

Sweden: A High-Migration Nordic Country

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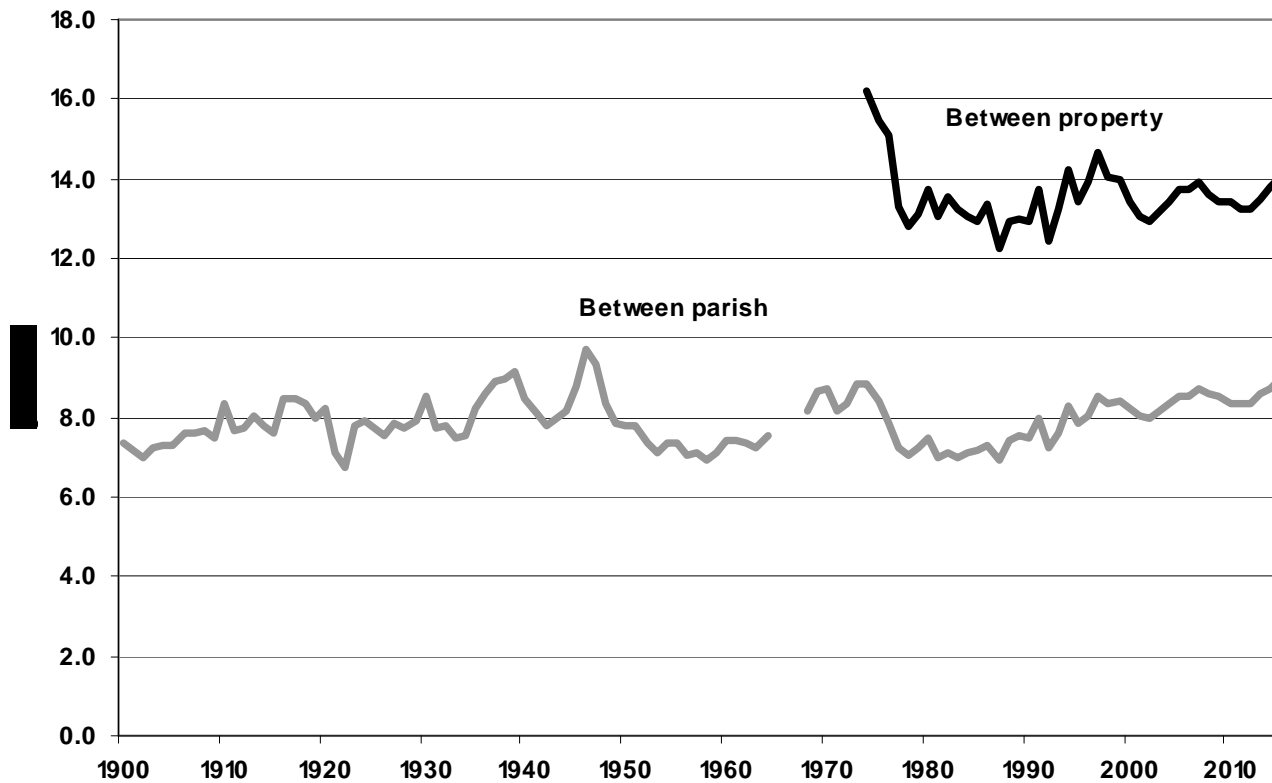
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Paper presented at BSPS/PGRG meeting 'Is internal migration slowing down?', London School of Economics and Political Science, 11 January 2018

