

COMPLEX AND MULTI-LAYERED PROCESSES OF DECISION MAKING ON LENGTH OF STAY: EUROPEAN CITIZENS FROM A8 AND A2 COUNTRIES IN THE UK

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ABSTRACT

Complex and Multi-layered Processes of Decision Making on Length of Stay: European Citizens from A8 and A2 Countries in the UK¹

This article focuses on post-2004 migration to the UK from A8 and A2 countries and discusses the complex, multi-layered and bounded nature of migrants' decision making on length of stay. It argues that the maximisation of economic benefits is only one factor amongst many which influences decision making. Following a 'bounded rationality' approach the article considers the following three dimensions of decision making: perception of environment, goals and normative principles. Data from a longitudinal study of migrant workers in the East of England will be used to illustrate migrants' decisions on length of stay. The study combined a mixed methods approach with a longitudinal panel approach and the article will present findings from three phases of semi-structured interviews (a core group of 30 A8/A2 citizens over three years) and two surveys (161 participants in year 1 of which 61 responded in year 2). The article concludes that the maximisation of economic benefits is only part of a complex bundle of factors which influence decisions on length of stay. A positive perception of the wider social situation in the UK (influenced partly by participants' transnational experience), a strong goal orientation (in the context of personal life and education) and strong normative principles (reflected in aspirations, determination, resilience and a certain flexibility regarding notions of identity and belonging) have been highlighted as important factors in decision making processes on length of stay.

KEY WORDS: A8/A2 migration, decision making, length of stay, bounded rationality

IZVLEČEK

Kompleksni in večplastni procesi sprejemanja odločitev o dolžini bivanja: Evropski državljani iz držav A8 in A2 v Združenem kraljestvu

Članek se osredotoča na migracijo v Združeno kraljestvo iz držav A8 in A2 po letu 2004 in govori o kompleksni, večplastni in omejeni naravi odločanja migrantov o dolžini bivanja. Trdi, da je maksimizacija ekonomskih koristi le en dejavnik med mnogimi, ki vplivajo na sprejemanje odločitev. Članek sledi pristopu 'omejene racionalnosti' [bounded rationality] in tehta naslednje tri dimenzije sprejemanja odločitev:

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¹ This article refers to material which has been published in the three reports produced for the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) as part of the EEDA contract ref: 07-071 (Schneider and Holman 2009, 2010 and 2011).

dojemanje okolja, cilje in normativna načela. Za ilustracijo odločanj migrantov o dolžini bivanja bodo uporabljeni podatki iz longitudinalne študije delavcev migrantov v vzhodni Angliji. Študija kombinira pristop mešanih metod z longitudinalnim panelnim pristopom, članek pa bo predstavil izsledke iz treh faz polstrukturiranih intervjujih (osnovna skupina 30 državljanov držav A8/A2 v obdobju treh let) in dveh raziskav (161 sodelujočih v prvem letu, od katerih jih je 61 odgovorilo v letu 2). Članek ugotavlja, da je maksimizacija ekonomskih koristi le del kompleksnega snopa dejavnikov, ki vplivajo na odločitve o dolžini bivanja. Pozitivno dojemanje širše družbene situacije v Združenem kraljestvu (na katero delno vplivajo transnacionalne izkušnje udeležencev), močna usmerjenost k ciljem (v kontekstu zasebnega življenja in izobrazbe) in močna normativna načela (ki se odražajo v težnjah, odločnosti, odpornosti in določeni meri fleksibilnosti kar se tiče identitete in pripadanja) so bili označeni kot pomembni dejavniki pri procesu sprejemanja odločitev o dolžini bivanja.

KLJUČNE BESEDE: A8/A2 migracija, sprejemanje odločitev, dolžina bivanja, omejena racionalnost [bounded rationality]

INTRODUCTION

This article presents a discussion of some of the issues and findings from the three year longitudinal study on European citizens from chiefly Accession 8 (A8) countries² in the East of England, with a focus on decision making processes regarding length of stay (LOS). Migrants' decisions on length of stay can be temporally classified as before, during and after a 'migration phase'. In the context of the intra-migration of European citizens, migration is understood as a fluid concept whereby individuals may be part of several 'migration phases' with shorter or longer intermissions in countries of origin (COO). This article's main focus is on migration decisions which have been taken by A8 (and A2) European citizens *during* their stay in the UK.

