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MIGRATION POTENTIAL OF COLLEGE GRADUATES FROM RURAL AREAS

SUMMARY

The paper discusses an important, from the perspective of the development of peripheral areas, problem of migration among youth. The weakness of the potential of disadvantaged areas contributes to the strengthening of disadvantageous demographic, economic or cultural trends which, as a consequence, makes submontane areas of the Małopolska or Podkarpacie regions distant from large urban centers, being doomed to stagnation and becomes a push factor for next generations of their inhabitants. The phenomenon very frequently affects graduates and young people who, in the beginning of their professional careers, encounter considerable barriers on the Polish labor market. The paper analyses a potential scale of internal and external migrations, assesses the importance of factors determining the selection of migration destination and the importance of elements affecting the nature of jobs undertaken, taking into account payroll expectations of potential migrants. Its key element was also a balance of potential benefits and losses resulting from mass labor migration from two perspectives: of migrants and their families, and of consequences of decisions to migrate affecting local communities.

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INTRODUCTION

Apart from natural growth, migrations are another factor affecting population, spatial distribution or formation of different population structures. As Zdrojewski and Guzińska¹ wrote, one of their characteristic features is the immediacy and speed of impact on the dynamics of numerical transformations, the density of population and structural arrangements of the population within a specific territory such as a gmina, powiat or voivodeship.

Peculiar social and economic, or political or cultural conditions may, to a much greater extent as compared to natural growth, affect the increase (or decrease) of the population and specific processes of the transformations of a demographic structure.

One of important problems related to labor migrations, especially in regard of peripheral regions suffering from a significant civilization gap, is a phenomenon of the so-called “brain drain”. It affects especially graduates, young people who, in the beginning of their professional careers, encounter important barriers on the Polish labor market. Push factors include a low level of wages and salaries, a limited number of work places and difficulties with getting a job or a discrepancy between knowledge acquired in the course of studying and employers’ expectations and requirements and - in the case of graduates majoring in the field of agriculture – difficulties with establishing or expanding existing farms. As a consequence threatened with unemployment such persons frequently decide to emigrate and enrich the intellectual potential of developed countries which trend, at the same time, produces negative divergences in the economic development of their home region or country².

Basically it is assumed that contemporary migrations are mostly related to labor mobility, however, in the case of persons with higher education and qualifications, important pro-migration factors apart from opportunities for earning higher incomes, include seemingly less important determinants.

¹ E. Zdrojewski, M. Guzińska, *Regionalne zróżnicowanie sald migracji w Polsce (1999–2009)*, [in:] P. Kaczmarczyk, M. Lesińska (ed.), *Krajobrazy migracyjne Polski*, CMR, UW Warszawa 2012, p. 163.

² P. Bożyk et al., *Międzynarodowe stosunki ekonomiczne*, PWE, Warszawa 1999, p. 225–227.

P. Kaczmarczyk and J. Tyrowicz³ enumerate such five elements: the willingness to improve education or master a foreign language, the possibility of working in a more growth stimulating environment, more beneficial institutional and financial conditions in the form of, among other things, supporting the research and development sector and stimulating high demand for the R&D sector employees, a positive climate for innovations, development and professional career, including, among other things, for starting one's own business or self-employment, the development of transnational corporations and related mobility of specialists and, finally, migration politics of highly developed countries focused on attracting highly qualified employees.

A vital barrier limiting the development of submontane regions of Małopolska or Podkarpacie is agrarian overpopulation. The phenomenon along with the entirety of accompanying negative consequences significantly reduces life opportunities of the region's inhabitants. The absence of alternative developmental scenarios results in the gradual depopulation of rural areas, with the migration of young and entrepreneurial persons taking the form of long-term stays which, as opposed to pendulum migration, permanently decreases the potential of those areas. The overlapping disadvantageous demographic trends result in the gradual peripheralization of the area being researched.

