

SOCIAL REMITTANCES AND SOCIAL CAPITAL: VALUES AND PRACTICES OF TRANSNATIONAL SOCIAL SPACE

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*M*igration cannot be viewed anymore as the process that uproots persons from their home country and reintegrates them into a new society and culture. Recent studies suggested that contemporary immigrants do not sever their relationships with the home country, on the contrary, they forge and sustain multiple linkages with it. This study draws on Levitt's (1998) concept of social remittances as the diffusion of social norms, practices, and social capital toward and from migrant-sending countries. The first section of the paper defines social remittances in relation to other types of remittances. Further, it identifies factors that influence the magnitude of social remittances' impact on home and host societies of migrants, and explains the pathways of its transfer. The second part of the study focuses on social capital and its role as a network in transferring values and norms reciprocally across national borders. Drawing on the essential attributes of social capital, such as trust and reciprocity, this paper argues that social capital creates the transnational social space, building on solidarity among people.

Keywords: social remittances, social capital, migration.

INTRODUCTION

Scholars viewed migration, for several generations, as the process that uproots persons from their home country and reintegrate them into a new society and culture. However, recent studies suggested that contemporary immigrants do not sever their relationships with the home country, on the contrary, they forge and sustain multiple linkages with it. Immigrants are better understood as transmigrants, persons who live their lives in a transnational social space (Levitt, 2005), and develop identities configured in relations to both home and host countries (Glick-Schiller et al., 1995). The twenty-first century immigrants belong to two societies simultaneously (Levitt, 2005). They become incorporated in the institutions and patterns of daily life of the country in which they reside. At the very same time, yet, they maintain connections, build institutions, conduct transactions, and influence local and national events in the countries from which they migrated (Glick-Schiller et al., 1995).

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Transnational perspective of migration has grown in popularity, because “migration is as much about the people who stay behind as it is about those who move” (Levitt, 2005: 2). Transmigrants leave their country, but don’t abandon it (Glick-Schiller, 1999). The connections between migrants and non-migrants are so strong sometimes that both parties’ lives are radically changed by economic, cultural, political and social exchanges between them. These exchanges are known also as remittances. The most researched remittances are the economic remittances, or the transfer of money and goods from migrants to relatives or friends in homelands. After foreign direct investment, they are the second largest source of external funding for the developing countries (World Bank, 2010). Besides economic remittances, however, migrants transfer to their home communities technological remittances (Goldring, 2003), political remittances (Fitzgerald, 2000) and social remittances (Levitt, 1998).

This study focuses on social remittances and their reciprocal transfer across national borders. Levitt (1998) coined the term social remittance to define the diffusion of social norms, practices, and social capital toward and from migrants-sending countries. Social capital, as a distinct type of social remittance, is defined in this paper along two dimensions. The first one focuses on collective social norms, trust and networks that can improve the efficiency of society (Putnam, 2000), and the second one looks at the individual’s obligations and expectations that take the form of a “capital” invested in one person for future use (Coleman, 1988).

The first section of the paper defines social remittances in relation to other remittances. Further, it identifies factors that influence the magnitude of social remittances’ impact on home and host societies of migrants, and explains the pathways of its transfer. The second part of the study focuses on social capital and its role as a network in transferring values and norms reciprocally across national borders. Drawing on the essential attributes of social capital, such as trust and reciprocity, I argue that social capital creates the transnational social space, building on solidarity among people.

REMITTANCES AS SOURCE OF CHANGE IN HOME COUNTRIES

Durand (1994) argues that remittances are not a unitary package, nor are they context-independent (as cited in Goldring, 2003). Remittances can be disaggregated conceptually into economic and “beyond economic remittances”. In the 1990s, the relationship between international migration and development was redefined by the possibility of remittances to leverage and promote development of labor-exporting countries (Goldring, 2003). The economic remittances were therefore studied as an important factor for global development. The transfers of money and goods from migrants to relatives or friends in their country of origin are the second largest source, after foreign direct investment, of external funding for developing countries

(Mohamoud and Fréchet, 2006). Only in 2010, the economic remittances reached a level of \$325 billion, a figure three times higher than the total official aid flows to the developing countries (World Bank, 2010). Today, the transfers of funds still supplement the domestic incomes of millions of poor families (Mohamoud and Fréchet, 2006).

