

Toward unequal exchanges

The longer term integration of South Eastern Europe into global migration linkages since the 1950s Extended abstract

South Eastern Europe is one of the most interesting regions to study the longer term development of its integration into global migration linkages and flows. It seems that the region is being “emptied” via producing large number of emigrants for other parts of Europe and North America, receiving immigrants mainly from within the region and in smaller numbers than emigrants and at the same time producing very low fertility figures. This may hinder the longer term development of the region as it is becoming a region with stable and massive unequal relationships toward other parts of the European Union and North America. The paper examines on the basis of longer term net migration, migration matrix and macroeconomic data how the regions has changed its integration into global migration flows in a longer run since the 1950s in order to see major macro level regularities.

Theoretical considerations

Insufficient research or theoretical work has been done on the question of how these complex modes of integration of countries into global migrations flows and stocks develop historically. There is a need to re-contextualize historically and regionally all of the major theories of migration that emerged over the course of the last three decades.

Classical and neoclassical macro and micro theories seek to discern mechanisms based on wage differentials and labor market processes without a historical perspective. Structural-historical and world system theories have arrived at the clear premise according to which transition from rural to non-rural economies and the intrusion of world capitalism create a scenario for massive emigration. From the theoretical perspective of intervention and the break-up of “traditional” systems, scholars of this approach also argue that colonial or historically established links matter, but they give no systematic analysis of longer term changes beyond the specific periods leading to massive social transformation or establishing specific links (Massey 1999. 34–53; Portes and Böröcz 1989. 606–30; Sassen [1990] 2006. 596–608).

Network theory and cumulative causation are also relevant to an understanding of historical change, as they help explain why and how established migration flows continue and how they are maintained. Nonetheless, they are not adequate as explanations of why such flows might dry out or become less intensive, nor for that matter they shed much light on how these flows can become cyclical. Furthermore, these theories offer little insight into the ways in which transitional or intermediary countries are integrated into the global flows and how this mode of global integration might change.

Concerning longer term and more empirical approaches to the question of how migratory integration of countries and regions varies over time, we have only a few hypotheses and even these ones are not supported by systematic evidence and statistical modeling. One is the idea of migration transition, which was developed by the geographer Zelinsky, who modeled the idea of demographic transition as established in the 1930s in the United States and Europe (de Haas 2007. 147, 148, Melegh 2006. 60–64). Zelinsky argues that gradually, following an increase in emigration, because of socio-historical processes countries of large-scale emigration become countries of net immigration within the framework of a fairly linear development. This model has been revised by Fassmann and Reeger, who conceptualized this transition from emigrant to immigrant status as migration cycles based on a combination of

demographic dynamics, labor market structures and (short-term) economic cycles (Fassmann and Reeger, 2008). In order to avoid the pitfalls of previous modernization theories (openly evoked by phases like “take-off”) the cycles are not identical and they are embedded into temporal and spatial contexts. Nonetheless the overall direction is not questioned or events like the collapse of labor markets during the transition from state socialism to capitalism are not integrated yet. The reference to a combination of factors and very interestingly the change of welfare systems and labor market structures make this theory subtle.

These above theories are related to migration hump or migration curve theory, according to which over time and with increasing income levels countries may move from increasing to decreasing flows of emigration and then to an immigrant country status (Ziesemer 2008; Faini and Venturini 2008). In other words, upon reaching a certain level of economic wealth, countries produce more migrants as the migrants or potential migrants are actually able to finance and organize a move to better-off countries, while an increase of wealth actually reduces the incentive for massive emigration. This is a non-linear idea of progress and may serve as an interesting starting point, but this theory also focuses on one transition and lacks a complex approach to the integration into a global flow of people that would combine not only wealth differentials, but also related historical processes of economic integration into the world economy. Moreover, this premise regarding the gradual move toward immigrant status is actually false with regard to many countries, as there can also be reverse processes, as we will see below.

