

WHY DO PEOPLE MIGRATE?

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Labour Market Security and Migration Decisions

Edited by

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

CONTENTS

<i>About the Contributors</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	ix
Introduction	
<i>Maciej Duszczuk</i>	1
1. Labour Market Security and Migration-related Decisions: Theoretical Background	
<i>Maciej Duszczuk and Kamil Matuszczyk</i>	25
2. Are the Countries Different? Statistical View on Labour Market Security	
<i>Kamil Matuszczyk</i>	67
3. Why and Where: Labour Market Security as a Push-pull Factor	
<i>Maciej A. Górecki, Kamil Matuszczyk and Monika Stec</i>	105
4. Migration Policy: Recommendations for Sending and Receiving Countries	
<i>Maciej Duszczuk</i>	131
5. Conclusions	
<i>Maciej Duszczuk</i>	147
<i>Index</i>	151

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INTRODUCTION

Maciej Duszczyk

INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century is oftentimes referred to as ‘the century of migration’ (e.g. [Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014](#)). In the second half of it, the migration status of many countries had gradually changed; they had evolved from being typical countries of emigration to acquiring the status of countries of both emigration and immigration, to have eventually become countries of immigration. In Europe, the greatest transformation in that sphere had taken place in countries of the south of the continent, that is, in Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and Greece. They had thus been named ‘new countries of immigration’ ([Okólski, 2012](#)). At the same time, countries of Central and Eastern Europe, in spite of their having been open to immigration as a result of the systemic transformation that started in 1989, retained their status of typical countries of emigration. The initial period of their membership in the European Union (EU), joined by most of those countries in 2004, brought no change in this respect. The magnitude of the wave of post-accession migration has undoubtedly exceeded the relevant forecasts ([Boeri & Brücker, 2000](#); [Fassmann & Hintermann, 1997](#); [Wallace, 1998](#)). It has perhaps actually been one of the many causes of the current political crisis in the EU. The result of the Brexit referendum

having been the most adverse effect it co-determined. Anyway, it was not until the second decade of the twenty-first century that the migration status of the countries of Central Europe changed, with great numbers of citizens of Ukraine starting to flow in and settle throughout the region (see [Duszczyk & Matuszczyk, 2016](#)). This was related to the deteriorating economic situation in Ukraine, a result of delayed free-market reforms, as well as to the socio-economic consequences of the armed conflict in the east of the country. Owing to the mass influx of Ukrainians and, on a smaller scale, migrants from other East European countries, Central European states have rapidly transformed into emigration-immigration settings.

Poland has been the country facing most pronounced change of migration status. The number of foreigners to whom temporary residence permits were issued grew dramatically in the years 2014–2018, from below 40,000 in 2014 to over 200,000 in 2018. There was a similar increase in permanent residence permits within the same period, their number having increased from 25,000 to 67,000 ([Office for Foreigners, 2019](#)). At the same time, a dynamic growth of the numbers of foreigners in the Polish labour market occurred, especially with respect to the segment of seasonal jobs. Within just the three-year period between 2015 and 2018, the respective figures increased by over 300% ([Ministry of Family, Labour and Social Policy, 2019](#)). During that time, for many Ukrainian nationals, Poland became a destination rather than just a transition country. Notably, all the aforementioned large-scale shifts have brought about neither an increase in unemployment rates nor a drop of employment figures in Poland. It caused no major social tensions either ([Duszczyk & Matuszczyk, 2018](#)). The increase in the attractiveness of Poland for immigrants is largely confirmed by the Eurostat data on the scale of first residence permits issued in the EU countries in 2015–2017. For instance, in 2017 for

Poland, the number amounted to more than 683,000, well above the numbers recorded for some of the typical countries of immigration, such as Germany (535,000) or the United Kingdom (517,000); (Eurostat, 2019).