The understanding of migrants' decision making processes has been researched by various migration scholars (e.g. Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Constant and Massey 2002 and 2003; Dustmann 2001; Eade *et al.* 2006). In the context of economic migration theories (such as neo-classical and the new economics of labour migration) migrants have been viewed as 'egoistic utility-maximisers'; reflecting a substantive rational choice approach rather than a procedural approach which considers both egoistic and altruistic goals and principles in the context of 'bounded rationality' (Simon 1985).³ This article follows the procedural approach and addresses, the complex, multi-layered and bounded nature of decision making by conceptualising decision making processes as an interplay between perception of the environment, goals and normative principles (see Sen 1982; Simon 1985; Schneider 2006):⁴

- The perception of the environment relates in our study to the migrants' conceptualisation of characteristics of their surrounding structures and their relationship to these structures. Structures (including economic, social and political developments) relates to their COO and the UK. To what extent the wider environment (local, regional, national and international) is perceived as offering opportunities or barriers is also investigated.

2 A8 refers to the eight East and Central European countries that acceded to the European Union in May 2004 (Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Hungary and Estonia). A2 refers to Bulgaria and Romania, acceding to the EU in January 2007 and whose citizens are subject to different employment eligibility criteria in the UK to A8 citizens.

3 For a discussion on 'egoistic utility maximisation' in migration theory see, for example, Constant and Zimmermann (2009).

4 Knowledge is a further dimension which has not been included in this article. The three dimensions of perceptions, goals and normative principles have been also utilised by Schneider (2006) to analyse politicians' decision-making processes in the context of German asylum policy.

- Goals refer to both egoistic and altruistic matters which could be short, medium or long term in nature. Goals are prone to change according to shifting structural circumstances in migrants' countries of origin, host countries or third countries. For example, typical goals of migrants are 'to learn English', 'to earn better money' or 'to have an adventure'.
- Normative principles refer to fundamental value schemes which are less easily challenged by changes in the structural realm; identity, aspirations and a belief in self-reliance have been classified under this dimension. At times, short term goals may contradict normative principles of migrants. For example, after arrival the majority of the research participants were keen to make a living in the UK irrespective of what job they occupied; however, after two or three years many showed dissatisfaction as they increasingly felt a contradiction between their more fundamental life ambitions and aspirations and their short term goals. As a consequence, migrants considered moving to a third country, contemplated a career move and/or considered further education and training.

The three dimensions (i.e. perception of environment, goals and normative principles) structured the development of the study's conceptual framework and the development of data collection instruments for the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the study. The three dimensions also structure the documentation of our findings below where we focus, in particular, on *perceptions* of environment.

METHODOLOGY

The longitudinal study used a mixed methods approach combining quantitative with qualitative methods of data collection. Over the three years, the research carried out three phases of data collection with interviewees and two phases with survey respondents. Interviews and surveys were also supplemented with stakeholder interviews and analyses of Polish blogs.⁵

Initially, expecting some attrition, 40 interviewees were recruited with the aim of maintaining 30 participants across the study period. By the third year of the study 30 interviewees from the original cohort remained. The participants of the 'core group' reflected diverse backgrounds with regard to countries and areas (rural/urban) of origin, date of arrival, area of settlement in the UK (rural/urban and different regions within the East of England), skills, educational and employment background, language proficiency, age, gender and marital status. Semi-structured interviews of approximately 90 minutes duration were conducted each year.

The survey in year 1 was completed by 161 European citizens from A8 and A2 countries; unfortunately, only 61 participants re-engaged in the second year of the survey. Although the response rate of 38% in the second year of the survey is low, it reflects a typical problem of longitudinal research which applies a panel study approach, intensified by the particular characteristics of migrants' mobility (see, for example, Thomson and Holland 2003). Questionnaires were made available in English, Polish and Russian to capture the experiences and decisions of participants who had lower levels of English proficiency. The survey cannot claim statistical representation due to the small size of the sample and a non representative sampling method. However, the objective of the survey was to provide a further evidence base for the qualitative findings rather than statistical representation. Due to the small sample size the findings focus on descriptive (rather than inferential) statistics highlighting percentages and percentage differences between year 1 and year 2.

