

THE REGIONAL IDENTITY OF THE SIBERIAN COMMUNITY: Major formation factors and reconstruction problems

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Abstract

The article considers conditions, factors and mechanisms of regional Siberian identity formation in the historical past and in the modern conditions of poliethnic and multiconfessional Russia. The Siberian identity is presented by hierarchy of identities: regional and territorial (territories and areas), national and territorial (autonomous republics and areas), ethnic, religious and professional ones. The level of the Siberian identity is proportional to the level of resource, technological, historical and cultural self-sufficiency of the Siberian society. Today the Siberian identity is realized mainly at the level of separate territories and national and territorial formations as well. At the same time, the strengthening of the confessional and ethnocultural identity role, expressed in the growth of the number of religious, national and cultural associations and autonomies, became a new phenomenon.

Keywords: Siberia, identity, Russia, community.

Introduction

In the last decade of the XX century, marked by mondialisation and the transformations of the political map of Europe, a surge in scientific interest towards problems of regional identity and the emergence of the theories of «neo - a regionalism» (Keating 1998) are evident. On the other side of the Atlantic these problems are briskly discussed in Quebec, where both academics and the public compare the quest for identity at home and in Europe (Palard & all 2006; Therien & all. 2004). In 2000, in Montreal, a congress gathering leading economists, political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists and ministers of the federal government debated on the topic of «Mondialisation and national identity».

A feature of the Russian society in its current state is the crisis of identity caused by the destruction of the bases and values of the Soviet period and loss of historical connections with Russian statehood traditions. Modern research on regional identity formation at level of the ethno-territorial region of the Russian Federation are narrowly connected with the study of tendencies and prospects of modern domestic federal system development. Domestic historiography pays much attention to the process of reforming

the state system of Russia, the problem of its preferable model, the opinion on this question of political elite and ordinary citizens of the Russian Federation (Shmatko and Kachanov 1998; Filippov 2000).

The studies bring up of the issues of power disproportion among the constituent entities of the Russian Federation, equal rights and duties of ethno-territorial and administrative-territorial regions of Federation¹, and status distinctions among the Russian citizens; they also tackle ethnic aspects of the ethnosocial and ethnopolitical² destabilization and disintegration of the Russian state system. There is an experience of researches of various aspects of process of regional identity formation at level of certain subjects of the Russian Federation.

A conceptual detour

The contemporary ethnographic map of Siberia is multiethnic and multicultural. It includes peoples speaking the Altai, the Finno-Ugric and the Paleoasian languages. Siberia is a unique territory where today on the territory of 10 million square kilometers 19 regions of the Russian Federation with the population of 24 million people who represent more than 100 nationalities.

Siberian Russians realized their peculiarity and what differentiates them from the metropolitan population rather early, in the late 17th century. The third and the fourth generation of migrants firmly associated themselves with Siberia and the newcomers with Russian Homeland (Vachtin et al. 2004).

The emergence of «Sibirstvo» as a special ideology can be traced back to the second half of the 19th century and is linked with the activity of regionalist

¹ The Russian Federation consists of Republics, Krays, Oblasts, Cities of Federal significance, an Autonomous Oblast and Autonomous Okrugs, which have equal rights as constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Republics (for example, Republic of Dagestan or the Republic of Yakutia), Autonomous Oblast and Autonomous Okrugs are ethno-territorial constituent entities. Oblasts, Krays (for example, Novosibirsk oblast or the Krasnoyarsk Krai) and Cities of Federal significance (Moscow and Peterburg) are administrative-territorial constituent entities.

² The ethnosocial sign characterizes society in case of its classification on the nations, a nationality, tribes, nationalities and ethnographic groups. For example, «the European society», «the American society», «Asian society», «the African society». These concepts also characterize the society phenomenon behind a continental sign (the European society outside the European continent). Ethnopolitical destabilization means the conflicts in which opposition takes place on the basis of belonging to any ethnic community. These are the organized political actions and spontaneous mass riots, separatist performances, civil wars.

leaders (G.N. Potanin, N.M. Yadrintsev), who called not for withdrawal of Siberia from Russia, but for the leveling of its rights compared to the other territories of the country (Shevtsov 2010). Consequently we can distinguish two directions in the formation of the Siberian regional identity. The first direction was guided by the educated minority (Siberian intelligentsia); the second one was given by the population of Siberia. At the same time, if the first group formed its Siberian identity consciously as a specific intellectual concept within the framework of scientific and journalistic discourse, the second one was spontaneous, unstructured and unconsidered in essence, fixed as a narration abundant with various mythological misconceptions (Russian settlers of Transbaikalia of the second half of the 19th century recognized themselves as the indigenous Siberian people conquered by Ermak) (Rodigina 2002; Sverkunova 2002; Diment and Slezkine 1998).

