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AT THE EMIGRATION DECISION AGAIN**

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More than fifty million people left Europe for overseas destinations between the Napoleonic Wars and the depression of the 1930s.¹ This paper is concerned with the factors that may have influenced their decision to emigrate² The problem is that we have little reliable direct evidence of what is presumably the most important question. Why did people emigrate from Europe overseas in this period? By this we mean why did only *some* Europeans choose to emigrate *and not others*? Many important ideas have come from the rigorous study of the letters that passed between the emigrants and their relatives in Europe. But the letters are difficult to interpret. We cannot infer the motives of more than a small number of emigrants from letters.³ And we cannot assume that the letter writers were a sample of all emigrants.⁴ In the absence of reliable direct evidence, historians have had little choice but to infer motivation from indirect evidence,

¹ 52 million were recorded as having *departed* for overseas destinations between 1815 and 1930 and 54 million as having *arrived* in the main destination countries. Some of these people were not emigrants. See footnote 9. Ferenczi & Willcox, *International migrations*, pp. 230-1.

² Other aspects of European emigration, including the degree of 'assimilation' and the effects on the economies of the receiving countries have recently been discussed in Baines, *Emigration from Europe*.

³ Well known collections of letters include, Blegen, *Land of their choice*, Thomas & Znaniecki, *The Polish peasant in Europe and America*, Erickson, *Invisible immigrants*. Most of the detailed studies of particular emigration flows that have appeared in recent years have used some evidence contained in emigrant letters.

⁴ Erickson, *Invisible immigrants*, pp. 13-21. Family problems have been isolated as a key cause of emigration from a large collection of letters analysed in a recent project located at the University of Bochum, Germany. The difficulty is that it is impossible to analyse the letters of those who did not emigrate. Hence, we cannot tell if the emigrants were dis-proportionately affected by family problems.

such as the ages, occupations and marital status of the emigrants or the economic and social characteristics of the areas from which they came.

Nor do we have a great deal of direct evidence about how prospective emigrants viewed the uncertainties of emigration, including the rigours of the journey. We can assume that emigrants were more likely to be attracted by a steam ship passage than by a sailing ship passage.⁵ What we would like to know, is the extent to which the expectations of the emigrants changed at the same time. For example, some people think that the 24 hour flight to Australia at the present time is a major undertaking. But it is trivial compared with even the most comfortable passage by emigrant ship in the late nineteenth century.

Migration is also notoriously difficult to measure. Since virtually all movement may be construed as migration we are forced to use a more or less arbitrary definition, in the sense that the researcher defines which of the moves are important. For example, emigration can be distinguished from internal migration since the former involved a move across a national border. (It was also more likely to be recorded.) We also tend to believe that emigration was more difficult than internal migration, but that may not have been the way that people

⁵ See particularly, Taylor, *The distant magnet*, pp. 131-66; Hyde, *Cunard and the North Atlantic*, pp. 59, 64ff. The rigours of the journey by sail are well documented in Guillet, *The great migration*, Ch.8. There has been a considerable controversy regarding mortality on emigrant ships in the early nineteenth century. Cohn, 'Mortality on immigrant voyages' pp. 300-1.

saw it at the time.⁶ In other words, our measurement may not be objective from the point of view of the emigrant.

This paper examines three questions about the emigration decision. The first is the extent to which the decision was dominated by information. Obviously, emigration cannot occur without some information being available. But could information flow be a sufficient explanation? This question concerns 'chains'. For example, historians and economists frequently cannot explain the differences in emigration rates from the different regions of European countries by reference to the characteristics of the regions or the characteristics of the emigrants. In this case, are they correct to assume that the explanation must lie in the amount of information available to prospective emigrants?

The second question concerns the apparent contrasts between emigration from northern and western Europe and emigration from southern and eastern Europe? We know that a higher proportion of southern and eastern European emigrants returned when compared with northern and western European emigrants. Does this mean that the emigration decision was different in southern Europe than it had been in northern Europe, or did the difference merely reflect the circumstances in which the decision was made?

Finally, how far was the decision to emigrate taken as an alternative to another move, for example, within the country? This is an important question

⁶ For example, in the early twentieth century, 'emigration' from the Netherlands to Germany exceeded overseas emigration. But, in effect, parts of the Netherlands and Germany were in the same labour market. We could say that, in effect, the movement was not emigration but internal migration. In other words, migration between the Netherlands and Germany could be considered to be similar to migration from, say, Scotland to England, except that in the former case the migrants crossed an international frontier. Stokvis, 'Dutch transnational migration', pp. 12-14; Stokvis, 'Dutch international migration', pp.47-51.

Even the emigration of indentured servants from Britain in the eighteenth century has recently been discussed in these terms.⁷ The development of the international economy may be related to the growth in international migration in two ways. The demand for labour in different economies reflected the relative factor endowments of the economies. The gap in labour demand could be closed by migration. Secondly, the development in international trade and communications made international migration much easier. Hence, there was a redistribution of the European population.⁸ In 1800, about 4% of people of European ethnic extraction were living outside Europe and Siberia. By 1914, 21% were.⁹

The implication (*ceteris paribus*) of these assumptions about the international economy is that, once, the population of a particular region of Europe acquired a large amount of information about any one overseas economy where the demand for labour was high, people would emigrate to that country in large numbers. There is a further implication. Since emigration would increase the flow of information, emigration rates *ceteris paribus* would tend to increase.

