

The role of the family for return migration, reintegration and re-emigration in Armenia

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Introduction

Until the late 1980s, migration studies emphasized the push and pull factors in the countries of origin and destination which trigger movements of people. This approach has been widely criticized for its focus on structural and economic circumstances and factors that provide individuals with incentives to leave their country of origin and move to another place. Karen Fog Olwig (2001, 17), for example, argues that this narrow perspective "...gives the impression that migrants are pushed out of their place of origin because of extraordinary conditions, or pulled away by attractive opportunities abroad". In the last 30 years, migration scholars increasingly stressed the significance of social aspects of migration. Classical migration theories, like the new economics of labour migration (NELM) and the social network theory consider particular the impact and involvement of family and kin on international migration decisions. NELM views migration as a family or household strategy that shifts the focus away from individual independence to mutual dependence (e.g., Stark 1991). The family supports migrants before and shortly after leaving home and expects remittances as compensation. Migration decisions are explained by an "intrafamilial implicit contract" (Stark & Lucas 1988, 478) based on an unwritten understanding about the benefits and obligations of the two parties. Once migration goals are successfully achieved (e.g. higher income and sufficient savings), it is assumed that migrants return to their families in the country of origin.

The social network theory analyses family/household, friendship and community ties which link sending and receiving countries as key ingredients in international migration (e.g., Boyd 1989, Massey et al. 2002, Brettell 2003). According to this approach, migrants and their friends and relatives are connected through social relations across time and space. These networks disclose the significance of interpersonal ties in determining mobility, but also for the direction of migration. As Monica Boyd (1989, 661) explains "the study of personal networks in migration reveals the importance of social relations in migratory behaviour...and provides insight into the origins, composition, direction and persistence of migration flows". Interpersonal networks across borders involve information, assistance and obligation and impact both individuals and groups. The participation of individuals in social networks may be a source of social capital which has been defined by Bourdieu & Wacquant (1992, 119) as

... the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition.

Individual migrants benefit from their involvement in social networks by gaining access to social capital which may be converted in other forms of capital, notably financial and human capital (Coleman 1990).

Several migration studies have confirmed the important role of the family for emigration as well as for arrival and integration in the country of destination (e.g., Richey 1976, Boyd 1989, Koser 1997, Brettell 2003). In contrast, comparatively few scholars have emphasized the impact of the family for return migration, reintegration and re-emigration. By taking the situation before departure, the experience abroad and the return and post-return conditions into account, this paper conceptualize migration as a dynamic social process and investigates the character and role of family networks for the entire migratory process. The emphasis is on the influence of family and kin on the individual's decision-making to return, on patterns of reintegration as well as on intentions to re-emigrate. Taking the case study of Armenia, this paper explores positive and negative aspects of family ties for migrants in the different stages of the migration cycle. On the one hand, the question is, what kind of support and assistance does the family provide and how do return migrants benefit from these linkages, and on the other hand, the paper asks about family expectations and pressure towards return migrants.

Throughout history, Armenia has experienced major population movements. Some of these have their roots in political events and economic transformations; others are the result of war and conflicts, discrimination of ethnic minorities or natural disasters. After its independence in 1991, Armenia experienced years of severe economic crisis characterized by increased poverty, hyper-inflation, high rates of unemployment, dramatic salary cuts and a rapid decrease in living standards. As a result, a quarter of the total population left the newly independent Republic of Armenia during the decade between 1991 and 2001 (Migration Trends 2002). During these unprecedented mass migration movements, around one million Armenians emigrated mainly as labour migrants to the Russian Federation and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries (Genov & Savvidis 2011).¹ Although to a lesser extent, this type of labour migration is still present nowadays. Today, it is estimated that the Republic of Armenia has less than three million inhabitants (Armstat 2012)², but around five to six million ethnic Armenians live dispersed on five continents with the majority in the Russian Federation and the United States of America (Melkonian 2002). While statistics on emigration from Armenia are scarce, reliable and comprehensive data on return migration to the

¹ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was created in December 1991 and includes Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, www.cisstat.com/eng/cis.htm, accessed August 2, 2012.

² The National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia (Armstat 2012) released preliminary findings of the 2011 Armenia population census which indicates that the population in the country has declined by about 130,000 compared to the 2001 census figures and has dropped below the three million mark for the first time since 1970s.

country are non-existent. Like many other migration countries, Armenia does not systematically record return migration flows to the country. The available statistical sources suffer from lack of accuracy and consistency and focus almost exclusively on the number of removed or readmitted Armenian nationals (Fleischer 2012). The few studies on return migration to Armenia provide some information on the socio-demographic profile of returnees as well as on their economic and social conditions after return (e.g. Bachmann et al. 2004, Johansson 2008, Minasyan et al. 2008, Genov & Savvidis 2011).

