

Proposal paper to be presented at the international conference “*Migration in China and Asia: Experience and Policy*”. A seminar of the International Metropolis Project in China, to be held on May 20-21, 2010 in Beijing, China.

From the “*Strawberry Jam*” to the “*Sushi-bar*”: Romanian Migration in the Context of Asia’s Increasing Economic Role

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With this research proposal, we intend to resume our studies of 2006/2007 regarding the peculiarity of Romanians' emigration. In a time when the media and the local entrepreneurs have announced the '*Chinese invasion*' into the Romanian labour market, due to the shortage of labour in construction, industry and even agriculture and the need of labour force from abroad, as a result of the mass migration of Romanian labourers to the markets as Spain and Italy, we published a paper titled *Romania, a Country in Need of Workers. The Bitter Taste of "Strawberry Jam"* (The Romanian Journal of European Studies, no.5-6/2007, pages 179-205) where we noted that Romanian labour market was already faced distortions. Back in Romania, the emigrated workers to the European Union are pejorative called as "Strawberry pickers", due to the fact that one of the first guest-workers' fluxes (based on bilateral agreements between Romania and Spain) was targeting the Spain agriculture and mainly the strawberry fields. In order to underline the perverse effect of labour mobility to the European Union member states (Romania 'exported' workers trained in the country, while it needs to 'import' other workers with high financial costs), the following syntagm was used: the "*Strawberry Jam*" made by Romanians is rather bitter in taste.

Now, we are looking forward and try to consider other phenomena of migration against the current trends show. In a time when Romanian migration continues to Southern European Union member states at a large scale (a process which now is part of the common market labour mobility), we noted an interesting fact: the Romanian Patriarchate (the Orthodox Christianity is the major religion in Romania with 87.7% observers as per 2002 census; the churches are partially financed by the state, but the religious law mentions autonomy of cults in relation with the state, and the neutrality, non discrimination and equidistance rule over religion) have assigned two missionary priests to work in Japan as from November 2008, to provide religious services to Romanian community around the country. It is obvious that no ecumenical and/or economical reason could lead the Patriarchate to assign priests if there were no Romanians to have the religious services delivered to. According to EU Delegation in Japan statistics, in conjunction with the figures provided by the Japan Immigration Bureau, Romanians are the fourth group of migrants from the European Union member states which were established in Japan. Japan is a country located at about 8.000 miles to Romania, but the Romanian community still counts of 2,540 citizens, with 1.047 persons registered as family member of a Japanese (most of them are female/wives, while the percentage between Romanian males and females in Japan is fifth times favourable to females). How those Romanian females arrived and settled to Japan? Within the last decade, a migration stream was observed to occur against the major tide: women groups travelled to Japan to engage in the entertainment industry. They were mostly workers in bars and pubs, and after a while part of them settled here by entering in international marriages (with Japanese but with South American immigrants also). Of course, the female influx covered by a kind of guest-workers programme was doubled by an ordinary bilateral human resources exchange: students, artists and high skilled personnel were temporary travelling to Japan, as the JICA officials and volunteers involved in the Japanese official development assistance delivered to Romania were temporary settled back to the Eastern European country.

Our paper will analyze the proposed subject throughout the following points:

- 1) The increase of Asia's economical role (consequences of moving the world economic centre from the Atlantic to Pacific; the new centres of power: China and Japan; Asia's attraction; the new economical configuration, an important migration vector)
- 2) Romania and the *Strawberry Jam*. Comparative analysis between countries of destination for Romanian emigration; remittances versus FDI; the influence of the economic crisis on development.
- 3) Chinese Diaspora in Romania. Romanian migration to Japan. Specificities, trends, development of phenomena. How to create a Romanian Diaspora?



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From the “*Strawberry Jam*” to the “*Sushi-bar*”: Romanian Migration in the Context of Asia’s Increasing Economic Role

- **Why studying *migration to Asia*, from a EU Member State’s point of view?**
 - migration scientists failed to put the *EU migration to Asia* into debate
 - there are Romanians even in Asia, they decided to come here instead of going to the EU
 - we consider Romanians’ authorities failed to realize the Asia’s importance for the world/EU/Romania’s economy: **Asia [China] is “tomorrow”**



From the “*Strawberry Jam*” to the “*Sushi-bar*”: Romanian Migration in the Context of Asia’s Increasing Economic Role

- The increase of Asia’s economic attraction
 - consequences of moving the *world centre* from Atlantic to Pacific; the new centres of power
- Romania and the *Strawberry Jam*
 - traditional countries of emigration for Romanians
- Romanian migration to Japan. Specificities, trends, development
 - how to create a Romanian Diaspora?