If the neo-classical idea that migrants were actors moving freely within a developing world economy is an adequate one, it should be possible to model emigration formally. (Assumptions of rationality and knowledge, would have to be maintained, of course.) There have been several attempts to do this.¹⁰ The

⁷ Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West*, pp. 21-28.

⁸ There was some underrecording in the early part of the century but the main data problem is overrecording. Many of the data list only passengers, many of whom were not emigrants. See footnote 2.

⁹ Calculated by Baines, *Emigration from Europe*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰ Galloway & Vedder, 'Emigration from the U.K. to the U.S.A'; Gandar, 'New Zealand net migration'; Kelley, 'International migration & economic growth'; Larsen, 'Quantitative study of emigration from Denmark'; Moe, 'Economic aspects of Norwegian population movements'; Neal, 'Cross spectral analysis'; Pope, 'The push-pull model of Australian immigration'; Quigley, 'Econometric model of Swedish emigration'; Richardson, 'British emigration and

most common method has been to take the annual rate of emigration as the dependent (LHS) variable, and a set of variables that measure, or proxy, economic and social conditions in the receiving and sending countries as the independent (RHS) variables. In essence this is a 'push-pull' formulation. 'Push' versus 'pull' need not detain us, however, since the majority of emigrants would not have been able to make so fine a distinction had they been asked. The essence of 'push' and 'pull' is comparative. A potential emigrant could only consider one in the context of the other.

In general, the determination of migration models were able to explain the fluctuations in annual emigration rates fairly well, although there are some technical issues, notably the ability of different models to obtain different but significant results about the same emigrants. The problems have been surveyed elsewhere, by Gould, Neal and others.¹¹ The successful models confirm the importance of information flows since they are able to relate changes in emigration rates to changes in economic and social conditions in the destination countries which means that emigrants must have been aware of those conditions.

The problem is that the determination of migration models analyse the timing of emigration but do not explain why some people chose to emigrate and others chose not to. We may, for example, only be considering those people who had already made the decision to emigrate. There was not one emigration decision but two. To go. And when to go. Once the decision to emigrate had been made,

overseas investment'; Thomas, 'Migration and economic growth'; Tomaske, 'International migration and economic growth'; Wilkinson, 'European migration to the U.S.'; Williamson, 'Migration to the New World' and *Late nineteenth century American development*.

¹¹ Gould, 'European inter-Continental emigration: patterns and causes, Neal, 'Cross spectral analysis', Pope, 'The push-pull model of Australian immigration, Gandar, 'New Zealand net migration'.

it was rational for the emigrants to delay their departure until a favourable opportunity. Of course, we cannot assume that most people were able to defer emigration indefinitely. Emigration was related to age and to important moments in the life-cycle. The effect of deferring emigration can be explained using two models. In one case, the number of emigrants would remain the same in the medium term but the emigrants would be, on average, older. In the second case, where potential emigrants would only leave at a favourable moment in the life cycle, there would be a permanent fall in the number of emigrants because some of the emigrants had missed the favourable moment.

We may also ask why did more people did not leave Europe between 1815 and 1930? This is a legitimate question. Despite continuous immigration, income differentials between the destination and European countries remained high throughout the period. (This was not because immigration was restricted. There were few restrictions on European immigration before the First World War.) Hence, it would have been possible for *additional* people to increase their income substantially by moving from Europe to United States, Argentina or Australia. Why did even more people not leave? Transaction costs may have been high - poor people in Europe may not have been able to pay the cost of emigration including the income forgone during the journey. Information may not have been as abundant as many writers have implied. Or the information that was available was insufficiently specific. Finally, potential emigrants may have decided to stay in Europe for reasons which we can characterise as cultural. They may have felt that emigration would make it difficult to maintain their religious preferences, for example.

May we assume that all individuals were equally likely to consider emigration under a given set of circumstances? Unfortunately, this is the implicit assumption of many studies. It would be invidious to mention particular examples, but it is commonplace for an emigration flow to be identified and then explained

by reference to a limited number of 'events' - a tariff on exports (as in northern Italy); the removal of a tariff on imports (as on American grain); a particular bulge in the age structure (as in Norway) or a disastrous harvest (as in Sweden). The problem is that there may be other areas where the economic problems were similar but where there was no increase in emigration. Without comparative analysis, we have no way of judging whether the causes of the emigration flow that we have identified are sufficient or necessary.

It is well known that emigration rates from the different 'provinces', 'regions' and 'counties' of the individual European countries were very varied. For example, in the early twentieth century, emigrants were leaving the Italian *regioni* of Calabria and the Arbruzzi at between eight and ten times the rate that they were leaving Emilio-Romangia or Sardinia.¹²

Questions about regional emigration differentials can only properly be answered by systematic quantitative analysis. There have been only a few studies and the results have been mixed. A study of emigration rates from Danish provinces found that emigration was negatively correlated with income.¹³ But studies of Swedish provinces have not been able to demonstrate a relationship

¹² Some European regions with high emigration rates were the Basilicata, Calabria and the Arbruzzi, the West of England, Transylvania, Galicia and the Bukovina, Pomerania, South Ostrobothnia, Berslagen, Halland and the west of Ireland. Foerster, *The Italian emigration of our times*, p. 38; Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 144, 158; Chelmer, 'The Austrian emigration', p. 319; Bobinska and Pilch, 'Employment seeking migrations of the Poles', p. 13; Sundbarg, *Emigrationsutredningen*, p. 99; Knodel, *The decline of fertility in Germany*, pp. 55, 109; Toivonen, *Etela-Pohjanmaan Valtamoven-Takaineen Surtelaisuus*, p. 91; Kero, *Migration from Finland*, p. 91; Carlsson, 'Chronology and composition', pp. 128-9, 134; Schrier, *Ireland and the American emigration*, p. 4.

