

# **Migration and Decision-Making: The Role of Human Capital under a Rational Choice Approach**

**ALUSHI, Anila\***  
**ORDONEZ, Johnathan\*\***

## **INTRODUCTION**

As conscious creatures, human beings face decision-making processes all the time. From deciding what activities to carry on, to the place where to do these activities, we see a link between *who* makes these choices and *why* decisions are made. This paper provides useful insights about decision-making as a methodology to understand migratory behavior. The main working hypotheses were based on the assumption that migration is known as a rational action which the main objective is to maximize the individual's (or the community) aggregated or net benefit. Following this assumption, throughout the paper, we argue that human capital determines the migratory behavior of individuals because the qualification level determines the probability of finding a job in the selected country of migration. Furthermore, the paper is divided into three big chapters that account for the current tendencies in the rational choice and migration literature, the main differences when making a decision between human capital and social capital, and the empirical analysis of Albanian students who decided or are willing to stay in Italy after finishing with their studies<sup>1</sup>The explanation of each chapter are as follow:

The first chapter of this paper offers a theoretical background about rational choice and migration studies. Here we tried to identify the weaknesses in the approach to both the migration literature and rational theory, and we point out the possible ways to include both into the decision-making theory of migration. As an important part of economic sociology, we argue that migration studies could use a boost from rational theory for a better comprehension of the human behavior. The second chapter narrows the analysis to two key concepts: human capital and social capital.

---

<sup>1</sup>. The reason we chose Albanian students for the analysis of this paper is because their presence as both foreign students and workers in Italy is relevant. As we will discuss in the following chapter, according to the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) over 11,000 Albanians students were registered in Italian universities, almost 10% of the whole Albanian university population. They represent the highest number of foreign students in the Italian education system, followed by Romanian and then Chinese students.

Here we analyze what takes predominance when making a decision: is human capital more important than social capital? If so, what are the conditions for that proposition to happen? To answer these questions, we went to the migration model proposed by Professor Sonija Houg, from Princeton University. As we will see later, and for the purpose of this paper, we focused on the *meso* level and micro level for we consider that they explain better the individual behavior of the actor as an *ex-ante* condition of a broader social context. The third chapter contains the empirical analysis of our original hypotheses. First, we examine *who* migrates and *where*, hinting that the theory of decision-making contributes in the choosing of where people migrate, and second, we analyze why Albanian students do in fact decide to stay in the selected country of migration. An Ordinary Least Squared (OLS) model was run for this part controlling for variables that could influence the decision-making process. The findings are consisting of our original hypotheses, and also, hint for over unusual migration factors that could be explored in future researches.

For the methodological part, we focused on Albanian university students who, after finishing their studies, decide to stay in Italy rather than returning to their home country. The statistical analysis and the empirical data were elaborated in two different moments: for the statistical analysis, various tables were developed from the Albanian Census of 2011, the Italian Migration Database from ISTAT (the year 2011) and database (surveys) elaborated in other migration studies. The tables developed from the Census database are attached as annexes to this paper. Moreover, to complete -and as a *cross-check* of the information gathered so far- the empirical analysis, an online survey was conducted to Albanian students in Italy. However, since the number “*n*” of respondents could not be considered representative, we also used other databases from other surveys to taste our hypothesis. This part will be fully explained in the following chapters.

Finally, we would like to thank the International Sociological Association (ISA) for this initiative towards graduate students around the world. We find it extremely useful because it promotes research on interesting topics in an international environment, where perspectives and ideas are put together to contribute to human knowledge. We are sure that this represents only the first of several contributions in the format of academic inquiry. Now let the exercise begin.

## I. Migration Studies and Rational Choice: Unifying Approaches

The theory of rational choice has become one of the most important, and yet controversial, insights in migration studies (Kalter, 2003 & Nauck, 1988; cited in Haug, 2008). According to Haug (2008), perhaps what characterizes rational choice in the sociology of migration is “the actor’s perspective towards the macro and micro links” of the phenomenon (Coleman, 1990; Opp, 1999; Voss & Abraham, 2000). In migration studies, the actor's perspective<sup>2</sup> Means that migration is explained by the actor's behavior. Schelling (1978) argues that both modeling, micro, and macro, is the direct result of the sum of individual decisions. Here we could demonstrate that, on one side, the theory of rational choice is utterly influenced by an economic approach and, on the other side, it is also influenced by behavioral decision theory in the realm of sociological psychology.

In economic terms, some theorists of rational choice study social interaction as a process which leads to social exchange (Scott, 2000). Single individuals are considered as actors who choose from sets of alternatives, whereas constraints and opportunities represent restrictions in their choices. It must be clear then that a cost-benefit approach could underline, in most of the cases, a decision-making process. In a way, the real objective of rational choice theory is to explain a utility model from a subjective-expected view (Esser, 1999).

Most of the theoretical production regarding rational choice theory are directly related to microeconomics. Thus, migration behavior is considered as a rational action that maximizes the person’s net benefit (Todaro, 1976). Here human capital is a crucial factor in migration decision-making because there seems to be a correlation between the qualification levels of the individual with the probability of getting a job at the place of destination. According to Sjaastad (1962), both monetary and non-monetary, can be included in the economic model. However, even though the non-monetary determinants of the decision-making process of migration may be included in the model, they are simply not considered as key factors. One relevant contribution of the neoclassical approach to migration studies, in this sense, is that it contributes to clarify the selectivity of migration (Massey *et al.* 1993: 435; 1998:19).

---

<sup>2</sup> For the purpose of this paper, and because we are discussing the migration phenomenon within the framework of rational choice, the term "actor" will be considered as a synonym of the term "migrant."

There are some studies that suggest that household economy relates to the distribution of incomes and benefits in the households<sup>3</sup>. The theory states that household income, in opposition to individual income, tends to be maximized for it enhances the individual's expectations to the household level (Stark, 1991). Migration therefore is, and always analyzing under with the rational choice theory, a family strategy. This framework tells us why sometimes the separation of families brings a net benefit to the family in specific contexts, such as diversification of risks among the members of the family, remittance, and division of labor. Furthermore, Massey *et al.* (1993: 439; 1998:21) state that while the theory so far can explain the remittances and diversification phenomena, what triggers things like the family reunification –through what it is known as *chain migration*- is not part of any explanatory models. This leaves the door open for further research.

