Regions

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CHALLENGE OF CONTEMPORARY MIGRATION

- Migration and Regional Development
- EU Cohesion Policy
- Transnational Collaboration
IN THIS ISSUE...

As we write, President Trump has announced temporary movement bans on nationals from selected countries and the UK Parliament makes the decision to start the process of BREXIT by triggering article 50 of the European Union. It seems appropriate, therefore, that one of the defining factors in these political upheavals — concerns about international migration — should be the focus of our Regional Survey provided by our team of guest editors, Danica Šantić (University of Belgrade), Gary Bosworth and Agnieszka Rydzik (University of Lincoln) and Ruth McAteavey (Newcastle University). The focus is on European migrations, specifically labour mobility within the EU, a process that has perhaps become obscured by recent media attention given to asylum-seekers and the movement of people into Europe who have been displaced by political upheavals and conflict.

Contributors to the Regional Survey provide significant insights into the character of contemporary economic migration within the EU. There are some themes that seem familiar. The impacts of recent migration on rural depopulation as observed in Serbia, for instance has some precedent in Europe. Elsewhere, however, other types of rural areas have become focal points for in-migration to address labour shortages in land-based industries. There are interesting points of analysis suggested also. The conventional explanations of migration in terms of “push” and “pull” factors may, it seems, be outdated in circumstances where jobs are precarious, movements are temporary and for some at least, being constantly “en route” has become a norm. Several articles also look at the socio-political implications of these migration flows. These authors question the relevance of conventional understanding of “integration” into host communities in situations where increasingly mobile groups are supported by socio-economic networks that cut across nations and are facilitated by ICT and low cost airlines.

EU Cohesion Policy continues to be a fertile area for policy evaluation. Riccardo Crescenzi, Ugo Fratesi and Vassilis Monastiriotis present findings from an econometric analysis of the impacts of Cohesion Policy. Their key finding — that there seems to be an association between Cohesion Policy and regional growth — will not doubt be reassuring for European policymakers. Somewhat more challenging, however, they also conclude that there is evidence to suggest that interventions are affected negatively by misalignment between targeted objectives and identified needs within regions.

This issue of Regions also contains a contribution from Anna Schopf and Walter Timo de Vries on transnational cooperation in the Alpine border region of Bavaria – Austria. This piece highlights the benefits of collaboration, but also the tensions. In particular, it is noted that interventions in this border region have tended to emphasize economic development outcomes, such as the improvement of tourism as an economic activity in a region that is experiencing significant environmental challenges and land-use conflicts.

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Front cover photo: A demonstration for freedom of movement and freedom of information in May 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland. Courtesy of Noborder network accessed via Flickr.

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Front cover photo: A demonstration for freedom of movement and freedom of information in May 2003 in Geneva, Switzerland. Courtesy of Noborder network accessed via Flickr.

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MIGRATION AND DEMOGRAPHIC SHRINKAGE IN RURAL AREAS IN SERBIA
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socioeconomic development on the urban-based industrialization and the employment of unskilled and semi-skilled labour from the villages, rural areas have suffered intensive emigration as well as demographic and socio-economic shrinkage. Consequently, rural shrinkage has become one of the largest structural development problems of Serbian society.

Rural – urban migration as a factor of demographic shrinkage
Historically, rural – urban migration has played a significant role in shaping the demographic profile of Serbia, especially after WWII. Migration patterns in Serbia have been characterized by a shift from the dominance of local, rural-urban migration since the 1960’s, to the dominance of regional migration between cities until the 1980’s, and the migration of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the 1990’s. These trends took place at the same time as the intensification of international migration of Serbian citizens from the 1960’s and are important determinants of changes in the spatial distribution of population potentials in Serbia.

Slow economic growth in rural settlements, especially in mountainous, peripheral and border regions, intensified the emigration of the population of working and reproductive age. Millions of inhabitants were moved from villages to towns and cities, causing massive depopulation with very dramatic population losses in certain parts of the country. Together with seeking a better life in a city, the rural population was trying to escape from agriculture and poverty. As a result, the 1991 Census shows that more than half of the population in Serbia lives in urban areas. However, because of the civil war, sanctions, economic crises and the failed transition in the 1990’s, they found themselves trapped in suburban houses, unemployed and with an uncertain future.

In the final stage of demographic transition at the beginning of the 21st century, Serbia is faced with a distinct polarization of regions with an increasing concentration of population on the one hand and a decrease in population size on the other hand. Population mobility is an important determinant of these changes in the spatial distribution. Migration from rural areas and towns toward cities such as Belgrade, Novi Sad and Niš heightens the concentration of urban population and this is fuelled by, highly educated people involved in tertiary and quaternary sector activities taking advantage of greater personal mobility (Figure 1). Despite these internal migration trends, the external migration flows of the labour force since the 1960’s have intensified negative demographic trends in rural areas, especially in the eastern part of the country. For half of the century, rural areas were the "raw
material and demographic reservoir of labour force” that went abroad taking with them reproductive and working potentials. In the first decades of emigration, unskilled and semi-skilled workers left the country. Changes in migratory behaviour started in the 1990’s with emigration of the (highly) educated and skilled workers, ranking Serbia among the top countries most affected by brain drain.

Very low and negative rates of population growth together with the emigration of young people, will contribute to a further reduction of the population in rural settlements, which will have the knock-on effect of worsening the “quality” of certain functional contingents such as fertile or working age people, leading to a decrease in local tax income and key service providers. On the other hand, the numbers of old, dependent population (65+) will increase. This is reflected already in inadequately treated agricultural land, an increase in the number of elderly households, a decline in the birth rate, the prominent producer role of women on individual farms and others. Unlike Serbia, countries in the developed world which are also faced with this problem, compensate losses of population with immigration or “importing” young, fertile people of working age.

