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Harris, C., Moran, D. and Bryson J.R. (2012) Measuring EU Accession Migration: National Insurance Number Allocations and the Geographies of Polish Labour Immigration to the UK, *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, Vol. 103, No. 2, pp. 209–221

Abstract

This paper addresses the challenge of measuring the extent of immigration to the UK following EU Accession in 2004, and argues that the most commonly used databases (UK Census, Labour Force Survey and Worker Registration Scheme) can be supplemented by the National Insurance Number (NINo) Allocations database, and demonstrates the utility of this data for future research by outlining the geography of immigration derived from NINo. The paper makes three important contributions through the thorough description of a data source currently underexploited in migration studies; first that the NINo, when used as a indicator of migration *per se* offers some interesting insights into migration in the UK, and secondly that as a tool for comprehensively measuring the registration of migrants working legally in the UK, it offers a means of constructing a internal geography of (legal) labour migration, as the paper demonstrates. Third, the analysis also identifies self-employment as a potentially important missing driver behind EU Accession Migration.

Key words: UK, migration, National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations, Worker Registration Scheme (WRS), Accession Countries, New Member States (NMS), Polish migrants.

Measuring EU Accession Migration: National Insurance Number Allocations and the Geographies of Polish Immigration to the UK.

Introduction

EU enlargement and the accession of ten new member states (NMS) in 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia) and 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania) has caught the public imagination, with concerns in host countries about a potential influx of low-paid workers sweeping in and "taking their jobs" (Whitehead 2009). In the UK at least, the reality is much more complex. Considering Polish migrants, British employment agencies and the Polish media all believe that the tide of immigration has now turned; "a combination of tightening economic conditions in the UK, a comparatively weak pound and an unprecedented surge in the Polish economy has made it unattractive for Poles to remain" (Mostrous and Seib, 2008).

Research has struggled to keep pace with media interest in accession migration, and academic attention has largely focussed on the costs and benefits of migration to the host nations, (e.g. Düvell 2004, Sinn 2004, Drinkwater *et. al* 2006), and the experiences of labour migrants (e.g. McDowell *et al* 2007). Debates about the methodological implications for economic geography and migration studies are still only beginning to emerge (see Meardi 2007, Drinkwater 2008), and fundamentally, the statistics upon which research into UK accession migration is based are open to dispute.

This paper explores immigration to the UK with a focus on labour immigration, regional patterns of immigration and an estimation of self employment. The analysis explores the data sources currently used to measure immigration to the UK, and given the topicality of EU accession labour migration, i.e. individuals moving between EU countries in search of work, it focuses specifically on datasets which can be used to assess the labour market characteristics of migrants from the NMS. Many of the conventionally used datasets which seek to measure all migrants rather than simply labour migrants, have deficiencies, either in terms of their sampling methodology, or their temporal range, that hinder the measurement of immigration. Techniques which target labour migrants specifically also have flaws, based on comprehensiveness and sampling. As a result there is a 'measurement gap' in relation to intra-EU migration, with the result that researchers, the media and importantly policy-makers find it difficult to make a satisfactory estimate of the flows both of migrants *per se* and of labour migrants entering the UK since 2004.

The UK Office of National Statistics confirms that the UK has no compulsory registration of migration and there are no comprehensive administrative sources. Although no single dataset provides definitive information, therefore, National Insurance Number (NINo) allocations to adult overseas (non-UK) nationals entering the UK seem to be both a useful indicative measure for migration, and importantly a means of accessing data about the migrant workforce. Since all individuals engaged in formal work in the UK must by law obtain a NINo, allocations give an indication of the number of migrants legally working in the UK. The allocation of a NINo is a firm indicator that an individual is likely to be employed, or seeking employment (DWP 2007), and the date of allocation can be used to monitor migrant flows into the country. This dataset has until now remained unexploited by geographers, and in this paper we demonstrate its utility, by showing the ways in which it can be used to indicate migration flows within the UK. In the paper, we use NINo to identify migration from the 12 NMS, including the place of allocation, which we use as a proxy to construct an intra-geography of accession immigration for the Polish migrants – the largest component of accession migration. We also compare NINo to the Worker Registration Scheme (WRS) data, and contrast the multiple geographies that these sets of data provide.

The paper is structured as follows. First, we examine the data sources currently used to measure migration; secondly, we describe in detail the use of NINo as an indicator of migration, thirdly, we compare the data generated by WRS with the NINo dataset for accession migration using the example of Poland, and finally we discuss the issues raised by the analysis and the potential future uses of NINo data both in migration and accession research, and for policymaking. An interesting issue is the identification of self-employment as an important element in the migration of NMS migrants to the UK. The paper makes two important contributions through the identification and description of a data source currently underexploited in migration studies; firstly that the data source, when used as a indicator of migration *per se* offers some interesting insights into migration in the UK, and secondly that as a tool for comprehensively measuring the registration of migrants working legally in the UK, it offers a means of constructing a internal geography of (legal) labour migration. Like all measures of migration there are problems with the NINo, but this dataset provides another interesting tool to explore labour migration to the UK.

