

Migration plans of the international PhD students

DANA RAKOVCOVÁ

Charles University, Faculty of Sciences, Department of Social Geography and Regional Development, Prague, Czechia; e-mail: dana.rakovcova@gmail.com

ABSTRACT Within the concept of transnationalism and global development, migration decisions of international students play a vital role. This article draws on 21 in-depth interviews with PhD students coming from 16 different countries across the world, who are studying at the Wageningen University in the Netherlands. The study explores the diverse factors influencing migration decisions and potential intentions of return. The results suggest that there is a specific influence of the life-cycle phase and the family considerations on the predictability and direction of respondents' future migration steps. Migration decisions of the interviewed PhD students with children tend to be strongly driven by responsibility towards their families and institutions, while a permanent return is very likely. The single and childless PhD students expressed individual freedom and professional opportunities as essential driving forces in their temporal migration decisions with their future migration destination being less predictable.

KEY WORDS return migration – student mobility – family considerations – life-cycle phase

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1. Introduction

Considering the debate on brain drain and brain circulation in context of global development, studying migration paths of internationally mobile highly educated people coming from the developing countries is one of the essential topics for current and future interdisciplinary studies including geography. Mechanisms of potential return migration play an important role in the development of the sending countries, especially if the return occurs after a certain time being spent studying and gaining experience. A broader understanding of the complexity of these trends is needed. This paper makes a contribution to this debate by qualitative approach and by analysing the phenomenon through the lenses of mobile students themselves. Interpretations of globally mobile students reveal diverse factors influencing their decision making about potential return migration to their countries of origin.

Majority of studies concerning international student mobility has been carried out from the point of view of state or educational institutions using specific terms and language of power and control. Research focusing on individual students themselves was predominantly using large surveys and statistical sources. Most of this work has put international students in pre-given seemingly clear categories. Approach of this study is trying to problematize the whole phenomenon and show the plurality and heterogeneity of the studied field instead. Both the method and the topic are chosen carefully to reflect the aim of discovering the existing diversity. In-depth interviews with individual students help to dig deeper below the shallow classification of either visiting student or permanent migrant and contribute to blur the strict border between mobility and migration. The questions of temporality of migration decisions and potential return to home follow the debate of fluid space and brain circulation. Experience of student mobility is seen through the eyes of migrants themselves as they reveal their own concerns, use their own words and stress what are the relevant influencing factors to them. Specific case of international PhD students represents the growing group of highly educated mobile people, who form a specific type of highly skilled migrants. Their activities embody a bridge between the student mobility, academic mobility and career mobility. These categories are often being studied separately, however, this study suggests that they should be understood as an interconnected continuum and stresses an important link between them.

2. History and development of student mobility

Student mobility is not a recent phenomenon. Students have been mobile all along the history of universities. Guruz (2009) describes how the international

mobility of students, but also scholars, programs and the whole institutions of higher education has evolved over time. For example, in some periods of medieval Europe the share of foreign students was about 10 percent across the continent. The share of foreign students enrolled in higher education worldwide today is much lower – about 2 percent. However, if we compare the estimates of absolute terms, huge number of 2,5 million international students worldwide is of much greater impact than few hundreds foreign students in medieval Europe. At that time, students moved for education abroad simply because there were no suitable institutions at their home regions. But today we can witness over seventeen thousand institutions of higher education across 184 countries and territories of the world providing access to education to masses. This expansion makes the relatively smaller share of foreign students nowadays much more significant than ever before (Guruz 2009). This expansion was influenced by many political, institutional, demographical, cultural and other factors of modernization of global society. The advanced technologies of distant communication and improved transport possibilities made the international education accessible for broader audience including students from the developing countries gaining higher education in Europe, who build the specific focus of this study.

3. Concepts

3.1. *Global competition in higher education market*

Global competition for the best minds and brains could be observed nowadays. Institutions of higher education and countries are trying to attract and keep international students as they bring profit in terms of student fees, life expenses, knowledge and cultural exchange. International universities strive to reach high quality of research and teaching to become world-class and to utilize the prestige of high ranking. The world of higher education is being transformed through international competition for the best minds. Growing numbers of international university students worldwide reflects the internationalisation of higher education (Altbach, Knight 2007). Besides the traditional world-renown institutions like Harvard or Oxford, newly created or expanding universities in China, India and Saudi Arabia are also becoming important players in global competition for students. Satellite campuses of Western universities are being established in Abu Dhabi, Singapore or South Africa. The rise of worldwide academic competition could be seen as a threat by some university and government officials as they try to limit both student mobility and the cross-border university expansion. However, Wildavsky shows his strong opinion that the spread of knowledge is educationally and economically beneficial for everyone (Wildavsky 2010).

