

Call for Sessions - WEHC 2015 [S20030]

Proposed title of the session

The economic impact of migration: lessons from history

Abstract

Migrations have been defined as cross-cultural movements which inevitably change and shape societies according to new cultural and economic development paths. More than 40 million people emigrated from Europe to the New World during mass migration years (1850 and 1913). Although net migration was a lot less, this huge movement of people represented an unparalleled population transfer that had profound effects on the global distribution of population, income, and wealth.

In recent years economists in the neoclassical tradition have addressed the questions whether and how immigration affects native workers' labour market outcomes. Recent calculations show that there is no consistent evidence confirming adverse effects on employment or unemployment in local labor markets today as well as in the past. Even though the effects of immigration on host country labor markets were and are small, the "distance" among cultures of origin and cultures of destination has grown a lot. The cultural gap was a lesser problem at the time of the great migration (Europeans going to the US or Latin America had many common traits), but today it is quite generalized, and the impact of migrations therefore much more substantial and difficult to predict in cultural and economic terms.

This session will gather the contributions of renown scholars who study the current and past economic impact of migratory movements. The useful comparison between past and present migration movements can help us find common paths: today as yesterday, mass migration movements entail the influence of friends and relatives among previous emigrants abroad. They can create persistence and path dependence in emigration flows and can also create immigrant communities with extraordinary well-developed social networks. These social networks in the past have created resources upon which immigrant co-ethnics drew for business purposes. That's why ethnic minority groups were overrepresented in small business in large part because their access to ethnic resources permitted them to outcompete native workers.

New empirical results will shed light on the role and impact of small immigrant business nowadays, which in part still depends on pre-modern values and solidarities, but in part relies on the export of a micro-enterprise model which replicates the one of the country of origin to many extents (in terms of financial resources' source, organizational structure and human capital). As one of the contributions will show, in the case of Chinese micro-enterprises in the service sector in Italy the model is replicated to such an extent that language barriers are considered non influential.

Other contributions will deal with the new wave of highly educated migrants from crisis-stricken European countries to Australia or other countries in Europe and with the relationship between migrants and business in Argentina. The session can already count on the contribution of a set of well-known scholars, yet we welcome additional papers dealing with any of a wide range of migration effects on recipient and sending countries' economic development.

The ultimate aim of this session is to contribute to a better understanding of the effect different forms of migration have on economic change in recipient and sending countries.

I. Corresponding Session Organiser

Prof. Francesca Fauri (University of Bologna [Italy])

II. Co-Organiser(s)

1. Corresponding Organiser.
2. Prof. Donatella Strangio (Università La Sapienza [Italy])

III. Expected Participant(s)

1. same as correspondent.
2. Leo Lucassen (Leiden University [Netherlands])
3. Maria Ines Barbero (Universidad de San Andrés [Argentina])
4. Paolo Tedeschi (Università Bicocca Milano [Italy])
5. Patrizia Battilani (Università di Bologna [Italy])
6. Alessandra De Rose (Università La Sapienza Roma [Italy])
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