Circular human mobility in Hungary 1 SÁNDOR ILLÉS *

Abstract

We measure the demographic patterns associated with international circular migration. Firstly, we define the circulation within the conceptual framework of transnationalism. Secondly, we create macro-scale data bank on long-term international circular movers based on an original statistical method. Thirdly, we seek to gain further insight into the composition of international circular movers by gender, age, and family status. The data are obtained from the Office of Immigration and Nationality. The primary database consists of individual data files on legal immigrants. The results of this research indicate that the long-term circulation (multiple mobility) of foreigners to Hungary as the host country is a mass phenomenon. More than 14 per cent of legal immigrants arriving in Hungary were long-term circulars between 2006 and 2008. Of these registered circular movers, 75.9 per cent entered the country for a second time, 21.6 per cent for a third time, and 2.5 per cent for a fourth time. Conclusions indicate the need for future research.

Keywords: Circulation; international migration; demographic distribution; Hungary; parity analysis.

Introduction

This paper provides empirical evidence on international circular movers² based on the comprehensive administrative database available in Hungary, and it conceptualises and analyses one of the aspects of the circulation. The aim of this study is to transform the highly theoretical concept of circulation (Jeffery and Murison, 2011; Montanari, 2012; Hugo, 2013) to align this concept with the thinking of demography, statistics, migration studies, and population geography.

A single event of immigration may mean a movement from the country of origin to the host country, or a return migration from the host country to the country of origin, or an onward migration from the host country to a third country (Kovács et al., 2013; Lang and Nadler, 2014). Circular human mobility

² We use the terminology of movers and human mobility as suggested by Cohen and Sirkeci (2011) and Sirkeci and Cohen (2015).



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refers to two or more instances of movement to the same country of destination. By analogy to the distinction stated by the European Commission (2011: 21), we may identify two different categories from a destination country perspective: We might differentiate between non-national circulars residing in the country of origin (inwards circulation) and non-national circulars settled in the host country (outwards circulation). From a methodological point of view, the analytical value of these two perspectives is equivalent. Due to data accessibility, we decided to utilise the inwards perspective in our study of the Hungarian case.

The system of multiple and recurring human mobility emerges due to the rapid development of information, transportation and telecommunication technologies. This is also due to policies and practices allowing free movement between the countries of the European Union. Thus the nation-state borders have been disappearing in most part of the continent as a result of the free movement of individuals has become a reality within such regional unions. Students of transnationalism claim that multiple affiliations are increasingly possible and common (Portes and DeWind, 2004; Williams et al., 2011). One of the distinguishing features of transnational movers is that their status transcended the exclusive relationship between the territory of the nation-state and its population (Tóth, 2011).

Several phenomena involving multiplicity accompanied the more frequent recurring spatial movements in the era of globalisation. These phenomena included multiple residence (McHugh et al.,1995), multiple citizenship (Bloemraad, 2004), multiple property ownership (Hall and Müller, 2004), multiple employment and multi-occupationality (McLoughlin et al., 2011), multiple social and political activities (Waldinger, 2008), multiple identity (Tannenbaum, 2007), multiple knowledge (Williams and Baláž, 2008), multiple loyalty (Sirkeci, 2009) and multiple partnerships (family, friendly, marital) (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). This list is not exhaustive and naturally, it can be expanded further. However, we only refer to the emerging phenomena of multiplicity which may have something to do with circulation as a migratory system (Beguy et al., 2010).

Data and methods

The current study on international circular movers is limited to Hungarian immigration data. This choice had several advantages. The data set came from a comprehensive administrative database which is collected by Immigration and Nationality Office (of Hungary). The method of data gathering harmonised well with international recommendations. In this study, we concentrate on the aspects of multiple movers related to immigration. As a reference group, of course, we can also distinguish the first-parity immigrants (entered the country for the first time). Main contribution of this research is that we can distinguish 153

the international circular movers within the overall complexity of human mobility patterns. In addition, we explored particular aspects of the demographic patterns shown by the international circular mover population in Hungary.

Clearly, given the macro scope of this research (Sanderson, 2010), not all dimensions of circulation can be investigated (Bailey, 2010; Skeldon, 2012). We studied the movers for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008 and determined the number of individuals who registered since 2001. Movers registered twice, three times, four times and more constitute the international circular movers.

The primary database consists of individual data files on legal movers each year between 2001 and 2008. According to the official statistical definition, the term mover - "immigrant" as legal point of view- means a foreign citizen who entered Hungary in a given year and obtained a permanent residence or settlement permit to stay one year or more. This definition is based on the recommended definition by the United Nations (Haug et al., 2002; Fassmann et al., 2009). The documented legal status guarantees free movements and appears to encourage border crossing.

