

NET MIGRATION IN NONMETROPOLITAN ILLINOIS: 1950 TO 1976

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the economic growth and decline of specific destinations in nonmetropolitan Illinois affects net migration patterns to and from these areas. The concept that a change in patterns of migration is concomitant with a change in economic opportunities at the destination is the central idea of the study. The net migration flows of nonmetropolitan counties in Illinois were analyzed for three separate time periods; namely, 1950-60, 1960-70, and 1970-76. Each of these periods represents a separate stage in the urban-to-rural migration turnaround.

The study is demographic and, as such, uses census results as primary data sources. However, for the more recent study dates, officials in several county and regional planning commissions were interviewed as well concerning the reasons for these migration changes.

Recent studies indicate that many migrants are being motivated by noneconomic or "quality-of-life" reasons instead of by employment considerations as in the past. Because of this, attitudes as well as recent migration changes in Illinois were analyzed to determine if noneconomic factors have become more important in the migration process within Illinois. It was found that noneconomic factors have helped lay the foundation for the expansion of nonmetropolitan employment but that Illinois basically lacks nonmetropolitan "amenity areas" which would motivate potential migrants to move into these areas.

Based upon the results of this study, it would appear that migration behavior is mainly a function of economic opportunities. The statistical tests used in this study revealed that a number of economic variables were significantly correlated with changes in net migration for both the 1950-60 and the 1960-70 time periods. However, it can also be

argued that other factors, such as amenities, may be important in determining the choice of a destination for potential migrants, especially where such development as improved highways or industrial growth has occurred. For Illinois, it is concluded that the determinants for the location of economic opportunities have changed, not the determinants of migration.