Measuring Migration

The enlargement of the European Union (EU) to the East in 2004 and 2007 has fuelled both debates over immigration, and the demand for better statistics. The EU is a free trade area, with 'free movement of workers' (FMOW) for all its citizens, without visas or work permits (Portes and French

2005, p.3). Previous accessions had caused EU Member States (the 'EU-15') considerable concern about the impact of complete liberalisation on their labour markets, and the Accession Treaties gave the EU-15 the option to delay implementation of full FMOW for up to seven years. Most, including France, Germany, and Spain, imposed restrictions on movement in one form or another; the United Kingdom was one of only three countries (along with Ireland and Sweden) to allow migrants from the NMS to enter their labour markets more or less without restriction.

International migration has exposed the weaknesses of existing methods of measuring migration; governmental and administrative processes have not kept up with the political changes in the EU, and there is a general recognition that official statistics on migration are inadequate, particularly at the local level (LGA Research 2007). In essence, the problem is both the lack of a single, all-inclusive system to measure the movement of people into and out of the UK as a whole, and the infrequency of measurement of the actual location of migrants once they have settled in the UK. Although the data problems are widely recognised, especially in the context of accession migration, (see Meardi, 2007; Abel 2010, de Beer et al 2010), few alternative measurements are suggested or analysed. Garapich asserts that "this can perhaps be attributed to the fast-moving and complex nature of the migration phenomenon which develops quicker than the research can follow" (2008, p.735), and perhaps also at a faster rate than EU border changes and the development of national statistics.
Existing measures of migration include the UK Census, the Labour Force Survey, the International Passenger Survey, and the Worker Registration Scheme (Boden and Rees 2010), and each is explored in turn.

The UK Census - The census, "a massive continuing national enquiry" and "a key anchor for much of the official statistical system" (Cook 2004, p.111) ought to be the most reliable data source for detailed information on the characteristics of immigrants to the UK. By law every UK resident must feature on a census return. However, an unknown proportion of the country's resident population are not counted by the census. There are also drawbacks in using census data for migration research because immigrant respondents are not asked about their year of arrival in the UK. They are asked to state their residence one year prior to the census date, so only recent immigration is located in time. More significantly, though, since the census is carried out only once every ten years, it provides a rather static account of the UK's population. The most recent census took place in April 2001, too long ago to capture the migration flows associated with EU enlargement, and it recorded less than 61,000 Polish-born individuals living in the UK (Drinkwater *et. al* 2006, 4). Although current

estimates vary widely, in 2007 Barbara Tuge-Erecinska, the Polish ambassador to the UK suggested that there may be ten times as many of her compatriots living in the UK (Polish Business News 2007).

The Labour Force Survey (LFS) - All EU member states are required to conduct this statistical survey, and in the UK it is a quarterly sample survey of households living at private addresses. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), the purpose of the LFS "is to provide information on the UK labour market that can then be used to develop, manage, evaluate and report on labour market policies" (ONS, 2008). As a sample survey, the LFS is subject to sampling variability and cannot make absolute statements about the size or distribution of immigrant populations, but it has been effectively used to examine the labour characteristics of recent immigrants (e.g. Drinkwater *et al* 2006, Sumption 2009).

The International Passenger Survey - Headline data for the number of migrants entering and leaving the UK are largely based on information compiled by the ONS' International Passenger Survey (IPS), a random sample survey derived from a quarter of million face-to-face interviews annually with passengers at the main airports, seaports and the Channel Tunnel. The IPS has been the main source for migration studies for over 30 years, but there are well known problems related to the purpose of the surveu and small sample sizes. This survey is extrapolated to estimate the number and characteristics of migrants into and out of the UK, but only those intending to stay for a year or longer. Although the survey provides valuable insight into migrants' journeys, its extrapolations should be treated with caution in relation to *labour migration*, since the IPS also covers non-working migrants, such as non-working students, family members, and asylum seekers.

