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New Forms of Mobility at the Romanian-Moldovan border: European Enlargement and Changing Living Strategies

Abstract

European enlargement process is characterised by a new way the EU external borders function. This paper presents the preliminary results of a research project about the role of international mobility under the changing forms and functions of the border between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The analysis is focused on cross-border trade developed by Moldavian "tourists" with Romania. The fieldwork, based on qualitative methods, was done in a big Romanian city where trans-border petty trade concentrates: Iași. As a result, it can be said that the border between Romania and Moldova has been a space for cross-border mobility and trade only after the collapse of Communist regimes. And this makes it no different from other former Communist borders: trade is a sign of post-communist times and of European integration there. Nevertheless, the organisation of cross-border trade has changed in the last fifteen years. Suitcase trade has several faces and occurs in different kinds of places; this clearly shows that the changes at the border are part of petty traders' strategies.

Introduction

In recent years, borders have become a major issue in the European enlargement process. On the one hand, the 2004 enlargement has "maintained" internal borders of the EU, since citizens of new Central and Eastern European member countries still do not benefit from the same freedom of movement as citizens of the older member states. On the other hand, the issue of the external borders of Europe was put under the spotlight during the last enlargement and the coming ones.

These political debates were accompanied by an important volume of scientific work about borders. It is often assumed that different kinds of cross-border mobility (trade,

temporary labour migration, family connections...) exist; they are therefore often considered as having the capacity to "erase" borders¹. Research works about transnationalism and transnational migration develop a different point of view. They see transnational migrants as being able to circumvent Nation-State and its constraints². In this perspective borders remain a State constraint. In both approaches, borders and mobility are opposite. Borders are considered as an impediment to social relations between different places. They would "exclude" people from the "outside" of the border while mobility is seen as having the ability to develop connections between places and societies.

Since 1989, Romania has become more and more attractive for international migrants, as did other Central and Eastern European countries. It is not only a departure country (a fact that is well known by scientific researchers), but also a transit and destination country. Moldavians, citizens of the neighbouring Republic of Moldova, are the most important group of migrants in Romania: they number more than 5.000 in a total foreign population of about 24.000 people³. After the breakdown of the USSR, cross-border circulation to Romania appeared as a new economic resource for a lot of Moldavians: petty trade considerably grew between the two countries.

Trans-border mobility has been analysed in various works about Central and Eastern European countries, as well as about the former USSR⁴. A lot has been written about "trade tourism" or "suitcase tourism" or "shuttle trade": "*the economic raison d'être of trader-tourism (...) rests on the assumption that the traders attempt to pass for tourists*"⁵. People

¹ Lévy J., Lussault M., 2003, *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, Paris: Belin.

² Bash L., Glick-Schiller N., Szanton-Blanc C., 1994, *Nations Unbound. Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments and Deterritorialized Nation-States*, New York: Gordon and Breach.

³ Romanian Census, 2002.

⁴ See for instance Bodnar J., 1998, "Assembling the Square: Social Transformation in Public Space and the Broken Mirage of the Second Economy in Postsocialist Budapest", *Slavic Review*, 57, 3, pp.489-515; Sik E., Wallace C., 1999, "The Development of Open Air Markets in East-Central Europe", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23, 4; Thuen T., 1999, "The Significance of Borders in the East European Transition", *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23, 4; Van de Velde M., Marcinczak S., 2005, *From Iron Curtain to Paper Wall: The influence of border-regimes on regional economies and societies. The life, death and resurrection of the bazaars in the Łódź-region*, Nijmegen: Research Group Governance and Places, University of Nijmegen, Working Paper Series, 5.

⁵ Konstantinov Y., 1996, "Patterns of Reinterpretation: Trader-Tourism in the Balkans (Bulgaria) as a Picaresque Metaphorical Enactment of Post-Totalitarianism", *American Ethnologist*, 23, 4.

from one particular country are going abroad to buy goods, then sell them once back in their country, as Konstantinov's Bulgarian traders do while being "tourists" in Turkey. Trade tourists can also sell, while abroad, goods they have bought in their own country⁶. Trade tourists often concentrate in so-called "open air markets" (OAM)⁷. From its very beginning right after the fall of the USSR, Moldavian trade concentrates in market places in Romania: those markets are in the focus here.

