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EXCHANGING THE CITY RUSH FOR A SMALL TOWN IDYLL: THE CASE OF HIGH-SKILLED INTERNAL MIGRANTS IN LATVIA

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**Exchanging the City Rush for a Small Town Idyll:
The Case of High-skilled Internal Migrants in Latvia**

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Abstract

The paper aims to determine what are the factors that attract high-skilled internal migrants to a certain small urban area [SUA] by exploring three cases in Latvia: Preili, Kuldīga, and Cēsis. Additionally, current activities implemented by the municipalities of these small urban areas to attract internal migrants are explored to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. The findings will help the municipalities in deciding on the activities aimed at attracting high-skilled internal migrants to move to the SUA in order to reduce the population decline and boost the economic development of the area. We apply qualitative multiple case study design and conduct in-depth interviews with high-skilled internal migrants and municipality representatives to explore the research problem. The results reveal that the factors attracting internal migrants to SUAs in general are the closeness of nature, availability of outdoor activities and/or slower pace of life. A certain SUA is chosen due to connection with the place, uniqueness and authenticity of it, and/or presence of a certain hub.

Keywords: counterurbanization, amenity migration, rural gentrification, high-skilled migration

1. Introduction

Regional inequality is an important challenge in many European countries, Latvia being one of them (Rutkovska, 2018). Inhabitants of small urban areas (SUAs), the regional centres with 9800 inhabitants on average, live in a less developed environment with regards to economic conditions than the population of the capital city Riga and its agglomeration (Rutkovska, 2018; Social, Economic and Humanities Research Institute of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences & European Urban Knowledge Network [SEHRI of VUAS], 2015). For the inhabitants of SUAs the lower income in comparison with Riga often serves as a reason to migrate away from the area or even the country, that way not only making the environment of SUAs depressing but also reducing the national GDP in general. Thus, it is in the interests of the government and municipalities to reduce the persistent economic inequality gap to ensure socio-economic stability in the country (Rutkovska, 2018).

In 2016 the GDP per inhabitant in Riga region amounted to 21 078 EUR, while in Kurzeme it was only 45.1%, Vidzeme - 39.9%, Zemgale - 35.4% and Latgale - 33.2% of the GDP per capita in Riga (Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia [CSBL], 2016). Moreover, based on the shifts of territorial development index in recent years, the scope of the regional inequality keeps growing in Latvia. The gap between the capital city and other areas is increasing in terms of economic development, investment, income and employment opportunities (Rutkovska, 2018).

One of the drivers of economic development included in the calculations of territorial development index is the relative number of entrepreneurs in the region (State Regional Development Agency, n.d.). However, as indicated by the entrepreneurs of SUAs, a major drawback of building a business in an SUA is the lack of labor. It is identified as one of the main obstacles for future regional economic development (Employers' Confederation of Latvia [ECL], 2015). The population size in SUAs is continuously shrinking, and it is getting more difficult to attain both low- and high-skilled labor force. The main reason for this negative trend is migration (ECL, 2015). In 2017 only 20% of all municipalities in Latvia experienced a positive net migration rate, most of which being the municipalities close to the capital city (e.g., Adazi, Babite, Baldone) or large towns (e.g., Valmiera, Rezekne). The remaining 80% of municipalities had a negative net migration rate indicating that more people left than moved to each of the areas (CSBL, 2017).

Nevertheless, in recent years more can be heard about people moving away from the most urbanized areas in the country - the republican cities (Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development of Republic of Latvia, n.d.). Even though statistical data does not reflect the claim strongly yet, during the past few years media has covered stories of individuals who decide to move from more developed areas to SUAs frequently (Aizpute TV, 2019; Mace, 2018; Semane, 2018; Sondore-Strode, 2018; Vidzeme Television, 2017).

This movement resembles the concept of counterurbanization or urban-rural migration (Mitchell, 2004). There are several theories describing the reasons behind the decision to move from large urban areas to less developed regions. The theory of rural gentrification states that at first counterurbanization arose due to people's willingness to access lower property prices; however, it was later developed by justifying the choice to move by the migrant's preference for a life in a "rural idyll" (Little, 1987, as cited in Phillips, 1993, p.127). That led to a concept of amenity migration, which emphasizes the importance of natural and cultural resources characterizing the SUAs. Hoey (2006) enriches the scope of reasons by arguing that counterurbanization helps one to escape the "rat race" of the corporate world. The perceptions of such opportunities in the rural areas are often strengthened by place branding (Van Dam, Heins & Elbersen, 2002; Zenker, 2009). Meanwhile, Florida (2003) asserts that high-skilled people are attracted to a place in which tolerance, talent, and technology are complemented by uniqueness and authenticity, vibrant cultural life and outdoor activities.