Changes in political, social and economic contexts drawn the attention of various non-state and state actors to the utility of remittances (Goldring, 2003). Governments even designed programs and policies to manage and attract remittances from successful migrants to enhance the entrepreneurial spirit and the welfare of communities of origin. However, the analysis of these implemented policies' effects in communities have revealed a critical extra-economic dimension of remittances. For instance, Nichols (2002) emphasizes the importance of knowledge, skills and technology that migrants bring back home with their return (as cited in Goldring, 2003). He entitles them technological remittances. Fitzgerald (2000) focuses on political remittances, representing the changes in political identities, demands and practices nurtured by new political ideas and values of returning migrants into their homeland.

Finally, Levitt (1998) uses the term social remittances to describe the diffusion and circulation of different social practices and ideas into the migrants-sending and migrants-receiving areas, which accompany the migration process. Noteworthy, while economic remittances are usually conceived of as unidirectional flows, from host countries to the homelands of migrants, social and political remittances may be multi-directional (Goldring, 2003; Levitt and Lamba, 2011).

SOCIAL REMITTANCES

Social remittances are ideas, practices, minds set, world views, values and attitudes, norms of behavior and social capital (knowledge, experience and expertise) that the diaspora mediate and transfer from host to home countries (Mohamoud and Fréchet, 2006). According to Levitt and Lamba (2011), there are at least four types of social remittances – normative structures, systems of practice, identities, and social capital. Normative structures are ideas, values and beliefs, that include norms of behavior, notions about family responsibility, principles of neighborliness and community participation, and aspiration for social mobility (Levitt, 2005). They are related to ideas about gender, race, and class identity, principles and values of organizations, government and churches. They also include norms about the role of the clergy, judges, and politicians (Levitt and Schelling, 2004).

Systems of practice are the actions shaped by normative structures. They encompass organizational practices, such as recruiting and socializing new members, goal setting and strategizing, establishing leadership roles, and forming interagency ties (Levitt, 2005). They also include how individuals delegate

household tasks and how much they participate in political, religious and civic groups (Mohamoud and Fréchaud, 2006).

Both values and norms on which social capital is based, and social capital itself, were socially remitted (Levitt, 1998). Bourdieu (1986), Putnam (1993, 2000) and Coleman (1988) understand social capital as a resource to collective action, consisting of social networks of civic engagement and associated norms that have an effect on the productivity of the community. A more broad view of social capital includes the social and political environment that enables institutional norms to develop and shape social structure (North, 1990). Social capital's characteristics and its role in facilitating the circulation of values and norms between new lands and homelands will be described in the second section of the paper.

Levitt and Lamba (2011) argue that migrants' experiences from their home countries have a strong influence on how they settle in the new culture which, in turn, affects what they subsequently remit back home. For this reason, social remittances have to be understood through a transnational perspective. Only by looking at changes and effects of other remittances in home and host countries will not reveal how or why values, norms and practices travel within the transnational social space created by migrants. For instance, migrants from Dominican Republic bring with them to their new country a strong sense of responsibility to their community, valued social ties, passion for partisan politics, as well as associational practices (Levitt and Lamba, 2011). Living in the US and dealing with phenomena such as red tape and protocol, socialize migrants toward a more bureaucratic dimension; migrants learn new organizational skills, abiding more by legal norms, demanding accountability or upholding contractual agreements. Eventually, these are the values and practices that they remit back to the Dominican Republic.

Pralong (2010) published in Romania a collection of almost forty interviews with Romanian returned migrants. Their stories document how the Romanian cultural heritage critically contributed to their integration in the new societies, but also how their new value system induced cultural and social changes in Romanian communities where they currently live. For instance, Romanian students who received scholarships at prestigious international universities brought with them from Romania the discipline of studying and the responsibility of work (Pralong, 2010). However, their mentality was dramatically changed when exposed to open dialogue and freedom of expressing opinions or critics in the classroom environment and beyond. Manaila, a Romanian Harvard graduate and director of the most prestigious investment house in Romania stated: "I returned to Romania and founded in Bucharest the first international fair for universities, so that Romanian students find out about the educational curriculum and teaching styles of international higher education institutions. [...] I wanted to be a pioneer of change in my country" (Pralong, 2010).

Impact of social remittances on the communities of origin

Manaila and others who returned to Romania carrying a new set of values, norms, practices and attitudes, succeeded to implement change (Pralong, 2010). However, others were not equally successful. Next, I discuss factors that determine the nature and magnitude of social remittance impact, focussing on the type of remittance, the messenger, the target audience and differences between sending and receiving countries.