Romania entered the European Union (EU) on 1/1/2007. The Romanian government had to reinforce its control on international migration, as well as control on borders. Indeed, migration and borders are in the same European policy area: Justice and Home Affairs (JHA). Our aim here is therefore to question the relation between borders and mobility. The paper is a work in progress rather than a set of conclusions⁸. Nevertheless, we assume that the strengthening of the Romanian-Moldavian border, brought on by this European enlargement, is causing big changes in mobility practices of Moldavian citizens shuttling between the two countries. Moldavian petty traders include the border, its rules, and its crossing in their original life strategy. Therefore, the border does produce special social and spatial practices.

The Romania-Moldova Border: A New Space for Mobility

Various works about trade tourism emphasize that it is not a new phenomenon provoked by the change of regime at the beginning of the nineties. On the contrary, it appears in numerous places and cases as a form of continuity between socialism in the past and

⁶ Fish M., Edwards L., 1989, "Shadow trading by international tourists in the Soviet Union", *Journal of Criminal Justice*, 17; Hann C., Hann I., 1992, "Samovars and Sex on Turkey's Russian Markets", *Anthropology Today*, 8, 4.

⁷ About the notion of open air market see Sik E., Wallace C., *op. cit.*

⁸ The first results come from my fieldwork research in Romania in April 2006, while working as a post-doctoral researcher at the Centre d'Etude des mondes Russe, Centre-Européen et Caucasiens (CERCEC), Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris. Cross-border trade has been analysed in the city of Iași, on the "Romanian side", where a lot of Moldavians come. Qualitative empirical methods (interviews, observations) have been followed; about 30 interviews have been realised, with petty traders as well as with the market administration.

capitalism in the present. And this is because trade tourism is embedded in the grey (second) economy that already existed in Communist times⁹.

Indeed, Polish suitcase tourists used to come to Romania before 1989, as well as Romanian citizens from the west of the country used to go to Yugoslavia (Serbia) or Hungary to buy goods they would sell afterwards in Romania¹⁰. But the border between Romania and the USSR (Moldova) seems to have been hermetically closed, so that none of the Moldavians interviewed in Romania mentioned any kind of trans-border exchange before the collapse of the Communist regime.

Nevertheless, cross-border traffic developed very quickly at the beginning of the nineties. At first, former Soviet citizens did not need any visas to enter Central and Eastern European countries (among them Romania). Post-communist governments signed "simplified agreements" about border crossing that allowed their citizens to circulate from one country to another¹¹.

The Opening of the Border at the Beginning of Post-Communist Times

From the very beginning of the 1990s, the border between Romania and the newly born Republic of Moldova is characterised by original features. Those clearly express the strong but ambiguous relationships the two countries have with one another.

The border is quite open: circulation is easy, since one only needs a personal identity card to cross it. From then cross-border trade develops very quickly. It is mainly directed from Moldova to Romania and this because of the price difference: Moldavians sell various

⁹ Bodnar J., *op. cit.*; Sik E., Wallace C., *op. cit.*

¹⁰ Chelcea L., Lăţea P., 2004, "Cultura penuriei: bunuri, strategii și practici de consum în România anilor '80", in Neculau Adrian (ed.), *Viața cotidiană în communism*, Iași: Polirom; Sandu D., Radu C., Constantinescu M., Ciobanu O., 2004, *Country Report on Romanian Migration Abroad: Stocks and Flows after 1989*, on internet http://www.migrationonline.cz/studies_f.shtml?x=211633, Multicultural Center Prague (17/04/2007).

¹¹ Moore M., 2004, "Politiques migratoires émergentes en Europe centrale et orientale", *Migrations Sociétés*, 16, 92.

kinds of products (manufactured products, agricultural products, fish, cigarettes, vodka...) in open air market places in Romania. The whole Eastern border region in Romania is affected, even if Moldavian tourist traders concentrate in urban centres, such as Suceava in the north, Iași, Băcău, Galați, Tulcea, etc.¹².

