
The influence of locality on migration: a comparative study of Britain and Sweden in the nineteenth century

Colin G Pooley

Abstract

This paper uses migration data for Britain and Sweden to critically examine the contention that locality or place influenced migration patterns and processes in the nineteenth century. Despite their very different geographies patterns of migration in Britain and Sweden in the nineteenth century were remarkably similar. Any differences can be accounted for by limitations in the available data. It is argued that at the national level geography had little impact on migration, but that at the local level most people in both countries were tied closely to particular localities. However, it is suggested that this is not primarily due to the specific characteristics of a place but, rather, can be attributed to the ties to family, friends and community which, while being situated in a place, are not produced by it. Finally, it is suggested that further comparative studies of demographic processes can aid the interpretation of local and regional population studies.

Introduction

How important was locality in shaping demographic processes? This is a question that should be of considerable importance to readers of this journal, yet it is rarely addressed directly. Most contributions to the journal are, understandably, studies of populations in particular localities or communities. They explore demographic processes and they provide valuable comparative examples over space and time, but they rarely examine the role of specific places in constructing these processes. Perhaps we should also pause to ask: did locality matter? In what ways, and to what extent, did specific characteristics of regions or localities influence the demographic processes that we routinely study? Or perhaps locality was unimportant and places simply provided the location in which universal demographic processes could operate. This paper has three main aims: first, to raise this question for possible further exploration and debate in future issues of this journal; second, to examine critically the contention that locality does matter using data on population migration in Britain and Sweden in the nineteenth century; and, third, to highlight briefly the contribution that international comparative studies can make to our understanding of demographic processes.

The importance of space and place is routinely asserted by geographers and other social scientists who have embraced the so-called 'spatial turn' in social, cultural and historical

studies.¹ In many disciplines it is now impossible to ignore processes of spatial differentiation. However, although the use of modern computer graphics and geographical information systems (GIS) has greatly enhanced spatial representation, including in historical disciplines,² such maps do not necessarily provide explanations. Nor do they demonstrate that the processes that shaped society were (or are) produced by, or were particular to, specific localities. This conundrum is not new. In the 1980s discussion of residential differentiation in nineteenth-century cities raised similar concerns: David Cannadine discussed the relationships between 'Shapes on the ground and shapes in society',³ and Martin Daunton argued that 'The meaning attached to the use of space does not emerge as a self-evident truth from the maps of historical geographers'.⁴ It is, perhaps, worth raising the same concerns in the context of population studies, particularly in a journal whose readers are particularly concerned with communities, localities and regions. In doing this I do not intend to indulge in the reification of space or, as it has sometimes been termed, 'spatial fetishism'.⁵ Rather, I use the empirical analysis of migration data for two countries to pose the question: is there evidence that geography, locality and place are of themselves important factors that influenced migration decisions? After all, migration is the most spatial of all demographic processes as it involves a decision to leave one locality and to move to another.

The choice of a comparative approach also needs some explanation. Most migration research focuses mainly on either international migration between two countries, or on internal migration within a single country. International migration, with its more obvious impacts on both places and people, forms the largest part of such research. Only rarely do migration studies explicitly compare migration patterns and processes between two different countries and few studies explicitly explore the links between internal and external movement.⁶ Such gaps in the literature are understandable as genuinely comparative data are difficult to acquire and studies of internal and external migration often rely on very different data sources. However, it is argued that by neglecting the links

1 See for instance: D. Massey, J. Allen and J. Anderson, *Geography matters! A reader* (Cambridge, 1984); S. Gunn, 'The spatial turn: changing histories of space and place', in S. Gunn and R. Morris eds, *Identities in space: contested terrains in the Western city since 1850* (Aldershot, 2001), 1–14; D. Massey, *For space* (London, 2005); B. Warf and S. Arias, *The spatial turn: interdisciplinary studies* (Abingdon, 2009).

2 A. Knowles, *Past time, past place: GIS for history* (Redlands, CA, 2002); I. Gregory and P. Ells, *Historical GIS: technologies, methodologies and scholarship* (Cambridge, 2007).

3 D. Cannadine, 'Residential differentiation in nineteenth-century towns: from shapes on the ground to shapes in society', in J. Johnson and C. Pooley eds, *The structure of nineteenth-century cities* (London, 1982), 235–52.

4 M. Daunton, *House and home in the Victorian city* (London, 1983), 4.

5 E. Soja, 'Between geographical materialism and spatial fetishism', *Antipode*, 17 (1985), 59–67; D. Sheppard, 'Dissenting from spatial analysis', *Urban Geography*, 16 (1995), 283–303; C. Collinge, 'The difference between society and space: nested scales and the return of spatial fetishism', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 23 (2005), 189–206.