The Worker Registration Scheme - The UK Home Office's Worker Registration Scheme statistics are available as a series of 18 quarterly Home Office Accession Monitoring Reports, from May 2004 to September 2009, but covering A8[1] arrivals only. A8 nationals are legally allowed to work in the UK, but must register with the WRS within one month of starting a new job, paying £90 to do so. They should also re-register if they change employer (but do not pay another fee). Application forms are available online and are submitted to the UK Border Agency by post. Each application to WRS therefore represents one job, not one applicant, and applicants are only represented once in the data. After 12 months' work without interruption of more than 30 days in total, migrants acquire full Worker Treaty rights, are free from the requirement to register, and are able to apply for a European Economic Area (EEA) residence permit to confirm their right to reside in the UK as a worker (Home Office et al 2008).

The WRS, however, only captures a fraction of A8 accession migration to the UK. It is estimated that relatively high proportions of migrants, between around a quarter and a third, have not registered on the scheme at all (Drinkwater 2008, Fife Research Coordination Group 2008, Surrey 2006) and critically, the self-employed are not required to register; the right of establishment in the EU allows self-employed citizens to move between member states to establish businesses; according to the LFS, 14 per cent of A8 migrants are self-employed. Pollard et al's (2008, 18) survey of A8 migrants suggested that more than 40% of Poles who worked in the UK since 2004, before returning to Poland, had never registered on the WRS.

Despite these drawbacks, the WRS and LFS datasets have been widely used in research into accession migration (Portes and French 2005), particularly research into the geographical distribution of migrants. Traditionally, immigrants to the UK have gravitated towards London and the South East, towards conurbations and to a relatively small number of larger towns and cities (Dobson et al 2001). Research into accession migration, and particularly Polish migration, (e.g. Düvell 2004, Garapich 2005, Garapich 2006, Eade et al 2006) seems to have been influenced by this immigration history, and follows the pattern of migration research more widely, by focussing on the capital city of London (e.g. Peach 1999 and 2006, McDowell et al 2007, and Wills et al 2009). However, successive rounds of recent LFS data have suggested that the overall regional distribution of A8 immigration might reflect a much broader geographical spread (Salt 2007). Smaller scale, local studies incorporating an analysis of WRS confirm that the geographical distribution of AB migrants extends way beyond the 'traditional' immigrant destinations (Stenning et al 2006, Bauere et al 2007, Green et al 2007a, Green et al 2007b, CRC 2007, Chappell et al 2009).

Bauere et al (2007, p.8) map A8 nationals' WRS registrations per thousand population for each UK local authority (LA), showing that the A8 population is widely spread across the UK, with high figures in Northern Ireland, Eastern England, and North Norfolk, scattered concentrations in the Midlands, the South West and South East, and relatively low rates in Wales, the North East and North West. Their ranking of registrations places the City of London top, with the City of Westminster (central London) in third place. The East Midlands localities of Boston, Northampton, and South Holland rank second, fourth and fifth. Registration rates are also high in the East of England, in Peterborough, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire (Bauere et al, ibid)

Similarly, Green et al (2007a&b) have used WRS data to study recent waves of A8 migration into the UK's East and West Midlands labour markets, identifying the highest levels of migration in food

growing, processing and packaging regions; a summer peak in WRS applications suggested seasonal work undertaken by NMS migrants. This rural migration is also identified in other research using WRS which argues that a key feature of the A8 migration appears to be a greater orientation towards rural areas than has been the case for previous immigrations (Stenning et al. 2006, CRC 2007, Chappell et al. 2009). High levels of Polish migrants in rural areas may reflect a geography of legal work - migrants working legally in agricultural regions of the UK may register with WRS whereas than those engaged in informal work in urban areas may not, although more research is needed to establish the factors involved in WRS registration decisions.

The National Insurance Number (NINo) dataset and labour migration

The statistical series discussed above provide useful measures, but there are sufficient drawbacks to suggest that other tools should be explored. We argue here that perhaps one of the most useful alternative sources is National Insurance Number (NINo) allocations to adult overseas (non-UK) nationals entering the UK, collected by the UK Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) (DWP 2007, 2008). Although Drinkwater (2008) has suggested that the most reliable information on the number of labour migrants entering the UK might come from this dataset, it remains unutilised by geographers.

Registrations for a NINo give an indication of the number of working migrants in the UK, since having a NINo indicates that an individual is highly likely to be employed, or seeking employment (Boden and Rees 2010, DWP 2007). This dataset is valuable as an indicative measure of immigration, in that it provides an indication of migrants' geographical distribution. A similar migration dataset is the UK National Health Service's 'Flag 4' data, which records registrations with General Practitioners (local doctors) from individuals previously resident outside the UK. However, unlike the NINo, Flag 4 and the GP patient register is a 'snapshot' taken annually, rather than a comprehensive record of each registration, and GP registration is unconnected to the working status of migrants. NINo data is provided by country of origin and disaggregated by Government Office Region (GOR)[2], Local Authority (LA) and Parliamentary Constituency (PC). Unlike the census, it covers much shorter and more recent time periods, from 2002/03 to 2008/09, therefore capturing the EU enlargements of 2004 and 2007.

