

Social Remittances and Recognition

- Cases of Migration Driven Conspicuous Consumption -

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Background and Research Objectives



Fig. 1 Migrant house in construction – Adjudeni village, Neamt county, Romania, www.adjudeni.ro

Key words:

Social remittances; Material remittances; Household; Circulatory migration; Return migration; Life strategy; Entrepreneurship, Conspicuous Consumption

Material remittances (financial and in-kind) are described as essential income for home families and have theoretical implications such as increase savings of the households and changing distribution of income (Grasmuck, Pessar, 1991). However the levels of consumptions and investment are deeply influenced by the also transferred social remittances.

The present research is primarily concerned with embedding the uses, displays and attached meanings of remittances in two rural settings from the North-Eastern part of Romania (counties of Neamt and Vrancea – with the highest prevalent rates of emigration), with a focus on household tasks delegation and development strategies attached such as migration driven entrepreneurship.

Theoretical Approaches and Methodology

Methodology:

- 1) Qualitative - semi-structured interviews with key persons (migrants, non-migrants, other household members), language proofs and participative observation
- 2) Quantitative - survey in 2 case study areas (RDS technique)
- 3) Review of secondary literature

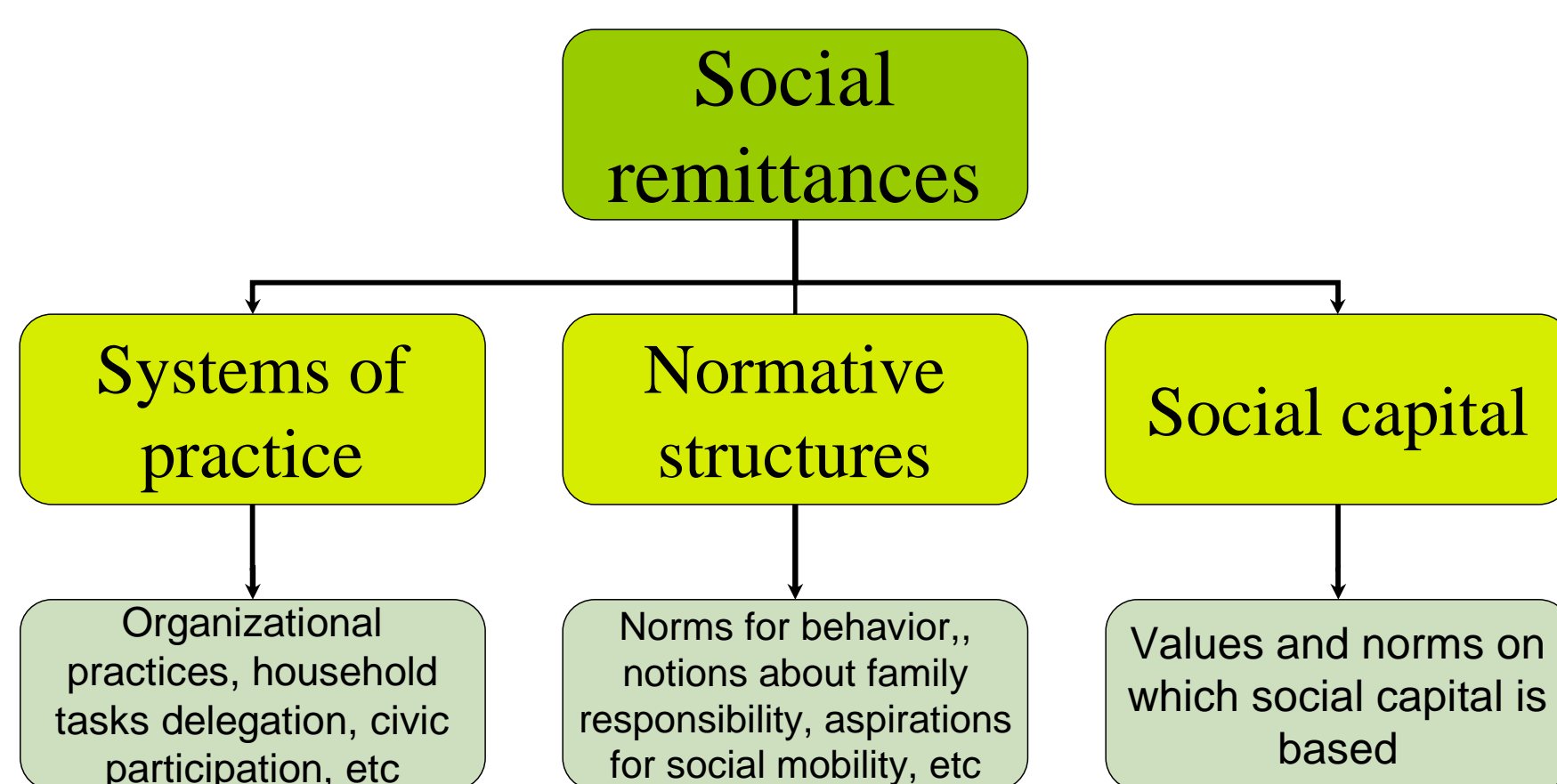


Fig. 2 Defining and specifying social remittances

Social remittances are transmitted systematically and intentionally and are usually transferred between individuals who know each other or who are connected by mutual social ties (Lewitt, 2001). Exchanges occur through communicational channels, when migrants return permanently to live in or just visit their communities of origin, but also when non-migrants encounter those in the receiving country.

Social remittances - based initiatives help increase the social recognition and prestige of migrants both in their communities of origin and of destination. Thus, remittances such as innovative ideas, managerial skills or even patterns of architecture assimilated by the migrant and further implemented, confer prestige and social recognition and uphold the migrant's reputation as we will later analyze.