In connection with the process of forming national intellectual elites in Europe, the establishment of the Siberian identity was initiated by representatives of the Siberian indigenous population who demonstrated a broad understanding of this notion – from a purely ethnographic interest to their national culture and a movement towards modernization within the Empire towards political autonomy (Savelieva 2005; Hahalkina 2011). The Siberian identity has historical roots in movement of the Russian population to the east, towards sunrise. It more and more had separated immigrants from Homeland which remained beyond Ural - "The Stone belt" as symbolical and geographical boundary between Europe and Northern Asia. Thus, the Siberian spatial symbolism as a shifting frontier and a peculiarity of the place began to appear in the sphere of collective mythology (Rezun & Shilovsky 2005). Until today, the natural factor has played a significant role in the conceptualization of Siberia as a special historical and geographic area. This factor is clearly realized at movement across the low-urbanized Siberia in comparison with the European part of Russia and foreign countries.

The creation of a specific type of "Siberian" (even from an anthropological perspective), a process that received a lot of attention, did not occur. The reasons were factor of language and territorial sustainability of the indigenous Siberian communities (Khakass, Buryats, Yakuts, Evenks and others) and a flow of migrants to Siberia starting with the middle of the 19th century. By 1917 the population of the region had grown from 3 to 11.7 million (Churkin 2006). During the revolutions of 1905–07 and 1917, Siberian deputies in the State *Duma* and members of national assemblies

were discussing the issue of establishing not a single Siberian regional *duma* but a number of regional *dumas* due to sharp differences of economic interests and local particularities.

Despite an identification of all Siberian people into one territorial community, a difference in the status of subjects of the Russian Federation that represent Siberia allows us to speak not about the common Siberian identity but about a range of Sub-Siberian identities having an administrative territorial (citizens of the Novosibirskaya oblast, the Kemerovskaya oblast, the Seaside area, etc.) and ethnic state character (the population of Tuva, the Khakass Republic, Altai, Buryatia, etc.) (Grosheva 2010).

The population of Siberian ethno-territorial and administrative-territorial regions identifies itself at first with their local communities, i.e. with their direct economic, social and other interests (when the person changes a residence, its identification changes also) and only in the second place with Siberia as a wider toponymic notion [Grosheva 2010]. Besides the civic (a citizen of Russia), ethnic features are also relevant (Russian, Tuvinian, Khakass, etc.) for self-identification.

Nowadays most Siberians retain a feeling of involvement and solidarity with citizens of the country as a whole based on likeness of historical fate and cultural unity. At the time of Freedom Parade (process of adoption of declarations on the sovereignties the republics of the USSR in 1990-91), when the Soviet state property had not been divided yet, Siberia did not seek autonomy and did not secede from Russia, as it was the case with other historical regions of the Soviet Union. This was due to the fact that the essence of the Siberian identity contains a so-called Slavic component. Mass national colonization transferred behind the Urals not only the living conditions of citizens from the central part of Russia, but also cultural and economic ties with it. The sustainability and prevalence of such an attitude are indirectly proved by the estimates of urbanization of Siberian regions. Their dynamism and quality directly depend on the population size of Slavic ethnic communities in different parts of the region. For example, in such ethno-territorial constituent entities as Evenkia, Taimyr, Buryatia, Tyva, Yakutia in which the Russian population makes 20-60% (on the average across Siberia – 86 %) have an urban saturation about 60% [Karih 2009].

The central power during the various periods of the Russian history (the period of the Russian Empire, the USSR or the Russian Federation) perceives Siberia as resource base for stocking the budget and implementation of various political and economic projects, which as a rule do not touch the interests of the Siberian population directly (Hill & Gaddy 2007). The concept of Siberian natural riches as an inexhaustible storage has been fundamental since the 17th century. In the list of riches only the main component changed – furs, wild growing plants, gold, coal, oil or gas. Such relation of the power formed one more feature of the Siberian identity – anti-St. Petersburg and anti-Moscow sentiments. They might range from political absenteeism to a kind of political form aiming at establishing local authorities independent from the centre (as it was in the period from March to October 1917 or the early 90s of the 20th century). These feelings did not show a willingness of the regions to secede but to be heard by the outer world – the centre or other regions. Thus depths of the country declared themselves as about “the real aboriginal Russia” in a counterbalance to the political center (the opposition between “we” – citizens and “they” – the Government is characteristic not only of Siberia but also of other Russian regions). Consequently, there was excessive attention given to the image of the territories of Siberia, aimed at making the region attractive for investors, resounding throughout Russia. As a result, local authorities pay special attention to image of the region for increase of its investment appeal. Advertizing structures, mass media, education system work for this task. The history of Russia is first of all history of its regions - such thesis is present at the research of local history.