In the UK, National Insurance Contributions (NIC) are paid by employers and employees (aged 16 to state pensionable age) to build up an individual's entitlement to social security benefits including the state pension. The type and level of NIC paid depends upon income level and employment/self-

employment. A National Insurance Number (NINo) is assigned as a personal account number, to ensure that NIC contributions and tax paid are properly recorded. A NINo is required by any overseas national intending to work or claim welfare benefits in the UK, including the self-employed or students working part-time. NINo data pertaining to migrants reflect all adult overseas nationals allocated a NINo through the adult registration scheme. NINo data is therefore a 100% sample held at case level, not subject to sampling error, and suitable for merging with other case-level data sources (DWP 2007, p.12).

Despite the utility of this dataset, it is not without limitations. Although a useful tool for exploring overall migration, it is only an indicative and partial measure, but there are some interesting insights that comes from NINo that provide an agenda for further research. NINo captures only migrants working legally, and not any unemployed accompanying family, or illegal workers. NINo relates to an individual's place of registration, rather than place of residence or employment (although these may of course coincide), and although an individual must obtain a NINo to undertake paid legal employment, they retain one NINo for life, meaning that this dataset can only be used to identify the geography of new migrants rather than step or return migration, and cannot reflect emigration, nor show length of stay in the UK, or movement within the UK.

To appreciate this dataset it is necessary to understand the process of NINo allocation. Overseas nationals entering the UK apply for a NINo initially via telephone, and then face-to-face interview. The NINo application is made to the DWP through Jobcentre Plus, a government agency supporting unemployed people of working age, and helping employers to fill vacancies. Applicants attend their interview at a local Jobcentre Plus office, showing proof of identity (i.e. passport or National Identity card), and in an employment-related application, prove that they have the right to work in the UK (DWP 2007, 5). A check is made to ensure that a NINo has not been previously allocated. The NINo allocated by Jobcentre Plus is registered in the National Insurance Recording System (NIRS), and the allocation date referred to in the DWP report represents the date the information on the registered individual was processed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs' (HMRC)[3]. The NINo allocation date does not, therefore, necessarily coincide with arrival in the UK – immigrants may apply immediately on arrival, or may wait several weeks, month or even years, before applying, if they wait to register until they seek or find work. Similarly, although the NINo allocation date is sometimes thought to be an indication of when migrants become active in the labour market, they can legitimately seek and take up employment before being allocated a NINo - once employed it is the duty of the employee to apply for a NINo at the earliest opportunity.

NINo allocations are recorded spatially, but an important consideration is the distribution of Jobcentre Plus Offices which perform the necessary NINo allocation interviews. Not all Offices conduct interviews, and Jobcentre Plus does not publish the location of interviewing offices on a national scale. It is likely that such offices are unevenly dispersed, and that rural and remote areas lacking interviewing offices may therefore undercount NINo allocations to their residents who have to travel out of region for interview. The logistical restriction of NINo allocation is quite different to registration for the WRS, which can be completed remotely, online and by post.

Recent changes have improved NINo data collection. Since 2007/08 the use of fixed datasets eliminates any retrospection in future reports, and the reporting year has been changed from the tax year (6th April to 5th April) to the financial year (31st March to 1st April). Improvements have also been made to the area allocation process and more frequent scans provide a more accurate account of individuals' locations at the point of allocation.

NMS migration to the UK

Immigration to the UK from the EU's New Member States has become a hot political topic, with the arrival of unexpectedly large numbers of migrants generating considerable political pressure on the UK government to 'regulate' immigration. As Boden and Rees (2010) point out, the UK Home Office's and Border Agency's new Points-Based System for controlling non-EU immigration to the UK by assessing migrants on the basis of their skills, experience, age and the demand for their skills in the UK labour market, is a response to the rising levels of uncontrolled migration within the EU. There is considerable pressure for methods to assess migration flows both to and within the UK. Boden and Rees (2010) discuss the New Migrant Databank which collects together administrative data sources such as NINo, and NHS Flag 4 data, for migration for the UK for 2001-2008, demonstrating the value of these data in describing migration at the local level.

The NINo dataset captures accession migration at a number of geographical scales. Data collected by world area of origin and year of allocation from 2002/03 to 2008/09 illustrates annual increases in allocations of NINos to NMS nationals entering the UK, with particularly marked rises from 2004/05 following EU enlargement. From 2004/05 onwards allocations are highest for NMS nationals, increasing from 29,000 in 2003/04 to 117,000 in 2004/05 (Table 1), and over 332,000 by 2007/08. Although the number of NINo allocations to NMS nationals fell to 257,000 in 2008/09, this figure remains higher than the pre-accession level. Since the NINo data does not provide exit figures or

information on length of stay in the UK, falling NINo allocations does not mean that NMS migrants are leaving the UK.

