Who does it better where?
Integration of refugees in France and Sweden
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Short abstract

This paper assesses the integration trajectories of refugees in Sweden and France using two national-level sources of data. The “Trajectoire et Origines” survey of 2008-2009 collects information on immigrants and their descendants in France. The 2010 “Level of Living Survey for Foreign Born Persons and their Children” includes information on resident immigrants in Sweden. Through logistic regression analysis based on these two datasets, we will investigate which are the factors that most influence the economic integration of immigrants in both countries. We look at labour market attachment and perceived economic status for the first generation of refugees. First, we contrast refugees with economic and non-economic immigrants, to investigate if the disadvantage of refugees is due by individual or contextual characteristics. Secondly, we focus exclusively on refugees to address which individual and contextual characteristics most influence their integration.

Introduction

In Europe today, the increased refugee flows from non-European countries have evoked international debate on whether welfare societies have sufficient capacity to welcome and integrate the rising number of refugees and how each European country must contribute. While policy reforms to be implemented to face the actual situation are largely debated at present in Europe, few quantitative researches have addressed the integration of refugees within different national reception contexts in Europe. Our study aims to fill this gap in order to assess if the differences in the integration paths in the local labour markets could be attributable to the country of destination or to the individual characteristics of the refugees.

Curiously, theories on international migration paid little attention to the integration of refugees, especially in the past or in the American context -were most of the theories were developed (Fitzgerald 2015). Ager and Strang, in their conceptualization of the integration of refugees, conclude that the concept of integration of refugees “is likely to remain controversial and hotly debated both as a policy objective and as theoretical construct” (2008: 186). However, they recognize the centrality of the social connection (Beirens et al. 2007; Korac 2005, Strang and Ager 2010) in shaping trajectories of integration.

The literature on migrants’ integration in general focuses on two principal theoretical frames, based on the classical theory and the segmented assimilation one. The first approach – classical assimilation – was developed by the Chicago school in order to explain the assimilation paths of European immigrants in the U.S. in the early twentieth century. Researchers acknowledged that immigrants faced many difficulties to integrate at the beginning of the migration experience;
however over time and across generations’ integration was a natural and irreversible process, by means of which immigrants become similar to the host country population (Park, Burgess, and McKenzie, 1925). Those who remained embedded into their own culture were marginalized (Park 1928). While the assumptions of classical assimilation theory are reflected among migrants belonging to the first waves of European emigration to the United States (Alba and Nee 1997), they do not fit with recent immigrants and their descendants (Esser 2003). Length of stay in the host society is not necessarily a proxy for integration, and migrants’ ties with their country of origin seem to be rather complements than substitutes for integration, in particular in the case of economic integration (Cela et al. 2013, Fokkema et al. 2012, Guarnizo et al. 2003, Itzigsohn and Saucedo 2002). Accordingly, the segmented assimilation theory has been introduced, considering integration as a multidimensional and non-linear process, and leading to highly differentiated (i.e. segmented) assimilation outcomes, partly according to migrant groups’ different ethnic and social-class backgrounds.

The integration of immigrants has also been defined as two way process, which implies efforts from both the newcomers and the host society (Council of Europe 1998, Mussino et al. 2014, Pennix 2004). In particular when referred to refugees, integration has been defined “dynamic and two-way” (ECRE 1999: 29). Hence, when we consider refugees we need to include the implication of the reception policies from the host country: Bevelander and Pendakur (2009), for example, emphasize how the differences in Swedish labour market participation among refugees and family reunion immigrants are mainly depending on integration policies in Sweden.

In this paper we will focus on the economic dimension of integration. As well as general theories of integration of migrants, there is a vast literature focusing on economic outcomes for immigrants, however studies on refugees are less common. Previous findings conclude that there is a clear disadvantage compared to economic migrants (Yu, Ouellette, and Warmington 2007) but the differences with no economic migrants are still debated (Bevelander and Pendakur 2014). Additionally, there are very few comparative studies that focus on integration outcomes of refugees (e.g. Bevelander and Pendakur 2014, Korac 2003).

