Migration networks and return expectations

The case of Romanians in Spain

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Abstract— In recent years, studies concerning interpersonal relations and their various implications are increasingly being taken as a basis for analysing the migration process, to determine the nature and impacts of migratory networks on immigrants' socio-economic situation in their country of origin and in the host society. The existence or absence of social networks as well as the nature of ties (closed or open) are considered key factors in the success or failure of an immigrant's life project and expectations of returning home. This paper explores the relationship between social capital accrued by migrations networks and expected return. The analysis is based on two types of social capital: bridging and bonding. A sample of Romanian immigrants in the region of Castellon was surveyed on a number of variables. Study results show that immigrants' expectations of return are negatively related to social capital at the place of destination, suggesting that when immigrants build bridging and bonding social capital in the host society their expectations of returning home decrease.

Keywords—migration, bridging social capital, bonding social capital, subjective well-being, prospects for return

I. Introduction

According to the International Organisation for Migrations, an individual's decision to migrate may be motivated by a range of pull and push factors: economic factors, governance and public services, demographic imbalances, conflicts; environmental factors and transnational networks [1, p.33].

In turn, various theories, from a macro or micro perspective, have attempted in-depth exploration of these motives to explain the reasons for migratory movements, each in accordance with its own paradigm. Other theories do not focus on the causes but help to explain through accumulated social capital provided by migratory chains, how migratory movements are maintained and perpetuated in time [2]. This work is located in this line of study.

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There is empirical evidence to show that social capital helps to explain concepts like perceived well-being and migrants expectations of return. According to the International Organization for Migrations [1], there is a relationship between subjective well-being and migrations. Previous studies suggest that social capital, represented by contacts and social activities, is a good indicator for predicting satisfaction and quality of life for immigrants [3], [1]. Similarly, the social capital in family networks helps to explain immigrants' decisions to return to their countries, through the experience of accumulated during the return ([4, p.110], or to stay in the host country, if there has been family regrouping [5, p.294].

Given the importance of migration networks, the purpose of this study is to analyse more deeply the role of migration networks in the success or failure of an immigrant's life project. Our research question can be defined basically as follows: How do bridging and bonding social capital affect immigrants' return expectations? The added value of our work thus lies in the classification of social bridging and bonding capital in migratory networks, which can be used to verify the differentiated behaviour in each network and thus help to immprove social programme and policy design.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the following section provides a short theoretical background of the main concepts and the hypotheses formulated. Section 3 presents the methodology, data used and the empirical approach. Section 4 provides our main results. Section 5 presents the conclusions.

II. Research Background and Hypotheses

A. Social Capital

Research on social capital has progressed rapidly in recent decades, with the results reflecting a wide variety of interdisciplinary contributions. Despite the abundant literature on the subject, the definition of the concept of social capital is vague, mainly due to its intangible nature and the multiple dimensions involved. Social capital is not a homogeneous concept, in fact quite the opposite. A brief review of the literature on the subject highlights the wide variety of proposed definitions and dimensions such as social networks, formal and informal social structures, trust, cooperation or social norms, among others [6] [7], [8], [9], [10], [11], [12], [13], [14]. Social capital has to do with values such as trust and cooperation and how they promote efficient social and economic development through networks. In short, the premise behind the notion of social capital is "investment in social relationships with expected benefits" [11, p.6].

The definition problems related to the concept are some authors' main criticisms, because they represent the two most significant limitations of the social capital approach as a tool for analysing the dynamics of social and economic development: 1) the impossibility of capturing it concretely (a study of each and every dimension would be too impossibly complex to tackle) and 2) the difficulties of measurement. Although the definitions contain a series of common elements that can be considered as "dimensions" of the concept (trust, networks, social rules), it is impossible to find a way of measuring them all at the same time.

