

SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF TURKISH IMMIGRANTS IN ROMANIA? SYNCOPES IN THE CONFIGURATION OF A DETERRITORIALIZED IDENTITY

Abdullah DEMIR*

Abstract

David Lockwood¹ highlights the distinction between systemic and social integration. If social integration focuses on cultural values, traditions, and identities, the systemic one operates with rules according to which the host community of the immigrant functions, whether they are judicial, economic, civic or political. Although ideally social integration would complement systemic integration, the former is more difficult to achieve, since it presupposes the configuration of a deterritorialized identity of the immigrant. The paper concentrates on the relation between social integration and the configuration of the deterritorialized identity of the Turkish immigrant in Romania. Methodologically, a content analyses of some interviews conducted with Turkish immigrants in Romania will be carried out, by following a series of indicators, such as: the development of social relations outside the ethnic group, the accessing of the various cultural services and those for informal education, the Turkish immigrant's openness toward the values promoted by the Romanian and European culture as well as the attachment toward traditions.

Keywords: social integration, identity, third-country migration, Turkish immigrants, Romania

1. Introduction

The research endeavour materializes starting from David Lockwood's model according to which the integration process presupposes on the one hand the *systemic integration*, namely the economic and civic integration – and on the other, the *social integration*, which involves in turn the configuration of a *deterritorialized identity*. The paper will concentrate on the manner in which the Turkish immigrants relate to the social integration, on their efforts to configure a deterritorialized identity. Deterritorialized identity is a type of identity that forms as a result of cultural interactions that the immigrant has in the new community and it presupposes as well changes at the level of their value and belief systems. Certainly, the immigrant already holds an identity formed during their time in Turkey. However, as they internalize the values and practices from the new culture, they develop as well a new identity, outside the territory from which they emigrated. More often than not, during the first years after the immigration, the immigrants *feel Turkish*, but after a period of time, they state that they *feel Romanian as well*. This is how the entire process of identity configuration outside the country of origin, also called deterritorialized identity, could be summarized.

The process of social integration is closely connected to the configuration of a deterritorialized identity, so that, as the immigrant assimilates values, codes and norms from the new culture, they configure for themselves a new identity as well, outside the

territory of origin, an identity that gives support in the process of social integration and facilitates this process.

In order to highlight the resources but also the barriers in the Turkish immigrant's process of integration, I have interviewed, during November 2017-February 2019, a total of 60 individuals of Turkish ethnicity who have been living in Romania for at least 2 years, namely 19 women and 41 men, with an average age of 39. Of the 60 individuals, 34 have a university education, 10 have a post-university one, 11 have a high school education, while 3 have a middle-school education.

11 out of the Turkish immigrants hold Romanian citizenship, 1 is a German citizen, 1 a French citizen, 1 a British citizen, 23 desire to obtain Romanian citizenship, while the other 23 do not have a plan to this end. The field research followed social integration indicators such as: the development of social relations outside the ethnic group (I1), the accessing of the various cultural services and those for informal education (I2), the immigrant's knowledge about Romanian culture (I3) and European culture (I4), and the role of traditions in the configuration of the new type of identity (I5).

2. Conceptual aspects

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (article 13) any person has the right to emigrate and live within the borders of any state. Migration is defined as a phenomenon that consists of the movement of an individual or a group of individuals from one territorial area to another, followed by a change in

* PhD Student, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania (e-mail: demirabdullah4@yahoo.com).

¹ David Lockwood, "Social Integration and System Integration", in Lockwood, David (ed.), *Solidarity and Schism: "The Problem of Disorder" in Durkheimian and Marxist Sociology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 399–412.

residency and/or an engaging in a form of activity in the area of arrival.¹ The movement can be internal when it is done within the territory of the same country or external/international when the migrant², as a result of a voluntary act, decides to emigrate (from the country of origin) and to work in another country in order to improve their quality of life. Migration is the result of a multitude of actions of individuals who are considered rational agents and who evaluate the costs, benefits and risks (including emotional ones). The decisions of individuals to emigrate are also a consequence of the traits of the economic, political and social systems from where they originate.

