Migration against the tide: Case studies from South Australia, Sweden and Croatia

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Research background

• Some rural and remote communities suffer from population decline and its consequences
• This may implicate it’s hard to attract newcomers to these areas
• The full diversity of drivers of migration to these rural and remote areas are not yet well understood
• Current contemporary theories and strategies tend to homogenize rural and remote areas
• There is a need to develop strategies and explore alternative options on how to attract desirable newcomers
What, why and how?

3 countries:

1) South Australia (6)
2) Sweden (11)
3) Croatia (18)

TOTAL: 35

- Semi structured Interviews (29min-4hrs)
- Recordings and Notes
- Exploratory sequential case study design

When analysed, this data will be used to explain the diversity of experiences of migrants to depopulating outer peripheral regional areas in three countries in the context of different theories of rural migration and what does it mean for the communities.
Case study 1: Sweden/Sverige

3 villages:
1) Latikberg
2) Järvsjöby
3) Dalasjö

2 towns:
1) Storuman
2) Vilhelmina
Case study 1: Sweden/Sverige

Glesbygdsmedicinskt centrum (GMC)/ (The Centre for Rural Medicine)

- small research and development unit within the Primary Health Care organisation of Västerbotten County Council

- Its aim is to improve the liveability of rural communities in the north of Sweden through innovation in health services delivery

- interested in the role of health services within rural communities and the broader social and economic benefits of partnerships between health services and communities
Case study 1: Sweden/ Sverige

Storuman Folkhögskola

- 8 participants
- Age: 16-28
- 4 from bigger urban areas
- 4 enrolled in music production program
- Lived in Storuman for at least 5months (up to 2y)
- 6 have no intention of staying in Storuman after they’re done with their education
Case study 1: contd

P2: (the issue is) that a lot of people are taking positions without experience or knowledge, but it's harder to attract 'good' people here, both for school and kommun.

P6: Still, people do smile but there's still some sort of alienation of people who are not a part of original community, so I think it's not very open, but still warm.

P3: Well, if you want to ever change up here Norrland, nothing will.

P4: Was hoping that the city would be larger, but frozen up here in year... maybe... Time is a place for you... for a live in a small village this.

P7: It took some time people around and to having other while... I'm not used.

P1: It's hard, there is a lack of jobs for your young people.

P5: I like it a lot in some ways, but I feel it's too little engagement into activities... and stuff like that. It's still a motive to stay.

P2: Still, people smile.

P4: I was hoping the teachers would be larger, but I realized you realize as you grow older, when you reach your 20's, that this village is - a village. Nothing to get involved, you need nothing to get involved here. It's a village. Nothing to get involved here.
Case study 1: Sweden/ Sverige

Job. I like the nature, have relatives here... Interested in local history and culture as well.

Entrepreneurs...people with new ideas. If the people that live around you are committed the more committed will you be as well. When I moved back from Stockholm in the 80’s I was eager to start new projects...some people were sceptical, almost angry with me, it should be like it always has been". But I chose to go along with the people that were interested instead...

The optimum would be a mixture of people. There is a lack of nurses and doctors. Well educated, intellectual people...

Some people have died and others moved away but otherwise it’s pretty much the same as it was 10 years ago.

More houses. I think it’s important to keep the kindergarten and keep up the organizations.

Very important with the proximity to a store, health care. Also I like the proximity to the airport (3 kilometers) when I travel. (Although it is more expensive than flying from e.g. Umeå)

The freedom to do whatever you want, and you know everyone...
Case study 2: Croatia/ Hrvatska

2 islands:
1) Korčula
2) Lastovo

• Both islands belong to Dubrovnik region, but they tend to use Split as their urban centre
• Lastovo is using Korčula as their small urban centre
• Remote and isolated environment
• Poor connection to mainland
• Poor internet connection
• According to DZS, the population on the islands has increased, but the issue of ‘fictional population’ remains
Case study 2: Croatia/ Hrvatska
Case study 3: South Australia (Burra, Mid-North Region)
The Mid North Knowledge Partnership (MNKP)

- research collaboration between universities, community and business. It is hosted by Flinders Rural Health SA, Charles Darwin University and the Mid North community

- provides opportunities for students and researchers to undertake research placements in rural areas where such opportunities aren’t readily available. It also provides local communities to have an access point to a university presence

- MNKP’s research crosses a range of disciplines all with a focus on the future of small rural communities, including: Rural healthcare professional workforce recruitment and retention, Rural life course migration, Tourism innovation systems, Art and place, Youth wellbeing and University-community engagement.
Case study 3: South Australia (Burra, Mid-North Region)

**2013**

- 37 participants
- 23 (62%) said it was a part of their life long plan
- Not only heritage assets are different, but the life-stage of each town
- No connection at all to the region
- 17 (45%) migrated from Adelaide and surrounding areas
- 15 (40%) moved to the area between 5 and 10 years ago
- 26 (71%) of all respondents changed occupation (24% retired)

**2015**

- 14 participants (+6)
- 2 participants already left
- 6 participants are thinking about leaving the area
- Additional 4 are waiting to see further events in the community
- Only 4 out of participating 14 stated in 2013 that this movement was a life-stage for them, instead of a part of a life-long plan
- 4 want to stay permanently (1 changed their decision from temporary to permanent stay)
Results

• All 3 countries are very different, but they share the same challenges when it comes to rural migration

• Although some places could be defined as “lower amenity areas” people will still migrate there for various reasons

• Adjustment vs. Adaptation

• Connection of the individual and the place will naturally evolve over the time → this challenges the notion of “failed migration”
Results

- Internal dynamics of these areas are significantly different in comparison to each other, which challenges existing theories of migration.

- Community's dynamics should be evaluated from the "internals' point of view" because the changes might seem irrelevant to the outsider but it may have immense implications for the community.

- Even the slightest change has the potential to affect the entire community.

- Just because the community is ageing, it doesn't mean it will perish.

- One size does not fit them all.
5 elements of migration system

- Address the **5 elements** prior to strategy development and implementation

1) System
2) Links
3) Diversity
4) Predictability
5) Persistence
Learning outcomes

**Acknowledge** the diversity of the rural areas

**Evaluate** the existing recruitment and retention strategies

Address the **5 elements** prior to strategy development and implementation

**Understand** the difference in between adaptation and the adjustment of the individual

Use the available **source of information** (e.g. newcomers, students)
References


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