B. *Emigration, Return Migration and Migration Networks*

The most important questions pertaining to migration research in general is why migration occurs and how it is sustained over time; that is, why people go or stay [15, p.77] [16, p.585]. Migration affects and is affected in many ways by life in society, which has lead to a range of approaches from different disciplines, originating many explanatory theories according to the scientific area (sociology, economics, geography or a multidisciplinary approach). All the explanatory theories have emerged over time in response to the paradigms that were current when they were produced. In general terms they could be classified into three main groups, depending on the perspective [2]:

- Theories with a macroanalytical approach. Including inequilibrium models, world system theory, dual or segmented labour market theory and the protoindustrialisation model among others. They contemplate migration as the result of the interaction and confluence of international market forces.
- Theories with a microanalytical approach, like neoclassical economic theory and the new economics of labour migrations which consider that decisions to migrate are taken exclusively at individual level.
- Meso-level theories, combine individual emigration decision models with the influence of migration networks which become chain migrations and also follow the social capital premise. Migration Networks Theory is also in this line of theories.

Each of these theories attempts to explain the various complex motives that lead a person to consider emigrating. When the decision has been taken, in the final instance by the individual or by the entire family unit, there is an underlying process of choosing the best option based on the expected cost-benefit binomial on the lines noted by Sjaastad, Todaro, and Leeds (as cited by [2]). This factor is undoubtedly not the only one to be taken into account otherwise we would fall into the mistake of reducing migratory movements to a purely rational action. As pointed out [16, p.586], this approach is closely linked to rational choice theory, which is strongly influenced by the economic approach on the one hand and by behavioural decision theory in social psychology on the other.

According to rational choice theory, migrants have to weigh the expected benefits and associated costs and risks of a particular choice. Expected benefits may be aspects such as health, status, comfort, autonomy, affiliation and morality [17,

p.50]. Migration takes place when a comparison of the outcomes of either staying at the place of origin or at the place of destination reveals the latter alternative to be more attractive [16, p.587]. In the evaluation of the risks, costs and benefits found using this decision model the role of chain migrations is crucial as channels that transmit information and support. This nuance is characteristic in theories that include the notion of migrants' interdependence with family and environment, generating migration structures like those noted by Stark, who pioneered the theory of the"new economics of labour migrations" and Boyd and Massey, who elaborated migration network theory [2].

Migration network theory was initially formulated by [18] and [19] and explains part of the migratory phenomenon on the basis of social networks. [18, p.448] define migration networks as "interpersonal ties that link migrants, former migrants and non-migrants in origin and destination area through the bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin". These networks provide potential migrants with more information, enabling them to reduce the risks and costs associated with migration, while also increasing expected net benefits. Thus these networks enable a series of resources or expected benefits that would otherwise be inaccessible (for example, access to housing or employment). Thus they operate like social capital as defined above [11, p.6] and migrants promote these networks by opening opportunities for network members to access new resources.

The relationship between migration and social capital can be seen throughout the migration process, from the moment when people decide to emigrate until they reach their new destination and even when immigrants decide to return. In the successive stages of the process, migrants make use of their social networks, family resources, neighbours and friends' knowledge and the unstable or consolidated social structures created by previous migrants. These chains allow migrants to cross supranational territories and provide them with resources [20], [1, p.14], [21], many of them inaccessible through official channels [22], making it more likely that settlement in the host society will take place.

In this regard, although this theory does not explain the causes of emigration in the line of theories with a macro or micro approach, it does help to illustrate how the accumulation of social capital through chain migrations can help to perpetuate migration. In the same way as the stock of social capital explains the call effect from the host country and the accumulated exit of migrants to the same destination [23], it can also help to explain the decision to return. Thus, as Durand [4, p.110] points out, the greater the accumulated experience of return in the family, the community and home country, the greater the personal motivation to return. As [5, p.294] suggest, if there has been family regrouping in the host country, return decisions come to a halt or are postponed. It can also be said that return migration is driven by the same mechanisms as emigration decisions [24]. Thus immigrants with greater social capital in the home country have more expectations of returning to their country than migrants with greater social capital in the destination area. Therefore, we posit:

Hypothesis 1. "Expectations of returning to Romania among Romanian imigrants in Castellon are directly related to the accumulated stock of social capital in the home country".

