Therefore, it is expected that this rigidity in male gender roles will enable women to take over the power position in the family after repatriation and will strengthen the gender contract in favour of females. To counteract the unchanging gender roles of their husbands, women will be induced to “legalize” their actual family leadership, previously disguised, thus dispelling males’ patriarchal illusions (Cherninska, 2007).
- 33 Thus, it is obvious that patriarchal West Ukrainian families are currently undergoing a process of crucial transformation of gender roles, which may lead to serious family confrontations and collisions after migrant women, economically and socially empowered by migration, return to their home regions, because their husbands and children, already accustomed to depend on them financially, at the same time are not ready to accept their wives and mothers in decision-making positions in the family and in the household upon their return home.

5. Conclusions: labour migration as both a carrot and a stick

- 34 According to the World Bank Report for 2006, Ukraine is currently one of the top 10 sending and receiving countries of migrants worldwide. Having 7 million of foreign-born residents, it holds the 4th place in this list after the US, Russia and Germany as a receiving country, and 3rd, after Russia and Mexico and before India and China, as a sending country (World Bank report, 2006: 23-24). This is a very high rate, considering the marked difference, with the possible exception of Germany, in the total populations between the countries that are closest to Ukraine on the list. Yet the major concern of international experts is not so much the scope, but primarily the character of Ukrainian migration – it is estimated that it is regular for no more than 5 %, whilst the

remaining 95 % is irregular, which was confirmed by the COMPAS Country report on Ukraine for 2007. It emphasized that Ukraine is not only the major supplier of migrant labour to Europe, but also the major sending country of irregular immigrant workers (COMPAS, 2007). Considering that remittances received in Ukraine from its migrant workers are estimated to be between 20 and 35 million USD, i.e. about a quarter of the Gross National Product, there are grounds to claim that today human labour represents the major “export commodity” of the Ukrainian state in the globalized trade system.

- 35 Indeed, labour migration can have both positive and negative effects on the wellbeing of the family, community and society. Yet the findings of the current paper contradict a stance that migration is a “triple win” for both sending and receiving countries and for migrants themselves (World Bank, 2006). Taking into account the World Bank argument that the main incentive for labour migration is unemployment and poverty, i.e. impossibility to secure proper means of survival at home, this leads to a challenging conclusion that the higher the poverty and unemployment pushing people away from their home regions, the better it is for the sending country and the people. In other words, if migration is viewed as a positive phenomenon, then it should be encouraged and sustained, and for that matter the underlying causes of migration should be reinforced. And these are unemployment, poverty, vulnerability and socio-economic insecurity. Furthermore, to encourage migration means to sustain exploitation, because migrants, especially undocumented ones, usually receive lower remuneration for their work as compared to natives and often work in “sweat labour” or such kinds of unqualified jobs which natives are unwilling to accept. Additionally, labour migrants are frequent victims of criminal gangs, forced labour and human trafficking. This is why it is true that, in reference to migrants from transitional and developing countries, the voluntary character of foreign employment, especially in the sex industry, is nothing but a myth, because labour migration for them is not a matter of free choice, but an obligation, an imposed survival strategy. Most Ukrainians, especially females and youth, seek employment abroad because they have no other choice – there are no opportunities for them to find decent work and provide economic security for themselves and their families at home. Therefore, I agree that coerced migration or labour exploitation in any labour sector, including manufacturing, agriculture, service work, domestic work and sex work should be treated as trafficking (Chang, 2008). Furthermore, my opinion is that labour migration from economically disadvantaged countries to affluent ones should be categorized, albeit only on a theoretical level, as “obliged employment displacement” and “economic asylum seeking” and labour migrants should be identified as “victims of structural economic violence” and “economic refugees”.
- 36 Thus, in contrast to the “triple win” stance, my research findings support the claim of international organizations that migratory experience is laden with contradictions and ambiguities (UN-INSTRAW, 2006) and despite its potential economic advantages it may have devastating consequences (UNIFEM, 2006) and that the feminization of international migration increases the vulnerability of women migrants to discrimination, exploitation and abuse (ILO, 2003).
- 37 My research showed that the positive effects of economic mobility reside primarily in the advancement of economic security and quality of life in transnational families due to remittances. The better financial situation in turn enhances social and emotional well-being of family members, raises self-esteem and increases social status and social

capital. Case-study research shows that the experience of economic mobility may have the effect of “social therapy” for transnational families, by enhancing social maturity of its members, especially the younger generation. But this is true only for mobile family members, while for those left behind in Ukraine it may have a reverse effect, by fostering their consumerist attitude toward life and especially toward the migrant relatives who provide for them.