¹³ Hvidt, *Flight to America*, pp. 38-40.

between emigration rates, income and other variables.¹⁴ And a study of emigration from English and Welsh counties (1860-1900), was unable to find a relationship between emigration rates and economic and social conditions - at least as far as they could be measured.¹⁵

One reason for our inability systematically to model regional emigration is that the region may be an insufficiently sensitive unit. It is unlikely that emigration rates were constant across a region. But what was the 'emigration unit'? For example, if the decision to emigrate was more likely to be taken by individuals or families we might expect the distribution of emigration to be spread more equally across a region than if the decision was more likely to be a collective one, perhaps involving the whole village. We are a long way from a model that would predict regional emigration rates.

Historians in recent years have used the concept of 'chain migration' to explain emigration flows. It has sometimes been possible to relate the movement of particular emigrants to earlier movement.¹⁶ The key to the idea of chain migration is information. A migration route could be established by 'pioneers'. Information came back to the European community mainly through letters and the experience of returned migrants. Hence, some communities had superior access to information. (The underlying assumptions about the international economy, were mentioned above.)

¹⁴ Carlsson, 'Chronology and composition', pp. 114-48. These results are confirmed by detailed studies of individual localities e.g Tederbrand, *Vasternoerland och nord amerika*, p.307; Rondhal, *Emigration folke emflyttning*, p. 273.

¹⁵ Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 166-77.

¹⁶ The idea of chain migration is discussed in more detail in Baines, *European emigration*.

The suspicion remains that the prominence given by many of the current generation of historians to the role of 'chain migration' is partly driven by the data. The single most important evidence is the listings of the characteristics of passengers on emigrant ships in the origin and destination countries. The best ships' lists contain high quality dis-aggregated data, including the ages, occupation, marital condition and geographical origins of individual emigrants - making nominal record linkage possible.¹⁷ (Unfortunately, there are no lists of British emigrants in some periods. Nor are there lists for most of Southern and Eastern Europe.¹⁸) Names on the ships' lists have been matched with other listings in the origin and destination countries. The ability to match names in the destination countries depends critically on the degree to which the immigrants were geographically clustered. It is much easier to trace immigrants if they tended to settle in agricultural colonies. Hence, Swierenga was able to trace one third of Dutch immigrants in the USA between 1835 and 1870.¹⁹ But, so far, it has proved impossible to match significant numbers of British immigrants (taken from the American lists) because they were so dispersed.²⁰

The problem is, that it is easy to use chain migration - the flow of information between origin and destination communities - when we cannot find

¹⁷ For example, the Uppsala Project, which was very active in the 1970s, used the ships' lists extensively. See, Rundblom & Norman, *From Sweden to America*. See Tederbrand, 'Sources for the study of Swedish emigration' and Erickson, 'Use of passenger lists', for a detailed criticism of the ships' lists as sources. The increase in transatlantic genealogy has led to the creation of large data bases, for example in Hamburg and Umea, Sweden. See Sundin, 'Demographic data base'.

¹⁸ Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 54-5.

¹⁹ Dutch immigration into the USA in this period was only 15,000 families. Swierenga, 'Dutch international migration and occupational change'. pp. 118-9.

²⁰ Hence, British immigrants in the United States were 'invisible'. Erickson, *Invisible immigrants*.

objective criteria to explain the variance in regional emigration rates.²¹ There is an element of this in my own work.²² There have recently been several detailed and imaginative books concerning emigration from particular parts of Sweden, Norway and western Germany to the United States.²³ These books discuss the dynamics of the relationship between social changes in the European community and in the 'transplanted communities', as they are called. Not surprisingly, the importance of chains is confirmed. The difficulty is, that the most telling evidence comes effectively from the chains themselves.

As we know, there are many examples of the localised ethnic neighbourhood.²⁴ (A well known one is the Icelandic speaking community in Gimli, Manitoba.²⁵) But this does not necessarily mean that immigration was

²¹ Price, *Southern Europeans in Australia* was a pioneering discussion of overseas chain migration. The book contains several interesting historical examples. e.g pp. 280-1.

²² Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 175-6.

²³ Kamphoefner, *Transplanted Westphalians, Ostregren, A community transplanted*, Gjerde, *From peasants to farmers*.

²⁴ There is a very extensive literature concerning chains and the ethnic communities in the destination countries. And, in particular, about the way that new immigrants could use chains (including family members) to obtain employment. However, an important conclusion of the most recent literature about the United States, is that immigrants did not rely exclusively on family connections for their advancement. They also used the institutions that were native to the host country, including trade unions and political parties. Hence, the distinction that historians used to draw between 'family oriented' immigrants who ultimately became 'economically oriented' cannot be sustained. Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, pp. 57-63, 71-83; Barton, *Peasants and Strangers*, p. 112; Briggs, *An American passage*, p.68; Bukowczyk, *And my children did not know me*, pp. 61-70; Yans-McLaughlin, *Family and community*, pp. 260-5. Vecoli, 'The formation of Chicago's 'little Italy's', pp. 268, 292. There are even rare examples of British 'ethnic communities'. e.g MacCleary, 'Networks among British immigrants', pp. 363-4.