Impact of social remittances partially depends on how easy a particular remittance is to transmit. Those which are clear, such as practices, are easy to circulate (Levitt, 1998). They may be modified and adopted or disregarded. Conversely, if the remittances are values and norms, which are less visible and fluctuate more easily, their impact is diminished. Sandu (2006) emphasizes that only 38% of the Romanians consider that living abroad changes mentalities. At the same time, 82% of them believe that people who worked abroad are wealthier. Values such as way of thinking or mentality are more difficult to be noticed, hence more difficult to assess their direct influence.

In a different study, Sandu (2006) studies, on a national representative sample, the effects of temporary migration on the societies and communities of origin in Romania. He argues that working abroad contributes to accumulating skills, values and life styles. Valuing risk-taking, work, and having an entrepreneurial spirit are only a few of the changes resulted from Sandu's national study in Romania. Ninety percent of the people who worked abroad believe that risk is necessary to succeed in life; comparatively, only 70% of Romanians who have not traveled to foreign countries are risk-takers. Moreover, work experience abroad positively correlates with entrepreneurial behavior and intention to set up a business. Ten percent of Romanians are entrepreneurs, but 23% of those who travelled abroad have set up a business. Similarly, 61% of former workers abroad consider that work is very important in their life, comparing to the average of 48% in the national sample.

The characteristics of the messenger, the carrier of the social remittance, influence the nature and magnitude of change (Levitt, 1998). Individuals occupying a higher social status have more credibility, moral and professional authority. For traditional societies usually the credible messengers are men, people with money or older members of community. In all migrant sending societies, however, high status individuals generally heighten the impact of remittances, for they are in the position of redefining standards.

The interviews conducted by Pralong (2010) with almost forty Romanians who returned to their home country showed the force of inducing social change from the young but very well educated individuals. In fact, two of the participants were able to create and implement laws in Romania, because of their well known reputation and recognized international experience. Most of these returned professionals established foundations and NGO's in their home country, which

turned into sources and tools of socialization for Romanians. Critical organizational values, norms, practices, attitudes, and ethics were changed by having a Westernized leader. “The most shocking thing for me was to see a young team that was that pessimistic. Everything I proposed was received with a NO. I had never seen that in America, where the whole culture is built on the *motto* that nothing is impossible. Over time, this changed, and in a few months, projects started to move” (Pralong, 2010: 39).

Remittances impact is also influenced by the target audience. One of the most researched areas of social remittances includes their effects on gender issues. Levitt (2001) discusses how women were more receptive to new ideas or practices when they were more independent from their husbands, had higher income, and were younger or unmarried.

How influential social remittances are, also depend on the differences between the sending and receiving countries. DiMaggio (1988) argues that patterns of behavior, social relations, or ideas that are similar to those already in place are more easily adopted. When the remitted values resemble the pattern of the prevailing ones, then social remittances are likely to be assimilated more quickly. The Dominican community studied by Levitt (2001) was more likely to adopt new religious practices from the US than political ones. This was because both communities practiced forms of Catholic services in church, and importing new style didn’t bring significant changes. However, political remittances advocated egalitarian leadership styles that went against the mainstream political practice in Dominican Republic. Mohamoud and Fréchat (2006) identify poor governance, lack of democracy and rule of law in African countries as being the most powerful challenge for migrants who decide to return and help their homelands develop.

Finally, the size and power differences between the cultures determine the remittances impact (Levitt, 1988). In Keohane’s (2001) terms, both the soft and hard power of a country influence the acceptance of social remittances imported from that country. Already powerful global cultural flows reinforce social remittances. Moreover, remittances traveling consistently with other global values in the same period of time have a greater impact on the home community. Non-migrants frequently copy the behavior of those who return, because they want to be like those in the rich, modern cultures. Levitt (1998) argues that values and norms transfers among more equal states are less powerful.

Pathways of transferring social remittances

Social remittances exchanges occur when migrants return to live in or visit their communities of origin, when non-migrants visit their relatives or friends in the receiving country, or through exchanges of letters, videos, cassettes, e-mails, and telephone calls (Levitt, 2005). This emphasizes the active agency of social actors and their interactions with global cultural flows. Ordinary people can act as

cultural creators and carriers who receive, expand, interpret and transform the values and practices they have been exposed to (Suksomboon, 2008).

