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## Article

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## **Migrations – Local Experiences in a Globalized World (Case of Slovenia)**

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### **Abstract**

*Migrations were one of the crucial economic and social questions of the period of the last two centuries in Slovenia. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the emigration and immigration flows were in strong correlation with the changing cultural, social and economic context in Slovenia, as at the international level. Slovenia became a multi-ethnic and multicultural society. Migrations were the spontaneous answer of inhabitants to rural overpopulation and the lack of economic and social prospects, lack of opportunities for improving their lives not only in the short term, but from the long-term perspective as well. Migrations were a useful tool to balance the number of population and available income on a macroeconomic level. The author presents three contexts of migration movements: the time up until World War I, the Interwar period and the time after World War II. Each of these periods represents a different context in the national and international framework. The contexts of emigration include three measurable categories, three variables determining the extent of migrations in the Slovenian space. Thus, the contexts include rural overpopulation, industrialization and urbanization. Migrations changed their form and direction in the second half of the twentieth century when Slovenia, with accelerated economic growth, became an immigration country, prevailing for the people from the territory of the former Yugoslav republics.*

**Keywords:** migrations, emigration and immigration, history, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Slovenia

### 要旨

人口流動はスロベニアの過去 2 世紀間において重大な経済的・社会的問題の 1 つであった。19 世紀から 20 世紀にかけて、人口の流出と流入は、スロベニアの文化的、社会的、経済的状況の変化と深い相関関係があり、国際関係レベルの現象であった。スロベニアはこの 2 世紀の間に多民族・多

文化社会に変化した。スロベニアの人口流動は農村部の人口過剰に対する自然な現象であるが、同時に、経済的・社会的将来性の欠如、及び短期的・長期的な生活改善の機会欠如に起因するものであった。人口流動はマクロ経済の観点から人口と直接収入のバランスにとって有効に働くものである。本稿ではスロベニアの人口流動を3つの時期に区分して論じる。すなわち第1次世界大戦までの期間、第1次世界大戦と第2次世界大戦のはざま期、第2次世界大戦後である。これらの時期はそれぞれ国家的及び国際的枠組みの状況が異なっている。スロベニアの人口流動は3種に分類でき、3つの変数によりその程度を決定することが可能である。すなわち農村部の人口過剰、工業化、都市化である。スロベニアの人口流動は20世紀後半において質的に変化し、急速な経済成長により移民受入国となり、特に旧ユーゴスラビア共和国からの移民受入が顕著である。

キーワード：人口流動、人口流出、人口流入、歴史、19世紀と20世紀、スロベニア

## **1. Introduction**

Migrations represent a very important research issue in the contemporary humanities and social science disciplines. This is by no means surprising. Already early on extensive migrations from Europe to the United States of America or within Europe itself in the nineteenth century, and to Europe in the twentieth century received much attention. The trend of the increasingly extensive and deepening migration flows in the twentieth century also brought about a new dimension of research. Migrations turned out to be a very complex social phenomenon with numerous implications for the sending countries as well as the receiving countries (Massey 1988).

My intention is to present the Slovenian case of migrations within the European context in the form of a very short overview. I will try to point out the most basic features of the Slovene migration processes during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since I am an economic historian, it will be no surprise that my interpretation framework is going to be based on the economic history background of migration. As expected, the processes of migration in Slovenia were deeply marked by general economic and social backwardness; by the fact

that Slovenia was on the verge of the European economic and social modernization process. Within the Habsburg Monarchy, Slovenia was among the group of the least developed regions. In terms of economic and social development Slovenia was a latecomer, a country that entered the modernization process a few decades later than other western and central European countries (Lazarević 2015: 12-36).

## **2. General context**

When we discuss migration then, we should start with the claim that migration was very important for Europe during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for its social and economic structure. In both centuries, Europe was a place of large-scale migration. The nineteenth century was marked by massive emigration of Europeans to The New World, mostly to the United States of America. This migration flow is considered, for instance by Klaus Bade, as an exodus of Europeans. Around 48 million people left different European countries toward the United States of America. In relative terms this figure represents approximately 12% of the European population at the turn of the century. The nineteenth century was also a period when the transition from a relatively liberal international migration policy (or the absence of such a policy at all) to the regulation of migration happened (Bade 2003: 81-116). This shift was in strong connection with the concept of statehood and the concept of citizenship (Kalc 2016: 23-34).