We argue that an actor chooses his or her place of residence from a spectrum of (alternative) places as the result of the utility calculations in several dimensions. This is coherent with the rational choice approach of the value expectation theory (De Jong & Gardner, 1981). In the model elaborated by De John and Fawcett (1981), we see that the will to migrate is the result of the sum of expected utilities of the actors<sup>4</sup>. However, we must consider that some features can alter the decision-making of the actors by influencing or changing the expectation components. These features include important variables such as individual characteristics, cultural and social values, risk-adverse or risk-neutral capabilities, and opportunity-cost to migrate.

So far, the migration literature shows that *affiliation*, namely, the utility of having family members near or being part of a community (De Jong & Gardner, 1981:50), is one of the most (if not the most) important variables in migration theory. The sense of belonging influence the decision-making of the individuals (Da Vanzo, 1981). When analyzed, it seems that migration occurs when the comparison of the outcomes (*payoffs*, in game theory terminology) of staying either in the country of destination or the country of origin show the latter to be more attractive than the former.

---

<sup>3</sup> Although this research paper is not dedicated to the household economy, it becomes a very important variable when trying to understand migration behavior and decision making. It is further taken into consideration when creating the explanatory model of migration in the following sections of this paper.

<sup>4</sup>. This model uses the definition of "expected utilities" according to the dimensions of wealth, status, comfort, suggestion, autonomy, affiliation, and morality. For more information, please refer to De Jong & Fawcett, 1981: 50.

## II. Social Capital and Human Capital in Migration Decision-Making

Is human capital related somehow to social capital? Does the place of destination influence the decision to migrate to another country, or it depends on other variables? One of the objectives this paper is to tackle those questions using a well-known model of migration using the theory of rational choice, social capital (place of destination), and individual resources. The model elaborated by Sonja Haug (2008) refers to all the variables mentioned above. Using the model proposed by Haug, we could argue that the migration decision-making of individual actors at the micro-level should be embedded in a social context (known as the mesolevel). These two levels are connected or influenced by a *meta-level* or macro-structural conditions. Since our units of analysis are Albanian students in Italy, the result of successful migration patterns, namely, chain migration, can be described as a process involving three different stages: (1) pioneer migration or first-wave migration; (2) labor/study migration, and (3) family migration. The migration chain starts with migrant pioneers: as the first generation of migrants, they decide where to go, and they have to find a job quickly. The costs and risks of migration are elevated at this stage. Networks are not yet established that could provide social ties and resources. Decision-making of migration takes place when the net utility to migrate exceeds the utility of staying at the place of origin. The following scheme shows a chart flow of migration interaction at three levels: The first level, the macro-level, where structural conditions are the key factors for migration purposes; the mesolevel, where social capital is the key factor for decision making, and micro level, where individual resources are the key factor for decision-making.

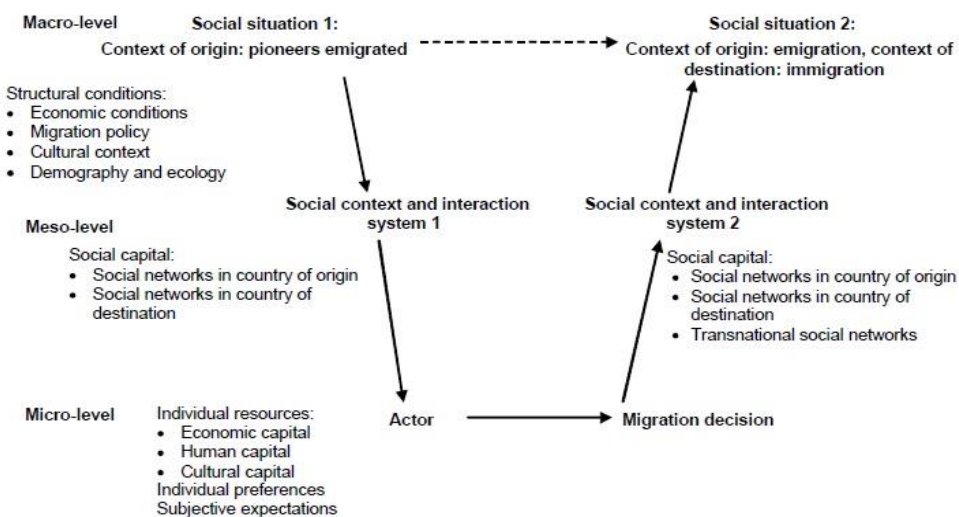


Figure 1: Multilevel model of migration decision-making and social networks.

Note: Haug (2008)

Once the pioneers have dealt with the risks of migration, actors confront lower problems: the transfer of social capital and other kinds of capital is now easier. Considering that our units of analysis are Albanian students, we give for granted that the conditions of their migration are, by definition, different from those in the upper (macro) level, namely, the Pioneers. Qualified migration makes the social context (the Meso level in the model) apt for “economic development and social integration in the receiving country” (Hugo, 1981: 202). A series of flows of migrants might then follow. These initially come without their families, at least until they decide to stay for a longer period. Family reunification is the third stage of this process, with the families also migrating to the original selected country of destination (Baily, 1982).

The location-specific social capital at the selected country of migration plays a decisive role in the migration decision of potential migrants. The attractiveness of places of residence is determined by the location-specific social capital, that is, by social affiliation or relations. Why do Albanian students decide to stay in Italy after they finish with their education? Why Italy? The critical point for the emergence of a migration chain is the decision to return or the migration of the family for the purpose of permanent settlement. Albanian students who originally come for a limited period have to make this decision. The process of chain migration hinges on whether large numbers of migrant return to their country of origin or arrange for their family to settle in the receiving country.

Faist (1997; 2010) and Haug (2000:152) state that the "chain migration process can be modeled by an 'S-shaped' function". That means that the rate of migration increases slowly, then more strongly, before declining first at a fast rate then more slowly, until it drops to almost zero and then the process stops. The rate of migration, then and only then, is represented by a bell curve. In other words, the cumulative migrant population at the country of destination corresponds to an "S-shaped" curve, and then a respective number of immigrants follows a bell-curve. With every new *actor*, the social capital of the country of destination usually increases for the following actor (or for the next generation). Thus, the more migration occurs, that is, the risk of migration for the following generation diminishes.