6 For a recent overview of migration research see C. Harzig, D. Hoerder and D. Gabaccia, *What is migration history?* (Cambridge, 2009).

between migration processes, and the comparative study of two or more countries, much may be missed. A focus on only one country can lead to an undue emphasis on uniqueness when, in fact, the opposite is the case; and by failing to link internal and external migration the connections that the migration process has to different stages of the life course may be obscured. This paper begins to explore such issues through the comparative study of both internal and (more briefly) international migration in Britain and Sweden in the nineteenth century, focusing especially on the role of locality and geography in shaping migration patterns and processes. It certainly does not overcome all the difficulties of comparative analysis, especially those relating to data comparability, but hopefully it will at least raise questions for further research and stimulate debate.⁷ In the context of this journal, it is also suggested that a comparative approach allows local and regional studies of population to be placed within a wider context.

Britain and Sweden in the nineteenth century

There are two main reasons why Britain and Sweden were chosen for comparative analysis. First, from a practical perspective, I had access to broadly comparable data (see below) and, second, their geographies are totally dissimilar. It can be argued that these differences should also be reflected in their demographic processes. If the patterns and processes of migration in the two countries are similar then this requires explanation. On the face of it Sweden and Britain are almost mirror images of each other: Britain is relatively small in land area, but in the nineteenth century was densely populated with a large and well-connected urban population; Sweden has a large land area but was sparsely populated with few large urban centres and limited industrial development. For instance, in circa 1900 the population of Britain was more than seven times that of Sweden, yet the total land area of Sweden is approximately double that of Britain. Whereas in Britain 77 per cent of the population lived in urban areas (with the largest city, London, attaining a population of 4.536 million in 1901), in Sweden just 21.5 per cent of the population lived in towns and the capital and largest city, Stockholm, contained only 301,000 people. Conversely, whereas over 69 per cent of the working population in Sweden were employed in agriculture, forestry or fishing, in Britain just 12 per cent were in these sectors. Transport is obviously essential to migration, especially longer-distance movement, and Britain and Sweden had very different rail networks. Whereas in the late nineteenth century the smaller land area of Britain had a dense network of some 29,783 route km, in Sweden there were just 7,998 km of track (including mineral lines).⁸ Such

7 See for example J. Walton, *Doing comparative social history: north-west England and the Basque country from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Lancaster, 1996); M. Detienne, *Comparing the incomparable* (Stanford, CA, 2008); and contributions to the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (Cambridge).

8 For further information on Britain see for instance: J. Langton and R. Morris, *Atlas of industrialising Britain* (London, 1986); *A vision of Britain through time* (<http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/index.jsp>). On Sweden see W. Mead, *An historical geography of Scandinavia* (London, 1981); B. Nordstrom, *The history of Sweden* (Westport, CT, 2002).

contrasts in geography, economy and urbanisation would suggest that patterns of internal migration should be very different in the two nations. While in Britain longer distance movement would have been relatively easy (a compact and densely populated land area with good communications), it can be suggested that in Sweden migration to new communities would have been difficult due to the greater distances, more difficult terrain and lack of good communications. It might also be argued that a population tied more closely to the land through its largely agricultural and resource-based economy would be less mobile than one that was mainly urbanised and employed in industry or commerce. Such assumptions will be tested in this paper.

The data

Data used for the comparative analysis of migration in Britain and Sweden are drawn from two large existing databases. Both have been extensively used in other publications and only the briefest of details are provided here. British data come from the collection of 16,630 individual migration histories (comprising 73,864 moves over the period 1750–1930) provided by British family historians and compiled and analysed by the author.⁹ These provide a unique longitudinal record of the pattern and process of migration in Britain, and both adjust and add detail to the static census-based studies that are more common within British migration historiography.¹⁰ It is necessary to collect migration life histories in this way because, unlike much of continental Europe, Britain does not keep population registers. Swedish data are drawn from the Swedish Demographic Database (DDB) held in the Centre for Population Studies, University of Umeå, Sweden.¹¹ This consists of data compiled from excellent Swedish population registers for a variety of parishes in Sweden.¹² For the purposes of this paper data for the regions of Sundsvall and Skellefteå were used (the DDB does not yet have data for the whole of Sweden). This provided information on 201,788 moves with an origin or destination in the regions under study, undertaken by 66,630 individuals 1800–1900. To enable comparison, data for all moves in Britain were extracted from the database for the period 1800 to 1900, giving 38,209 moves with both an origin and destination in Britain, undertaken by 11,630 individuals. These are the samples used to generate the maps and

9 See C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century* (London, 1998). The original data are held in the UK Data Archive (<http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/>). For a summary see C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, 'Migration and mobility in Britain from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries', *Local Population Studies*, 57 (1996), 50–71.