Demographic shrinkage – A contemporary issue in rural areas

The very dynamic spatial and demographic development of Serbian settlements recently was reflected in the rapid demographic development of smaller groups of settlements (mostly urban) and intensive demographic shrinkage of a large number of rural settlements. That caused a number of changes to the spatial organization of the settlements network in the country. A large number of villages, especially those in areas distant from local, sub-regional and regional centres, as well as in mountainous and isolated areas, recorded a population decrease for decades and therefore a negative demographic change. The consequences of these trends are reflected in the process of depopulation in villages and the increasing number of abandoned villages and their parts, as well as settlements for which it can be concluded that they are facing demographic extinction in the near future. Particularly vulnerable settlements are those in traditionally underdeveloped areas (hilly and mountain areas, peripheral and border areas) that are in terms of “economic rationality” in contemporary society marginalized and socially neglected (Martinović and Ratkaji, 2015).

Orientation of socio-economic development in the urban-based industrialization process has resulted in sustained agricultural decline, spatial relocation and changes in the vital characteristics and structure of the rural population. Migration from villages to the towns and cities had strengthened the depopulation trends, in the first place in villages, and became the main factor in decreasing the population, even more important than the process of deagrarianization. Depopulation became one of the biggest structural development problems of Serbian society (Radovanović, 1999).

The largest numbers of settlements in Serbia or 96.2% of the total number are located in rural areas. According to the 2011 census, 93% of urban settlements had less than 2,000 inhabitants. Among this group, the smallest or “dwarf” settlements, with less than 500 inhabitants made up two thirds of the total number, settlements with less than 200 inhabitants one third and villages with less than 100 inhabitants less than one quarter of the total number of villages in Serbia. A particular problem present in small rural villages with an unfavourable demographic structure, is that they are the first places affected by the process of demographic ageing. According to the 2011 census, in 203 rural settlements there were less than 20 inhabitants, with an average age above 50 years. We can conclude that in the coming decades, a significant number of villages, especially in mountainous and peripheral regions of Serbia, will lose population (Martinović, 2014).

After dynamic and long term socio-economic, functional and cultural changes of rural areas, the problem of...
the transformation of settlements has an important place in rural research. In the modern period that become one of the vital issues which imposes complex geospatial development outside the boundaries of urban agglomerations. This is a result in the first place of the growing interest of modern society for the concept of sustainable rural development, especially in underdeveloped, peripheral and devastated rural areas.

Those areas with continuous, dynamic and structural development processes greatly burden the overall development at the national and global level (Woods, 2005, McDonagh, 2012).

Accepting the thesis of the heterogeneity of rural areas and rural settlements influenced the general academic acceptance of typological method as an important starting point in the research of its development. The previous method of the typology indicated that should be based on an understanding of the processes that affect the demographic, socio-economic, functional and morphological structure of settlement complex. Creating adequate typology in terms of the dynamic transformation of rural areas and rural settlements, in addition to illustrating their heterogeneity, is a good starting point for more detailed research into the rural complex in order to identify the main structural problems and determining the appropriate measures and models of development and reactivation of villages and rural areas.

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MIGRANTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND: OPPORTUNITIES AND IMPEDIMENTS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

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Introduction

This article examines migrants' experiences in Northern Ireland, a New Immigration Destination (NID) where their arrival has reversed a pattern of emigration. Significant changes were made to many rural areas and small towns in the region. Their incorporation into society has not been smooth. This short article draws on empirical research that the author conducted in the region exploring among other issues, migrants' experiences in the labour market and the extent to which opportunities for their economic and social mobility exist. It examines the recognition of overseas qualifications and the significance of the migrant's identity. The research shows how migrants can face discrimination in everyday encounters, even though robust equality legislation in the region ought to provide protection to them and other vulnerable groups. This curtails the ability of migrants to maximise their potential in the labour market.

New Immigration Destinations

Right across the globe the emergence of NIDs has been experienced. Within Europe countries including Ireland, Scotland, Greece, Italy, Spain have all become destinations for migrants from Central and Eastern Europe as well as from Southern America, Asia, Africa and
Regions

The Voice of the Membership

The Regional Survey in this issue (Guest Editors Gary Bosworth and Danica Šantić) comprises a selection of papers which emerged from a conference staged in Belgrade as part of the Regional Studies MICaRD (Migration, Inter-Connectivity and Regional Development) network. The rationale for the network is to provide space to debate current and emerging issues on European economic migration in order to foster collaboration and expand research opportunities. The specific focus is on increasing labour mobility within the EU and the impact on regional development in rural areas for both sending and receiving nations. The papers presented here include perspectives from regions suffering depopulation and those facing challenges associated with the integration of new migrant populations. In a world of uncertainty for international migrants in the US and Europe, especially the UK, with growing numbers of asylum seekers and a continuing flow of people towards Europe, this issue of Regions forms part of a wider call for new thinking about contemporary patterns of mobility.

Our In Depth article by Cresczenzi, Fratesi and Monastiriotis examines the factors that condition the successful implementation of Cohesion Policy in the EU using econometric modelling techniques. The experiences of 15 regions are analysed. Their results show that while there is a positive association between Policy and regional growth, the success of policies appears to depend on levels of concentration and effective targeting of spend on regional needs. This article complements our Research Note provided by Schoof and de Vries which consists of an analysis of transnational cooperation to stimulate regional development in the Alpine Border region of Bavaria-Austria.