Polemic about the international fight for the talented people is also offered by Abella (2006).

3.2. *Transnationalism and identity*

The concept of transnationalism has been prominent in social sciences since the 1990s. Transnationalism is being described as the various ties that migrants seem to maintain to more than one country simultaneously (Basch, Schiller, Blanc 2003). The ties are of different types including political, social, economic or emotional. Topic of transnationalism emerged mainly out of the debate on the effects of globalization and it reflected the dominant view of nation-state losing its sovereignty position (Collins 2008). The older conception of migration as a permanent and discrete move from one country to another has been challenged by the behaviour of modern migrants themselves (Vertovec 1999).

In the case of modern hyper-mobile super-migrants, citizenship facilitates travel (with a business or professional purpose in particular). In the new understanding, citizenship became something to be collected by passport holders. Citizenship seems to lose some of the original affective aspects – the feelings of belonging, pride and responsibility. In the anthropology and sociology debates, transnationalism has been associated with the notions of de-territorialised and cosmopolitan forms of identity in 1990s (Hannerz 1996). Trends of cosmopolitanism are related to redefining borders and both external and internal boundaries (Kearney 2006) or questions of personhood and collectivism (Rouse 1995). Ong (1999) provided a theoretical framework for understanding of wealthy and powerful migrants in turbulence of global trade in his book *Flexible Citizenship*. Ideas that integrate both transnationalism and student mobilities has appeared in the academic literature only recently in the 2000s (Baláž, Williams 2004). It deals with numerous diverse themes, including students' cosmopolitan identities, the transnational accumulation of (human, social and cultural) capital and transnational consumption practices.

Student mobility should not be seen as a singular move between two countries, but rather as a complex phenomenon in broad context of transnational networks and diverse connections between students' home and host societies. These linkages from the time of international studies often persist after graduation and influence further lives of students. In the era of dominance of transnationalism debates, movement should be understood as continuous process and potential return to the country of origin should not be taken as complete action. As several studies about return migration show, migration plans and strategies are changing over time. These changes are influenced mainly by different stages of life-cycle when priorities concerning career, children education and quality of life

in retirement are naturally shifting over time (Ley, Kobayashi 2005; Kobayashi, Preston 2007). Life-course perspective seems to be very useful since it considers the whole family as unite of migration and could reveal deeper context of plurality in motivations to migration. Mobile students are not separated and isolated entities; they are often part of transnational families. Student mobility sometimes leads to international relocation of entire families, which was demonstrated by studies on East Asian student mobilities and transnational family strategies of Hong Kong and Chinese diasporas (Kobayashi, Preston 2007; Ley 2010). In contrast to prevalent view, these findings suggest that all international students are not entirely independent and footloose. However, cases of family members following the international students are just as common as splitting of families for educational purposes. Members of one family living life transnationally in several countries were studied especially in the case of Asian migrants (Ho 2002). Other studies reveal the role of children in process of family migration (Orellana et al. 2001) or experiences of lone mothers and flexible families (Waters 2002). Transnational life of international students and their migration intentions and decisions as an ongoing process were described by Hazen and Alberts (2006). Specific importance of relationship considerations in such a process was analysed for the case of (post)graduate students (Geddie 2013). This study stressed the importance of care for children and parents among other factors in shaping migration strategies in transitional life-stage.

3.3. Brain circulation and development

One of the key interests of exploring student mobilities is the attempt to better understand global flows of knowledge and human capital which is embodied in movements of highly educated people across borders. The so called 'brain circulation' debate problematize simplistic view of brain drain or brain gain effecting separately the sending and the hosting country. Brain circulation discourse is strongly related to the changing paradigm of migration and development. Migration of highly qualified persons does not necessarily need to be seen exclusively negatively as brain drain, but rather as brain circulation or 'brain exchange'. According to this new approach, student mobility could also bring some positive effects to the sending country, as Castles, de Haas and Miller (2014) described. Movement of ideas, knowledge and capital is facilitated by modern communication technology revolution. By use of computers, mobile phones and internet, mobility in certain meaning (transfer of ideas, knowledge, money or emotions through family calls) could be realized distantly without the need to physically travel. Certain panic of exodus of highly educated people followed by necessary loose of human capital is quite often being raised through media especially in context of

the developing countries. Opposed to the waves of fear of losing the best brains, another trend appears which sees international student mobility as relatively positive phenomenon and points out the possible benefits of research cooperation, investment and knowledge exchange. The international students could be seen as export product or so called 'transnational exchangers' (Faist 2000). Student mobility and migration could also prevent unemployment in the country of origin and decrease the waste of brains through unqualified work outside the field of their studies (Hensen, de Vries, Cörvers 2009).