Such a shift in the preferences of life in the society could help to reduce the problem of regional inequalities. According to Lucas (1988), the high-skilled migrants, in particular, are the ones that can help to facilitate the economic development of less developed regions. Acknowledging the contribution of high-skilled migrants on the development of SUAs, we focus on this migrant profile in our research and define the high-skilled migrants to be people having a bachelor's degree or higher or having extensive empirical experience in a specific field. The definition also includes professionals as skilled specialists, senior role candidates, technicians of specialized fields, investors, entrepreneurs, social service workers and others (Springer Science+Business Media B.V., 2017). By enhancing innovation and bringing new knowledge and professional network with them, high-skilled migrants can increase regional productivity and, thus, facilitate the economic growth of an area (Lucas, 1988). Therefore, it is of the highest interest of municipalities of SUAs to determine the factors

that could attract the high-skilled migrants to their SUA in order to address the population shrinkage, which results in a lack of labor and the negative economic disparities relative to the more urbanized areas.

Factors that could help the municipalities to attract the high-skilled migrants are not explored in-depth in Latvia. Berzins (2011) has looked at both socioeconomic traits of individuals involved in counterurbanization and motivations behind the decision to migrate; however, the research was quantitative and concerned counterurbanization in general. This indicates a lack of understanding about counterurbanization process involving high-skilled migrants in particular. Therefore, our aim is to fill in the gap in the academic literature and, by providing qualitative evidence, offer a deeper understanding of high-skilled counterurbanization in Latvia. More specifically, we want to examine the decision-making process of high-skilled internal migrants and explore [1] the factors that had attracted high-skilled internal migrants to a particular SUA and [2] how municipalities have attempted to influence the decision of high-skilled migrants. This leads us to the following research questions explored in this thesis:

1. *What are the factors that attract high-skilled internal migrants to a certain Small Urban Area?*
2. *What are the activities currently implemented by the municipalities of Small Urban Areas to attract the internal migrants?*

To explore our research questions, a multiple case study design is applied and the cases of three specific SUAs are examined: Cesis, Kuldiga, and Preili. There are three reasons why particularly these SUAs were chosen. Firstly, to avoid the effect of the closeness of the capital city, SUAs outside the agglomeration of Riga were chosen. Secondly, to account for differences in factors emerging due to cultural and geographical preferences of high-skilled internal migrants, SUAs representing different cultural regions of Latvia were selected. Thirdly, SUAs with better current results in terms of internal migrant attraction and cases showing worse performance were picked. Comparison of such cases could allow deriving conclusions about the unique success factors of the SUAs showing superior performance.

The final output of the research is set to be a broader understanding of the counterurbanization process in Latvia from both, migrant and municipality, perspectives. The insights will help the municipalities in decision-making process aiming to increase the number of high-skilled inhabitants and encouraging the economic development of the SUA.

2. Literature review

To find out whether there are specific factors that excel and play an important role in attracting the internal migrants to SUAs in theory, existing literature on the issue is reviewed. The literature review begins with building a deeper understanding of the concept of migration by defining the relevant terms of internal migration, exploring the concept of counterurbanization and discussing the impact of high-skilled migration on the destination area. Afterward, it proceeds with the examination of the existing research on the motivations behind urban-rural migration and explores what municipalities could do to facilitate migration flows to their SUA.

2.1 Migration

2.1.1 Defining internal migration and internal migrants

Migration is one of population mobility types defined as “a move from one migration-defining area to another that was made during a given migration interval and that involved a change of residence” (United Nations [UN], 1970, p.2). The type of migration involving a change of permanent residences within a country’s boundaries is defined to be internal migration (Kupiszewski & Rees, 1999).

A migrant is “a person who has changed his usual place of residence from one migration-defining area to another at least once during the migration interval” (UN, 1970, p.3). The person is an internal migrant in case the boundary of the area in which the new place of residence is located was crossed from a point outside the area but in the territory of the same country (UN, 1970).

2.1.2 Counterurbanization

According to Mitchell (2004), the process of counterurbanization is a physical movement to a different area, involving reconsideration of one’s preferences and substitution of urban life with an alternative. While agreeing on the fact that counterurbanization involves physical movement, several authors emphasize that the difference should be recognized between counterurbanization and suburbanization (Kontuly, Wiard & Vogelsang, 1986; Nefedova, Pokrovksii & Treivish, 2016). Counterurbanization is a migration from an urban to a rural area, as a result of which the connection with the urban area is lost and the lifestyle of the rural area is adapted.

Suburbanization, however, does not imply a drastic change in lifestyle since all the previously available infrastructure is still near to the new place of living.