With different types of rules, European states implemented restrictions on international migration flows at the end of the nineteenth century. The interest of individual states came to the forefront. One state would restrict the emigration of young men for military, defense reasons, another state would be under pressure from trade unions to protect the domestic labor market, just to mention some examples. Northwestern Europe and parts of Central Europe at that time witnessed massive internal migration, i.e. from the countryside to the urban industrial centers. The main driving force for migrations, both international and internal, was overpopulation in rural areas. Growth of Gross Domestic Product and creation of jobs in non-agrarian sectors lagged behind population growth. At the same time, due to the gradual introduction of modern technology, agricultural productivity was on the rise while demand for an agricultural workforce was gradually decreasing. With ideas of a better life, of new opportunities, a large

portion of the European population migrated overseas or to domestic industrial centers with an increased pace of urbanization (Bade 2003: 53-80).

The twentieth century was marked by the transformation of Europe from an emigration continent to an immigration continent, at least where the western part of Europe was concerned. This historical step came about after the Second World War. Twentieth century Europe survived two great wars both of which caused huge population losses. In the first, around 12 million people (without counting Russia), or 3.5% of the European population, lost their lives; in the second, even more, with around 40 million people losing their lives. Forced migrations during the First World War were just an introduction to the atrocities of the Second World War when 30 million people were displaced. Political migrations (Russian revolution, Spanish civil war, Eastern Europeans after 1945) and exchange of population (for instance between Greece and Turkey in the 1920s, or Germans after 1945) were on the agenda. All of these processes dramatically changed the demographic picture of Europe. At that time, the long-term birth rates also started to decline. In combination with the increasing economic development from the end of the 1950s onward, the highly industrialized western European countries experienced a lack of workforce. The regulated inflow of migrants from Mediterranean countries and former colonies followed. Western Europe, in terms of post-war political geography, changed its image. In just a few decades western states became multiethnic, multiracial and multicultural societies (Aldcroft 2001; Berend 2006).

In this regard, I should emphasize the case of former Yugoslavia. Yugoslavia practiced a liberal type of communism; it took its own path after the break with the Soviet Union in 1948 and subsequent political and economic expulsion from the East European communist bloc. Yugoslavia was the only communist country to allow migration of its citizens to western countries. Furthermore, economic migrations were regulated in close cooperation with certain western countries, for instance Germany, Austria and Sweden, in accordance with their demand for workers. Yugoslavia not only officially recognized unemployment, in contrast to other communist countries, but also exported its unemployed workers to western European states. The remittance of migrants became an important item in the Yugoslav balance of payment (Baučić 1972).

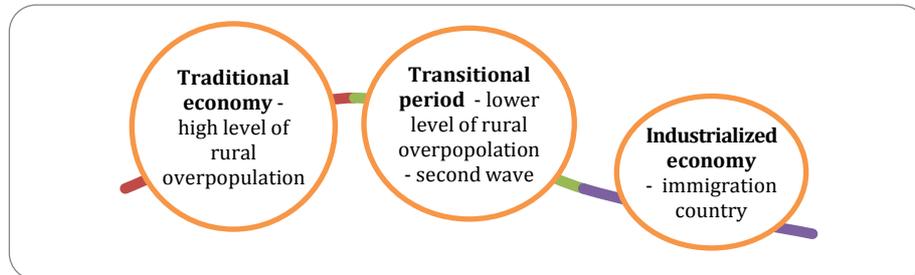
### **3. Economic background**

The topic of migration has also been taken up by Slovenian historiography, which has paid quite a lot of attention to emigration from the Slovenian territory. The extent and direction of migratory flows, as well as temporal and regional distribution have thus been determined. Even research thematizations of integration of Slovenian communities into their new environments, their organizations, and their cultural and religious life have been examined. Thus Slovenian historiography has focused on the two manifestations of Slovenian migrations which are the most evident and the easiest to measure (Drnovšek 2009: 29-50). However, the home environments, which generated the emigration flow, remained unexplored. The issues regarding the economic dimensions of migration also remained outside the scope of the research interest. This has started to change lately with some research initiatives, which are trying to explore the processes in local communities after migration has happened.