10 For a review of recent work and an attempt to overcome some of these issues see I. Gregory, 'Longitudinal analysis of age- and gender-specific migration patterns in England and Wales', *Social Science History*, 24 (2000), 471–503.

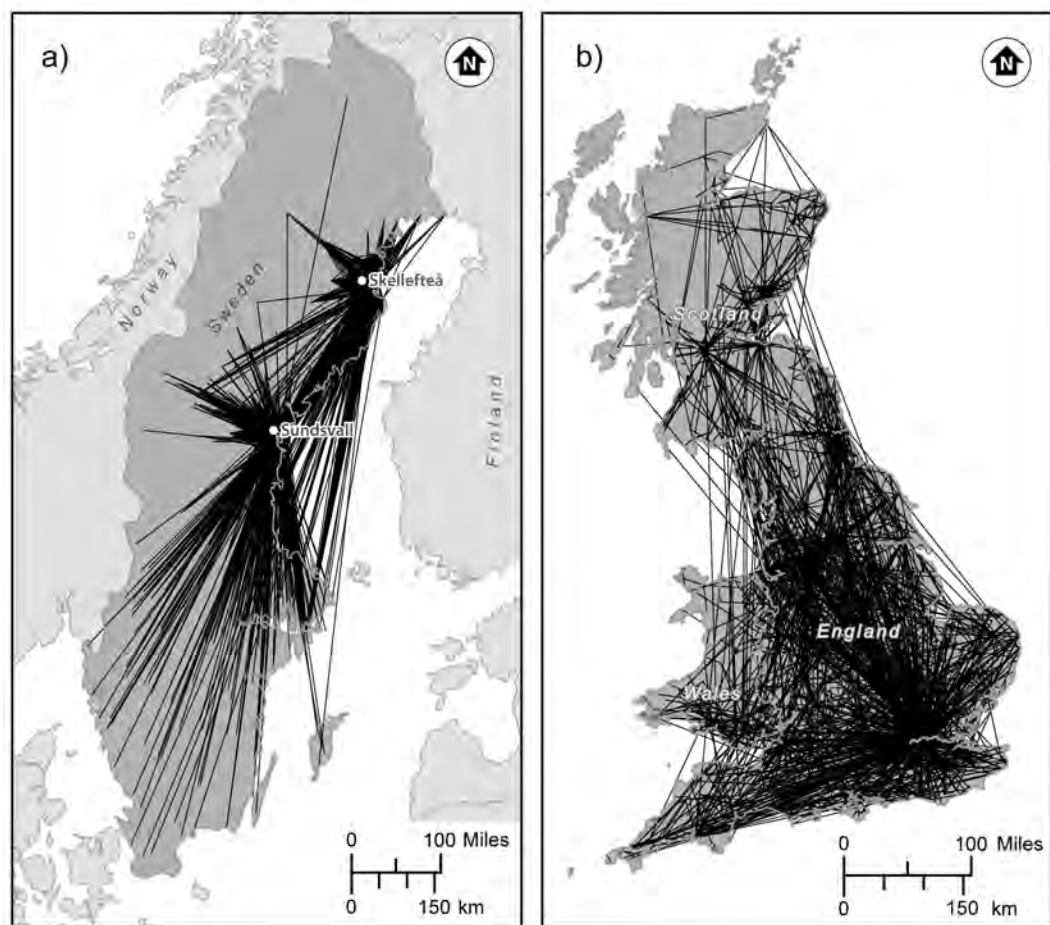
11 For details of the DDB and its holdings see <http://www.ddb.umu.se/ddb-english/>. Data were kindly retrieved for me by Maria Wisselgren and her staff at the DDB following a period as visiting research fellow at Umeå in 2008.

12 U. Jeub, *Information from the Demographic Data Base: parish records, 19th century ecclesiastical registers* (Umeå, 1993).

tables used in this paper. The two data sets were analysed within a GIS framework (using ArcGIS) to provide both spatial and statistical interpretations.

Sundsvall and Skellefteå are both coastal communities (the majority of settlements in Sweden are on the coast), and both are situated well to the north of Stockholm (see Figure 1). The (present) road distance from Stockholm to Sundsvall is about 376km whereas Skellefteå is a further 400km to the north. In the nineteenth century travel from either location to the capital would have been long and arduous. Both towns had economies based mainly on primary resources: timber, fishing and agriculture. Sundsvall was the larger community, attracting migrants to its expanding sawmills in the nineteenth century with a population of 69,167 in the Sundsvall region in 1900.¹³ In contrast, Skellefteå grew

Figure 1 All internal moves in (a) the Swedish and (b) the British databases, 1850–1870



13 L. Vikström, *Gendered routes and courses: the socio-spatial mobility of migrants in nineteenth-century Sundsvall, Sweden* (Umeå, 2003); G. Stenflo, *Information from the Demographic Data Base: demographic description of the Skellefteå and Sundsvall regions during the 19th century* (Umeå, 1994).

