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Identity Change in the World of International Migration

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Identity Change in the World of International Migration.

Book review for the volume *Schimbări identitare în lumea migrației internaționale*, author Viorica – Cristina Cormoș, Lumen Publishing House

Carmen Cornelia BALAN¹

Abstract

In this new publication, Cristina Cormoș professionally addresses a sensitive issue, complex and difficult in the same time, and ambitiously manages to give us a picture of international migration viewed through identity change.

Starting from the hypothesis that "migration is a change that simultaneously occurs in both physical and socio-cultural realms, which implies not only movement from one community to another, but also the disintegration of structural bonds in the departure area, paralleled by a cultural assimilation of the destination environment", the author analyzes identity changes of the emigrants throughout the entire migration process, the factors underlying these changes, as well as the consequences and implications of these factors in the return migration. The issues addressed within this book also cover the changes occurred in the family and community of origin as a result of the absence of one of its members and of the manifestation of identity changes respectively.

Keywords: *identity change, international migration, change.*

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By already publishing her second book, Viorica Cristina Cormoș offers us an example of a professional path characterized by the seriousness of the theoretical and methodological training, by practice in the field of social work, by her societal involvement as an agent of change and multiplication of this pattern and by her teaching career which raises research and social action to a new level.

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In terms of technical and methodological approaches, several elements require attention as they individualize this work in the contemporary sociology research: from a hypothetical model with notable explanatory value, by exploiting more opportunities of operationalization of the theoretical concept of identity change, without losing sight of the complementarity of different investigation methods (interview-based survey, questionnaire-based survey and participatory observation), and by correlating the obtained results, the author constructs the "theory of identity-migration".

Within the first eight chapters, the theoretical size of the book takes the form of an authentic meta-theory developed around the strategy and needs to address phenomena, processes or social actions that define identity, collective and individual change occurred as a result of international migration. The scientific methodology used aims to explore the theoretical cognitive foundations of self-relating to the investigated social reality, starting from the general conceptual background of the *migration - change - identity* triad. The merit of the

author consists in systemically addressing this relationship, so that each of the two elements (international migration - identity change) is viewed sequentially as the cause / effect of the other.

The three following studies manage to construct a unitary approach. The first two studies refer to individual changes and their impact on the family and community of origin. Achieved by participatory observation in the framework of a doctoral mobility in France and Belgium, the third study presents *the Role of the Romanian Church abroad in preserving the identity of the Romanian emigrants*.

The information derived from 30 semi-structured interviews is augmented by quantitative analysis (questionnaire-based survey - 350 people). The data obtained from assessing a representative number of people in the Suceava County who migrated abroad, but who were in the country during Christmas and Easter Holidays and the annual leave respectively, between 2009 and 2011, generally show what is typical and applies to the entire population of migrants. Through the migration process, the average person experiences losses and separations. These losses are compensated to some extent by the possibilities and opportunities in the destination country. But to enjoy these advantages, the migrant must undergo several stages of adaptation, assimilation and integration: "Changes in the migrant are triggered with entering the new environment, where immigrants go through the process of adaptation and integration and through the stages of identity change. Such changes are reflected and retrieved across multiple identity dimensions and have powerful effects on family and community".

It is also notable that the need of direct knowledge is not confused here with an obsession of gathering information. The research data are continuously combined with other studies and designed in the national and international framework offered by the relevant published literature. They aim to follow fundamental targets of the contemporary society and can provide comparative benchmarks for subsequent social analysis of the international migrant profile and the Romanian migrant features, from individual identities to collective identities.

By approaching decisions as cause and effect of the identity changes, the author insists on the situations of return to home country, with an "outer" identity marked by the migration experience and the need for social reintegration of migrants. This need should be approached by special government and non-governmental programs, a

social policy line which is unfortunately too often verbally displayed and rarely materialized in viable forms. Within the best traditions of the classic Romanian sociology, Cristina Cormoș does not limit herself to describing and explaining identity changes and their effects on family and community, but also introduces the institutional aspect into the equation, thus involving a commitment to sociology as a social science that can help to both describe and change the world.

References

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