Virtual Special Issue on Migration

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EDITORIAL

Virtual Special Issue on Migration

ABSTRACT  This editorial introduces a virtual special issue of Spatial Economic Analysis compiled to mark the keynote lecture at the 46th Annual Conference of the Regional Science Association International—British and Irish Section in Cornwall by Professor Jacques Poot of the National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis, University of Waikato. Professor Poot’s lecture on migration, which is also the theme of this virtual special issue, could not be more topical. Migration is a central issue in public discourse in Europe and the United States, and is setting the agenda for political debate throughout the developed world. The ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, the associated rise in populist, nationalist political movements in Europe and the United States, and the recent vote by the UK to leave the European Union all have migration at their centre.

RÉSUMÉ  Cet éditorial présente un numéro spécial virtuel de Spatial Economic Analysis qui a été établi à l'occasion de la communication inaugurale lors du 46ème Colloque annuel de la Regional Science Association International, section britannique et irlandaise, en Cornouailles délivré par le Professeur Jacques Poot du National Institute of Demographic and Economic Analysis (institut national des études économiques et démographiques), à l’université de Waikato. La conférence de Poot sur la migration, qui est aussi le thème de ce numéro spécial virtuel, ne pourrait être plus d’actualité. La migration constitue une question clé dans le discours public en Europe et aux États-Unis, et fixe le calendrier du débat politique partout dans le monde développé. La migration est au cœur de la crise des réfugiés qui sévit en Europe, de l’essor y associé des mouvements politiques populistes et nationalistes en Europe et aux États-Unis, et des intentions de vote récentes au Royaume-Uni de quitter l’Union européenne.

RESUMEN  En este editorial se introduce un número especial virtual de Spatial Economic Analysis que se ha recopilado para destacar el discurso principal en la 46ª Conferencia Anual de la Sección Británica e Irlandesa de la Asociación Internacional de Ciencia Regional en Cornualles que realizó el Profesor Jacques Poot del Instituto Nacional de Análisis Demográfico y Económico, Universidad de Waikato. La ponencia de Poot sobre la migración, que también es el tema de este número especial virtual, no podría ser de mayor actualidad. La migración es una cuestión primordial en el discurso público en Europa y los Estados Unidos, y está determinando el debate político en todo el mundo desarrollado. La continua crisis de los refugiados en Europa, el consiguiente aumento de movimientos políticos de carácter populista y nacionalista en Europa y los Estados Unidos, y el reciente voto del Reino Unido de abandonar la Unión Europea tienen todos la inmigración como cuestión principal.

摘 要

本期编辑评论引介一个“空间经济分析”的虚拟专刊，该专刊的编制，是为了记录在康瓦尔所举办的国际区域科学学会英国及爱尔兰分会的第四十六届年会中，由怀卡托大学国家人口及经济分析机构的亚克斯．普特（Jacques Poot）教授所进行的主题演讲。普特有关移民的演说，同时也是此一虚拟专刊的主题，相当反映现实。移民是
Migration is a central issue in public discourse in Europe and the United States, and is setting the agenda for political debate throughout the developed world. The ongoing refugee crisis in Europe, the associated rise in populist, nationalist political movements in Europe and the United States, and the recent vote by the UK to leave the European Union all have migration at their centre. Of course, regional scientists’ interest in migration predates these recent developments. For decades, regional science has contributed significantly to our understanding of the dynamics of migration, since, in essence, migration is about place. Migrants choose to live in one place rather than their home place, or rather than the other alternative destinations available to them. The relative characteristics of the destination location, alternative destination locations and the home location, as well as the characteristics, preferences and abilities of the migrants themselves, all contribute to the decision to leave (or, indeed, to stay).

Now in its 11th year, *Spatial Economic Analysis* has been at the forefront of providing robust spatial analysis of key economic phenomena, which have included migration. This included a special issue in 2011 on ‘Interregional Migration’ (Faggian & Biagi, 2011). This article introduces a virtual special issue bringing together a sample of the papers on migration published in the journal in recent years. They demonstrate the role that spatial analysis plays in understanding the dynamics of migration, at both international and interregional levels, and the factors that push and pull migrants to decide to move to another location (or, in the case of Mellander et al. 2011, the decision to stay).

Several of the papers in this issue are concerned with the factors that influence the migrant’s choice. Three of these focus on interregional migration within a European country. In their analysis of migration flows within Poland, Sarra & Del Signore (2010) find evidence to support the implication of New Economic Geography models that real-wage differentials are the key determinant of labour migration. Controlling for unemployment rates, housing availability, road infrastructure and crime, they also provide more evidence that other economic factors are prominent in explaining migration.