A set of geopolitical elements shapes the ambiguous relationship between Moldova and Romania, and this partly explains their respective policies about their shared border. On the Moldavian side, the policy toward Romania seeks to avoid the reunification issue¹³. This policy has been strengthened since 1994; it is reinforced by an inner policy promoting a Moldavian identity, clearly distinct from a Romanian one¹⁴. From 2001 on, the Voronin policy generates a diplomatic conflict and a decline of economic exchanges with Romania.

On the Romanian side, a lot of initiatives are taken in the 1990s to support relationship with Moldova¹⁵. Romania is the first State to recognize the newly gained independence of Moldova in August 1991. Moreover, Romanian citizenship can be granted to Moldavian citizens whose parents or grandparents were born in the Bessarabian territories that used to be part of Great Romania until June, 28th 1940. This gives shape to the idea that Moldavians are part of the Romanian Nation, the later being defined in ethnic terms. A lot of Romanian politicians defend this idea, which legitimises the granting of Romanian citizenship. Thirdly, a "Fund for the Republic of Moldova" is created in the Romanian State budget; it is meant to support economic and cultural activities in the neighbour country, as well as to develop non governmental organisations there¹⁶.

If reunification was never officially claimed by Romanian authorities, it is nevertheless very clear that both states have divergent opinions about national identities (especially the

¹² Centrul Roman pentru Jurnalism de Investigație (C.R.J.I., Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism), 2003, *Report on the borders of Romania*, on internet <http://www.crji.org> (11/04/2007).

¹³ Tomescu-Hatto O., 2004, "Romanian-Moldovan political and economic relations", Communication at the Conference *Europe and the transition process in the Republic of Moldova*, Munich: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, on internet: <http://www.suedosteuropa-gesellschaft.com> (11/04/2007).

¹⁴ Demian A., 2004, "Roumanité et moldavité en République de Moldavie. Lorsque culture et ethnicité renvoient à des logiques conflictuelles", *La Nouvelle Alternative*, 19, 63, pp.49-59.

¹⁵ Tomescu-Hatto O., 2005, "Comment conjuguer l'élargissement de l'Union européenne et la sécurité de ses frontières? Le chapitre roumano-moldave", *Les études du C.E.R.I.*, 116.

¹⁶ Tomescu-Hatto O., 2004, *op .cit.*

Moldavian one) as well as about the legitimacy of the Moldavian State. As a consequence, they developed different policies about their shared border. European Union appears as the third major actor, and from the end of the 1990s, most reforms are supervised by European authorities.

From 2001 on, several agreements are signed by Romania and Moldova: agreements about crossing the border¹⁷, as well as agreements between administrations responsible for the control of the border in each country (General Inspectorate of the Border Police in Romania, Department of Border Policy in Moldova)¹⁸.

Nevertheless, numerous points of disagreement remain; the signed agreements do not have clear effect. This lack of effectiveness is firstly due to the fact that the authorities and administrations responsible in each country have very different sets of competences; collaboration is therefore difficult. Moreover, technical means are unequally distributed along the border and its nine crossing points, and laws have to be amended to take into account the changes that occurred at the border since 1991. Therefore, the Romanian-Moldavian collaboration on the border is not that effective¹⁹.

In fact, this clearly tells that the border has not the same value and importance for both countries. This border is in the focus in Romania because it is right in the heart of its integration process into the European Union. On the contrary, Moldavian authorities pay more attention to Transnistria and the border with Ukraine. Therefore, the European policy toward this future Eastern border adds to a regional geopolitical context in which many interests coexist.

¹⁷ Agreement on reciprocal travels, 29/06/2001; Agreement of 27/07/2001 about readmission of foreigners; Protocol for the travel of citizens, 27/09/2001.

¹⁸ Institutul pentru Politice Publice București (I.P.P. Bucharest, Institute for Public Policies), 2002, *Nouă frontiera Schengen și impactul asupra relațiilor dintre România și Republica Moldova*, Bucharest, on internet <http://www.ipp.ro> (11/04/2007).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

In the Focus of the European Union: The Ambivalent Policy of the Border

The role played by the European Union makes things more complicated. First of all, as soon as the principle of Romanian accession is accepted in 1998, European authorities ask Romania to close the "simplified agreements" signed with other former communist states²⁰. Moreover, Romania has to impose passport requirement on Moldavian citizens to enter the country from July 2001. In return, Romanian citizens do not need any visa to enter Schengen from January, 1st 2002. All these changes show that Romania has to strengthen its border regime and controls during the European pre-accession process.