However, Levitt (1998) argues that the ways of social remittances' transmission differ from those of global cultural dissemination. First, unlike the diffuse dissemination of global culture, the transmission of social remittances is specific. The pathways, argues Levitt (2005) are identifiable, the source and the destination are clear. Migrants and non-migrants can state how they learned of particular ideas. Second, social remittances are passed on intentionally and systematically, unlike cultural dissemination. Most of the times, migrants encourage non-migrants toward political and economic reforms during their communication with family and friends from home. Third, remittances are transferred between individuals who know each other as opposed to the faceless, mass nature of global cultural diffusion. Finally, claims Levitt (2001), remittances' transmission is a part of the global cultural flow, as the latter paves the way for the former. Levitt (2001) considers that social remittances are much easier accepted and adopted when they emulate the patterns laid out by cultural globalization, for instance, those observed in the media.

Diaspora and transnational migrants use formal and informal pathways to transfer their social remittances to their home communities (Mohamoud and Fréchaud, 2006). The informal contacts, emails, letters, internet chats, enable migrants to transmit social values, attitudes and norms to their relatives at home. Emigrants share with friends and families information about political, religious or social ideas and practices, and encourage them to promote change and reforms in the homeland. A different type of informal pathway to transmit social remittances back home consists of individuals in the diaspora returning permanently or temporarily. "Viajeros", circular migrants or individuals who travel frequently between the two countries, play crucial parts in moving goods, money, but information too (Tilly, 2007).

Permanent return migration generates a very influential type of social remittances, for they are delivered by individuals who carry a higher social status. In her book, "Why did I return to Romania", Pralong (2010) emphasizes, with a collection of almost fifty interviews, the profound social changes and tremendous transformations generated by Romanian migrants who returned to their communities. "With what we learned abroad, we can build a new Romania", stated an interviewee. Many Romanian returning migrants founded organizations or companies, and started businesses, yet the most important assets they brought were ethic of work, positive attitude, honesty in personal relationships, trust, punctuality, and the courage to be different (Pralong, 2010).

The formal channels for social remittances' transfer include governmental organizations, such as the Department for Romanians abroad, under the Romanian General Secretariat of the Government. Its objectives are mainly developing and implementing the state's policy toward the Romanian communities outside the

boarders, and building and maintaining a continuous flow of information in both directions among the government and the Romanian community. In addition, on line forums, foundations or other non-governmental organizations bridging the host and home countries constitute formal pathways for transferring social remittances. Levitt and Lamba (2011) identify television programs produced to capture aspect of migrants' and homeland communities' life style as a way to allow both migrants and non-migrants to keep informed and witness the transformation of their community.

REMITTED SOCIAL CAPITAL

Social capital, a sociological concept at origins, developed into a ubiquitous explanation for virtually any socio-economic problem. Defined initially by Bourdieu (1986) as an attribute of an individual in a social context, social capital has evolved in two directions. The first one concentrates on collective social norms, trust and networks that can improve the efficiency of society (Putnam, 2000), and the second one focuses on the individual's obligations and expectations that take the form of a "capital" invested in one person for future use (Coleman, 1988). Rarely, these two dimensions are met together in a definition of social capital, yet they are both essential for understanding social remittances.

Collective dimension

Let's consider first the Brown and Ferris' (2003) description of social capital "as social networks among individuals and norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them" (p. 2). Do networks among individuals matter for migration and flow of social remittances? Do reciprocity and trust among people have an impact on the process of relocating into and transmitting social values from the host country?

Migrant networks not only sustain but increase the likelihood of migration, as they reduce the costs of relocation (transport, food, lodging, information costs, opportunity costs and psychic costs). Network formation is, probably, the most important structural mechanism in international migration. Migrant networks are sets of interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination areas thorough the bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey, 1988). Having friends or relatives at a destination dramatically increases the probability of migrating to that location. Once the network reaches a certain level of stability and spread, migration becomes self-perpetuating, as migration itself creates the social structure needed to sustain it (Massey, 1988).

Emigration research in Europe indicates that networks were a powerful force in promoting and channeling European emigration (Morawska, 1988); similarly,

recent studies show that access to network connections raised the likelihood of emigration from Mexico to the United States (Massey and Garcia-Espana, 1987). As Taylor (1986) argues, networks, with their abilities to offer jobs to newcomers, make migration a reliable and risk-free economic resource. For instance, 60% of all living people born in Ticuani, a village in Mexico, live in the US, most of them in New York (Tilly, 2007). In Romania, during the first stage of emigration after the collapse of communism (1990–1995) the pattern of departure without support or assistance from others prevailed. Only 22% of those who left for work abroad received help from someone, the others using labour intermediation companies. As the number of people who left increased, personal networks expanded, and companies lost their importance. Therefore, between 1996 and 2001, 40% of the Romanian migrants received help to leave, and after 2001, their percentage reached 60% (Sandu, 2006).

