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Case study details

Title:	<i>Getting off the escalator? A study of Scots out-migration from a global city region</i>
Date:	<i>Published May 2008</i>
Subject Area:	<i>Geography</i>
Relevance to other subject areas (Optional):	<i>Economics and business studies</i>
Project type:	<i>Funded research project</i>
Summary:	<i>Something new is happening to reverse the historical trend of skilled Scots moving to London for career progression. The Scottish population of London and the South East is falling, despite Scots enjoying continued occupational success within this labour market. This paper asks why Scots are leaving the UK's main escalator region and investigates how these migration changes can best be theorised relative to literature on the mobility of the 'new service class'. Building on Fielding's (1992) escalator region hypothesis, the paper considers why people would leave a global city offering good opportunities for occupational mobility and move to a 'peripheral' regional labour market.</i>

Service Used (Complete for all datasets used).

Name and Edition of dataset:	<i>UK Census 1991 and 2001, downloaded via Casweb (place of residence, place of residence a year ago and place of birth variables)</i>
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Aims and Objectives

In the context of Scots migrants to and from the South East of England, this project asks:

(a) What can be understood about the forces responsible for the Scots-born population of London falling between 1991 and 2001?

(b) How has the occupational mobility of Scots in the UK's main escalator region compared with that of other groups and what are the implications of this for internal labour migration?

(c) What is the profile of return migrant Scots and what does this suggest about the changing position of the Scottish economy and its potential to attract not only 'fresh talent' from other countries but also return migration of skilled Scots?

This empirical lens ties in with wider theoretical issues, including:

1. Whether patterns of labour migration from so-called 'peripheral' regions in advanced economies towards global cities within the same state are changing because these global cities are sourcing cheaper labour from other parts of the world economy rather than, as in the past, from 'dominated' local labour markets within the state.

2. Whether access to global labour markets has resulted in skilled labour from so-called 'peripheral' regions moving to new locations outside the state which offer better opportunities for occupational mobility than is available within the state, even within an escalator region.

3. Whether regions distant from global cities need not fear suffering from net out-migration, because the greater mobility of capital and skilled labour means that they may make net migration gains as the so-called creative classes increasingly move to areas with the work and quality-of-life attributes that they desire.

4. Whether there is evidence of migrants using escalator regions differently from in the past, perhaps still moving to them for rapid occupational mobility but, in the context of more fluid labour-market structures, leaving these urban regions at an earlier point in their careers.

Methodology

The research results reported in this paper are part of a larger multimethod project involving census analysis, a suite of questionnaire surveys including one covering 1,200 households across South East England, and in-depth interviews with Scots migrants and return migrants. The paper also draws on a range of secondary datasets:

Casweb and the National Health Service Central Register (NHSCR) are used to measure the scale of Scottish migration to and from London and the South East.

The Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study (ONS LS) is used to assess the occupational mobility of Scots in the South East labour market

Specially commissioned tables provided by the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) are used to explore the characteristics of Scots return migrants.

Finally primary data based on the authors' household questionnaire survey in South East England are presented to offer insights into the likelihood of return migration taking place.

The key analytical tool deployed by the researchers is log-linear modelling.

Results/Outcome

The Scottish population of London and the South East has fallen significantly since the early 1990s as the level of return migration to Scotland has increased. These return migrants are mainly skilled workers who are economically active and returning at an early or middle stage in their careers. The increased level of Scots return migration from London and the South East is unlikely to be the result of a reduction in the career opportunities for Scots in these prosperous locations since they, like other in-migrants, experienced very favourable upward occupational mobility in the South East during the 1990s. Instead rapid career acceleration appears to have provided Scots with the opportunity to move upward and onward from London at a relatively young age, meaning that they can pursue other life goals and no longer need await retirement to be liberated from the expensive and constraining environment of life in a global city. Lifestyle factors appear to be a significant driver of Scots return migration, although access to appropriate job opportunities in Scotland is often a prerequisite for such moves.

This research formed part of the ESRC/The Scottish Executive's 'Scotland's Demography Research Programme', which aimed to inform policy debates on fertility, aging and migration issues in Scotland.

Additional Information

Table 1: Scots-born population of London and the South East, 1991 and 2001

Location	1991	2001	Percentage change
Greater London	113, 117	108,602	- 4
South East including London	301,586	261,373	- 13
South East excluding London	188,469	152,771	- 19

Source: Casweb, 2006

Project website

The full research report and other project outputs are available at:

<http://www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk/esrcinfocentre/viewawardpage.aspx?awardnumber=RES-342-25-0009>