The influence of Russian historical and political space.

The cultural historical component of the Siberian identity may be viewed in the context of adaptation of different ethnic groups of migrants in Siberia, in relations with the indigenous population and in connection with peculiarities of the history of settlement of Siberia and their position in Russia. By the end of the 17th century Russians as leaders of migration flows in the trans-Ural region succeeded in complete adaptation to local natural climatic conditions and building a diversified economy with great adaptive potential (Shelegina 2005; Skobelev 2002). Further migration flows in Siberia were accompanied by forming big ethnic enclaves and small dispersedly settling groups amidst which complex assimilation, acculturation and consolidation with the Russian and the aboriginal population were taking place together with the process of forming new identities – the local and the common Siberian ones. In bridging the gap

between the concepts of native and alien some migrants, for example, the Letts, the Estonians and the German colonists suffered greater difficulties because they were alien not only due to their birthplace but to several essential characteristics (language, religion, culture, etc.)

Within the foreign cultural environment in Siberia isolated communities representing Old Believers and village communities of German colonists which were trying to protect themselves from any kind of foreign national and cultural environment and which preferred to live absolutely isolated were formed (Dutchak 2007; Nam 2002). Such a habitual commonly understood component of the Siberian community as the exiles (comprising 5.2 % of the Siberian population in 1897) and especially its political part which did a lot for studying the area and the growth of public awareness cannot be referred to as the integral part of the Siberian community completely, as these forced Siberians to perceive their living here as temporary and to wait for their return to their motherland and undertaking escapes (Skobelev 2008). In the composition of the Russian Empire Siberia had a special administrative and legal status, nearing the all-Russian one with a considerable delay. In spite of the fact that free commercial and peasant colonization of Siberia was closely followed by the government (construction of stockade towns and fortresses in Western and later in Eastern Siberia was aimed not only at collecting a regular levy from indigenous peoples but at exercising administrative and fiscal control over the migration flow), the Siberian population felt more detached and independent of the central power (Suponitskaya 2005; Ageev 1997).

The government paid attention to unification and regulation of the political structure in Siberia meeting the national legal standards only in the 20s of the 19th century (Speransky's reforms) (Remnev 2002). In the second half of the 19th century the imperial project provided for gradual engagement of Siberia into the imperial space at the expense of peasant colonization, transport network development, economic ties and the system of education. The leading role in formulating and implementing these goals had to be played by the central and local state establishments and scientific communities in the hands of which material wealth and administrative resources were concentrated. Furthermore, to define Siberia in the all-Russian historical and geographical space such toponyms were used as trans-Ural colonies, eastern outskirts and Asian Russia.

The local intelligentsia described the past-present-future of Siberia (preferring this toponym) in its journalistic discourse as "absence"-

“opportunity”-“awakening”, assigning the role of the head in the progressive development of the region not to government structures but to organizations of public self-government and the regionalist press capable of defining tasks and assessments different from those of the capital’s press and influencing policies of local and central authorities (Shevtsov V.V. 2011).

In the conditions of the 1917 revolution when a real possibility for the Siberian intelligentsia to participate in autonomous existence of Siberia appeared regional leaders turned out to be unable to administer the region (as was the case with the central Russia) at the time of the deepening economic and political crisis. In the face of the threat of the bolshevist dictatorship Siberian regionalists had to support antibolshevistky «the Supreme Governor of Russia» A.V. Kolchak, with his headquarters located in Omsk. The new image of the eastern outskirts – Soviet Siberia, socialist Siberia – did not need the support of former developers in accordance with the ideological changes. The image was created on the basis of discrediting autonomist efforts as well as peculiarities of development of the Siberian region.