After finishing the university degree abroad, international students face the decision whether to return to the country of origin or to continue education or career abroad. This phase could be seen as crucial in the development and brain circulation nexus. One of the specific new categories of highly skilled or highly educated returnees was described by Anna Lee Saxenian (2007) as the 'new argonauts'. She shows new type of entrepreneur on example of international migrants, who gain knowledge in Silicon Valley system. These migrants build international networks and create bridge to transfer technology development to their home region. This form of return is not an absolute form of return as they sometimes continue living both in Silicon Valley and at home. This complex understanding inspires this research to avoid simplification and to see diverse forms of return more critically. Universities located in so-called developed countries of western civilization are not exclusively the only hosting institutions. Students from both developed and developing countries are moving for education across borders globally. In that sense, mutual exchange of students is taking place at different levels. The scale of such an exchange might vary as the numbers of mobile students in sending and receiving countries, their opportunities, conditions and motivations are different. However, global flows of talents are multi-directional and thus create seeds of brain circulation to a certain extend (Solimano 2008).

4. Objectives, aims and research questions

This paper focuses on specific group of international PhD students within western context. It examines their personal migration plans at the crossroads of their migration trajectories in context of their perspectives on potential return migration considering diverse influencing factors and life-cycle stage specifically. Focus on developing countries further reflects the key role of development nexus within the brain circulation debate. This study aims to cover the global scale of the phenomenon by introducing students from diverse countries across Asia, Africa and America. To investigate the transnational issue of PhD student mobility in its global scale, the Wageningen University in the Netherlands (hereinafter WU) was chosen as a site for this study. WU is an institution with deep international

roots and a specific study environment. It hosts growing numbers of international students from a wide range of national backgrounds. Quarter of all students at the university is international which offers unique form of cultural diversity and exchange¹. WU runs frequent activities and research projects in numerous developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America. English is the official academic language at WU and consequently the language barrier seems to be less evident. Generally welcoming and tolerant socio-cultural environment of the Dutch society and prevalent open attitude within the academic environment facilitates easier cultural adaptation of foreigners. Attractiveness of this science-research institution is further increased by its international prestige especially in the fields of nature sciences.

Generally, Netherlands seems to become a competitive alternative to the globally favourite student destinations such as UK or USA. Although the domination of these traditional student hegemonies can hardly be challenged in absolute numbers in any close time, as US hosted 19% and UK 10% of globally mobile tertiary-level students in 2013 (UNESCO 2013), global student shares are slowly shifting. Previously mentioned instruction in English, relatively cheaper student fees and availability of scholarships makes the Netherlands popular target of international students². There is an important factor influencing flows of students to the Netherlands – Nuffic is a Dutch organization for internationalization in higher education, which offers wide range of scholarships and supports especially strategically important locations mostly of developing countries³. Furthermore, unique Status of PhD students in the Netherlands is economically privileged, as

¹ The percentage of non-Dutch Bachelor students at WU comprised 6% of the total number of Bachelor students in 2011. Approximately 80% of these students were German. Of the total number of Master students, approximately 44% were of non-Dutch nationality (1,454 students) in 2011, which is above Dutch average of 11%. The main countries of origin for international Master's students at WU were China (257), Germany (114), Ethiopia (90) and Indonesia (87); Annual Report Wageningen UR (2011).

² According to the UNESCO data, The Netherlands' share of the global international student market, measured as a percentage of all international students worldwide studying in the Netherlands, increased from 0.7% to 1.2% between 2000 and 2009. Apparently, numbers of international students in the Netherlands are consistently growing – 56,131 in 2011–2012, and the percentage of international students as part of the total student population in the Dutch research-oriented higher education rose from 7.7% to 11.2% between 2007 and 2012 (NUFFIC 2012).

³ Nuffic's network of Nuffic Netherlands Education Support Offices (Nuffic Nesos) operates in so called Neso countries: Brazil, China, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Russia, South Korea, Taipei (Taiwan), Thailand and Vietnam. In line with the growing numbers of international students from all Neso countries worldwide, the number of outbound students from the Neso target countries studying in the Netherlands climbed from 2,500 to 10,500 students between 2007–2008 and 2011–2012 (NUFFIC 2012).

they are treated as temporal university staff rather than students⁴. Moreover, colonial history and overall multicultural environment of the Dutch society offers an interesting setting for this study.

This study tries to cover two main areas: the diverse factors influencing migration decisions and return intentions of the interviewed international PhD students (coming from the developing countries, studying at the Wageningen University in the Netherlands), and the specific influence of the life cycle phase and the family concerns on the predictability and direction of the future migration steps of the respondents. Aims of this study are reflected in the following research questions:

1. What is the character of migration plans of the interviewed international PhD students?
2. How do the interviewed international PhD students think about a potential return migration to their countries of origin?
3. In what way do family concerns influence the migration decisions of the interviewed international PhD students?
4. How is a potential return intention related to the life cycle stage of the interviewed international PhD students?

