University Doctoral (PhD) dissertation theses

Life Chances of Young Female Graduates Working Abroad

Edit Schranz

Supervisor: Dr. habil. Ibolya Czibere PhD
Department Head, University Docent

UNIVERSITY OF DEBRECEN
Doctoral School of Human Sciences

Debrecen, August 2018.
I. Overview: Defining the Aims of the Dissertation and Delineating the Topic of Discussion

The migration wave of younger generations leaving Hungary, which gained increased impetus after 2011 – as a phenomenon entailing foreign employment on a large scale - left its mark on both the population pyramid and the socio-economic relations of Hungarian society. (Czibere–Rácz 2016; Sik–Szeitl 2016). A large percentage of young people leaving Hungary are highly educated. Of them, professionally qualified female graduates who arrive at the destination of their migration alone and without a local social network make up an ever greater number (Czibere–Rácz 2016), representing a unique aspect of international migration today. This dissertation analyses the life chances of young women with recent university degrees along their motivations of resettling short-to-long-term. Following the changes in the gender distribution of young migrants, the increased ratio of women, especially single women, among migrants is connected to the increased liberalization of women and their growing propensity to appear as independent decision-makers with regards to migration in both the country of origin and the destination of migration (Blaskó–Gödri 2014). In line with the aims of our research, however, the dissertation does not approach the topic from a gender studies angle, but takes as its basis the quantitative data collected by studies from the 2010s dealing with migration and migrational aspirations. The migration of young people generates potential in-migration in countries that are comparatively rich within the economic milieu of a given region, a fact that serves as a pull factor incentivising the inward migration of talent, especially members of the intellectual elite, from poorer countries (de Haas 2010). The migration thus engendered sees a large group of migrants not even attempting to seize employment opportunities in their home markets, opting instead to immediately look for opportunities in the chosen target country promising better living conditions and economic advantages (de Haas 2010). This process results in the emergence of the brain-drain phenomenon (Csanády 2008; Blaskó–Gödri 2014).

The aim of this dissertation is to examine the living conditions of young female graduates who migrated away from Hungary with the aim of taking up employment in another country, as well as, in close connection to this, discovering and describing the life satisfaction of migrants with regards to familial relations, attained professional and social status, and personal background with relation to integration and social trust. By exploring the diverse motivations behind permanent migration and returning to one’s home country, we intended in this dissertation to uncover the opportunities, tendencies, and facts which influence the thinking and decisions of young migrant women.
Through the answers to our research questions, the dissertation also attempts to shed light on why those who left alone as women decided to take on the psychological and financial burdens that accompany migration, what sorts of prospects could be so attractive to them. Moreover, we strive to also uncover what kind of investment-return mechanism they are thinking in terms of (Bourdieu 1978; Rosen 1998), when they choose to move to a different country, short or long term. The dissertation also tries to show, based on the answers received during our empirical research, that based on the newest theories of migration, the movement of young Hungarians is better described as mobility, instead of migration (Tilly 2007; Massey et. al 2007; Melegh 2011; Pité 2015), set forth how it can be described on a micro-level, and elaborate on how our observations can be linked to macro-level processes, taking into account that on an individual level, migration is a personal decision, and when treated as a phenomenon, reflects macro-level factors due to its connection to societal processes forged through real events (Gödri 2005). Through this, the behavioural patterns of narrower social groups, and within that even smaller groups of individuals, with relation to the political, social, and economic conditions created by society.

In establishing the theoretical background of our research, besides a thorough overview of theories of human capital and theories of migration, we also focus on reviewing and interpreting relevant academic research. Other than research on the migrational willingness of younger generations, in our analysis of secondary literature we concentrate on the results of a survey conducted through the relatives of Hungarian migrants who stayed at home (KSH-SEEMING report 2014), as well as the statistical results of a research carried out amongst Hungarian migrants in the most common destination of Hungarian migrants, London (The NBC Group 2015, MTA TKKI – Kováts – Papp 2016), along with the conclusions based on them (employment opportunities, life satisfaction, intention of returning home).