Family and kin play an important role in the contemporary Armenian society (e.g., Pattie 1997, Ishkanian 2002, Panossian 2006). Stephanie Platz (2000: 118) argues that “kinship is a central part of what it means to be Armenian”. Naturally, “the Armenian family has changed and continues to change, but the strong value its members place upon it remains” (Pattie 1997, 143). Values and norms are still transmitted from one generation to the other and Armenians maintain a lively interest in family ties, even when living abroad. Family life is still, particular in rural areas, organized around patrilocal residence practices, which means that a man’s wife and children reside with him in his parents’ home. During the Soviet regime (1921-1991), but also in the years after the independence of the country, particularly male Armenians migrated for seasonal work leaving their wives and children with their parents behind (Menjivar & Agadjanian 2007). They often returned to visit their families for three months in winter and left again in spring. As the main breadwinners of the family, these men sent money to their parents, wife and children. The dominance of male labour migration continued until at the end of the 1990s, when Armenian women also started to emigrate (Ishkanian 2002).

From a social network point of view, “family consists of those people who share a certain set of moral values and expectations” (Olwig 2007, 12). Family in the Armenian context involves husband, wife and children, but in many cases also parents, parents-in-law and other relatives such as siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins. In general, family constitutes of people related by blood, marriage or adoption. However, in some cases, also close friends are considered as belonging to the extended family network. According to Susan P. Pattie (1999, 5), for many Armenians the concept of ‘home’ is “mobile and nomadic, more synonymous with family than a particular place”. Family networks provide a sense of belonging, solidarity and protection, but also involve expectations, obligations and responsibilities.

In this paper, I argue that family and kin relations are not only crucial for emigration and the time spent abroad, but also for return migration, reintegration and re-emigration. This explorative study focuses on the influence of the family on the individual’s motivation and decision to leave Armenia and to come back. It also considers the importance of social capital for return migrants’ reintegration as well as the role of cross-border family networks for the intention to re-emigrate.

Data, methodology and descriptive statistics

This paper is based on the results of a field survey on return migration and reintegration in Armenia. The field survey is part of the Cross-Regional Information System (CRIS) on the Reintegration of Migrants in their Countries of Origin.³ For the CRIS project, a return migrant is defined as

...any person returning to his/her country of origin, in the course of the last ten years, after having been an international migrant (whether short-term or long-term) in another country. Return may be permanent or temporary. It may be independently decided by the migrant or forced by unexpected/adverse circumstances (Cassarino 2008, 3).

This definition, which partially draws on the one recommended by the United Nations, refers particularly to migrants who lived for at least one year continuously abroad before returning to Armenia and who, at the time of the interview, have returned for more than three months (United Nations 1998). Furthermore, persons included in the survey are required to have returned to Armenia in the course of the last ten years. This time limit enables returnees to describe their experience before, during and after migration more precisely.

With support of Advanced Social Technologies (AST)⁴ a total of 350 Armenian return migrants were interviewed using a structured questionnaire and asking about the situation before emigration, the experience in the main country of immigration, the return to Armenia and the post-return conditions. These face-to-face interviews which lasted on average one hour were conducted in Armenian language. Data from the paper versions of the questionnaires were entered in an online form using Lime Survey hosting platform and subsequently transmitted to the CRIS team located at the European University Institute. Field data were evaluated and then analysed on a common template using STATA.⁵ To meet the sampling criteria such as duration of the migration experience and time since return, snowball sampling was used as a recruitment method. AST asked interviewees to provide information and contact details of other return migrants whom they know and who fulfil the required sampling criteria. In addition, the sampling procedure was based on a geographical stratification process, covering three main emigration regions in Armenia: Yerevan, Ararat and Shirak.

As Table 1 illustrates that our sample includes 185 male and 165 female returnees. This gender composition is consistent with the Armenian-Georgian Migration survey (ArGeMi) which confirms the international trend of feminization in both emigration and return migration (Genov & Savvidis 2011). The mean age of the returnees at the time of the interview was 42 years. Since on average four

³ For more information on the Cross-Regional Information System (CRIS) on the Reintegration of Migrants in their Countries of Origin, see <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/>, accessed July 24, 2012.

⁴ For information on Advanced Social Technologies (AST), see www.ast.am/, accessed July 24, 2012.

⁵ A detailed description of the field survey and methodology can be found under <http://rsc.eui.eu/RDP/research-projects/cris/survey-on-return-migrants/methodology/>, accessed July 24, 2012.

years have passed since their return, their mean age at the time of return was 38 years. At the time of departure, migrants were on average 34 years old. The high migration activity of middle-age population (ages 25 to 54) has been confirmed for the Armenian case by other studies (Minasyan et al. 2008, Genov & Savvidis 2011). In fact, the ArGeMi survey (2011) shows that more than three quarters of all interviewed returnees were older than 30 years.