- 38 Furthermore, international experience has enabled migrants to gain economic knowledge and to develop managerial skills necessary to succeed in the new conditions of the free market, and has encouraged many of them to become entrepreneurs (Malynovska, 2004). Young people with experience of foreign employment have more active positions, higher self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency, and stronger responsibility for their own lives and for the well-being of their families, than their non-mobile peers. They have better survival skills to manage their problems by their own efforts, not relying on the help and support of relatives, the community or the State. For example, young Ukrainian rural migrants who identified themselves by the above qualities outscored other categories of youth by 2.5 %. Furthermore, international experience makes a strong impact on the world-view of migrant workers, increases linguistic competence and communication skills, expands cultural horizons and intercultural tolerance by exposing new cultural realities, and promotes political literacy and responsibility. Thus, sociological surveys show that Ukrainians who had experience of employment in Russia tend to vote for politicians promoting closer cooperation with the RF and better integration of Ukraine into the CIS, while those who have work experience in Western Europe vote for political parties aimed at EU integration (SIFY, 2004b: 66).
- 39 However, the social and cultural costs of these positive effects are too high, because the negative effects of labour migration on the family outweigh by far its benefits. Specifically, due to migration, the health condition of migrants often deteriorates, fertility of married couples decreases and emotional ties between family members decline. Durable absence from home of one or both parents significantly hampers pedagogical and nurturing potential of the family and makes a negative impact on children’s spiritual wellbeing, increasing the risk of their social orphanage and juvenile delinquency. Such family functions as joint household management, financial strategizing, division of home labour, etc. are also being eroded by fragmentation ensuing from migration. Therefore, the economic stability of the family ensured by economic mobility has its reverse negative effect, leading to general managerial deprivation of the family. As a result, migration damages family connections and increases the risk of divorces.
- 40 Overall, a general conclusion is that the principle effect of labour migration on a transnational Ukrainian family is that it erodes emotional ties and kinship connections, instead fostering consumerism and alienation between family members. So, despite sometimes being represented as a “remedy” and a “gift of destiny” in times of economic hardships and turmoil, economic mobility actually turns out to be a “poisoned gift” rather than a “dream realized”. While it may have positive effects on individual members of the family or on some aspects of family life, for the family as a whole, as a joint venture of its members, it has a disintegrating effect and damages the family as it is. If migration can ever be seen as a remedy, it must be admitted that it

allows only to obscure the symptoms, but not to cure sending societies of socio-economic diseases that push people away from their home regions.

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NOTES

1. It became possible after a *Decree No.4/2001 of January 10, 2001* was adopted, allowing a Ukrainian migrant worker, holding an employment visa, to be joined by a wife/husband, children under the age of 21, and parents.

RÉSUMÉS

L'effondrement du système socialiste à la fin des années quatre-vingt, début des années quatre-vingt-dix et le démantèlement de l'URSS ont conduit à une plus grande liberté de mouvement et un accroissement effectif de la mobilité de la population. La migration interne et externe de main-d'œuvre est devenue un facteur important des transformations socio-économiques de ces pays et un outil efficace de gestion de l'emploi dans une situation de crise. En Ukraine, au cours de la dernière décennie, la migration de travail à l'étranger a acquis un caractère global : elle touche tous les aspects de la vie de la société et a eu un impact considérable sur la famille en tant que vecteur de la reproduction sociale.

L'article examine l'effet de l'émigration de travail sur la réorganisation de la famille ukrainienne à la fin du XXe et début du XXIe siècles : il retrace l'évolution de la structure familiale, l'idéologie y afférant, les valeurs promues et des attitudes individuelles comme des expressions de l'évolution du modèle familial. L'analyse examine les transformations des modes de consommation et la structure des ménages, des perceptions et des altérations du modèle traditionnel dans les familles transnationales. En outre, elle met en lumière l'impact de la culture des pays d'accueil sur les modes de vie et les visions du monde au sein de la famille ukrainienne, et identifie les conséquences de cette influence. En conclusion, l'auteur propose un ensemble de mesures et activités utiles à une approche plus intégrée du phénomène migratoire ukrainien.

The collapse of the socialist system in late 1980's - early 1990's, the breaking up of the USSR and the subsequent transition of post-soviet states to the market economy provided the populations with greater freedom of movement and increased mobility. Internal and external labour migration became a significant factor of socio-economic transformation and an efficient tool in the regulation of the labour force. Over the last decade, economic migration with the purpose of employment abroad took on a global character in Ukraine. It affected all sides of societal life and had a dramatic impact on the family as a major subject of social reproduction.

The current paper examines the effects of external labour mobility on social reorganization of the Ukrainian family over the 1990s and early 2000s. It traces the evolution of family ideology, values and attitudes; spotlights current changes in family models and functions; examines transformations of consumption patterns and household structures; and analyses continuity and disruptions of family traditions in a foreign setting. Furthermore, it sheds light on the impact of the receiving culture on the lifestyles and world-views of the Ukrainian family and identifies consequences of this influence, with an accent on the attitudinal and ideological significance of intercultural exchange. The paper concludes with a variety of measures and actions necessary for the formation of a more integrated understanding of Ukrainian migration policy and its efficient practical implementation.

INDEX

Keywords : migration effects, social reproduction, transnational families, Ukrainian migrations

Mots-clés : effets des migrations, familles transnationales, migrations ukrainiennes, reproduction sociale

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