Table 1 NINo allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK, by year of allocation and world region of origin

Thousands

World Region of Origin	2002/3	2003/4	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9
All	**346,23**	**373,50**	**435,35**	**663,06**	**705,84**	**733,09**	**686,11**
Europe-EU excluding Accession Countries	80,09	85,54	80,71	97,84	102,75	107,47	120,14
Europe-EU Accession Countries	17,67	28,72	116,84	276,68	317,50	332,44	257,04
Europe-non-EU	14,66	15,87	14,04	15,50	16,14	17,21	16,10
Africa	65,98	70,71	64,08	74,03	60,72	59,63	63,31
Asia and Middle East	113,56	116,03	109,39	134,40	143,79	149,87	163,04
The Americas	26,33	31,41	26,52	31,53	31,50	32,64	36,45
Australasia and Oceania	27,13	24,49	23,16	32,51	32,98	33,35	29,53
Others and unknown	0,80	0,72	0,61	0,56	0,46	0,49	0,50

Source: 100% extract from NIRS, DWP 2009.

Having established that NMS make up the majority of NINo allocations to migrants, we can disaggregate NMS migrants by country of origin and this analysis shows that between 2004/05 and 2008/09 that Polish nationals were the largest group of migrants from the accession states (Table 2 . By 2006/07 over 220,000 allocations had been made to Poles. Other NMS in the top ten included Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia, and recently Romania. With Polish nationals not only receiving the majority of NINos amongst NMS nationals, but also amongst all overseas nationals applying for a NINo, they are the most significant recently-arrived ethnic minority group currently working in the UK.

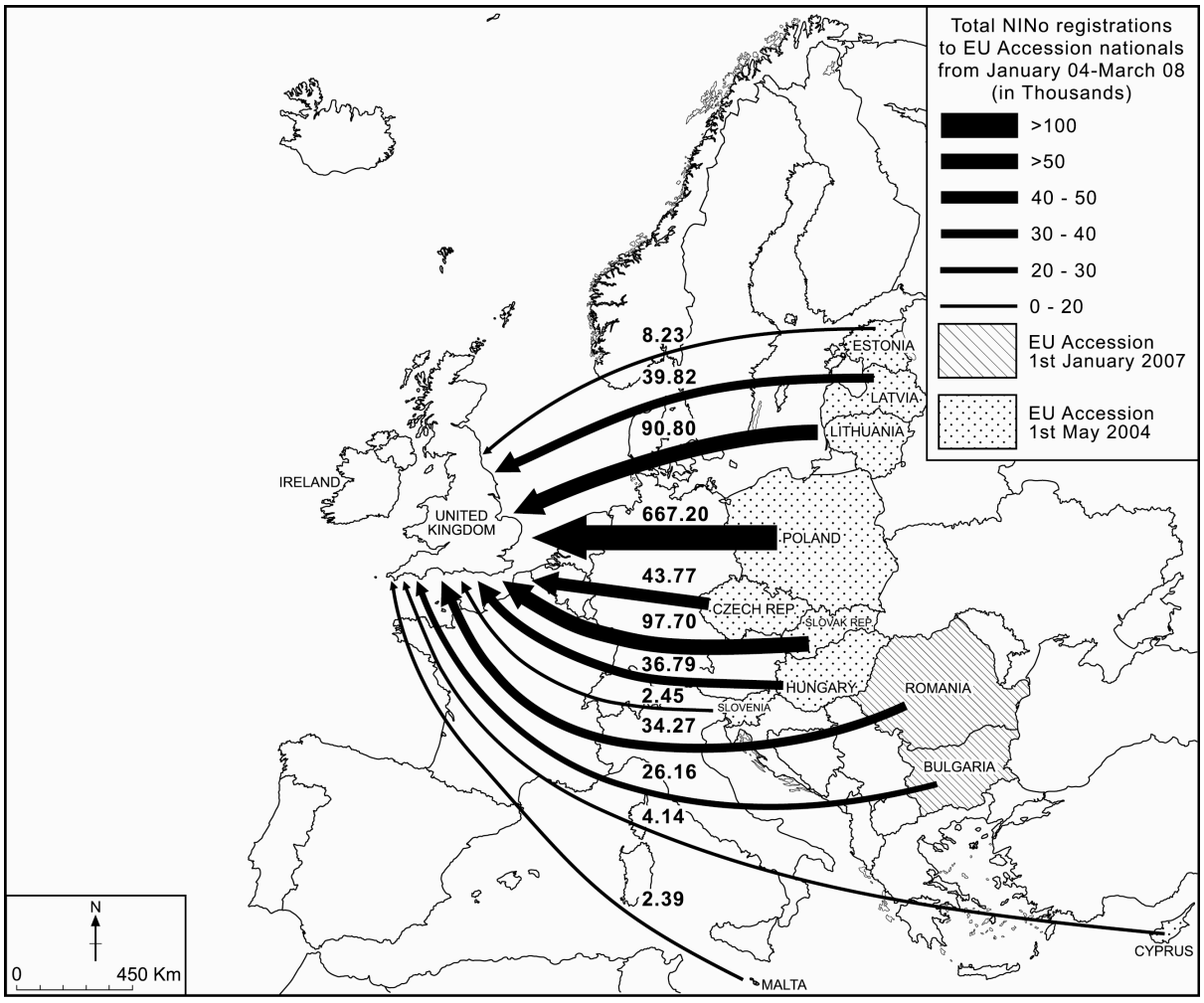
Table 2 NINo allocations to adult overseas nationals entering the UK, top ten countries by year of allocation