more slowly (with 29,847 in the Skellefteå region in 1900) but was itself an important regional centre in the sparsely-populated north of the country.¹⁴

It is important to note that while in essence both databases provide similar information—migration life histories of individuals during the nineteenth century—there are also substantial differences between the data sets. These differences are inevitable, and will always occur where data are originally collected for different purposes and in varied formats, but clearly they have to be borne in mind when interpreting the results. First, the two sets of information have very different spatial structures. The British data are a small sample drawn from across the whole country, whereas the Swedish data contain information on the entire population in just two regions of Sweden.¹⁵ The British data give a good representation of migration in the country as a whole, and in large regions, but cannot be used with confidence at the local level. The Swedish data provide high quality data for particular locations but cannot be said to represent the whole country. Second, there are potential differences in data quality. The Swedish data are drawn from official parish records and thus were, in theory at least, compiled within a common framework (though obviously subject to the vagaries of individuals charged with the task of compiling the records). The British data were provided by family historians who had researched their own ancestors. There is thus no direct quality control (beyond checks done by the researchers as data were returned on standard forms), and family historians (not surprisingly) overwhelmingly provided data on ancestors who lived to adulthood and had descendants.¹⁶ Third, the data sets have different levels of completeness. As far as is possible the British data include all moves made by the individuals for whom we have data, irrespective of the origins and destinations (so long as either an origin or destination was in Britain) together with the distance moved. The Swedish data are more restricted. Swedish parish records note only moves with an origin or destination in that parish: they rarely recorded movement within a parish, and thus short-distance migration is likely to be under-represented. Nonetheless, when all moves are mapped in both countries they do extend over most of the land area (see Figure 1).¹⁷ Such differences are inherent in the two data sets, which were compiled for very different purposes, but when interpreting results it is important to ask whether the patterns revealed are due to the varied data structures rather than any real differences in migration behaviour.

14 Stenflo, *Information from the Demographic Data Base*.

15 Various checks show that the sample is broadly representative of the population as a whole. See Pooley and Turnbull, *Migration and mobility* for details.

16 Likely biases in the database are fully discussed in Pooley and Turnbull, *Migration and mobility*, 38–48.

17 Figure 1 only maps all moves 1850–1870 because inclusion of a longer time period produces a pattern that is too dense to interpret.

Migration in Sweden and Britain

It is now well recognised that in almost all times and places that have been studied most internal migration takes place over short distances, but that levels of mobility have been historically high (thus questioning assumptions of a 'mobility transition'), and with substantial longer distance and international moves taking place alongside the majority (but often less visible) short distance mobility.¹⁸ However, it might be anticipated that the greater land area of Sweden, coupled with much sparser settlement and longer distances between major settlements, would lead to more long distance internal movement in Sweden than in Britain. Whereas in Britain a move of (say) 100km would take most people to a wide variety of destinations, in much of Sweden distances to a significant settlement were much greater and far fewer alternative destinations would have been on offer.

In fact, the distances moved by internal migrants were remarkably similar in both countries. In Sweden and Britain the mean distance moved in the entire data sets was around 32 km and approximately three quarters of all moves were less than 20 km. In both countries just over four per cent of moves were over 200 km. The British data did reveal a higher proportion of very short moves (less than five km) but this is almost certainly due to the fact that short moves within the same parish are under-recorded in the Swedish data set (see Table 1). There are also very consistent variations in the distance moved by different groups of the population. In both Britain and Sweden the young tended to move further than those who were older, those who were unmarried moved over longer distances than those who moved as part of a family group, but males and females moved over very similar distances. The mean number of moves undertaken was also almost identical in both data sets (see Table 2). The only significant difference between the two datasets was in the proportion of migrants recorded as moving alone. Whereas in Sundvall and Skellefteå over 60 per cent of moves were recorded as being undertaken alone, in Britain the figure was just 12.4 per cent. In part, at least, this large disparity can be accounted for by one of the main differences between the two data sets as outlined above. Short-distance moves from one home to another within a town or parish are most likely to be undertaken by families adjusting their housing to suit their life course stage, while longer distance moves are more likely to be undertaken by men or women moving for employment. The Swedish data rarely recorded changes of address within a parish and thus many short distance moves by families are missed. In contrast, all longer distance moves with a destination in the parish were recorded. Although the British data set probably also missed some very short-distance moves in this respect it is much more complete than the Swedish data.

18 A. McKeown, 'Global migration 1846–1940', *Journal of World History*, 15 (2004), 155–89; P. Manning, *Migration in world history* (Abingdon, 2005); L. Lucassen, 'Migration and world history: reaching a new frontier', *International Review of Social History*, 52 (2007), 89–96; J. Lucassen and L. Lucassen, 'The mobility transition revisited 1500–1900: what the case of Europe can offer to global history', *Journal of Global History*, 4 (2009), 347–77.

