

# New gateways in Sweden? Secondary migration and employment careers of newly arrived migrants

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## Background, theoretical framework and aims

The geographical distribution of immigrants within nation states has received renewed attention in contemporary policy and immigration patterns. Attempting to reverse regional population decline, policies focused on regionalization of refugee settlement have emerged in Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Akbari and MacDonald 2014, Fang et al. 2018). Although policy regionalization has not emerged in the US, there are strong empirical signs of population deconcentration to smaller localities and to rural areas of immigrants, both due to newly arrived immigration and due to secondary migration (Lichter and Johnson 2006; Waters and Jiménez 2005). Without doubt, the majority of US immigrants are directed towards traditional metropolitan destinations, but these so called “**new gateways**” show new population trends, namely immigrants directly moving to smaller areas, without crossing the main gateways. This upcoming trend may **affect both integration and spatial assimilation** (Lichter and Johnson 2006; Lichter 2012; Shihadeh and Barranco 2010). According to Lichter and Johnson (2006), this process is bound to increase in the future, with all the socioeconomic challenges and promises of population growth that they may entail.

In order to understand immigrant settlement patterns, Lichter and Johnson (2009) argue that there is a need to integrate the research on **ports of entrance** with that on the **secondary migration** of immigrants. Whereas studies on ports of entrance focus on migrants’ initial settlement patterns (e.g. Andersson et al. 2018), studies on secondary migration can be seen as an adjustment to initial conditions at arrival, or in other words, secondary migration may be examined in the light of **spatial assimilation theory**. This adds a regional perspective to the theory of spatial assimilation – asserting that migrants tend to move away from areas with high concentrations of migrants to areas with low concentrations of immigrants – which tends to be studied within urban areas only. A recent exception combining spatial assimilation with secondary migration is Vogiazides and Chihaya’s (2019) study, finding that spatial assimilation is neither the only nor the most frequent long-term residential trajectory among recent migrants in Sweden; most migrants stay in deprived areas.

Emerging **regionalization** in both policies and empirical patterns of international migration points towards a renewed importance to study the regional dispersal of immigrants and socioeconomic outcomes for migrants. The **aim** of this paper is to **map internal migration sequences** of newly arrived international migrants in Sweden and to analyse **if secondary migration is related to socioeconomic improvements**. First, the paper will outline if so-called “new gateways” have emerged in Sweden, and if they are produced by new arrivals or secondary migration. Second, the paper will map the migration sequences of newly arrived immigrants in rural, middle-sized and metropolitan regions. Lastly, the paper will analyse to what extent regional dispersion is related to migrants’ labour market outcomes.

## The Swedish context

Recent studies show that **international migration has increased in rural Sweden**, to the extent that it contributes to repopulate sparsely populated regions (Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014). In most rural areas, international migration is the only factor contributing to population growth. The increase in international migration has been explained both from the perspective of the migrants themselves,

**searching for new lifestyles**, and from the **perspective of local regions**, wanting population influxes to dampen ongoing population decline (Cvetkovic 2009; Syssner 2014). Especially in the wake of the vast refugee flows that entered Sweden in 2015, the role refugees may play in population processes is increasingly discussed (Arora-Jonsson 2017). Migrants tend to stay short periods in rural areas (Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014), which is why Hedlund et al. (2017) argued that rural immigration offers no panacea to population decline. The immigrant rural population is increasingly heterogeneous, with a majority of middle-aged and older Nordic and European lifestyle migrants and marriage migrant, mainly from Southeast Asia (Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014).

Sweden has seen a **shift in policy towards regionalization of refugees** since the 1980s, when the Sweden-wide strategy was established: compulsory placement in municipalities throughout the country. This policy is generally seen as a failure in terms of socioeconomic integration into society (Åslund and Rooth 2007, Åslund et al. 2010; Edin et al. 2004), mostly as many migrants were placed in places with limited work opportunities. At present, refugees can choose their own place of residence or be placed in accommodation anywhere in the country provided by the Swedish Migration Agency. Those choosing their own accommodation tend to more often reside in metropolitan areas than those who were assigned housing (Statistics Sweden 2016). Similar to studies in the US (Kritz et al. 2011), migrants first settling in small rural areas have higher out-migration rates compared to those settling in urban areas. Larger immigrant populations, the presence of co-ethnics and better labour market prospects are important factors for migrants to remain in their current areas (Aradhya et al. 2017).

### Secondary migration and socioeconomic outcomes

**Adding a regional component to the theory of spatial assimilation**, means that migrants move to other labour markets in order to increase their human capital. Studies in the US found that mobility between states improved both employment chances and incomes for immigrants, especially among those that were already affluent (Hall 2009). Similarly, Goodwin-White (2012) found that secondary migration improved immigrants' incomes. Migrants may move to avoid labour market vulnerabilities, rather than a means to capitalize on a high education. Kritz et al. (2011) explain immigrant secondary migration with an attempt to combine economic conditions with social motives. For Canada, Valade (2017) found that immigrants do better in small cities, but nonetheless more often move to large cities.

**Research on employment for immigrants in small-sized and rural localities in Sweden** has been scarce and contradictory. Whereas Hedberg and Haandrikman (2014), for immigrants in general, and Statistics Sweden (2016), for refugees, find support for similar or even more positive employment chances for immigrants in rural areas compared to urban areas, Åslund et al. (2010) and Hedlund et al. (2017) found that living in rural areas negatively impacts employment levels. The most advantageous regions for migrants to find work were either Stockholm or small rural areas, according to Vogiazides and Mondani (2019). The latter has been linked to easier socialisation processes in rural areas. Statistics Sweden (2016) reported that refugees who were placed in or moved to rural areas had higher employment chances than those in large cities.