One of important effects of globalization is the increased mobility of rural areas' population (including peripheral ones). The process, to a considerable extent, involves young people who are more aware of realities of the contemporary world in the area of social and economic transformations. Analogically to the beginning of the past century, labor migrations of the population of submontane areas have become a way of a gradual exit from that area of the economy, becoming, through the change of the mobility, a bridge to life-style changes⁴.

From the perspective of the global economy, the possibility of effective and highly efficient management of surplus of labor force is very important, which, in consequence, thanks to the transfer of funds earned that way, is reflected in the economic revival of peripheral areas from which migrants often come from. Some symptoms of such increased activity can be observed in regions polarizing tourist traffic, among others, in the area of the Western Bieszczady Mountains where a significant increase in the number of overnight and gastronomic facilities and niche tourist and recreational services is

³ P. Kaczmarczyk, J. Tyrowicz, *Migracje osób z wysokimi kwalifikacjami*, www.bezrobocie.org.pl, Biuletyn Nr 3/2008, p. 8.

⁴ M. Wieruszewska (ed.), *Tu i tam. Migracje z polskich wsi za granicę*, IRWiR-PAN, Warszawa 2007, p. 19.

caused by an influx of funds and know-how obtained from trips abroad related to labor purposes.

However, one should be aware that further economic growth of those areas, and – in consequence – limited migration from those areas, will only be possible under the condition of permanent and constant economic growth not only in the dimension of local economics but above all in the national and global economy.

Methodical remarks: A questionnaire survey in the presence of a researcher was conducted in the 1st quarter of 2013 – the sample consisted of 130 engineering and MA studies' seniors majoring in three areas at the Economic and Agricultural Faculty of the Agricultural University in Kraków. The respondents were selected purposefully – they declared that they originated from rural areas, mostly from the Małopolska and Podkarpacie regions.

1. ATTITUDES OF THE ACADEMIC YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF POTENTIAL DECISIONS TO MIGRATE

The migration potential of a specific group of persons should be considered in the context of their declared life situation (including, their financial standing) and with reference to previous social and professional activities. In response to a question regarding the current financial standing, more than 50% of the respondents decided that it was good (every 12th respondent described their financial standing as very good), whereas nearly 40% declared that it was average or poor. It is obvious that future migrants will mostly come from the last group, especially as answering the next question regarding the location of job search, only less than 14% wants to look for a job at their place of residence and more than 45% plans to expand the search area to cover the territory of the whole Poland, and frequently chooses internal pendulum migration (figure 1.).

It is characteristic that every third respondent has not made any decision with regard to the location of the search for a permanent place of employment yet. It shows that in a situation where a home labor market could be able to absorb the supply of graduates – which naturally would have to be preceded by the improved economic situation in Poland – the scale of external migrations would be a marginal phenomenon accounting for only a fraction of a contemporary migration wave in mass statistics. It is good that despite prevailing beliefs, the professional mobility of a young generation has been on the increase which is favorable to the development of large cities – in the case of the surveyed group, mostly Kraków, Rzeszów and to a smaller extent Warsaw.

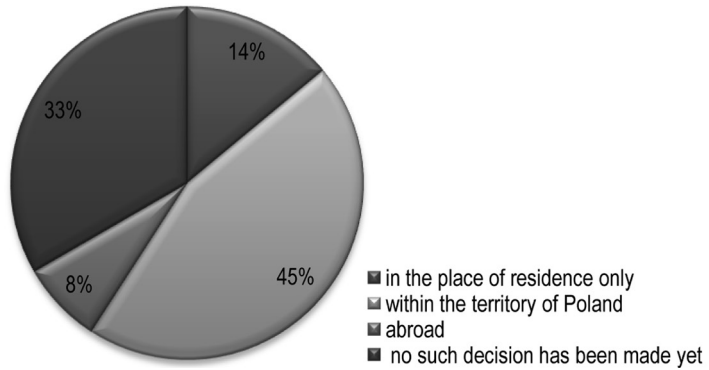


Figure 1. The declared job search location

Source: own study.