As we discuss migrations in the Slovenian space, we should bring attention to the basic economic and social situation of the Slovenian environment until World War II. The population growth was ahead of economic development or GDP growth. The central social problem with numerous implications was how to provide enough work, and at least modestly jobs, how to increase the income and ensure that the population could survive. In this regard, I can give three introductory statements:

- 1) The core of the issue was the question of the rural population, very pressing until World War II. The dilemma in agriculture was how to ensure market orientation and higher yield of Slovenian agriculture with its dominant small ownership structure. Only in this way could the income of the population working in the agricultural sector be higher and thus give a better living standard.
- 2) Rural overpopulation was the primary reason for migrations within and outside of Slovenia, as in the rest of Europe as well.
- 3) External and internal migrations were equally important for Slovenia and had an equal function.

Before proceeding to a more detailed analysis of the above statements, the temporal dimensions of the migrations in the Slovenian space should also be defined. In this regard we can distinguish three periods, as shown in the figure below.



(Lazarević 2015: 64)

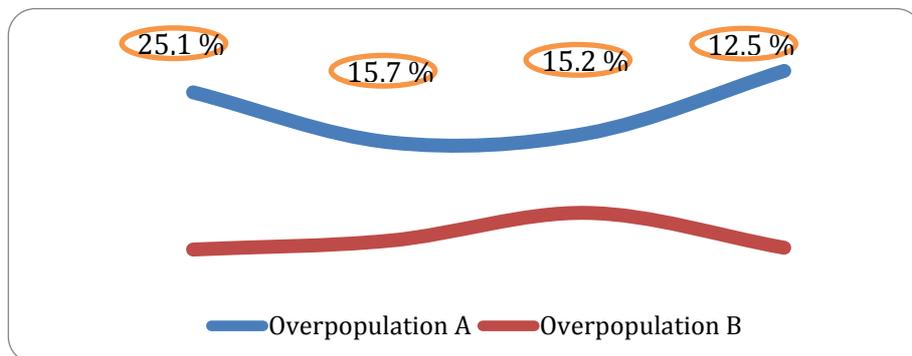
**Fig. 1: Contexts of migration movements**

Fig. 1 presents three contexts of migration movements: the time until World War I, the Interwar period and the time after World War II. Each of these periods represents a different context in the national and international framework. I would also like to emphasise that I see migration itself as a process of interaction of the Slovenian space with the international space. The contexts of emigration are envisioned or distinguished from each other in three measurable categories, three variables determining the extent of migrations in the Slovenian space. Thus the contexts include rural overpopulation, industrialization and urbanization. Therefore, emigration is obviously the consequence of changes through an extended period of time. Each context has its own characteristics, which need to be clearly presented.

The first period of Slovenian migrations was until World War I. Only as late as the 1880s did industrialization gain the character of a process, and basic infrastructure (transport, finance, energy) established. All of this took place decades after other, more developed environments. Agriculture was the basic economic activity. In 1910, 67% percent of the population was still employed in agriculture. Just for comparison, forty years before, in 1870, the share of agricultural population in Great Britain was 14%, in Belgium 17%, in The Netherlands 35% and in Austria 64% (Broadberry and O'Rourke 2010: 149). The level of commercialization of Slovene agriculture was low, and the level of self-supply was still high. Without the modernization of agriculture – that is, increased productivity and income growth of the rural population – faster industrialization could not take place.

High-quality human and natural resources, as well as capital and technology, were in short supply or used insufficiently and inefficiently. In terms of knowledge and technology, the Slovenian space depended on the importation of required resources as well as trained technical staff. The Slovenian environment of the time was trapped in a vicious circle of poverty: low income, low savings, modest productivity and slow accumulation of capital as the prerequisite for new investments. Economic development was dreadfully slow and could not keep up with population growth. The consequences were more than obvious. Most of the agricultural production was used by the population for its own survival. Productivity growth in agriculture was gradual and low. Increased productivity in the agricultural sector through technology was hindered by the abundant workforce. As the land was the basic means of survival, the pressure to divide what had already been small estates was considerable. There was little room for investment in agriculture. Rural inhabitants faced overpopulation; as income was too low with regard to the number of people, therefore the level of relative poverty increased.

