

IMMIGRATION AND COMPETITIVENESS – SOME METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS

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Abstract

Immigrants can contribute significantly to the economic and social development of regions or urban areas. Some key figures on migration are thus traditionally used in studies on local development. Beyond the usual description of migratory movements, two research fields are often in the centre of controversies, namely the labour market and the inclusion of immigrants. Comparing the European regions, the phases of urban development as well as the relevant internal and external factors present a mixed picture in Europe. At the same time, the dynamics of migratory movements and the reactions of national and subnational policies also vary. The Member States of the European Union aim to harmonise their definitions and data on migration issues, however, the daily practice leads us to the questions of reliability and comparability of migration statistics; and the interdisciplinary character of migration research offers the use of variable research methods.

The aim of this study, as a part of a presentation at a conference on urban development, is to describe some key methodological issues of migration research exploring the typical questions. The first part of the paper calls attention to the importance of data quality, processing and interpretation, describing the research methods mainly used in studies on immigration. The second part summarizes the significance of immigration in regional competitiveness, pointing out the possible “stumbling stones” in the relevant migration studies. Some of these factors, the areas that are mainly in the centre of scientific and political debates, are discussed in this paper, namely the labour market challenges and issues relating to the different aspects of segregation.

Keywords: data quality, development, immigration, labour market, methodology

INTRODUCTION

Migration is one of the main factors that shape and accelerate the development of nations or urban areas, although the dynamics and combined effects of migratory movements, national policies and the roles of local authorities present a mixed picture in Europe.

Immigrants bring experiences, knowledge, or their pure workforce with, besides their demographical, cultural characteristics or international connections. In contrary, migratory movements have their negative effects, too: labour market conflicts, expenditure of the welfare system, segregation and deprivation. According to the statistics of the Eurostat 3.8 million people immigrated in 2014 to the EU-28 Member States: 1.3 million third-country-nationals, 1.6 million people with citizenship of another EU-Member State and 870 thousand returning migrants. Since the 1980s European states have been facing the challenge, how to

include immigrants in on different stages. It is because, like Fassmann and Münz in their book also present (1996), the illusion of temporary migration has disappeared, guest workers stayed in their new homeland. New migratory groups have been arriving: new work force, entrepreneurs, family members, students, refugees and illegal migrants as well. The framework conditions of the national migration and integration policies and tasks are based on the relevant policies and goals of the European Union, and each European state has been developing a national strategy. Beyond these levels, most of the West-European regions and cities have already recognised the impacts of the migratory movements and the importance of perception and reaction.

The current migration policies that exist in Europe are, despite of the European goals, often based on specific or non-harmonised definitions. Migration research, just like other disciplines, operates thus with different methods. Methods and methodology are often in focus of controversies, from the basic questions like harmonised definitions of phenomena, data sampling, data processing or evaluation (Longhi et al., 2005; Van der Mensbrugghe, Roland-Holst, 2009 and Abel, Sander, 2014).

Beyond migration statistics, the measurement and interpretation of issues relating to migration are generally built up on widely used concepts. These old concepts were, however, developed along individual national phenomena at their time, without taking into account the results of other studies (Haas, 2007). Furthermore, this interdisciplinary character of migration research requires and offers a wide range of research methods. Studies on migration and competitiveness emphasize the importance of migration and the mobility of workforce. Thus, as Papdemitriou (2009) also points out, in case of analysing the performance of the labour market at national or regional level, the specific migratory features of the labour force – beyond the usual sets – pay an important role. Considering immigrants as labour force, it is essential to realise the variety of factors while analysing the labour market (Maruszewska, Przybylska, 2009; Flügel 2010; or Georgi, 2014). Besides labour market issues, integration of immigrants and segregation are also often discussed, depending on the goals and interest of the stakeholders. Furthermore, I agree with Angenendt (2000) that social issues and the integration of immigrants play an important role in the local competitiveness. Therefore the exploration of issues relating to segregation and the interpretation of integration should also be approached from different aspects. Immigration, its consequences and the interference between migration and regional development will continue to be an important part of discussions and decisions. Beyond the legislative background, which is still not able to provide harmonized rules and instructions, the administrative practices of executive

authorities also vary even at regional or local level, as regards implementation of policies or adding reliable values to future strategies.

