

EDITORIAL

Social mobility and migration

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Abstract

Migration is a type of geographical mobility. This kind of mobility across space can also be related to socio-economic mobility. The study of such a combination of territorial and socio-economic movements is becoming more relevant because, on the one hand, some places are currently being reconstructed by an increase in geographical mobility. On the other hand, during the last decades, debates about socio-economic mobility have been increasing too. This special issue addresses a number of questions concerning social mobility that are at the heart of contemporary debates and have given rise to quite divergent policy prescriptions. It is quite clear that in the present economic and political environment it is unlikely that any sort of agreement about how to develop new policy regimes in this field will be easy to achieve. On the contrary, it seems likely that this will remain an area full of controversy and conflict for some time to come.

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This special issue ultimately addresses a number of questions concerning social mobility, among others: Which structural barriers need to be overcome to achieve more social and economic mobility? Which policy measures are incentive to reinforce social and economic mobility? Which best-practice policies and structural changes do promote equal opportunities and social cohesion? All of these questions are at the heart of contemporary debates and have given rise to quite divergent policy prescriptions. It is quite clear that in the present economic and political environment it is unlikely that any sort of agreement about how to develop new policy regimes in this field will be easy to

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achieve. On the contrary, it seems likely that this will remain an area full of controversy and conflict for some time to come. In this present special issue of "Migration Letters" a selection of contributions presented at the conference "Social Mobility and Migration. Multidisciplinary Perspectives" (Bolzano/Bozen, 21 June 2011) organised by EURAC and Zemit within the Migralp/Interreg project, are collected.

During recent years, the number of migrants in most European countries has increased significantly. Governments, public administrations and civil society are challenged to integrate migrants and persons with migrant backgrounds into society. Increased migration is not only an enormous challenge for the European Union and its member states, but also for the individual regions and provinces that play an increasingly important role in planning and implementing national immigration policies. As such, a response at the local level more accurately provides for the needs of specific territories in terms of housing, employment, education and health care.

Migration is a type of geographical mobility. This kind of mobility across space can also be related to socio-economic mobility, both upwards to a better life and downwards to a worse living condition. Socio-economic mobility sometimes occurs within a single place, without migration, but today socio-economic movements are often related to a change of residence place (or having more than one home at once).

As time goes by, the study of such a combination of territorial and socio-economic movements is becoming more relevant because, on the one hand, some places are currently being reconstructed by an increase in geographical mobility, with more people being on the move (e.g. through improved transport and information technologies) and some institutions and social practices are becoming more mobile too (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Urry, 2007). Additionally, on the other hand, during the last decades, debates about socio-economic mobility have been increasing too. In the UK, for instance, there are studies suggesting the need to improve social mobility there (e.g. Crawford *et al.*, 2011) and, in countries where there have been economic *booms*, socio-economic mobility has taken place hand in hand with the arrival of immigrants. For instance, in Spain, during the 2000s, foreign workers upwards social mobility took place there, at least until the *Spanish National Immigration Survey / Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, ENI*, was conducted in 2007 (Pajares, 2009). This survey was directed by American-born sociologist David S. Reher and it has been considered as an excellent tool to study several aspects of the immigrants' arrival and settlement processes in Spain (Reher *et al.*, 2008), including socio-economic mobility of immigrants.

As in most societies and circumstances, international migration tends to be into cities and towns. Indeed, the collective view of 120 of Europe's major cities is that not only are cities very attractive to migrants because they offer job opportunities but also because they promise a better quality of life, and family and friendship networks (Eurocities, 2007). With the free movement of

workers within the European Union, and the accession to the EU of nations in central and eastern Europe in the enlargement of 2004, there have been significant flows of workers to the growth poles of the continent – the cities and capitals.

As the hosts of these migration moves continued to be these urban regions throughout the economic cycle (though see Jentsch and Simard, 2007, for a balanced view of the impacts on rural areas), the challenges of integration also have fallen on the public authorities of these communities. The provision and delivery of services at the local level is where many migrants and their host communities come into closest contact and potential conflict, so that the focus on municipalities should address many of the most pertinent issues facing all concerned.

In this special issue of *Migration Letters*, two complementary papers devoted to immigrants' socio-economic mobility are based on results from that survey. On the one hand, Stanek and Veira analysed the ethnic niches where workers from five main immigrant communities concentrate. Among other findings, the authors suggest that the segmentation of the Spanish labour market strongly favours the concentration of immigrants, but, at the same time, variables related to human and social capital still play a significant role in the placement of immigrant workers in different occupational niches, which are not all equally attractive. For them, the gender gap is of great importance and it is detrimental to women, as they are more likely to be employed in less desirable occupations.

On the other hand, Vidal-Coso and Vono de Vilhena analysed the transition from the last job in the country of origin to the first job in Spain for immigrants according to their country of birth. Among other outcomes, the authors suggest the inexistence of differences between men and women on the impact of networks and that pre-settled partners have a key role in immigrants' upwards labour mobility.

Unfortunately, these papers do not offer an assessment of the link between social mobility and integration (the first paper just mentions once the term 'integration' in the introduction quoting another author). It is argued that, in Spain, the massive arrival of foreign immigrants is relatively recent and more time perspective is needed for evaluating integration processes. In any case, a new survey would be necessary in Spain in order to understand the impacts of the current economic crisis in the socio-economic and geographical mobilities of immigrants (and natives), as well as if (and how) their integration processes have been affected. Furthermore, learning from the experience of ENI-2007, it would be interesting to conduct a similar survey at European and inter-continental levels in order to carry out international comparisons.

