

Postwar Migration in Southern Europe, 1950-2000.
An Economic Analysis

Edited by Alessandra Venturini
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reviewed by Theodore P. Lianos*

International migration is an extremely complicated issue of the modern world. Differences in growth rates in the international economy, differences in the absolute level of standards of living, recent developments in technology and the political changes that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the communist regimes have led to huge migration flows, legal and illegal, towards Europe. One development which was rather unexpected was the flows of international migration to countries which until very recently were labor exporting countries. These are the countries of southern Europe, i.e. Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain, which, within a period of approximately twenty-five years, have experienced a complete reversal of migration flows.

Alessandra Venturini's book presents an economic analysis of these flows during the period 1950 – 2000. The book is organized in five extensive chapters. The first chapter (Introduction) presents migration from and to the four southern countries and the stock of foreign population and foreign workers by country of origin in the main receiving countries i.e. France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland and Belgium. It also presents differences and similarities between emigration and immigration in the four southern countries.

Chapter 2 is devoted to an analysis of the choice to migrate and presents a number of models that theorize the migration decision. Among the economic models which Venturini presents briefly, there are the human capital model, the expected income model, the “new economics of labor migration” model, the relative deprivation hypothesis and also a non-maximization migration model. She also presents the gravitational migration model which has become fashionable recently, and the migratory chain model as an example of the sociological approach to migration. Chapter 2 also provides some statistical tests of the three basic models, namely the economic, the gravitational and the sociological model and some observations on these results.

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Chapter 3 examines the effects of immigration on the receiving country. It contains a theoretical discussion of the effects of immigration on the level of wages, on the growth of the economy, on social expenditure and on the native population and on pension funds. This analysis is followed by an extensive review of the literature, which is not limited to the four southern European countries.

Chapter 4 discusses the effects of emigration on the country of origin and focuses on two basic areas, namely on population and the labor market, and on remittances. Most of this chapter is on remittances as this subject has become an area of intensive research. Venturini presents and discusses many of the studies on remittances and their effects on the sending countries.

Chapter 5 is devoted to a description and analysis of migration policies and their effectiveness. It discusses issues such as open versus restrictive policies, family reunification and its implications for the economy, asylum applications (which in fact are an indirect way of entering the country), the regularization procedures that have been followed by the southern European countries, citizenship and naturalization and integration policies.

The book contains an extensive list of references with more than 550 items.

It is evident, I believe, from the above description of the contents of the book that Venturini has given an excellent and balanced presentation of the issues of migration as they apply to the four southern European countries. The book includes analysis, statistical data, estimation, and historical incidents of importance to the subject. Venturini also offers views and opinions that this reviewer shares. It is worth reproducing here the last two paragraphs of the book, concerning migration policies in the southern European countries:

“The southern European countries must send a clear and unequivocal message to the countries of departure that it is not possible to legalize irregular entry and that only regular entry is conceivable. This can be achieved only with the collaboration of the countries of departure. They must sign bilateral agreements that establish joint arrangements that make it easier for immigrants to gain legal entry, thereby discouraging illegal entry.

The receiving countries can defend themselves against uncontrolled immigration, but the measures they can adopt vary in effectiveness depending on the economic and social situation, and when such measures are most needed, their effectiveness is much weaker. Therefore, there should be some form of permanent collaboration among the parties involved so that a common project of development and growth can be devised.”

Academics and researchers working in the field of migration will find Venturini's book extremely useful.