Moldova is concerned by another side of the European policy toward former communist states: the Neighbourhood Policy²¹. It is meant to develop strong economic and political collaboration with post-communist states, but without integrating them into European institutions²². Some measures make this policy tangible: for instance, a special visa regime for inhabitants of border regions, as well as the opening of new consulates of Central and Eastern European states (members of the EU) in the Community of Independent States (CIS), or the opening of new checkpoints on the borders between EU member states and their neighbours²³.

This built a general framework for the agreement signed between Moldova and the EU in February 2005. It is of great importance, since it means that enlargement is not any more the only political instrument of the EU. Another one is the "Neighbourhood"; therefore, both

²⁰ Moore M., *op. cit.*

²¹ For several years, European authorities put stress on making the future Eastern border of the EU more "secure". Nevertheless, the possible dismantling effects of this policy are now taken into account. The Neighbourhood Policy has been developed in 2002 for cooperation with neighbour states excluded from the European integration process: former Yugoslavia, and various states of the former USSR.

²² Guild E., 2005, "What is a Neighbour? Examining the EU Neighbourhood Policy from the Perspective of Movements of Persons", *Liberty and Security*, on internet <http://www.libertysecurity.org> (11/04/2007).

²³ De Tinguy A., 2004, "Migrations et mobilité, symbole et instrument de la réunification de l'Europe", *Migrations Sociétés*, 16, 92.

political frameworks must be taken into account to negotiate with the EU and to understand the reforms at the border.

In spite of the collaboration policy, the main goal remains, for the EU, to make its Eastern and Southern borders "safer". All measures against supposed threats coming from the neighbour states (illegal migration, supposed bogus asylum seekers, various trafficking, etc.) are reinforced²⁴. So the border between Moldova and Romania is now managed by this double European policy, as well as by both concerned states.

Romanian and Moldavian border policies agree on the procedure Moldavian citizens will need to undergo at the border once Romania has entered the EU. Indeed, European authorities impose on Romania a strengthening of controls and the introduction of visa requirements for Moldavians. But Romanian and Moldavian authorities want to find solutions which would still allow Moldavians to enter Romania without any major difficulty: becoming an EU member should not oblige Romania to cut all relationships with its neighbour. The same situation was already faced by Poland and Hungary.

Moldavians have to apply for Romanian visas since November 2006. They nevertheless benefit from a simplified visa regime: visas are free of charge, at least for some years after 2007. The system elaborated in Poland toward some neighbour countries (Belarus, Russia, Ukraine and Moldova) was used as a model²⁵.

Therefore, even if simplified, the future visa obligation will be a restriction in comparison to the present ability of crossing the border (between Moldova and Romania) with a simple passport. The border crossing policy is a compromise between opposite trends: on the one hand, Romania and Moldova want to keep cross-border traffic alive; on the other hand, European authorities ask for reinforced controls over border and population movement.

²⁴ Jeandesboz J., 2005, "La genèse de la politique européenne de voisinage: des logiques d'inclusion et d'exclusion aux frontières de l'Union européenne?", *Liberty and Security*, on internet <http://www.libertysecurity.org> (11/04/2007).

²⁵ The aim, for Poland, is to preserve economic and social ties that bind the Polish society to some regions of neighbour countries. Visas are therefore free of charge, but foreign citizens of those countries need to be invited by a Polish citizen and visas are only issued by Polish consulates.

Moldovan Tourist Traders in Iași: How the Circulation Reveals the Changing Border

The reinforcement of controls at the Romanian-Moldavian border began in 2001. From then on, Moldavian petty trade seems to have changed. This assumption needs to be confirmed by further fieldwork research; but the information gathered in Iași confirms that cross-border suitcase trade is adapting to the new conditions at the border. This particular kind of mobility gets more and more complex, and is integrated in a broader set of international mobility.