International migration is done under different forms: workforce migration, the migration of the immigrants' family members, migration forced by political or religious persecutions, by calamities and war. To this end, a conceptual specification is welcome related to the frequent confusion between immigrant and refugee. The Geneva Convention³ stipulates the criteria that are at the basis of categorizing a person as a refugee: the person who has "... justified fears of being persecuted based on race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a certain social group or their political opinions ...". A series of political and social causes are found at the basis of the act of forced emigration: political persecutions, personal insecurity and that of family members, extra-judicial detentions, generalized corruption that blocks the functioning of state institutions in the service of the citizen, the lack of resources for daily living, the lack of access to healthcare and education, humanitarian crises determined by armed conflicts, hunger, diseases, massive violations of human rights.

Any international migrating act is at the same time an *emigration* and an *immigration* process. Emigration corresponds to the immigrants' process of movement from their countries of origin, while immigration is associated with the process of entering the destination countries. In the majority of cases *territorial, geographic mobility* is accompanied by a *social mobility*, meaning by the change in the social status of immigrant individuals.

Being considered a spatial social mobility (territorial, geographic) the clarification of the concepts of social mobility, status and social role is required. Social mobility generally represents the movement of individuals or social groups in the social space. Peter

Sorokin treats the process of social mobility in his paper *Social Mobility* from 1927, but a richer literature in the field appears after World War II, with authors such as Otis Duncan⁴, Martin Lipset and Reinhard Bendix⁵, Raymond Boudon⁶, Arnold Anderson⁷. If we consider George Gurvitch's⁸ perspective, according to which society is formed of social levels, social mobility represents the individual's movement from one level to another (vertical mobility) or within the same social level (horizontal mobility).

Social status represents the position occupied by an individual or a group of individuals in a society. Ralph Linton considers that status is the collection of behaviours that an individual is entitled to expect from others. Talcott Parsons distinguishes between *attributed* and *gained* statuses⁹. The *attributed* status is the collection of attributes that the individual has at birth (sex, name, ethnicity, financial situation etc.) while the *gained* status is obtained as a result of social mobility, and personal efforts and investments made by the individual. The direction of the mobility can be ascendant or descendant, so that an individual could have an ascendant or descendant vertical social mobility. In the case of the *ascendant vertical* mobility, the individual changes their status, as a result of socialization and education, having the possibility to accumulate social prestige and economic rewards, but also to develop contacts and exchanges with individuals situated on a superior position within the society. In meritocratic societies, which emphasize the individuals' efforts to gather information and new competences, this type of mobility is frequently encountered. In closed traditional societies, mobility is done on the basis of family ties, blood ties or according to the economic capital held by the families of origin. The *descendant vertical* mobility is the opposite to the ascendant mobility, the individual goes down the social hierarchy. The *horizontal* social mobility is associated with the movement of the individual within the same social and professional category, within the same social level/layer, without any change in status (only in the social role in certain cases). A *social role* corresponds to each social status, in other words the social status is emptied of content without exercising the role. *The social role* of an individual is considered to be the collection of behaviours that other individuals are entitled to expect from the former. An individual is thus equally characterized by several statuses, such as

¹ Cătălin Zamfir & Lazăr Vlăsceanu (eds.), *Dicționar de sociologie* (București: Babel Publishing House, 1993), pp. 355-357.

² Chris Lee "Sociological Theories of Immigration: Pathways to Integration for U.S. Immigrants", *Journal of human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 2009, 19(6): 730-744.

³ *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees* (Geneva: UNHCR, 2010), Available at <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10.pdf>, accessed April 2019.

⁴ Otis Dudley Duncan, "Path Analysis: Sociological Examples," *American Journal of Sociology*, 1966, 72(1): 1-16.

⁵ Martin Lipset & Reinhard Bendix, *Social Mobility in Industrial Society*, (New York: Columbia University Press, [1959] 2018).

⁶ Raymond Boudon, *L'inégalité des chances. La mobilité sociale dans les sociétés industrielles*, (Paris: Armand Collin, 1973).

⁷ Arnold Anderson, "Lifetime InterOccupational Mobility Patterns in Sweden" *Acta Sociologica*, 1955, 1(1): 168-202.