The following outlines the key findings from our qualitative and quantitative research. The findings presented in this article represent individual level data (rather than data relating to structural levels or linking individual data with structural data) looking at decisions of length of stay and factors which may

⁵ Data from stakeholder interviews and Polish blogs will not be part of this article.

have an impact on these decisions, i.e. participants' perceptions of the social, economic and political context in the UK and their home country, their goals and normative principles.

DECISIONS ON LENGTH OF STAY (LOS): AN OVERVIEW

The findings of the two samples who responded to both surveys indicated that during the span of one year views on LOS had become more concrete. While 57% selected in year 1 'I have no specific plans, let's see', in year 2 only 28% had this attitude. Instead, people were more likely to state that they would stay up to three years and slightly more participants also said that they intended to stay indefinitely.

The survey looked at both subjective factors (self-identified by participants) and objective factors (variables relating to LOS). With regard to subjective factors participants who responded to year 1 and 2 of the survey self-identified similar factors as being important for their decision making on LOS (although the ranking changed slightly between year 1 and year 2): 'I like the area where I live' (Y1: 43%; Y2: 44%); 'I have settled in the UK' (Y1: 35%; Y2: 40%); 'I have a good social life in the UK' (Y1: 35%; Y2: 34%) and 'I find it easy to access services' (Y1: 33%; Y2: 37%). However, in year 2 participants placed more emphasis on the following factors: 'My job does not reflect my skills' (Y1: 18%; Y2: 37%); 'I miss my home country' (Y1: 20%; Y2: 36%); 'I need to earn more money' (Y1: 22%; Y2: 32%) and 'It's difficult to find work in home country' (Y1: 16%; Y2: 30%). In both years of the survey participants were more likely to self-identify factors which supported a stay in the UK rather than a move to their COO or a third country. Subjective factors also showed that social considerations were as important, if not more important, than economic considerations.

The following objective factors (comparing different variables with length of stay) related to a longer stay in the UK (i.e. longer than 3 years or indefinitely):

- Participants who indicated that their skills were reflected in employment were more likely to stay longer (Y1: 39%; Y2: 39%) than those who did not see their skills reflected (Y1: 12%; Y2: 32%).
- Year 2 highlighted that migrants who were older (30–39) were more likely to stay longer (or indefinitely) than those who were younger (20–29); although this finding was not confirmed in year 1.
- Having children made a clear difference and participants with children wanted to stay longer (Y1: 29%; Y2: 50%) than those without children (Y1: 13%; Y2: 21%).
- Those who did not identify strongly with their COO were also more likely to stay longer (Y1: 27%; Y2: 44%) compared to those who indicated a stronger national identity (Y1: 16%; Y2: 24%).
- Respondents who were married (Y1: 27%; Y2: 36%) or divorced (Y1: 28%; Y2: 40%) were more likely to stay longer than those who were single or co-habiting.

The next and main section will look at perceptions, goals and normative principles as influential factors for decision making processes.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS IN COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN

In both years participants of the overall samples expressed negative views regarding the economic situation in their respective home countries with a fairly large number ranking it as being 'negative' or 'very negative' (Y1: 40%; Y2: 53%); around 30% in both years selected neither good nor bad. The overall samples show that perceptions had become more negative by year 2. However, those who responded to both years (with the majority being Polish) had a less negative view of their home country's economic

situation by year 2 (Y1: 68%; Y2: 47%). Migrants' perceptions of the political situation in their home countries were ranked by 58% in year 1 and 52% in year 2 as being negative or very negative (around 30% in both years thought it was neither good nor bad and 10% didn't know). Similar to the findings relating to the economic situation, the perception of participants who responded to both years was less negative by year 2 (Y1: 64%; Y2: 49%). Participants were also concerned about the social situation in their home countries with 54% in year 1 and 48% in year 2 perceiving it as 'negative' or 'very negative' (around 30% viewed it as neither good nor bad). Respondents who participated in both years had similar views of their home country's social situation in both years (Y1: 52%; Y2: 51%). In year 2 participants indicated that their perception of their home country had a strong (37%) or very strong (17%) influence upon their decision making on LOS.