If social capital is significantly elevated at the place of destination, that means that it is low at the place of origin. Each new actor increases the location-specific social capital, and this reduces as a consequence the opportunity costs of migration for the following actors. If Albanian students decide to stay after finishing their studies at the university level, the social network they create will

facilitate the next generation to come, either family or friends. Consequently, staying at the place of destiny rises the social capital about networks and community. This becomes relevant because the structures of the constructed networks determine the behavior of the actors within the chain of migration. The main feature of chain migration phenomenon seems to be the displacement of social context and continues into cyclical dynamics.

The networks established at the city of origin will eventually pass on the country of destiny. We could argue that the more qualified the migration is, the stronger the networks become, and the easier it is to transfer the networks from one country (origin) to the other (destination). This effect is known by the name of “snowball effect”, and has been previously studied in the field of sociology (Faist, 1997 & Massey, 1990). Networks triggers “cumulative causation” because every single actor reduces the costs for potential migrants; this leads to more migration and new networks linking different individuals in the place of origin, in turn giving rise to renewed migration and new networks, and so on (Massey *et al.* 1993:449). In this way, migration maintains itself by social networks. A micro-foundation of the diffusion process has to be based on modeling of the distribution of threshold values for migration decisions within a population (Haug, 2000: 153). In an absence of networks, the cumulative causation of migrant networks would be limited (Fussell & Massey, 2004).

### **III. Migration Decision-Making from Albania to Italy: Revising the Empirical Evidence**

The following section shows the decision-making process of Albanian university students who decide to migrate to Italy. The first part is a general statistical analysis of Albanian population, its growth rate, its migration rate and the potential migration phenomenon to Italy. The second part tries to deal with the core question of the whole paper: *Should Albanian students migrate or not, and why*. In both cases, the main sources used for this section were the Albanian Census from 2011 (the most recent one); the Italian Migration Data Base (from ISTAT) and several studies about the Albanian-Italian migration phenomena. Finally, an Ordinary Least Square (OLS) model was used as a part of the Rational Choice methodology to prove our initial hypothesis. Most data was synthesized into a unique data set, which is attached to the present paper<sup>5</sup>.

#### **A. Albanian population in numbers: Who migrates and where?**

The following part of the paper is the results of the analysis of the demographic and migration database of Albania (national census of the year 2011), focusing particularly on university students who study in Italy and decide to stay there. Please note that the information of the Albanian census is disaggregated, and further efforts to construct some consolidated tables were necessary to run the statistical analysis.

After the 1960s, Albania went through a demographic transition. Birth rates declined slowly despite government policies that tried a population increase (Mitchell, 1975). After the end of the Cold War, the population continued to decline around 0,3% yearly, but, this time, due to emigration. A study conducted by Bobeva, D. and Telbizova (2000) concluded that tendency of Albanian migration "has been maintained throughout the past decades" (Bobeva, D. & Telbizova-Sack, J. 2000:207). The reduction in the population between the two last population censuses (2001 and 2011) totals almost three hundred thousand, representing an aggregated 9% of the country's average annual population over this period (INSTAT, 2011). For almost ten years (2001-2011) Albania registered negative net growth rate in its population due to migration. The main countries

---

<sup>5</sup> As stated in the introduction, and due to the limited amount of time and other external factors, we could only collect a limited number of responses from Albanian students who are about to finish their studies. Although our target was those people who already finished their university studies, the intentions of staying in Italy remains evident. We attach the results of the survey, and its function would be as a *cross-check* that supports our original hypothesis.



of destination for Albanian migrants are Germany, Austria, Italy and Greece (INSTAT, 2011; ISTAT, 2015; Haug & Diehl, 2004; Kalchev, 2001). This tendency seems to grow as the economic, social and political problems in Albania remain (Bobeva & Telbizova-Sack, 2000: 207). Current migration trends in Albania come in the form of transit migration to Western Europe from African countries, from the former Soviet Union, and other parts of the world (Bobeva & Telbizova-Sack, 2000).

A prognosis of the emigration potential in Albania has been drawn up by the population department of the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), based on stated interest in the reports of the 2011 census (Kalchev, 2001; ETF, 2007; INSTAT, 2011). A survey conducted in 2007 by the European Training Foundation (ETF, 2007) found that two-thirds of Albanians wanted to leave the country mainly for economic reasons: to “improve living standards” (36,7%); “finding a job” (19,7%) and because they found the nature of their current work “non-satisfactory” (9,3%).

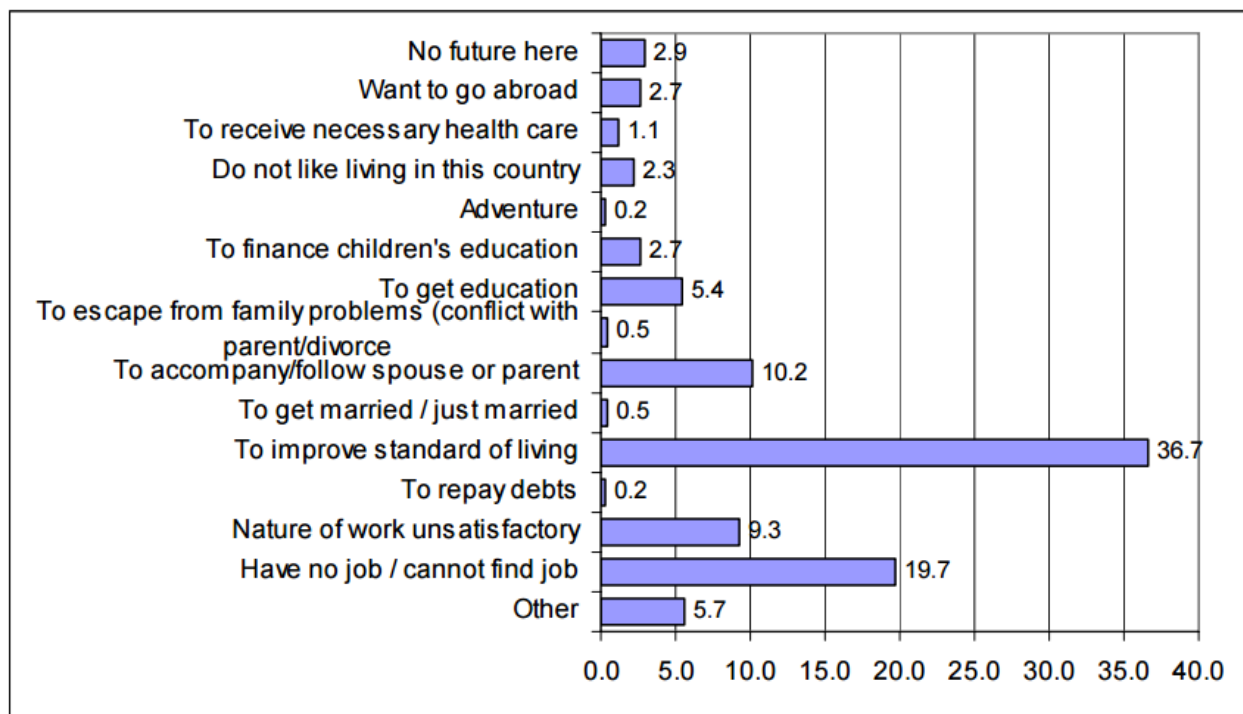


Figure 2: Main reasons for migration.