Analyzing the respondents' current activity it should be stressed that more than 27% of all respondents has already commenced work (in the case of the majority of them – permanently), every fifth respondent has taken part in different training or internship programs, a minimal proportion, however, has been willing to become engaged in pro publico bono activities working as volunteers in social organizations. The respondents were also asked about their previous travel and work experience. Almost every third respondent declared that they took such trips during their college/university education, and in the case of 12% such trips were recurrent (figure 2.).

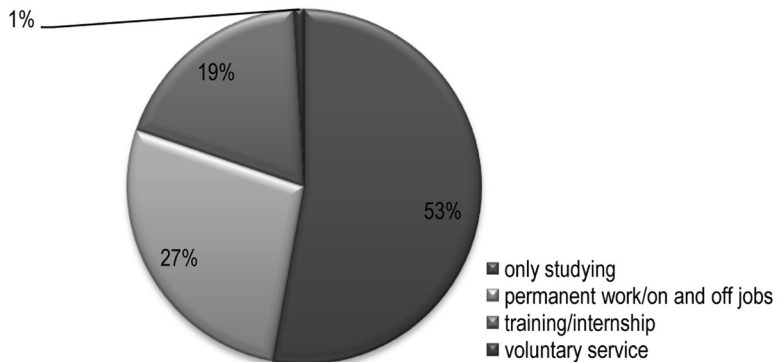


Figure 2. Respondents' activity during studies

Source: own study.

Creating the migration potential, in accordance with the theory of migration networks, is related to the existence of not only push factors (e.g. prob-

lems with getting a job at one's place of residence) but also pull factors (or at least those favorable to internal migrations). Such a factor can be presence of persons from one's previous environment at a destination. In response to a question regarding relatives or friends abroad, the respondents' answers were affirmative in the majority of cases.

From among all respondents, only every fifth person does not have any family or friends abroad, 40% of all respondents declared that their families were staying abroad, nearly half of all respondents had at least one distant relative or a friend abroad. The above shows that the migration potential in light of the theory presented above is significant; it also confirms numerous opinions of the large scale of labor migrations by the citizens of Poland.

2. DETERMINANTS OF MIGRATION ABROAD BY THE RURAL YOUTH

Analyzing the importance of individual factors affecting decisions to migrate and the migration destinations, one should note that a similar scale of migration by inhabitants of rural areas had already occurred in the past several times, including both nationwide and abroad. Galicia's agrarian overpopulation resulted in mass migration at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, among others, to the United States and Canada or Western European countries. Poland's industrialization after World War II in turn became a main reason for mass internal migrations from villages to towns and cities. The increased spatial mobility of rural population in the early days of the political transformation after 1989 was of mixed nature – apart from a significant dimension of labor migrations abroad – also of the nature of internal migrations. However, a number of economic conditions related, among other things, to the dynamic increase of purchase prices and real estate lease preventing the stabilization of young people entering the labor market, considerably reduced the scale of internal migration movements. According to Sikorska⁵, a decreasing number of job offers and a growing unemployment rate constituting an important push factor for almost the entire Poland in a significant way determined the limitation of national translocations to the benefit of migration abroad and, following Poland's integration with European Union member states and the opening of western markets for the employees from the Central Europe, led to mass labor migrations.

⁵ A. Sikorska (ed.), *Migracje ludności wiejskiej w latach 2000–2005*, IERiGŻ, Warszawa 2008, p. 7.

A decision-making process related to migration abroad is subject to a multi-criteria analysis. The survey accounts for the most important determinants of decisions to migrate to which migrants ascribed the following importance: 1) the possibility of earning a remuneration higher than in Poland, 2) difficulties with finding a job in Poland, 3) guaranteed employment abroad, 4) employment terms better than in Poland, 5) acquiring professional experience, 6) improving qualifications, 7) the possibility of learning a foreign language and 8) willingness to experience another country. The results of the ranking are presented in Table 1. below and the synthetic breakdown of the evaluations is presented on Figure 3.