A number of interviewees in year 1 were despondent about the political, economic and social situations in home countries and the negative impacts on their personal situations. The majority of interviewees from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic were critical of the political situation in their home countries and distrusted politicians. Some also criticised the close link between the media and the government in COO. It was commonplace for interviewees to comment on how corruption, discrimination and ponderous bureaucratic practices combined to make life very difficult, especially for individuals without powerful connections. In year 2 many interviewees – especially from Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – were hopeful that a political change might lead to better economic and social situations in their COO. However, by year 3 interviewees, from Poland and Hungary in particular, remained critical of political developments in COO. Interviewees from both countries referred to issues such as right-wing politics, intolerance towards minorities, homophobia and bureaucracy; they often contrasted these developments with their experiences in the UK and highlighting 'tolerance' as a positive aspect in the UK.

The employment situation in COO continued to be viewed as being bad or very bad; although the economic situation in countries such as Slovakia and Poland was viewed in a less negative way than, for example, in Latvia and Lithuania. However, the perception of the economic situation in COO is influenced by a high level of relativism. Interviewees not only compared the situation in their home countries with the situation in the UK but they also placed their perception in the context of prospects in other countries. For example, an interviewee from Slovakia described the economic situation in Slovakia as relatively good when compared to Poland and Russia, however not so good when compared to Germany and the UK.

With regard to the perception of social situations in COO a number of interviewees criticised the levels of intolerance and xenophobia in home countries towards minorities and contrasted this with a more open and tolerant situation (regarding gender, ethnicity, age and marital status) in the UK. With regard to social relations the picture varied; while some still felt that their strongest personal contacts were with the family and/or friends in COO, many said that, although they had regular face-to-face or virtual contact with their family and/or friends in COO, they had developed stronger contacts with people in the UK (often co-nationals or nationals from other A8/A2 countries).

Although the perceptions of COO were generally quite negative it should be emphasised that the majority of interviewees missed their home countries and that specific areas such as health provision and schools were perceived by many interviewees as superior to that in the UK.

PERCEPTIONS OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS IN THE UK

As highlighted above, interviewees placed emphasis on their perception of the social situation in the UK which, for the large majority, remained a positive or very positive experience throughout the three years

of the study. In general interviewees viewed their location of living as positive: people are friendly; good provision of facilities including shops and leisure facilities; and, a good infrastructure were mentioned as positive experiences. A common theme in the interviews was also the advantage of living close to work, spending less time (than in their COO) on commuting and having more time for leisure and other activities. A small number of interviewees mentioned social issues in their local area which they perceived as being negative, e.g. drug-taking in the neighbourhood, occurrence of crimes such as burglary and abuse from local residents outside their home. As noted, interviewees viewed tolerance and diversity as a positive feature of British society, often contrasted with their experiences of discrimination and intolerance (e.g. relating to age, gender, sexual orientation, forms of co-habiting before marriage and xenophobia) in COO. However, this general picture of a 'tolerant UK' was also contrasted with the ongoing (at least since 2005) discriminatory representation of European citizens from A8/A2 countries in large parts of the British press; and experience of direct and indirect discrimination in the context of employment, housing and health by some of the interviewees. With regard to social relations people in the UK were generally viewed as being friendly and polite. However, interviewees emphasised throughout the study that British people had a different concept of friendship and the British were not perceived as individuals one could discuss problems with. This view of different understandings of friendship had been present from the first year of the study and after three years none of the interviewees seemed to have changed their perceptions.