Table 1 All moves c1800–1900

	Sweden	Britain
<i>Mean distance moved</i>	31.4km	33.2km
<i>Cumulative % moves:</i>		
<5km	37.5	54.1
<20km	77.8	71.8
<100km	93.3	89.7
% moves >200km	4.2	4.3

Table 2 Mean distance moved by selected characteristics, 1800–1900

	Sweden	Britain
Age <20	35.8	36.3
Age 20–39	28.5	35.5
Age 40–59	22.1	26.6
Age 60+	25.0	19.7
Unmarried	30.2	43.5
Married	22.7	27.5
Alone	31.9	59.7
Male	32.9	34.1
Female	30.3	32.7
% moving alone	63.5	12.4
Mean number of moves per person	3.6	3.0

Table 3 Mean distance moved (km) by occupation, 1800–1900

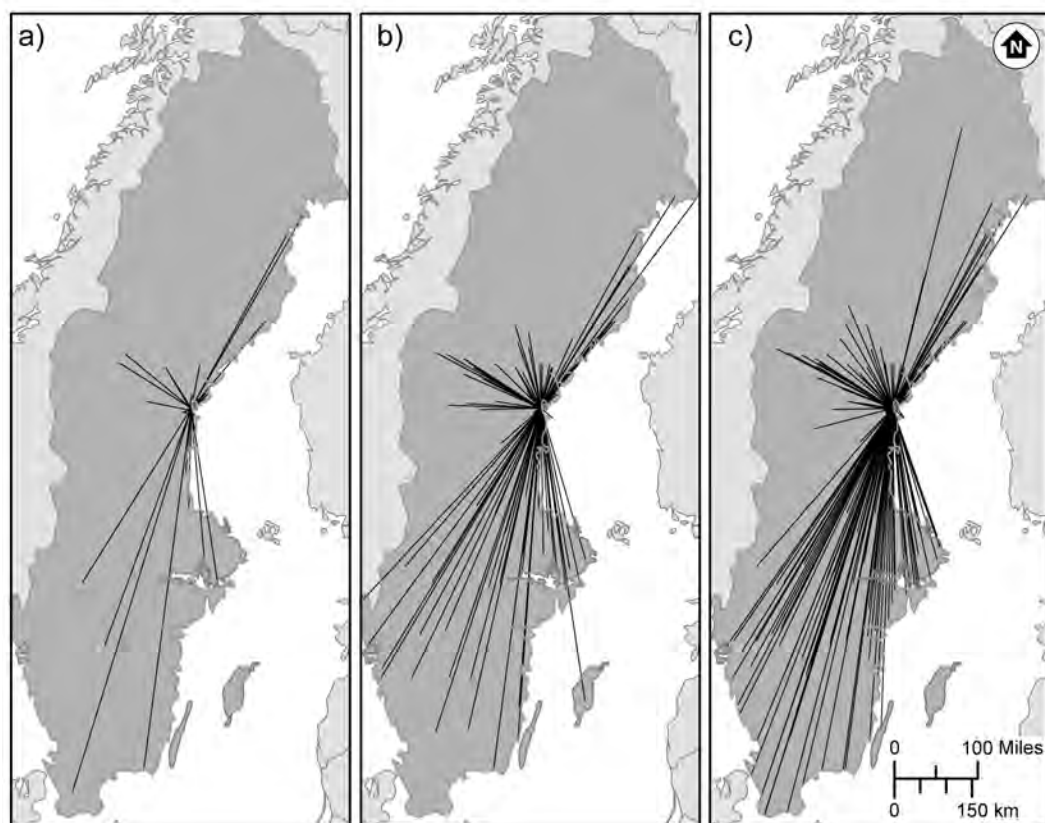
	Sweden	Britain
Skilled and professional occupations	48.7	33.6
Other occupations	20.2	32.6
Agricultural workers	17.7	24.1
Farmers	14.7	22.3
Non-agricultural workers	61.0	32.6
Armed forces/defence	53.1	78.7
Professional/management	80.3	63.7
Domestic	59.2	43.0

