

Why do they stay when they are not supposed to? Reconsidering the push-pull theory

(Extended abstract)

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In his influential paper Lee states that – besides *personal factors* and *intervening* obstacles – the major factors affecting migration decisions are (positive and negative) factors associated with the area of origin and (positive and negative) factors associated with the area of destination (Lee, 1966). Yet, Lee's theory in the majority of the cases appears as a push-pull theory, in which push refers to the negative factors of the country of origin and pull is associated with the attraction of the (potential) country or countries of destination. By focusing on why people move, major theories of migration tend to embrace this one-track approach. Theories based on micro or macroeconomics, dual labour market theory, world systems theory or the concept of cumulative causation – just to name a few – basically explain why people move (either the initiation or the perpetuation of international migration). Nevertheless, these theories do not perform well when explaining why the vast majority of people – even in the least developed countries – choose not to migrate; in spite of – for example – more job opportunities and higher salaries in potential destinations or existing migration networks. We argue that one cannot have a full picture on migration decision ignoring that negative (push) factors do exist in the destinations, and positive (pull) factors are to be found in the country of origin, as well. It is not enough to explore the reasons for moving, one must also raise the question why people stay within borders (De Jong, 2000, O'Connell, 1997, Schoorl et al., 2000). Since researches on residential mobility (Arsdol et al., 1968, Kan, 1999, Landale and Guest, 1985) clearly demonstrate that those having no mobility intention are indeed more likely to stay compared to the rest of the population, mapping the rationale behind the lack of migration intentions may be one of the key elements in better understanding the nature on international mobility.

In this framework, difficulties, risks and costs associated with migration are to be stressed and taken into account. In the endeavour to analyse them and their effect, one must be aware that these are attached to various domains like personal relations, use of mother-tongue, culture, landscape and environment, social status, ethnicity and even physical security (Puerta, 2004). Expectations on how different aspects of the life of an emigrant change after migration may be considered to be an indicator of the perceived costs – in case a decline is supposed. A number of researches (Crivello, 2009, De Jong, 2000, Mahonen et al., 2012, O'Reilly and Benson, 2009, Tartakovsky and Schwartz, 2001, van Dalen et al., 2005) have studied expectations as a motivational force to migrate. We find it important to highlight the other side of the coin: expectations can also hinder the emergence of migration intentions (Gödri and Kiss, 2009).

Our analysis is based on data deriving from a national survey – titled *Migration plans in Hungary among the 18-40 aged population*¹ – carried out in Hungary in 2013. In this research project 1464 individuals were interviewed, and the sample represents the indicated population as regards to age, sex, education and settlement type. The existence or the lack of intentions to move abroad were thoroughly examined – *short term intentions* (spending several weeks or months abroad), *long term intentions* (spending a few years abroad) and *intention to settle down abroad* were mapped in a way that not only intentions to work abroad were asked about, but migration intentions of other kind (e.g. studying abroad) were also registered. This constitutes an undisputable added value, considering the fact that in the vast majority of studies exploring migration intentions only the labour market mobility oriented approach is applied (Gibson et al., 2012). Thus, on the one hand, the results of the survey allows for identifying those who have no intention to go abroad whatsoever (neither to work, nor for other reason; neither for a short period nor for a longer duration), on the other hand, the group of those who lack migration intentions can be broken down into two further subgroups: those who have never even thought of going abroad, and those who have already considered migration, but are held back by certain factors.

Since in the case of the latter group, hindering factors were extensively mapped in the survey, our analysis will explore in depth what keeps people from having a consolidated intention to migrate. These forces to examine will include – among others – the lack of language skills,

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social embeddedness, appreciation of current environment, attachment to Hungary, health issues and fear of uncertainty.

In order to determine 1) who is more likely to lack migrations intentions, and 2) who is more prone to not even consider migration, in the second phase of the analysis we elaborate binary logistic regression models, in which – besides socio-demographic and other control variables – three main sets of potential explanatory variables will be taken into account:

- perceived hardships related to migration (drifting away from family, limited use of mother-tongue, language-problems, cultural differences, new environment, and lower social status);
- perceived risks associated with migration (worsening of financial situations, worse than expected work environment, incompatibility of professional knowledge, losing the support of friends and family, and losing the money invested in migration);
- expectations on how the respondent's life (regarding well-being, employment prospects, personal relations, happiness and satisfaction) would change if he or she went abroad;
- levels of satisfaction with current financial situation and personal relationships.

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