The following figure supports the thesis of a direct connection between rural overpopulation and emigration. It shows, as an example, the situation of four districts with the highest rates of rural overpopulation in Carniola and emigration to the United States before World War I. Overpopulation is measured with two parameters: the number of people per district size (A) and the number of people per arable land available in the district (B). Obviously, the regions with the highest rural overpopulation rates had, at the same time, the highest emigration rates.



(Lazarević 2015: 67)

**Fig. 2: Rural overpopulation and emigration**

The solution for such a situation could only be found in the restructuring of the development model. Besides the technological renewal of agriculture, jobs had to be created in other sectors so that a part of the population could move from the agricultural sector. It turned out that people were the only resource in abundance in the Slovenian space. The extent of the available workforce significantly exceeded the requirements of the Slovenian economy.

The problem of rural overpopulation started resolving itself in the final decades of the nineteenth century. It was addressed by a single solution, manifesting itself in three ways. The basic manner of lowering the rural overpopulation rates was to migrate from the rural areas, from the agricultural sector. Emigration took place in three ways:

- 1) Migration of the population within the Slovenian territory as a consequence of domestic industrialization;
- 2) Migration of the population to the outer reaches of the Slovenian territory and to other countries of the Habsburg Monarchy;
- 3) Migration of the population to the United States and partly also to other European countries, more especially Germany.

#### **4. Slovenian case of migrations**

In order to explain the process of lowering the rural overpopulation rates, let us begin with the domestic industrialization. As already stated above, industrialization became a continuous process in the 1880s. In the period until World War I approximately 40,000 jobs were created in the industrial sector, mostly in industries based on the exploitation of natural resources. Therefore, the development was territorially dispersed and consequently the level of urbanization was still low. Industrialization, despite noticeable progress in comparison with the preceding period, simply failed to create enough jobs. The domestic industrial development was still too modest to significantly contribute to lower the rural overpopulation rates.

An important change took place in the second half of the nineteenth century. The Slovenian space was crossed by railroad connecting the triangle between Graz, Trieste and Zagreb. With their position near the border, these cities spread their

influence deep into the Slovenian space. As dynamic regional centers of political, cultural and economic power, these cities attracted economic and migration flows from a significant part of the Slovenian territory. There was no center in Slovenia that could measure up to them. Before World War I strong Slovenian communities existed in all three of these cities (Lazarević 2009: 15-36).

However, the most important contribution to the reduction of the rural overpopulation rates was emigration to the United States. So the turn of the nineteenth century was the period of classic emigration. At that point national as well as international circumstances were most favorably inclined toward emigration. The Slovenian emigration flow in the final decades of the nineteenth century was a part of the emigration flow of the East European nations, and it had a twofold character. It involved the regional as well as economic and sectorial relocation of the population. It distinguished itself from the emigration of the previous decades since it did not only result in a spatial migration of the population, but also in a sectorial relocation from agriculture to the industrial sector. It was mostly the rural population who emigrated. These people only had basic education, which determined their position in their new environments. In view of the poor educational structure of society this is not surprising, since on the other hand the Slovenian space also depended on the importation of technical staff for the needs of industrialization.

Slovenia was among the most affected countries in Europe regarding emigration. 23% alone of the Slovene population migrated to the U.S.A. (Peternel 2003: 29). This is a very high proportion. Ahead of Slovenia were Great Britain (41% of its 1900 population), Norway (36%), Portugal (30%), Italy (29%), Spain (23%), and Sweden (22%). In the middle range were Denmark (14%), Switzerland (13%), Finland (13%), Austria-Hungary (10%), and Germany (8%); and in the low range were Belgium (3%), Russia-Poland (2%), and France (1%) (Massey 1988: 385-386).

In the economic sense, emigration from the rural areas had multiple consequences. On one hand, it was about inclusion into the wider economic space. It involved opening up and participating in the economic flow, with a mostly one-sided population exchange, providing the opportunity for economic and cultural transfer. On the other hand, emigration from the rural areas contributed to the

reduction of the rural overpopulation rates in the Slovenian environment. In the long run, emigration until World War I did not solve the problem of rural overpopulation, but alleviated it to the degree where the slow restructuring of agriculture became possible.

