

CONCEPTUAL APPROACHES TO THE PROBLEM OF REPATRIATION

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Abstract

There are a number of theoretical approaches to the reintegration of migrants and returnees: Descriptive, Inclusive, Residualist and Recidivist approaches. The descriptive approach was developed on the basis of modern constructivist approaches and is presented as a descriptive theoretical and methodological model. This synthetic model is related to the descriptions that distinguish collective representation. According to the inclusive approach, "migrants" are individuals who have participated in all forms of migration (internal, external, repatriation, temporary, permanent, tourist, seasonal, etc.). The essence of residualist social policy is that "the state takes care of citizens only when all other institutions (the labor market, family, personal savings and charity) have proven ineffective". The theories of rationalism, structural-transnational approach, as well as structural-functionalism and institutionalism applied in the management of the migration process are mainly related to the solution of social, political, economic problems.

Keywords

Repatriation, descriptive approach, inclusive approach, residualist approach, recidivist approach.

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1. Introduction

In the 21st century, the return of people who migrate for various reasons to their homeland is a process that affects the development potential of the country in any case and the return of people who have left their country for the purpose of education or work or who have become refugees and internally displaced persons due to natural and social disasters, conflicts and wars, to their homeland - repatriation contributes to the socio-economic and socio-demographic development of the receiving country. The process of repatriation or return is accompanied by a number of difficulties along with its positive aspects. In this case, the readjustment and reintegration of repatriates manifests itself as an important process.

2. Theoretical approaches to the reintegration of migrants and returnees

There are a number of theoretical approaches to the reintegration of migrants and returnees: Multicultural, Descriptive, Inclusive, Residualist and Recidivist approaches.

The descriptive approach was developed on the basis of modern constructivist approaches and is presented as a descriptive theoretical and methodological model. This synthetic model is related to the descriptions that distinguish collective representation. The main elements of the model are defined as ethnic categories and their relationships, ethnicity. This model, which benefits from the constructivist models of R. Brubaker, K.

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Chandra, A. Wimmer and R. Jenkins, is an empirical research strategy aimed at describing, classifying and structuring migration processes in detail, rather than explaining the causes or building predictive models. The descriptive method is aimed at analyzing and describing a number of demographic indicators of the migration process based on comparative-statistical analysis (Varshaver, 2024).

2.1. Inclusive approach

According to the inclusive approach, “migrants” are individuals who have participated in all forms of migration (internal, external, repatriation, temporary, permanent, tourist, seasonal, etc.). Although the inclusive approach is often applied to migrant children, the reintegration of individuals who speak different languages, have different religious beliefs, have different cultures and traditions and who are marginalized in foreign cultures and social relations as a result of migration makes the application of the inclusive approach necessary and important.

An inclusive approach to migrants is primarily implemented through programs for the education, health and adaptation of migrant children to a new social environment. The same approach is applied to migrants of other ages in a slightly different form, with programs aimed at improving their integration into new conditions, such as age-appropriate health, linguistic and employment issues.

The inclusive approach is also described as a humanistic approach to migrants, a non-traditional or non-categorical approach. If the traditional approach divided migrants into social categories and applied different approaches to victims of war and conflict, different approaches to political refugees, labor and education migrants, etc., the inclusive or non-categorical approach does not accept these differences and emphasizes the application of a humanistic approach to migrants from all categories (Linde, 2009). The humanist approach puts forward a concept based on the “Universal Declaration of Human Rights”. Here, the protection and realization of the rights and freedoms of all members of society without any discrimination is emphasized as a necessary point. Based on these provisions, the humanist approach prioritizes the idea of improving the living conditions of refugees and displaced persons.

2.2. The residualist or residualist-institutional approach

The residualist or residualist-institutional approach (Latin for “residual approach”) is the opposite of the inclusive approach and does not consider people who have been forced to flee their homeland due to war and conflict as migrants. In general, the essence of residualist social policy is that “the state takes care of citizens only when all other institutions (the labor market, family, personal savings and charity) have proven ineffective”.

Residualist-institutional social policy accepts migrants as foreign citizens and provides maximum support to them. According to this model, social assistance to migrants is not considered the responsibility of the state, they are treated only as a temporary labor force, they are not provided with any social assistance (related to employment, health, housing, etc.). The residualist-institutional approach is based on the idea of providing social assistance to migrants from war and conflict regions by international organizations (Bommes & Geddes, 2000).

2.3. The recidivist approach

The recidivist approach to migrants is somewhat controversial, as supporters of this approach do not accept the idea that migrants have the same rights as citizens of the host country and often demonstrate harsh legal, social and political pressures against migrants. According to this approach, those who migrate as a result of war and conflicts cannot be called migrants. These people are considered internally displaced persons and are expected to be repatriated en masse to their homeland after the end of war or conflict in their country.

Many authors note that the relapse approach is associated with migrant phobia, especially in European countries. Thus, approximately 30% and in some cases 50%, of migrants who flock to European countries for the purpose of studying and working do not return to their countries. This is observed with ambiguous changes in the social, political and economic situation of the countries receiving these migrants. In this sense, local citizens do not want to accept migrants as representatives of a foreign culture and express their objections, on the other hand, the state implements special social projects and programs related to migrants as sensitive groups. In these programs, the issues of encouraging migrants to return to their countries also occupy a special place, migrants are subjected to both voluntary and forced repatriation. This is an activity related to the basics of the relapse approach to migrants and constitutes the main essence of the migration policies of various countries.