Regardless of the emergence of Poland as an attractive destination setting for migrants from the East of Europe, the number of Poles residing in those EU member states that have traditionally been destinations for emigrants has not dropped. In 2014, about 1,800,000 Poles were living in countries of the ‘old EU’, and in 2017 that number even rose by 200,000. It is estimated that at the end of 2017 2,540,000 Poles were living outside their native country. The leading destination countries for Polish emigrants remain unchanged and include the United Kingdom, Germany, the Netherlands and Ireland (The Central Statistical Office, 2018). In spite of the improving macroeconomic situation in Poland, in 2017, about 13% of Poles interviewed were still considering the possibility of emigration. Unsurprisingly, they mentioned the attractiveness of the labour markets of the EU-15 countries, in addition to difficulties finding high-quality employment in Poland, as major factors that spur emigration (Work Service, 2017).

All the aforementioned data sources indicate that Poland is facing an increasing presence of foreigners, especially in the labour market, while, at the same time, being a country where emigration is still holding up. It can thus be classified as having the status of an emigration-immigration country. While such a situation is not unusual in the history of migration – Spain and Italy mentioned here, had gone through the same phase in their migration history – the speed of that process in the case of Poland is exceptional, especially as regards immigration.

The dynamic transformation of Poland and, more broadly, Central Europe into an emigration-immigration context raises

new research questions and can potentially facilitate the study of some phenomena that would otherwise pose enormous difficulties to the scholarly community. Among others, it includes research that can potentially make an additional contribution to theories of migration and provide a better explanation of the migrations taking place in Europe and beyond. The factors determining individual-level migration-related decisions would certainly be one of the topics which such research could throw new light on. Although there does exist an extensive literature analysing the factors ‘pushing’ and ‘pulling’ immigrants, there are still many shortcomings suffered by the theories explaining the highly complex processes of making migration-related decisions. The relevant extant literature has thus far tended to be dominated by theoretical perspectives emphasising broadly conceived economic aspects, such as salaries, costs of living and access to health services, political factors, such as regulation of migration, and, finally, social ones, including social/migration networks.

The present publication is part of a scholarly debate that attempts to explain why only a part of the population makes decisions to look for employment in countries other than their native one. In particular, we are interested in establishing whether or not labour market security, broadly conceived, is one of the factors behind migrants’ decisions of leaving their country of origin and whether or not it affects their choice of destination countries. We understand ‘labour market security’ as the ability to gain and maintain employment which allows the fulfilment of one’s objectives, that is, income security. This can be achieved in various ways. For example, an immigrant may feel ‘secure’ if, following losing a job, he/she can be employed again in a short time. In such a situation, an individual may value employment mobility and perceive ‘security’ as determined by his/her own skills and

professional experience. He/she is thus confident that losing employment is not a disaster as he/she can find another job very quickly. In this case, 'flexible' forms of employment may be viewed as attractive. In an alternative scenario, an individual feels secure due to the possibility of retaining the job once he/she has got it. There are many factors driving that kind of 'security'. For instance, the individual ensures retaining employment by improving his/her own professional qualifications. At the same time, he/she may expect labour law to be designed in such a way as to make laying off employees difficult for employers. We should assume that for individuals holding such an attitude, the labour markets offering advanced systems of employee protection will be most attractive. Applying the terms used in the extant literature on labour markets, we can refer to the former model as emphasising 'employment security', while the other one can tend to put greater weight on 'job security' (see Esser & Olsen, 2012; Marx, 2014; Matuszczyk & Duszczuk, 2018).

In order to answer the question as to whether or not labour market security is relevant for making decisions to emigrate, and, if so, whether or not the expectations concerning the ways to achieve it determine the choice of the country of destination, comparative empirical research project has been carried out. The results from the project are presented in this publication.¹ In addition to interviews with experts on migration, the empirics of the project are based on a social survey Paper and Pen Personal Interview (PAPI) and qualitative (in-depth) interviews with labour migrants. Our respondents and interviewees were recruited mostly from among Poles employed in the United Kingdom and Germany for at least 12 months and Ukrainians living and working in Poland for 12 months or longer. This time perspective made it possible to examine how experience gained by the migrants in a particular country translates, among other things, into

conditions of employment, the migrants' knowledge of public institutions and perceptions of different dimensions of labour-related security. In other words, we set out to establish to what extent experience of a destination country affects the level of security in the labour market. Furthermore, we attempt to examine whether or not it brings about changes in the preferred model of security, shifting the preference from a model based on employment security in favour of the one based on job security or vice versa.