Over half of the interviewees were married before their emigration (55%) and 34 per cent were single. The civil status of most return migrants did not change during their stay abroad or after return. The marital status of the respondents gives an explanation for their migratory behaviour. Around half of the interviewees left Armenia with their spouse, their children under 18 years and/or their parents. While the majority of men (63%) migrated alone, women largely moved together with other family members (59%) or joined their husbands abroad. The same pattern holds true for return migration: 61 per cent of the interviewed women returned with relatives, often with their husband and children, while 64 per cent of the men returned alone. The surveyed returnees had a relatively high level of education before their departure. The majority completed secondary education (59%), a large percentage (22%) had a Bachelor/Master degree and only five per cent had either no education, only pre-school education or primary/elementary education. Their educational status rarely changed between pre- and post-migration periods. Most return migrants (63%) never received any vocational training throughout their migratory experience.

More than half of the surveyed Armenians (57%) declared the Russian Federation as their main country of immigration and eventually returned from there.⁶ This finding is coherent with the results of other studies which conclude that the vast majority of Armenians migrants leave for the Russian Federation and come back from there (e.g., Bachmann et al. 2004, Minasyan et al. 2008, Genov & Savvidis 2011). Other respondents in the field survey returned, for example, from France, Austria, the United States of America and Ukraine (see Table 1).

Table 1: Personal profile of return migrants, N=350

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	165	47
Male	185	53
Total	350	100
Age		
18-30	98	28
31-47	144	41
48-65	92	26
66-	16	5

⁶ In the CRIS project, the main country of immigration is defined as the country where the return migrant spent most of his/her time abroad.

Total	350	100
Marital status before emigration		
Single	119	34
Engaged	7	2
Married	193	55
Separated/divorced	15	4
Widowed	16	5
Total	350	100
Education before emigration		
No education	4	1
Pre-school education	4	1
Primary/elementary school	5	1
Incompleted secondary education	52	15
Completed secondary education	205	59
Bachelor/Master	77	22
Doctoral degree	3	1
Total	350	100
Main country of immigration		
Russian Federation	201	57
France	54	16
Austria	12	3
United States of America	10	3
Ukraine	9	3
Others	64	18
Total	350	100

Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

Cross-border family networks, emigration and destination country

The field survey with 350 Armenian return migrants revealed that the reasons for leaving Armenia were mainly economic and professional motivated: 38 per cent of the respondents declared “better salary” as the main motive for emigration, 28 per cent were “looking for an employment” and 21 per cent were in search for “better working conditions”. Other studies confirm these results and state that many Armenians are leaving their country of origin for economic reasons (e.g., Bachmann et al. 2004, Minasyan et al. 2008, Genov & Savvidis 2011). While economic and professional motives seem to underpin the decisions to emigrate, the existence of family and kin networks was decisive for the choice of the main country of immigration. The large majority of the interviewees (54%) stated that they decided to settle in the main country of immigration because “family members and/or friends were already there”. Another 15 per cent indicated “existing contacts/networks” as decisive for the choice of the destination country.

This explorative research reveals that a total of 89 per cent of our sample joined family members and

friends abroad. Of these, the majority followed their spouses, siblings, other relatives or friends. Women largely followed their husbands, while men often joined other relatives. This type of migration where one family member follows relatives already living in the destination country could be seen as a kind of 'chain migration' (Rickey 1976, Adepoju 1995, Faist 2000). These migration chains are formed through interpersonal ties where one or several family members migrate and are followed by others at a later date. This migration pattern is widely known in the Armenian context. After the country's independence, particular young men from rural areas were the first to escape the disastrous socio-economic conditions in their country; some of them were later joined by their spouses, children and other relatives (Menjivar & Agadjanian 2007). The importance of cross-border social networks for the direction of emigration has been confirmed by other studies. The ArGeMi survey (2011), for example, brings to light that the widespread network of compatriots is particularly important for the decision of Armenian migrants to leave to Moscow (Genov & Savvidis 2011). Similar, Bachmann et al. (2004) explain that for Armenian return migrants existing family linkages in the southern parts of the Russian Federation are decisive for their destination choice. Hence, the distant location of family members encourages and directs migration.

Furthermore, the family plays a central role in financing and preparing the migration journey. 39 per cent of the respondents indicated that they received financial support from their family and kin to pay for their emigration. The assistance was provided by family members living in Armenia, but also by relatives already residing abroad and sending remittances to enable emigration. Migrants who join relatives often receive initial support from these people. The field survey highlights that family members were particularly helpful in finding employment (36%) and housing (16%) or to obtain residence permit (21%). In addition, 34 per cent of the newcomers were provided with financial assistance from their relatives. Only eight per cent did not receive any support upon arrival. These findings clearly demonstrate that cross-border family networks, i.e. having relatives abroad, constitute an important form of social capital for migrants and provide them with tangible and intangible resources (Boyd 1989, Cassarino 2004). As Douglas Massey et al. (2002, 19) explain "each act of migration creates social capital among people to whom the migrant is related, thereby raising the odds of their migration". Social capital has to be viewed as resources provided by family and kin which are then exploited during the migration process. Links with relatives already living abroad play a key role in providing information and assistance regarding housing, residence permit or job opportunities, but also constitute a source of emotional support. Hence, they facilitate orientation and adjustment to new surroundings. Moreover, family networks reduce costs and risks of movement.

