Introduction

Internal Migration: A Major Interdisciplinary Topic in Regional and Urban Research

Guest Editors

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With the decrease in fertility experienced by most developed countries since the early or mid-sixties, internal migration has become a very influential factor in determining the level and socioeconomic composition of regional and urban populations. Accordingly, this phenomenon has attracted the interests of social scientists in many fields, and it is now a major subject in regional and urban research. In fact, in the Silver Anniversary issue of the Journal of Regional Science (volume 25, number 4) published in November 1985, internal migration was one of only seven topics seen as having contributed substantially to this field.

As guest editors of this special issue, we deliberately avoided looking at internal migration from the narrow perspective of one or two disciplines. Instead we chose to exemplify the interdisciplinary character of migration research by assembling a set of papers from a number of disciplines, as manifested by the departmental affiliations of the various authors. In this way, a wide range of issues concerning internal migration could be covered.

For the most part, the research problems examined are empirical in nature; we have chosen to exclude purely theoretical papers. Progress in migration research, we believe, cannot be maintained without devoting a great deal of attention to the development of good data bases and to the careful analysis of data sets. To be meaningful, empirical research should aim at achieving a skillful match among substantive questions, real world data, and scientific methodology. Such a belief is reflected in our choice of the six papers included in this issue.
A prerequisite to a sound empirical study on migration is a good (or at least a well-understood) data base. What kinds of migration data are available? What are their strengths and deficiencies? Do they lead to contradictory results? Why? Which migration data set is the best? These are some of the questions addressed in the first paper, by Vanderkamp and Grant.

At the risk of oversimplification, migration analysis can be viewed as consisting of three tasks that focus on characteristics, causes, and consequences. The first task (focus on characteristics) is concerned with the identification of migration patterns. The next two papers in this issue fall within this area. Field examines migration flows among different levels of the urban/rural hierarchy, while Mueser, White, and Tierney study the age selectivity of internal migration. The second task (focus on causes) is an explanation of the migration process (behaviour) in terms of intervening factors. This is illustrated in a paper by Liaw and Ledent that emphasizes the joint effects of personal and ecological (contextual) factors on elderly migration patterns. Finally, the third task (focus on consequences) is to assess the effects of migration on the migrants and their family members, on the sending and receiving regions and on the system as a whole. Rather under-represented in the literature, this task is exemplified here by Termote’s examination of the impact of migration on population distribution and other demographic attributes, and Marr and Millerd’s look at how migration affects the employment status of married women.

Except for one paper based on U.S. data (Mueser et al.), all of the papers included in this issue deal with some aspects of migration in Canada. Nevertheless, researchers who are not particularly interested in Canadian migration should benefit greatly from the approaches and methodologies used in the various papers.

In the papers assembled here, both the macro and micro approaches to migration are represented. Among the papers that analyze particular data sets, three adopt a macro approach and the other two a micro approach. The macro approach is usually concerned with identifying the gaining and losing region in a zero-sum game and the major flows of migrants in the geographical system. Due to the need for a concise presentation or a lack of detailed migration data, net migration is commonly adopted as the key measure of migration (see the papers by Field and Mueser et al.). By contrast, the micro approach considers the migrants and stayers as the players in the migration process, which is viewed as a game of choice with the regions being simply the alternatives in the choice set. Since no one is a net migrant, the basic measures here are the departure and destination choice probabilities (see the paper by Liaw and Ledent).

Some of the most innovative methods and techniques currently used in migration analysis also are included in these papers: a robust nonparametric procedure for a data set subject to large estimation errors; a multistate method, which puts migration and the birth and death processes in a multiregional framework; and discrete choice (nested logit and probit) models for analyzing the factors and implications of migration in a multivariate framework.

Four of the papers included in this issue were selected from the three sessions on migration research, which we helped to organize under the joint sponsorship of the Canadian Regional Science Association and the Canadian Association of Geographers, at the 1987 Conference of the Learned Societies held May 30-31 at McMaster University, Hamilton, Ontario. The remaining two papers were solicited after the Conference. All six papers were reviewed by at least two referees and later revised. It is hoped that readers will find them readable, relevant, and stimulating.