When choosing cases for exploration in our research, suburban areas were excluded to avoid the impact of the closeness of the capital city Riga. Consequently, we explore the concept of counterurbanization; the movement from republican cities to SUAs outside the agglomeration of Riga.

Republican cities are defined to be the origin of the migrants under research because those are the biggest and the most urbanized areas in the country. According to the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Affairs (n.d.), there are nine republican cities in Latvia: Daugavpils, Jekabpils, Jelgava, Jurmala, Liepaja, Rezekne, Riga, Valmiera, and Ventspils. These cities have at least 25 000 inhabitants, highly-developed transportation network and infrastructure, and well-established cultural scene (Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas, 2008). Considering that these characteristics are not possessed by SUAs, the move from a republican city to an SUA could imply a noteworthy change of lifestyle which is a relevant component of the process of counterurbanization.

2.1.3 Impact of high-skilled migration on the economy

The impact of high-skilled migrants on the development of destination area has different angles. Firstly, high-skilled migrants enhance the performance of the local enterprises by bringing new knowledge and professional networks in the area (Miguelez & Moreno, 2013). Secondly, because of high-skilled migration, the wages in the region are increasing. Even though salaries in some industries might decrease due to an abundance of specific skills as a result of more players in the industry, the boost created in the productivity exceeds the drop (Dotzel, Faggian & Rajbhandari, 2017). Finally, an endowment of high-skilled people tends to attract the knowledge-based, tech and creative industry firms. These companies seek for clusters of knowledge, which emerge in places where high-skilled people gather, to build hubs in which to benefit from the knowledge spillover effects (Florida, 2003).

Even though the negative consequences may be less obvious, there are some negative effects that the destination area may encounter due to high-skilled migration (Dotzel, Faggian & Rajbhandari, 2017). The most common problem is that high-skilled internal migration may increase the prices of goods characterized by inelastic supply, such as housing (Nathan, 2015, as cited in Dotzel, Faggian & Rajbhandari, 2017,

p.134). As high-skilled migrants move to a certain area, the prices of housing increase, making housing more expensive for the locals as well.

2.2 Factors influencing migration

In the following sections, articles focusing on the reasons inducing the migration from metropolises to non-metropolitan areas are examined. Several of those are conducted in the U.S., e.g. Abrams & Gosnell (2011), Hoey (2006), Rudzitis (1999). The areas researched in these articles are rural areas. It is proposed that the perceptions and theories related to rural areas in the U.S. are applicable to the SUAs in Latvia, as the sizes of those are comparable¹.

2.2.1 Groups of factors influencing the decision of migration

According to the theory of migration proposed by Lee (1966), four types of factors can influence the decision of migration: 1) factors related to the area of origin (push factors); 2) factors related to the area of destination (pull factors); 3) personal considerations; 4) intervening obstacles.

If both push and pull factors are taken into consideration when exploring the decision of migration, it is hard to tell whether the decision was more influenced by some pull factors attracting the migrant to the destination or some push factors forcing him or her to leave the original place (Toren, 1976). Moreover, the municipality of destination area can only influence the migrant's decision through addressing his or her preferences for certain pull factors (e.g., improving the availability of education, infrastructure, etc.). Following from that, the emphasis in this research is put on exploring the pull factors that have attracted high-skilled internal migrants to a particular SUA.

However, Lee (1966) argues that not so much the actual pull factors influence the decision as does the person's perception of those. The perception is created as a result of insights from personal contacts and other information sources, person's overall

¹ In the 1990s, when most of the research papers discussed in our literature review were written, rural areas in the U.S. were defined as having 2 500 to 50 000 inhabitants (United States Department of Agriculture: Economic Research Service, n.d.). At the beginning of 2017, there were 15 293 inhabitants in Cesis, 10 753 in Kuldīga, and 6 522 in Preiļi (CSBL, 2017). Knowing that SUAs under research here do not exceed the population size defined in the U.S. rural area definition, it is argued that characteristics and motivations relevant for in-migrants in the U.S. can be explored with relation to the internal migration from republican cities to SUAs in Latvia.

intelligence, emotions and ability to compare the area of origin and destination. Considering that personal perceptions are closely related to the actual pull factors, this aspect is also explored in our research.

2.2.2 Pull factors encouraging migration

According to Department of Immigration and Border Protection [DIBP] (2014), employment has been the main reason to move to a particular destination; also, difficulties to settle in a new living area are usually related to difficulties to find a job. Moreover, the significance of employment is relevant not only for the person himself or herself but also for his or her family members with whom the migration takes place (DIBP, 2014). These considerations highlight the importance of employment opportunities for the migrant and his/her family members; therefore, the employment factor is addressed in the research.