Overall the study showed that the recession in the UK had a relatively small impact on decisions on length of stay. Although participants reflected on issues such as decreasing wage differentials between the UK and COO and on changes regarding the job market they did not consider a return to their COO or a move to a third country because of the recession. The fact that the economic situations in COO were considerably worse than in the UK meant that in relative terms the UK economic situation was perceived in a fairly positive light. Despite the continuing recession and government plans to cut public spending, participants felt that there were still (in comparison to COO) many opportunities and advantages in the UK including job opportunities, financial advantages and educational opportunities (although the latter will be significantly affected by increase in tuition fees to a maximum of £9000 per year from 2012 onwards). Several interviewees highlighted their good relations with work colleagues and their employer. A small number of participants described situations where they felt unprotected in employment and had experienced discrimination in the work place. Opportunities regarding self-employment in the UK were also emphasised by several participants. They thought it was relatively straightforward to become self-employed in the UK as there was less bureaucracy than in COO.

Some interviewees were interested in British politics and followed political developments. Views regarding the current and the previous government were mixed. Participants especially commented on migration policies developed by British governments. While some feared that the recession would lead to increasing unemployment and a stop on immigration, others thought that there would be no immigration restriction for EU citizens in the future. Only a very small number of interviewees voted in the council elections. While several participants stated that they were not interested in (British) politics, others explained their non-participation with reference to: lack of knowledge regarding political programmes/ ideas of candidates and/or the registration process; uncertainty about whether they were registered; and, uncertainty about their right to vote as a foreign national. The interviews highlighted that there is a need to inform European citizens from outside the UK about their political rights.

The survey confirmed the data from the qualitative study and showed that the social situation in the UK was viewed by the majority of the overall sample as being 'positive' or 'very positive' in both years (Y1: 67%; Y2: 68%); followed by a 'positive' or 'very positive' perception of the economic situation in the UK (Y1: 49%; Y2: 47%). Surprisingly, the perception of the economic situation had not changed between year 1 and year 2 while the political situation in the UK was perceived in a less positive light in year 2 with 28% perceiving it as 'positive' or 'very positive' compared to 40% in year 1 (the year 2 survey was carried out in the context of the pre-general election campaign period which might have influenced

the responses). Between 30% and 40% selected neither good nor bad for the perception of the social, economic and political situations in the UK.

The positive outlook on the UK is best understood in the context of transnationalism which 'broadly refers to multiple ties and interactions linking people or institutions across the borders of nation states' (Vertovec 1999: 447). The findings of our study highlight how the perceptions of the social, political and economic situation in receiving (and sending) countries are influenced by migrants' transnational experiences. The majority of interviewees contrasted their positive or very positive perception of the social and economic situation in the UK with a negative or very negative perception of their COO. In this sense their transnational experience contributed to the positive or very positive view of the UK which impacted strongly on their decisions to stay for a long(er) time in the UK.

PERCEPTIONS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND BARRIERS

For interviewees, the frame of reference when considering barriers and opportunities was knowledge and past experience of life in home countries (or for those who had lived and worked in other countries prior to coming to the UK, the COO and a third country) along with positive comparisons with COO and the opportunities presented by migration. Employment opportunities (even modest opportunities) and pay levels in the UK remained relatively well perceived compared to COO and, coupled with negative views on housing, food and other costs in home countries, presented continued disincentives for returns to COO. Opportunities for personal development – education, career development, language acquisition – and the ability to live independently and feel in control of one's own life were also important 'stay' factors for a number of largely female interviewees. More broadly, the freedom of movement afforded by EU membership was perceived as an opportunity by interviewees.

In both years participants of the survey highlighted a number of employment constraints: non-recognition of skills and qualifications, lack of promotion, lack of career opportunities, discrimination at work and language barriers. Constraints and barriers which did not relate directly to employment included family constraints, barriers regarding health and housing, and constraints relating to the representation of European citizens from the A8/A2 countries in the British media. In particular, personal constraints relating to family in the COO and negative representation of A8/A2 migrants in the British media were linked to a shorter stay. It should be noted that a large number of participants in both years indicated that they did not experience any constraints or barriers (Y1: 39%; Y2: 38%).