5. Methodology and methods

This qualitative research investigates the migration plans of international PhD students. It follows the biographical or life story tradition (Plummer 2001), which was applied in research of academic mobility (Hoffman 2009) or brain circulation (Saxenian 2007). Personal life stories of the mobile students are followed, as it was suggested to follow the life-cycle approach to the overseas students by Dunlop (1966) or McNamara and Harris (1997). The in-depth interviews which were used as a research instrument in this study enable us to see complexity of the studied phenomenon and support the bottom up approach and qualitative analytical framing. Detailed methodological instructions for interviews are provided by (Gubrium, Holstein 2002). This study is part of a bigger ongoing research project, in which the author applies longitudinal approach, is in contact with the respondents over several years and monitors the changes in their migration behaviour. This article is based on evaluation of the first phase of interviews of this broader longitudinal research.

This paper draws on 21 in-depth semi-structured interviews with international PhD students (aged between 26 and 46), coming from developing countries, studying at the Wageningen University (WU) in the Netherlands. There was a split

⁴ 366 students were enrolled at PhD level at WU in 2011 (Annual Report Wageningen UR 2011).

between the genders (10 women and 11 men) within the interviewee sample. Some personal details are listed in Table 1. Students representing diverse environmental and social scientific fields and coming from different countries were chosen to represent the heterogeneity of the studied phenomenon. All major global developing regions were represented in the 16 countries of origin of the respondents including Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Benin, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, India, Mongolia, China, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Mexico, Chile, and Costa Rica. Developing status of countries included in this study was in line with the country classification used by United Nations in the World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP Country Classification 2014) nevertheless their level of development varies a lot.

The interviews were carried out in 2012 at different times according to the availability of the individual respondents. The respondents were initially contacted via e-mail (the e-mail addresses were obtained from the websites of the WU departments). 84 students from 14 departments were addressed, out of which 25% have finally agreed to meet for the interview. Interviews were conducted in English by the author on the WU campus or in public coffee shops and lasted on average an hour and a half (ranging from 1 to 2 hours). The respondents were assured that the information obtained in the interviews will be treated as strictly confidential, and that it will be used strictly for research and scientific purposes. In what follows, all the respondents were given numbers to protect their identity. All interviews were recorded with permission of the respondents and transcribed for later analyses. Using the citations of the direct speech of the respondents for analyses in the result part of this article follows the method used by other similar studies in the field (Geddie 2013 or Hazen, Alberts 2006).

Personal conditions of the respondents varied broadly, as they originated in diverse socio-cultural-economic backgrounds and went through different life-cycle stages. While some were on the doorstep of adulthood, others had own established families and carriers behind them. They were having different funding situations and PhD scenarios (full time or sandwich students⁵) requiring different amount of time being spent at their host institution (ranging from 1 to 8 years, for those who had also conducted part of their previous studies in Wageningen). Choice of varied group of respondents reflects the intention of this study, which was not to make the sample completely representative, but rather to cover existing heterogeneity, avoid simplifications and complicate the issue of student mobility.

⁵ Sandwich PhD students are international PhD candidates who only spend part of their time at WU. They are not employed by WU as they have a grant and they generally only spend the initial and last six to eight months of the four-year PhD programme in Wageningen. In the intermediate period they conduct their research in their country of origin. They need to have the support of both their home institute and supervisor at WU (Categories of PhD candidates, 2016).

6. Results

This paper draws on interviews, in which PhD students (see Table 1) reflected on their migration plans with a special focus on a potential return migration to the countries of their origin. In the result chapter diverse family situations are being