Beside the political aspects, research projects on immigration and integration of newcomers also require comparable data, harmonized terms and well-structured findings. The topic methodology can thus refer to several questions, some of them are particularly important both from a practical as well as from a scientific viewpoint. The term “method” refers to techniques for investigating phenomena, acquiring, testing or modifying hypotheses, whilst the term “methodology” can be described as a research strategy. At the same time, after Berriane and de Haas, the methodological way chosen for a migration research has basic consequences for the choice of methods (2015).

RESULTS

Data Quality and Data Evaluation

Figures on migratory movements, percentages on the foreign population or labour market indices are suitable to characterise Europe and the European states in general, regarding migration.

Beyond presenting the usual data on migration (Tab. 1), it is also essential to recognise the various impact factors and ways of interpretation behind the first results and conclusions.

Table 1 Key Data on Selected Countries (2015)

<i>Country</i>	<i>Non-nationals in % of the population</i>	<i>EU citizens (1.000)</i>	<i>3. nationals (1.000)</i>
Luxembourg	43,2	191	30
Austria	12,3	352	555
Spain	12,3	2.329	3.325
Belgium	10,6	749	414
Ireland	9,2	292	69
Germany	9,1	2.628	4.571
Italy	8,5	1.335	3.235
United Kingdom	8,2	2.061	2.425
Sweden	6,7	270	352
Hungary	2,1	127	82

Source: Eurostat – own calculation

Availability, reliability and comparability are the main criteria that are often criticised here, similar to other statistical topics. Regarding availability and quality, an international consistency cannot be easy to implement even if definitions and key concepts are already harmonised and a number of recommendations have been introduced. The attitude, discipline and practice of migration offices vary, even within a sub-national unit, as for the implementation of the migration policy or reporting towards legislative bodies. Further challenge researchers meet, that there is no common data system, which can be useful both for the sending and the host country to reveal exact figures about the number of people affected. As Sander (2014) also calls attention, the existing data on global migration flows are not yet really complete and comparable – and the Hungarian Statistical Office intensively agrees with this statement as well (KSH, 2012).

As practice has shown, migration offices and thus national databanks have only information on the intended duration of stay which is, in addition, based on the declaration of immigrants and the given legal options. Thus, the identification and evaluation of migratory flows depends, beyond the European harmonising endeavour, on the rules and administrative practices of a country. As Raymer and Willekens also emphasize (2009), some variables are, even if essential, maybe hard to define and collect in some countries, whilst other variables, having only little impact, are available. In some cases it is impossible to characterise the foreign population of a country, however, the statistical practice of the European countries vary. In Austria there can be accessed data on religion (s. address registration system of Austria), while e. g. in the United Kingdom race and ethnicity are daily used in evaluations as well. The ground variables are available in the European countries due to the administrative data collection and data processing. Moreover, we should rely on other data sources (comparing them), depending on their accessibility and quality, such as censuses, statistical surveys, surveys of local authorities and of research projects.

Definitions and data interpretation

According to mainstream studies but also to the European legal rules migration is a phenomenon in which persons change their place of living – it means the place where these persons spend most daily periods of rest. With other words, the place of usual residence is in the focus, regardless of temporary absences, as it is defined in a EU-regulation of the EU Commission on international migration (2007).

We talk thus about the mobility of the labour force or about commuting as well, within the country or crossing the border. If a person changes the country of her or his usual residence, it is about international migration. Studies mainly take into account the whole immigrant population without distinguishing the data on temporary and long-term-migration or the

purpose of stay. In case of long-term migration, legal consequences appear usually after a 12-month-period, e.g. legal equality issues, settlement rights, welfare themes, labour market problems. Long-term-migration is defined, as stated in a recommendation of the UN (1998), by a period of at least 12 month and with a criterion that the person effectively changes his or her usual residence. The Eurostat also uses this 12-month-period defining the meaning of immigration on the base of the regulation of the EU Commission.