There are different forms of social capital. In his book Bowling Alone, [25] speaks of two ways of looking at social capital, which he terms as bonding vs. bridging in social capital. Bonding social capital is based on affective and compact ties, constructed by bonds between family, close friends and neighbours; bridging social capital establishes connections between dissimilar groups, composed of more heterogeneous collectives where relationships are more formal.

The distinction between strong ties (bonding social capital) and weak links or bridges (bridging social capital) is important because from the economic point of view their effects are different according to whether economic development or personal well-being/life satisfaction is being explained. The differentiation between the two types of links, formalised a priori in most cases, has been developed mainly in the economics literature to explain economic growth more satisfactorily.

When analysing development in economic terms, bridging social capital takes on a major role and, as most studies on the subject point out, can have a positive impact on economic growth at a macro level [26], [27] In contrast, the relationship between bonding social capital and growth appears to be the opposite [27], [28], [29]. Similarly, when focusing on the effects of individual social capital, empirical evidence has also demonstrated that bridging capital is more effective than bonding capital in helping people advance economically [30] and that bridging social capital is also linked to increases in participants' economic well-being [31]. Nevertheless, the findings in the studies that relate social capital to subjective well being suggest that bonding social capital has greater explanatory power for life satisfaction and individual well-being than bridging social capital [27]. An important idea emerges from the above comments, both types of networks, those which create bonds and those which build bridges, are important and complementary in the dynamics of social and economic development.

If we focus on the relationship between migration networks and immigrant integration in the host society, both types of social capital appear to be significant. A study by [32] on women immigrants in the USA reported a negative relationship between bonding social capital and the social promotion of women, because the circles of family and friends were in a similar disadvantaged situation and consequently opportunities for beneficial interaction able to favour social mobility were scarce. In contrast, heterogeneous networks (bridging) function more effectively to generate social promotion opportunities when they act with women. However, the results in [33], suggest that both bridging and bonding social capital are necessary for immigrants to integrate in the host society. Thus, although the role of bridging and bonding is not as clear when evaluating perceptions as when quantifiable aspects such as growth or economic well-being are being evaluated [31], we posit:

Hypothesis 2. "Expectations of returning to Romania among Romanian immigrants in Castellon are inversely related to the accumulated stock of bridging social capital in the destination country".

A beneficial consolidated migration network in the host country determines the degree to which immmigrants settle there, just as social isolation becomes an extreme negative value. Thus social capital becomes a pre-requisite for enabling immigrants to feel socially and emotionally integrated. Therefore:

Hipótesis 3: "Expectations of returning to Romania among Romanian immigrants in Castellon are inversely related to the accumulated stock of bonding social capital in the destination country".

III. **Data and Methodology**

The analysis is based on the collective of Romanian immigrants in the province of Castellon (Spain), for several reasons. Firstly, because Spain, and in particular Castellon due to its important ceramic tile industry cluster, tourism industry and the ageing profile of its population became an important receiver of Romanian immigration, especially by the year 2000 [34]. Social networks have also played an important role, given that according to [35, p.29] three quarters of Romanian immigrants in Castellon had at least one family member already in the province. Romanian migration to Castellon also has a religious aspect: the Adventist community was a determining factor in the initial stages of the immigration, because it acted as an important network providing immigrants with minimum conditions for survival and a guaranteed welcome into a society where the migrants did not usually even speak the language [36]. Language has also acted as a shared link between host and origin countries because Romanian, like Spanish and Catalan, is a Latin, romance or neo-Latin language from the same IndoEuropean branch and the languages are closely and historically related.

