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On The Nexus of Geographic Mobility, Personality and Preferences in a Geo-referenced Framework: Why Distance Still Matters

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ABSTRACT

Literature on migration patterns of high-skilled individuals displays several loose ends – the most prominent one is the lack of a joint evaluation of geographic mobility, personality and preferences for heterogeneous individuals in the presence of various locational choices. In order to connect these dots, I present a simple theoretical model with a distinct emphasis on behavioural mechanisms and the integration of psychic costs. The model offers insights into driving forces which shape in a first step an individual's initial choice set, categorised not only by quantitative but also by qualitative aspects of locational alternatives, and in a second step the individual's migratory decision. Both aspects are assumed to be influenced not only by socio-demographic characteristics, but additionally by psychological traits, risk attitude, time and social preferences, as well as previous experiences. Subsequent empirical analyses illustrate a high degree of interconnectedness of these individual characteristics and the initial choice set of a potentially geographically mobile individual. Moreover, these predictors retain their informative value in an examination of observed migratory decisions. Furthermore, the analytical approach, relying on geo-referenced data, points out that simple geographic distance still matters in a globalised and digitalised world – even when it comes to internal migration.

KEYWORDS Geographic Mobility; Big-Five; Risk Attitude

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