The Changing Times of Trans-Border Trade

Analysing the changing trade tourism at the Moldova-Romanian border brings us back to the beginning of the 1990s. Moldavians came to sell different kinds of products in open air markets: from that time, chronology and changes in market places tell the evolution of trans-border trade mobility. Three major steps characterize this interdependent evolution of market places and cross-border trade.

Open air markets existed in Romania before the collapse of Communist regimes (first step). They were mostly food markets, where peasants came to sell their products from neighbouring places and regions in Romania. The collapse of the Soviet regime brings a major change: with a new freedom to cross the border, Moldavians immediately come to Romania to sell manufactured products. From the very beginning of the 1990s, open air markets quickly grow in number and size thanks to the recent trade with Moldavians. A brand new kind of market appears: the bazaars. According to the interviewees, bazaars appear and develop with the coming of Moldavians. These are open air market places where exclusively manufactured products are sold; therefore they have to be differentiated from agricultural and food markets. Moldavians take the opportunity of selling there all kinds of products produced in the former Soviet bloc: prices are much lower, and they can import a big variety of products that cannot be found in Romania. Moreover, they take advantage of the fact that for

several years after the Romanian Revolution, people entering the country as tourists are not obliged to declare the goods they bring in²⁶: they benefit from the gaps in the law to develop trade. The idea of "trade tourism" is conceptualised at that time: "*the actors are traders who pass for tourists; their merchandise passes for personal belongings; and in this way they avoid paying the required duty*"²⁷. Moreover, a lot of Moldavians benefit from another law in Romania: they apply for Romanian citizenship, and develop their trade activities thanks to this double belonging.

In the following years, Romanian citizens themselves fill in the gap. They go to Turkey (or Hungary or Serbia) as tourists, buy there various kinds of manufactured products (mostly clothes and shoes) and join the Moldavians in bazaars to sell them. From 1992-1993 on, the growth of bazaars in Romania therefore relies on suitcase trade, be it from foreign citizens coming to Romania as tourists (Moldavians) or Romanians going abroad as tourists. Bazaars quickly begin to play a major role in the new economic landscape: they provide goods that are rather difficult to find elsewhere, or too expensive for the vast majority of people.

Moldavians also appear in food markets, bringing fruits and vegetables, milk products, fish, and meat. Once again, their prices are much lower than the ones of Romanian producers; they manage to find a "niche" in a country where food markets also undergo large transformations and reorganisation.

The second step in the evolution of market places and cross-border trade begins at the end of the 1990s and beginning of 2000s. Three major events explain it. First, controls are reinforced at the border. Moldavians must enter Romania with a passport and its cost prevents a lot of them from buying it²⁸. According to the Romanian Police of Borders in Iași, the

²⁶ Chelcea L., Radu C., Constantinescu L., 2005, "Informalizare și instituționalizare: geografia compărării și piețele agricole din două sectoare ale Bucureștiului", in Chelcea L., Mateescu O. (eds.), *Economia informală în România: Piețe, practici sociale și transformări ale statului după 1989*, Bucharest: Paideia.

²⁷ Konstantinov Y., 1996, *op. cit.*

²⁸ In 2001, the average salary in Moldova was about 40 euros, and the Moldavian passport cost 32 euros. In order not to stop all trans-border circulation, the Romanian government gave one million dollars to Moldova so that the Moldavian authorities could help poorer Moldavian citizens get a cheaper passport; See Lăzăroiu S., 2003, *More "Out" Than "In" at the Crossroads between Europe* Michalon Bénédicte

inflow of Moldavian citizens clearly declines from 2001 on, be it on a daily or a yearly basis. Second, the law which allowed Moldavians to obtain Romanian citizenship is modified; since 2000, Moldavians are not considered as "repatriated" any more and they must enter the same process as any other foreign citizen to get Romanian citizenship²⁹. The consequence is a brutal decline in the number of naturalised Moldavians³⁰ and therefore another obstacle for their trade activities in Romania. Thirdly, market places are affected by a restructuring process since the end of the 1990s. The previous decade was one of improvisation and informal trade; but several changes show a new process of increased control over trade and market places coming from local authorities. Most of the food markets and bazaars are bought by the Iași city hall in 1996-1997, whereas their legal status was unclear up to that time. The city hall establishes a new policy on market places in order to organise, modernise and control activities and people in the markets. This is a local response to a national policy reform of trade and market³¹. The consequences for Moldavians are: the obligation to get an authorisation to sell products in food markets as well as in the bazaars, and therefore the obligation to respect the limits on the amounts of merchandise they bring. The fieldwork showed that these new constraints on trading clearly make things more complicated for Moldavians.