Thousands

	2004/05		2005/06		2006/07		2007/08		2008/09
Poland	61,12	Poland	171,08	Poland	220,43	Poland	210,66	Poland	134,36
India	32,47	India	45,93	India	48,82	India	49,76	India	59,39
Pakistan	20,19	Lithuania	30,94	Slovakia	28,60	Slovakia	29,99	Slovakia	24,09
South Africa	19,19	Slovak Rep	27,51	Pakistan	25,01	Pakistan	24,83	France	24,01
Australia	16,47	South Africa	24,03	Australia	24,21	Australia	24,10	Romania	23,95
Lithuania	15,54	Australia	23,83	Lithuania	23,92	Romania	22,95	Pakistan	23,46
France	13,18	Pakistan	22,29	France	20,01	France	21,77	Australia	21,39
China	12,55	France	17,23	South Africa	16,80	Lithuania	19,03	Italy	18,63
Portugal	12,20	Latvia	14,40	Germany	15,07	Germany	15,53	Lithuania	17,62
Slovak Rep	11,11	Germany	13,39	China	13,00	Italy	15,40	Nigeria	17,46

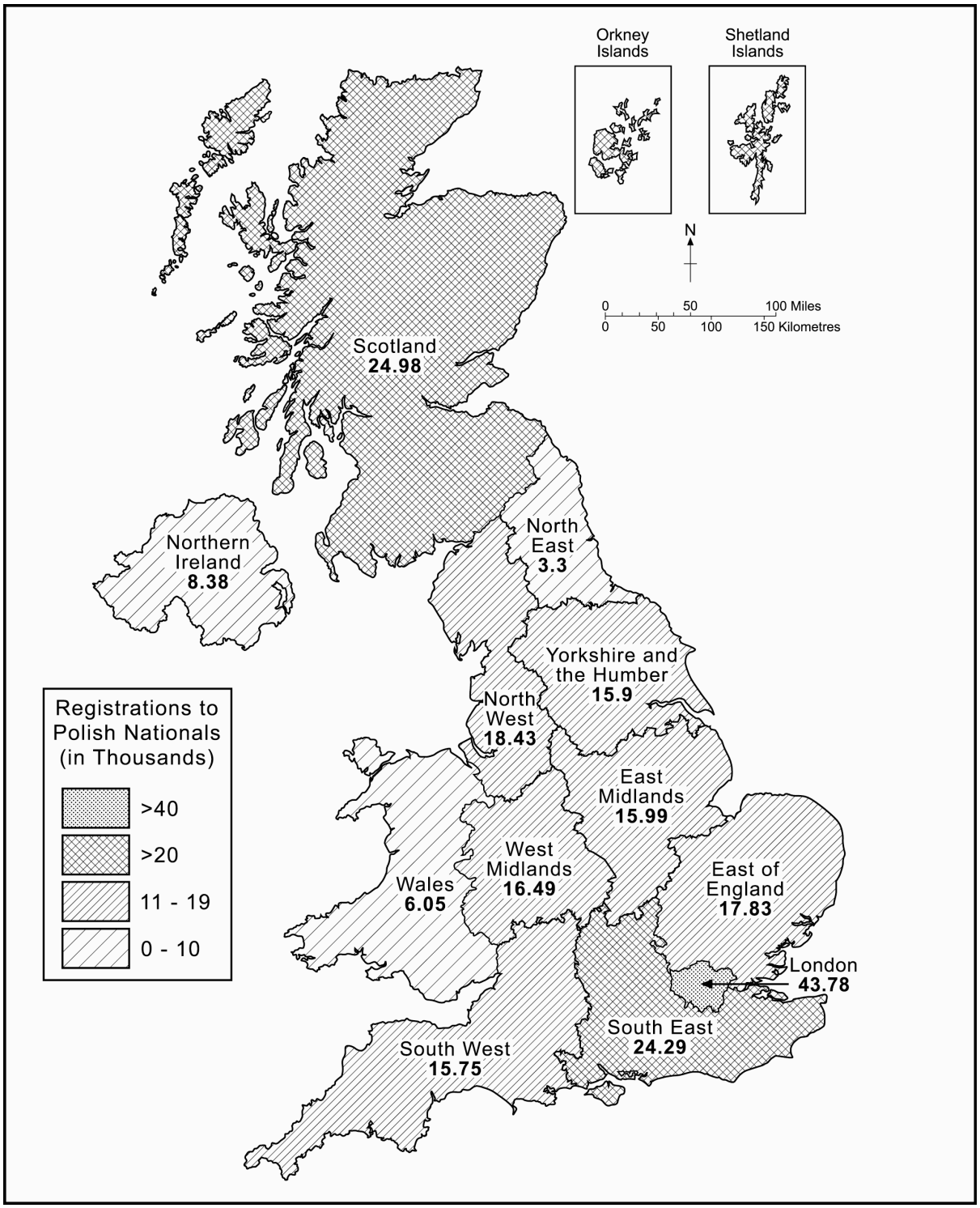
Source: Source: 100% extract from NIRS, DWP 2009, 11