⁸ Jean-Christophe Marcel, "Georges Gurvitch, La conception gurvitchienne de la sociologie", Available at <https://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/georges-gurvitch/2-la-conception-gurvitchienne-de-la-sociologie/>, accessed April, 2019.

⁹ Ralph Linton, *The Study of Man: An introduction*, 1936, Appleton-Century-Crofts. INC, Available at https://archive.org/stream/studyofman031904mbp/studyofman031904mbp_djvu.txt, accessed April 2019.

social, economic, cultural, political, but also by the roles that correspond to these statuses. More often than not there are conflicts and tensions both within the statuses and roles, and between them. The constellation of statuses and roles, the cultural medium in which they are exercised contribute to the configuration of the individuals' identity.

Alan Simmons¹⁰ considers that together with a *change in residency, place of employment or profession*, the immigration process presupposes a *major change in the sphere of social and cultural relations* as well. As a result of the social and cultural interactions developed in the new community, there are changes that occur in the values and beliefs system of the immigrant. On the other hand, new beliefs are developed, as well as new frameworks of value that contribute to the configuration of a new identity, outside the territory of origin.

James Fearon defines personal identity as being "a set of attributes, beliefs, desires or principles of action" that distinguish a person from a social point of view and direct its behaviour¹¹. The personal identity refers to the unique characteristics of a person, to aspects of their life that are different from those of other individuals.

On the other hand, social identity is defined as the process of the individual's *identification* with others at the basis of the criteria related to race, gender, nationality, and religion. Social identity offers the individual the possibility to form a self image¹² for themselves. *Cultural identity* has in turn to meanings, namely individual identity and collective identity. At the individual level it refers to the cultural dimensions, to the cultural medium in which a person was socialized: linguistic context, religious and moral education, attitudes attained in the social medium, manners, etc. Another use of the term takes into consideration the belonging to a cultural group, being thus a synonym to collective cultural identity. A group is considered cultural when its cultural characteristics are combined so as to characterize the way of life of its participants, which determines a type of culture to be different from others.¹³ From a cultural point of view, collective identity is different from the personal one since the former does not represent the sum total of individual identities, but the manner in which a group "gets along" and "perceives" itself¹⁴. Identity takes into account the relation between the self and the other as well¹⁵. Thus, it is based on differences and it is built through inclusion/exclusion mechanisms.

For Claude Levy Strauss identity is a polysemantic term that is centred on value axes that evoke *similitude* -the character of what is identical-, *unity* -the character of what is "One"-, *permanence* -the character of what remains identical to oneself-, *recognition and individualisation* -a person is a distinct entity for another person-. Identity is for Strauss similar to a "virtual house". What is to be recalled is that identity does not have a real form, it cannot be tangible but it does explain many connections and processes of a particular relevance.

3. The social integration of the Turkish immigrant in Romania

We have considered it necessary to address a series of questions related to *the social relations* developed by the Turkish immigrant outside the ethnic group, so that this *first indicator* translates the availability and resources of the immigrant to explore other social and cultural spaces as well. From our open discussions we have noticed a tendency of the Turkish immigrant to conserve their own cultural customs that they mainly find in their ethnic group. As a result, they mainly frequent persons with the same cultural background. This tendency annuls in many situations the development of social relations with citizens belonging to the society that represents the destination of the immigration. We wanted to verify this presumption by addressing a series of questions that have targeted the types of activities undertaken together with Romanian citizens, the frequency of the visits done by the immigrants to Romanian citizens, the causes for which the Turkish immigrants prefer/do not prefer to develop friendships with Romanian citizens outside the professional medium. *The second indicator* took shape as a result of a focus group organized in October 2017, when we discovered that all of the 17 participants had not accessed various services offered by associations or NGOs that activate in the field of migration. Although they complained that they feel excluded, that they would like to be supported, helped in learning Romanian traditions and culture, and Romanian, they did not conduct any documentation regarding the existence of associations/NGOs that organize activities of formal/informal socialization with immigrants and refugees. We would like to highlight the motivation of the Turkish immigrant to explore existing resources in the host society and to

¹⁰ Alan B. Simmons, "Mondialisation et migration internationale: tendances, interrogations et modèles théoriques", *Cahiers québécois de démographie, L'immigration*, 2002, 31(1): 7-33.