We utilise data on the flow of movers because net migration figures conceal multiple movements, *e.g.*, circulation. The researchers had access to the primary database on international movers to Hungary. Individual movers are identifiable in this database. The individual data files include the movers' surname, given name, gender, date of birth, place of birth, marital status, citizenship, and the address of usual place of residence in Hungary. We established an original method for the creation of a secondary database on international circular movers in Hungary as our group of interest. In this method, we compared one of the three years under investigation with the previous years, starting with 2001 (for example, 2006 with 2001-2005, 2007 with 2001-2006 and 2008 with 2001-2007).

For purpose of data processing, we created a special computer programme as a multi-level identification system to recognise the same individual over different time periods. On the first level of disaggregation, we associated natural persons with the same surname, given name(s), gender, date of birth, and place of birth. This procedure was an essential step towards the identification of circular movers. The first results were extracted from the original data set. The subject of the next stage of the analysis was the residuum data file. On the second level, we connected the natural persons remaining with the same surname and given name(s) without any special characters in the letters, gender, date of birth, or place of birth. This stage is necessary due to the large variety of languages and due to the mistakes in spelling made by the officers who recorded the information with or without any documents that could be consulted. On the third level, we abbreviated the family name to the first five letters without any special characters. We did not include the given name(s). This information was combined with the information on gender, date of birth, and place of birth. In the next stages, we did not use the names, but we included any other

variables. In practice, we did not find the same persons after the seventh or eighth levels of comparison of the residuum data sets. Overall, we obtained an exceptional secondary database. In this database, natural persons returning different times to Hungary were recognised as international circular movers.

We chose to investigate flow data from 2006 through 2008 because the results (numbers, patterns, and structures) for separate years differed markedly year on year. This solution helped to decrease the distortion produced by the highly changeable character of year-on-year long-term circular human mobility. This characteristic of international circular mobility was consistent with New-land and colleagues' (2008: 1) argument on the highly fluid patterns of international circular migration. Our main aims were to explore the semi-permanent demographic patterns of international circular movers in Hungary.

Demographic composition

Between 2006 and 2008, 77521 foreign movers registered as immigrants in Hungary. Of these foreign citizens, 10907 have already stayed in Hungary as movers previously indicating that more than 14 per cent of all of these movers were circulars (simple or multiple returnees) with previous personal experience of living in the country (this percentage could be even higher, but we only had access to data for the years since 2001). In contrast, Constant and Zimmermann (2011) utilised German data to explore the extent of international circular mobility among the 'guest worker' population. They used the first 14 waves of the German Socio-Economic Panel data from 1984 to 1997 and found that 62 per cent of all individuals in the sample were repeat or circular movers. The large difference between the two values could be explained by the different types of data (register data versus panel data), the length of the study periods (3 years versus 14 years) and the populations investigated (all legal movers versus guest workers only). Moreover, Germany has traditionally been a country of immigration over the past half century, whilst the history of immigration to Hungary starts in the late 1980's following the regime change. Unfortunately, the circular guest worker subpopulation was not separated by parity (numbers of exits) in the study of the German data, in contrast to the Hungarian case. We also found that of the 10907 long-term international circulars (who were reported as movers more than once). Of these registered circular movers 75.9 per cent entered the country for the second time, 21.6 per cent for the third time, and 2.5 per cent arrived for the fourth time since 2001. The decrease in these values was in agreement with previous expectations.

According to the Hungarian data, 57.3 per cent of the total number of movers was men, 42.7 per cent women. Among the circular movers, 55.4 per cent were men, 44.6 per cent women. Surprisingly, the gender composition of the circulars in Hungary was similar to that of the German circulars (52.3% and 47.7%, respectively) (Constant and Zimmermann, 2011: 504). We can conclude that a slight male surplus exists among the circular movers like for all movers.

However, the probability that an international mover woman becomes a circular mover is higher than the corresponding value for a man for all the years analysed. This finding may contradict the cultural truism that often opposes mobile masculinity to localised femininity. From a gender perspective (Kovács and Melegh, 2007), the higher female probability of becoming a circular mover would represent one of the symptoms of the feminisation process within international human mobility and would indicate perhaps the weakening of priority of economic motives.

As shown in Figure 1 and 2, the analysis of age composition indicates that children (aged 0-4), secondary or tertiary school students (aged 15-24) and elderly people (aged 55 and up) were less frequent among the circular movers than people at an economically active ages. The most frequent age group is 25-54 representing more than half of circular movers. Within all international circular movers to Hungary, more than a third of all were aged 25-39, while those aged 40-54 were only one-sixth.

