

Catching the elusive: studying Argentinean returnees from Spain

Marcela Cerrutti and Alicia Maguid

Center for Population Studies and National Council for
Scientific and Technical Research, Argentina

Presentation

- The objective is to describe a methodological approach to study recent return migration from Spain to Argentina in the context of the collaborative project Temporary Migration vs. Permanent Migration, TEMPER.

The return process

- Conceptualizations of migration process have paid more attention to the drivers of migration than those of return. Less is known about motivations and conditions for the return, reintegration processes, impacts and re-emigration.
- A returnee can be broadly be defined as *someone who returned to his/her country of birth after residing for some unspecified period of time in a foreign country.*
- “Return” requires further operational specifications (i.e. time spent abroad, arrival time, purpose...) and can be difficult to study when it is part of complex migration trajectories.

What we want to know about return

- Why some migrants return home?
- Motivations to migrate (tendency to evaluate it as failure or success of migratory project).
- Migrants integration (particularly economic integration) and changes in the context of reception.
- Family and network ties both in origin and in destination (including family formation/dissolution).
- Age and gender
- Migration policies (including return policies)

- What are the *factors associated* with reintegration experiences?
- Preparedness
- Labour contract/job promise
- Skills (and transferability)
- Time spend abroad
- Return motivations, and participation in the return decision
- Savings
- Social support

- What are the *impacts* of (migration and) return for individuals and their families?
- Labor force and occupational mobility.
- Family (formation/dissolution/separation)
- Educational achievements
- Wealth

TEMPER Project and the study of return through origin surveys

- Seeks to understand return (and more generally mobility patterns) in different contexts.
- Collected in Argentina, Romania, Senegal and Ukraine, with returnees from EU countries.
- Differ from other return surveys: collect information on returnees but also on non-migrants.

Types of questions and data requirements

- Characterization of returnees, return process and reintegration → sample of returnees in origin countries
 - How to define and to find a representative sample of returnees
 - The approach will miss those who have returned but are not longer in origin countries

If only returnees are surveyed, will fall short to understand both selectivity in the return process and impacts of (migration and) return.

Types of questions and data requirements

- *Selectivity question* (Why some migrants are more likely to return than others) requires comparable data from returnees and current migrants.
 - Origin surveys are useful to study selectivity when coupled with other surveys in destination
- *Impacts question* (How (migration and) return may affect individual attainments, timing of life course events, labor careers, etc.) requires comparable data from returnees and non-migrants.
 - Origin surveys will need to be complemented with a sample of comparable non migrants (in the same time and space)

Origin surveys (Argentina)

- Returnees vs. non migrants
- Similar profiles but differ in the “treatment” variable, (migration and) return.
- Returnee population, as close to be representative as possible (sample frame is not available)
- Collects biographical and retrospective longitudinal information
- Collects information comparable with other pre-existing data (Argentine immigrants in Spain and non-migrants in Argentina).

Returning to Argentina

- The number of Argentines in Spain grew 4 times from 2000 to 2009 (reaching 295 thousands immigrants).
- However, the outbreak of the international crisis in Spain coincidentally with a period of prosperity in Argentina induced an increase in return flows.
- From 2009 and 2014, Argentine stock in Spain decreased in more than 40 thousands; losses in the Spanish Municipal Registry reached 70 thousands.

Sampling returnees in Argentina

looking for a needle in the hay

- 2010 Argentine Census did not gather last country of residence for returnees → no data on sociodemographic traits or specific geographical location of returnees from Spain.
- No alternative data on returnees (multipurpose representative surveys were not useful due to small sample size).
- Number of returnees is small and disperse in large populations (metropolitan areas).

Not viable options

- Representative survey of returnees → sample frame is not available from pre-existing data)
- Community -or county- based surveys in areas with high concentration of returnees where aleatory routes are established and households are selected randomly → no data on returnee location, low number of returnees (very likely highly dispersed).

An alternative option

- Non-probability purposive sample following a snow-ball procedure (500 individuals), following strict criteria in selection procedure.
- Problem: chain referral biases due oversampling a particular network of peers:
 - Large numbers of initial “*seeds*” from various social contexts.
 - Limited number for referrals by each contact.
- Personal contacts, Argentine associations in Spain, Argentines residents in Spain, repatriation programs (scientists and scholars), return programs (vulnerable populations), social media (Facebook, Twitter).
- Selection criteria: last emigration from 1996 onwards; last return since 2000; age at return 20 + years; 3+ months in Spain.

Sampling non migrants

- Sample of non-migrants (500 individuals): siblings of returnees who had never migrated (quasi-experimental design). Common family and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- For those who did not have siblings non migrants (or refused) → replace the dyad with close cousins or childhood school friends (with common social backgrounds) who had never migrated.
- Statistical analyses will have to control for non-independent observations (cluster effects).

Field Work

- Currently in field work (about 220 interviews).
- Interviewing non-migrants has been harder.
- More difficult to find low skilled returnees (fewer and hard to reach).
- Since returnees' traits are unknown, we search for heterogeneous profiles within parameters of Argentine immigrants in Spain (from pre-existing data).
- Skype a good option for long distance interviews.
- We register information on:
 - Size of returnee network for each interviewee
 - Refusals (although low)

Thank you!