Based on published empirical material we can assume that emigration to the economic centers on the outer limits of the Slovenian territory was equally important for all regions, only at different levels. Trieste as a city where people migrated to exceeded the importance of Graz or Zagreb. As far as emigration abroad is concerned, literature provides the possibility of making a twofold conclusion. Emigration to the United States affected Carniola, the central part of Slovenia and the coastal region the most, while the second most important destination was Germany. On the other hand, it is possible to conclude that the lack of a more prominent emigration to the United States in Slovenian Styria was compensated for by emigration to other parts of the Habsburg Monarchy and Germany (Valenčič 1990b: 21).

In the nineteenth century a specific type of emigration developed in the western part of Slovenia. Due to poverty and economic hardship many women left their babies at home and traveled to Egypt. They were employed by rich Arab families or families of the British colonial administration as nurses. Not as ordinary nurses, but as wet nurses to their employers' babies. In local historical memoirs they were known as 'Aleksandrinke', since many of them worked in Alexandria in Egypt. It is interesting that lately this phenomenon has attracted a lot of research interest with regard to emigration of women and children. It also attracted media attention and the phenomenon of 'Aleksandrinke' has been reinstated in national historical remembrance (Koprivec 2006)

As we have seen, until 1918 – until the establishment of the Yugoslav state – migrations abroad and to the outer limits of the Slovenian space were very important for the process of lowering the rural overpopulation rates. With new borders and change in attitudes towards migration at the global level, the possibilities for emigration became restricted. Therefore, after 1918, internal migrations, as a consequence of accelerated industrialization and resulting urbanization, also became important. These involved the migration of the population from the rural areas to the industrial centers. The rate of rural

overpopulation started to decrease with the creation of new jobs in industry and services. Nevertheless, although the interwar period announced an exit from the vicious circle of poverty - the amount of savings and investments slowly but steadily increased, capital was being accumulated, and productivity as well as average income was also on the increase - there still were around 300,000 people living in deep poverty in the Slovene countryside (Lazarević 2009: 106-121). Even though evident economic progress was made, around 100,000 people still left Slovenia in the interwar period to western European countries like France, Belgium, The Netherlands or Germany, and also to Argentina, even to Egypt. In relative terms, this figure was round 7% of the Slovene population of the time (Drnovšek 2009: 29-50).

The majority were economic migrants, but not a small number were pushed to emigrate from political circumstances. The western part of today's Slovenia was, in the interwar period, under Italian rule. The fascist authorities began using severe physical and economic violence against the Slovene minority and their organizations. Therefore many migrated to Argentina or Slovenia/Yugoslavia to escape ethnic-based violence. In the interwar period, another form of migration emerged on a much larger scale than before, the so-called 'seasonal' emigration. Seasonal migrants formed the majority among the groups of people who looked for work abroad before the Second World War. It was typical of agriculture, when people, prevailingly from the eastern part of Slovenia, went to other European countries to work in agriculture up to late autumn. Seasonal migrations were stimulated by imposed restrictions and changing general attitudes toward international migrations in the interwar period.

The basic economic and social problem of the Slovenian space until as late as the 1960s was still rural overpopulation. Until World War II the population growth was ahead of economic development as I have already highlighted. This fact represented the main reason for external and internal migrations. As in the European context, the Second World War was a watershed. During the war many people were forced to migrate, 6% of the population lost their lives, and the number of political emigrants when the communists came to power in 1945 was also high. The demographic image of Slovenia at the end of the war was very different from what anyone could have expected when the war started in Slovenia in 1941 (Fischer et al. 2005: 1131-1132)

Finally, in the 1960s, economic and social development started overtaking population growth. In a few decades after World War II, declining birth rates, long-term increase of economic growth due to accelerated industrialization, and growth of social and personal level of wellbeing were registered in Slovenia under a communist economic and political environment. In the context of the Yugoslav liberal migration policy, Slovenes also were part of the emigration flows. Estimations exist, that approximately 100,000 people left Slovenia after the Second World War due to economic reasons. They started to look for their fortune in western European countries, mostly in German regions. At the end, the reserves of the national workforce were exhausted. Under circumstances of accelerated economic growth, a migration shift took place.

