

Expatriate Managers in International Trade

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Motivation

The end of a Qatari project in Budapest



Husztai István / Telex (2021)

The end of a Qatari project in Budapest

- ▶ Qatari real estate investors made several high-value investments in Budapest in 2015 (Brückner 2021).
- ▶ For them, however, the projects were small, not worth delegating an expatriate manager.
- ▶ Business deals, even simple decisions often took months.
- ▶ Finally, they sold their stake in December 2020.

Research question

- ▶ What role do expatriate managers play in foreign direct investment?

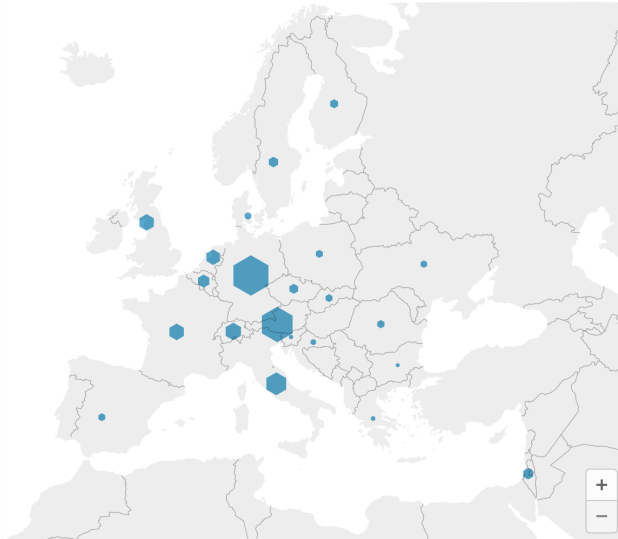
Data

Data

- ▶ Administrative data on *all* Hungarian corporations, 1992–2018.
- ▶ Financial data, trade transactions (1992–2003)

Largest investment partners of Hungary 1992–2003

Expatriate Managers in Hungarian Firms



Number of firms with managers from the given country between 1992 and 2003.

Map: Koren, Orbán and Telegdy • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Foreign owners often replace managers

Foreign Owners Often Replace Managers



Sample: Hungarian corporations with 20+ employees 1992-2003.

Chart: Koren, Orbán and Telegdy • [Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Inferring ethnicity from name

Address	Name	Partner	count	lang	ethn
DE	Klaudia Wolf	DE	1	1	1
DE	Klaudia Wolf	AT	0	1	1
DE	Klaudia Wolf	IT	0	0	0
DE	Enrico Mazzanti	DE	1	1	0
DE	Enrico Mazzanti	AT	0	1	0
DE	Enrico Mazzanti	IT	0	0	1
IT	Fioretta Luchesi	DE	0	0	0
IT	Fioretta Luchesi	AT	0	0	0
IT	Fioretta Luchesi	IT	1	1	1

Large and permanent effects on exports



And on imports



Discussion

Three stories

Vertical integration

Foreign owner takes over firm to export/import within own supply chain.

Professional network

Managers help connect different firms within their professional network.

Business culture

Why managers matter

Three broader implications:

1. Trade within “supply chains” larger than previously thought.
2. Entry into new trade markets is inelastic.
3. Experience with existing partners leads to preferential attachment.

Business network trade

- ▶ Contrary to evidence from US, investment in Hungary leads to large increases in trade with home region.

Inelastic market entry

- ▶ If professional networks are hard to build, extensive margin of trade is less responsive.
- ▶ Competitiveness leads to higher manager wages, not more entry.
- ▶ Complementarity of trade and migration policies.

Preferential attachment

- ▶ It may be easier to trade with friends of friends.
- ▶ We (will) highlight a mechanism for why that is.

Conclusions

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- ▶ We find firm-level evidence that the nationality and ethnicity of owners and managers matters for the direction of trade.
- ▶ Whatever the specific mechanism, we need to model markets and individuals jointly.