Tab. 1 – Respondent details at the time of the interview

| Respondent number | Country of origin | Gender | Age | Field of study | Type of study | Years in NL | Family status |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------|-----|--------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------------|
| 1 | Iran | F | – | Earth System Sciences | Full time | 1 | Single |
| 2 | Tanzania | F | 42 | Cultural Geography | Sandwich | 1 | Married with 3 children |
| 3 | Kenya | F | 44 | Cultural Geography | Sandwich | 1 | Married with 2 children |
| 4 | Kenya | F | 34 | Cultural Geography | Sandwich | 2 | Not married with 1 child |
| 5 | Thailand | M | 34 | Cultural Geography | Full time | 3 | Single |
| 6 | Mongolia | M | 36 | Agricultural Economics | Sandwich | 4 | Married with 3 children |
| 7 | China | F | 26 | Management Sciences | Full time | 2 | Single |
| 8 | Turkey | M | 28 | Logistics Management | Full time | 1 | Married with 1 child |
| 9 | Costa Rica | F | – | Environmental Economics | Full time | 4 | Single |
| 10 | Chile | M | 31 | Applied Philosophy | Full time | 3 | Single |
| 11 | Malaysia | M | 30 | Cultural Geography | Full time | 2 | Not married with 1 child |
| 12 | Vietnam | M | 35 | Natural Resources | Full time | 1 | Married with 2 children |
| 13 | Vietnam | M | 35 | Environmental Economics | Sandwich | 1 | Divorced with 2 children |
| 14 | Mexico | F | – | Development Economics | Full time | 5 | Married with 2 children |
| 15 | Mexico | M | 34 | Sociology of Development | Full time | 8 | Single |
| 16 | Malaysia | M | 46 | Environmental Policy | Sandwich | 4 | Married with 2 children |
| 17 | India | F | 30 | Consumer Behaviour | Full time | 4 | Married with no children |
| 18 | Ethiopia | M | 35 | Competence Studies | Sandwich | 1 | Married with 2 children |
| 19 | Benin | M | 32 | Marketing | Sandwich | 2 | Married with 1 child |
| 20 | Mexico | F | 29 | Rural Sociology | Full time | 1 | Single |
| 21 | Kyrgyzstan | F | 32 | Sociology of Consumption | Sandwich | 1 | Single |

analysed among multiple influencing factors before the assumption about the role of life-cycle stage is made.

Almost all the respondents have been already internationally mobile in past, mostly for the educational purposes. Such an experience gives them broader perspective to compare life and research conditions in different countries and thoroughly weight their future migration decisions. Potential return migration to the countries of origin is being considered very carefully; as such a migration step is seen as an important strategic decision by the respondents. One of the respondents described the mixed feelings and hesitation regarding return: *“I want to be mentally well prepared for returning back home to India. I want to be prepared and decide well not to regret any mistake later on. I have mixed feelings about returning. I will be missing something and gaining something at the same time.”* (Respondent nr. 17 from India)

Results suggest that interviewed international PhD students move in quite unpredictable trajectories, their on-going migration steps are interconnected, rather temporal, difficult to foretell and often have multiple directions.

6.1. Family considerations in migration plans

Return migration intentions are influenced by diverse motivation factors. Both internal personal motivations and external structural motivations play strong role in the decision making process. The external motivations are often regarded as diverse responsibilities by the respondents. The interviewed students mention responsibilities on different scales: towards their countries of origin and their societies, scholarship provider, research institution, previous employer, colleagues and especially strongly to their friends and families.

Diverse responsibilities towards family members could be a very strong driving force towards return migration either directly after finishing the PhD or at some point in the future as these statements reveal: *“My family is in Vietnam, so I have to return, there is no other choice. Shifting to another home, that is not an option for me.”* (Respondent nr. 12 from Vietnam)

“I have to return for my parents, as they get old, they will need me and my husband around more and more. They have done their part by taking care of me, now it will be my turn...” (Respondent nr. 17 from India)

“I am very close to my mother and being so far away is emotionally difficult especially now as she is getting older. I am the oldest one of her children and I should help her out and be around as there is no care for elderly provided by the state.” (Respondent nr. 21 from Kyrgyzstan)

Care for the ageing parents is a relevant factor especially in the countries lacking high quality social system and where care for elderly is generally considered

a relatives' responsibility. Students coming from those cultures expressed stronger responsibility to provide the ageing parents with the financial, material and also psychological and emotional support. This situation often leads them to consider their presence in the countries of origin to provide sufficient psychological support in particular. The aspect of gender was not revealed as being a crucial factor determining the return intentions in this study. Both sons (11 respondents) and daughters (10 respondents) expressed the need and willingness to help their parents. And such a help often depends on geographic proximity and might require return in future.

Migration plans are almost always related to the broad family circumstances. An example of how a changing family situation might be shifting the future migration directions is given below: *"Home is a place where I will work. Our parents do not live anymore, so their residence and the location of their house are not important any more."* (Respondent nr. 14 from Mexico)

The attachment to one pre-defined life-long home as a place of parents seems to be weakened when the parents or other ancestors die. Both the responsibility and the social ties toward this born place tend to weaken gradually. In this case the migrant seem to move towards more fluid plan with return migration being less predictable.