GOALS

Throughout the three years participants indicated very high levels of 'goal orientation' which corresponded with their high levels of ambitions and aspirations. There is clear progress noticeable from year one to year three with regard to goal formulation and goal achievement. While interviewees who had arrived recently were (understandably) concerned about immediate issues such as finding employment and accommodation and learning English, in the second year they were already formulating goals which emphasised 'quality of life' (with regard to employment, housing, education, personal and social life). By the third year many interviewees had achieved their goals reflected in the high number of qualification gained by year 3, a fairly large number of marriages and/or child births by year 3, some employment progressions and a small number of property acquisitions. Aiming for and achieving these goals in the UK were often associated with a longer or indefinite stay in the UK.

The surveys showed that the majority saw their careers in the UK (Y1: 61%; Y2: 62%); followed by education in the UK (Y1: 36%; Y2: 34%). A similar number of respondents wanted to set up a business in their home country (Y1: 17%; Y2: 15%) and in the UK (Y1: 13%; Y2: 15%). Less than 10% intended to

further their study in their home country (Y1: 7%; Y2: 8%). As mentioned before, the significant rise of student fees in the UK will affect ambitions regarding higher education in the UK and possibly persuade more A8/A2 citizens to seek opportunities in COO or third countries.

In a study of Polish migrants in London, Eade, Drinkwater and Garapich (2006) constructed a four-fold typology of migrant goals: 'hamsters' (one-off migrants) accounted for 16 per cent of those questioned in their study; 'storks' (circular migrants) accounted for 20 per cent; 'searchers' (open options) 42 per cent; and 'stayers' (self-explanatory) 22 per cent. Using the same typology, we asked interviewees to identify their own broad migration goals. Similar to Eade *et al's* findings, the majority of our interviewees located themselves in either the searcher or stayer categories, but there was also a significant number who situated themselves *between* the searcher and stayer categories. The benefit of a longitudinal study is that we were able to chart how these identifications changed over time. Interviewees were able to recount how their migration goals had changed over the period of the study; for example, for some, shifting from the hamster category, to the searcher category and 'settling' in the stayer category.

NORMATIVE PRINCIPLES: IDENTITY AND DETERMINATION

As noted, the longitudinal study classified different conceptions of identity, characteristics of determination and aspirations under the concept of normative principles.

Whilst public, political and often academic discourses label people who have arrived from the A8 and A2 countries as 'migrant workers', interviewees did not generally identify with this concept (nor necessarily with the concept of East European). Instead, a large number perceived themselves as European citizens (often in combination with their national identity). This finding appears to underpin the normalisation of living and working in another country; considered as unexceptional as working in a major city in the home country for some of our interviewees. The longitudinal aspect of the study showed that identity and belonging were shifting and fluid categories which were affected by changes in participants' personal and wider contexts such as their social networks or the socio-political situation in COO. For example, several interviewees in year 3 emphasised that their well developed social networks in the East of England contributed to a feeling of belonging. As outlined above interviewees from Poland and Hungary were often critical regarding the levels of intolerance and discrimination in their COO and identified more closely with the values of tolerance and diversity experienced in the UK or in the East of England. However, reflections relating to concepts of belonging/not belonging, insider/outsider or citizen/stranger were not necessarily perceived as clear-cut notions associated with geographical dimensions; different aspects of belonging and identity cut across 'places' such as the UK, COO, the East of England or the 'region of origin'.

Both the qualitative and quantitative research findings emphasised a high level of determination and resilience amongst migrants. Although many migrants experienced barriers relating to language, employment, housing and health, they showed a strong determination to cope with barriers and constraints. The survey in year 1 and year 2 highlighted that the majority of participants felt that they were coping well or very well. Interview findings revealed that 'self-help' and 'self-reliance' were important coping strategies. The expectation that the migration process might be difficult and the fact that many interviewees identified themselves as optimists, positive thinkers and active planners explains partly why the experience of barriers did not impact very strongly on LOS. The high level of aspirations and ambitions (with regard to personal life, employment and educational careers) also contributed to their determination to deal with barriers in the UK; illustrated by the fact that a large number of participants had improved their English language skills, their employment positions, their educational qualifications and their housing situation by the end of year 3 of the longitudinal study.