²⁵ Norman & Rundblom, 'Migration patterns in the Nordic countries', p. 58.

dominated by movement into ethnic communities. Nor does it mean that the communities were dominated by one group of immigrants.²⁶ We do not know, as yet, how many immigrants - say, Italians - moved between an Italian community and an Italian neighbourhood in the United States and how many did not. This is a very difficult calculation for both conceptual and practical reasons.

Another problem concerns the dynamics of chain migration. Chains were presumably not immutable. For example, Baily and others have shown the importance of letters, returned migrants and other contacts, to emigration from the north of Italy to Argentina in the later nineteenth century.²⁷ But in the early twentieth century emigration from the north of Italy began to shift towards the United States. Contemporaneously, emigration from the south of Italy grew very fast, most of which was aimed at the United States. This presumably means that new chains were being created and old ones broken.²⁸ The South did not replace the North, which remained an important source of emigrants. What determined the diffusion of information to other parts of the country?

A question about the importance of chains may be formulated as follows. Would we expect *ceteris paribus* that the differentials between regional emigration rates would narrow in the long run or would emigration always be dominated by

²⁶ The so-called 'ghettos' included many groups, although one group tended to be 'ethnically dominant'. Zunz, *The changing face of inequality*, pp. 57-87. Only 75% of Italians in Chicago were southerners, for example. Vecoli, 'The formation of Chicago's 'little Italy's', p. 268. There was also a high degree of residential mobility within the destination cities. [In the United States, at least.] Kessner, *The golden door*, p. 143; Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco*, p. 106; Thernstrom, *Poverty and Progress*, p. 96; Bodnar, *The Transplanted*, p. 175.

²⁷ Baily, 'The adjustment of Italian immigrants in Buenos Aires and New York', p. 298-305. Klein, 'The integration of Italian immigrants', p. 318.

²⁸ Gould, 'European inter-continental emigration; the role of diffusion and feedback', pp. 284, 304.

a limited number of areas? There are problems in the interpretation of differences in regional emigration rates but they seem to have narrowed in Sweden, Finland and Italy - in the latter marginally.²⁹ But the differences do not seem to have narrowed in Norway and Portugal, nor in England in the 40 years for which we have data.³⁰

This question concerns what Gould called the *elasticity of response*.³¹ Even if we assume that there was a reasonable spread of information, there is no particular reason to believe that the responses were the same in different parts of the country. A different set of expectations could, for the sake of argument, draw more people from one area than from another. This is clearly almost impossible to test directly since there could be a hundred reasons why emigration did not occur.

The elasticity of response has been tested indirectly using English data for the period 1861-1900. The study showed that emigration from some of the important industrial counties peaked in only one of the decades for which data exist. This was the decade (the 1880s) in which the material benefits of emigration were greatest. (For example, job creation was relatively high in the USA.) If we could be sure that prospective emigrants from these counties, and from those counties with consistently high emigration rates were in possession of comparable information, then their elasticity of response must have been different. In other words, inhabitants of those counties would only emigrate when it was exceptionally

²⁹ *ibid.* p. 284.

³⁰ Norman & Rundblom, *Transatlantic connections*, pp. 65-7; Brettell, *Men who migrate, women who wait*, pp. 86-7; Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 285-98.

³¹ Gould, 'European inter-continental emigration; the role of diffusion and feedback', p. 302.

advantageous to do so.³² This conclusion can only be tentative, for a variety of reasons.

III

The neo-classical view that nineteenth century emigrants moved relatively freely within a developing international economy implies that income differentials between origin and destination countries would tend to narrow. There is, however, a considerable literature about recent migration from third to first world countries which suggests that this will not occur. The argument is as follows. Modern capitalist development has created a demand for low cost, low skilled labour in the 'core' countries which can be met by immigration from the 'peripheral' countries. But the immigrants are confined for several reasons, including lack of skill, to a limited part of the economy. In other words the 'core-periphery' view - as we will call it - implies the existence of a dual labour market in the developed countries. Many of the migrants are 'birds of passage' or 'target earners' who return to the periphery where their earnings partially support other people.³³ Put another way, the emigration decisions are dominated by remittance decisions.³⁴ The 'core-periphery' formulation can be applied, in part, to emigration in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. We know, for example, that remittances provided cash for a variety of purposes in Europe,

³² Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 205-12.

³³ See, for example, Piore, *Birds of passage*. The Harris-Todaro model has been the most influential theoretical exposition of migration within a dual labour market. Harris & Todaro, 'Migration, unemployment and development'.