In the mid 2000s, and this is the third step of the analysed process, the situation seems to be stabilising. Market places are more and more organised and controlled; this does not prevent various strategies developed by sellers (Moldavians but also Romanians) to bring higher amounts of merchandise, or to sell without an official authorisation. A consequence is the development of a wholesale market: some suitcase traders change their strategies. Individual firms are partly replaced by larger firms that supply wholesale markets with products brought from Moldova³². Trade exchanges go on between Romania and Moldova,

and the Balkans, Geneva: International Organisation for Migration, Migration Trends in Selected Applicant Countries, IV.

²⁹ Romanian law on citizenship, nr.21/2000.

³⁰ Romanian Statistic Yearbook, from 1999 to 2003.

³¹ Chelcea L., Radu C., Constantinescu L., 2005, *op. cit.*

³² Centrul Roman pentru Jurnalism de Investigație (C.R.J.I., Romanian Centre for Investigative Journalism), 2003, *op. cit.*

but their form changes. The recent development of an important wholesale market in Iași is an example of this. Some choose another strategy: they still bring little amounts of merchandise (little enough to be considered personal belongings) and sell them to Romanian go-betweens, who will themselves sell in different market places. Another major fact has to be taken into account: labour migration has rapidly developed by the end of 1990s and offers now other possibilities to Moldavian citizens³³. Regional petty trade is challenged by new economic opportunities abroad: between 600.000 and 1.000.000 Moldavians work in Western European countries (Italy, Portugal, Germany, but also the Czech Republic, Turkey, Greece, Israel, etc.), as well as in Russia and the Ukraine (out of 4.400.000 inhabitants)³⁴. Romania also takes part in this process: more and more Moldavians look for a labour contract in the country. Therefore, the transformations observed on the future Eastern border of the EU are part of broader changes, both on the petty trade and the labour force levels.

Market Places in Iași: From Informal to Formal Trade by Moldavians

Moldavians' petty trade evolution in the course of time reveals a process of formalisation. Even if the articulation informal/formal still needs deeper insights at this stage of the research, a spatial overlook brings important elements to analysis. Three kinds of trade places are to be mentioned about Moldavian tourist-traders in Iași: the Nicolina bazaar, the food markets, and the margins of market places. Each one of these trading places is characterised by a specific combination of formal and informal strategies.

The only bazaar of Iași is the Nicolina bazaar, located in the southern part of town. It appeared in 1991, right after the fall of the Soviet regime and the opening of the border between Romania and the new Republic of Moldova. It at first took the form of an informal

³³ Institutul pentru Politice Publice Chișinău (I.P.P. Chișinău, Institute for Public Policies), 2004, *Migration Policies in the Republic of Moldova*, Chișinău; International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2005, *Overview of the Migration Systems in the CIS Countries*, Vienna.

³⁴ Quoted by I.P.P. Chișinău, 2004, *Migration Policies in the Republic of Moldova*, *op. cit.*

gathering of Moldavian "tourists" in the middle of town, who sold various things at very low prices, from home-made chapkas and vodka to shoes, clothes, electronic articles, and so on. In the course of time, more and more people gather: Moldavians, but also an increasing number of Romanians selling merchandise bought in Turkey (mostly clothes and shoes). A first step toward formalisation is made when, in 1992, a special place is allocated to what has been in between recognised as THE bazaar of Iași by the Chamber of Commerce of Iași. This is where the bazaar still is nowadays. From then on, sellers need to get licenses from the Chamber of Commerce, in order to get a place in the bazaar. The need of a license seems to have been an obstacle for Moldavians and to have provoked changes in their trade: according to the director for market places at the local administration, "*Romanians came with licenses from the Chamber of Commerce. Therefore they respected the rules. But Moldavians... They were tolerated, they are our relatives, and then they came and offered much lower prices than the Romanians. Slowly Romanians have built commercial associations³⁵, so there were more and more of them, and finally there were a bigger number of them than of Moldavians. But Moldavians don't have the right to come; they are controlled and stopped at the border. That's why there are only Romanian commercial associations in the bazaar nowadays*"³⁶.