Migrations changed their form and direction in the 1970s. Slovenia was no longer an emigration country; it became a typical immigration country. Slovenia became an immigrant destination for people from the territory of former Yugoslav republics. In a few decades around 300,000 people migrated to Slovenia; just in the period from 1975 to 1982 almost 100,000 people (Drnovšek 2009: 29-50). The vast majority formally integrated themselves by obtaining Slovenian citizenship in 1991 when Slovenia proclaimed its independence. Nowadays Slovenia is a country that officially has a migrant population of around 4%. In reality, every fifth resident of Slovenia is of migrant origin, prevailing of some South Slav ethnic group; Croats, Bosnian Muslims or Serbs as first, second or third generation migrants. The postwar inflow of population to Slovenia from other Yugoslav regions replaced the war population losses, and political and economic emigration. The numbers are very close. Thus, the cultural, social and economic context changed profoundly, Slovenia also became a multi-ethnic and multicultural society.

## **5. Conclusion**

If we try to summarize the Slovene migrations, then we have to say that migration was one of the most crucial economic and social questions of the period of the two centuries that were explored in this paper. Migrations were the spontaneous answer of inhabitants to rural overpopulation and the lack of economic and social prospects, lack of opportunities for improving their lives not only in the short term,

but also in the long term perspective. Migrations were a useful tool to balance the number of population and available income on a macroeconomic level.

The majority of migrants were of rural origin, from the countryside where they could not find employment or where they were miserably paid. As a rule they had only basic education, just able to read and to write. Only a small group had had professional education, such as for a professional craft. Many left their villages with the idea of short-planned migration but which turned into permanent migration. As other migrants they were modest. Their wish was just to earn enough money to repair or to build a house, a stable or barn, to buy new machinery, a new plot of land, to save some money to start a business at home or to pay off debts, to give some examples given for the economic motives of emigration. But there were also cases when people wished to avoid military service, to run away from court prosecution, for family reasons (such as unwanted marriage), or simply because they were curious to see what the foreign world looked like.

In conclusion, I would also like to point out another frequently overlooked aspect in the exploration of migrations in Slovenia. I would like to emphasize that the sending environments, which generated the emigration flow, remained outside the scope of interest of migration researchers. The issue of the interaction between the sending and receiving countries remained in the background. This has to do with the broader concept of the study of migrations dominant in the past. We should be aware that the emphasis on the economic aspects of migrations, as well as their effects and consequences for the local economies, has only recently come under the focus of the research interest. Extensive migrations in the second half of the twentieth century placed the issue of reverse influence of the migration communities on their land/region of origin at the center of the research interest. Questions were raised about the processes taking place after the emigration of a part of the population on their home environment and about the nature of the reverse effects of migrants on their home environments. This applies to social as well as to economic phenomena.

Such a conceptualization stems from the modern theoretical premises on the relationship of the migrant communities as an intermediary between the host and the emigration country. Thus researchers underlined this intermediary role between

the host country and the country of origin as one of the important characteristics of migrant communities. This role has many aspects and involves the encouragement of cultural as well as economic cooperation. However, another aspect, which demonstrates the extent of the influence of the expatriate communities on their original environment, is especially important. One of the most significant aspects of this relationship is the transfer of the migrants' funds to their families or relatives in their original environment which has an effect on the social and economic differentiation with regard to investment, lifestyle and so on. Another important aspect is the establishment of social networks between migrant communities and their original environments. On one hand these networks encourage emigration, while on the other hand they facilitate the transfer of knowledge and experience. Two way economic flows are established through these networks. The cash flow from the migrants toward their home environments is joined by the reverse economic flow from the country of origin to the emigration community. A trade between both communities has emerged, considered as a 'nostalgic trade' in the literature.

By all means it should be noted that the economic consequences of migrations, defined in such a manner, are generalizations on the basis of empirical materials from the second half of the twentieth century. That is to say, this applies for the time when modern means of communication allowed for a more intensive communication between the sending and receiving communities. The typology of the economic relations of the emigrants' communities with their original environments represents a useful contextual and methodological tool for application in the Slovenian context. This raises a new research issue, in the context of which the extent and forms of the reverse influences of migrations (external as well as internal) on the home environments will have to be studied carefully (Taylor et al. 1996; Massey 1988; Keeley 2009; Özden and Schiff 2007).

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