Note: ETF, 2007. n=559 respondents who intended to migrate.

The correlation about the role of migration and education seems to be controversial, and no consensus is found in the literature. According to the ETF (2007), people with primary and secondary education showed to be more optimistic to migrate than those with university education.

This could be explained by the fact that most of the jobs offered in the European Union member states are for non-qualified workers. However, we argue that university students also have a high intention migrate, - or to stay in the country of destination once their university education is over because it is easier for them to create networks than those with a lack of or lower qualifications.

Regarding selected place to migrate, Albanians tend to migrate to Italy, Greece, Germany, and the United Kingdom. A small percentage decide to go overseas to some countries of North America, especially Canada and the United States (USA). Another interesting thing to notice is that, according to the ETF survey (2007), there is a correlation between the country of destination and the level of educations. Albanians with lower level prefer to go to Greece, whereas those with the most qualification prefer to go to the USA. Those with higher secondary or early university education prefer to go to Italy. Again, in the case of this paper, we are more interested to know the reasons *why* those Albanians students who live in Italy decide to stay, instead of why they choose one country over the other.

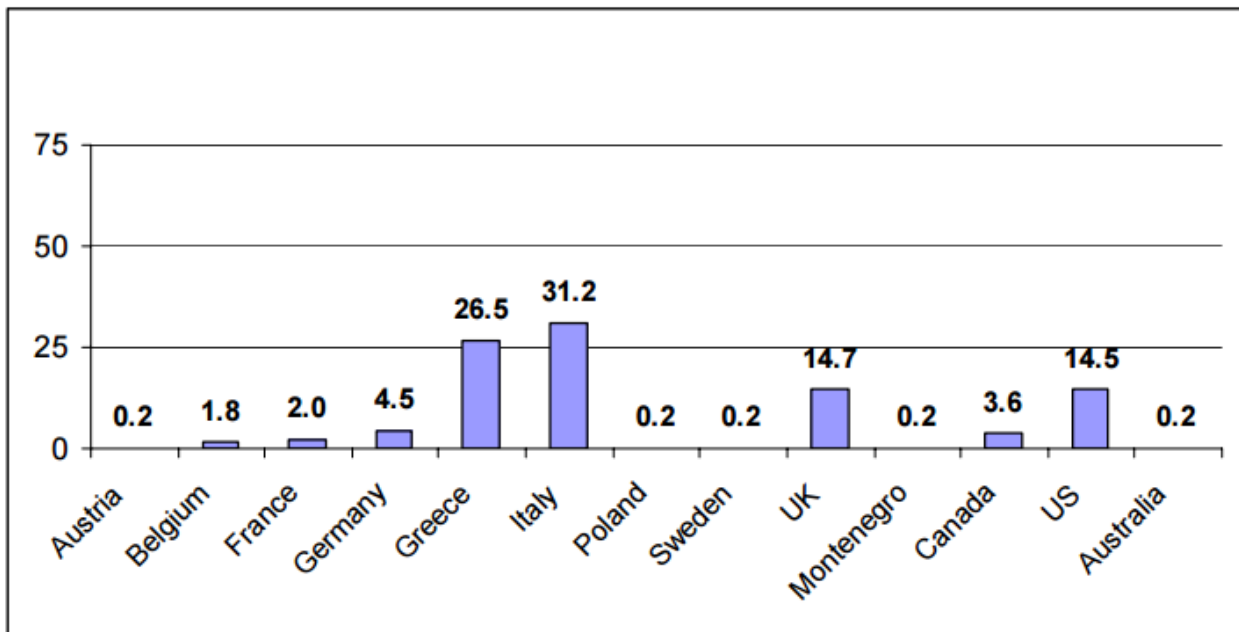


Figure 3: Most likely destination country (%)

Note: ETF, 2007. n=442 respondents who intended to migrate.

Migration networks also seem to play an essential role when choosing a country where to migrate. As stated in the previous chapter, once a pioneer migrant has already settled into the country of destination, the entry costs and uncertainties are lower for the next people to come. A

study conducted by Germinji *et al.* (2005; 2006) state that Italy and Greece were preferred over other countries because it is easier to construct networks there. What other factors might influence Albanians to stay after they finish the university education? The most accurate answer could be that once networks are established, employment in the host country becomes easier. The sample used in this paper was the one collected by the ETF survey (2007). Out of 1001 cases, the survey showed that around 86,7% of potential migrants prefer to work as salaried workers, and that could be related to their level of education and attitude towards risk-taking. Please note that about half of the respondents to the survey expressed their desire to stay abroad for up to five years, and around 16,1% stated that they wanted to leave the country for good. This means that Albanian return migration rate is also elevated. There also seems to be a correlation between the desired period to stay abroad and the education level of the potential migrants. According to the ETF survey, Albanians with primary education said they wanted to stay up to 10 years; the ones with secondary education up to 5 years, and those with university education stated to stay abroad permanently. The percentage, of course, may vary across cases.

Finally, the role of location-specific capital in Italy is firmly corroborated, at least concerning the intention to migrate, according to these perspectives are drawn from the 2011 Albanian census and the ETF survey. Following the above-mentioned information and facilitating hypotheses, the existence of a personal connection with the place of destination can be conducive to decisions to migrate and lead to a higher probability of emigration. Nevertheless, predictions based on migration intentions presuppose that intentions will lead to corresponding behavior. After all, migration intentions are not sufficient to predict migration. Migration intentions and forecasts based on migration intentions are not trustworthy in general (Kupiszewski, 2002:642).