Another illustration of how changing family situation influences the migration decision making process is given by the life story of a widow respondent: *"Since my husband has died, it is hard to be back home. It brings me memories of him. Now my family is only me and my children. We can easily move. I like the lifestyle in Wageningen and the opportunities for children in school. But let's see, what the future brings..."* (Respondent nr. 2 from Tanzania)

Death of a close relative may result in losing an anchor in the home country and making the migration trajectory less predictable. In addition, this case illustrates, that migration may typically occur with teenage children for educational purposes. This strategic stage of life cycle was also observed and described by Ley and Kobayashi (2005).

Finally, even for the students who express high likeliness to continue their careers abroad, return will always remain an option either later in life (for example for retirement, as several respondents mentioned) or as an emergency option in the worst case scenario (if the career abroad does not develop well).

6.2. Life-cycle and family formation stage

How a potential return migration is viewed and interpreted seems to be (among many other factors) strongly related to the life-cycle stages of migrants. Own children seem to play especially important role in the decision making process.

The sample of this research covered 13 respondents with children (mostly married) and 8 single respondents. Respondents with children have to take into consideration the overall wellbeing of the family including the job opportunities for their wife or husband (dual career decisions), type and quality of education of their children and many other factors: *“My wife is fed up with me being so far away, but I am here for our common benefit and better future. I want to live together with my family. If we would live abroad, my wife would lose her job in Ethiopia and my children would have to cope with the new language. That is why my return plans are clear and well organized.”* (Respondent nr. 18 from Ethiopia)

Strong transnational ties are often formulated around missing the family members, which were left behind:

“My family wants me being back home. I have 3 small boys there. So after I return, I can be finally there for my family and continue being a lecturer. That way I will also contribute to the development of my country.” (Respondent nr. 6 from Mongolia)

“I have responsibilities back home. I have left my family there. Luckily there are all those modern technologies... so I can be in contact with my wife, daughter, mom and brothers every day.” (Respondent nr. 19 from Benin)

„I have promised my son to return back home. Only then the real life will start. ... I am not married, my son needs me...” (Respondent nr. 11 from Malaysia)

Respondents with children tend to be always motivated by concerns for the general welfare for their family and for the quality of education specifically:

“I am here to get the experience and get back. I will return for sure. Support of my family has always been most important to me. My parents take care of my son and he will go to school there. I will return for my job and for my family.” (Respondent nr. 4 from Kenya)

“I am 100% sure about my return. I have strong family attachment to my home country and I simply love Kenya. My children are studying there. If they want to study abroad, they can do it later, they need to wait to grow.” (Respondent nr. 3 from Kenya)

These examples show, how migration decisions tend to occur around key points marking the life-course transition, entry to education being one of them (as described by Kobayashi, Preston 2007).

While being asked about migration plans, stressing out the importance of individual independence, freedom and openness towards future possibilities was especially typical for single respondents, mostly without their own children. These mostly younger students still do not need to directly face the responsibility of taking care of ageing parents yet neither do they take the needs of children into account. In these cases, strong orientation towards future perspective and towards constructing ideal dream destination for later stages of life is prevalent. Interviewed single young researchers seem to mainly follow the best career opportunity and thoughts on return or home belongings are often viewed as constrains, described as undesirable thoughts which could slow their prospective and bright

futures. There is a sense of sensation and exploring. It even seems that they are trying to prevent thoughts on return and postpone the period of responsibility (towards parents, home country, own family...) which is inevitably coming closer. They try to protect their right of freedom and build inner barriers against wishes of others and questions such as what is expected from them or when and where are they settling down. These barriers could have unconscious character.

"I try not to have any plans in advance in my life, let's see which opportunities the future brings to me and I will just follow them." (Respondent nr. 10 from Chile)

"I try to keep my future very opened in general. Most probably I will not return to my home country, but who knows. It is not very productive to worry about the job or the future. Even though I like to have my roots, I like to keep moving as well." (Respondent nr. 20 from Mexico)

Some of the respondents (typically the single one without children) plan to continue living transnationally, potentially becoming international exchangers of innovations and technology development. They might become a specific type of the 'new argonauts', as Saxenian (2007) described them, and support development in their home countries distantly.

"I probably will not come back to Iran. It would be difficult to adopt back to the atmosphere there. I do not limit my future to one country. I can make a use of the good access to scientific resources and good network here in Europe. And it is also still quite close to my family. I want to live in a free country and use my knowledge." (Respondent nr. 1 from Iran)

"I have always wanted to study and live in Europe. I am experiencing a sense of independence and freedom here. I do what I want. I like the environmental and professional aspects of life in the Netherlands. I think, I can find better job in the future here than in my home country. But maybe, that when I will marry and have kids, I might like to establish and settle in Costa Rica. Family is at the first place for me." (Respondent nr. 9 from Costa Rica)

Good career prospect and future contract conditions seem to be one of the main factors influencing their migration decisions. However, family and personal relationships still play a role to certain extent, as it is apparent from the formulations of respondents. Family is always an important issue, even for those, who are currently single free movers.