The increase of Asia's economic attraction

- on the way to “the Asian Century”, an irreversible political/economic shift in global power from West to East was noted
- the result: the *world economic centre* was moved from Atlantic to Pacific
- even if countries as China, Korea, Japan, India and Vietnam don't share an “Asian” economic system and don't have a decision centre or coordination institutions (as the EU), they used the recent financial crisis wisely, reinforcing their economies
- Asia managed to turn **globalization** for its own economic and political interest...



The increase of Asia's economic attraction

- historically, the main drivers for economic globalization were the Western (developed) countries; in the 21st Century, the *developing countries* contribute for more than 50% of the world GDP
- Asian countries [and China in particular] are now in position to influence and reshape the global economy
- the new centres of power: China and India contribute to the global growth; economic, political and social impact of their investments in Africa and the rest of the world
- the Rising Tigers → changed the world into one with *three poles: USA, EU and Asia / China* [both India and Japan face a “Chinese paradox”: China is their single largest trading partner, the new geostrategical threat, and the future regional hegemony]



The increase of Asia [China]'s economic attraction

- China: the world leading exporter in 2009
- China passed Germany as 3rd largest economy in 2007 and replaced Japan as world 2nd largest economy in 2010 (prognosis to overtake the US by 2027 and become double in size by 2050)
- China: with \$2.4 trillion in foreign exchange reserve – the largest holder of American debt
- China took over the lead: Japan's slow economy growth shifted investments and production to China; Japan turns to a “special relationship” with the new great power
- the end of the “Western world” and the birth of a new global order – **China will dominate the world culturally and politically as well as economically** [China, the “new America”]



The increase of Asia's economic attraction

- as many developed countries, Japan became an economic power in relation to labour migration: the rise and the decrease of Japan is close linked to importing foreign workforce in the national economy
- **migrants – economic engine** in every region of the world, as foreign workers fit unmet demand; a increasing role of international migration for the Chinese growth?
- **migration and economic development link**
- remittances – the largest source of income for many developing countries

Asia's development ↔ labour migration



The increase of Asia's economic attraction: the migration issue



- increase in Asia's development results in **increase in migration flows** to Asia
- in absolute numbers, largest concentration of immigrants is in Europe, followed by Asia and North America
- new trend: **feminization of migration**; human trafficking is one of the most profitable transnational crime (forced migration is a component of feminization of migration)
 - from Asia to Europe, but also from Europe to Asia



The increase of Asia's economic attraction: the migration issue

- *migrants returning "home"?*
 - historical, the European population is said to be a result of **Asia** → **Europe migration**. Currently the Asia → Europe flux still continues
 - a new **Europe** → **Asia migration** stream was noted
- Raveinstein's (1885) migration laws revised?
 - “*even in case of countries of dispersion / population to spare for other countries, there takes place an inflow of migrants across that border furthest away from the great centres of absorption*”
 - “*each main current of migration produce a compensating counter current*”
- An open question: may be the contrary flow considered as *returning*, over the history?



Romania and the *Strawberry Jam*



- “traditional” destination for Romanian emigration are EU countries like Spain and Italy
 - networks, language, cultural links, labour opportunity
- major legal flows of Romanian workers to EU labour market were based on Governmental bilateral agreements
 - Germany, Spain – destinations for temporary guest workers, mainly in agriculture
 - pejorative called as “**strawberry pickers**”, majority of labourers from the firsts waves to Spain have worked on strawberry fields
 - some EU member states still apply restriction on the labour market



Romania and the *Strawberry Jam*



- Romanian labour emigration increased after 2002, when visa waiver was enforced (resulting in free travel to the EU / the Schengen member states)
- some 3-4 millions are currently living [working] abroad
- temporary/circular migration tends to change to a semi-permanent/settlement [kids are left alone back to Romania, or are raised in the EU residence country of choice]



Romania and the *Strawberry Jam*



- 2007 – **Romanian migration** to EU countries changed into **EU mobility**, as Romania joined the EU (internal market)
- Romanians work now in construction [*the syndrome or Romanian constructor, similar to the Polish plumber*], housekeeping, agriculture – generally low skilled work
- despite of current crisis into EU, the Romanians prefer to stay abroad then returning home, where unemployment increases



Romania and the *Strawberry Jam*: the bitter taste of emigration



- in a time of a supposed “Chinese invasion” to Romania, the local labour market already faced distortions (*Silași, Simina 2007*)
- *even before recent crisis*
 - labour shortages on local market and the mass-migration of Romanians to SW European countries increased the debate on **importing labour force**
- *at this time*
 - increase of unemployment, due to businesses closure; soon after recovery from crisis, **Romania will need workers** [but the local labour force prefers to work abroad]



Romanian migration to Japan vs. European Union *mobility*?