Table 1. The grading of key motifs for migration abroad is as follows

MOTIFS/GRADING	GRADING OF KEY MOTIFS [IN %]							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not important	1.5	3.9	5.4	3.1	4.6	6.2	2.3	8.5
Low importance	0.8	3.1	13.1	10.0	13.9	13.1	0.8	13.1
Average	3.1	22.3	32.3	32.3	27.7	30.8	12.3	23.1
Important	18.5	25.4	29.2	32.3	30.0	26.9	20.0	18.5
Very important	76.2	45.4	20.0	22.3	23.9	23.1	64.6	36.9

Source: own study.

Major reasons for migration included, according to the respondents, the possibility of earning a higher income (in the case of nearly 95% it was a very important or important factor) and the possibility of learning and mastering a foreign language; they also mentioned difficulties with landing a job in Poland (84% and 71%, respectively, recognized these determinants as important).

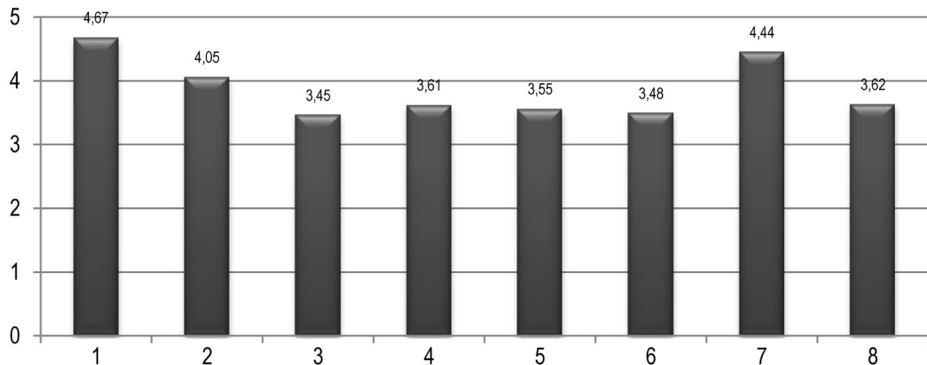


Figure 3. Synthetic indicator for the significance of migration triggers

Source: own study.

Guaranteed employment abroad and the possibility of raising one's qualifications were rated relatively low. For almost 20% of the respondents these elements were irrelevant in the process of taking a migration-related decision.

An important element of the decision-making process was also the selection of the destination of labor migration. Eight important elements were presented to the respondents: (1) a distance of the migration destination to Poland, (2) earnings, (3) getting a job with ease, (4) family presence, (5) the presence of friends, (6) historic events, (7) an attitude towards Poles, and (8) a threat of terrorist attacks. The results of the assessment are presented in Table 2 and on Figure 4.

Table 2. The importance of major factors affecting the selection of labor migration destinations (%)

MOTIFS/GRADING	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Not important	19.23	0.77	0.00	7.69	6.15	59.23	5.38	20.77
Low importance	11.54	0.77	2.31	16.92	10.00	24.62	14.62	21.54
Average	31.54	6.92	13.85	28.46	43.08	8.46	35.38	28.46
Important	16.15	26.15	43.08	19.23	24.62	6.92	30.00	13.85
Very important	21.54	65.38	40.77	27.69	16.15	0.77	14.62	15.38

Source: own study.