Danson and Jentsch analysed the labour market experiences of international migrants to non-metropolitan and rural areas that, despite increasing evidence that can be observed in many developed countries, remains neglect-

ed as a research topic. Danson and Jentsch drew their analysis on the evidence of a large, cross-national research project on immigration and rural areas, focusing on four of the six countries included: Ireland, Scotland, Canada and the USA – the former constituting two new settlement countries, the latter two established countries of immigration. The authors concentrated on three themes that have emerged as being especially important in shaping the experiences of labour migrants to rural areas: different forms of unemployment; pay and working conditions; and the significance of welcoming communities.

Drawing comparisons across the four countries from which evidence was analysed, Danson and Jentsch observed that even in countries recognised for their progressive policies and laws supporting labour migrants, significant problems are experienced on the ground. According to the authors, of particular concern here are temporary workers, and especially those employed in sectors such as agriculture and services. Danson and Jentsch concluded that as national legislation can only play a limited role, we are reminded again of the importance of *local* policies of integration.

Cundal and Seaman focused their analysis on temporary workers and explored the human rights dimension behind Canada's Temporary Foreign Worker (TFW) Programme that is often used to meet long-term labour needs, particularly in occupations requiring lower levels of education and training. With a focus on the western Canadian province of Alberta, Cundal and Seaman discussed some of the human rights issues regarding management of temporary migration and identified areas where reform is needed.

Cundal and Seaman observed that there has been a marked downshift in the skill levels of workers coming to the province under the TFW Program and these lower-skilled workers, many of whom lack proficiency in either of Canada's official languages, are particularly vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. The authors explored a list of major areas where temporary foreign workers experience challenges, particularly those who are lower-skilled, namely, inaccurate information prior to departure; illegal recruitment fees; work permits and job mobility restrictions; employment standards; integration and discrimination in the field of language, housing and basic services; and family separation.

Gerhard Hetfleisch addresses the theme of migrant communities in Austrian urban places and he discusses the marginalization of foreign nationals and immigrants from the new EU member countries in Austria. After identifying the different characteristics of successive periods of immigration, he focuses on the particular relationships between the qualifications and occupations attained by each cohort. This analysis shows significant changes over time and reveals significant undercurrents, he argues.

So, by cross-referencing these statistics with residential and social environments, and demonstrating that a third of immigrants become trapped in poverty, he takes a strong view that this is due primarily to social exclusion by the host society. Assessing indicators on education and the utilization of edu-

cation, participation in the workforce, unemployment, and occupation and housing conditions, he provides evidence to support this hypothesis. Extending his argument, Hetfleisch suggests that discrimination by Austrian residents is the cause of exclusion, rather than a failure of migrants themselves. It follows, therefore, that ideology has established and sustained the public debate on ethnicity and cultural barriers to integration and this has been camouflaging the true causes of social inequality. This analysis supports the pro-active approach prescribed by the international agencies (OECD, ILO, and the EU) of working with migrant and host communities to promote integration and inclusion. The last paper in this set of papers for the special issue is on the role of municipalities in fostering integration processes in Austria by Marika Gruber. This study identifies eight municipal fields of integration and examines the two Austrian cities Linz and Dornbirn as cases. It points out the possibilities for municipalities in contributing the integration process.

We have also included in this issue, a regular paper by Anna Amelina critically reviewing methodological nationalism in migration studies. She focuses on social inequalities and discusses the potential of spatial scales and social boundaries approach. Finally, some of the books we received have been reviewed and introduced.

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The Institute for Minority Rights at the European Academy of Bozen/Bolzano (EURAC)

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The Institute for Minority Rights represents many years of pure and applied research on questions of the protection of minorities, cultural variety and European integration as well as the resolution of ethnic conflicts. Using the successful South Tyrolean autonomy model as a basis, our hand-picked team of lawyers and political scientists has since 1993 concerned itself with the peaceful co-existence of different peoples around the world, thereby gaining an international reputation for itself. As a renowned centre of excellence in the managing of ethnic and cultural diversity, the Institute for Minority Rights is involved in a large number of projects. The focus is on research work, but high-quality advanced training schemes and appropriate political advice are also regularly offered.

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MIGRALP

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The MigrAlp project (2009-2012) seeks to highlight the dynamics existing within different ethnic communities that facilitate integration into the local community and the labour market. This is achieved through extensive exchange of information between North- and South Tyrol and a study of the selected ethnic communities and their social and economic networks. Indicators of successful integration at the local level have also been developed in order to develop recommendations for better integration policies. In parallel,

the project develops role playing in the field of anti-discrimination and diversity in order to prepare the youth for a more open society.

The main Migralp publication is *La migrazione in Alto Adige e Tirolo. Analisi e prospettive multidisciplinari/ Migration und Integration in Südtirol und Tirol. Analysen und mutlidisziplinäre Perspektiven* (EURAC research, 2011), Roberta Medda-Windischer, Gerhard Hetfleisch, Maren Meyer (eds.), ISBN: 978-88-88906-69-0 /ISBN:978-88-88906-68-3. This multidisciplinary collection of articles provides a contextual analysis of the migration of third country nationals into South Tyrol and Tyrol in order to crystallize regional particularities and challenges.

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