Introduction

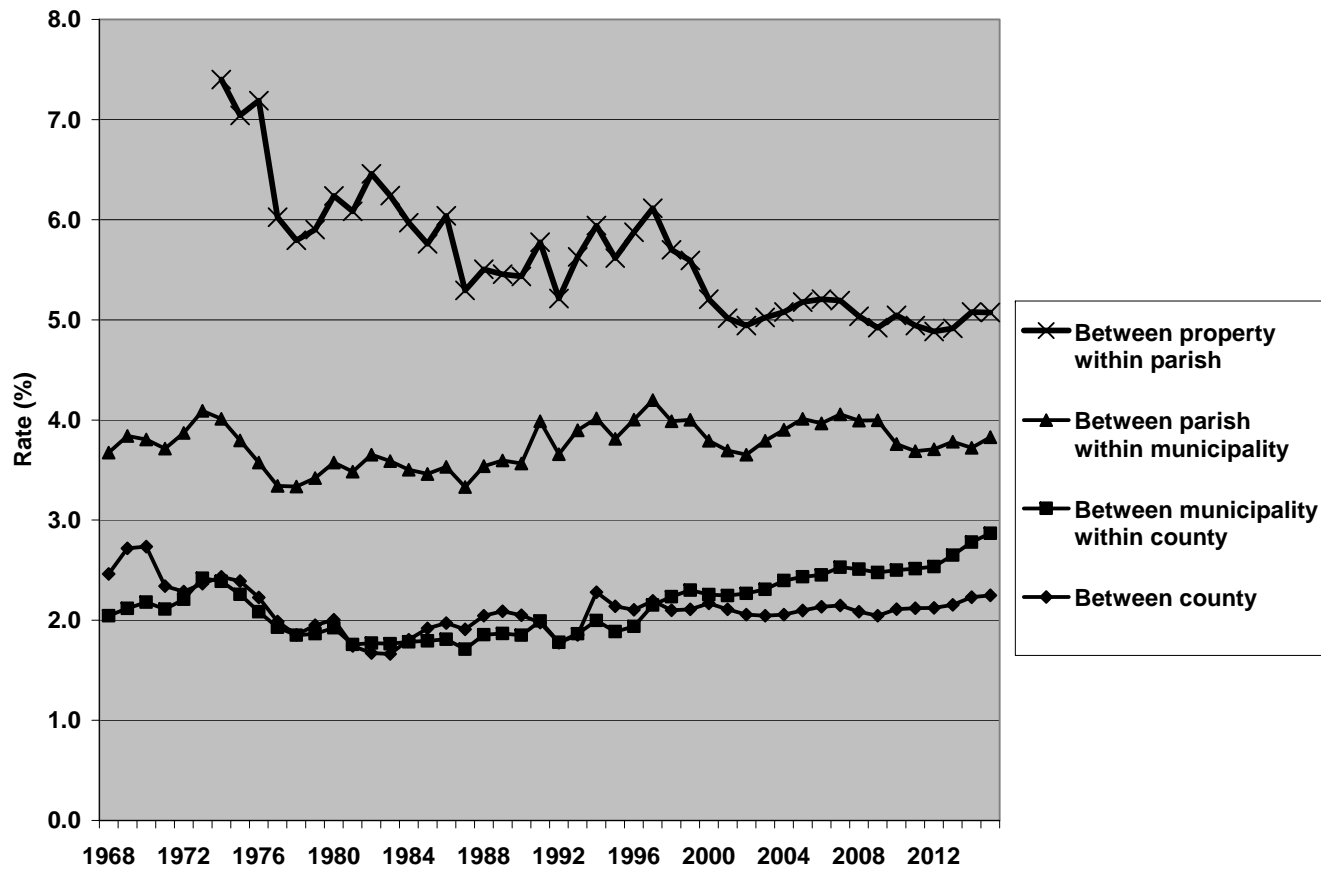
- **Sweden (8/45)**: traditionally a high-migration country by Old World standards and currently with no sign of falling rates at any spatial scale; different economic and social model (within limits) to other case study countries
- Well placed for this kind of exercise with regards to data
- Excellent 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 universities to HE researchers)

Long-term trends: Migration rates from 1900



- Between parish annual rates oscillate between 7% and 10% from 1900-2015
- Peaks just after WWII and early 1970s
- Troughs in 1950s and mid 1970s and 1980s
- Falls in between-property and between-parish moves post 1970
- Increases in between-parish moves 1980-2015 but between-parish moves stable?
- The 1980 trough – an explanatory digression – Bengtsson and Johansson (1993) – structural economic and demographic change

Trends by type (distance): Rates 1968-2015



- Falls in between-property moves within parishes
- Slight growth in within municipality – between parish – moves
- Growth in intra-county between-municipality moves
- Steady between-county moves
- Net effect? Do increases at longer distances offset shorter distance declines?

Trends since 1990 – The PLACE database

- Analyses migration upturn since the end of the 1980s
- Individual-level analysis over different distance bands
- Contrasts 1991-95 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 1991-95
- 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
- Composition relatively unimportant as elsewhere in US and England & Wales

Moves of 100km or over

- 1.38pp increase by 2001-05 over 1991-95
- Most of increase attributable to rate effect – changed behaviour
- But...social/demographic change has a net positive effect with increased education and changes in economic activity offsetting population ageing
- Once again, population composition is relatively unimportant as in US and England & Wales

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 in terms of trends
- It has maintained its position as a relatively high-migration country (by European standards)
- This illustrates the importance of country-specific factors in explaining national trends in internal migration – one structural jacket does not fit all
- In the Swedish case recently this includes govt centralisation of jobs and services and the expansion of HE

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 grander 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?