II. Overview of Method
Apart from constructing a theoretical background and analysis of secondary literature, the dissertation answers the research questions and draws its conclusions through qualitative research. We chose this method because in academic research in the field of migration and foreign employment, one usually encounters statistical results gathered through survey questionnaires. We used the analysis of our half-structured interviews to complement such research by constructing a more complete picture of individual decisions and better outlining the consequences of migration. The method of half-structured interviews carried out with
expert sampling and through the snowball technique, although time-consuming, can help uncover the deeper reasons behind decisions and how various characteristics thereof can relate to differing social groups.

Conducting interviews with the group of young people in our sample, who moved away from different parts of Hungary, was not an easy task. Most of the young adults whom we contacted showed greater willingness to fill out a questionnaire, however, many did not agree to talk, share their opinions, and some of their personal stories - even though complete anonymity was guaranteed. Thanks to modern technology, skype interviews allowed the interviewer and interviewee to not only hear, but also to see each other - strengthening the trust that was essential to making the interviews. In the day and age of multinational corporations and globalization, young people are of course no strangers to technology. The interviews were voice-recorded using Skype-recorder so that they could be transcribed word for word. Out of the 50 interviews, 44 were with young graduates who were mostly employed in jobs in their field of study *33 women, 11 men, 22-36 years of age). The control group was made up of 6 young people (4 women and 2 men) without a higher education degree. It has to be mentioned that reaching and persuading young people without a university degree to participate in interviews proved considerably more difficult than in the case of their degree-holding counterparts. The reasons for this are explored from multiple angles in the dissertation (pp. 78-80). The biggest factor appeared to be the discordant relationship between work, free time, rest, aims and achievements.

We compiled a set of questions with four larger areas of inquiry for the half-structured interviews. The first one made it possible to obtain the relevant demographic data, the second was intended to assess the family background and social networks of interviewees before moving, the third one was designed to shed light on the subject's current circumstances, and the nature and degree of their integration in their new environment, the fourth and final was aimed at uncovering their future plans. Since an interdisciplinary approach is not uncommon in migration research, we inserted a short series of psychological questions, the answers to which are used to gain a deeper understanding of the "whys" of migration, and apart from the personal motivations behind leaving their homeland, reveals clues to the personality of interviewees (closed or open personality, optimist or pessimist predisposition, strong or weak tendencies of self-actualization).

When analysing the half-structured interviews, we put down the keywords we identified after codified annotation of each transcribed interview in (Excel) Pivot tables. This way, on the one hand, subgroupings denoted by a different colour for each (graduate women - single,
in a relationship; graduate men; control group) became manageable enough to interpret, on the other it became possible to look up the components of the five categories set up along the lines of research motivations. With the help of these keywords, the characteristics of categories also became easily searchable, while filtering within the categories made it possible to find interviewees through their individual numbers allocated based on interview order, which became important when changing categories. In order for it to be possible to find the similarities and differences between interviews, aided by open coding, we divided the texts belonging to each question into subsections.

During the research, we examined the characteristics of groups of young female graduates employed abroad along four dimensions of motivations by mapping out career paths, social background, and the dynamics related to these. The four dimensions are as follows:

1. **Expectations** – the process of becoming an adult – roles fulfilled – social network
2. **Gaining a comparative competitive advantage** – at home and on the European labour market
3. **Trust** – social trust – institutional trust – interpersonal trust
4. **Integration** – ability to adapt – success.

We wished to answer the question of whether it was social, economic, labour market changes characteristic of post-2008 Europe, including Hungary, that bore significance in the decision to move, or other elements of the motivational matrix – family, friends, other relationships, environmental factors, world views?

We also looked to answer whether the Bologna process, introduced more than 10 years ago in 2005, aids with finding employment on the European labour market, or if individual life-paths would have turned out to be similar regardless of tripartite education. Also, we wished to clarify how education becomes first a short then a long-term employment, when and why young people return home, or why they choose instead to move away permanently, focusing specifically on young, single female graduates living abroad.

