

Historical Perspectives on Internal and International Migration

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Workers' Skills and Geographic Mobility: Human Capital and Geographic Mobility in Sweden, 1885-1940

Jonatan Andersson, Uppsala University

A large body of literature has found a positive relationship between human capital and geographic mobility, both in contemporary as in historical societies. In modern settings it is usually found that highly educated individuals are much less sensitive to moving long distances than the less educated. Similarly, researchers in history often conclude that rural-to-urban migrants were positively selected on a number of characteristics, such as occupational status, literacy, and height. However, lacking knowledge on educational background of internal migrants in historical times we know little about if differences in the propensity to migrate were related to skills attained from formal education or skills associated with occupational status. The aim of this article is to fill this research gap by studying long-distance internal migration in late 19th and early 20th century Sweden. The aim is achieved by using a novel individual-level data set, containing information about residency, education and occupational status on a large number of Swedish residents.

The land of opportunity? Returns to migration for Swedish migrants during the Age of Mass Migration

Marcos Castillo, Lund University

Between 1850 and 1930, during the Age of Mass Migration to the United States, Sweden was one of the sending countries with the highest emigration rates, with over a million Swedes leaving their country for the US, in the hopes of better economic opportunities. During this period, the US had a policy of almost open borders, which allows studying migration economics without the presence of entry requirements in the receiving country. This paper studies if for the Sweden-to-US migrants, the US truly represented a land of opportunities by estimating returns to the migration decision, as well as for which classes was migration the most profitable, and if these returns decreased over time. The dataset used to conduct the study was obtained by locating boys living in the same household in the 1880 and 1890 Swedish Censuses and linking them to the 1900 and 1910 Censuses in either the US or Sweden. The returns are estimated by comparing economic outcomes in 1900 and 1910 of the migrants to their brothers that stayed in Sweden, assigning mean earnings to the occupational class of the individuals.

Home, Sweet Home? Across the Atlantic and back again during the Age of Mass Migration

Olof Ejermo, Lund University

Kerstin Enflo, Lund University

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We take a close look at the selection, social and occupational upgrading, and relocation patterns of Swedish return migrants during the Age of Mass Migration. Linking emigration records with full count census data at high precision, a detailed picture emerges: one out of six emigrants show up as returnees in our sample. While we detect a negative outward selection of migrants, we document that returnees were positively selected. Compared to stayers, return migrants settled further away from their birth parishes and were more likely to get married and upgrade in terms of occupation. Combined with a selection pattern best described as “the best of the worst”, return migrants’ impact on their sending countries are likely to be substantial.