Although Sweden and Britain had totally contrasting occupational structures in the nineteenth century, there were substantial similarities in the ways in which migration distances varied with occupation. Those in professional and skilled occupations were more likely to move over long distances, as were those in the armed forces and those in domestic service (mainly women). Farmers and agricultural workers had by far the shortest mean migration distances (see Table 3). Such differences are not surprising, and confirm trends found in many migration studies, but the consistency between two countries with such different economies is notable. Further spatial analysis demonstrates that such trends are consistent over time and both within and between countries. Thus,

taking the example of Sweden, although the volume of moves undertaken increased over time there was little variation in the spatial pattern of those moves with the majority going to a small number of urban centres (see Figure 2).¹⁹ The stability of such patterns is notable. In both Britain and Sweden longer distance moves were overwhelmingly to larger places, with Stockholm dominant in Sweden and London dominant in Britain, despite the much larger number of competing centres. Although in Britain other major cities such as Manchester, Liverpool, Birmingham, Newcastle Leeds and Sheffield attracted some migrants over long distances, the majority of their in-migrants came from adjacent counties. Most moves in both Britain and Sweden were very local, forming a dense network of migration between adjacent parishes. This is clearly demonstrated for Skellefteå where each of the small local communities generated its own migration field within the Skellefteå region (see Figure 3).

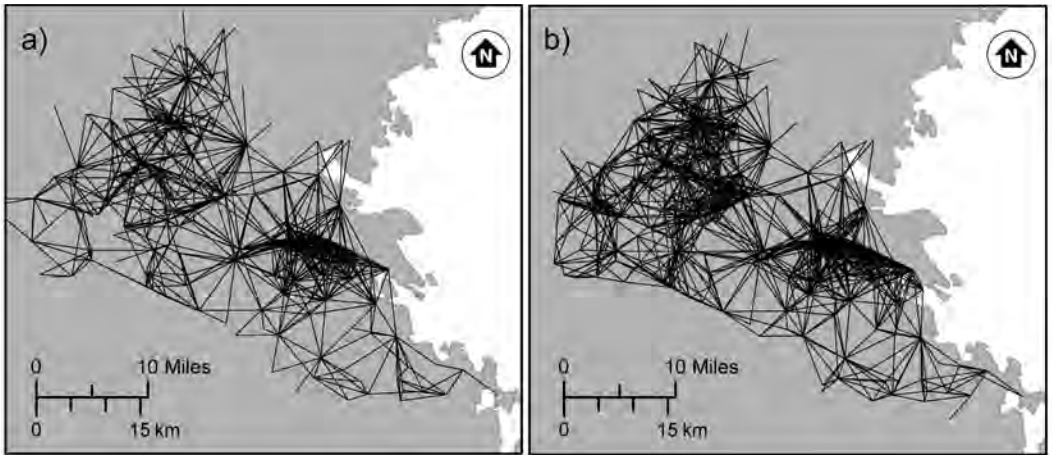
In addition to details of internal moves, both data sets contain information on those who emigrated and also on those who returned. These data are almost certainly less complete

Figure 2 Moves from Sundsvall: (a) 1800–1829; (b) 1830–1869; (c) 1870–1900



¹⁹ For detailed maps of migration within Britain see Pooley and Turnbull, *Migration and mobility*.

Figure 3 Moves <10km in Skellefteå region: (a) 1800–1850; (b) 1851–1900



than for internal moves, and are dealt with only briefly here, but they can be used to compare the internal migration patterns of emigrants and non-emigrants. Were emigrants more mobile prior to emigration than those that stayed at home, or were the migration patterns of emigrants broadly similar to those of all other internal migrants? In general, internal moves prior to emigration followed very similar patterns to the moves of other migrants and there is little evidence that emigrants had migration trajectories that were significantly different from others who moved. Further analysis also suggests that those who returned also then established a pattern of internal moves that was indistinguishable from those who had never left. It is argued that this emphasises the connections between internal and external migration, and that rather than internal migration and emigration being viewed as two very separate entities, they should more usefully be seen as different aspects of the same migration system viewed over the life course.²⁰ Again, similar patterns and processes are found in both Britain and Sweden. Large aggregate data sets of this sort do not allow the detailed explanation of individual moves, but when such data are linked to diary and other archival evidence it is clear that emigration is often viewed in much the same way as any other reasonably long-distance move, and that it is undertaken for much the same reasons.²¹

20 Pooley and Turnbull, *Migration and mobility*, chapter 9, provides a full discussion of emigration and return migration using the British data set. For further discussion see also: C. Pooley, 'London, Liverpool, Ohio or New South Wales: linking internal and international migration over the life course.' Unpublished paper presented to the European Social Science History Association conference, Lisbon, March 2008.

21 C. Erickson, *Leaving England: essays on British emigration in the nineteenth century* (Ithaca, NY, 1994); E. Richards, *Britannia's children: emigration from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland since 1600* (London, 2004); M. Harper and S. Constantine, *Migration and empire* (Oxford, 2010).