- Chinese invasion to Europe vs. **EU citizens migration to Asia**: migration to Asia [Japan, China] – a good opportunity for high skilled Europeans
- **Case study: Japan**, a country with a high density – 327 pers/km², but Japan population is falling / rapidly aging and becoming a nation of retirees
- Japan's very strict immigration legislation; major migrants groups: South Korea, China, Brazil, Peru...
- EU nationals in Japan: UK, France, Germany, **Romania** (the 4th country!)



Romanian migration to Japan

Specificities, trends, development



- 2,504 Romanian legal residents as for 2008 (4/5 of total are females, majority aged between 25-35)
- feminization of migration [similarities with the Italian case, but no family implications; sometimes families are created in Japan, as a tool for a residence permit and/or settlement]
- Romanians - “guest workers” migrants dedicated to entertainment industry – *an alternative to the main flow to EU?*



Romanian migration to Japan: *Attraction of the Sushi-bar*



- at 8,000 miles far away to Romania, the syndrome of the *Strawberry pickers* is turned into the *Sushi-bar girls*
- Romanian ladies mostly work / used to work in pubs and bars
- entertainment industry tolerated by Japan authorities sometimes linked to prostitution; the illegal part of Romanian immigration is still unknown (suppositions)



Romanian migration to Japan: *Attraction of the Sushi-bar*



- lack of opportunities back home and the possibility of higher income than in Europe led some people to choose even a promiscuous situation
- the “*Japanese ladies*” do not have a favourable image back home [alike the *Strawberry...*]
- enforcement of the new Japan immigration legislation stopped the major influx of “Sushi-bar” girls; number of those employed in the entertainment industry decreased sharply



Romanian migration to Japan: *Attraction of the Sushi-bar*



- temporary migration pattern, partially settled in mix marriages (with Japanese, but also South-American migrants)
- 1,047 Romanians were registered as family members of a Japanese (as for 2008)
- sometimes, marriage is only the way of getting proper residence permit; a high divorce and re-marriage rate is recorded: the marriages' duration is often up to one year, for the duration of the regular residence visa...



Romanian migration to Japan: *The Sushi-bar*



- there are also students, artists and high skilled personnel (mostly IT and advanced technology researchers and workers)
- part of Romanians arrived to Japan in the framework of the bilateral human resource exchange (JICA agency)
- no relevant information related to current illegal migration to Japan (previous overstays, illegal work, drug traffic cases)
- Romania: the last EU member state included in the Japanese (still temporary!) visa waiver, as from September 1st, 2009 – *no major increase in migration flux*



Romanian migration to Japan

How to create a Romanian Diaspora?



- Romanians usually do not create close communities, they integrate and live apart
- **November 2008** – two young Romanian Orthodox priests were settled to Japan, at the Romanians' request
 - main tasks: providing religious services to Romanian community
 - main goal: creating of a *real community [Diaspora]*, by unifying somehow the Romanian groups which lived all around the country



Romanian migration to Japan

How to create a Romanian Diaspora?



- No ecumenical and/or economic reasons could lead the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate (main religion in Romania, with 87.2% observers of total population, as per 2002 census) to finance living of two missionary priests, if there were no Romanian communities in need for such religious services
- Religion – **a tool for creating a new Romanian Diaspora**: may the *Muslim model* succeed in Japan?



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- **Conclusion:**

- Romanians [as other EU nationals] are attracted by the Asia’s economic development
- even if the Romanian [and the EU] authorities failed to use major economic opportunities in relation with new Asian powers [China], migration streams to Asia were noted
- EU → Asia migration needs a wider analysis, to understand implications
- communities in Diasporas are formed without the help from the State: independent EU citizens are more likely to use the Asian opportunities than the Governments themselves

- **Thank you for your attention!**
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