Besides employment, which is relevant to any economically active migrant, there is also a group of pull factors that could be characterized as personal pull factors. In several studies where the in-migration towards rural areas was researched the residence of the migrant's family or relatives in the destination place was of near the highest importance (DIBP, 2014; Lee & Sugiura, 2018). The factor was also emphasized by families with children; priority is given for a destination close to family members who then can serve as a support in child-care (Baily, Blake & Cooke, 2004). Thus, the closeness of family should also be considered as a factor affecting the decision-making process.

There could also arise discrepancies in the decision-making process of high-skilled migrants in different life stages. In the case of young families with children or people aspiring to become parents, children future prospects become one of the main factors in choosing the destination. In a study done by Baily et al. (2004) parents with children revealed they had assessed the educational opportunities strongly before moving. Thus, the factor of accessibility of educational institutions is included in the research framework.

2.2.3 Pull factors encouraging urban-rural migration

Surveys conducted in the U.S. in the 70s revealed that when facing the choice of living location, people prefer to move to small towns or rural areas rather than to live in cities (Rudzitis, 1999). Researchers were surprised about the results because the

migration theories had argued the opposite: people would always choose to move to places in which their income would be increased or maximized, which usually would not be the case in rural areas. In a study conducted in the U.S. Western counties, only a quarter of all the migrants had gained an increase in their income after moving to a rural area, while a little less than half of them had, in fact, experienced a decrease in their salary. Theories of income maximization failed to explain the willingness to move to the peripheral areas. Two possible conclusions arose from that: the real income remains the same in the rural area even with the reduced salary or the quality of life in the rural area offsets the reduction in income (Rudzitis, 1999). The contradiction between the theory and practice made us curious about the importance of this factor in the decision-making process of high-skilled migrants in Latvia. Thus, we include change in income in our research framework.

The life in a rural area outweighing higher income could be reasoned with the ideas presented by Hoey (2006). He claims that besides the economic meaning, employment considerations in urban-rural migration are also related to migrants' willingness to change their area of occupation to meet the perception of potential self. For example, as much as 40% of the migrants who participated in a survey by Hoey (2006) after the movement had created their own small-scale enterprises. The significant share of new entrepreneurs among the survey participants indicated the migrants' hope to get in charge of their own lives after moving (Hoey, 2006). As argued by Selada, Vilhena da Cunha and Tomaz (2011), in-migrants often arrive at the destination with energy to implement their business ideas; thus, entrepreneurship is a way to integrate their skills and knowledge in the development of local economy. These considerations highlight the need to explore the ease of involving in the entrepreneurship, which is why we include this factor in the research framework.

In addition to changes in income and ease of involvement in entrepreneurship, Hoey (2006) and Rudzitis (1999) found more factors that had influenced the urban-rural migration decision. In a study conducted by Rudzitis (1999), the survey participants revealed that the main reasons for their relocation to a rural area had been scenery (72%), environmental quality (65%), pace of life (62%) and accessibility to outdoor activities (59%). Adding to the significance of pace of life, Hoey (2006) argues that the decision to move implies an opportunity to run away from the "rat race" in the corporate world. It helps to approach the vision of one's "good life" by looking for "meaning, fulfillment, and a sense of dignity and self-respect to life" (Hoey, 2006, p.351). These

findings go in line with the main ideas behind two theories discussing the motivations behind counterurbanization: rural gentrification and amenity migration.

The concept of gentrification hasn't been defined uniformly across the literature. However, most definitions agree on an aspect that gentrification is a change of society decomposition. When considering the rural gentrification specifically, it is defined to be a process in which one fraction of the middle-class (the migrants) replaces another fraction of the same class (the original inhabitants of the rural area) (Phillips, 1993).

As argued by Little (1987) rural gentrification had firstly arisen due to lower property prices (as cited in Phillips, 1993, p.127). Meanwhile, Rose (1984) claims that the property pricing motivation for rural gentrification could be too vague (as cited in Phillips, 1993, p.126). She suggests gentrification is not only about purchasing a cheaper property, but also buying into a socially desired lifestyle. Thus, the housing choice for rural gentrifiers is also dependent on its closeness to social places where the community gathers (e.g., cafes, restaurants, community houses).

That goes in line with the alternative motivation of rural gentrification which implies a move due to a willingness to employ a certain lifestyle: to live the idyllic rural life in a close-knit community, nature, and peace all around (Little, 1987, as cited in Phillips, 1993, p.127). As the technological development in telecommunications and IT has reduced the importance of being present in the workplace for white-collar workers and well-functioning road infrastructure are present, people with the desire to deploy lifestyle amenities of rural areas can make it happen more easily now (Abrams & Gosnell, 2011). The willingness for the certain lifestyle implies a wish to consume "positional goods", which are goods of fixed supply and which are consumed depending on one's position in the society (Newby, 1987, as cited in Phillips, 1998, p.126). More in detail, the goods could include a house with a spectacular view or some history, consumption of local homemade production, rural leisure activities, tourism, museums, heritage, and access to historical centers and markets. To add, the lifestyle preference could also imply a willingness to get involved in the local communities and institutions, such as the church, the school, and NGOs. Even though such activities are available also in the cities, they are regarded to be more attractive in the rural context due to the size and strength of the local community (Phillips, 1993).