Apart from these largely positive effects of family networks for individual migrants, they also involve constraints, expectations and obligations towards the newcomers. On the one hand, family networks enable emigration in the first place providing migrants with essential information and contacts and supporting them psychologically and in some cases financially upon their arrival. On the other hand,

by being a family member and relying on these family bonds, migrants can hardly withdraw from them. In this regard, their membership in family networks could be seen as a barrier or even a burden to realize their personal migration goals. Thus, migrants' family networks influence migration patterns, they motivate and enable migration, but at the same time, they may constrain individuals' freedom. As I will show, this ambivalence also holds true for return migration and reintegration.

The field survey also highlights that Armenians living abroad kept close contact with non-migrant family members in their country of origin. During the last year of their stay in the main country of immigration, 64 per cent of the surveyed respondents declared that they contacted their family and kin who stayed behind in Armenia at least once per week. Only five per cent stated that they never communicated with their relatives at home. Moreover, a large number of interviewees (43%) declared that in their last year of stay in the main country of immigration, they have sent remittances to Armenia, either once a month or once every three months.⁷ The main beneficiaries of these financial means were spouses, children and parents.⁸ On an average, respondents sent from 1000 to 3000€ per year. These private transfers of savings were largely used "to support family's needs" (49%) like school fees, medical treatment or to finance family events such as weddings and funerals. In only few cases, the money was sent to "build/buy/furnish a house" (3%). None of the interviewees stated to use financial transfers to invest in a business project, to buy land/property, to improve production equipment or to construct public buildings (e.g. schools, hospital, etc.).

As shown, more than half of the respondents (53%) received support from family members for the migration journey with the majority stating that their family helped them to pay for the journey, at the same time, a large part of the interviewees send financial contributions to their non-migrant relatives in Armenia. Thus, it could be argued that family and kin support the emigration of one member of their family in order to obtain remittances as compensation. In this regard, migration can be seen as a family/household strategy which involves initial social and economic support, but also commitment and obligations. According to the NELM, remittances are part of the mutual agreement between the family and the migrant (Lucas & Stark 1985). The family provides preliminary financial support for the journey and for the starting time after arrival in the destination country, in return, the migrant sends part of his income to his family in the country of origin. Migrants may also remit financial means to maintain and strengthen relationships with relatives left behind and to prepare for their return. As Cassarino (2004, 11) argues, cross-border social networks which involve migrants and non-migrants need to be constantly maintained from both sides and "require long-standing interpersonal relationships, as well as the regular exchange of mutually valuable items between actors".

⁷ According to the World Bank, Armenia counts to the Top Remittances receiving countries worldwide with nine per cent of the GDP as remittances (World Bank 2011).

⁸ The UNDP Human Development Report states that every fifth Armenian family out of 1,000 families interviewed, reported having received financial assistance from relatives living abroad (UNDP 1996).

Return and reintegration

The previous sections have shown that family members in Armenia and abroad provide migrants with social and financial resources before emigration and upon arrival in the destination country. At the same time, migrants retain close links with their non-migrant family members in Armenia while living abroad. A large number of interviewees in the field survey stated that they transferred money to relatives who stayed behind. With regard to the process of return migration, the field survey demonstrates that the family plays a crucial role in various aspects. The large majority of respondents (78%) declared that their family was the main source of information in the return process. Only few interviewees mentioned governmental or non-governmental organizations, migrant associations or consulates as an information source. Furthermore, the intention to return was frequently discussed with family members residing in the main country of immigration (39%) as well as with relatives who remained in Armenia (38%). That means family members both in the main country of immigration and in the country of origin were involved in the decision-making to return. By gathering information about post-return conditions, Armenian migrants aim to secure their return and reintegration back home. This process refers to the level of return preparedness, namely migrants' "willingness and readiness to return" (Cassarino 2004, 17).

The field survey reveals that most respondents "decided on their own initiative to return" (71%). The remaining 29 per cent declared that their "return was due to adverse circumstances".⁹ Of those who decided or chose to return on their own initiative, the large majority declared "personal, family and/or socio-cultural reasons" as decisive for their return. As Table 2 illustrates, the main reason to return was "homesickness/nostalgia". A survey, conducted jointly by the Armenian Ministry of Labour and Social Issues and the National Statistical Service of the Republic of Armenia in 2008, found out that up to 55 per cent of all surveyed returnees indicated that their return to Armenia was caused by "nostalgia or missing family and relatives" and "family circumstances" (Ministry of Labour and Social Issues 2008, 45). Likewise, Bachmann et al. (2004, 108) assess that "the feeling of homesickness is a major reason to return". Armenians living abroad miss their country and its people. The second main reason to come back to their country of origin was "to take care of the family". This motive was primarily mentioned by female return migrants who often returned to care for their elderly parents or in-laws. In this regard, these migrants were obliged to return to fulfil their social duty and responsibility in the family relations in Armenia. Other key motives to return were "family problems in the country of origin" and "education and upbringing of children in Armenia".¹⁰

⁹ The distinction between a decided return and a return which was due to adverse circumstances avoids using terms such as voluntary and forced return. As Cassarino (2008) explains the term 'voluntary return' has been increasingly applied for return migrants who actually did not decide on their own initiative to return to their country of origin. By using the expression "my return was decided on my own initiative", the freewill of migrants is emphasized.