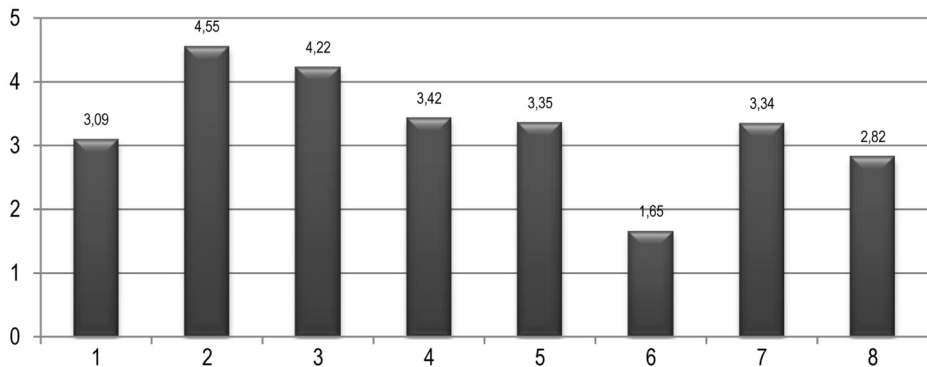


Figure 4. The synthetic rate of materiality of determinants of the selection of labor migration destination
Source: own study.

Based on the data presented, the most important factors affecting the selection of the place of employment include the level of earnings and getting a job with ease. Nearly 92% and 83%, respectively, regarded them as very important or important. The respondents also indicated the importance of the environmental relations referred to above (analogically, nearly 47% and

41%, respectively, ranked them among top scores) and the attitude to Poles in a new place of living.

Historic events, however, did not impact the choice of a destination – almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the respondents regarded them as irrelevant or unimportant; also the risk of terrorist attacks was assessed relatively low (42% responses). Every 3rd respondent also indicated the unimportance of the factor related to the migration destination's distance from their homeland which, in the era of mass, fast and relatively cheap transportation, should not be a surprise.

3. THE EVALUATION OF A BALANCE OF BENEFITS AND LOSSES RELATED TO MIGRATION

Intensifying globalization of labor markets and related mass flow of intellectual resources impacts the existing shape of local economies both in reference to homelands and countries being migration destinations. The balance of migration benefits and losses should also be referred to individual behaviors of the migrants themselves and the impact of the phenomena in question on their direct environment, including households. Reference books often provide breakdowns of both positive and negative consequences of labor migrations. It is also worthwhile to mention that the consequences of the above are mutually related to the said platforms being discussed herein, namely, individual elements influence how local communities function; also opposite direction relations can be found with collective consequences determining the behavior of individuals.

Making such balance of benefits and losses, the respondents were tasked with evaluating the intensity of influence of individual elements on the scale from 1 (irrelevant) to 5 (very important). The balance was made with respect to two different areas. The first one referred to the impact of migration on migrants and their families. The advantages listed included: 1) an improved standard of living, 2) financing current expenses, 3) investment activities, 4) education and broadening knowledge, 5) the possibility of undertaking a job, 6) becoming acquainted with a different culture and learning a foreign language. The losses specified included: 7) living on the edge of two worlds, 8) depreciation of human capital, 9) health and emotional costs related to being apart from one's family and friends, 10) a breakup of relations, families, 11) young people escaping to larger cities.

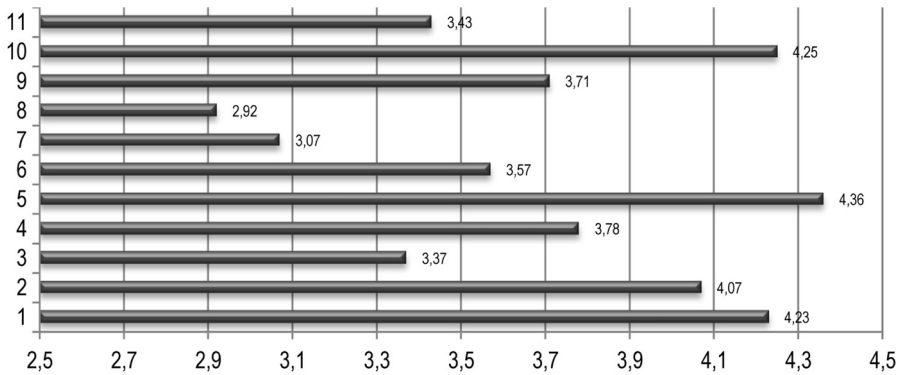


Figure 5. Balance of migration benefits and losses (implications for migrants and migrant families)
Source: own study.