A derivative of rural gentrification is the amenity migration: rural gentrification backed by the reasoning of willingness to be closer to the nature or "the movement of people based on the draw of natural and/or cultural amenities" (Abrams & Gosnell,

2011, p.305). Increased life quality, being close to nature, environmental quality, recreation, and escapism are the main motivators for amenity migration, leaving the importance of economic motivations aside (Hull & Kendra, 2005).

After exploring both of the concepts, we adopt the idea of evaluating the significance of housing availability, welcoming and friendly community, opportunity to get involved into community activities, availability of culture and entertainment opportunities, and uniqueness of the place (e.g., heritage, historical centers) from the theory of rural gentrification. The factors related to amenity migration - scenery and natural amenities, outdoor activities are included in the research framework as well.

2.2.4 Factors encouraging high-skilled migration

Florida (2003) asserts that the future economic development of a particular place will depend on the human capital that is attracted to that place for living and working. However, not any type of human capital could contribute to the economic development of an area. In his research Florida (2003) focuses on the economic performance delivered by the creative class. This particular group of human capital is composed of highly-educated people which goes in line with the definition of high-skilled migrants applied in our research. The creative class consists of: 1) super-creative core being people that “create meaningful new forms” (p. 8), e.g., scientists, engineers, architects, professors, business leaders, and others; 2) creative professionals that are engaged in creative problem-solving yielding innovative solutions for problems, e.g., financial sector, business management, and health-care sector employees (Florida, 2003). As discussed before, these high-skilled people can nudge firms with the need for talent to locate their operations in the area. However, they come with three specific requirements that a place should possess for it to become a creative center: 1) tolerance - openness and inclusiveness of different races, ethnicities and life choices, which creates a mix of different influences that are highly valued by the creative class; 2) talent - people having Bachelor’s degree and higher; 3) technology - an ecosystem of innovation and high-technology (Florida, 2003).

Next to the three pillars of a creative center, Florida (2003) argues that the creative centers are also described by having a degree of uniqueness and authenticity: historic blocks, specific cultural occurrences, a mix of the creative community and the original inhabitants (e.g., “bag ladies”, old people), and places offering authentic experience (e.g., alternative stores rather than the chain ones). Moreover, the creative

people are interested in engaging cultural activities being available for them: for example, music and performance venues, authentic art galleries. They are attracted by recreation activities that encourage communication, such as vibrant cafes, sidewalk musicians, etc. What is more, the creative ones desire to participate in outdoor activities, e.g. jogging, cycling and some more extreme activities as snowboarding, trail running. At the same time, Florida (2002) highlights that there is no unique strategy that would suit every member of the creative class. The needs and factors that attract them can differ depending on the age, ethnicity and marital status.

As it is of the primary interest to explore the factors that have attracted people with high economic potential to the SUAs, the factors important for high-skilled migrants are included in the research framework. While cultural activities, entertainment opportunities, outdoor activities, and uniqueness and authenticity were already discussed, we now add tolerance, technology and talent to the framework.

2.2.5 Perceptions of the rural areas and place branding

As mentioned before, Lee (1966) argues that in addition to pull factors one's perceptions of those factors can also play a significant role in the migration decision-making process. According to Van Dam, Heins & Elbersen (2002), individuals can have different perceptions of the rural, as there are many forces forming the perception. For example, people who have lived in the countryside or have visited often will have more positive perceptions than people who have little or no relation to rural life. Thus, familiarity with the ruralism is one of the factors that shapes the perceptions of the countryside and we include it in our research.

Another shaper of personal perceptions is characteristics of households (Appendix A). For example, while in Rudzitis (1999) only one third of the respondents said that safety had been a relevant factor to consider when moving, families with children assess the safety to be one of the most important factors to move to the rural area (Valentine, 1997, as cited in Van Dam, Heins & Elbersen, 2002, p. 463). Therefore, it can be concluded that the relevance of safety to some extent depends on the type of household surveyed. To examine this assertion, we include the safety factor in our research framework.

According to Zenker (2009), perceptions can also be shaped by marketing efforts. Zenker (2009) claims that more and more cities apply place marketing and city branding to advertise the unique value of a place and represent it in a way so that the

potential visitors would be conscious about the unique value proposition that this place offers (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993, as cited in Zenker, 2009). Following from that, another factor influencing the choice of migration destination could be city branding: how well the values promoted by each of the SUAs go in line with beliefs and preferences of possible migrants. Taking that into consideration, we establish the identity of an SUA as a factor relevant to the migrant decision-making process.

