

Review

Miloslav Bahna: Migration from Slovakia after accession to the European Union

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International labour migration of Slovak people certainly belongs to the most important phenomena of economic and social life in Slovakia after 1989. Within the EU, Slovakia is currently among the countries with the highest intensity of international labour migration. Various estimates suggest that approximately 10% of the labour force work or study abroad. Hence, M. Bahna's book on migration from Slovakia after its accession to the EU is very interesting and relevant.

The author begins with an overview of economic and social science migration theories. In this regard, he goes back to classic works by Massey and his team of authors from 1993, 1994 and 1998. If we exclude enforced population transfer due to war and political events or natural disasters, most voluntary migration flows are economically motivated. As a result, most theories concentrate on labour migration. It is understood as a flow of labour force from a place with low incomes or lack of vacancies to places with higher incomes or job opportunities. These concepts of neoclassical economics are supplemented by concepts borrowed from institutional economics, sociology, and political science (theories of human capital, dual labour market, the so-called new household economics, world system theories, transnational networks etc.). Since in the case of Slovakia most of the migration flows are economically motivated, it is quite appropriate to apply the neoclassical framework. Nevertheless, it is a pity that in such a deep overview of migration theories, the author has not mentioned behavioural concepts and the most recent knowledge from behavioural genetics, which imply a bit about why some people from the same social and demographic group migrate, whereas others don't, or why some world populations migrate more than others do.

The next chapter focuses on the history of emigration from Slovakia in the 19th and 20th centuries. This chapter is valuable for a newcomer in migration studies for its long-term comparison of migration behaviour in various social and economic systems. The author is right in saying that the current emigration wave is not a rare phenomenon in the modern history of Slovakia. In this sense, the period from 1948 to 1989, in which natural migration flows were suppressed, was more exceptional.

M. Bahna focuses his work on the period after 2004, when most EU countries (with the partial exception of Austria and Germany) had opened their labour markets for Slovak migrants. The author concentrated particularly on

studying migration flows to the Czech Republic and Great Britain. These countries are the most important labour migration destinations for Slovaks. The quality of empirical studies is measured by the quality of source data. In various econometric studies, authors use data only as an inevitable filling of mathematical models without discussing the quality and validity of their data. In this work, the author shows deep knowledge of the quality of data from the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The author's careful approach to limitations of the databases should be acknowledged. In addition, he gives reasons (p. 81) for the systematic over-representation of some social and demographic classes in the LFS and for the under-representation of others. The author has used available data in order to find out which of the two main economic motives for migration (wage and (un)employment rate) plays a more important role for Slovaks. Based on data from Slovak regions and linear regression models, he concludes that income disparities are more important for migration flows than disparities in the unemployment rate (p. 130).

M. Bahna has not interpreted migration flows solely from a neoclassical viewpoint, but has attempted to characterize these flows also from the perspective of the so-called new household economics (or new migration economics). This theory emphasises that in most cases the decision to migrate is not made by an individual, but by the whole household. Earned income from abroad makes an important source of income for the family based in the source country. Families can diversify their sources of income into two or more countries. Most migrants are young men. The author has identified two different income strategies (p. 159). When fathers (or heads of the family) are those migrating, then their income becomes part of the family's income, particularly when they work abroad for a longer time. If adult children migrate, their income does not reflect significantly in family income. At the end of the seventh chapter, the author touches on a very interesting question related to the positive selection of migrants. Neoclassical theory assumes that the bigger the difference in incomes between the source and the destination of migration, the higher the inclination to migrate. If so, mostly people with the lowest income should migrate. However, empirical knowledge does not confirm this assumption - people with lower and middle incomes are more inclined to emigrate, perhaps because of the higher volume of human capital, language knowledge, and the like. According to the author, limitations of the source data do not allow us to decide the matter. Nevertheless, the high percentage of young au pairs – middle class girls – migrating to Great Britain before 2005 suggests that neoclassical assumptions are not generally valid (p. 160).

No work is able to exhaust its subject totally. Some researchers might miss a discussion on the migration of Slovak students. In 2011, 30 thousand Slovaks studied abroad. This is one of the highest emigration rates in Europe in relation

to the number of domestic students, which can potentially have significant impacts in terms of brain drain. In addition, another interesting phenomenon might have been mentioned, namely incentive migration of the young, who choose to live in exotic places for many years in order to become familiar with the life style and culture of different populations. Western countries experienced a boom in interest in exoticism in the 60s and 70s. Slovakia is experiencing it now. Unfortunately, databases for this topic are very poor.

M. Bahna's work can be characterized as a very erudite and well-researched study of migration trends in Slovakia for more than a century. It should be considered as a fundamental work for the study of international migration in the Slovak Republic.

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