Statistics on migration consider besides newcomers as immigrants who are not surely willing to stay longer than 12 month but at least for 3 months (Kováts, 2014). As for the administrative practices, after comparing the legal definitions (see also Austria's Aliens' Law package), authorities and national statistics also consider new applicants as immigrants if they intend to stay longer than 3 months – this 3-month-period is relevant in the legal rules both for EU-citizens and 3rd country nationals. In the international statistical practice there are two indicators preferably used by young researchers and politicians, namely the foreign-born population (even maybe already with citizenship) and the foreign population (and maybe born in the host country). As Tab. 2 shows, we should, however, distinguish, besides directions and duration of migration, the legal status of immigrants and other migratory features of the population.

Table 2 The main definitions of migration management in Europe

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Terms</i>
Direction of movements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emigration • Immigration • Circular migration / Commuting • Transmigration
Duration of migration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary stay • Long-term residence
Nationality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationals • Nationals of a Member State • 3rd country nationals • Persons with multiple nationality • Stateless
Migrant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nationals • Foreign-born population • Persons with migration background • 1st and 2nd generation migrants
Legal status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry with or w/o visa • Commuters • Registration for EEC/CH-nationals • Permits for 3rd country nationals • Issues of asylum • Illegal immigrants • Naturalised migrants

Source: Aliens' Law Package of Austria - own illustration

The statistical practice of the European countries varies. In some cases it is impossible to characterise the foreign population of a country in details. Religion and physical characteristics are, however, only available in countries where accepted in the society (e.g. physical variables in the UK or the Netherlands) or legally recommended (e.g. data on religion in Austria or Germany).

Regarding studies with migratory aspects relating to regional development, it is essential to record further characteristics of immigrants when analysing population groups with a foreign background. Thus studies should distinguish in particular the followings: country of birth, current citizenship and citizenship at birth, country of previous residence, reason and aim of migration, ethnic affiliation and attachment to a group (and these data on the parents). Accordingly, these features shape the national and spatial pattern of the population with migratory background, beyond stock and flow indices. We have thus various ways to interpret the statistical data we have on the population of a country or a region relating to immigration. Due to its interdisciplinary character surrounded with multidimensional aspects, studies on migration should be conducted on the base of diverse forms of data, e.g. our own primary data, contents of documents, permanently changing concepts, legal precondition, case studies etc. beyond national statistics. I agree with Bose (2012) who points out, that figures on migration are useful for researches, who tend to rely on numbers alone, but this perspective only offers a limited view of the complexities of migratory phenomenon.

An additional viewpoint regarding data interpretation relates to the environment of our evaluation including the experiences and the historical background. These environmental factors of interpretation are internal and external variables – similar to the chapters of integrated urban development strategies, or like it is regulated by a government decree (314/2012 Hungarian Government Decree).

Reflections on Mixed Methods

In migration research qualitative methods have a particular role, especially while these instruments also have multidisciplinary roots and often combined with quantitative issues. This methodological approach is widely used in studies relating to demographic changes and economic issues migration brings with (Fritzgerald, 2006).

Migratory phenomena do not only have demographic or economic dimensions and require therefore more than an oversimplified explanation of a qualitative and quantitative mixture. Migration has geographical and political aspects as well, beyond social and cultural issues. This interdisciplinary character requires a wide range of research methods and a reliable

combination of these. Here I have to mention the study of Tashakkori and Creswell (2007) on mixed methods, pointing out the importance of combined solutions that integrate both qualitative and quantitative approaches in one study, even if projects on migration are often based on quantitative data collection and analysis. Later, Creswell (2009) distinguishes 4 elements that shape the character of a study. These are timing, weighting, mixing and theorising. Using these elements he identifies several types of research methods. Two combinations of them are particularly important, in my opinion, in studies on migration. The sequential explanatory type has a greater weight on quantitative research complemented with a qualitative follow-up analysis. The second one, the sequential exploratory method, consists of a range of qualitative results finding new quantitative ways to test them.

Derived from this, already in simple, exploring studies but also in advancing researches there is a need for a more diversified approach, a logical combination of instruments. This flexible and differentiated point of view should be used as precondition for studies, from data collecting to ethnographic work – so summarizes Portes as well (2003, p. 889). Mixed approaches, and a good combination of instruments are in summary more favourable and have their roles in migration research.

Analysing the interaction between immigration and competitiveness

Concerning the definitions and impact factors of regional or national competitiveness, there is abundant literature dealing with this topic, offering different explanations (Lengyel, 2003).