Figure 1: Age pyramid of international circular movers in Hungary between 2006 and 2008, (%)



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Figure 2: Age pyramid of international non-circular movers in Hungary between 2006 and 2008, (%)



The average age of circulars rise according to parity. In addition, the average age of female international circular movers is younger, according to parity, than their male counterparts. It is highly probable that the women began their mobility trajectory earlier than the men (Illés and Kincses, 2012: 205). A comparison with the German data shows that the average age of circulars in Hungary (32.3 years) was approximately equal to the average age of the circular guest workers (32.9 years) (Constant and Zimmermann, 2011: 504).

Examination of demographic distribution with respect to family status (see Table 1) shows that the percentage of single people (53.6 per cent) among the circular movers is higher than that among the non-circulars (47.4 per cent). One possible explanation is that the "mobile" way of life is not typical of those who have formal partnerships, with or without children. The presence of immediate family members may reduce the probability of circulation (Illés and Kincses, 2012: 208). This hypothesis supports Vertovec's (2007: 5) speculation on the likelihood of circular movement: "likelihood falls with marriage ... when migrants have children ... they are less likely to engage in circular migrants who are the most mobile and open to circular migration are the middle-aged, male, /and single migrants".

Table 1: Family status distribution of international non-circular (1) and circular (2–X) movers by parity of entering in Hungary between 2006 and 2008, (%)

male

Family status	Numb	Total				
	1	2	3	4	Together (2–X)	
Single	49.4	52.5	52.0	48.7	52.3	49.8
Married	43.9	42.6	42.9	46.2	42.8	43.7
Widowed	1.9	1.0	1.9	1.3	1.2	1.8
Divorced	4.9	3.9	3.3	3.8	3.8	4.7
Total	100.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

female

Family status	Numb	Total				
	1	2	3	4	Together (2–X)	
Single	44.7	52.8	62.6	70.9	55.2	46.2
Married	44.7	36.6	30.3	23.6	35.0	43.3
Widowed	5.0	4.9	3.2	3.6	4.5	4.9
Divorced	5.6	5.7	3.9	1.8	5.2	5.6
Total	100.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

male and female total

Family status	Numbers of entering					Total
	1	2	3	4	Together (2–X)	
Single	47.4	52.6	56.6	57.8	53.6	48.3
Married	44.2	39.9	37.4	36.9	39.3	43.5
Widowed	3.2	2.8	2.5	2.2	2.7	3.1
Divorced	5.2	4.7	3.6	3.0	4.4	5.1
Total	100.	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	0					

However, we cannot claim that the probability of circulation is higher for the people without legal partnership than for those with partners due to the lower percentage of widowed and divorced circulars than the corresponding first parity values. Such findings are germane to arguments associated with the erosion of the traditional concept of the family and the creation of new types of cohabitation.

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The consistent patterns characterising the demographic composition of the country of citizenship reflected the identity of the international circular mover subpopulation as a multiply selected group. At their first movement to Hungary, they are distinguished from the non-mover population. With the second movement, they became international circular movers, and thus are distinguished from other foreign citizens who moved from Hungary for the first time. With the increase in their serial number, the populations of circular movers changed from larger groups to many smaller subgroups.

Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that the long-term circular movement of foreigners to Hungary as the receiving country becomes sizeable. Based on the unique data processing method used in this study, over 14 per cent of all registered movers arriving in Hungary were circular migrants between 2006 and 2008. As a distinguishing feature, these individuals had previous experience of living in the host country. Of these registered circular movers, 75.9 per cent entered the country for a second time, 21.6 per cent for a third time, and 2.5 per cent for a fourth time. Men dominate the international circular movers, but the surplus is smaller than their dominance of all international movers. The probability of internationally mobile women to become circulars is higher than male movers becoming circular. From a gender perspective, this empirical evidence points a feminisation process in the international human mobility towards Hungary. The strongest finding of this research is that the vast majority of circular movers are single individuals (53.6 per cent). It is highly probable that getting married -often meaning a settled life style- is incompatible with the circular mobility trajectory of individuals.

Due to the multiple selection processes, the group of international circular movers understandably includes a significantly lower share of children, students and elderly people compared to their share in the total population of international movers in Hungary. Most circular movers are aged 25-54, largely working ages whilst among all international movers, a more balanced age distribution is prevalent. Age and gender selectivity of international circular human mobility deserves and warrants more research and possibly more qualitative studies to better understand this phenomenon. International comparisons are also necessary to develop conceptual frameworks and models to explain this particular human mobility behaviour. The method used in this study to analyse international circular mobility can be used in other country cases and thus enable comparative studies. Nevertheless, for such studies, comparable and reliable data sources are needed to be developed at national and international levels. Academic and policy debates on international circular mobility and movers will underline the importance of this particular movement pattern and eventually may lead to suitable datasets to be produced.

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