Mulhern & Watson (2009) explore the determinants of internal migration in Spain in the first half of the last decade after a period of substantial change in the Spanish labour market and economy. Using spatial error and spatial autoregressive models, they find that economic factors are critical for internal migration decisions. While New Economic Geography models may suggest that real-wage differentials alone drive migration, this paper demonstrates that relative unemployment rates and house prices, as well as real wages, influence the migration decision.

In another study of internal interregional migration, this time for Mexico, Flores et al. (2013) explore whether the shock to the Mexican economy from the trade
liberalization associated with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) affects the flow of internal migration. In a comprehensive empirical analysis, the paper concludes, inter alia, that trade liberalization had a negative effect on migration, and suggests that this may have been caused by improved economic conditions in traditional sending regions due to better access to foreign markets. They suggest also that migrants may value other job features, such as security or progression, more than wages. This opens the possibility of other non-wage determinants of migration decisions.

Biagi et al. (2011) are also concerned with internal migration, as they consider long- and short-distance migration dynamics in Italy. This paper decomposes internal migration into short- and long-distance flows, and examines, using a gravity employment model, the differential effects of economic and social variables on each form of migration. This article has proven to be influential, with 29 citations at the time of writing, and its finding that economic opportunities are important determinants of long-distance migration, while the search for a better quality of life is the main driver of short-distance migration.

In a study that turns the traditional approach to analysing migration decisions on its head, Mellander et al. (2011) consider the decision not to migrate, and specifically the effect on that decision on community satisfaction. The paper considers three types of factors influencing the decision to stay, using survey data from 28,000 people across all 50 US states and all major US cities and metro regions. The three types of factors include satisfaction with community or place-based factors, economic conditions and individuals’ demographic factors. The paper finds that the dominant factor in the decision to stay in a location is community satisfaction. In particular, the beauty and physical setting, and the ability to meet people and make friends are the most important factors. This paper highlights the importance of non-market factors in the decision process of non-migrants. From a policy perspective, retaining the current population may be as important as attracting new people, and the factors that attract in-migration may be as important for citizens already living and working in a location.

The importance of one particularly important non-economic factor, namely cultural diversity, is explored in two papers in this issue. Olbert & Partridge (2011) use an index of community-level ethnic diversity to represent tolerance and diversity, and estimate its importance for location decisions of workers in cultural occupations in Canada. The paper finds a positive relationship between ethnic diversity and the share of cultural occupations in urban areas, but not in rural areas. This suggests an agglomeration or urban economy effect rather than a diversity effect. The paper also finds that the share of cultural occupations remains persistent over time, so that policies to attract workers in these occupations may not prove effective.

In a recent paper that also appears in this virtual special issue, Wang et al. (2016) explore the effects of cultural diversity and cultural distance on the sorting behaviour of international migrants among European NUTS-1 regions. This is a particularly interesting paper in the context of the current refugee crisis in Europe. Cultural diversity refers to the compositional profile of diverse cultures in a region relative to a monoculture. Cultural distance refers to the extent of dissimilarity between the cultural groups in a region. The paper uses a two-stage estimation model, with endogeneity between the two cultural variables addressed using an instrumental variable approach. The results suggest that cultural diversity increases regional attractiveness
for migrants, while cultural distance weakens regional attractiveness. The paper suggests policy interventions that enhance cultural integration, since this would be beneficial for migrants already residing in a region as well as future migrants.

The final two papers in this special issue are focused on the effects of migration rather than its determinants. Nijkamp et al. (2011) consider the link between inward migration and foreign direct investment (FDI). The paper is a meta-analysis of various studies to assess the robustness of the relationship between FDI and immigration. The paper reports a positive relationship between immigration and both inward and outward FDI, though this is strongest where migrants are highly skilled and educated. Building on a previous paper in this journal, Rowthorn (2009) models the effects on a large city of an exogenous population shock, which may take the form of an increase in immigration. In most versions of the model, immigration reduces the standard of living of existing workers in the city, except where there are increasing returns to scale and the costs to the existing population (congestion costs) are relatively small.

Overall, these papers present important policy challenges and a fruitful basis for further research on a critical issue to which regional scientists will make important contributions. The virtual special issue can be accessed at http://bit.ly/rsea-migration

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