We also wanted to determine whether foreign employment provides greater security for young people, especially women, counteracting the uncertainties faced by young people in Hungary as apparent in the national inquiry into the situation of young people (2012). Is studying and starting a life abroad a necessity, an adventure, an opportunity, or a rational alternative for young people?

We also wanted to pinpoint what social conditions gave rise to the perception among young people that finding fitting foreign employment is less challenging than finding a similar job in Hungary’s comparatively small labour market.
An important subtopic of the dissertation is how the factors that play a role in thwarting, both in a material and mental sense, young people’s efforts to become as independent as can reasonably be expected at certain stages of life, change with relation to foreign employment. This is important because due to these factors, the conditions within the current framework of labour, salaries, stability and security, which are a function of the Hungarian economy, are not perceived as adequate for starting a life. How does all this appear in the similarities between the values various young people internalized at home? How can the cumulative effects of the social processes behind migration be observed in the currently perceivable tendency of out-migration.

III. Enumeration of results in the form of theses

1. Based on the comparison of the results and narratives of academic research in the field, the dissertation exactifies the trend among young people to take up foreign employment – a recent tendency, as mentioned above – with regards to the ratio of sexes. According to our findings, with the growing volume of migration the weakening of male dominance among migrants is distinctly traceable. Comparative data from the last few years clearly shows (SEEMIG, SEEMIG Omnibusz, Census [Népszámlálás], NKI Omnibusz, Tárki Monitor) that among those who left Hungary the ratio of migrants among university graduates is higher than among those without or with only a secondary degree (Blaskó–Ligeti–Sik 2014). If we take into account that through positive selection (Horváth 2015; Czibere–Rácz 2016), young people with higher education degrees left Hungary in larger numbers, of which in the past few years women in a fertile age looking for employment form considerable portion (Czibere–Rácz 2016), and also consider a few other factors, we can say that with relation to Hungarian female migrational potential and the labour market demands of target countries, *this process is a manifestation of the feminization of brain drain* (Csanády 2008; Rohr 2012) *as shaped by Hungarian conditions*. This is a particularly important proposal of our research.

2. We created five categories according to migrational motivations, and analysed the opportunities available to and positions attained by women, following their actions aligned with the aim of achieving a level of independence appropriate to their current lifestage through the system of criteria derived from these five different vantage points.
The five categories are (1) better life chances; (2) self-actualization; (3) escaping (refugee: as interpreted through failure on the labour market); (4) university studies; (5) relationships (following spouses). The result of the comparative analysis of subsamples created based on analysing these categories as well as on the level of higher education and the place of attaining the degree(s) highlighted differences and similarities between the thinking, habitus, expectations of migrant men and women, especially with relation intentions regarding returning home.

Results and conclusion based on an analysis of the five categories:

(A) The interviewees do not believe that conditions in Hungary are adequate either with relation to the labour market or to fulfilling their age-group specific social roles. This means finding suitable employment (for the first time), opportunities for advancement, internal and external stability for later family life. The reason for this is that young people are missing a vista of 25 years the values which would have strengthened the dimensions of self-actualization, meaningful work, and freedom in Hungarian society (Szabari 2015).

(B) They experienced the depreciation of primary values internalized through their families (behavioural rules, respect for the rule of law, deference), presumably along existing norms in Hungarian society (Szabari 2015), due the fact that outside the family, mainly in work-related but also in looser social networks, there is currently escalating value–preference deficit. This experience, induced by the labour market and affecting people’s frames of mind did not appear as an isolated phenomenon during young people’s experiences with starting a life. Thus, we saw our hypothesis, according to which this phenomenon causes a widening gap between, rather than inspire cohesion amongst members of a society or social group, confirmed. Therefore, it does not bring about the emergence of “cooperative strategies”¹ (Hankiss 2004:44) in reality. Apart from this, in the first job after graduation, the common lack of the kind of social trust that is supposed to originate from doing an intellectual job and would have helped create a stable vision of the future in the Hungarian employment market in young people’s eyes lead to uncertainty and the erosion of institutional and interpersonal trust (Csepeli 2010) among

¹ The concept of cooperative strategy in Hankiss’s interpretation entails two simultaneous modes of behaviour: (1) the individual behaving in a cooperative way, taking into account the majority interests; (2) the individual not placing their personal interests ahead of those of the community. Moreover, both of these have to be ingrained in society. (Társadalmi csapdák és diagnózisok, 2004: 44.)
young migrants. This does not help kindle the thought of returning home (Horváth 2015) or seeking employment in Hungary among young people.