³⁴ Remittances were also used to finance additional emigrants, usually family members. For example, a third of those entering the U.S.A. in 1908-14 were travelling on tickets that had been paid for by someone else. Dillingham Commission, quoted in Jerome, *Migration and business cycles*, p.70. Estimates for specific periods of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggest that 30-40% of Scandinavian emigrants travelled on pre-paid tickets. Brattne, *Brodarne Larsson*, p.276; Kero, *Migration from Finland*, pp.177-8.

including the purchase of livestock and the provision of dowries. Examples from our period would include temporary emigration from northern Portugal, Croatia, Poland, Greece and southern Italy.³⁵

To take the northern Portugese example.³⁶ Partible inheritance was introduced to the Northern Provinces in 1863, leading, apparently, to the sub-division of agricultural holdings and to the growth of temporary emigration. An economist would probably say, that in the absence of alternative employment in the Northern Portugese provinces a substantial fall in income would occur unless there was a substantial fall in fertility or permanent emigration or an increase in the capital available in agriculture. In the Portugese case the solution seems to have been an increase in the amount of capital from remittances rather permanent emigration. And, if the 'solution' to the overpopulation problem was temporary rather than permanent emigration there is no reason to expect that the social structure or the agriculture practice of northern Portugal, and other temporary emigration regions, would change.³⁷

The 'international economy' view and the 'core periphery' view have different political implications. Essentially they are about the ability of capitalist development to increase welfare generally or partially. In the 'core-periphery'

³⁵ Brettell, *Men who migrate, women who wait*, pp. 70-1, 78. Palairt, 'The 'new' immigration and the newest', pp. 44-5;. Morawska, *For bread with butter*, pp. 45, 65-7; Puskas, 'Hungarian migration patterns', pp. 238-9, 245. The main exception to this pattern was Ireland. Irish emigrants always had a low rate of return and a high percentage of females. There are a variety of political, social and economic explanations of this phenomenon. e.g Miller, *Emigrants and exiles*, p. 556; Jackson, 'Women in nineteenth century Ireland,' p. 1007.

³⁶ Brettell, *Men who migrate, women who wait*, pp. 70-8.

³⁷ The northern Portugese example may be contrasted with post Famine Ireland where the 'solution' was a fall in total fertility and permanent rather than temporary emigration. O'Grada, *Great Irish Famine*. pp. 69-70; Solar, 'Great Irish Famine', pp.116, 123-8.

model, income differentials between rich and poor countries do not narrow. Hence, we would expect that emigration rates would be higher than in the 'international economy' model. It is difficult to distinguish between the two models in practice. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both national incomes and the value of international trade were rising. It is likely that income growth in an emigration country was associated with an increase in the information available to prospective emigrants. Rising incomes in European countries in the late nineteenth century, relative to incomes in the destination countries, are compatible, both with a rise in the emigration rate - as in Italy, and with a fall - as in Norway, Sweden and Denmark.

It is implicit in the 'core periphery' model that the international labour market was segmented. There is also an implication that emigration was confined to relatively narrow streams by culture and prejudice. There have been several attempts to test whether there was discrimination in the United States against immigrants from southern and eastern Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Unfortunately, this research has been rather inconclusive.³⁸ In general, in a reasonably free labour market, as there was in the late nineteenth century, it would seem unlikely that employers would pay lower wages to immigrants than to natives of identical qualifications and experience. It would mean that employers were paying more than they needed to natives. On the other hand, if the labour market was not completely open, discrimination would be in the interests of the protected workers, for example, the members of a trade union.³⁹ This argument would imply that discrimination against immigrants

³⁸ There is a summary of the literature in McGouldrick & Tannen, 'Did American manufacturers discriminate against immigrants?' pp. 724, 741-3. see also Williamson, 'American prices and urban inequality', pp. 319-20.

³⁹ The causation could run the other way. If native workers refused to work alongside immigrants for other than economic motives, it would have the effect of confining immigrants to particular sectors of the labour market.

would be higher *ceteris paribus* in the late twentieth century than in the late nineteenth century.

By the late nineteenth century, a high proportion of European emigration - which was coming from the poorer parts of southern and eastern Europe - was temporary, and was undertaken for the purpose of supplementing the family income in Europe. Going *overseas* from southern and eastern Europe for this purpose was a new experience in the later nineteenth century. But people had been making temporary moves (sometimes connected with the harvest) both within these countries and to other European countries for some time. Emigration could simply be 'the American option' - as the Sicilians are said to have described it.⁴⁰

The distinction between the earlier 'settlers' from northern Europe and the later 'temporary' emigrants from southern Europe - 'new' versus 'old' in American usage - is largely arbitrary, however.⁴¹ We know that only some 20% of the 'old' emigrants from the Scandinavian countries who left before 1914 returned. This compares with 30-50% of the 'new' emigrants from most of the southern and eastern European countries in the twenty years before the First World War.⁴²

⁴⁰ Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco*, p. 41. It is said that, in the nineteenth century, the westernmost villages in Cornwall referred to the United States as 'the next parish.' Rowe, *The hard rock men*, p. v.

⁴¹ This distinction became popular as a result of the investigations of the US Congressional Enquiry of 1907-10 - the Dillingham Commission.

⁴² In the early twentieth century, 30-40% of northern Portugese, Croats, Serbs, Hungarians and Poles and 40-50% of Italians returned. Brettell, *Men who migrate, women who wait*, p. 84; Gould, *European inter-continental emigration: patterns and causes*, p. 609; Kuznets and Rubin, *Immigration and the foreign born*, p.45; Krajlic 'Round trip Croatia', p. 406; Puskas, 'Hungarian migration patterns', p. 223. Hvidt, *Flight to America*, p.157; Tederbrand, 'Re-migrants from America to Sweden', p. 359; Virtanen, 'Finnish emigrants in the overseas migration movement', p. 395.