Historical memory, traditions and prospects

At the grassroots’ level not connected with the scientific or educational sphere the concept of the historical past of Siberia is quite indistinct and mythological. Images of pioneers, explorers, town founders, exiled Decembrists, Siberian merchants and owners of goldmines occur more or less correctly, historically speaking. Such elusive constructions as the Siberian character and Siberian health are widespread in the formal language in Siberia and beyond. Historical town centres, monuments and sights compose a material landscape of cultural memory. Organization and functioning of the symbolic space is carried out and a cultural value of objects, phenomena, events and characters is ensured with the help of knowledge which is not identical to rationality of the scientific or expert community.

The main reason for living in Russia rests on motives of value, rationality and tradition (it also the reason not only to live in Russia, but also the reason of that not to leave it). So, the most important reason is the value of family and friendly relations built in the local space. The fact that family members, friends and colleagues live in the same city, village or settlement becomes a weighty anchor per se rooting a person in a certain place.

Another powerful motive is adjustment to a place of living and the feeling of a little motherland. Rational motives - a good job, developed infrastructure, etc. - are named less frequently as reasons for living somewhere. Middle-aged and elderly people from rural areas who have a primary or secondary education and earn a living a little higher than the minimum subsistence level are more deeply rooted and more attached territorially in conformity with the principle "One is needed where he was born". These are people who make up the backbone of Russian society. The feeling of community with the Siberians is in direct proportion to one's age - the older the age the more the person is likely to consider the Siberians one's friendly group. Identification of the middle-aged and the elderly generations in the context of large social groups is linked with the experience of socialization in the conditions of building the common Soviet identity.

The fact that a part of the Siberian community retains a positive attitude to its prospects of living in Siberia even against the background of serious social problems can be explained by the influence of two tendencies having a different origin and character. The first is political fatigue or apathy of the population appearing when power and society exist in parallel, the franchise is exercised by a smaller part of the population, and dominance of bureaucracy makes the system of ruling the country corrupt and inefficient. The reverse side of the coin is decreasing interest to events that happen in the country and consequently increasing attention to one's native town or region. The other tendency is relative political stability of the region relying on its own strength. This explains the beginning of working out a concept of sustainable development of subjects of the Siberian federal district.

Actualization of the «Siberian solidarity»

Actualization of identification processes in Siberia (on the scale of its population, not only in the sphere of the educated elite) took place twice: at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries and of the 20th and 21st centuries. In the first case the central government initiated a change of the economic situation of Siberia in the composition of Russia having started to build the Transsiberian main line (1891) and given the migration movement a character of a state policy (1906). The imperial project to create "a big Russian nation" provided for active state interference into ethnic and democratic processes, regulating migration flows and manipulating the ethnic and religious composition of the population for solving military mobilization tasks. It was connected in the first place with widening the

presence of the Russian Orthodox element on the outskirts with heterogeneous composition of population or on the territories which were threatened by external demographic and economic expansion as was the case of the Amur and the Seaside region. In Siberia and on the Far East a new threat for the imperial policy arose: local population was forming a feeling of territorial isolation and was developing awareness of its dissimilarity and economic infringement in the relations between the centre and the outskirts. The process of forming the "great Russian nation" was complicated not only by saving ethnic and local (in the region of Siberia and the Far East) identity but also by building a specific territorial Siberian and the Far eastern identity (Remnev 2002; Remnev 1997). A clash of economic interests of the local population and the newcomers at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century aggravated. An aggressive defensive pattern of behavior was developed by both the host community and migrants. It could be treated as a natural phenomenon because even under favorable circumstances adaptation to new conditions of life is a difficult and stressful process. For similar reasons conflicts between migrants and non-Russian settlements took place. Nomadic non-Russians from steppes got used to spaciousness but migrants' settlements restrained them. Similarly most peasant and non-Russian settlements were drawn into land disputes as a result of disarray in land ownership and absence of land management. Together with common features there were some specific characteristics in the relations between migrants and non-Russians which resulted from their evident differences and consequently greater cultural distance. It led to developing a clear-cut opposition "we-they", "native-alien" among representatives of both parties when interacting with each other (Alishina 2010).