CONCLUSION

As recent studies of A8 migrants have highlighted (e.g. Eade *et al.*; Holman and Schneider 2008; Spencer *et al.* 2007), migrants' decision making processes regarding return or stay are complex and multi-layered. The findings from the longitudinal study of A8/A2 citizens residing in the UK showed that care needs to be taken not to overemphasise the economic factors with regard to decision making processes of new European citizens from the A8 (and A2) countries. Although these new European citizens are often labelled as 'migrant workers', they are individuals who are embedded in complex personal, social, political and economic situations both in their home countries and in the UK; the so-called 'migrant workers' (economic migrants) will not necessarily leave the UK due to an economic recession. Reasons for the lack of a 'mass return migration' are likely to lie in the negative perceptions of social, economic and political factors in COO, and *relatively* positive perceptions of the social, economic and political situation in the UK. Transnationalism, reflected in participants' ongoing comparative evaluations of the economic, political and social situations and experiences in COO and the UK, is therefore crucial for the understanding of decision making processes on length of stay. A perspective which merely focuses on the objective situation in the UK ignores the complex bundle of factors which impact on migrants' perceptions and influence decisions and actions. Participants' goals showed high levels of aspiration and ambition with regard to their personal life, educational qualifications and careers. The three year study indicated that participants were 'goal achievers'. Short-term goals formulated in the first year of the study (such as improving language skills and accommodation) were fulfilled by a large majority of interviewees by year 2 so that they could move on to their medium term goals (including educational qualifications and finding a job which reflected their skills). This does not mean that A8 and A2 citizens in the UK do not experience barriers (besides opportunities). The non-reflection of skills in employment, problems regarding the recognition of qualifications and language barriers (even if participants had a good level of English) continued to be perceived as barriers in year 3. However, the study indicates that, in particular, perceived employment barriers were 'compensated for' through positive perceptions of especially social factors and/or personal factors and did not have a strong influence a LOS. Participants' normative principles such as aspirations, ambitions, high levels of determination and well developed coping strategies also explains why barriers did not affect LOS to a large extent. Overall, the study has shown that short-term economic goals do not necessarily take priority in decision making processes on LOS. Perceptions of the wider social, political and economic situation in the UK and COO (influenced by participants' transnational experience), goals (relating to educational qualifications, careers and personal lives), high levels of aspiration and determination, and a feeling of being European citizens are important aspects to understand the decision making processes of A8/A2 citizens residing in the UK. In the final year of the study the new UK coalition government of Conservatives and Liberals (elected in 2010) announced that university fees will be increased to up to £9000. It will be seen whether this change will have a greater impact on length of stay than the economic recession as many participants compensated their downgrading in employment with educational and training opportunities in the UK.

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POVZETEK

KOMPLEKSNI IN VEČPLASTNI PROCESI SPREJEMANJA ODLOČITEV O DOLŽINI BIVANJA: EVROPSKI DRŽAVLJANI IZ DRŽAV A8 IN A2 V ZDRUŽENEM KRALJESTVU

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Članek se osredotoča na migracijo v Združeno kraljestvo iz držav A8 in A2 po letu 2004 in govori o kompleksni, večplastni in omejeni naravi odločanja migrantov o dolžini bivanja. Trdi, da je maksimizacija ekonomskih koristi le en dejavnik med mnogimi, ki vplivajo na sprejemanje odločitev. Članek sledi pristopu 'omejene racionalnosti' [bounded rationality] (glej Simon 1985) in tehta naslednje tri dimenzije sprejemanja odločitev: dojemanje okolja, cilje in normativna načela.