No generally applicable model of migration behaviour could be found across all different life situations of interviewed students. Yet what could be observed among all the respondents are diverse responsibilities which they are considering. Mobile academics thus should not be seen solely as absolutely independent free movers. The results support research on transnational scientific labour force (Geddie 2013). The findings underscore the importance of accommodating complex family ties and considerations among other factors for better understanding of the migration plans of mobile people in academia. Results suggest that migration decisions of

PhD students with children are strongly driven by external responsibly towards family and institutions, with rather permanent return quite likely. They see home as safe, well-known place from their past and their journey is viewed as allowing them to return and bring back additional quality to the future life in their countries of origin. This contrasts with the single PhD students, expressing individual freedom as an essential driving force in their migration decisions and tend to act as global nomads. In conclusion, the studied migration plans reveal to be changing over time, constantly evolving and thus quite difficult to predict.

7. Conclusions and discussion

Internationally mobile PhD students seem to behave differently than the average typical migrant of the last century. Their lives are more dynamic and the idea of one definite move seems too simplistic in their case. International students can be viewed as a privileged migrant group at some respect. They are privileged to have opportunity to travel and to have access to higher education. The respondents of this study have had rich international experience already before their PhD studies and their migration decisions are constantly developing over time. Their migration cannot be seen as one-directional single move, but rather as complex of networks, which persist over time before, during and after studies abroad. This paper assumes that the interviewed international PhD students move in quite unpredictable trajectories, their on-going migration steps are interconnected, temporal and difficult to foretell and often have multiple directions. These trends are in line with the approach in transnationalism literature (Baláž, Williams 2004).

Although working with a varied group of respondents limits the possibilities of exploring cultural, class, racial, ethnic and economic dimensions that shape migration decision making, it arguably brings a deeper insight into common patterns on the basis of shared mobile experience which might otherwise be missed. Interviewed students were sharing profiles in terms of academic status and transnational experience. As they were in the same period of educational cycle, while pursuing their PhD studies, they formed a specific category between student and professional life, including some features of both.

Analyses and investigation of the return intentions and diverse aspects shaping the migration decision making revealed an essential importance of the life-cycle stage of the individual respondents. Extended family relationships strongly influence the migration decision making and transnational life strategies of the respondents. Students who have their own children or other dependent family members (ageing parents in particular) seem to be planning their future on different bases than independent single students with much less bounds and responsibilities. Migration decisions of PhD students with children tend to be strongly

driven by responsibility towards family and institutions, with rather permanent return very likely. This contrasts with the single PhD students, who express individual freedom and professional opportunities as essential driving forces in their migration decisions and tend to act like global nomads with less clear migration plans. In conclusion, the results indicate that the family concerns should always be taken into consideration while researching international migration. These findings are in line with previous research on return migration (Ley, Kobayashi 2005) and transnational academic sphere (Geddie 2013). It would be interesting to follow up the migration trajectories of the respondents in the future and to further investigate the development of their migration plans over time. Such an aim is reflected in the longitudinal approach of a broader ongoing research project. Because the evaluation of the whole longitudinal research is deemed beyond the scope of this paper, the other extended results will be presented in one of the oncoming articles.

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SHRNUTÍ

Migrační plány mezinárodních postgraduálních studentů

Studium migračních cest mezinárodně mobilních vysoce vzdělaných osob z rozvojových států je podstatným tématem v rámci debaty o odlivu mozků a cirkulaci mozků v kontextu globálního rozvoje. Mechanismy potenciální návratové migrace mohou hrát důležitou roli v rozvoji vysílajících zemí. Tento článek přispívá do dané debaty užitím kvalitativního přístupu k odhalení různorodosti migračních plánů z pohledu celosvětově mobilních studentů samotných. Jejich vlastní výklad poukazuje na různorodé faktory ovlivňující proces rozhodování o případné návratové migraci do jejich zemí původu. Po dokončení univerzitních studií v zahraničí čelí mezinárodní studenti rozhodnutí, zda se vrátit do země původu nebo pokračovat vzdělání či kariéru v zahraničí. A právě tato fáze, která může být vnímána jako zásadní v kontextu globálního rozvoje a cirkulace mozků, představuje specifické zaměření této studie.