Migrants make significant contributions to competitiveness at national or local level: with their workforce, experiences and knowledge, but with their cultural characteristics or international connections as well. On the other side, mobility brings negative effects with: expenditure of the welfare system, conflicts in the society, discrepancies regarding the values and goals of the host community, and, of course, deprivation. Literature and empirical experiences on the field of migration have not yet given us complex answers related to migratory flows and their impacts on regional competitiveness. The results, as Ortega and Peri (2009) also emphasize, are often contradictory.

Beyond the variety of impacts we can observe different national and regional characteristics regarding migratory movements as well as in the field of migration management, which can also be discovered in the research projects in these countries. Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik (2007) also discusses in his presentation that definitions used in survey researches depend on the political contexts and national concepts. If we compare the European policies, some European states have restrictive migration policies. These countries

require an intensive assimilative attitude from immigrants, the common values and the own culture have here political priority. Other nations provide easier access to residential status, labour market and welfare services. If they assist immigration and diversity, we could outline them with multiculturalism. If they do not provide protections against market forces, and do not support cultural diversity, they operate rather as a *laissez-faire* government regarding migration and integration.

Perceiving and understanding migratory flows and the migrants themselves, comparing the complex and contradictory circumstances, motivations and consequences, require deliberate research strategies. Tables and graphs, set out in average presentations on the interaction between migration and development, showing figures in GDP and migratory percentage, simplistically prove the hypothesis that mobility and migration are clearly accompanied by development. It is, however, more difficult to explore and explain linkages between indicators of regional or national development and migratory phenomenon or relevant political instruments.

As for the interaction between migratory phenomena and urban (regional) development, the data evaluation from only one aspect can lead us to misinterpretation or simplified conclusion. The dimensions of interpretation regarding the migratory impacts can be summarized in one matrix containing a number of viewpoints. Thus, analysing the impacts of the appearance of immigrants, we should consider which area and which migratory factor we are getting a nearer view of. Beyond the migratory areas and factors (e.g. the high qualified labour force within the area “knowledge, qualification, skills”) we can distinguish negative and positive effects and, further, the point of view of the stakeholders (e.g. the local government, the civic community, entrepreneurs, research institutions or the native labour force). Continuing this logic, the data evaluation of one highlighted factor from a combined dimension leads us to further issues of migration such as illegality, security, fiscal effects, social welfare issues, norms and customs or the revision the legal system.

The performance of the labour market

Studies on demographic issues emphasize the importance of migration and the mobility of workforce. From poorer regions migrants are forced to leave their home looking for a better life and more possibilities (Redei, 2007).

Not only migrants, but host communities and rich countries also have to shape their politics, strategies and all the conditions for immigration and integration. Labour markets need workers with low qualifications as well as highly qualified or specialised employees.

Hence, in migration research, as Köllő also points out, changes in the performance of the labour market should be interpreted under consideration of various components relating to the foreign workforce (2015). Further, the European Economic and Social Committee (2012) underlines that immigrants can be characterised with their flexibility, professional and life experiences, readiness to compromise, besides their social capital or entrepreneurial skills.

Table 3 Aspects of considering migration as answer to labour market challenges

<i>Criteria relating to environment</i>	<i>Criteria as for the objects</i>
Legal equality	Population with migration background
Demographic variables	Economically active age groups
Probability of entering the labour market	Active job-seekers
Influence of 1 st generation immigrants	Ethnic groups (sending region or country)
Entrepreneurial environment	Groups in a region / spatial concentrated groups
Equality regarding income	Obtained legal status vs. purpose of stay
Career chances	Economic sector
Acceptance of qualifications	Level of qualification, experiences

But can we consider each immigrant as potential labour force? As the Tab. 3 shows, we have to take different aspects into account when analysing the labour market and the positive and negative effects of immigration. Considering immigrants as labour force, it is essential to realise that the environment analysing the labour market has another meaning, other factors and effects. Moreover, we should not forget about the specific variables that are important analysing migration regarding its forces on the labour market. These are country of origin, skills and qualifications immigrants bring with (or qualifications the host community accepts at all), legal status and settlement purpose of immigrants, spatial concentration of immigrants, economic sector etc.