Za ilustracijo odločanj migrantov o dolžini bivanja so uporabljeni podatki iz longitudinalne študije delavcev migrantov v vzhodni Angliji. Longitudinalna (panelna) študija je uporabila pristop mešanih metod in izvedla polstrukturirane intervjuje z osnovno skupino 30 državljanov držav A8/A2 (živečih v Združenem kraljestvu) v obdobju treh let, dve raziskavi (161 sodelujočih v prvem letu, od katerih jih je 61 odgovorilo v letu 2) in intervjuje z deležniki v vsaki od grofij vzhodne regij v drugem in tretjem letu. Intervjuje in ankete dopolnjujejo analize poljskih blogov.⁶

V celoti je študija pokazala, da kratkoročni ekonomski cilji niso njuno prioriteta v procesih odločanja za dolžino bivanja (LOS). Izsledki so pokazali, da so bili pozitivna percepcija širše družbene situacije v Združenem kraljestvu (na katero vpliva predvsem transnacionalna izkušnja udeležencev), močna usmerjenost k ciljem (v kontekstu zasebnega življenja in izobrazbe) in stroga normativna načela (ki se odražajo v aspiracijah, odločnosti, odpornosti in določeni stopnji prilagodljivosti glede idej o identiteti in pripadanju) pomembni dejavniki pri procesih odločanja o dolžini bivanja.

Četudi so državljani držav A8/A2, ki bivajo v Združenem kraljestvu, pogosto označeni kot ‚delavci migranti‘, so posamezniki, vpeti v kompleksne osebne, družbene, politične in gospodarske situacije tako doma, kakor tudi v Združenem kraljestvu; tako imenovani ‚delavci migranti‘ ne bodo nujno zapustili Združenega kraljestva zaradi gospodarske recesije. Razlogi za odsotnost ‚masovne povratne migracije‘ verjetno leži v negativnih percepcijah družbene, gospodarske in politične situacije v državah izvora (COO) in *relativno* pozitivni percepciji družbene, gospodarske in politične situacije v Združenem kraljestvu. Transnacionalizem, ki se pri sodelujočih odraža v nepretrganem primerjalnem ocenjevanju družbene, gospodarske in politične situacije v COO in v Združenem kraljestvu, je torej ključnega pomena za razumevanje procesa odločanja o trajanju bivanja. Perspektiva, ki se osredotoča zgolj na objektivni položaj v Združenem kraljestvu, ignorira ‚transnacionalno izkušnjo‘, ki vpliva na percepcijo migrantov in vpliva na njihove odločitve in dejanja.

Triletna študija je tudi pokazala, da so sodelujoči ljudje, ki ‚dosegajo cilje‘. Sodelujoči so pokazali visoko stopnjo aspiracij in ambicij v zvezi s svojim zasebnim življenjem, izobrazbenimi kvalifikacijami in kariero. Kratkoročni cilji, oblikovani v prvem letu raziskave (na primer izboljšanje jezikovnega znanja in bivalnih pogojev), so bili pri veliki večini intervjuvanih do drugega leta izpolnjeni, zato so se ti lahko premaknili k svojim srednjeročnim ciljem (vključno z izobrazbo in iskanjem zaposlitve, ki bo ustrezala njihovemu znanju). To ne pomeni, da državljani držav A8 in 2 v Združenem kraljestvu ne naletijo na ovire (poleg priložnosti). Zaposlitev, ki ne odraža dejanskih spretnosti, težave pri priznavanju kvalifikacij in jezikovne ovire (celo pri udeležencih z dobrim znanjem angleščine) so se v tretjem letu še vedno kazale kot ovire. Vendar pa raziskava kaže, da so bile (percipirane) ovire pri zaposlovanju ‚kompenzirane‘ skozi pozitivno percepcijo posebej družbenih dejavnikov in/ali zasebnih dejavnikov in niso močno vplivale na LOS. Normativna načela udeležencev, na primer aspiracije, ambicije, visoka stopnja odločnosti in dobro razvite strategije za spopadanje s težavami prav tako razložijo, zakaj ovire LOS niso močno prizadele. V zadnjem letu raziskave je nova koalicijska vlada konservativcev in liberalcev (izvoljena leta 2010) objavila, da se bodo univerzitetne šolnine povečale na do 9000 funtov. Videli bomo, ali bo imela ta sprememba večji učinek na dolžino bivanja kakor gospodarska recesija, kajti mnogi sodelujoči so kompenzirali nazadovanje v službi s priložnostmi za izobraževanje in usposabljanje v Združenem kraljestvu.

⁶ Podatki iz intervjujev z deležniki in poljski blogi niso del tega članka.