Teorie doporučují v případě moderních hyper-mobilních migrantů využít přístupy, které integrují jak transnacionalismus tak studijní mobilitu (Baláz, Williams 2004). Studijní mobilita by neměla být vnímána jako jednotlivý pohyb mezi dvěma zeměmi, ale spíše jako složitý fenomén v širším kontextu transnacionálních sítí a nejrůznějších propojení mezi hostitelskými a vysílajícími společnostmi. V době dominance transnacionální debaty by měl být migrační pohyb vnímán jako pokračující proces, který se vyvíjí. Mimoto, jak dokládá několik studií o návratové migraci, se migrační plány a strategie proměňují v průběhu času. Tyto změny jsou ovlivněny zejména různými fázemi životního cyklu, kdy se priority týkající se kariéry, vzdělání dětí a kvality života v důchodu přirozeně v čase posunují (Ley, Kobayashi 2005; Kobayashi, Preston 2007). Perspektiva životního cyklu se jeví jako velmi užitečná, jelikož bere jako jednotku migrace v potaz rodinný celek; a může tak odhalit hlubší různorodost motivací k migraci. Mobilní studenti jsou součástí transnacionálních rodin a volí nejrůznější transnacionální rodinné strategie od přemístění celé rodiny (Kobayashi, Preston 2007; Ley 2010) až po transnacionální život v několika zemích a rozdělení rodiny pro účely vzdělávání (Ho 2002). Měnicí se paradigma migrace a rozvoje je silně propojeno s diskuzí o cirkulaci mozků. Migrace vysoce kvalifikovaných osob (včetně mobilních studentů) může ovlivnit vysílající země také pozitivně (Castles, Miller, de Haas 2014). Ačkoli je jistá panika z hromadného odlivu vysoce vzdělaných osob následovaného nezbytnou ztrátou lidského kapitálu poměrně často zmiňovaná v médiích zejména v kontextu rozvojových zemí, mezinárodní studenti mohou být také vnímáni jako transnacionální výměnní zprostředkovatelé (Faist 2000) a studijní mobilita může předcházet plýtvání mozků (Hensen, de Vries, Cörvers 2009).

Výzkumným cílem této studie je nejprve stručně popsat vybrané koncepty, které daný fenomén studijní mobility a návratové migrace zastřešují. Poté jsou zkoumána dvě hlavní témata: rozmanité faktory ovlivňující migrační rozhodnutí a návratové záměry dotazovaných mezinárodních PhD studentů; a specifický vliv fáze životního cyklu (včetně různých rodinných

ohledů) na předvídatelnost a směr budoucích migračních kroků respondentů. Tento výzkum se snaží předejít zjednodušením a nahlédnout na rozdílné motivace k potenciální návratové migraci kritičtěji za použití hluboce kvalitativního přístupu. Tento článek čerpá z 21 hloubkových částečně strukturovaných rozhovorů s PhD studenty pocházejícími z rozvojových zemí, kteří studují na Wageningen University v Nizozemsku. Všechny hlavní globální rozvojové regiony jsou zastoupeny v 16 zemích původu respondentů (Keňa, Tanzanie, Etiopie, Benin, Írán, Kyrgyzstán, Turecko, Indie, Mongolsko, Čína, Vietnam, Thajsko, Malajsie, Mexiko, Chile a Kostarika).

Výsledky naznačují, že dotazovaní mezinárodní PhD studenti se pohybují v poměrně těžko předvídatelných migračních trajektoriích, jejich pokračující migrační kroky jsou navzájem propojené, spíše dočasného charakteru a často míří více směry. Potenciální návratovou migraci do jejich zemí původu zvažují velmi opatrně, jelikož takový migrační krok je respondenty vnímán jako závažné strategické životní rozhodnutí. Kromě řady dalších pestrých ovlivňujících faktorů hraje zásadní roli v migračních rozhodnutích a potenciálních návratových záměrech respondentů fáze životního cyklu, ve které se nacházejí. Rodinný stav a nejrůznější společenské zodpovědnosti významně ovlivňují stabilitu či nestálost migračních plánů a předvídatelnost budoucích migračních kroků respondentů. Prospěch z cirkulace mozků pro vysílající země se zdá být slibnější v případě mezinárodních studentů s vlastními dětmi, jak naznačují výpovědi většiny z nich ve smyslu pravděpodobné návratové migrace do jejich zemí původu. Takový migrační krok by v jejich případě mohl mít spíše trvalý charakter.

Zatímco pro svobodné a bezdětné dotazované PhD studenty zůstává návrat vždy jednou z možností, jejich budoucí migrační kroky se jeví být hůře předvídatelné, jejich plány se vyvíjejí více dynamicky a mívají spíše dočasný charakter. Souhrnně výsledky této studie korespondují s přístupem teoretické literatury o transnacionálních rodinných strategiích. Výše popsané zkoumání naznačuje, že je třeba se vyhnout ambivalentnímu rozlišování mezi trvalou návratovou migrací a trvalým odlivem mozků, jelikož migrační plány mají často dočasný a vyvíjející se charakter.