This discourse was quite strange to hear since the bazaar is frequently identified by inhabitants as an important place of trade for Moldavians. But direct observations and interviews also point to a rare presence of Moldavian sellers: only about ten to twenty of the 560 regular sellers of the bazaar come from Moldova, according to Moldavian traders and the manager of the bazaar. Moreover, they represent different kinds of sellers, different trade practices and different status regarding migration law. As an example, two of them have Romanian citizenship and are members of a commercial association under Romanian law. A strong social hierarchy differentiates Moldavian traders.

The different groups of Moldavians are also represented in food markets. Those markets existed before 1989, and no Moldavians worked there before the 1990s. But when suitcase trade begins, it does not only concern manufacture goods, but also products of

³⁵ Authorisations for selling are only allocated to commercial associations in the bazaar, and not to individuals. This a major difference between the bazaar and food markets.

³⁶ Interview with the administrator of the market, Iași, April 2006.

agriculture. Moldavians get access to the main markets of the city: Nicolina (close to the bazaar), Alexandru cel Bun and Piața Cugului. All of these markets are located in the southern part of the city and developed after the Second World War in the process of urbanisation and industrialisation. This is where most workers used to live. Seven other market places exist nowadays in the city, but do not seem to be frequented by Moldavian traders: the causes of this have not been explained so far, but are probably dependent on the transport infrastructure on the one hand (an international railway station is located in the Nicolina quarter close to the market and the bazaar), and on the ability to negotiate with the administration of each market on the other hand. Moldavians sell fruits and vegetables, or milk products; for this they must be recognised by the administration as producers of the sold products, and then they are authorised to sell in market places. Theoretically, they are not allowed to sell products that would have been bought before in wholesale markets (this is also true for Romanian sellers). This is the only condition for them to be allowed to sell in food markets (once they have gone through the border controls). But the interviews revealed that most of the Moldavians met there engaged in other occupations before they began to trade: they were teachers, working in administration, or used to work in industry. Moreover, most of them live in urban centres (Ungheni, Bălți, Florești...). Therefore, it would be interesting to go further in on this question in order to understand how they changed their occupation and began to produce agricultural products; or, if they did not, how they managed to get all the necessary paperwork to be recognised as agricultural producers.

Once in a market place, it is obvious that Moldavians do not only sell food products but also manufactured products, as well as fish and meat. This last point is highly interesting since they are not supposed to: manufactured products are forbidden in food markets; fish and meat can only be sold in cold places leased by commercial associations. Nevertheless, everyone knows where to find them. Manufactured products (chocolate, sugar, candles, dustbin bags...) are hidden under the tables. Smoked fish and meat are sold "under the jacket". Buyers know where to find what they want; administrators also know about it, even if they are supposed to forbid this kind of trade. It can go on because of the bribe sellers give to the administrators.

Whatever they sell, Moldavians still benefit from a good position in the food market: their prices are one-third lower than the ones Romanian sellers ask. And this in spite of the cost of transportation and stay, and the numerous bribes they pay at the border and in market

places. That is why they still represent an important part of the sellers: almost one third of them in the Nicolina market (out of about 200 sellers in total).

The most interesting places are the margins of food markets: these are the places for contraband. At the main entrance of the Nicolina market, a crowd of people permanently stands and calls "*țigări țigări țigări*" ("cigarettes, cigarettes, cigarettes") when someone comes closer. This is the place for contraband cigarettes coming from Moldova. Sellers are generally Romanians and not Moldavians: here a new pattern of trans-border trade emerges. Moldavians bring cigarettes to Romania and sell them to Romanian in-betweens; this is done close to the border, so that Moldavians do not go any further into the country and quickly go back to Moldova. Once in front of the market, sellers take just a few cigarette packs, put them in an ordinary plastic bag in order to avoid attracting much attention and regularly go to a storage point or person to get new packs. Just like manufactured goods or fish and meat, everyone knows where to buy contraband cigarettes; connections to administration and police are an important aspect to analyse.