2.3 Framework

In the previous section, we presented a detailed review of the factors affecting internal migrants' decision of the destination area. All the information gathered in the literature review is now compiled in a framework in which all the relevant factors are divided into four themes: 1) Employment; 2) Availability of services and infrastructure; 3) Regional characteristics; 4) Personal factors. Under each of the themes several more detailed aspects that have been proven to influence the decision of the destination area are presented.

Nr.	Groups of factors	Key factors relevant to internal migrants` attraction
1.	Employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Opportunity for safe, long-term, full time and well-paid employment ● Family member employment ● Changes in the level of income ● Business environment
2.	Availability of services and infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Housing ● Educational institutions ● Entertainment opportunities (cafes, performance venues, bars) ● Outdoor activities ● Cultural activities
3.	Regional characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Scenery, natural amenities ● Clear SUA identity ● Opportunity to involve in creating the future of the SUA ● An open social climate / Welcoming community ● Talent ● Tolerance ● Technology ● Safety ● Uniqueness and authenticity
4.	Personal factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Familiarity with the place ● Family connections

Table 1 Framework of factors influencing the choice of internal migrants of the destination area. Source: Created by the authors using the articles discussed in the literature review.

2.4 Migration enhancing activities implemented by municipalities

2.4.1 Activities for internal migrant attraction

In order to balance the regional inequality among urban and peripheral areas of a country and ensure sustainable development of the SUAs, municipalities have to find ways to attract young and educated people to move to the SUAs. An area abundant of economically active and young people encourages the creation of businesses, thus job opportunities, increased tax revenue, participation in boards of local institutions as well as the creation of children, which then contributes to reversing the negative tendency of population loss (Kumar, 2018).

While SUAs are often highly motivated and full of energy to attract inhabitants and develop the economy, research shows they often lack the understanding of their target audiences, as well as strengths and weaknesses that should be the guide in choosing the development direction (Haque, 2001). In line with that, Kumar (2018) argues that to be able to align the developmental activities accordingly municipalities have to start with understanding its target audience.

Meanwhile, there are several activities that can help in attracting internal migrants for any SUA. According to Kumar (2018), one of such attractions is the ease of acquiring or starting a business. As argued by Haque (2001), municipalities have to research how they can support the entrepreneurs by providing financial, managerial or technical assistance for the enterprise advancement. Some activities include providing financial support through low-interest rate loan programs; creation of technology parks with access to innovative technologies and others. On a different note, Robertson (2001) states that small town attractiveness is induced by a compilation of smaller activities, not big-scale instant solutions. These activities include little design, organizational, economic advancements in the area, which result in a well-developed, good quality area for living. Haque (2001) argues that such activities include renovation of the downtown as it makes the local community proud and serves as a symbol of the good life in the area; encouraging cooperation of the local community and communicating the uniqueness of the area.

2.4.2 Activities for high-skilled internal migrant attraction

According to Kefela (2010), in recent decades, knowledge has been growing in importance as a value creation mean. This goes in line with the claim of Florida (2003) and UN (2008) that knowledge and creativity of the workforce attracted to a place are becoming the main determinants of the territorial development. Knowing that, a lot of small and medium-sized urban areas around the world have implemented creative-based strategies which are claimed to be successful in attracting highly skilled workforce (Selada, Vilhena Da Cunha & Tomaz, 2012).

After analyzing a vast amount of creative-based strategies in small and medium-sized cities, Selada et al. (2012) indicated four main factors that contribute to the success of creative-based strategies. The first factor that plays a crucial role in facilitating change and implementing new vision is leadership. To create an environment where ideas can flourish and where creative-based strategies are promoted, it is important that the creative activity is not constrained by the institutional bureaucracy. Thus, local leaders have to be open to new initiatives, ready to implement institutional change, as well as be future-oriented and proactive.

Secondly, the involvement of citizens in the development of an area is also seen as a critical component of a successful creative-based strategy (Selada et al., 2012). Thus, it is important to create conditions where citizens can meet, express their opinions and contribute to the process of shaping the future of a place.

Thirdly, SUAs can derive advantage by exploiting different kind of amenities already present in that place, including natural and built environment (architecture, public places, nature etc.), the social environment of the place (the *genus loci* implied by intangible heritage), business climate and cultural infrastructure (Selada et al., 2012). A rather exceptional example in this sense is a small city in Portugal called Serpa, which has been continuously exploiting its local traditional music called Cante Alentejano to make the place more attractive. Together with other artistic expressions, this is a factor that attracts a certain group of highly skilled workers to this place.