Debates on migration and development focus on the analysis of a complex interrelationship between migration and developmental processes, but generally the temporal perspective is rather limited and/or the discussion remains on a rather superficial level, listing several factors and mechanisms without actually measuring and systematically demonstrating the mechanisms and the importance of various factors (Massey et al. 1998; Castles and Delgado 2007). This is undoubtedly a consequence of the lack of appropriate and comparable statistics and actual data, but a more systematic historical analysis is still missing (Fassmann, Reeger and Sievers 2009).

The model of migration and development constructed by de Haas is somewhat different as it actually tries to combine transition models with some developmental aspects and it also utilizes systematic empirical analysis. (Hein de Haas 2009) Very importantly he argues that migration is linked not to absolute development and opportunity levels but relative ones (Hein de Haas 2010,). Also he allows for “reverse migration transitions”. the empirical analysis clearly shows the robust (not so linear) relationship to GDP per capita concerning emigrant and immigrant stocks, but raises various doubts that push and pull theories provide no real insight into the migratory processes as for instance development leads to generally increase levels of migration. Concerning developmental and migratory processes Haas also raises the issue of structure versus agency and claims that this has not been solved yet.

It is also worth mentioning that there are some descriptive analyses on the history of migration in the last century, but while they may be very informative and sometimes brilliant in capturing historical problems, they are either very specific in time and analysis or actually rather broad and fail to give a systematic analysis of how countries have been integrated into a global flow of people and global processes of development (Sassen 1999, Tilly 2006). In addition, in the history of migration most analysts stress the importance of political events, but fail to consider the role of other relevant social processes. This is especially true when countries representing varying political systems are included in an analysis of long term change.

Data and specific goals

In this paper I identify some basic developmental patterns in Southeastern Europe on the basis of some longer term macro statistics provided by the United Nations (UN) World Population Prospects (WPP), World Bank and UN migration matrices, World bank development Indicators and the Maddison databank .

First I focus on net migration as estimated by the UN as a residual of population growth minus natural growth. This is a problematic source, as it incorporates the problems of population enumeration as well, but there are no other comparable sources available for the period in question.

It is worth citing various authors who have published findings in the recent Prominstat project reviewing various data systems, including migration flows. They have arrived at conclusions such as the following:

“In the study, we have presented a detailed analysis of the availability, reliability and comparability of data on international migration flows in 27 European countries (all EU Members States except Bulgaria and Romania, plus Norway and Switzerland). Our conclusion is that internationally comparative research on migration flows in Europe is currently generally not possible. The main problem is the comparability of data, in particular the differences in definitions and sources used in various countries and in the coverage of the statistics. These differences imply that comparing migration flows in various countries would be often like comparing pears and apples.”¹

Furthermore net migration rates hide whether countries in which similar levels and the same overall direction (positive or negative) of net migration prevail actually have the same levels of outflow and inflow. Thus a country with a net migration rate of negative five people per 1,000 inhabitants could be a country with zero immigration and rate of five in outmigration, but it could also be a country into which there is large-scale immigration, but this rate of immigration is surpassed by the emigration rate by five people per 1,000 inhabitants. This remains hidden, and this lack of information is a significant problem that needs to be addressed through the collection of more information on the actual rates of emigration and immigration. There have been promising attempts to make bilateral migration flow estimates based on country of birth stock figures based on migration matrices, which need to be integrated into future research.²

Nonetheless, the rate of net migration can be a very useful measurement if one looks at the data systematically. With reference to possible methodological problems, it can be understood as an overall sum of “personal” levels of integration into global flows of people, and this actually avoids some of the pitfalls of migration statistics in terms of definitions and the actual underestimation of immigrants and more importantly of emigrants (Fassmann, Reeger and Sievers 2009). Altogether, change will be assumed when the figure for a country in which there is a negative, positive or zero rate of net migration shifts in terms of scale or direction.