¹⁰ The education and upbringing of their children as main reason to return to Armenia was not specifically listed

Table 2: Reasons to return in %, N=249 (according to priority, multiple answers possible)

Reasons to return	First	Second	Third
Personal, family and socio-cultural reasons			
Family problems in the country of origin	8.6	4.1	0.6
Family problems in the immigration country	4.6	1.6	0.6
Health problems	2.3	1.4	1.4
Homesickness/nostalgia	13.1	11.7	3.1
To get married and form a family	5.1	0.8	0.6
To take care of the family	10.8	9.4	2.9
Total personal, family and socio-cultural reasons	44.5	29	9.2
Economic and professional reasons			
Job precariousness in the immigration country/no job	3.4	0.8	0.8
Retirement	0.3	0	0.3
To continue to run my business at home	1.4	0	0.3
To create a new business at home	0.3	0.6	0
Termination of my job	1.4	0.6	0
End of my studies	1.1	0	0
To complete my training/studies	0.3	0	0
Total economic and professional reasons	7.8	2	1.4
Other reasons			
Situation in my country of origin turned positively	0.3	2.0	0.6
Political reasons	0	0.3	0
Racism/discrimination	0	0.3	0.3
Migration aims not achieved	1.7	1.4	1.4
Migration aims achieved	4.3	1.7	1.4
Deception/disillusion	0.3	0.3	0.8
Other reasons such as education and upbringing of children in Armenia, etc.	9.7	1.7	0.6
Total other reasons	16.3	7.7	5.1

Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

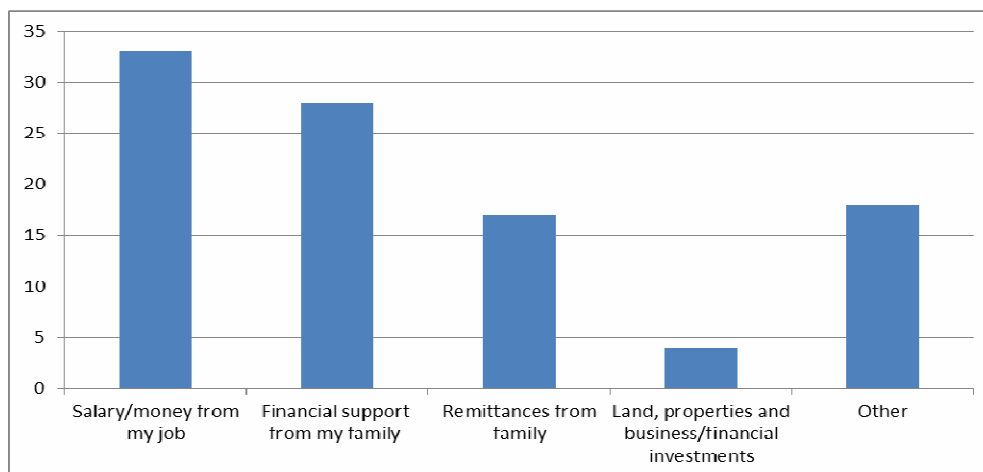
Table 2 demonstrates that for those return migrants who decided on their own initiative to move to back to Armenian, reasons to return to Armenia tend to be mainly motivated by family factors, including the longing to be back in the home country and the duty to support the family. Economic and professional motives such as “to continue to run my business at home” or “to create a new business” played a less important role for the decision to return to Armenia. Also political reasons were not significant. Contrary to what the NELM approach is suggesting, only few respondents decided to return because they achieved their migration goals. Unsurprisingly, these motivations differ from those mentioned by migrants who were compelled to return (N=101). Migrants who declared that their “return was due to adverse circumstances” referred to external obstacles, namely,

as responses in the survey questionnaire, but an open space was provided for additional comments on return motives.

non-renewal of residence permit, expulsion/readmission/removal and administrative/financial problems. Family motives were not decisive for their return. Also, family and kin were less involved in the return process of these migrants.

The previous section has shown that family and kin play an important role as source of information in the return process, but also as motivation to return to Armenia, at least for those who decided on their own initiative to return. Importantly, after return, more than half of the sample (54%) received support and assistance from their family. Family members provided psychological and moral support (48%), gave returnees an update in the current situation (41%), (re)established contacts/networks (29%) and/or assisted in the search for employment (21%). Furthermore, the field survey demonstrates that family members supported returnees also financially (see Figure 1). 27 per cent of the respondents stated that they received “financial support from their family in Armenia” and 17 per cent declared that their main source of income was money sent from family members from abroad.¹¹

