Relative labour deprivation and urban migration in Turkey

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Abstract The paper develops a concept, a measure and an index of relative labour deprivation and applies these tools to measure deprivation in urban areas of South-East Turkey. It is shown how a Yitzhaki-type of relative deprivation index can be applied to the labor domain and be extended to take into account the notion of reference group derived from modern theories of social justice. In the absence of panel or longitudinal data, such measure results particularly useful to derive policy recommendations for areas characterized by heterogeneous communities. Contrary to what conventional statistics and wisdom would suggest, we find migrants from Eastern Turkey to be less relatively labour deprived than other groups of migrants.

Keywords Labour participation · Reference groups · Relative deprivation · Turkey

1 Introduction

In labour economics, the problem of unemployment is regarded as a disequilibrium in the labour market determined by market inefficiencies. From the perspective of welfare economics unemployment is a form of deprivation from work associated with a multitude of human conditions such as poverty, social exclusion, social unrest, crime and morbidity. In both traditions, explaining labour status is essential to understand labour market functioning, welfare and social stability.

This paper builds on both the labour and welfare economics traditions to develop an alternative set of tools to study the labour force in heterogeneous communities.
with a potential for social instability. We borrow from existing theories of social justice to develop a concept of relative labour deprivation and we render operational this concept constructing a measure and an index of relative labour deprivation.

These tools are then applied to household data on urban migration in Turkey. The paper uses a unique survey on labor and internal migration conducted in 2005 in one large city located in South-Eastern Turkey. It is little known that Turkey experienced a massive internal migration during the past thirty years with an estimated one change in residency for every two inhabitants and that these migrations pose serious social challenges to the Government of Turkey. This paper uses the measure and index developed to study labour deprivation across groups of migrants and across local municipalities. It is shown how these tools can be effective in providing policy recommendations for deprived and heterogeneous communities when researchers dispose of only one cross-section survey.

2 From deprivation to relative labour deprivation

The concept of deprivation is a popular concept in all social sciences. We are not aware of a universal cross-disciplinary definition of the concept but deprivation generally depicts ‘a lack of’ some status, commodities, abilities or capabilities. Deprivation could refer to the lack of income, work, education, health, public services, human rights, living conditions, social relations, affections, and any other attribute that human beings are associated with. We can think of these different dimensions as different ‘spaces’ in the same spirit as Sen describes functioning spaces in his capabilities theory [20].1 In our case, we are concerned with deprivation in the labor ‘space’.

The concept of relative deprivation emerged first in a post-war study on the US army [22] and was later formalized in a theory of social justice by Runciman [19]. Runciman defines the situation of relative deprivation when an individual: 1) Does not have X; 2) Sees some other person or persons as having X; 3) Wants X and 4) Sees it as feasible to have X. The first condition defines deprivation as a ‘lack of’ X. The second condition introduces one concept of relativity, the reference group. Deprivation is relative to the group of people who have what I don’t have. Runciman dedicates several chapters of his book to explain how individuals may identify the reference group. In a nutshell, the reference group is identified by a mixture of objective criteria such as those who have what I don’t have and by subjective criteria such as those who I consider as my similar, those people I feel I should compare myself with. The third condition captures the will of individuals to have what they

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1The concept of deprivation has been adopted by regional and small areas studies across social sciences. This branch of research emerged as a response to the need of identifying local areas at particular risk of poverty, social exclusion, diseases or crime and as a tool for local administrations to define local public policies and budget allocations (see for example [23]). This literature identifies a priori the types of functioning failures to observe and measures deprivation based on the sum of functioning failures associated with individuals and cumulated for local administrative areas such as districts or regions (see for example [16] for a review). These are now standard tools used by local administrations in the UK and other countries and more recently introduced in EU institutions following the Amsterdam treaty in 1997 and the Lisbon agreements on poverty and social exclusion in 2000 (see [13] for a recent EU report that makes use of these instruments).