### **B. “Should I stay or return?”: Making the decision**

The Albanian students who migrate to Italy show how migration decision-making mechanisms might function. Since we lack a database on current university students who decide to remain to work and live in Italy<sup>6</sup>, the analysis in this part was made on survey data on migrants in the country of destination taken from the Albanian Census 2011 and the ETF Census of 2007.

---

<sup>6</sup> Statistical data of Albanian students to decide to go and stay abroad is, in most cases, incomplete. A cross-check analysis reviewing statistical database of migrants in Italy was necessary to have a broader picture of the phenomenon. The most updated (2011) data from Albanian Census dataset used in this paper was collected and re-arranged in different excel sheets. All the information regarding this is provided in a separate file for verification if necessary.

It can be assumed that the return migration is driven by the same mechanisms as emigration decision. Consequently, an analysis of panel on migrants is suitable to demonstrate social and human capital effects on return migration decision (Haug, 2000, 2001). As stated before, the main assumptions from which our analysis is based are the following: (1) that human capital is a determining factor in migration decisions due to the qualification level of the actors: the higher the qualifications of Albanians, the higher the probability of finding a job in Italy; (2) that the human capital built in Italy by former migrants has a positive impact on the intentions of new Albanians to migrate, and (3) that social capital already established in Italy makes return migration to have a negative impact. In the Italian Institute of Statistics (ISTAT, 2011) over 11,000 Albanians, students were registered in Italian Universities, almost 10% of the whole Albanian university population. They represent the highest number of foreign students in the Italian education system, followed by Romanian and then Chinese students.

Most of the Albanian students registered in Italian universities are second generation immigrants, which means that either they live with the first generation immigrants (their parents), or they just traveled to Italy to study and then decided to stay and work. We will focus on the latter rather than the former. As seen in Figure 3, out of the sample of 1000 individuals, over half of them had a medium education (secondary education), one third low education (primary), and the rest university education.

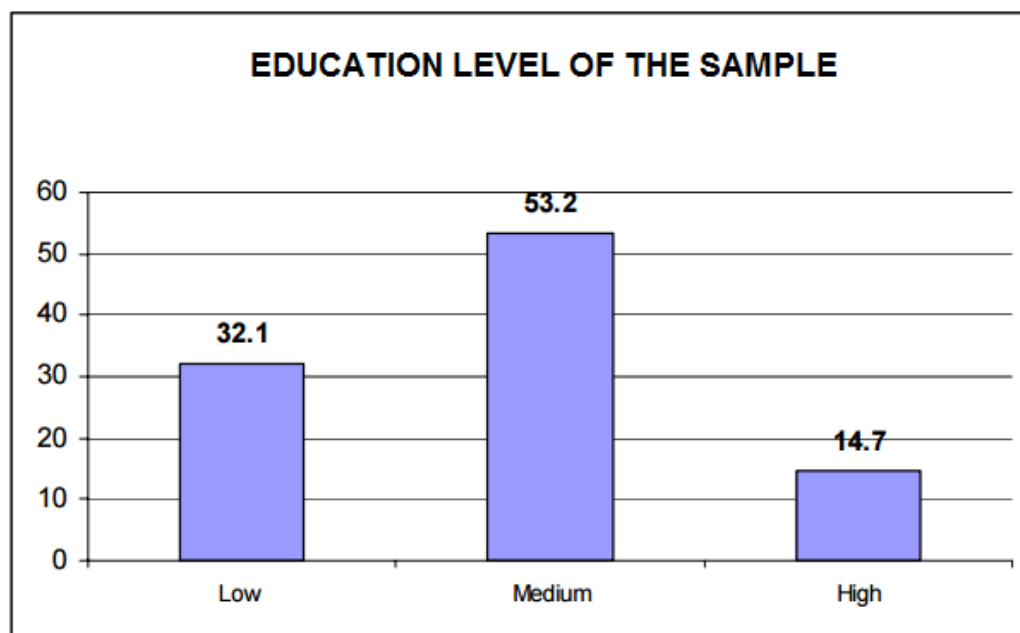


Figure 4: Education Level.

Note: ETF, 2007. n=1.001 respondents.

The bivariate analysis reveals a correlation between educational level and the desire of migrating. According to the ETF, almost half of people with low education expressed their desire to migrate, compare with 40,1% of those people with a university degree. However, a tendency to migrate gets elevated in people who had studied agriculture, engineering, health, and welfare. Here we can consider that the numbers of years of study have a restraining effect on return migration.

Albanians with fewer years of education (either young adults who are in middle school or high school or adults with ten years or less of effective education) -although expressing higher intentions to migrate, are also the ones with the higher probability of returning to Albania. Students with university degrees or those with over 15 years of education have a lower return probability.

<b>Education Index<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>Return Migration</b>	<b>People having returned before</b>	<b>Return migration</b>
<b>0</b>	1,6	2	0,6
<b>1</b>	3,4	29	9,0
<b>2</b>	1,7	37	11,6
<b>3</b>	0,7	39	12,2
<b>4</b>	2,2	99	30,8
<b>5</b>	1,9	5	1,8

*Table 1: Education years, returned people and return migration (%).*

*Source: INSTAT, 2011. Person/Period record file (see Yamaguchi, 1991 for method; Haug 2000:242) n=324 person/year; rm=213.*

One interesting finding is the positive effect of Albanians with many years of education who have returned to Albania before. Table 1 proves the previous statement: people with little less than ten years of education have fewer probabilities to stay in the country of destination. This is a proxy indicator of the sequential migration decision mechanisms within Albanian immigrants. Most Albanians who decide to return have a medium level (upper secondary) education. It is important to notice that women seem to be more educated than men<sup>8</sup>. Most of the respondents of

<sup>7</sup> For the sake of simplification, the variable of years of education was transformed into an ordinal variable called "Education Index". The codification is the following: 0=Illiterate; 1=Literate (write and read); 2=Primary; 3=Lower Secondary; 4=Upper Secondary, and 5=University and Post-University.

<sup>8</sup>. Although men are more inclined to migrate than women, according to the response from the survey, young women see student migration not only as an opportunity to advance in their education and their careers but also as a way to escape from a "convention-bound" and highly paternalistic society.

the ETF survey considered that proper instruction might enhance the status of living (the main cause of migration), for it is associated with human wellbeing.

Figure 5 indicates a direct link between the employment rate (that is, the percentage of employment) and the level of instruction. It reveals the following: the higher the education of the person is, the more likely it is for that person to have a job in the selected country of migration and, thus, to stay in that country. In other words, Albanians who are educated in Italy and decide to have a set of skills that other Albanians do not: not only they speak the language and have a higher cultural adaptability, but the constructions of networks allow them to find a job easier.