The empirical analysis used to meet the study objectives and test the hypotheses is based on a questionnaire administered to the Romanian community in the province of Castellon for the purposes of a prior study [34]. Said study took a representative, stratified sample of 418 Romanian nationals distributed in five areas of the province: Castelló de la Plana, Vila-real, Borriana, Morella and Vinaròs, all towns with large numbers of Romanian immigrants. The data were collected with the Community Social Support questionnaire AC-91 [34] suitably adapted to the context and study population. This questionnaire collects employment, economic and social variables and places particular emphasis on immigrant support networks, which it evaluates through five areas of social support and it also reflects the social capital characteristics of the Romanian collective: community integration and satisfaction, association and participation in the community, contribution to the community, institutional and community resources and finally, intimate and trusting relationships.

Logistic regression was used to obtain a model to forecast how the attitudes and characteristics of Romanian immigrants

in Castellon influence their expectations of returning to their country. The variables used in this analysis have been put into several groups, and have already been tested in previous studies and may influence return expectations. This present study considers the existence of a dichotomous dependent variable (expectations of return to Romania). The independent variables have been classified into control variables, (age, gender, marital status, education and employment) and into a series of explanatory variables that reflect immigrants' relations in the country of origin and the destination society, these latter reflecting assimilation or adaptation to society in Castellon. They are social capital variables on three levels: bonding, bridging and general, as defined below:

- Bonding Social Capital:

- BO_HS (Bonding social capital in the host society): to find work in Castellon, the individual turns to family and/or friends.

- BO_HC (Bonding social capital in the home-country): the immigrant's parents and/or children are in the home country. It has been detected that immmigrants whose children are in Romanian also have parents there, although the opposite is not always the case.

- Bridging Social Capital:

- BR_HS (Bridging social capital in the host society): to look for work, the individual turns to at least one association, (cultural, NGO, church, mosque or parish, employment centres or other resources).

- BR_HA_AS: The individual belongs to one or more associations, which does not really guarantee the existence of social capital: the fact of being officially a member of an association does not necessarily mean that social connections are made with other people in that association.

- General Social Capital:

- GSC_HS_COL (General social capital in the host society): The individual collaborates with at least one association and lives with more than 3 people in Castellon.

- GSC_HS_AS (General social capital in the host society): The individual belongs to at least one association and lives with a family member in Castellon as well other individuals who are not family.

All the explanatory variables are considered qualitative except for age which is continuous, but for greater congruence in the analyses it was transformed to dichotomous, calculating two differentiated age groups through the median. To facilitate the analysis, both the continuous variable (age) and the qualitative multiple response variables (categorical) including ordinals like education have been redefined as dichotomous.

IV. Results

The first result comes from the descriptive study of the data which provided the socio-economic characteristics of Romanian immigrants in the province of Castellon, summarised in the figure below (Fig. 1):
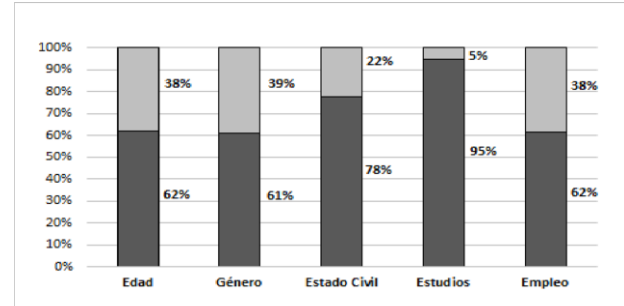

Figure 1. Profile of Romanian Immigrants with return expectations

Thus Romanian immigrants in the province of Castellon are around 32 years old, male, married or with a stable partner, educated at a level equivalent to secondary education or professional training and most of them are employed.

In order to study and measure (ODDS Ratio) the association between return expectations and the independent variables, a bivariant analysis was run using contingency tables (Table I). This analysis helps to confirm the suitability of each independent variable for inclusion in the final model. Note, however, that in this case if a result was not significant the variable was still included in the model following the recommendations in the literature [24], [37], [38].