¹¹ James D. Fearon, *What is identity (as we now use the word)*, 1999, Stanford University, California, Available at <https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/What-is-Identity-as-we-now-use-the-word-.pdf>, accessed April 2019.

¹² John B. Davis, "Identity and Commitment: Sen's Conception of the Individual", Tinbergen Institute Discussion Paper, 2004, Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/4785801_Identity_and_Commitment_Sen's_Conception_of_the_Individual, accessed March 2019.

¹³ Paul Gilbert, *Cultural Identity and Political Ethics* (Edinburgh : Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 3-4.

¹⁴ Gerard Delanty & Chris Rumford, *Rethinking Europe. Social theory and the implications of Europeanization* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 52.

¹⁵ Gerard Delanty & Chris Rumford, *op. cit.*, p.51.

utilize them. *The third indicator* translates as well the immigrant's efforts to hold a minimum of knowledge about Romanian culture, a minimum without which one cannot establish certain value reference points in the relation between the immigrant and the society chosen for immigration. Similar to the third indicator, *the fourth indicator* highlights the efforts made by the immigrant in learning basic notions about European culture, considering the fact that the majority of those interviewed want to spend the rest of their lives in Romania or in other countries in Europe. Moreover, following the open discussions, we were able to deduce that a large part of the immigrants who participated in the study admit that there are important differences between the European culture and the Turkish one, that they present difficulties in understanding certain social and cultural practices. *The last indicator* makes reference to the role of traditions in the immigrant's process of social integration. The informal discussions revealed that for the majority of the interviewed immigrants the traditions are a substantial component of their lives, an element of distinction and a permanent resource that supports them and guides them in their daily life. Moreover, the act of immigration is considered by a part of them as "a betrayal of the traditions". This indicator was meant to highlight whether traditions truly represent a real resource that support the immigrant in the process of social integration.

Indicator 1. The development of social relations outside the ethnic group

22 (7 men and 15 women) of the 60 interviewed have not developed friendship relations with Romanian citizens. They consider that they feel more comfortable with friends from the same ethnicity or with colleagues coming from Libya, Lebanon, or Syria. A total of 28 out of those interviewed stated that they meet up with Romanian citizens only to discuss business. Another 8 stated they participate, on average, once a year to various activities together with Romanian citizens as follows: sport, eating together, and attending performances. Only two male individuals out of the 60 interviewed stated that 3 times a year on average they exchange visits with other Romanian families and they participate in various Romanian holidays at the invitation of their Romanian friends. 14 of the interviewed men consider that they prefer to invite Romanian citizens in their own houses or to the restaurant, rather than be invited by them. The number of women who did not establish social relations outside the family is larger than in the case of men, with only 4 out of the 19 interviewed women having friends who are Romanian or of a different nationality. They consider that the traditions do not allow them to develop friendships or to visit other individuals without being accompanied by their husbands.

Indicator 2. The accessing by the Turkish immigrant of various cultural services and those for informal education

What is noticeable is the fact that neither of those interviewed did not know, during the research period, names of associations or NGOs that organize cultural activities, Romanian language courses, courses for obtaining citizenship, recreational activities, encounters between Turkish immigrant children and Romanian children, film viewing, games, etc. Despite the fact that 37 of the Turkish immigrants have denounced difficulties in correctly speaking Romanian, only 11 of them seemed interested in the courses organized by Romanian associations and NGOs to this end. The 11 Turkish immigrants who obtained Romanian citizenship answered that the existence of such associations and NGOs is useful, but only 4 of them stated that they would have attended the classes and activities organized by them. Only 10 out of the 23 Turkish immigrants who are planning to obtain citizenship have shown interest in accessing such services with the specific purpose of obtaining detailed explanations about the manner in which a citizenship exam is conducted. Only 9 of those interviewed consider as useful the organization of family cultural activities, such as visits at museum or exhibitions, viewings of cultural shows that have a Romanian or international character.