Discussion: migration, geography and locality

This is a relatively simple empirical paper that has compared nineteenth-century migration patterns and processes in two very different countries. Without a great deal of additional research and contextual information based upon more qualitative sources it is hard to add detail and interpretation, but certain trends are clear. Despite the fact that Britain and Sweden were almost mirror images of each other in terms of size, economy and connectivity, the patterns and processes of migration in the two countries in the nineteenth century were remarkably similar. In summary, most moves were over short distances within a clearly prescribed local area, and longer-distance moves were mainly to the largest towns. There was little variation by gender, but young, unmarried and lone migrants tended to move furthest. There was substantial stability over the nineteenth century with respect to these trends, and for most individuals emigration was just one part of an on-going migration experience that developed over the life course. None of the migration patterns and characteristics described here are especially surprising as they have been demonstrated in many other studies at a variety of scales.²² What is perhaps notable is that the similarities are so great even though Britain and Sweden are in other respects substantially different.

What does this tell us about the connections between migration, geography and locality? At one level the data appear to be contradictory. While at the national scale geography appears to have little influence on migration patterns and processes—these are essentially the same despite the very different geographies of the two countries—at the local scale it can be argued that place does appear to matter. In both countries most people appeared to be tied relatively closely to a specific region or locality, and they only moved any distance away if their destination was to a much larger urban centre with improved employment opportunities. In this sense it can be suggested that place did matter and that ties to the locality (or alternatively the attraction of expanding economic centres) were important in shaping the demographic process of migration. However, this conclusion also needs closer examination: the fact that people remained in one locality does not necessarily mean that they did so because of characteristics peculiar to that place. Many other factors, including ties to family, employment and culture, could produce the outcomes described above. These are processes operating in a place but, arguably, they are not of that place. Or, to put it another way, the factors that tied migrants to a particular locality (or repelled them from another) may have been independent of the locality itself but instead were due to other associations and attractions that happened to be in a particular location. Given the diverse

22 For reviews of migration in the past and present and at a variety of scales see: P. Boyle, K. Halfacree and V. Robinson, *Exploring contemporary migration* (Harlow, 1998); D. Hoerder and L.P. Moch eds, *European migrants: global and local perspectives* (Boston, MA, 1996); D. Hoerder, *Cultures in contact: world migrations in the second millennium* (Durham, N.C, 2002); J. Lucassen and L. Lucassen eds, *Migration, migration history, history: old paradigms and new perspectives* (Bern, 1997); L.P. Moch, *Moving Europeans: migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington, IN, 1992, second edition 2003).

geographies of both Britain and Sweden, it is hard to identify particular common characteristics of place that might consistently produce similar migration outcomes, and thus it seems more likely that factors independent of place were the dominant forces.

There is a large literature on different aspects of the links between identity and place,²³ but only rarely has this been explored in the context of migration.²⁴ However, a distinction is not always drawn between those characteristics that are intrinsic to a place, such as resources, landscape, climate and history, and those that are produced through the association of particular people or activities with a place, including family, friends, work, leisure activities and community identity. I accept that this distinction is not always easily drawn, but the key factor is that the first are (largely) unchangeable whereas the second can alter relatively quickly and easily. For instance, community characteristics can change due to redevelopment and population movement while family and friends may relocate thus changing the way in which a place is viewed. It can be argued that for most people ties of language, culture, religion and kinship are likely to be much stronger than those such as landscape, climate or the resource base of a location that are intrinsic to a place. They may become associated through a linking of people and place, and thus help to generate migration flows, but such structures are not immutable. For instance, someone may move to a location for reasons of employment in a resource-based sector of the economy, and in so doing they may develop a strong sense of identity as a coal miner or timber worker, but such associations are not primarily with a place but rather to an economy, and could easily be transferred to other locations with similar resources. Thus people may well be attracted to places with particular and similar economic structures but, it is argued, the association is not place-specific but, rather, is primarily generated by the occupational skills, needs and preferences of an individual worker.

This theme can be explored further through an example drawn from one nineteenth-century diary.²⁵ John James was born in Cornwall in 1822 and worked as a tin miner and mine manager. As the Cornish tin mining industry declined he was forced to seek work elsewhere (including overseas) and on several occasions recorded his unwillingness to leave his native Cornwall (or his desire to return). At one level this can be interpreted as a strong association with locality and place which influenced his willingness to move, and certainly factors intrinsic to his native Cornwall did play a part in his decision-making. For instance, towards the end of his life while living in Ireland he records that, 'I think it is

23 Y-F. Tuan, *Space and Place: the perspective of experience* (Minneapolis, MN, 1977); B. Anderson, *Imagined communities* (London, 1983, second edition 2006); E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780: programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge, 1990); S. Taylor, *Narratives of identity and place* (London, 2009).

24 For a discussion see C. Pooley, 'The role of migration in constructing regional identity', in D. Newton and N. Vall eds, *An agenda for regional history* (Newcastle, 2007), 63–84.