Figure 1: Main source of income at the time of the interview in %, N=350



Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

In many cases, return migrants received financial support from their relatives upon their return. In fact, salary and money from the job was only for 33 per cent of the returnees the main source of income. Moreover, results from the field survey illustrate that the financial, economic and professional situation of the majority of interviewees significantly worsened after their return. A large part of the respondents (82%) declared that their financial situation in the main country of immigration had either improved significantly or slightly. Only six per cent of the respondents claimed that their financial standing during their migratory project worsened or considerably worsened. Remarkably, compared to the situation abroad, over half of the interviewees declared that their financial conditions at the time of the survey worsened or worsened significantly (59%). Only 15

¹¹ The category “other” includes income sources such as savings, pension and financial means from agricultural activities.

per cent of the sample had a good or very good financial situation after their return. Hence, from a financial point of view, the return to Armenia was for the majority not a ‘success’. The improvement of the financial situation was one of the main reasons mentioned by the interviewees for leaving Armenia (e.g., better salary). They achieved their migration goal while living abroad, but their financial situation worsened again upon their return. Similar, most return migrants evaluated their standard of living at the time of the survey as either “a bit worse” or “much worse” compared with their former standard of living abroad. Furthermore, migration did not have a positive impact on the professional advancement of returnees (see Table 3). In contrast, the majority of interviewees were working before emigration, being largely employed on a permanent contract (29%), but during their stay abroad, a large percentage was only temporary employed (31%). After their return, only 28 per cent were either employed on a permanent or temporary contract compared to 41 per cent before their emigration and 49 per cent during their stay abroad.¹² At the same time, the percentage of unregistered unemployed respondents increased between pre- and post-migration periods, reaching 21 per cent at the time of the survey.¹³

Table 3: Progression of Armenian returnees’ occupational status in %, N=350

Occupation status	Before emigration	Before returning to Armenia	At the time of the survey
Employed on a permanent contract	29.2	17.8	20.6
Temporary employed	12.4	31.3	8.8
Part-time employment	1.7	2.3	1.7
Seasonal work	0.3	0.6	0
Entrepreneur, manager	1.1	1.4	2.3
Self-employed in the formal sector	2.9	3.2	6.8
Self-employed in the informal sector	9.3	5.7	8.6
Registered unemployed	2.3	0.6	3.7
Unregistered unemployed	18.5	6.8	21.2
Pupil/student	6.4	4.8	3.4
Housewife	12.1	23.2	14.6
Retired	3.8	2.3	8.3
Total	100	100	100

Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

As demonstrated, the financial, economic and professional situation of many return migrants in the field survey changed for the worse after their return to Armenia. Hence, a large number of

¹² Those respondents, who were working after their return, were mainly occupied in the construction and building industry, in trade and repair or in manufacturing industry. Many did not change their professional sector before, during or after migration. Among the returnees, who were employed after their return, the majority assessed their earnings as too low (84%), only eight per cent of the whole sample declared to be content with their salary.

¹³ The large percentage of unemployed returnees reflects the supply and demand gap on the labour market. According to the European Training Foundation (ETF 2010), the total unemployment rate in Armenia was 28 per cent in 2007 which is the highest level for the Caucasus region.

respondents depended on the financial support of family members residing in Armenia or on remittances from relatives living abroad. Another explanation for the widespread and significant family support after return could be the weak social protection system in Armenia. The field survey reveals that only 12 per cent of the surveyed return migrants benefit from a national social protection system. Therefore, family and kin may often function as support and security network for returnees, particular for those who are unemployed and have no other financial resources to rely on. Family networks play a crucial role in coping with resource shortages after return.

The large majority of return migrants in the field survey received financial assistance from their family after return. At the same time, however, some were confronted with high expectations from their relatives. 12 per cent of the respondents experienced “envy and suspicion from family, friends and neighbours” and nine per cent faced “high family expectations (gifts, favours, etc.) – sharing one’s wealth with less well-off relatives at home”. Among those returnees who encountered demands and claims, 30 per cent were asked for “financial support”, 12 per cent “to get married and form a family” and nine per cent “to start a new business”. Particular the financial demands may be explained by the initial family support before emigration. Family and kin provide assistance for one of their members to enable and facilitate emigration, as a compensation they expect remittances, but also financial contributions after return. On the one hand, returnees receive support and assistance from their family members during and after their return to Armenia. The family was also crucial for the decision to return to Armenia. On the other hand, the family asserts claims against the return migrants.

The results show that in the context of return migration, family networks may have positive and negative effects on the returnees. Return migrants benefit from social capital provided by family members before, during and after migration. Cross-border family networks provide opportunities to access desired resources and achieve certain migration goals. However, there are also possible limitations and constraints resulting from the membership in these networks (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993). In many cases, migrants are expected to remit a part of their salary to their family in the country of origin and to support family members financially after their return. In addition, for some return may also be a family duty which is expected from migrants, for example, to care for relatives at home. Family networks are always reciprocal in nature involving support and assistance throughout the migration process, but also include responsibilities, duties and obligations from both sides. It goes without saying that the family cannot be assumed as a harmonious group of related people with a common migration strategy and aim, as it was often portrayed in the NELM literature, but rather involves tensions and conflicts among its members. Thus, migrants’ participation in these networks can be interpreted as both enabling and constraining different steps in the migration cycle depending on the perspective of the actors and the goals to be achieved. It becomes clear that return migrants need to balance duties towards family and their own personal strategy.