Tilly (2007) suggests that networks are more than just facilitators of migration. Interpersonal trust, an essential attribute of social capital, creates the transnational space, building on solidarity between people at the origins and destinations of migration. For this reason, migration tend to concentrate people from the same trust networks into specific economic, geographic and social niches. A large number of Romanian immigrants – between 500,000 and 600,000 – live in Spain, and they are not uniformly scattered throughout the country (Sandu, 2006). The Romanians live in the same areas, go to the same shops, use the same means of public transportation, go to the same churches, meet and spend spare time together. The town of Coslada, for instance, has 13,000 Romanians out of 70,000 inhabitants. The trust networks of Romanians build around churches, which become not only a place where people come to pray, but a meeting place, a place where people can socialize and exchange information (Sandu, 2006). The economic and social concentration of Romanians, as a consequence of trust networks, is represented by their preference for jobs. More than 60% of Romanian migrating men work in construction, while almost 47% of women are in housekeeping sector.

Individual dimension of social capital

The second definition of social capital, belonging to Coleman (1988), refers to individual as *homo oeconomicus*. According to this perspective, individual's obligations and expectations take the form of a capital invested in other people for future use. In other words, if A does something for B and trust B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B. This obligation can be conceived as a credit slip held by A for performance by B.

Migrants in new countries invest in those at the other end of the migration stream, for they build their capital, or credit slip. They do not want to lose their privileged status in their home communities. Tilly (2007) argues that relations

between migrants and those who stayed home reinforce the migrant's claim on the membership in the sending community. This capital works as a source of social insurance, as it offers migrants the opportunity to return, it secures care for their children, and socializes migrants' children into network and home culture. Moreover, Levitt and Lamba (2011) argue that migrants choose strategically which connections to keep and nurture and which to let aside, based on their anticipation regarding future needs.

Suksomboon (2008) discusses the importance of remittances for Thai families who, in return, take care of migrants' children. Similarly, when families offer help and support for one member to migrate, they also invest capital and expect return investment, in the form of remittances, from the one who leaves (Suskomboon, 2008). Suskomboon (2008) argues that some young Thai villagers prefer to a certain degree to have a daughter instead of a son, because they expect that their daughters will sooner or later marry a foreign man and will remit large sums of money.

Therefore, this form of social capital depends on reciprocity, which functions as a norm. If the norm is not followed, meaning B does not perform his part of obligations, B attracts severe negative sanctions. As Tilly (2007) mentions, in trust, networks criticism and shunning work as negative sanctions. If one member default in sending remittances, for instance, or does not help other members of the migrant stream, he or she will be criticized and stigmatized by the community. This is a mutual obligation relationship. Members of migrant trust networks reinforce the rights and obligations built into these networks. This also ensures passing of values, ideas and practices between the home and host country members. In the village of Miraflores, argues Levitt (2001), when someone does not help the migrant community as much as they are perceived to be able to, their family at home is marginalized. Conversely, when migrants contribute positively to the existence and sustainability of immigrant community, their families at home are rewarded with increased social capital.

Social capital has not only positive consequences, but negative too; hence the migrant trust network confronts its members with a few disadvantages. For instance, the trust network facilitates, but also confines its members to niches created and inhabited by other migrants. Despite the market dominated economy of the US, immigrants acquire jobs, housing through personal contacts. Living in a constricted network confines an individual to a limited range of opportunities. Therefore, if the opportunities include access to capital, advanced education, network members do well, but, if they concentrate in low-wage labor, network members suffer consequences (Tilly, 2007). Network based social capital, on one side, provides security, solidarity, mutual aid, and connections. On the other side, it confers restricted opportunity, and negative sanctions, as shunning, or even expulsion, when members break the norm of reciprocity. Tilly (2007) concludes that if the networks adapt, incorporate new connections and facilitate members'

opportunities, then transnational ties survive and prosper in the long run, otherwise they decline. In any case, these types of networks shape the lives of immigrants and their families in home countries.

Diaspora and the power of social capital

Despite long distances between them, migrants and their relatives share the same social space (Levitt, 2005), as they are members of the same networks that stretch between the sending community and its migrants (Grasmuck and Pessar, 1991; Levitt, 2001). More recent research emphasizes that these networks encompass not only the two host and home communities, but multiple others, all of them contributing to building the identity of the new immigrant (Gomez and Benton, 2002).