Close to the market there is a little street where small groups of four, five women wait. They are all middle age, carry little handbags, and wait. People pass quickly in front of them and if they buy something, the transaction is very brief: they sell contraband vodka. They do not call the clients and try to be as discrete as possible. A car sometimes goes by, in which some vodka bottles are stored. When the police show up, the women quickly disappear in neighbouring buildings: they choose their "selling place" close to a building entrance, in order to hide when necessary.

This clearly shows how legal and illegal practices mix in cross-border trade: one person will practice both, depending on the product sold. These descriptions also demonstrate how suitcase trade gets more and more formalised, embedded in local and national policies controlling petty trade and market places as well as bazaars. Not only is the mobility between Moldova and Romania dependent on the new conditions at the border, but also on broader economic restructuring processes.

The observations made in market places confirm what several academics wrote about illegal practices and their connections to State and law, be it national or supra-national (European, in the studied case). First, State actors take part in illegal practices³⁷: the market administrators (probably as well as border police officers) do know about the illegal dimensions of Moldavians' petty trade; the Moldavians can continue their activities only thanks to some arrangement between themselves and Romanian and Moldavian State officers. Moreover, Moldavian petty traders seem, as has been reported in some interviews, to employ private security guards in order to protect them from theft and bribery. Therefore, as C. Humphrey noticed about racket in Russia, some functions which the State should perform, here the protection of persons, are performed by other actors³⁸.

Conclusion. Temporary Labour in Romania: New Strategies to Keep in Mobility

The description of Moldavian activity in open air market places reflects the profound transformations that occurred at the border, and the strengthening of controls over "tourists". Attention must also be paid to the new organisation of economy and trade in Romania: the growing involvement of the Romanian State in this area, as well as the very rapid development of other forms of trade since 2000 (supermarkets, malls), represent a major challenge for cross-border petty traders.

Some of the persons interviewed mentioned the wish to find a job "abroad"; they usually thought about going to Western Europe, but another possibility is to find a labour contract in Romania. Indeed, more and more land farmers in Romania hire Moldavian seasonal workers. This is also the case in wood industry, as well as in garment industry.

³⁷ Heyman J. McC., Smart A., 1999, "States and Illegal Practices: An Overview", in Heyman J. McC., Smart A. (eds.), *States and Illegal Practices*, Oxford: Berg.

³⁸ Humphrey C., 1999, "Russian Protection Rackets and the Appropriation of Law and Order", in Heyman J. McC., Smart A. (eds.), *States and Illegal Practices*, *op. cit.*

Eastern Romania faces an important shortage of work force since its population is old and the young have left to work abroad. These factors call for a deeper research into this new phenomenon of Romania becoming a labour force immigration country. Moldavians are in the best position to enter this newly opened economic, social and political space.

On a theoretical level, the discussion above brings us back to the interactions between borders and mobility. None of the empirical data collected tends to confirm the hypothesis of the weakening of borders. On the contrary, the European building process strengthens EU external borders, as the Romanian-Moldovan case shows. Petty traders have to adapt their practices in order to maintain their activities: as H. Cunningham demonstrates, mobility is therefore highly stratified and regulated³⁹. Despite European claims of greater interactions with EU's new neighbours, among them Moldova (see the Neighbourhood policy), Claude Raffestin's assertion remains actual: "*The classical idea that most of economic, political and cultural integration movements lead to 'erase' borders only makes sense if the differences the limits are made of also disappear, if not this is a trivial and meaningless opinion, without any basis*"⁴⁰.

³⁹ Cunningham H., 2004, "Nations Rebound?: Crossing Borders in a Gated World", *Identities*, 11, 3.

⁴⁰ Raffestin Claude, 1986, "Eléments pour une théorie de la frontière", *Diogène*, 134, pp.3-21.

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