Figure 1. NiNo registrations to NMS nationals entering the UK.



These annual figures can be unpacked further. NINo allocation data are available by nationality and quarter of allocation from 2004 to 2009, and show that allocations to Polish nationals peaked between January and March 2007 at 81,000, accounting for 70% of the total made to all NMS nationals during this period. More recently, allocations to Poles have declined significantly, and in January-March 2009 just 31,000 registered. NINo data allow cumulative totals to be calculated, and Figure 1 shows that Polish registrations (January 2004-March 2009) are the highest among NMS (Figure 1), although registrations made by Romanian and Bulgarian nationals increased noticeably after their EU accession in 2007.

Figure 2. NiNo registrations to Polish nationals entering the UK by Government Office Region.



The numerical significance of Polish NINo registrations in the UK raises questions of geographical dispersal. Here the NINo dataset is particularly useful, and we would argue that its value is best demonstrated in comparison with the spatial data generated by the WRS, the most commonly used means of assessing labour migrant distribution in the UK. Analysis of the NINo dataset shows that at

the sub-national (GOR) level from 2002-09 there were high absolute numbers of Polish allocations right across the UK. London saw the greatest number in this period (almost 195,000), followed by Scotland and the South East (Figure 2).

Multiple geographies of accession migrant workers

A comparison of the number of Polish NINo allocations with WRS registrations between May 2004 and March 2009 suggests that the NINO dataset captures a different and perhaps a more comprehensive dataset. During this period over 820,000 NINo allocations were made to Polish nationals, compared to just under 600,000 WRS registrations (Table 3). The greatest difference between NINO and WRS is in the GOR of London, where NINo data counts over 100,000 more than WRS; a difference of 55 per cent. There could perhaps be an association between WRS registration counting and rural areas (Green et al. 2007b); in the more rural GORs of the East of England, East Midlands and Yorkshire and the Humber, the differences are smaller (5,350/7%, 2,840/4% and 6,720/12% respectively). Although studies using the WRS show very significant proportions of NMS populations in rural areas (Stenning *et al.* 2006, CRC 2007, Chappell *et al.* 2009), NINo allocation data question this perceived rural bias in the location of migrants.

Table 3 NINo allocations and WRS applications to Polish nationals entering the UK by Government Office Region

Government office region	NINO allocations to Polish nationals (in thousands)	WRS registrations to Polish nationals	Difference between NINo and WRS	Difference between NINO and WRS as a percentage of NINO
Total	821,21	597,51	223,71	27%
London	186,82	83,17	103,65	55%
East Midlands	64,12	61,29	2,84	4%
East of England	74,55	69,21	5,35	7%
West Midlands	64,24	53,22	11,03	17%
South East	96,33	77,38	18,96	20%
South West	58,55	49,63	8,92	15%
Yorkshire and the Humber	56,54	49,83	6,72	12%
North West	70,74	54,20	16,55	23%
Wales	23,94	17,12	6,83	29%
North East	12,36	7,90	4,46	36%
Scotland	77,36	54,97	22,40	29%
Northern Ireland	28,21	19,53	8,69	31%
Overseas Residents/Not stated	7,46	0,10	7,36	99%

Source: NINo registrations are 100% extract from NIRS, DWP 2009. WRS applications are authors' own calculations from WRS data.