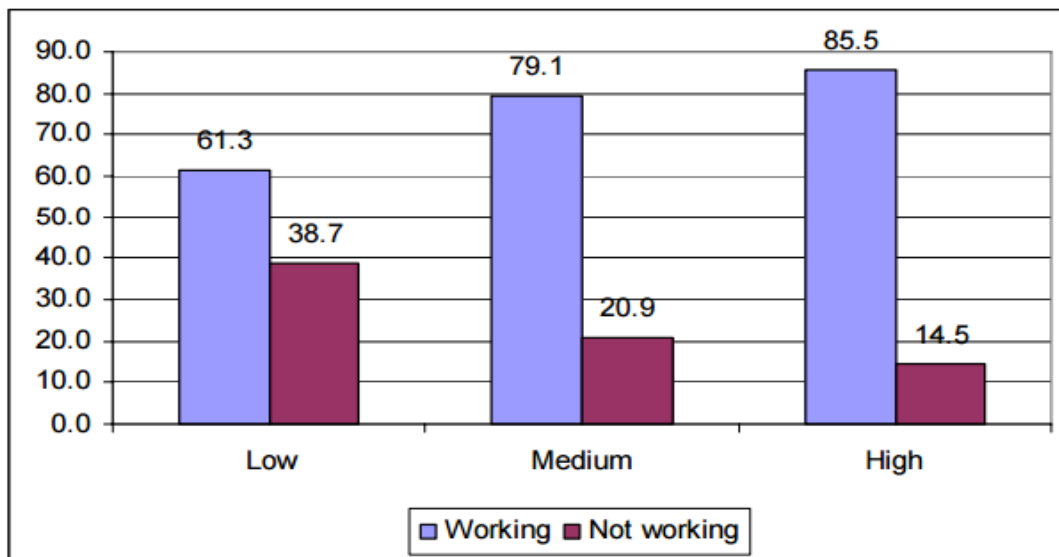


Figure 5: Work Status on Educational Level in the country of destiny (%)

Source: ETF, 2007. n= 1001 respondents.

Three different models have been tested in multivariate analysis to compare the effect of some other variables on the return rate of Albanian students. Model 1 includes personal characteristics of the actor; Model 2 compares individual features such as return migration intentions, income, human capital resources and employment (the assumption, in this case, is that not having a job in the place of destination raises the probabilities of return). Finally, Model 3 controls for the variable "years of education". Our assumption here is that the more educated one person is, the higher the possibility for that person to find a job and stay in the place of destination.

**Final Results: Determinants in Return Migration. Linear Regression Models.  
Beta Coefficient, Margin Effect and Confidence Intervals shown in all models.**

Predictor Variables	Model 1 Biography		Model 2 Individual		Model 3 Education	
	Coeff	Mar. Eff.	Coeff	Mar. Eff.	Coeff	Mar. Eff.
<b>PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS</b>						
Age	1,78*** (8,91)	0,0054	0,45*** (9,14)	0,0058	0,38*** (8,33)	0,0042
Age Squared	-0,007*** (-9,82)	-0,0001	-0,007*** (-10,10)	0,72	-0,0064*** (-9,27)	-0,01
Single	0,7003*** (3,08)	0,0099	0,7009*** (3,09)	0,0105	0,4276 (2,32)	0,62
<b>RETURN INTENTION</b>						
Income	7,76** (2,45)	0,0931	8,44*** (2,65)	0,1075	7,37** (2,32)	0,0825
Income Squared	-0,45** (-2,37)	-0,0054	-0,4939** (-2,56)	-0,0063	-0,4276** (-2,22)	-0,004
Live Stock	-0,0367 (-1,47)	-0,0004	-0,0359 (-1,43)	-0,0005	-0,0318 (-1,31)	-0,0004
Self-Employed	-0,6562*** (-2,95)	-0,006	-0,652*** (-2,94)	-0,006	-0,63*** (-2,88)	-0,0058
Wage	-0,97*** (-4,71)	-0,0092	-0,987*** (-4,76)	-0,0098	-0,98*** (-4,78)	-0,0086
<b>EDUCATION</b>						
Foreign Education			0,3248* (1,92)	0,0039	0,3065* (1,81)	0,0034
Education Squared			-0,0138 (-1,63)	-0,0002	-0,0127 (-1,50)	-0,0001
Secondary Education			0,2567* (1,79)	0,0035		
University and Post-University					0,1828 (0,47)	0,0025
<hr/>						
Number of observations	3.934		3934		3934	
LR in Chi <sup>2</sup>	1097,80		1093,86		4,175	
Prob>Chi <sup>2</sup>	0,000		0,000		0,000	
Log-likelihood	-748,7691		-750,7374		-754,9603	
(Gox/Snell) Pseudo-R <sup>2</sup>	0,4230		0,4215		0,4182	

*Table 2: Linear Regression Models controlling for personal characteristics, return intention and education.*

*Notes: The data base and the model were drawn by the work of Germenji & Swinnen, 2005. Person period record file, dependent variable: return migration. Numbers in parenthesis are standard z-values. Confidence Intervals in parentheses. \*\*\* p<0.01, \*\* p<0.05, \* p<0.1*

The variables of Model 3 have the lowest impact on return migration than those of Model 1 and Model 2 (Pseudo-R<sup>2</sup>). This means that the return migration rate does not tend to increase when we increase the numbers of years of study. The human capital theory also confirms it. Schultz (1982) suggests that “a minimum level of education is required in order to access jobs in high-income countries, while higher levels of education increase the employment and expected income-earning opportunities”.

Model 3 shows the selected variables for education. The codification of the variables is as follow: ‘Education’ is a continuous variable measured by years of schooling; ‘Education Squared’ are the years of schooling squared. There are two dummy variables: ‘Secondary Education’ (1=with school diploma; 0=with no school diploma), and ‘University and Post University’ (1=with university degree; 0= with no university degree). Each case of aggregated years of education decreases the probability of return migration for the Albanian students who live in Italy. The return migration decision of years of education affects the behavior of the actors in question. These variables take precedence over almost all other effects of the other variables. In the context of modelling chain migration process, sequences of migration within years of education or networks are crucial. If certain number of Albanian students are (rationally) tempted to stay in Italy after their years of university study, we argue that higher education makes the networking in the country of destination easier. Finally, if the network of work/study is constructed, the chain migration process also becomes easier in their location-specific social capital.