TABLE I. CONTINGENCY TABLES

Independent variable	Chisquare	p value	ODDS Ratio	ODDSIC₉₅% Inf	Sup
Age	0.61	0.434	1.194	0.765	1.864
Gender	6.900	0.009	1.830	1.162	2.880
Marital status	10.210	0.001	2.008	1.228	3.246
Primary education	1.900	0.168	2.110	0.714	6.235
Secondary education	1.022	0.312	0.727	0.391	1.351
Employment	7.532	0.006	0.511	0.315	0.820
BO_HS	3.720	0.054	0.629	0.392	1.009
BO_HC	0.014	0.904	0.952	0.429	2.112
BR_HS	5.074	0.024	0.561	0.337	0.931
BR_HS_AS	3.579	0.059	0.497	0.238	1.033
GSC_HS_COL	4.589	0.032	0.512	0.275	0.952
GSC_HS_AS	0.062	0.819	0.911	0.409	2.023

The data in the above table indicate an association between the return expectations of Romanian immigrants in the province of Castellon and the variables gender, marital status, employment, BO_HS, BR_HS and GSC_HS_COL. The variable considered to have no effect on the dependent variable is BO_HC, which presents Odds Ratio values close to the unit.

In the multivariant analysis four different logistic regression models were tested to study the impact on return expectations of the variables that reflect immigrants' social networks in the origin and destination countries as indicated in the hypotheses (Table II). The first model included only basic sociodemographic variables; bonding social capital variables were added in the second model; bridging social capital was added in the third model and the fourth or full model included the variables that refer to all Romanian immigrants' relationships with their environment, that is, social capital from the general perspective.

The results in Tables I and II have been used to determine the extent to which the hypotheses formulated in this study are confirmed.

TABLE II.   LOGISTICS MODELS

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio	β	Odds Ratio
Age	-0.063	0.939	0.049	1.051	0,089	1.093	0.073	1.076
Gender	0.603*	1.827	0.683*	1.979	0.752*	2.122	0.738*	2.092
Marital status	0.897*	2.452	0.844*	2.327	0,798*	2.221	0.829*	2.292
Primary education	0.560	1.751	0.718	2.050	0,648	1.911	0.702	2.018
Secondary education	-0.258	0.772	-0.269	0.764	-0,316	0.729	-0,267	0.766
Employment	-0.748*	0.473	-0.700*	0.496	-0,428	0.652	-0,441	0.643
BO_HS			-0.388	0.679	-0,829*	0.436	-0.811*	0.444
BO_HC			0.121	1.128	0,129	1.137	0.134	1.144
BR_HS					-0,850*	0.427	-0,822*	0.440
BR_HS_AS					-0,691	0.501	-0.594	0.552
GSC_HS_COL							-0.462	0.630
GSC_HS_AS							-0.022	0.979
Constant	0.921	6.759	1.108	3.027	1.493	4.449	1.488	4.428
Correct %	76.2		76.5		76,8		75,1	
-2 Log Likelihood	417.309		383.781		372,034		370,531	
N	390		370		370		370	

*p<0.05

The results from the logistic regression estimations are shown in the models in the above tables. Models 2, 3 and 4 show that the variable representing immigrants' social capital in their country of origin ("BO_HC") keeps the positive sign attributed in the literature (and an Odds Ratio higher than the unit), thereby indicating a direct relationship between having children and parents in Romania and the likelihood of having return expectations. The variable, however, was not significant, indicating that maintaining direct family connections in the country of origin does not guarantee increased return expectations. Therefore *H1* is rejected.

Models 3 and 4 in the table contain the variables reflecting the level of bridging social capital ("BR_HS" and "BR_HS_AS"). It can be seen that both variables have the expected sign, that is, there is an inverse relationship with the dependent variable: maintaining social networks with weak links in Castellon reduces the likelihood of having return expectations. However, hypothesis *H2* is partially confirmed because only one of the two variables collecting information on bridging social capital in the destination country is significant: the variable corresponding to Romanian immigrants' formal networks in Castellon that help them to find a job.