Re-emigration

When asked about their intention to leave Armenia again, 32 per cent of the returnees stated that they plan to re-emigrate. Another 30 per cent was not sure whether they would leave again and only 23 per cent stated that they do not intend to re-emigrate (see Table 4).

Table 4: Returnees' intention to re-emigrate, N=350

Today, do you intend to leave for abroad?	Frequency	Percentage
Yes, definitely	113	32.3
Maybe	70	20.0
Not now	36	10.3
Never	81	23.1
I do not know	46	13.1
No answer	4	1.1
Total	350	100

Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

The field survey reveals that the time since return impacts the intention to re-emigrate. Interviewees who returned in the period from 2003 to 2005 are less likely to consider leaving Armenia again than those who returned later, namely from 2008 to 2012. This indicates that interviewees who spend more time after their migratory experience in Armenia and who had more time to reintegrate in their country of origin are less likely to migrate again than those who returned recently. It is important to note that the duration of the migratory experience abroad had no significant influence on the consideration to re-emigrate.

As expected, the majority of those return migrants who were unemployed at the time of the interview expressed their desire to re-emigrate, while those who were employed were less likely to consider leaving Armenia again. Also, returnees whose financial situation in Armenia has worsened compared to their financial standing abroad expressed their clear intention to leave Armenia again. Whereas, those few respondents who stated their financial conditions after their return remained unchanged or even improved were more likely to stay permanently in their homeland. Table 5 illustrates that those respondents who relied on remittances or financial support from family members as their main source of income at the time of the survey were more likely to express their intention to re-emigrate than those who earned their own money.

Table 5: Interaction of intention to re-emigrate and main source of financial income, N=346

Today, do you intend to leave for abroad?	Which is the main source of financial income at the time of the survey?					
	My salary/money from my job	Remittances from family	Financial support from my family	Land, properties and business/financial investment	Other	Total
Yes, definitely	19	31	25	31	7	113
Maybe	9	28	7	25	1	70
Not now	5	11	9	9	2	36
Never	24	27	9	19	2	81
I do not know	6	17	11	11	1	46
Total	63	114	61	95	13	346

Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

Importantly, the field survey illustrates that return migrants who are financially independent from their family are less likely to consider re-emigration than those who dependent on family support either from their relatives in Armenia or abroad. This implies that returnees who are economically reintegrated in Armenia (i.e. being employed and having their own income) often do not intend to leave their country of origin again. Others who are unemployed often cannot afford to remain in Armenia and intend to leave again, despite the fact that they do not wish to live far away from their families and relatives. As shown, many interviewees returned for family reasons, but upon their return they are confronted with economic constraints such as unemployment and low salary levels. These obstacles to economic reintegration in Armenia are the main reasons to consider re-emigration. In case, respondents mentioned that they consider leaving Armenia again, the key motives for their intended next stay abroad were “I have no future in my country of origin” (28%), “I cannot find any job here” (23%) and “new job opportunities abroad” (17%).

The survey data also highlight that 97 per cent of the respondents returned to Armenia despite the fact that they still had family members and friends abroad. Those who had relatives in a distant location remained in close contact with them: 34 per cent communicated via phone, letters, email, etc. at least once per week and 17 per cent several times per month. After their return, 35 per cent received remittances from family members living abroad: 14 per cent of return migrants received once a month remittances from abroad, eight per cent once every three months. The main purpose of these remittances was “to support family’s needs” (31%), “for family events such as weddings and funerals” (5%) and “education” (5%). Those return migrants who kept close contact with relatives still residing abroad were more likely to consider re-emigration than those who were never in contact with family members living outside of Armenia. Table 6 illustrates that 48 return migrants who communicated at least once per week with their relatives abroad stated that they intend to leave

Armenia again, while 32 returnees who never had any contact to family member residing abroad declared that do not consider re-emigration.

Table 6: Interaction of intention to re-emigrate and contact with family members and friends who are still living abroad, N=344

Today, do you intend to leave for abroad?	Since your return, how often are you in contact (phone, letters, email, etc.) with family members and friends who are still living abroad?								Total
	At least once per week	Several times per month	Once a month	Several times per year	Once per year	Seldom	Never	No family/friends abroad	
Yes, definitely	48	24	13	8	1	3	12	4	113
Maybe	27	11	6	8	1	3	11	3	70
Not now	10	8	4	7	0	2	4	1	36
Never	18	2	12	9	1	2	32	3	79
I do not know	13	11	8	5	0	1	8	0	46
Total	116	56	43	37	3	11	67	11	344

Source: CRIS/RDP 2012, @EUI

There is no question that cross-border family networks not only play an important role in enabling and facilitating emigration, but are also central for the intention to re-emigrate. Return migrants who have relatives residing abroad are more likely to consider leaving Armenia again. The temporary return to Armenia may help to strengthen relationships with non-migrant relatives and prepare for the potential permanent return. A subsequent re-emigration, however, may sustain and even reinforce cross-border family networks between the country of origin and the destination country.