But the 'oldest' emigration country, England, also had a high return rate. In the fifty years before the First World War, returns to England were not much less than 40% of outward movement.⁴³ There is also evidence of temporary emigration from England and Scotland in the earlier nineteenth century⁴⁴ and there may also have been temporary emigration from Scandinavia in this period.⁴⁵

In the literature, return migration rates are often quoted in a way that is open to mis-interpretation. This is because emigration for the second and even third time was relatively common - which, of course, they must have been if the emigration was truly temporary. Hence, the ratio between outward and inward movement underestimates the proportion of *individuals* who did not return. The frequently quoted estimate that 58% of all Italian immigrants who entered the United States in the early twentieth century returned, is perfectly compatible with another estimate that more than half never returned and settled in Italy.⁴⁶ One estimate refers to the number of arrivals, the other to the number of individuals.

The key question about return migration concerns *intention* - whether the emigrants intended to 'settle' in an overseas country, to stay for a long period or

⁴³ The rate of return of Scottish overseas migrants was probably comparable, but cannot be calculated. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 135-40.

⁴⁴ Erickson, 'Who were the English and Scottish emigrants?', p. 117. Erickson, 'The English', pp. 325-6.

⁴⁵ Norman & Rundblom, *Transatlantic connections*, p. 107; Tederbrand, 'Sources for the study of Swedish emigration', pp. 209-10. The existence of temporary migration from the northern European countries in the early nineteenth century implies that with more adequate transport, individual emigration from these countries would have been higher in this period.

⁴⁶ The former is the difference between alien departures from the United States in 1907/8-1913/14 and alien arrivals in 1904/5-1910/11. Gould, 'Return migration from the U.S.A', p. 86.

to return quickly.⁴⁷ Again, the problem that must be faced is that we have no direct evidence about motivation. It is known, however, that most southern and eastern Europe emigrants who did return, did so within about five years. This is consistent with their being target earners.⁴⁸ We can also infer from the difference in the sex ratio of returning and outward bound emigrants, that some had already decided to return before they left Europe. There were relatively more males among emigrants returning to Europe than among those leaving. Unless there was some factor in the overseas countries which made male immigrants consistently more likely to return than female immigrants, the selectivity towards males must reflect a decision made in Europe.⁴⁹ (The emigrants cannot have changed gender.) What we cannot test, however, are the intentions of those who did not return. It is quite possible that most European emigrants in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries intended to return at some time. The point is that only some had the opportunity to do so.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Some emigrants returned because their migration had been a failure. This cannot have been the main reason for return, however, not least because periods of high returns were not associated with periods of low outward movement. This would have been the case if the experience of returned emigrants had been discouraging. Direct evidence about the subsequent experience of returned emigrants is rather scarce, but what evidence there is, suggests that returned emigrants were no less prosperous than non-emigrants. Brettell, *Men who migrate, women who wait*, pp. 113-4; Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco*, p. 60; Foerster, *The Italian emigration of our times*, pp. 454-5; Kamphoefner, 'Volume and composition,' pp. 300, 305; Morawska, *For bread with butter*, p. 65; Saloutos, *They remembered America*, pp. 117-31; Semmingsen, 'Norwegian emigration', p. 160.

⁴⁸ Palairat, 'The new immigration and the newest', pp. 44-5; Morawska, *For bread with butter*, p. 70.

⁴⁹ Livi Bacci, *L'immigrazione e l'assimilazione degli italiani negli Stati Uniti*, p. 41.

⁵⁰ Some historians have said that the majority of Italians in the United States in this period would have claimed that their residence in the United States was temporary. Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco*, p. 66.

To summarise. The idea that there was a change in the nature of emigration in the later nineteenth century depends on three factors. (a) A shift in the economies of the destination countries which created more jobs in the urban areas and which were relatively unskilled. (b) A fall in the cost and an increase in the convenience of transport. These changes affected all emigrants permanent and temporary. And (c) an increase in the proportion of emigrants whose motivations were different. The problem is, that a greater proportion of European emigration came from northern and western Europe when conditions favoured permanent emigration and a greater proportion came from southern and eastern Europe when conditions favoured temporary emigration.

IV

In the later nineteenth century, many of the countries that were losing large numbers of emigrants had relatively high rates of economic growth. This raises the question of the geographical origins of the emigrants. A simple 'push-pull' model would imply that the emigrants came dis-proportionately from the less advantaged sections of the population. This would imply that the emigrants were more likely to be 'peripheral' - to come from parts of the economy that were growing less fast than average, or alternatively where growth was relatively fast but technical change was threatening some occupations. There are examples from many parts of Europe of agricultural emigrants who were 'peripheral' in this sense.⁵¹ There are also examples of 'peripheral' industrial emigrants, for example, a large number

⁵¹ For the growth of a 'rural proletariat' in Europe, see Bade, 'German emigration', pp. 67-8; Morawska, *For bread with butter*, p. 25; Walker, *Germany and the Emigration*, pp. 165-6; Gjerde, *From peasants to farmers*, pp. 16-24, 37-9; Zubrzycki, 'Emigration from Poland', p. 252. The effect on non-agricultural incomes is shown in Collins, 'Irish emigration to Dundee and Paisley', p. 77; Moky, *Why Ireland starved*, pp. 281, 290-2; Zubrzycki, 'Patterns of peasant migration', p. 77.

of those leaving Britain in the early nineteenth century.⁵² A detailed study of parts of North Rhein-Westfalia showed that emigrants were more likely to come from areas characterised by proto-industrialisation than from areas characterised by heavy industry. Interestingly, they were more likely to come from proto-industrial than peasant agricultural areas.⁵³ But there are many examples of an alternative scenario where the emigrants came from places or had followed occupations that we would consider to have been at the 'centre' of economic change. We could define a capital city as 'central', for example.