In case of analysing the performance of the labour market of a nation or a region, we have to consider the migratory features of the labour force beyond the usual sets such as active, inactive, unemployed and employed persons. These migratory characteristics are e.g. migration motivations and backgrounds, migration purposes, skills, qualifications. This is essential, since not all the immigrants between 15 and 65 can be considered as labour force, and, in addition, immigrants have different career possibilities. According to the Todaro-

theory, the success or future of settlement in a new region or country depends on the vision of the migrant and the quality of information she or he can get, with embrace of the probability of employment (Todaro, 1969). In addition, workers without or with low qualification have fewer chances and are often subjected to discrimination or criminalization (Koopmanns, 2008). Migrants, who arrive on the base of forced migration, have to find their new home involuntary, surrounded with problems such as marginalisation, exclusion, and difficulties on the labour market.

Studies point out, that experienced and highly qualified migrants, who arrive voluntary, have more freedom of movement and other chances on the labour market. However, Delgado Wise and Marquez call attention to the fact that these immigrants also suffer from discrimination on the labour market, and furthermore, migration of highly qualified persons can also be considered as forced migration, since they are motivated to leave the country in order to fulfil higher professional and intellectual needs (2012).

Segregation and integration

The interpretation of integration can be approached from different aspects, such as legal and political processes, socio-economic situation and socio-cultural issues (Bijl, 2008).

From a socio-economic viewpoint, the economic interests of the society and the national and local development have an important role. This aspect relates to methodological issues such as labour market participation, unemployment, taxation, business life etc. but we should take into account the spatial aspect (e.g. spatial segregation) as well. From a socio-cultural aspect, the measurement of integration deals with social relations, conflicts, networks and the level of acceptance of the other language, customs, norms. The following list calls attention to the main and problematic areas regarding segregation, including collection or evaluation of relevant data:

- Spatial concentration
- City, space and its functions
- Lack of social integration
- Equal chances and rights (education, health and social welfare)
- Pillarization
- Income situation (cons. discrimination, equalised income, circumstances)
- Fiscal effects (cons. time series / spatial evaluation, migratory characteristics)

Issues relating to segregation of immigrants – as perception, condition or process – can be examined from more than one angle again. The direction of research can vary. Thus it can target in particular the urban space (spatial segregation and concentration) or changes in urban functions; beside, issues of equality such as social and health systems, education; labour market discrimination including the equivalent income or fiscal effects.

Beyond spatial and economic segregation, evaluating the degree of integration (or segregation) of immigrants, we have to emphasize the importance of the different areas of participation. Political participation, trust in public institutions, issues of identity, civic participation etc. can be considered as contribution to their integration and thus to social development. The Declaration of Zaragoza (2010), targeting a harmonised evaluation of integration issues in the European countries, also contains indicators regarding participation of immigrants. Other statistics beyond national or European statistical tables, but results of existing studies can also assist us understanding segregation or its background. Further, analysing and comparing political priorities or concepts on urban or regional development can give us complementary information about segregation and the governmental reactions.

CONCLUSIONS

This study, as a part of a presentation on issues in regional and urban development, analysed in the first part the importance of data quality and research methods used in migration research.

Themes such as data quality, availability, comparability and interpretation of migratory phenomena were discussed, with particular attention to questions relating to mixed methods. The second part of the paper highlighted – after summarizing the importance of migratory impacts on regional competitiveness – research fields in connections with the migratory effects on the labour market, followed by issues of segregation and integration of immigrants.

Existing studies point out, that data quality; methods and methodology are often in focus of controversies in this research area. Students and researchers, who are interested in exploring and explaining migration or only a tangential part of it, have to face many methodological, ethical and practical challenges. As long as European countries and research projects keep on using different definitions and data of diverse qualities in connection with migration and migrants, it is not easy to compare these data. Analysing the impacts of the appearance of immigrants, labour market performance and issues of segregation, we should consider which area and which migratory factor we are getting a nearer view of. Beyond a simply

interpretation of negative and positive effects studies should take into account the point of view of the stakeholders and a wider environment. A combined dimension of evaluation leads us thus to further issues of migration such as illegality, security, fiscal effects, social welfare issues, norms and customs or the revision of the legal system.

The interdisciplinary character of migration research requires thus the use of variable research methods, a good combination of instruments and a careful interpretation of various data. This is relevant and calls for further research concerning migratory structures and migration management – with special attention to the importance of data quality and research methods.

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