Finally, Selada et al. (2012) stress that it is of high importance to create an environment where the specific needs of the highly skilled are satisfied. It involves building flexible and low-cost creative places, as well as programs facilitating the collaboration of the highly skilled ones. One of the practices applied by towns with an industrial past could be to renovate the abandoned factories and turn them into either living or working spaces.

3. Small Urban Areas

3.1 Choice of SUAs included in the sample

According to SEHRI of VUAS et al. (2015), there are 21 SUAs in Latvia. In our research, the emphasis is put on three specific SUAs: Cesis, Kuldiga, and Preili.

The reasons why the three certain SUAs are chosen for the research are the following. Firstly, we looked for SUAs that are located outside the agglomeration of the capital city Riga. That implies that the share of the population commuting to Riga daily for work is under 5 to 15% of the town's population. Moreover, the total amount of journeys of the town's inhabitants to Riga per year does not exceed 40 to 75 (Department of Human Geography, Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences at the University of Latvia [DHG FGES at the UL], 2017). Even though the flow of new inhabitants to SUAs located in Riga agglomeration is substantial, this movement is mostly present because of the closeness of the capital city, rather than because of the attractiveness of the opportunities in a particular SUA. The closeness of Riga allows to study or work there while living in a calmer and quieter place (DHG FGES at the UL, 2017). To ensure that the concept of counterurbanization is explored, SUAs that are located outside the agglomeration of the capital city had to be chosen.

Secondly, each of the SUAs is placed in a different cultural region of Latvia. Thus, the differences in factors affecting migration decision-making process that arise from cultural and geographical preferences are captured.

Thirdly, cases were chosen based on the opportunity to learn. If looking at the media coverage and statistical data in recent years, Cesis has shown superior performance in internal migrants' attraction (CSBL, 2018; Semane, 2018). Thus, taking Cesis as the good example and comparing it with SUAs showing not that good performance, an opportunity to distinguish the success factors of Cesis is ensured.

3.2 Population size and migration flows in SUAs

All three SUAs in our sample have experienced population decline over the period of 2011-2018 (Appendix B). Population decline was the most significant in Preili (-13.5%), it was followed by Kuldiga (-11.3%) and Cesis (-11.2%). However, a positive tendency can be seen in the data of the last two years, as the rate of population shrinkage has decreased or at least stayed unchanged in all of the three SUAs. Overall, there are two main factors that contribute to the negative tendency in the population size

of SUAs - demographic situation and migration. However, if compared between the two factors, the effect of negative migration rate is more significant (ECL, 2015).

Over the period of 2011-2018, migration balance was negative in all of the three SUAs, meaning that more people left than moved to any of these SUAs (Appendix C). The most negative migration balance was for Kuldīga (-240), while Cēsis experienced the least negative migration balance (-193). What is more, the latest data also shows the superiority of Cēsis - migration balance for the year 2017 is the best for Cēsis and it is also the only one that is positive (83). The data statistically supports the information in media and approves that the effort of Cēsis municipality put in creating Cēsis a better place for living has paid off and resulted in a growing popularity of Cēsis as an internal migration destination (Luksa, 2017).

When looking at the areas of origin of internal migrants moving to SUAs, for all SUAs in our sample Riga is among the five most popular ones. Moreover, there is at least one republican city among the five most popular original areas of settlement for in-migrants of all SUAs (Appendix D).

Overall, even though migration balance for two out of three SUAs still remain negative, a positive tendency of a growing number of in-migrants during the latest years can be observed (Appendix C). Moreover, quite a significant part of in-migrants move to SUAs from the republican cities, indicating that, to some level, the process of counterurbanization can also be observed in Latvia.

4. Methodology

The summary of the factors in the literature indicated as important in the process of choosing destination area (Table 1) served as the basis for the structure of empirical research: semi-structured in-depth interviews with high-skilled internal migrants and representatives of the destination municipalities. When interviewing internal migrants, the framework helped to determine whether the factors mentioned in the literature are indeed important for high-skilled internal migrants in Latvia. During the interviews with municipality representatives, the framework allowed to determine what activities municipalities had implemented to attract internal high-skilled migrants.

4.1 Research design

To determine the factors that high-skilled internal migrants consider when moving from republican cities to SUAs, qualitative multiple case study design was employed.

The reasoning for the choice of this particular research design is as follows. Firstly, a qualitative approach was chosen as it is the most appropriate to determine what meaning people assign to some particular problem or situation (Creswell, 2014). As the main aim of the research is to understand the reasons behind the location choice, the qualitative study allowed to explore this issue the best. Secondly, case study design is applicable when the research is focused on a specific entity for which the setting has to be examined in-depth (Bryman, 2012). As the three different SUAs were chosen due to the opportunity to learn, it was important to explore the unique aspects of each SUA's migrant decision-making process as well as the municipality activities in the areas. Thirdly, multiple cases explored and then considered in an interconnected manner can be applied to acquire a broader understanding of a certain issue (Stake, 1995). Insights from different SUAs in terms of geographical location and municipality specifics, allowed us to develop a broader understanding of counterurbanization in Latvia.