The relationship between migration to the cities and emigration has attracted a considerable literature.⁵⁴ In a frequently stated formulation, the cities are seen as alternatives to rural emigration. The implication of this view is that the rural areas were the main source of emigrants. The rural population is assumed to be 'peripheral', in the sense in which we are using the term. The ability of the cities to absorb the 'surplus' rural population determined the rate of emigration. This implies that, other things being equal, the higher the degree of urbanisation (and industrialisation), the lower the emigration rate. It also implies that if the rate of urbanisation and industrialisation increased, the emigration rate would fall.⁵⁵ An example is the fall in emigration rates from

⁵² Erickson, 'Emigration to the U.S.A from the British Isles', 'Emigration from the British Isles to the U.S.A in 1831'. Van Vugt, 'Welsh emigration', p.560.

⁵³ Kamphoefner, 'At the crossroads of economic development', p. 189.

⁵⁴ For Britain see, Thomas, *Migration and economic growth*, pp. 124-8; Jones, 'Background to emigration from Great Britain', pp. 45-6, 60-2.

⁵⁵ A more sophisticated view is that rural-urban migration and domestic investment were linked, as were emigration and overseas investment. Hence, in periods of high domestic investment rural-urban migration would be high, and emigration low and vice versa. See, Thomas, *Migration and urban growth*, pp. 92, 175; Thomas, *Migration and urban development*, pp. 45-54; Easterlin, *Population, labour force and long swings in economic growth*, p. 342, for the analysis of the so-called 'Atlantic Economy'.

eastern Germany after the 1880s, which have been linked to the industrialisation of western Germany and, in particular, to the increase in the demand for labour in the Ruhr.⁵⁶

There are, however, examples where urbanisation was not associated with falling emigration rates. Britain is particularly interesting. Britain was the most urbanised and industrialised country in Europe in the nineteenth century. But the rate of emigration was not falling. A comprehensive study of migration in England and Wales in the period 1861-1900 confirmed that the cities did exert a powerful influence on the rate of migration from the rural areas. But the rate of emigration from the rural areas was not related to the attraction of the cities. There was no simple trade-off between emigration and internal migration. Or at least between emigration and internal migration defined in this particular way.⁵⁷ This is also the conclusion of some Swedish studies.⁵⁸

Another conclusion of some recent studies is that, in many countries, emigration rates from the rural areas were not higher than from the urban areas. By the late nineteenth century, mean emigration rates from the urban districts of Denmark, Finland, Norway and Britain exceeded those from the rural districts. Individual cities in other countries are also known to have had relatively high

⁵⁶ Bade, 'German emigration', pp. 124-5; Bade, 'German emigration; continental immigration', p. 141; Kollman, 'The process of industrialisation in Germany', p. 61; Walker, *Germany and the Emigration*, pp. 189-91. There were 1,000,000 foreign workers in Germany in 1900.

⁵⁷ Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 213-49.

⁵⁸ Rondhal, *Emigration folke emflytning*, p. 273; Tederbrand, *Vasternoeland och nordamerika*, p. 307; Ostregren, 'Swedish migration to North America', p. 132; Carlsson, 'Chronology and composition', pp. 128-34.

emigration rates. In the British case, this meant that emigration was dominated by the urban areas since the country was highly urbanised.⁵⁹

The interpretation of urban and rural emigration rates has been controversial, particularly in regard to Scandinavian migration. Data that trace emigrants through parts of their life cycle are extremely rare, of course. But there are studies of Scandinavian cities which show that 'stage-emigration', as it is called, was common. Many of the emigrants had originally moved to the cities from another part of the country. The studies show that 25-50% of the urban emigrants had not been born in the cities from which they left.⁶⁰

It is possible that there was a difference in the attractiveness of the larger and the smaller towns. Scandinavian historians have developed the idea of the 'urban influence field'. Urban influence fields have been identified for most of the larger Scandinavian cities, some of the north German cities and St. Petersburg.⁶¹ Only the larger towns are thought to have attracted migrants from the surrounding rural areas, which in consequence, had low emigration rates. The smaller towns did not exert urban influence fields and in consequence, emigration rates from the surrounding rural areas would be expected to be higher.

⁵⁹ Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 143-7; Hvidt, *Flight to America*, pp. 41, 52; Kero, *Migration from Finland*, p. 54; Semmingsen, 'Emigration from Scandinavia', p.53.

⁶⁰ Less than a half of the emigrants from Bergen, 1875-94, 45% of emigrants from Stockholm and 25% of those from Stockholm in 1880-93 had not been born there. Semmingsen, 'Norwegian emigration', p. 154; Hvidt, *Flight to America*, pp. 58-9; Nilsson, *Emigrationen fran Stockholm till Nordamerika*, p. 365.