Migrants make use of their identities and new status in the host country to advance their cause in the home country. For example, long distance nationalist or liberation movements have frequently influenced national transformations throughout history. Lithuania would not have become an independent state without immigrants in the United States to mobilize into a force of change (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Similarly, Romanian diaspora had a prevalent role in starting the Romanian Revolution in 1989. Furthermore, they were an even more important player in democratizing the country. Some of the most prominent political, cultural and economical personalities of post Revolution Romania were returned migrants (Kast and Rosapepe, 2009). More recent examples indicate the transnational migrants' critical role in rebuilding Iraq and Egypt. Transnational migrants can also fuel movements for rights and social justice; they have the power to strengthen, alter or thwart religious movements.

Migrants, with their networks and lobby power, can potentially shift the position of states within the economic order, and even influence internal order of states (Jimenez, 2008; Levitt and Schiller, 2004). The 2009 Romanian presidential elections were swung by the Romanian diaspora living in the United States who massively voted against the exit poll-leader, after the voting closed in Romania. Therefore, as Faist (2010) argues, transnational migrants not only challenge the notion of citizenship, but they are also embedded in multiple legal and political institutions that determine access and action to social change.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The traditional view of immigration as a process that uproots individuals and implants them in a new society does not correspond anymore to the complex reality where migrants maintain and develop relations, both with new lands and homelands. The twenty-first century migrant belongs to at least two societies, simultaneously. Their identity develops in relation to all communities that they are

part of. They live in a transnational social space, in which, voluntarily or involuntarily, they circulate values, norms, practices, attitudes, and social capital, in the form of social remittances (Levitt, 1998). The flow of social remittances is a continuous process occurring in both directions, toward host and home cultures. The paper discussed the types of social remittances as identified by Levitt, such as norms, practices, and social capital, following the definitions adopted by most scholars of social remittances.

However, a broader and more recent perspective of social capital, to include people's beliefs, their optimism, trust and connection to the community (Noiset, 2008), encompasses the norms and values, while the practices are natural consequences of the former. Consequently, social remittances and transnational social space are dimensions of social capital built by migrants and non-migrants together. Following Putnam's definition, social capital was viewed in this paper as the social networks and the norms associated with them. In this way of thinking, social remittances are nothing but the norm-based social capital. Along this dimension, values, norms, and beliefs are flowing among the migrant exporting and importing countries, building stocks of social capital. In addition, the transnational social space, or the infrastructure for social capital circulation is identified with the network-based social capital. The network-based social capital, according to Putnam (2000), is reflected, for example, by individuals' involvement in formal groups and community leadership.

Despite some disagreements on terminology, the paper agrees on the significance of social remittances which permeate the daily life of migrants and non-migrants equally, affecting their behavior, attitudes, and values. The first part of the study makes the distinction between social remittances and social capital. It also indicates that the type of remittance, the messenger, the target audience and differences between sending and receiving countries contribute to and influence the impact of social remittance on home and host societies of migrants. Further, there are identified formal and informal pathways through which social remittances are transferred. The second part of the paper captures the complexity of social capital as a distinct type of social remittance. Social capital is defined along two main dimensions, individual and collective. It is argued that migration itself, as well as the transfer of social remittances, occur on the support of social capital as interpersonal network. Finally, the study considers the power of political and institutional change that resides in the social capital of transnational social space.

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Procesul de migrație nu mai poate fi înțeles numai ca deșurădăcinare (a migranților din țara de origine) și integrare a migranților în noua societate. Studii recente arată că imigranții contemporani nu întrerup relațiile cu țara de origine, ci din contră, mențin și întăresc legăturile cu aceasta. Studiul de față pornește de la conceptul de remitențe sociale (Levitt, 1998) înțeles ca transfer de norme, practici și capital social dinspre și spre țara de origine. Prima secțiune a lucrării definește remitențele sociale în raport cu alte tipuri de remitențe. În continuare, studiul identifică factori care influențează magnitudinea impactului remitențelor sociale asupra societății gazdă și de origine, iar ulterior explică modalitățile de transfer a acestui tip de remitențe. Partea a doua analizează conceptul de capital social ca rețea de transfer al valorilor și normelor sociale între țările de origine și gazdă. Plecând de la atributele esențiale ale capitalului social, încredere și reciprocitate, care contribuie la formarea solidarității între migranți și cei rămași în țara de origine, studiul argumentează că spațiul transnațional este creat de capitalul social.

Cuvinte-cheie: remitențe sociale, capital social, migrație.

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