In the analysis additional longer term statistics on GDP and other economic and labor market indicators will also be used coming from various sources, such as the World Bank, International Labor Organization (ILO) or local statistics. Regarding per capita GDP figures, this paper follows Böröcz when looking at changes such as percentages of world average and evaluating historical development of various regions and countries accordingly (Böröcz

¹ Possibilities and limitations of comparative quantitative research on international migration flows by Dorota Kupiszewska, Marek Kupiszewski, Mónica Martí and Carmen Ródenas, February 2010. Promoting Comparative Quantitative Project funded by the Research in the Field of Migration European Commission, DG Research and Integration in Europe Sixth Framework Programme, Priority 8, (PROMINSTAT), 3.

² There are new attempts to make estimates for net migration inflows and outflows using mathematical demographic techniques that link country-of-birth population stocks with migration flows See the Research Article of Guy J Abel, Estimating global migration flow tables using place of birth data DEMOGRAPHIC RESEARCH VOLUME 28, ARTICLE 18, PAGES 505-546 PUBLISHED 15 MARCH 2013 <http://www.demographic-research.org/Volumes/Vol28/18/> DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2013.28.18

2009).³ Here I do not use his ideas concerning global weight, regardless of the fact that in the case of migration population and economic size matters.

It is important to clarify that macro structural indicators, relative global positions will not be used as direct explanations of migration *per se*, but as factors setting the stage for mass migration flows. But without these macro structural changes we cannot explain historical processes and most importantly developmental patterns (Sasses, 1990)

In the analysis I will also use the structural development of global migration matrices of the relevant countries in order to see how their integration in terms of structures have changed and how stable historical links have been, The data is mainly census based stock figures for birth of the country (World Bank and United Nations migration matrices) ⁴, but often other categories are used and even we just have estimates. To counterbalance these pitfalls additional data will also be used for various major links based on local national statistics when possible.

These databases at the United Nations (e.g. World Population Prospects), World Bank (Migration matrices since 1960) are often just estimates based on censuses and population registers and even sometimes estimates based on estimates (like the Wittgenstein method estimating migration flows out of migration stock matrices since 1960 containing a large number of estimates). ⁵ But regardless of the national level observations they are systematic globally on a level not seen before. Thus we already have more than 60 years of time series to look at on a global level and this has improved our chances to write a global demographic history of the recent past and to construct hypotheses on previous developments.⁶

In this paper I focus on the area between Italy and the Caspian Sea. I identify subregions in an inductive manner on the basis of changes in net migration. Nonetheless, I capitalize on the insights of historians like Wallerstein and Berend, according to which Southern and Eastern Europe have something in common if longer term historical processes are analyzed. This approach is based on the premise that these countries were integrated into global-colonial capitalism in a rather similar manner, especially during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries leading to similar social tensions and authoritarian regimes (Arrighi 1985, Berend and Ránki 1982. 7–12,).

Generally this regional linkage is forgotten when state socialism, as a rivaling form of modernity appeared in the late 1940s, and there is an overdue emphasis on political changes and factors. The period of state socialism is either ignored or it is seen as a somewhat “frozen” period as far as longer term regional patterns of migration are concerned. (Massey 1998, 108-109) In my view we need to go back to proper historical comparative social and economic analysis without inbuilt teleological assumptions. This type of analysis provides a better perspective from which to understand migratory changes in the region in question. This is true for the period between the 1950s and 1960s and the so-called transitional period between 1988 and 1995.