⁶¹ Bergen, Oslo, Stockholm, Goteborg, Malmo, Norkopping, Helsinki, Tampere, Turku, Copenhagen, St. Petersburg. Hvidt, *Flight to America*, p. 58; Kero, *Migration from Finland*, p. 54; Semmingsen, 'Emigration from Scandinavia', p. 154; Rundblom and Norman, *From Sweden to America*, pp. 134-6, Rondhal, *Emigration folke emflytning*, p. 269; Kero, *Migration from Finland*, p. 54; Norman and Rundblom, *Transatlantic connections*, p. 81.

The question may be complicated by gender differences. In some countries, women were more likely to move internally than men. In Sweden, for example, it is likely that women were more likely to have been stage emigrants.⁶² This raises the question of the relationship between male and female emigration - which is comparatively easy to explain- and the relationship between male emigration and female internal migration - which is very difficult to explain.⁶³

There remain some important questions concerning the migration decision. For example, why did the stage-emigrants originally move to the urban areas? If, for the sake of argument, they had already decided to emigrate before they left a rural area, then they were, in effect, rural emigrants. If on the other hand, the original decision was to move to a city and the decision to emigrate was taken while the main influences on them were *urban*, they can be classified as urban emigrants. This brings us back to the question of the proportion of the emigrants who may have been 'peripheral' to the development of the economy. Or, perhaps, thought that they were. The distinction between 'peripheral' and 'central' emigrants is easy to make in theory but, for obvious reasons, very difficult to establish in practice.

There are some limited Swedish data sets which allow a proxy measure of the 'true' rate of urban and rural emigration to be estimated. The proxy measure is the period of previous residence in an urban area before emigration. The assumption is that an emigrant who had been living in an urban area for only a

⁶² Norman and Rundblom, *Transatlantic connections*, p. 79.

⁶³ Over the whole period 1815-1930, male emigrants from most countries outnumbered female by two to one although male ratios rose from the later nineteenth century. The major exceptions were Sweden which always had relatively large numbers of men and Ireland which usually had large numbers of women. For some explanations of these phenomena see, Norman & Rundblom, 'Migration patterns in the Nordic countries'. p. 51 and Jackson, 'Women in nineteenth century Ireland'. p. 1009

short period had already made the decision to emigrate before he or she left the rural area. The most important study concerns Stockholm between 1880 and 1893. (Stockholm was not the main port of embarkation in Sweden.) The majority (75%) of the emigrants from Stockholm had not been born there. But nearly a half of them had lived in Stockholm for at least five years. Hence, relatively few of the urban emigrants can have been transients.⁶⁴ Unfortunately, there are very few comparable studies.⁶⁵ It would be fair to say that the so-called 'through traffic issue' has not been resolved.

It is also possible to use circumstantial evidence to distinguish between three groups of emigrants - urban-born (who went directly from the urban areas), rural-born (who went directly from the rural areas) and rural-urban stage emigrants. English and Welsh emigrants can be classified in this way for the period 1861-1900. It was found that about 67% of the emigrants came from the urban areas and about 33% from the rural areas. But no more than a third of the urban emigrants could have been born in the rural areas.⁶⁶ This evidence would suggest that the majority of the decisions to emigrate from England were not taken on the 'periphery' but at the 'centre' of the economy. There also appears to have been a fundamental difference between emigration from English and from Scandinavian cities. Two-thirds of urban emigrants from England and Wales had been born (and presumably brought up) in an urban environment. In Scandinavia,

⁶⁴ Nilsson, *Emigrationen fran Stockholm till Nordamerika*, p. 310.

⁶⁵ Another study of a small industrial town in northern Sweden came to similar conclusions. Tederbrand, *Vasternmoeland och nordamerika*, p. 308.

⁶⁶ The theoretical maximum of rural-urban stage emigration was calculated by assuming that a move from a rural to an urban area doubled the propensity to emigrate. See, Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, pp. 260-1, 264-5.

the urban emigrants were much less likely to have been born in the urban areas.⁶⁷

V

Emigration affected large areas of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, every occupation and all classes of people. This makes it difficult to explain. There are general explanations, of course. Emigration was related to the growth of the international economy. Emigrants moved from areas of lower to higher incomes. These explanations are generally true but also trivial. They do not address the key question which is taken to be the *relative incidence* of emigration. Why did some places produce relatively more emigrants than other places that were outwardly similar? We now know some of the important parameters of emigration in some countries - for example, the regional incidence of emigration. But, in the long run, we will probably obtain more insight from local studies.

This is not to argue against quantification. But, unfortunately, most questions of motivation are not amenable to large scale quantitative analysis. We need more detailed studies of individual and family behaviour - particularly behaviour over the life cycle. (The questions that are asked will have to be very closely specified.) A fruitful area of research might be the detailed analysis of the areas where one kind of migration overlapped another. Where internal and overseas migration occurred in the same area, for example. Or both temporary and long term emigration. It might then be possible to get a little closer to the answers to questions like 'how did chains spread' and 'what was the objective cost of migration?'

⁶⁷ Possibly three quarters of the emigrants from London had been born in London, for example. But three-quarters of the emigrants from Stockholm had not been born there. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy*, p.259; Nilsson, *Emigrationen fran Stockholm till Nordamerika*, p. 310.

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