The variables that reflect strong ties in the destination country proposed in hypothesis *H3* are in models 2, 3 and 4 which all include the variable "BO_HS", representing immigrants' strong informal ties with their direct family and closest friends in Castellon, which enable them to find a job in the province through those people. The sign for the coefficient of this variable indicates an inverse relationship between bonding social capital at destination and the likelihood of having return expectations. Hypothesis *H3* is fulfilled for models 3 and 4 (but not for 2), that is, for the models that include other types of social capital, other types of ties that keep immigrants in Castellon, because in both models the variable reflecting strong ties in the destination country is significant.

For the block of socioeconomic indicators, the data in Model 4 or the Full Model indicate that half the remaining variables were not good predictors of return expectations. Gender and marital status were significant at the 95% level in all the models, which means that their impact is a significant determinant of the decision to return or not to the country of origin, in contrast with the remaining socioeconomic indicators. That is regardless of age, education and employment, Romanian immigrants may have expectations of returning to their country or not. Furthermore, the variables representing general social capital were not significant either.

It is also advisable to verify whether the Odds Ratios obtained using the contingency tables are similar to those obtained with the logistic regression analyses. The Odds Ratio values are adjusted for each variable and represent an estimation of its strength of association with the dependent variable, when we control for all the other variables in the model. Most of the variables in the model are statistically significant (p<0.05) (see Table 2) in relation to the dependent variable "have return expectations", except variable GSC_HS_COL, which goes from p=0.032 to p=0.630. Furthermore, it can be seen that the Odds Ratio values calculated here are similar to those in the contingency tables (Table 1) with small variations. The variables with slightly higher Odds Ratios are Gender, Marital Status, Primary Education, Employment, BO_HS, BO_HC, BR_HS, GSC_HS_COL and GSC_HS_AS. The Odd Ratios for the variables Age, Secondary Education and BR_HS_AS are slightly lower.

Finally, the general fit of the model was evaluated through different statistics. The classification table provides a comparison of the forecast values with those actually observed to give the exact proportion of individuals that the model classifies correctly. In general, the models provide a good fit of over 75%. Deviance was also calculated with satisfactory results as fit improves as fuller models are estimated.

v. **Conclusions**

Various studies on the determinants of immigrants' expectations of returning to their countries of origin suggest that a wide variety of sociodemographic and contextual factors influence that process. The findings presented here, although they sometimes coincide and sometimes disagree with the findings of other studies, show that family and communal

responsibilities and ties are statistically relevant and have a significant impact on the expectations of returning (or not) to the country of origin. These findings suggest the following conclusions.

Firstly, the results appear to support the general view of the subject in the literature in the sense that return expectations are a natural consequence of social networks with strong ties in the country of origin and so there is a direct and positive relationship. Furthermore, these expectations have an inverse relationship with bonding and bridging social capital in the destination country. In fact, as can be seen from the previous tables, the positive coefficient of the variable that represents bonding social capital at origin remains after controlling for other indicators of assimilation and variables related to Romanian immigrants' ties. Furthermore the variables that represent both strong and weak ties in the destination country have a negative sign that continues in the different models as additional variables are added.

Secondly, although the study results are congruent with the literature on the subject, acceptance of all the hypotheses is not so clear due to the absence of statistical significance in some of the variables in the models. More detailed analysis may lead to more concrete conclusions on the impact of those variables. Similarly, because this study has been conducted on a specific population group and geographical context, the findings cannot be generalised without further comparisons with other population groups and other databases to provide more information on return expectations and the determinants. In this regard, some authors state that in the study of migration characteristics, one of the main limitations is that the data are not longitudinal. With the characteristics of the data in this study it is impossible to monitor the dependent variable over time and the changes that occur in individuals' situations and in immigrants' assimilation patterns in the destination society. Therefore, we can conclude that some aspects of Romanian immigrants initially appeared important for the study of return expectations, but finally they were not statistically significant when their impact was controlled by other variables in the logistic regression analysis.

Acknowledgement

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