(C) *From on a meritocratic viewpoint*, they wish to utilize their knowledge and the integrational capabilities of their personalities (Kapitány–Kapitány 2016) in an environment where they are compensated for it proportionally – not only in a material sense.

(D) The process of disintegration observable in Hungarian society (Hajdu 2012), the weakening of real cohesion (Kucsera 2012), which effects economic performance and equality of opportunity (Juhász 2006), public morale, integration (Putnam 2000), and even personal success, shows a direct connection to vision of the future that does not inspire young people to return to Hungary (Kováts–Papp 2016). As a result of this, the lack of meaningful socio-political responses, and the polarized nature of Hungarian society (Angelusz–Tardos 2010) combined with the self-sustaining circulation of migration (de Haas 2010; Gödri 2010) helps further young graduates arrive at the decision of taking up foreign employment.

(E) Approaching the topic through the study of social networks social networks (Gödri 2010; Sik 2012) seemed to confirm that the better quality of life attainable through the European labor market and the ability to work in one’s profession – with regards to degree-holders (Sik–Szeitl 2016; Kováts–Papp 2016) - means a more solid foundation for young people. So much so, in fact, that, thinking in terms of an investment-return mechanism, they set off leaving behind existing social networks, their family, friends, and supporters (Gödri 2010), and take on the new environment alone.

(F) The young graduates in the sample pair the modern economic sphere with the Fukuyaman concept of informal trust (1997), which stipulates that honesty based on trust must permeate everyday economic life in order for it to function properly (Fukuyama 1997).

Results based on comparing the subgroupings:

(A) Circumstances relating to accommodation abroad by and large do not affect the satisfaction of young degree-holders, especially women living alone, even if living circumstances were perceivably better in the familiar home (confirming Hradil’s (2010) theory of milieu through the lifegoal hypothesis).

(B) Long-term foreign employment correlates strongly with level of education. Tjis is most apparent in the rather homogenous opinions of interviewees holding a PhD.
(C) The young people who chose to move abroad together with a partner or strived to form a relationship quickly in their new country usually were the ones whose parents’ divorce was part of their family history, as a safety deficit. Looking at the subgroups of sexes, in our sample it was typically men who set off from home with a partner or attempted to find with Hungarian as their mother tongue at the destination of their migration. This was not characteristic of single women with degrees. The reasons behind this phenomenon are, first, that a relationship where the parties are of the same ethnicity and have the same nationality strengthens their sense of identity (Tóth–Vékás 2008). Second, the safe environment of a shared intellectual and cultural heritage and value system (Tóth–Vékás 2008) plays a role in keeping one’s identity. (Gödri 2005).

Results of the analysis according to the motivation of returning/not returning home:

(A) Of the five categories, those belonging to the “escaping” category – who generally chose to move due to labour market limitations – form a homogenous group (independently of sex) with regards to returning home. They are the ones who definitely do not want to go back to Hungary.

(B) The following subgroups do not think about moving back:
- The vast majority of single women who migrated for reasons related to higher or postgraduate education (brain-drain feminization)
- Those who can be said to belong to the category of single self-actualizers
- Men who did their master’s degrees abroad and are untrusting of the Hungarian economy’s ability to retain them
- Women who completed their bachelor’s degrees abroad
- Single men living abroad, most of whom seized opportunities granted to them by their advantages regarding skills and European labour market integration - mostly after a longer period of studying abroad (Gödri 2010; Lakatos 2015). Their reasons for not returning home include their career, financial benefits thereof, and better living conditions which can increase life satisfaction.