Rather than necessarily relating to a rural/urban issue of WRS registration, some of the discrepancy between WRS and NINo data could originate in self-employment; many of those who have not registered for the WRS are self-employed migrants, who although required to have a NINo, are not required to register with WRS. This is a critical point. Further research is required into understanding the geographies and processes behind migration that is either driven by a desire to establish a firm or leads rapidly to the formation of a new enterprise. The 27% difference between the the NINo and the WRS needs to be explored through detailed research as it may go someway towards indicating the size, and/or the geographical distribution, of the self-employed Polish population in each GOR. The political and media debate concerning Polish immigration to the UK has focussed on employment rather than the role of migrants as entrepreneurs and job creators rather than job takers. The NINo provides one perspective on migrant entrepreneurs, but there are problems that require further research.

It must be emphasized that the proportion of the discrepancy between the datasets which may be attributed to the self-employed is unknown. Another potential source of discrepancy is in migrants registering for a NINo and WRS in different places; migrants could arrive and receive a NINo in a city, and later register for the WRS in a rural area on employment. Further research into migrant labour activity is needed to explore these possibilities and especially the activities and geographies of self-employed migrants. Much of the political debate regarding migrant workers to the UK has revolved around discussions that assume that migrants 'displace' British residents in local labour markets. Polish migrant entrepreneurs are extremely visible in British towns and cities. They provide a range of retail and supporting services to local Polish communities, but also to the wider population. Further research is urgently required as these migrant entrepreneurs may only by based around employment of members of the same family, employ only other Polish migrants or provide employment opportunities for the wider population. Polish entrepreneurs might be competing with established local businesses and could even out-compete them on the basis of family labour of the provision of services from a location in Poland. There markets have might be restricted to the local Polish community and this could limited their ability to grow.

Conclusion

This paper identifies and addresses the deficiencies in migration data in the UK, suggesting that National Insurance Number data can be used as an indicator of migration flows, and more specifically to illustrate the geography of accession migration and potentially to investigate its impact on employment in the UK.

The inadequacies of national migration data have implications for UK government policy. Central government grants to local authorities, financed from national taxation, are adjusted to reflect population changes, and therefore rely on accurate population data. However, there are few grounds for confidence in the estimates or projections of populations on which these grant calculations are based. Local allocation is ultimately based on the 2001 census (LGA Research 2007, 3-4), and thus excludes accession migration. Not only is administrative data such as NINo allocations useful for academic research, but it provides a tool that can be deployed to explore the geographies of accession migration in the UK; incorporating this data into population measurement would allow UK local authorities to "understand the composition and needs of their local populations to plan and deliver services and deal with potential cohesion issues" (LGA Research 2007, p.4).

The example of Polish allocations highlights the utility of the NINo dataset, which until now has not been fully explored by geographers. Furthermore, Polish data illustrate the discrepancy between the geography of NINo allocations and WRS registrations for the UK as a whole and each GOR, questioning some of the analysis of the geography of immigration based on WRS. Further analysis could be conducted by Local Authority and Parliamentary Constituency to more closely examine the distribution of NMS registrations, and to propose reasons behind their patterns of dispersal since the experiences of different local authorities and different NMS groups may differ considerably from one another in terms of "social networks… being created which may result in new local cultural mixes" which could impact on local schooling, housing, healthcare and so on (Bauere et al. 2007, p.18).

Neither NINo nor WRS are comprehensive, and the discrepancies between them open up further interesting questions about migrant behaviour, self-employment and internal labour migration in relation to EU enlargement. The 2011 UK census will provide much more comprehensive data on migrant residence, but NINo and WRS can help to fill the ten-year data gap. The discrepancies between the NINo and WRS highlights that detailed intensive research is required to explore accession immigration entrepreneurship. The flow of accession migrants to the UK and elsewhere has been an extremely topical issue for politicians and journalists. This paper has highlighted the regional geography of Polish immigration to the UK, but more importantly emphasised that some accession migrants were also entrepreneurs. These Polish entrepreneurs require further detailed research. They may only be providing employment for members of the same family or for other Polish migrants . Some of these Polish firms may also be trading on their established relationships with businesses and family based in Poland.

Notes

1. The A8 countries are Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

2. In 1994 Government Offices for the Regions were established across England. This administrative sub-division were intended to enable government departments to work in partnership with local people and organisations in order to maximise regional prosperity and the enhance the quality of life. In 1996 the Government Office Regions (GOR) became the primary classification for the presentation of regional statistics.

3. HMRC ensures the correct tax is paid at the right time.

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