Finally, it can be stated that return migration decisions are determined primarily by social capital aspects, independently of individual aspects such as full-time employment or age<sup>9</sup>. The migration behavior of the Albanians is influenced by their level of preparation and location-specific social capital. In other words, the location-specific capital in Albania has a hindering effect on migration. The loss of capital in the country of residence is a *push* factor and capital in the country of destination –that is, the actor’s selected migration country- is a *pull* factor. The process of returning to the origin country has also been analyzed before by Constant and Massey (2002) controlling for other variables. Their method was used as well as a methodological framework for this study.

---

<sup>9</sup> Please note the direct relations between age and years of education. Keeping both of these variables associated, one can assumed that the older one person is, the more educated he or she is. However, for the purpose of this paper, both variables are disassociated, meaning that years of education could determine the age of one person but not necessarily the other way around.



## CONCLUSIONS

At the end, economic motives could largely explain the decisions to migrate and international migration movements. Macro-economic approaches to migration are incomplete in explaining migration motives and processes. Micro-level economic migration theories take into account individual and structural conditions, especially wage rates and unemployment levels, and explain the selectivity of migration. However, they do not explain non-economic migration motives to a large extent, and are surrounded by empirical weaknesses. Rational choice theory includes different utility dimensions and takes into account different costs and returns. Unfortunately, the weighting of different utility factors, the transitive ordering and the connection between monetary and non-monetary factors still remain under-specified. Another problem is the range of different factors included in the model. For example, a model of rational theory in fertility decision-making among migrants is the “value of children approach”. A set of economic-utilitarian, psychological-affective and social-normative utility factors are measured independently and linked to a prognosis of the fertility of migrants (Nauck, 2005). In migration decision research there is no consensus about a list of necessary and adequate push or pull factors. This is one of the weaknesses identified in this study as well: the selection of variables was made because those are the most common controlled variables in models of migration. However, when two or more variables in a multivariate models seems to be embedded one with the other, then it becomes methodologically complicated to have clear results of the analysis.

Moreover, the economics and the sociology of migration are converging and overlapping (Portes, 1995). Economics can incorporate social networks and non-economic decision factors in order to be more realistic. Sociological research can draw on economic models about rational choice and the social *embeddedness* of migration to enhance theoretical clarity and concreteness. Theoretically, especially when adapted to a specific issue, various models show that migration networks play a major role in migration. The social network concept may improve and complement the theory of rational choice and contribute to the explanation of further specialization of human capital, family reunification and chain migration process. This paper tries to be a contribution to migration studies by elaborating the concept of “social capital” in the selected place of destination. We have argued that the social and human capital of Albanians in Italy increase the probability of emigration intentions and, therefore, may increase the probability of emigration. The demonstrated

influence of education and migration behavior seem to correlate with the decision-making of Albanian students that live abroad.

Difficulties arise in finding an acceptable concept to measure the other potential results of migration, such as social networks -beyond households and families-, and to measure utilities and threshold levels beyond the simplified concept of emigration intention. The main focus is either on surveys involving a small number of indicators but high sample numbers, or on small, detailed, qualitative studies. In this sense, we would like to recognize the limitations of this current research. Time and resources were the main constrain to obtain more accurate data from our online survey for the analysis. However, using the data of the Albanian Census and several other surveys, the results were consistent nonetheless with our original predictions. Updated data needs to be considered as well for future exercises.

What is lacking, then, is an elaborated method to collect data on social networks of migrants at relatively low cost in order to be able to investigate network structures in migration contexts. The challenge now is to identify migration system not only between Albania and Italy, but also within Europe and other countries outside Europe. This will permit researchers to apply similar research designs based on interviews in the country of origin and country of destination. The debate is still open.

#### Special Acknowledgments:

We would like to thank the people who make this paper possible: to Niki Marku and Anita Korita for helping in the elaboration and the distribution of the online survey; to all of those Albanian students who are currently studying or studied in Italy, and that kindly responded positively to our request.

#### About the authors

\* **Anila Alushi (Albania, 1988)** has a Bachelor's Degree in Sociology and Social Policy, and a Master's Degree in Project Management. She has worked in different organizations regarding social work, gender policies and migration. She is currently enrolled in a Master's Degree in European Project Planning and Management at the University of Venice.

\*\* **Johnathan Ordonez (Nicaragua, 1988)** has a Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, and a Master's Degree in Public Policy and Economic Development. He has worked in several think tanks and research institutions about economic integration, policy analysis and international commerce in Latin America and Europe. He is currently a Ph.D. Student in Political Science at the University of Milan.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Albanian Institute of Statistics –INSTAT- (2011)** *Population Growth and Migration Tendencies: General Census*. Source: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/census/census-2011/census-data.aspx> Date of consult: November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

**Baily, S.L. (1982)** “Chain Migration of Italians to Argentina: Case Study of the Agnonesi and Sirolesi.” *Studi Emigrazione*, 19(65): 73-91.

**Brown, L. & Moore, E. (1970)** “The intra-urban migration process: a perspective, in *Geografiska Annaler*,” Vol. 52B: pages 1-13.

**Bobeva, D. & Telbizova-Sack, J. (2000)** “Migration in Albania,” in Fassmann, H. and Munz, R. (eds) “*Ost-West-Wanderung in Europa*.” Vienna: Bohlau Verlag, 207-16.

**Coleman, J.S. (1988)** “Social Capital in the creation of human capital, in *American Journal of Sociology*,” 94S: 95-120.

**Coleman, J.S. (1990)** “*Foundations of Social Theory*.” Cambridge: Belknap Press.

**Constant, A. & Massey, D.S. (2002)** “Return migration by German guestworkers: neoclassical versus new economic theories.” *International Migration*, 40(4): 5-38.

**De Jong, G. & Fawcett, J. (1981)** “Motivations for migration: an assessment and a value-expectancy research model,” in De Jong, G. & Gardner, R. (eds) “*Migration Decision Making: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Micro-level Studies in Developed and Developing Countries*.” New York: Pergamon. Pages: 13-58.

**DaVanzo, J. (1981)** “Repeat migration, information costs, and location specific capital, in *Population and Environment*,” 4(1): 45-73.

**De Jong, G. & Gardner, R. (eds) (1981)** “*Migration Decision Making: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Microlevel Studies in Developed and Developing Countries*.” New York: Pergamon.