Indicator 3. What the Romanian culture means for the Turkish immigrant

7 of the respondents do not have knowledge about Romanian culture although they immigrated to Romania over five years ago, 4 consider that it is similar to the Turkish one, 7 consider it a mix of cultures mainly formed from Western and Eastern elements. 3 of the Turkish immigrants associate the culture with the people, namely a culture with warm and welcoming people. A majority of the 39 associate Romanian culture with the name of certain poets, painters, rulers, and sportsmen, such as: Eminescu, Grigorescu, Ștefan cel Mare, Carol I, Hagi. 4 respondents added as well the name of former president Ceaușescu to the four names, while two others complete the aforementioned list with the names of certain entertainment presenters. 10 of those interviewed consider it important to have knowledge about Romanian traditions, customs, and culture in order to better integrate in the Romanian society. A number of 5 individuals visited the Village Museum, 2 visited that of the Romanian Peasant, while 2 visited the History Museum. Although they went through a citizenship exam that contains a series of questions about Romanian culture as well, 19 of those interviewed admitted that they memorized the answers and did not feel the need to visit museums or to read a stanza from the poem of a Romanian author. Only 4 of the 23 individuals who have citizenship stated that in preparation for the exam they felt the need to visit the Village Museum in order to better understand Romanian traditions and customs.

9 of the respondents know the significance of Romanian holidays such as Easter and Christmas.

Indicator 4. The European culture for the Turkish immigrant

9 of those interviewed do not know what European culture means, with 12 of them associating it with democracy, human rights and free travelling. Only 4 of the 60 respondents have attended classes in universal literature within courses organized at the faculty in Romania. Even so, they admit they were not passionate about them and they did not further their studies outside the classes, reason for which they hold vague information about important trends in art, literature, and music, about famous works, painters, composers, and writers from the European cultural space. Only 6 of them have knowledge about the main historic landmarks, such as colonization, world wars, the Holocaust, the Cold War, etc. Neither of those interviewed was able to explain what Renaissance or Enlightenment meant. In regards to the great names from European literature, only two individuals mentioned Emile Zola, Honoré de Balzac, William Shakespeare, and Plato. Only 3 of those interviewed mentioned painters such as Picasso, van Gogh, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, and Rembrandt. 4 of the respondents know composers such as Vivaldi, Beethoven, and Chopin. 20 of the respondents have visited cities such as Rome, Paris, London, Amsterdam, Luxemburg, Frankfurt, Berlin, and Vienna. Only 8 of them visited historical monuments as well, 4 allocated time for art museums, and 2 for open-air exhibitions.

Indicator 5 The conservation of the traditions of Turkish immigrants

52 of those interviewed consider traditions as being a highly important part in their lives, when organizing their lives. The majority of them have named the following as being a part of the wider category of traditions: respect for parents, religion, prayer, food, dinners with friends, and the help they offer others. Two of the Turkish immigrants consider that in Romania traditions might be lost, but even so they have to remain here, for only here can they develop businesses. 43 of the respondents consider that the supreme force that sets things in motion and that helps them “go forward in life” is Allah. 10 of the Turkish immigrants who participated in the research are married with Romanian women. They consider that it is the duty of the wives (and not of the husbands) to respect the traditions and to learn the customs of the Turkish culture, although they live in Romania. 19 of those interviewed consider that although traditions are very important, these impede them from understanding other cultures. 12 of the respondents stated that after an average of 5-7 years, their perceptions concerning traditions and religion changed over time in a “good way”. They shared the fact that they went through major changes to the better at the level of understanding, approach, relating to themselves or to the exterior social medium.

On the one hand, the interviews looked at the *efforts made* but also the *cultural, intellectual resources of the Turkish immigrant*. On the other, what was

analysed was how the *respect and attachment for traditions* can facilitate or burden the Turkish immigrants’ process of social integration.

In regards to the *efforts made* by the Turkish immigrants we found that the social relations developed by them outside the professional medium are channelled mainly on businesses as well and less on the immigrants’ curiosity or openness toward exploring the new culture in which they decided to immigrate. The tendency of the majority of the target group is to withdraw to the groups of friends belonging to the same ethnicity.