(C) Those who would like to return home:
- Men who attained their bachelor’s degrees abroad – they would most often like to start a business back home
- Women (single or in a relationship) for whom the returning home becomes a more enticing prospect when contemplating childrearing
Men who live in a stable relationship with spouses who they know from back home. For them, starting a family is within the foreseeable future (1-2 years)

(D) For women who are married, have children, or are in stable relationships, having a child in itself did not inspire them to return home, but they do not discount the possibility when it comes to schooling the child – or, on the contrary, returning home is made all the more impossible because of their opinions on schooling.

Summary
In this dissertation, we examined the phenomenon of the mass foreign employment of young graduates, primarily that of women (Czibere–Rácz 2016; Sik–Szeitl 2016). Focusing on life chances, visions of the future, and along lines of motivations of short-to-long-term migration, circumstances in the new environment. The tendency of marriage and childrearing to be pushed to an ever higher age (Utasi 2002) necessitated the creation of unusual age boundaries for the focus group (22-36 years). Academic literature in the field points out the prevalence of higher-educated migrants among those leaving Hungary when analysing the trend of increasing volumes of foreign employment after 2011, mainly based on statistics from survey-type studies. However, the large male majority observed in the first period of migration, however, was mitigated by the widening scope of migration (Blaskó–Ligeti–Sik 2014), which brings with it the migration of particularly women among young graduates. In our interpretation, this shows the process of the feminization of brain drain (Csanády 2008; Rohr 2012).

We based our analyses in the dissertation on the investment-return relationships of theories of human capital. That apart from reviewing migration theories and empirical research at the center of most studies in the field our research was not done using the most widely utilized methodology for such studies, survey – questionnaires, but qualitative half structured interviews, in an important aspect of our dissertation. As such our results can reveal in more detail the reasons behind personal motivations and decisions. The push and pull factors in such micro-level investigations (Massey et al. 2007), on the other hand, can show macroenvironmental conditions as well as microenvironmental ones in a complex manner through the spatial and temporal extension of interviews.

These condition likely exert their influences conjointly, and can manifest characteristics that can be extended to social groups. Academic literature designates current processes of inter-European migration (transmigration) as leading to transnational lifestyles (Tilly 2007). In this way of life, space expands and perceived distances contract traditional forms of life.
get re-evaluated. Young people who choose to leave Hungary do not experience foreign employment as a necessity but as an opportunity. However, young graduates, and since the middle of the decade, especially young women with degrees, would not seize this opportunity in such large numbers – as laid out in studies in the field – if social processes which appear as perceptible tendencies and which direct our attention to their cumulative effects were not taking place in the background of migration, engendering it. The dissertation, in terms of its answers to research questions and its results, attempts to present the effects of these processes in a detailed manner through the personal motivations of individuals.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


SEEMIG – Managing Migration in South East European transnational cooperation project, press release entitled „Helyzetkép a magyarországi elvándorlásról” (2014),


Csepeli, Gy. (2010): Politikai Antropológiai Előadások,
http://www.zoonpolitikon.hu/?page_id=19 – last accessed: 2016. 05. 05.


DoI: 10.18030/socio.hu.2015.3.2; 2–16.


List of publications related to the dissertation

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (4)
   DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18392/metsz/2015/1/10
   DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18392/metsz/2015/3/5
   életkezdési esélyei.
   DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18458/ktb.2015.2.17

Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)
5. Schranz, E.: Community is more than just a physical space.
   DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18392/jit.2015.4.10

Other journal articles (1)
   Metszetek. 7 (2), 172-177, 2018. EISSN: 2063-6415.
   DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.18392/metsz/2018/2/8

Hungarian abstracts (1)
List of other publications

Hungarian scientific articles in Hungarian journals (2)


Foreign language scientific articles in Hungarian journals (1)
10. Schranz, E.: 'Who is in crisis? With reference to the debates about the 'crisis of masculinity', discuss about poverty, unemployment, or other social issues, and its effects on women': But Whose crisis is it after all?

The Candidate's publication data submitted to the IDEa Tudóstár have been validated by DEENK on the basis of Web of Science, Scopus and Journal Citation Report (Impact Factor) databases.

05 November, 2018