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Expected Results

✓Due to the lack of social and financial capital for investing into a new venture, the migrant uses the material remittances for two viable alternatives: supporting the households' needs and house rehabilitation (construction).

✓The amount sent from abroad is decisive for the path the migrant takes, from an entrepreneurial point of view: entrepreneurial behavior vs. life strategy

✓Even though emigration presumes high costs, the poor households are the ones that have the greatest incentive to send migrants abroad, with a much higher probability of remitting, both social and financial

✓The impact of social remittances at household level (both at decision taking level and gender associated tasks) is more predictable to appear in relation with social recognition.

✓The lack of household basic infrastructures combined with unproductive, economically irrational investments – the so-called conspicuous consumption- can also be explained by the migrant desire for social esteem.

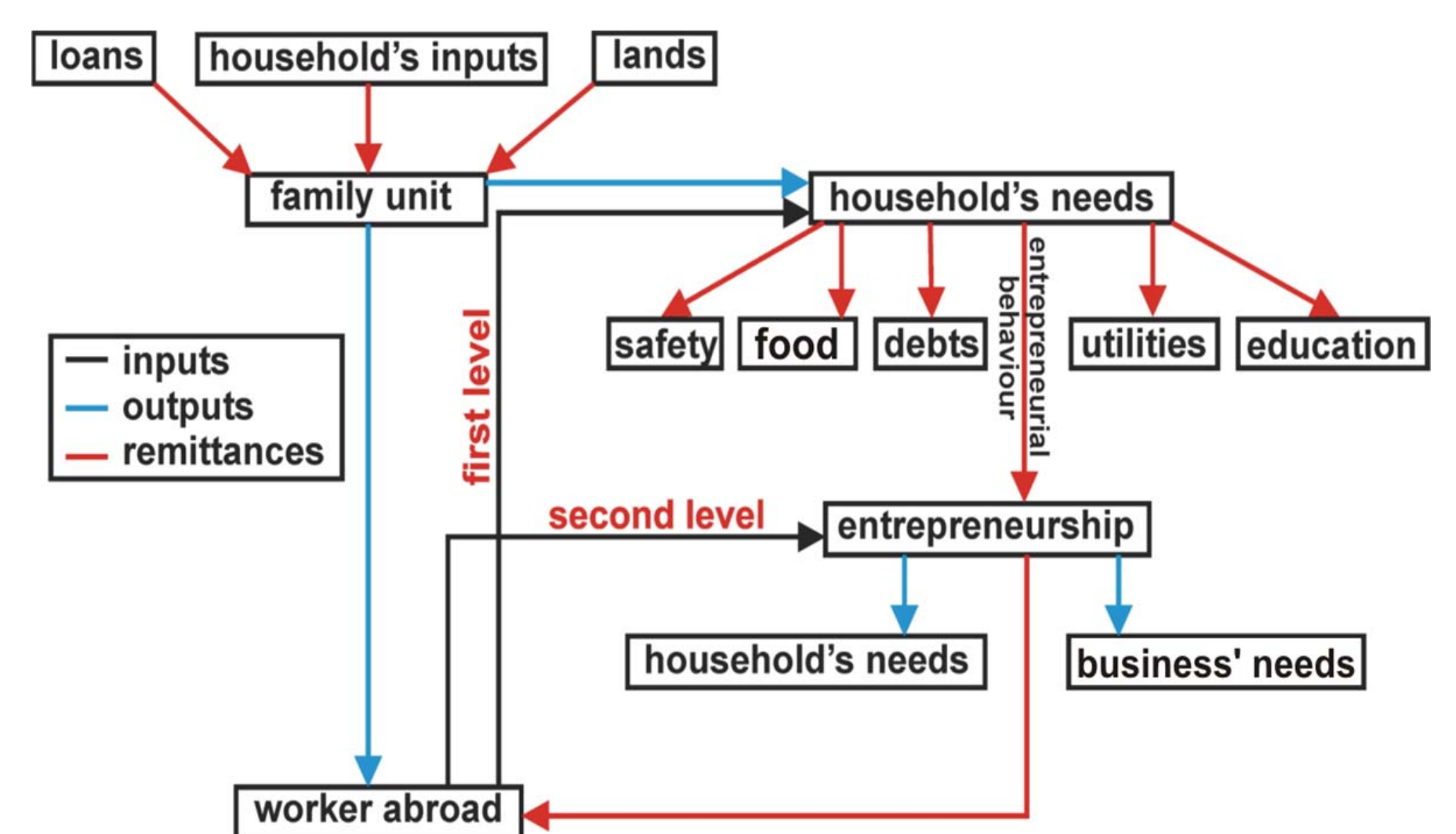


Fig. 3 Temporary migration's inputs and outputs. Entrepreneurial behavior and remittances usage

Conclusions

❖ Status quo recognition

- 1) Migrants houses are in direct relation with the new desired status quo. Although they assimilated a new labour ethos and some of them possess successful migration history, their new social status (which includes prestige, reputation, social esteem) was not yet gained and thus, not yet recognized by the sending community.
- 2) Even migrants with permanent migration patterns are buying, constructing or rehabilitating houses in the community of origin – fundamental assets for the recognition of their mobility status. Migrants and non-migrants are occupying the same social space!

❖ Remittances usage

- 1) The entrepreneurial behavior is assigned with a strong and successful migration history. The remittances usage from the survival stage of migration has a different consumption pattern comparative with the last stage associated with gaining self esteem.
- 2) Migrants are in the same time remittance senders and receivers, both for material and social remittances with a strong impact on delegating household tasks and electing along the decision to migrate.

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