

Demographic dynamics and ethnic geographies in Latvia: the impact of internal migration

The effects of internal migration play a key role on socio-demographic change and population redistribution. The movement of people within countries determines spatial patterns of urban change. In addition, migration has extremely selective nature in regard to socio-demographic characteristics of individuals. Previous studies prove that the mobility patterns can be different among involved age and ethnic groups. For example, numerous studies show that the propensity to migrate decreases with age. Young adults are more likely migrating to urban areas for education and employment reasons; whereas, the elderly are the least inclined to move and tend to age in place (Coulter & Scott 2015; Elshof et al. 2014; Tervo 2000; Stillwell et al. 2000). Differences also can be found among the ethnic groups. Some studies show that ethnic minorities are less likely to move than those belonging to majority population (Sjöberg & Tammaru 1999; Tammaru, et al. 2013), whereas some studies have found the opposite (Bonvalet et al. 1995; Finney & Simpson 2008).

Since 1991, a higher population concentration and positive growth have been identified near Riga, whereas the depopulation has been evident in all other regions, including Riga. Despite the existence of sizeable Russian-speaking minority populations in the Baltics, relatively little is known about the internal migration behavior of different socio-demographic groups. This study aims to analyze age and ethnic dimensions in population redistribution due to internal migration in Latvia. We use measures such as net-migration and migration effectiveness in order to emphasize the importance of migration as a population redistribution mechanism. Our study analyses 2000 and 2011 Census data to provide an overview of patterns and trends in the geographies of internal migration for several age and ethnic groups. Our research finds evidence of different migration behavior with regard to ethnic background.

In this paper we use joint Census dataset of 2000 and 2011. In these 10-year interval data, a person is categorized as internal migrant if the place of residence was changed during the 2000-2011 period. We find that approximately 16% or nearly 330 thousand inhabitants have changed the place of residence across municipalities over the particular 10-year period. Most of them were Latvians (73.8%). Migration effectiveness ratio is used in order to assess the role of internal migration as a population redistribution mechanism (Figure 1). We find that internal migration has had the highest impact of population redistribution in the suburbs of Riga. This is a visible result of recent residential suburbanization in the core of metropolitan region. Converse patterns are

evident in the non-metropolitan regions that have witnessed population decline due to negative net-migration.

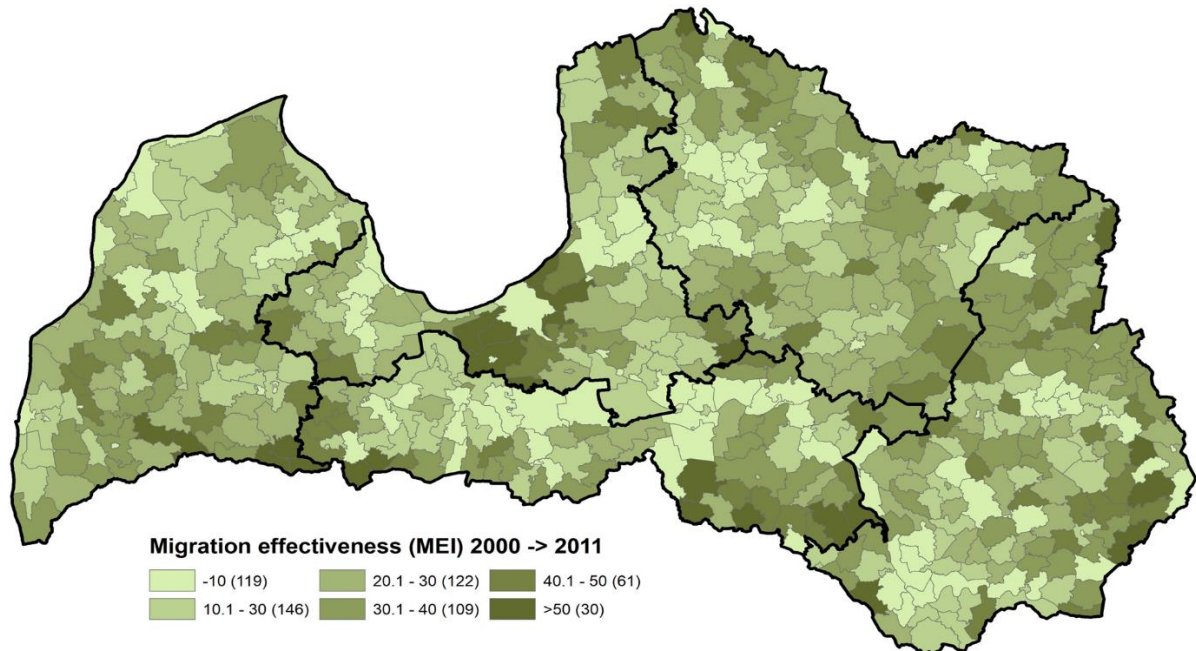


Figure 1. Spatial pattern of migration effectiveness (authors' figure using 2000 and 2011 Population Census data)

The analysis of ethnic dimension shows that minorities are more represented in the urban areas – the hubs of internal migration activity. The capital city Riga has by far the largest concentration of ethnic minority populations in Latvia and plays a key role in the national internal migration system. However, migration effectiveness indicates that rural areas are more affected by internal migration. We intend to outline the levels and patterns with regard to ethnic and demographic composition in population redistribution. Initial results of the current study reveals that internal migration has significant impact on demographic change in the metropolitan region. Urban sprawl, greenfield development, coastal gentrification leads to an increase of younger residents. Concentration of youth are evident in the metropolitan core. This can be described as a process of re-urbanization. Whereas the non-metropolitan regions have witnessed an increase in share of elderly population. Thus, ageing is much more evident in the rural areas. Overall, an

increased residential clusterisation in the Riga metropolitan area due to internal migration fosters demographic polarisation.

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