³ Haas also proposes similar approach when argues for analysing relative levels of wealth and migration (Haas 2009)

⁴ Guy, J. Abel: „Estimating global migration flow tables using place of birth data”, Demographic Research 28, 2013, 18. tanulmány, 505-546. old. (<http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol28/18/28-18.pdf>; DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2013.28.18); Ç. Özden, C. Parsons, M. Schiff and T. L. Walmsley (2011) 'Where on Earth is Everybody? The Evolution of Global Bilateral Migration, 1960-2000', World Bank Economic Review 25(1):12-56

⁵ Guy, J. Abel: „Estimating global migration flow tables using place of birth data”, Demographic Research 28, 2013, 18. tanulmány, 505-546. old. (<http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol28/18/28-18.pdf>; DOI: 10.4054/DemRes.2013.28.18); Ç. Özden, C. Parsons, M. Schiff and T. L. Walmsley (2011) 'Where on Earth is Everybody? The Evolution of Global Bilateral Migration, 1960-2000', World Bank Economic Review 25(1):12-56

⁶ For the use of the databases, World Population Prospects in particular see: Chris Wilson. 2011. 'Understanding global demographic convergence since 1950'. Population and Development Review, 37(2) 375-388.

As mentioned above, the idea of the region below is an inductive one. This is true in the sense that at the moment I disregard ideas of historical regions such as the “Balkans,” the “Eastern Block,” or “Mediterranean” territories. I do this not because I find these ideas useless or lacking validity from the perspective of many aspects of historical change, but rather because one needs to be more open in dividing and linking these regions when social processes such as migration are analyzed.

Major preliminary results

In the beginning of the period under discussion each of the countries in the region was either following European patterns of emigration or was actually serving as a migratory target (for instance in the case of Moldova). In the 1970s and 1980s (in other words well before the actual collapse of state socialism) diverging patterns began to emerge the differences between which became acute after the collapse. Some of the sub-regions (the Balkans and the region around the Black Sea within the Soviet Union) actually became sources of migrants, while others, most notably Italy and Austria became destination countries of larger number of migrants. This is a distinctive story of the construction of inner dependency within a larger region the countries of which had a great deal in common, and this process needs to be analyzed with particular care.

Thus smaller meaningful historical, geographic regions can be constructed on the basis of migratory patterns. These regions do not follow the “classic” divisions, and the state socialist and capitalist local histories are related to one another, regardless of divergences. State socialism was not isolated from global flows, and, more importantly, it partially reproduced global hierarchies and had its own effects on international migration.

In a modified form, the world system approach is helpful in furthering an understanding of longer term developmental patterns. In the case of state socialist economies, the direct intervention of world capitalism had a long-lasting impact on the migratory links between the countries within the region under discussion. Actually, most of the former state socialist countries in the region became dependent on remittances, as shown by Böröcz (Böröcz 2015). When state socialism collapsed in the late 1980s, the economies of the countries of the region were based on a huge industrial sector. Countries that were unable to counterbalance the collapse of local industry became sending countries and were partially re-ruralized and partially pushed into large scale emigration. Thus the break-up of socialism also did not have a uniform impact on the countries in question, and the impact also depended on historical developmental hierarchies and the related ability of the various countries to regain some of the losses in the industrial sector with gains in the service sector.

The analysis offered here lends some credence to the neoclassic macro-economic theory of migration, but following Böröcz and De Haas I argue that its validity with regard to per capita GDP differentials is strengthened if it is linked to positions in global hierarchies (Böröcz 2009, De Haas 2010). It thus needs to be re-contextualized into a world system approach. The key point is that it is not simply GDP differentials that matter, but rather relative positions within the global economy, which themselves are in part the results historical processes and linkages. In other words, one needs to go back to the theories of global structural changes, which is the subject matter of global history and the literature on development.

The analysis also shows that migration linkages in terms of key emigrant stocks are very resilient toward historical change and most countries in the region remained integrated to major migration link centers of the region like Germany in Europe and North America. Thus historical stability is one of the key aspects to be taken into account when assessing longer term development. There are some changes nonetheless. The region has lost some of its key links showing beyond the Western Europe and North America (Latin America, Australia;

Soviet Union etc.), while its integration with South Europe has become very strong. These conditions and the above described developmental patterns of net migration may show some of the problems in the development of the region in the forthcoming periods.

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