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Extended Abstract

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Transnational Practices of Return Migrants Prior to Their Return

Objective

In recent years, return migration to Hungary has become an increasingly visible phenomenon. However, to this date, the issue has not been deeply researched yet. The goal of this research is to reveal the transnational practices and ties of Hungarian return migrants in light of their demographic characteristics, motivations, length of stay, and performed activity abroad. We used the Hungarian Microcensus 2016 data to explore the characteristics of those who have returned to Hungary since 1990 after a long (at least one-year) stay abroad.

Introduction

Return migration can be interpreted in various theoretical frameworks. The transnational approach states that social and economic ties are particularly important in the process of returning to the country of origin (Cassarino 2004, de Haas – Fokkema 2011). As opposed to the neoclassical economics of migration and the theory of new economics of labor migration, the transnational approach regards return as a stage, and not the end of the migratory process. Regular visits to the home country can increase the chance of return, migrant remittances strengthen the ties among the stay-at-home family members and the migrant.

Method

For the analysis, we relied on the Hungarian Microcensus 2016 data. The survey contained questions concerning migrant remittance practices and home visits that allowed us to measure transnational practices. The returnees we selected had lived abroad after 1990 at least for one year, were born in Hungary, lived in private households in Hungary, had Hungarian citizenship at the time of the survey, and were aged 15 or older at the time of the return. We applied the same selection criteria for those who stayed permanently abroad. For analyzing migrant remittances, we broke the sample into three groups by the activity performed abroad: 1) only work activity, 2) working and studying at the same time, and 3) only studying (including language learning). After examining the descriptive data, we used logistic regression to analyze the odds of sending remittances and of home visits.

Results

We found that returnees with only working activity abroad helped their relatives by migrant remittances in a higher proportion if they were men. Regarding age groups, returnees remitted mostly if they were 50-54 years old at the time of return, if they were skilled workers, and if they were working in Austria or Germany. Reverse remittances (namely helping the migrant financially from the country of origin) were received by women in bigger proportion if they were only studying; however, gender differences were not remarkable within the other groups. Remittance receiver return migrants (only studying) had mainly secondary education, and were living in the Netherlands. Men returnees visited Hungary, their country of origin more often. Frequent visits (at least once a month) were typical in the age groups above 50, and among married individuals who were living abroad without their families. The results confirmed that the proximity of the target country strongly affected the frequency of home visits. Both returnees and migrants staying permanently abroad were visiting Hungary most frequently from Austria.

Logistic regression models demonstrated that besides demographic traits, labor market characteristics play important roles in transnational practices as well. Entrepreneurs and helpers in family enterprises supported their stay-at-home family members in higher probability than employees. Those, who lived with co-tenants, or co-workers abroad, sent remittances twice as likely as they had been living with someone else. The likelihood of remitting increased if the performed work abroad corresponded to the original profession.

In the next phase of the analysis, we intend to investigate three different periods of return separately (which are: 1990-1999, 2000-2010, and 2011-2016), where we will compare the effects.

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References

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