The theoretical foundations of the presented monograph are constituted mainly by Lee's (1966) model of making migration-related decisions, based on identification of push-pull factors. The model was repeatedly criticised but equally often defended (King, 2012). Critics pointed to its taking neo-classic approach, most notably assuming that migrants are rational in their decisions and have adequate knowledge of the situation in the country they are leaving and in the country of their destination. Such an idealised situation indeed occurs quite rarely. Nonetheless, those defending Lee's theory have emphasised that it helps us to explain the fundamental determinants of migration decisions and to understand which factors, and in what order of importance, are taken into consideration by a potential migrant. We are thus certainly aware of major shortcomings of the concept, especially the aforementioned assumption that a person analysing the push-pull factors has adequate knowledge to make a rational decision. In practice, this might never be the case. However, the present-day development of migration networks and access to social networks allow migrants to gain a much greater knowledge than in the past. Therefore, the 'push and pull' theory is currently being 'rediscovered' by migration researchers. It was selected by authors of this monograph also because it seems to suit ideally the task of examining security on the labour market as a migration-related factor. In the

case of expected security, we deal exactly with attitudes and views before departure, updated following the commencement of one's employment in the receiving state. Thus, it can be assumed that the possibility of gaining security in the labour market of the receiving state is perceived as a pull factor, while the absence of this type of security in the state of origin is a push factor.

It should be emphasised at the outset that the extant literature has not paid due attention to the problem of labour market security in the context of factors influencing various kinds of migration-related decisions. The literature trying to explain this sort of decisions has thus far tended to focus on factors such as disparities in salaries, demand on part of employers or functioning of migration networks (Dustmann & Glitz, 2005; Hatton & Williamson, 2005; Kahanec, Zaiцева, & Zimmermann, 2010; Kennan & Walker, 2013). At the same time, decisions concerning employment, emigration and settling abroad are undoubtedly more complex than a simple calculus based solely on the aforementioned security considerations. Therefore, the main hypothesis of the project constitutes a partial explanation only, acknowledging the fact that the security of the labour market is merely one of the co-determinants of migration-related decisions, albeit an important one, operating jointly with factors such as salary levels or the supply of jobs.

Labour market security should be taken into consideration when asking questions regarding both the decision to emigrate and the choice of the country of destination. It also certainly affects the situation of the emigrant in a particular labour market. In spite of the development of legislation regulating the issues of labour market and social policy at the level of the entire European Community, there still are differences among the EU member states with respect to regulation of the domains such as labour relations, social security

systems or the various state-funded benefits which both the unemployed and the employees are entitled to (e.g. family income supplements, housing benefits). There are a number of studies classifying countries into groups characterised by different models of social policy and labour market regulations. The initial scholarly exploration of those different social models took place as early as the first half of the sixties of the twentieth century. The models were distinguished according to the share of social expenditures in a country's gross national income (Golinowska, 2018). A more nuanced approach was initiated by Titmus (1974) in the early 1970s. Based on an analysis of the relations between social policy and free-market economic policy, he distinguished three models. The first, or the marginal one, assumes the accomplishment of the desired state of social security in the labour market through individual resourcefulness with little regulation or intervention on part of the state. Under the second, motivational model, the universality of social insurance is conditioned by the amount of premiums paid. It incentivizes active participation in the labour market but, at the same time, offers benefits in case of unemployment and in other legitimate instances of dropping out of the labour market. Finally the institutional-distributional model assumes that work is a value but it nonetheless offers general access to the system of social welfare based on one's needs, making it possible to gain security also outside the labour market.

Another scholar who contributed greatly to our understanding of the variety of social models is Esping-Andersen (1990). In the early 1990s he suggested new criteria for assigning states to a particular social model and put forward a new classification of those models. He distinguished three types of those: liberal, conservative-corporate and social-democratic. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, Sapir (2005) proposed a yet another typology, designed for