Currently, people who have left their countries due to war and conflict are considered a special group of migrants and the policies applied to them have slightly different characteristics. According to statistics provided by the UN, the number of refugees and internally displaced persons due to war and conflict in the world currently exceeds 122 million. The largest number of people fleeing wars is in Sudan and Syria. The number of people fleeing Sudan is 14.3 million, the number of people fleeing Syria is 13.5 million, the number of people fleeing Afghanistan is 10.3 million and the number of people fleeing Ukraine is 8.8 million. According to UN data, in addition to those fleeing abroad, 60% of people are forced to relocate within their own countries due to war. More than two-thirds of those fleeing to other countries live in neighboring countries and 73% of them live in low- and middle-income countries and 23% in the poorest countries in the world (Fedotov, 2025).

The majority of war refugees permanently settle in the areas they migrated to, only a small number of displaced persons return to the areas they lived in before the war, especially among people who have become refugees in other countries. The return of people who have become refugees, especially from countries where there have been long-term wars, is a somewhat complicated process and special voluntary return programs are implemented for this purpose. The countries receiving the refugees implement integration programs in accordance with the requirements of UNHCR in order to help the migrants who do not return adapt to local conditions (Alaeva *et al.*, 2020). At the same time, reintegration programs are implemented for people repatriating to their homeland.

3. The concepts of “reintegration” and “sustainable reintegration”

The concepts of “reintegration” and “sustainable reintegration” are the most relevant and widely used approaches in the 21st century. The theory of reintegration has been formed as a new direction of multiculturalism.

The Dictionary of Migration defines “reintegration” as a process that enables individuals to restore economic, social and psychosocial relationships. Social reintegration involves the returnee’s access to public services and infrastructure in the country of origin, including health, education, social protection, etc. systems. Psychosocial reintegration is the process of reintegration into personal support networks (friends, relatives, neighbours) and civil society structures (associations, self-help groups and other organisations). It also includes the returnee’s re-acquisition of the values, lifestyle, language, moral principles, ideology and traditions of the society. Economic reintegration is the process by which the returnee re-enters the economic life of the country of origin and is able to ensure its well-being (IOM, 2019).

The mentioned levels of reintegration are observed both in the initial migration process and in the return process. Refugees and internally displaced persons migrating to territories beyond the borders of the country face different social, economic, political, etc. conditions in the receiving country (often in the territories of border states) and become marginalized, alien groups to the new social reality. In fact, the same process is observed during internal migration, although it is often a community of people with the same language, religion and traditions, especially when migrating from regions to large cities, the self-identification of “provincial” and “urban” becomes the main reason for the marginalization of migrants. Migration, regardless of its form, both outside the borders of the country and within the country (as a result of war and conflicts), is accompanied by gradual adaptation and integration. Often, the receiving party or country prepares the ground for the return of migrants, implements projects aimed at restoring the economy and improving social well-being in the abandoned territories, thereby transforming permanent migration into temporary migration. At the next stage, a multilateral plan of measures begins to be implemented regarding the reintegration of migrants returning to their places of origin.

3.1. The concept of sustainable reintegration

It should be noted that the concept of sustainable reintegration primarily includes programmatic activities related to determining the characteristics of the reintegration of migrants who have lived outside their homeland for several decades and who return to their homeland due to social, political, economic, etc. issues, sociological assessment of the economic and social situation of returning migrants and their socio-psychological well-being and identification of the problems they face in the return process, as well as at the reintegration stage. One of the first attempts to scientifically explain the diversity of factors shaping the reintegration models of migrants in their country of origin was made by J.P. Cassarino. J.P. Cassarino argued that reintegration models are related to the following factors:

- First, the varying levels of attitudes towards the reintegration of returning citizens in their country of origin (reintegration environment);
- Second, the duration and type of migration experience; the conditions and reasons motivating return both in the country of origin and in the host country (Cassarino, 2004).

K. Kuschminder identifies the following as the main factors of reintegration strategies:

- The migrant's cultural orientation towards the host and home countries;
- Inclusion in social networks; self-affirmation and a sense of belonging to the country of origin;

- Access to rights, institutions and labor resources in the market in the country of origin.

Kuschminder (2017) emphasizes the multidimensionality and intersectional nature of the reintegration process and notes that reintegration is perceived differently by men and women, which often depends on the social and professional status of returnees and that the structural and cultural context of return has a fundamental impact on reintegration.

The theories of rationalism, structural-transnational approach, as well as structural-functionalism and institutionalism applied in the management of the migration process are mainly related to the solution of social, political, economic problems. The application of these theories was mainly related to the migration crisis that began at the end of the 20th century.

The theory of rationalism mainly involves the impact of the migration process on the economy of the receiving country and the solution of problems with minimal losses. According to A. Sulaymonov, "The repatriation of a foreigner, which depends on adapting to a different job, work contexts and colleagues, also includes the process of intercultural adaptation". A number of authors argue that the repatriation process is an opportunity for both organizations and individuals to achieve mutual benefits (Sulaymonov, 2017).

A rational approach to the repatriation process is directly related to the return of people working in various professional fields outside their homeland (diplomats, ambassadors, teachers, doctors, workers, etc.), analyzes the various benefits they will receive in the receiving country and also comments on the conditions they face during their reintegration upon return.

A rational approach to the reintegration process of ordinary citizens who have to repatriate due to war and conflicts involves both international and local interventions and assistance in restoring their rights that have been violated at almost all levels.

4. Conclusion

In the 21st century, the return of people who migrate for various reasons to their homeland is a process that affects the development potential of the country in any case. Whether it is people who have left their country for the purpose of education and work or people who have become refugees and internally displaced persons due to natural and social disasters, conflicts and wars, the return to their homeland - repatriation - contributes to the socio-economic and socio-demographic development of the receiving country. The process of repatriation or return is accompanied by a number of difficulties along with its positive aspects. In this case, the readjustment and reintegration of repatriates manifests itself as an important process.

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