In the second case the collapse of the USSR and the community of the Soviet nation led to destruction of deep-rooted and habitual forms of social interaction as a result of which interest to ethnic and territorial forms of solidarity (they started to be perceived as a counterbalance or a substitute to national common civic solidarity) has sharply risen. In the first half of the 90s of the 20th century the main direction of activity of public political organizations in the republics of southern Siberia was fighting for a sovereign status and passing constitutions that include a provision on separation of rights and powers, property rights between federal and republican bodies, protection of rights and interests of titular ethnic groups. The leading participants of the process of forming the regional identity were elite groups: the power-holding elite, which defined the main

vector of social change in republics and the brainpower generating ideology which would support the official strategy or would oppose it. The call to acquisition of sovereignty was justified firstly by keen interest to revival of the ethnic culture and language of titular ethnic groups. In this case statehood was viewed as a prerequisite to saving and developing the nation. Secondly it was justified by the need to take political control over economic resources on the territory of republics. Additional authority and advantages above the Siberian *krais* and regions were fixed in the respective constitutions by the following republics: the Khakass Republic and the Tuva Republic in 1993, the Altai Republic in 1997. Article 1 of the Constitution of the Tuva Republic adopted in 1993 permitted its withdrawal from the Russian Federation (it was abolished in 2001). Passing this article produced a soothing effect on radical movements which could considerably destabilize society referring to absence of the named law.

The opposition of the Russian state/federal centre and ethnic subjects of the federation (republics)-states made some representatives of ethnic intelligentsia reflect badly on annexation of Khakassia, Altai and Tuva to the Russian state. However a considerable part of the ethnic scientific and political elite of republics contributes to creating a positive climate of interethnic interaction and forming a more objective assessment of the period when Turkic ethnic groups remained within the Russian state. They underline a voluntary character of annexation of territories to the Russian/Soviet state and advantages (not only adverse consequences) of this union at different stages of its existence: saving peoples from holocaust, preserving a historical territory, creating conditions for an economic rise, advances in the social sphere (education, healthcare, culture, etc.), developing national intelligentsia, appearance of a written language, availability to take part in modernization, etc. (Grosheva 2010; Balakshina and Anayban 1995).

For the population of republics to retain national statehood in its present form is very significant. The replacement of the national-territorial system of Russia for an administrative-territorial one is inadmissible. This fact appears to be quite critical if we consider that it was in Khakassia and Altai unlike many other republics, for example, Tuva that power did not pass into the hands of representatives of the titular ethnic group. The idea of enlargement of regions proposed in the early 2000s is not supported by the population: annexation of Khakassia to the Krasnoyarsk region and of the Republic of Altai to the Altai region (unification of the Kemerovskaya

oblast, the Altai region and the Republic of Altai). According to the republican scientific intelligentsia, sustainable development of the Russian Federation depends on incentives to self-development of regions and their forming self-sufficient budgets for solving their own social and other problems including through developing political processes of federalization. Inexpediency to unify regions is proved by worsening the existing social economic and financial situation because of the cuts in funding from the centre, narrowing/exemption of powers of the region, a loss of control over the use of land and other natural resources, imminent appearance of the problem of interethnic differences. It is noted that it is possible to enlarge subjects only when, firstly, there is a need to optimize administration, secondly, when it is economically and socially reasonable and, thirdly, when unification of subjects of the Russian Federation does not contradict the idea of self-determination and national interests of the people living on the territory of the subject.

At the turn of the 19th-20th centuries two differently directed tendencies were easily traced in Khakassia, Altai and Tuva: at first, titular ethnic groups were striving for separation on the basis of ethnic consolidation (at the level of contrasting representatives of a titular ethnic group vs. Russians in the sphere of government, in particular); secondly, some representatives of ethnic intelligentsia were trying to ground theoretically the necessity of interethnic consolidation of population of republics as well as that of deepening integration of Khakassia, Altai and Tuva into the Russian and the world community. The second tendency is positive and is conditioned by the aspiration of regional elites to create the foundation for successful development of titular ethnic groups and to facilitate the spirit of interethnic accord and stabilization of the ethnic political situation in republics.

Between West and East

Modern Siberia is getting more geographical remote from the political and historical centre of the Russian statehood. The level of communication between the rural and the urban population not engaged into entrepreneurship along the line of Siberia vs. the European part of Russia, Siberia vs. the near abroad, Siberia vs. the West can be characterized as extremely low because of high transport charges. On the contrary, the level of communication along the line of Siberia vs. the East tends to grow in the sphere of economic and cultural ties. Citizens of the Far Eastern federal region prefer doing the shopping and having a rest in neighboring China to

setting out on an expensive and rather uncomfortable journey to get acquainted with cultural treasures of both Russian capitals or the Golden Ring of Russia. According to Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation in 2011 China was visited by 2.4 million people (Federal State Statistics Service of the Russian Federation). Recently the migratory flow of the Russian Far East residents abroad, in P. R. of China in particular, has increased. Stressful migratory flows get more strength that results in flow-out of the most active, skilled workers and «brains». A poll carried out in 2006 among youth of Primorsky Krai showed that 60% of young people visited China at least one time (Blyakher, L. E., Fedoreeva, 2009).