**Esser, H. (1993)** “*Sociology, General Basis*.” University of Frankfurt.

**Esser, H. (1999)** “*Sociology, Special bases*” Volume 1: Situational Logic. University of Frankfurt.

**ETF (2007)** “[T]he Contribution of Human Resources Development to Migration Policy in Albania.” European Training Foundation.

**Faist, T. (1997)** “The crucial meso-level”, in Hammar, T., et al. “*International Migration, Immobility and Development*.” University of Oxford. Pages 187-217.

**Fischer, P.A., Martin, R. & Straubhaar, T. (1997)** “*Should I stay or Should I go?*” in Hammar, T. et al. “*International Migration, Immobility and Development.*” University of Oxford. UK.

**Fussell, E. & Massey, D.S. (2004)** “[*T*]he limits to cumulative causation: international migration from Mexican urban areas.” *Demography*, 41(1): 151-71.

**Germinji, E. & Swinnen, J. (2009)** “*Human Capital, Market Imperfection, Poverty and Migration: Evidence from Rural Albania.*” *Review of Business and Economics*. Vol.: 54; Issue:1; Pages: 22-45.

**Guentcheva, R., Kabakchieva, P. & Kolarski, P. (2004)** “*Migration Trends in Selected Applicant Countries.*” Volume I: The Social Impact of Seasonal Migration. Vienna: International Organization for Migration.

**Haug, S. (2000)** “*Social Capital and Chain Migration: Italian Immigrants in Germany.*” Opladen: Leske & Budrich.

**Haug, S. (2001)** “*Stay or go? To Measure Explanation and Forecasting of Return of Immigrants in Germany,*” 26(2): 321-70.

**Haug, S. (2004)** “*Hiking between Germany and Eastern Europe.*” *Wirtschaft und Statistik*, 3: 280-87.

**Haug, S. (2005)** “*East-West migration from Central and Eastern Europe to Germany: data sets, migration models and predication of migration potential,*” in Slany, K. (eds.) “*International Migration. A Multidimensional Analysis.*” Krakow: AGH University of Science and Technology Press, 191-215.

**Haug, S. (2008)** “*Migration Networks and Migration Decision-Making.*” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Vol. 34, No. 4, pp. 585-605.

**Haug, S. & Diehl, C. (2004)** “*External Migration in Albania. External Migration and Emigration Potential in Albania and its Consequences for Demography and Economy.*” Wiesbaden and Sofia: Italian National Institute of Statistics and Albanian Institute of Statistics. Data base attached to this paper.

**Hugo, G.J. (1981)** “*Village-community ties, village norms, and ethnic and social networks: a review of evidence from the Thrid World,*” in DeJong, G. and Gardner, R. (eds) “*Migration Decision Making.*” New York: Pergamon, 186-224.

**Italian Institute of Statistics –ISTAT- (2015)** *Statistics about migration in Italy*. Source: <http://www.istat.it/en/about-istat/activities/open-data-in-istat> Date of consult: November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2015.

**Kalchev, I. (2001)** *International Migration of Population in Albania*. Tirane: Dunav Press (in Albanese).

**Kalter, F. (2003)** *Stand und Perspektven der Migrationssoziologie*, in Orth, B.; Schwietring, T. & Weiss, H. (eds) *Soziologische Forschung. Stand und Perspektiven*. Opladen: Leske & Budrich. pp. 33-38.

**Krieger, H. (2004)** *Migration Trends in an Enlarged Europe*. Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conidtions.

**Kupiszewski, M. (2002)** *How trustworthy are forecasts of international migration between Poland and the European Union?* *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28(4): 627-45.

**Labrianidis, L. & Hatziprokopiou, P. (2011)** *Albanian Return Migration: Migrants tends to return to their country of origin after all*. European Commission. Working Paper. Bruxelles. pp. 22.

**Massey, D. (1990)** "Social Structure, household strategies, and the cumulative causation of migration." *Population Index*. Pages: 3-26.

**Massey, D., Alarcón, R., et al. (1987)** "The social Process of Interantional Migration from Western Mexico." Berkeley: University of California Press.

**Massey, D., Arango, J., et al. (1998)** "Worlds in Motion: Understanding International Migration at the End of the Millenium." University of Oxford: Clarendon Press.

**Mitchell, B. (1975)** "European Historical Statistics," 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edition. McMillan, London, in Taiyoo, A. "Economic Growth: The New Perspective for Theory and Policy." Seul National University.

**Nauck, B. (1988)** "Social-structural and individualistic migration theories. Elements of a theory of comparison, *Kolner Zeitschrift for sociology and social psychology*." Volume 40: Pages 15-39.

**Nauck, B. (2005)** *Changing value of children: an action theory of fertility behavior and intergenerational relationship in cross-cultural comparison*, in Friedlmeier, W., Chakkarath, P. and Schwarz, B. (eds) *Cultural and Human Development. The Importance of Cross-Cultural Research to the Social Sciences*. New York: Routledge, 183-202.

**Opp, K.D. (1999)** "Contending conceptions of the theory of rational action," in "Journal of Theoretical Politics, 2 11(2): 171-202.

**Schelling, T.C. (1978)** *Micromotives and Macrobehavior*. New York: Norton & Co.

**Scott, J. (2000)** *Rational choice theory*, in Browning, G.; Halcli, A.; Hewlett, N. & Webster, F. (eds) *Understanding Contemporary Society: Theories of The Present*. London: Sage, 126-38.

**Sjaastad, L. (1962)** "The costs and returns of human migration," *The Journal of Political Economy*. Volume 70: pages 80-93.

**Stark, O. (1991)** "The Migration of Labor." University of Oxford: Blackwell.

**Todaro, M. (1976)** "Internal Migration in Developing Countries: A Survey." Genève. International Labor Office (ILO).

**Voss, T. & Abraham, M. (2000)** "Rational choice theory in sociology: a survey, in Quah, S.S. & Sales, A. (eds) *The international Handbook of Sociology*." London: Sage, 50-83.

**Wallace, C. (2002)** *Opening and closing borders: migration and mobility in East-Central Europe*. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. 28(4): 603-25.

**Wolpert, J. (1965)** "Behavioral aspects of the decision to migrate," in "Papers and Proceedings of the Regional Science Association," Volume 15: Page 159-69.

**Yamaguchi, K. (1991)** *Event History Analysis*. Newbury Park: Sage.