### Methods and preliminary findings

We use longitudinal register data on the full population of Sweden. For this study, we examine all newly arrived migrants in the year 2002 and follow them over a period of 10 years. Migrants are defined as foreign born persons, excluding those with both parents born in Sweden. We use sequence analyses to identify typical migration pathways for migrants between areas with different degrees of urbanisation. Place of residence is defined as one of the following states: living in metropolitan areas, living in mid-sized areas, or living in rural areas, based on a municipality classification. Sequence analysis is an

excellent tool to identify these trajectories, not the least as we are interested in the timing of living in rural areas. How long do migrants stay in rural areas? Which migrants move to and perhaps from rural areas? Figure 1 displays index plots of unique sequences showing the most typical regional pathways for migrants who start off in rural areas. The **most common trajectory is “stable rural”** – migrants who start in rural areas and stay there, which applies to 71 of all migrants. The **second most common trajectory is “Short Rural -> Mid-sized”**, while other trajectories are less common.

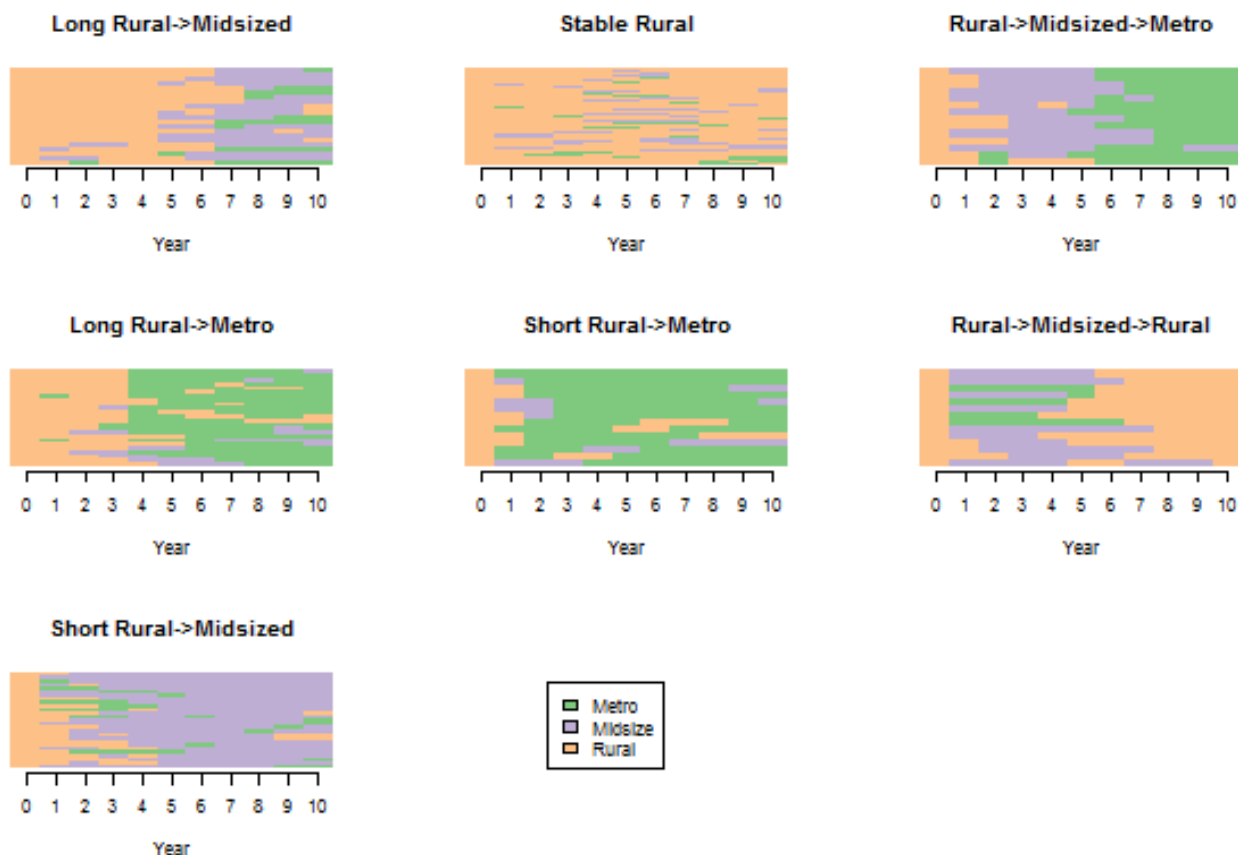


Figure 1. Index plots of unique sequences of migrants initially residing in rural areas, cohort 2002

In a second part of the paper, we will use **multinomial regression analysis** to estimate the effects of various individual socioeconomic and demographic characteristics on the probability of following each type of trajectory, also for those starting off in mid-sized and metro areas. Our main focus will be on **employment and migrant type**, distinguishing between Nordic migrants, life style migrants from Western Europe, labour migrants, marriage migrants, and refugees and their families. Other independent variables include gender, age, education and having a Swedish partner. We will include **maps with typical locations** of the trajectories found. The paper will discuss findings in the light of spatial assimilation and policies to disperse refugees and policies to attract migrants to shrinking areas.

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