

Sweden: A High Migration Nordic Country

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Introduction

- Sweden(8/45): traditionally a high migration country by Old World standards and currently with no sign of falling rates at any spatial scale; different economic and social model (within limits) to other case study countries
- Well placed for this kind of exercise with regard to data
- Excellent population data (Statistics Sweden established 1858; migration data from censuses and registrations; between parish migration data series from 1900)
- Population register data from 1990 (individual level longitudinal data with fine 100m*100m spatial resolution; customised extracts made available via universitiesto HE researchers)

Trends since 1990 – The PLAC Database

- Analyse migration upturn since the end of the 1980s
- Individual level analysis over different distance bands
- Contrasts 1991 05 and 2001 05; only a decade, unlike longer term US and England & Wales analyses (a shame)

All address changes

- 6.27pp increase in all address changes in 2001 05 as compared with 1991 05
- Most of this is attributable to change behaviour – a rate effect
- Social/demographic change – population composition – has had a slight net negative effect – ageing and housing tenure effect have outweighed changes in marital status and increased education
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Discussion

- Changes in migration intensity appear to be more to do with changed behaviour than changed population composition – as seen in other countries
- Sweden appears to have followed a different migration trajectory to the US, Australia, and (to a lesser extent), the UK the

Discussion

- In the longer term, the Swedish welfare model may make internal migration less risky – although this model has been ‘reformed’ and modified recently much like in other countries
- The Swedish case also highlights the seductiveness (and weakness) of grand narratives which attempt to relate internal migration to economic models and long term social, labour market and demographic changes
- For instance, the migration decline of the 1970s and 1980s was very plausibly explained by Bengtsson and Johansson (1993) in terms of a shift from industrial to a post industrial society, ageing and technical change – major structural and long term trends
- Yet, Swedish migration rates seem to have increased since then
- Might we fall into a similar trap of explaining current declines in internal migration in similar macro terms?