Despite the fact that a series of specialized associations and NGOs develop services meant to help immigrants get used to the cultural medium in Romania, the immigrants did not seem sufficiently motivated to access them, although they thought them as being useful. The data obtained show attitudes of inertia, inaction and even of rejection from behalf more than half of those interviewed. The accessed group is still the ethnic one. The immigrants consider that the friends and colleagues who have been in Romania for a longer period of time tell them “how things happen, what is good to do, what is not good in Romania, what is good to avoid”.

A series of questions regarding the familiarization of the immigrants with the values of Romanian and European culture did not have the intention to be a knowledge test. We considered that certain information about the main moments in universal and European history, the main cultural trends, the great names in European art can constitute a useful resource for immigrants, a resource that could attenuate the culture shock, or that could be an intermediary bridge between the pre- and post-immigration stages. The schools frequented by immigrants in their past did not ensure a familiarization with notions of European culture and civilization, even less so with respect to the Romanian one. The supplementary readings and activities conducted by the immigrants were not directed this way. These are also the reasons why a part of those interviewed did not have the curiosity to decipher the codes and cultural values of the new medium, and in addition, they are found in the situation of not understanding, of denying, rejecting and retreating to what they know best, namely their own cultural group. This tendency was encountered in several of the individuals with higher studies. We consider art as a universal language and a resource that could be explored more in the integration processes of Turkish immigrants in Romania.

Both the *personal resources* and the *efforts made* are found in a constant competition with the *traditions* that are considered as the centre of existence for Turkish immigrants. The formal and informal socialization mediums, the family, school and friends have promoted this type of cognitive and affective model based on traditions. Even more, they promoted its superiority in relation to other cultural models. This is also the reason for which the majority of those

interviewed consider that the women of other ethnicities and religions married to Turkish citizens have the duty to convert religiously out of respect for their husbands and they have the duty to respect their traditions. Only one of those interviewed answered affirmatively to the question regarding a possible renunciation of this own religious system. Turkish immigrants a priori place faith in the centre of existence and through it they justify for themselves many of the cultural and social facts, phenomena and processes that they are a part of, without resorting to logical or factual arguments.

4. Conclusions

The content analysis of the data obtained from the unstructured interviews highlights the fact that *social integration* is a slow process, which is at an early stage with over half of the Turkish immigrants, although the immigration took place on average at least two years ago. Moreover, in certain cases, the immigrants who record more than 10 years since they decided to immigrate in Romania, what was noticed was a tendency to become stuck in these early stages. This process of social integration is slower with the interviewed women, since they mainly frequent the familial medium or groups of friends that are very close to this medium.

Although in the present paper we did not focus on *systemic integration*, the research conducted has highlighted as well the fact that the *systemic integration* was done more rapidly than the social one, outrunning it. As mentioned in the first part of the paper, *systemic integration* is focused on economic and civic integration, in other words, on respect for the rules of the economic game but also on the respect for the civic rules that ensure institutional, formal relations for the

immigrant in the Romanian society. The majority of immigrants stated that the main cause for their immigration is economic, a fact that shaped their professional and social trajectory after immigration as well. In order to develop their businesses, they learnt to respect the rules imposed by the Romanian society to this end. The situation is different in regards to the *social integration* that operates with values, beliefs, social interactions, the immigrant's potential to understand and assimilate certain codes, and cultural values. The new culture encountered in Romanian society, constitutes itself as a medium different from the cultural medium where the immigrant configured *their identity of origin*.

The efforts made for social integration, the cultural and intellectual resources, and the attachment for traditions represent elements that configure the *deterritorialized identity* of the Turkish immigrant. This type of identity supports in turn the process of *social integration* that is conducted as aforementioned, at a more profound level, that of cultural values, of cognitive and affective beliefs. The data analysed in this paper highlights the fact that the Turkish immigrant is not prepared to invest in the new type of identity – called *deterritorialized* in the present paper –, an identity that would ensure *social integration*. The tendency of the majority is to return to the *identity of origin* and to protect it, with the risk of feeling isolated in the new immigration medium that they have chosen. This tendency manifests itself even if the configuration of the *deterritorialized identity* does not presuppose the annulment of the *identity of origin*. It presupposes in fact its maintenance and, moreover, using it as a basis for building the deterritorialized one, meaning a nucleus of interactions, and cultural values and codes that can ensure the immigrant the understanding of the new social and cultural medium.

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