25 Journal of John James c.1847–83. A transcript of the journal is available in the Cornish Studies Library, Alma Place, Redruth, Cornwall.

time for me to leave this strong Northern atmosphere. If my life be spared until the end of March next I hope to go to Cornwall and try the effect of a warmer climate and my native air'.²⁶ Here we can suggest that it was characteristics intrinsic to place that were attracting him back to Cornwall, and he did indeed return to Cornwall and live there for approximately four more years before his death. However, elsewhere in his journal, and much more frequently, he links his ties to Cornwall to people and, especially, family. For instance in 1869 he wrote:

After having been home from Norway near two months with but little prospect of a situation. Trying to help bring out New Rosewarne Mine but without success, everything in the mining world being dull, I accepted the offer of a situation in this place—Burtins Pond—Notre Dame Bay, Newfoundland. ... Also took with me wife & three daughters, leaving home three others. This course would never have been adopted if I could have seen any other source. I have left friends whom I hope to meet again. It seems I must follow what I hope are providential openings. We left on 4th August 1869 via Bristol and Liverpool...²⁷

and in 1871

We have been home about three months. I have had much anxiety. I have had no situation, have travelled many miles & made many inquiries after mine situations etc, but have not succeeded to anything as yet. There are some friends who would help me when opportunity offers & I hope to succeed soon. I have no desire to leave home & home comforts again.²⁸

It is clear from these extracts that if he could have taken all his family with him then leaving Cornwall would not have been seen as a great hardship, but the loss of the love and comfort afforded by family was what made him reluctant to move. In this sense it can be argued that it is not place or locality *per se* that influences migration decisions but, rather, factors and circumstances that have become associated with a place.

One possible conclusion to be drawn from this is that the human processes shaping migration are so strong that they largely override local, regional and national, economic, social and topographic differences. Thus despite their physical and economic differences nineteenth-century migration patterns and processes in Britain and Sweden were essentially the same. This is not a trivial point. It is common to seek to explain migration in terms of a range of structural social, economic or cultural variables: for instance, structural changes in employment opportunities that could produce migratory

26 Journal of John James, entry dated January 4th 1883.

27 Journal of John James, entry dated September 3rd 1869.

28 Journal of John James, entry dated November 1st 1871.

movements from one region to another.²⁹ While these clearly have relevance, and in some instances may be the major factor stimulating population movement, perhaps of equal importance are the human factors that influence migration decisions. These include attachment to family and friends, caring responsibilities, and individual perceptions of opportunities (that may not reflect accurately economic realities). The use of individual life histories allows these factors to come to the fore, while macro-level studies using aggregate data derived from (for instance) birthplace data or the calculation of net migration rates, tend to place most emphasis on longer distance flows to expanding economic centres (be they urban or resource-based); but they necessarily ignore the individual and familial factors that generated much migration. Personal attachment to a particular locality, landscape or environment may also play a part but, it is suggested, this is often secondary to the influence of people. Thus locality becomes important because of its associations rather than due to its intrinsic characteristics. The data presented here cannot examine such personal factors in detail, but they do raise questions about the individual nature of migration, and its links to people and place, that are worthy of further exploration.

Conclusions

This paper is necessarily limited by the data available. As outlined earlier, although both the British and Swedish data sets provide information on a large number of individual migration life histories, there are substantial differences in how these data were collected, in their reliability and in the spatial coverage. Such differences always limit comparative historical research and also restrict the utility of meta-analyses of existing studies because of the difficulty of comparing like with like. However, there is an increasingly large number of demographic databases collected for different regions and time periods, with many made readily available through the Minnesota Population Center.³⁰ One possible future project of relevance to readers of this journal would be to identify appropriate databases and then to rework them to focus where possible on regional and local demographic characteristics in formats that allowed as much direct comparability as possible. In other words, to explore the extent to which local and regional data can be extracted from large national databases to undertake comparative research on local populations. This would allow much more rigorous testing of existing assumptions about migration patterns and processes in particular locations together with examination of the robustness of migration patterns across time and space. While not in itself providing explanations for similarities and differences between locations, it could provide a much

29 D. Baines, *Migration in a mature economy: emigration and internal migration in England and Wales 1861–1900* (Cambridge, 1985); T. Hatton and J. Williamson eds, *Migration and the international labour market 1850–1939*, (Abingdon, 1994); D. Feldman, 'Migration', in M. Daunton ed, *The Cambridge urban history of Britain: volume III, 1840–1950* (Cambridge, 2000), 185–206.

30 For details see the Minnesota Population Center website: <https://www.pop.umn.edu/>

more rigorous framework for identifying sites for further research, both quantitative and qualitative, that could explain and interpret macro-scale analyses and allow further interpretation of the complex interplay of factors—be they individual, locality-based or structural—influencing nineteenth-century migration.

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