The feeling of solitude and alienation is stressed geopolitically too at the background of dynamically developing countries of Eastern Asia. In this respect alarmist sentiments among Siberians are strengthening. Siberia as a vast sleeve of Big Russia stretching to the east may in the near future turn out to be a sleeve of a fur coat which is being cut increasingly quicker by the great eastern neighbor.

Conclusions

The fact that the Siberian identity exists in two forms – territorial and cultural historical – can be an independent factor of social stability at present only in the conditions of a balanced federal policy that includes the opportunity to compare the standard of living in Siberia and other regions of the country, creating favorable conditions for attracting home and foreign investments into non-stock fields of economy, forming a positive image of Siberia as a territory of advanced living standards and a career rise, usage of regional experience of interethnic and interreligious harmonization of interests. On the basis of this assumption prospective target groups in the Siberian region should be pupils and students, citizens of rural settlements and small towns and non-government organizations of migrants. The leading agents for realization of policies besides federal and regional authorities and bodies must be brainpower of Siberian regions, *krais* and republics, university Faculties of Humanities and local mass media.

The example of forming regional identities of such ethnic state subjects of the federation as the Republic of Khakassia, Altai, Tuva which make up South-Siberian historical cultural community of Turkic peoples allows to single out the following positive traits of the experience of national regional formation: republic leaders are oriented to consolidation of all population

on the basis of common interests; regional elites (including ethnic intelligentsia) work on explaining the necessity of interethnic consolidation and deepening integration of republics into the Russian and the world community; the historical and cultural landscape is preserved as a basis for development of ecological and ethnic cultural tourism and treatment at the health resorts.

Simultaneously it is obvious that in the near future it will be impossible to improve the economic and demographic situation in the region significantly and to create its positive image for keeping the local population and increasing migration to Siberia from central Russia. That's why the main source of growth of Siberian population and meeting the demand of the labor market will be migration from countries of the near abroad and Eastern Asia that will lead to enlargement of ethnic diasporas in Siberia and enhance multiculturalism of the region. It will cause acculturation of new ethnic religious and ethnic components in the Siberian community (within the framework of Siberian identity and the Russian Federation citizenship) and reproduction and translation of one's own ethnic cultural traits and peculiarities.

Moreover, differences in assessments of Siberia (negative, positive or neutral) do not influence successful adaptation of indigenous peoples and migrants to social changes per se. Much importance is attached to their skills to form constructive living strategies on their own and resting on their basic ethnic religious features (including those of mentality and way of life). In the process of self-identification of modern Siberians a crucial role is given to orientation on links with the emotionally close narrow communication circle (family, relatives, friends, colleagues). It allows structuring the space of daily life in relation to the situation of uncertainty of the present and the future, on the one hand. On the other hand, atomization of life hinders forming national, civic and regional identities and limits opportunities of Siberians to integrate into modernization processes initiated by the state.

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THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY IN ROMANIA

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Abstract

International Student Mobility provides opportunities for acquisition, creation and transfer of knowledge. However, little is known about the students' impact on the settings they return to. This article examines the impact of Romanian international mobile students on the origin communities. The respondents indicate a positive experience during the mobility, with language and academic knowledge as the main accumulations. Significant differences are detected in terms of students' impact on the education system and on the working environment. The results emphasize the possible consequences and how the return environments may benefit from the students international experience.

Keywords: International Student Mobility, education system, migration impacts, Romania

Introduction

Return migration and its effects on the origin countries are covered extensively in the migration literature. Researches show how the returnees can foster economic development, enrich human capital, stop human capital outflows, transfer technology, knowledge, and, financial remittances (Faist and Fauser 2011, de Haas 2007); invest in their own or family members' education, lift the social status or challenge the power relations, create a 'culture of migration', hybrid identities or adopt diverse habits and values (Massey et al. 1993, Cassarino 2004, Black et al. 2003); be involved in politics, in the non-governmental sector or to do philanthropic activities (King 2000).

In the debate around return migration and its effects, scholars take into account mainly the labor migrants who return and how they can impact the origin countries. However, recent research asks for other categories of migrants to be included in this discussion (King and Raghuram 2013). Working in this context, this paper empirically explores the effects of

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