The benefits named by the respondents included the possibility of undertaking a job and the resulting improved living standard. A disadvantageous situation on the labor market in Poland and declining numerous macroeconomic rates have considerable impact on the perception of job opportunities abroad by respondents acting as a peculiar safety buffer protecting them against the unemployment rate. Also negative consequences of migration were noted and costs related to families and relations breaking up and a mental strain caused by lengthy time apart were stressed.

In the other area the balance of migration was made from the perspective of a local community. The following benefits were taken into account: 1) investing in Poland funds earned, 2) new qualifications and skills acquired by the migrants, 3) increased household incomes resulting in the increase of incomes of self-governmental units, 4) the improved infrastructure, 5) reduced poverty and pathology, 6) reduced expenses towards social benefits, 7) improved furnishings of households. The losses included: 8) a disturbed demographic structure, 9) a shortage of qualified mobile labor force and 10) a threat to the pension system's solvency. From the perspective of interests of social communities benefits were stressed that stemmed from the improvement of qualifications and new skills of migrants; also beneficial influence of transfers of funds earned abroad to the revitalization of internal demand, mitigating the effects of an economic crisis were observed.

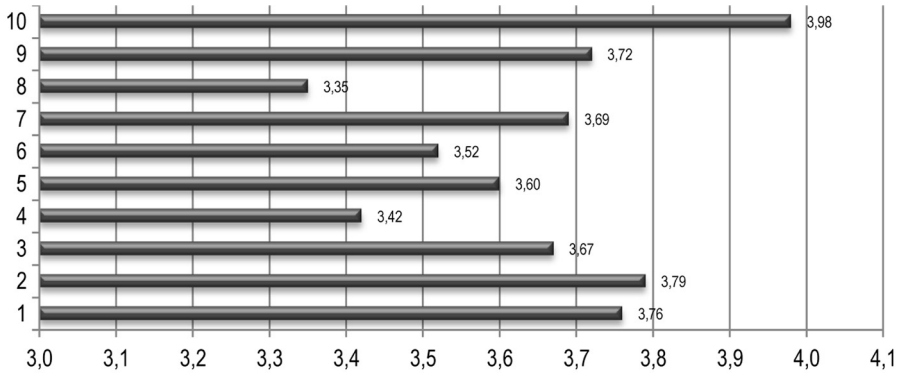


Figure 6. Balance of migration benefits and losses (implications for the local community)

Source: own study.

At the same time the respondents stressed negative consequences of migration for the area under analysis being a shortage of the qualified labor force. Threats to the stability of the social security system were stressed that stemmed from disadvantageous demographic trends which were additionally intensified by mass migrations among young people.

It is worthwhile to notice that further developments will, to a large degree, depend on Poland's overall economic situation and – in a broader context – the condition of the global economy as labor migration is a response to an attempt at leveling economic potentials where countries with a higher economic growth (or a higher living standard measured by the level of incomes) are a natural harbor for the surplus of labor force used inappropriately, to an insufficient extent (frequently with other resources being misallocated) originating from areas characterized by poorer economic performance.

CONCLUSIONS

The problem of the low economic potential of peripheral areas and the related negative social and economic consequences has been known for a long time. As part of concepts related to the sustainable development of the areas being distant from large urban centers, also as part of a policy implemented by competent European Union institutions, efforts are made to decrease differences in the area of technical and social infrastructure or stimulating entrepreneurship and boosting competitiveness of economic entities in those areas. However, a considerable difference between economic potentials of peripher-

al areas and metropolis remains to be an important factor determining migration from those areas, especially with reference to young people who frequently have high qualifications and extensive knowledge; at the same time an increased interest in internal migrations has been noticeable. The lack of sufficient absorption of the surplus of human capital on the native labor market has become a push factor which, given a general slow-down in the global economy, intensifies the disadvantageous trend and adversely impacts the social and economic structure of peripheral areas.

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