

THE EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL LABOR MIGRATION ON POLITICAL LEARNING

Center for the Study of Democracy, Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca)

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Location: Center for the Study of Democracy, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Deadline: Proposals should be sent, before March 30, 2008 to Gabriel Badescu, at Babeş-Bolyai University (badescu@msu.edu). The final program will be sent out before April 15, 2008.

The working language is English.

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The workshop seeks to address the role played by international labor migration on political culture of the migrants, their family members and other people from the sending societies. It aims to present both empirical research and theoretical work.

Labor migration has been investigated mostly from the point of view of economic outcomes. The remittances, developing trade networks and learning new skills have been shown to have a profound impact on the living standards of people in donor societies. There are good theoretical reasons that, in addition to these economic and social aspects, the effects of migration include significant changes in cultural variables, including attitudes, values, networks and norms that are relevant for democratic processes.

Various studies have indicated the existing potential for social learning from migration, especially regarding assimilation processes among recent émigrés within consolidated democracies. However, these studies seldom detail the exact nature or mechanisms of such learning and often produce mixed or contradictory results. When compared to other instances of re-socialization, labor migration seems to be one of the strong contenders. Compared to civic involvement, for instance, the length of exposure to a new social context tends to be longer, and the exposure to diversity of a higher intensity in the case of migration.

On the other hand, it is not entirely clear what kind of effects should be expected, given the vast variety of experiences which migrants can have. Some people who work abroad experience an environment with people who interact with and rely on efficient public institutions. Others, who face hostile authorities or unsympathetic local population, find support for their negative stereotypes about strangers and the inefficiencies of democratic decision-making. In addition to interaction with people from the receiving countries, group interaction with other migrants can have equally important social learning effects.

Finally, the critical mass of migrants from the same country may reach a point where migrants operate in a self-contained, largely exclusive community skeptical of others. We are looking for papers that aim to evaluate the outcomes of labor migration on attitudes and behaviors that are relevant for democratic processes.

- What are the effects of the migration experience on political involvement, social capital, tolerance, left-right orientations, institutional trust, civic engagement and political participation on those who work abroad or have returned from working abroad?
- What are the indirect effects on their family members and acquaintances?
- What are the conditions under which these effects are positive for both the involved individual and his or her family or community?
- What are the mechanisms through which migration influence political learning?
- In particular, what is the role of exposure to diversity?

These questions will be at the heart of the discussions during this two-day international workshop in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The aim of this workshop is to assemble an interdisciplinary group of scholars working on migration issues as they relate to changing attitudes and behaviors and share new research results. We welcome proposals from all disciplines including political science, sociology, economics, psychology, geography and anthropology.