In this paper we look at France and Sweden: the two countries have different migration history and integration policies but similar histories of welcoming refugees in their society. Sweden has usually been referred to as an example of generous welcome and integration policies (Valenta and Bunar 2010). After a long history dominated by out-migration, Sweden has, in the past 50 years, become an immigration society, first with immigrants workers from the neighbouring countries and then, from the 1990's, with refugees and family reunification from all over the world. Today, Sweden is characterized by a high share of immigrant population of which many migrated as refugees and asylum seekers. In 2014 about a third of issued resident permits were due to a need of protection (Statistics Sweden 2016). Considering new arrivals the share and number for 2015 will be higher. Additionally, Sweden is characterized by a system of inclusive immigration policies and a universalistic generous welfare state (Sainsbury 2006). As outlined by Fog Olwig in 2011, the Swedish immigration policy established in 1975 is based on a multicultural ideology of “equality, freedom of choice and partnership”. Although studies have showed how equality in practice requires conformity to Swedish norms (Eastmond 2008; Fog Olwig 2011; Valenta & Bunar 2010), this policy strand in Sweden attempts to emphasize
immigrant’s right to benefit from the welfare society like the native population and the right to maintain cultural specificities.

As far as integration policies are concerned, conversely to multiculturalist Sweden, France is conceived as an assimilationist country: the so called republican model of integration (modèle d’intégration républicaine) has characterized French integration policies till the Fall of 2005 when, following a large riots of immigrants origin youths in the country, the model was largely debated and challenged (Bertossi 2007). Like Sweden, France has been particularly generous with refugees since the period following WWII: at present the number of refugees living in France is approximately 144,000, while the number of asylum application is among the highest in Europe.

The objective of this study is to examine the economic integration of refugees in Sweden and France and to determine which individual characteristics effect integration and whether there may be a contextual or policy effect. The differences in integration policies across the two countries allow us to analyse contextual policy effects compared to individual immigrant characteristics.

The article is structured as follow: the next section contains a brief history of the migration flows and policies in the two countries; in the third section, we present our research questions. The data, measures and method are described in the fourth section. Finally; in the fifth and sixth sections, the main outcomes and some conclusions are discussed.

Research questions and Hypotheses

The aim of this paper is to answer to the following research questions:

• **Who does it better?**

Previous studies agreed that refugees have worse economic outcomes than natives (Bevelander 2011; Lundborg 2012) and economic migrants (Yu, Ouellette, and Warmington 2007; Lamba 2003), while it is still debated how they perform compared to other non-economic migrants. Some studies suggest that refugees perform as well as non-economic migrants (Devoretz, Pivnenko, and Beiser 2004) while other found that the gap exists even comparing these groups (Aydemir 2011; Wilkinson 2008). Looking at immigrants in Sweden and in France, we hypothesize that refugees do worse than economic and student migrants but better than family related migrants in terms of economic outcomes.

• **Where?**

We hypothesize that that the economic integration is strongly connected to the country of destination. Looking at the literature and the integration policies in the two countries we hypothesize that immigrants in Sweden have better outcomes than in France, however we expect part of this being a result of a period effect.

We believe that controlling for individual characteristic will decrease the effect of the reason of migration but not the effect of policies and labour market in the country of destination. All the
same, we believe that both individual and contextual variables will not play the same role when we look at refugees or when we look at the entire immigrant population in the two countries.

**Data, measures and method**

The data used for the Swedish sample are drawn from the Swedish Level of Living Survey of Foreign Born (LNU-UFB) conducted by SULCIS - Stockholm University Linnaeus Centre for Integration Studies in cooperation with Statistics Sweden. The survey was conducted 2010-2012 and includes over 4000 individuals born outside of Sweden who have lived permanently in Sweden since at least January 1st 2005, meaning for at least 5 years at the time of the interview (Wadensjö 2013). Additional to the questions asked in the questionnaire, LNU-UFB contains variables linked from Swedish registers. To study the French case we use the TeO (“Trajectoire et Origines”) survey: a nationally representative sample of 22,000 individuals aged 18 to 60. Data were collected in the period September 2008-February 2009. The questionnaire covers a wide range of topics related to integration such as education, employment, migration history, family formation, social relationships, etc. About 10% of the sample is composed by people that obtained the refugees status when they first arrived in France. To make the French dataset homogeneous with the Swedish one we excluded from the analysis immigrants arrived in France since less than 5 years.

From the two datasets we draw a sample in total comprising 11,182 individuals with information on labour market attachment. For comparison reasons we have dropped persons that are not 20-60 years old.

Through logistic regression analysis based on these two datasets, we will investigate which are the factors that most influence the economic integration of immigrants in both countries. We look at labour market attachment and perceived economic status for the first generation of refugees. First, we contrast refugees with economic and non-economic immigrants, to investigate if the disadvantage of refugees is due by individual or contextual characteristics. Secondly, we focus exclusively on refugees to address which individual and contextual characteristics most influence their integration.

In the last step all the model are run only for the refugee’s population.

**Preliminary results**

Results will be available in time for the PAA.
References (to be completed)


