The effects of integration and transnational ties on international return migration intentions

BY Hein de Haas, Tineke Fokkema

Abstract

While return migration is receiving increasing attention, there is still insufficient insight into the factors which determine migrants’ intentions and decisions to return. It is often assumed that integration in receiving countries and the concomitant weakening of transnational ties decreases the likelihood of returning. However, according to alternative theoretical interpretations, return migration can also be the outflow of successful integration in receiving countries. Drawing on a data set of four African immigrant groups in Spain and Italy, this article reviews these conflicting hypotheses by assessing the effects of integration and transnational ties on return migration intentions. The results of the analysis suggest that socio-cultural integration has a negative effect on return migration intentions, while economic integration and transnational ties have more ambiguous and sometimes positive effects. The results provide mixed support for the different hypotheses but question theoretical perspectives that unequivocally conceptualize return migration and transnationalism as causes and/or consequences of “integration failure”.

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