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Discussant comments for “The Economic Effects of Youth Drain”

The argument for this paper is intuitive. If most college graduates in the city of Davis suddenly leave, this exodus would have a negative economic impact on the city. The empirical challenge is to demonstrate the reverse story does not hold: negative impact causes most college graduates to leave. The authors use an instrument variable of “pull factors” prior to the economic recession to measure the effects of youth drain on the Italian economy, and conclude there is a negative effect on economic outcomes.

Is it possible to find Italian municipalities with comparable economies and demographics, but one has a higher emigration rate than the other for some reason, and measure the difference in economic outcomes? Empirically, I am a bit confused about exactly when is the cut-off for the “sudden” increase in emigration. The authors mention the increase started in 2005, that there was a “sharp” increase in 2010, and they seem to use 2008 as the pre/post cut-off.

I wonder if their argument can be generalized to other countries with different political/cultural contexts. For example, many college graduates from developing countries emigrate abroad and send remittances back to their home country. In this way, their emigration has a positive effect on their home countries’ economy.
Also, does the argument work the other way too? Would Influx of sea turtles increase innovation and boost home economies?