Conclusion

This analysis of 350 interviews with Armenian return migrants suggests that the family affects many aspects of the migration cycle and plays a significant role in return migrants' lives. Family members support migrants before their departure, for example, by assisting in the preparation of the journey or paying for trip. In this regard, they enable emigration in the first place. Furthermore, cross-border family networks are decisive for the choice of the main country of immigration. Having family members in one particular country has been declared as the most important reason for choosing the destination country. Thus, personal networks shape the direction of migration flows. In addition, relatives who live abroad provide newcomers with information, contacts and resources. In doing so,

they facilitate their arrival in the destination country. At the same time, many respondents stated that they remained in close contact with the non-migrant family members in Armenia while living abroad. The majority of the survey respondents send regular remittances, mainly to support their family's needs. Non-migrant family members enable and facilitate emigration and the stay abroad by providing migrants with social and financial resources. Migrants, in return, retain close links with their relatives in Armenia by keeping contact and transferring remittances. In this way, they may also prepare for their return. Ideally, cross-border family networks are constantly maintained from both sides.

Family networks do not only play an important role for emigration (i.e. enabling departure and facilitating arrival in the destination country), but also for the decision and process to return to Armenia. Return migrants, at least those who decided on their own initiative to return, frequently discussed their return with family members and received information about the current situation and the social and economic opportunities in their country of origin. Reasons to return tend to be mainly motivated by family factors, including nostalgia for the home country and people and the duty to support the family. However, family reasons as return motivations can be ambivalent. On the one hand, migrants long to be back with their family in Armenia. On the other hand, some migrants are obliged to return to fulfil family expectations such as care for relatives.

Upon their return, the majority of respondents received family support, in form of moral and psychological assistance, (re)establishing contacts and networks, but also financial aid. These social and financial resources provided by the family may have partly facilitated social and economic reintegration. Family networks play, for example, a crucial role in coping with resource shortages after return. However, this research has also shown that return migrants who received financial assistance from family members from inside and outside the country are more likely to consider re-emigration than those who were able to rely on their own income. This indicates that family support particular financial assistance upon return does not necessary enable long-term reintegration in Armenia. In contrast, returnees who are unemployed and hence depend on their relatives' financial contributions often intend to leave their country of origin again in order achieve better job opportunities and higher wages and hence, improve the financial conditions for themselves and their families.

Despite the large part of return migrants who was assisted by their family, some returnees also experienced high demands from family members such pressure to provide them with material resources. It can be assumed that particular employed returnees and those who have been financially successful abroad were confronted with family expectations. Financial demands may be explained by the initial family support before emigration and during migration. Family and kin provide assistance for one of their members to enable and facilitate migration, as a compensation they expect remittances, but also financial contributions after return. In this regard, the reciprocal character of family networks, which involve social and economic support, commitment and obligations from both sides, becomes evident (Portes & Sensenbrenner 1993, Boyd 1989, Tiemoko 2004).

After their return, the majority of respondents maintained strong links with their former place of settlement. Return migrants continued to participate in the dynamics of cross-border family networks by being in frequent contact with relatives still living abroad. Some received remittances from family members in distant locations. Most women who returned alone or with their children were provided with financial support from their husband who often remained abroad. Considering that over half of the surveyed return migrants intend to leave Armenia again, the maintenance of cross-border family networks, which bind return migrants, migrant and non-migrant family members in complex social and interpersonal relationships, is important to facilitate re-emigration. The large majority of Armenian migrants return to their country of origin because they are homesick, miss their family or feel the need to support relatives. Yet, mainly due to the economic constraints, many returnees cannot stay permanent in Armenia and consider re-emigration. The family plays an important role as information source in the return process, as return motivation and in some cases for the social and economic reintegration of returnees, but economic obstacles force many return migrants to consider re-emigration.

Family networks constitute a form of social capital which enables and facilitates the emigration of individual family members, but also their return migration, reintegration and re-emigration. Family and kin mobilize necessary social and financial resources (e.g. information, contacts, money, etc.) to support a member of their family throughout the migration cycle. However, family networks may not only have positive consequences. They may also impact return migrants negatively by constraining access to desired resources and thus, preventing social mobility. The duty to take care of relatives may oblige some migrants to return, others are confronted with financial expectations that are hard to fulfil. The involvement in these bounded family networks may undermine individual initiatives through pressing social obligations and excessive claims to support family members. Thus, return migrants' membership in family networks enables and facilitates, but at the same time constraints return migration, reintegration and re-emigration.

Further research is needed to explore in more detail the complex and sometimes seemingly contradictory impact of family networks on return migrants' reintegration and intention to re-emigration. Additional studies should devote more attention to the exclusive nature of family networks. Which disadvantages, but also which advantages do male and female returnees who are located outside of these bounded family networks have compared to those returnees who are embedded in family bonds?

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