However, one has to take into account that the case study approach implies that we looked at several specific cases (SUAs) and interviewed specifically chosen people. Thus, the sample is not representative of the whole population. Even though some common themes could arise among the motivations for moving to SUAs, there is no

guarantee that all the possible reasons are covered. Consequently, results obtained by case study method cannot be generalized.

4.2 Data collection

Primary data was acquired by conducting in-depth semi-structured interviews with [1] high-skilled internal migrants and [2] municipality representatives of all three SUAs. Sixteen interviews were conducted with internal migrants - four in Preili, five in Kuldiga and six in Cesis (Appendix E). Such number of interviews was chosen following the advice of Baker and Edwards (2012) that a researcher should keep interviewing as long as the respondents give different answers. After conducting all the interviews with internal migrants in each of the SUAs, one representative in the municipality was interviewed.

4.2.1 Interviews with internal high-skilled migrants

To develop a structured guide for the interviews with high-skilled internal migrants (Appendix F), the framework of factors influencing the decision of the destination area (Table 1) was applied. First of all, interviewees were asked an open-ended question of why they moved to a particular SUA. Afterward, attitudes toward other factors not initially mentioned by the internal migrant but in the literature perceived as important were explored. That way it was possible to discover places for improvement that municipalities could address to become a more attractive destination.

There were several characteristics that internal migrants had to possess to qualify for the interviews. First of all, to ensure that the concept of counterurbanization is explored, migrants had to have moved to the SUA from a republican city. Secondly, as the broader aim of the paper is to help to improve the economic development of SUAs, high-skilled internal migrants were interviewed. Thirdly, migrants had to have moved to a particular SUA during the last five years. Each of the municipalities of SUAs had created a sustainable development plan covering the period from 2013 to 2030 (Appendix G). Maintaining the current number of inhabitants or increasing it is one of the objectives pointed out in each of the municipalities' development plans (Cesis municipality, 2015; Kuldiga municipality, 2013; Preili municipality, 2013). By choosing internal migrants relocated themselves during the last five years, the changes municipalities had implemented since the creation of sustainable development plans were taken into consideration.

The interviewees were reached by applying the method of purposive sampling that is intended to select sample elements with specific experience and knowledge in relation to the research question (Check & Schutt, 2012). To find the contact information of suitable interviewees, municipality representatives and community activists being aware of people from other towns entering their SUA were approached.

Considering the nature of the purposive sampling method, there are some drawbacks that we are aware of. First of all, this sample selection method implies that the sample is not random or representative (Sharma, 2017). However, considering that the aim of the paper is to gather qualitative data rather than prove some phenomenon statistically, non-randomness is not an obstacle. Secondly, taking into account that in the process of sample creation the researcher itself is highly involved, this sampling method is exposed to researcher bias (Sharma, 2017). This bias is especially pronounced if the sample selection is based on thoughtless researcher judgment. To avoid the bias, before selecting respondents, the characteristics that an individual should possess to be suitable for the interviews were clearly defined. It helped us to choose the respondents based on the need, rather than ill-advised judgment.

4.2.2 Interviews with representatives of municipalities

The interview structure for municipality representatives (Appendix G) was also based on the framework of factors relevant to the high-skilled internal migrants (Table 1). In the beginning, we asked the representatives what had been the activities implemented regarding each of the factors included in the framework. In addition, the interviews were enriched with details from the municipality development plans. We outlined the development strategies related to the framework factors and asked what the progress had been in achieving the stated goals.

Municipality representatives with the following profile were interviewed: firstly, being informed about the content of the SUA development plan; secondly, being aware of the current progress in fulfilling the development plan; thirdly, being competent in talking about the municipality intentions (if any) in terms of attracting internal migrants. Municipalities themselves recommended those who are the most knowledgeable.

4.3 Data analysis

Before the fieldwork, we developed a “start list” of codes based on our research questions and prior findings in the literature regarding our topic. Even though it is true

that the codes were changed and adjusted during the fieldwork, the “start list” ensured that the focus was not lost when coding the interviews (Miles, 1994).

During the interviews, notes were made to capture both, the main ideas and the details of the emotional atmosphere of the interview. The interviews were recorded (with the permission of the interviewees) to secure that all the information is available for listening repeatedly for the analysis.

The analysis of the data collected proceeded as follows: at first, the interview recordings were listened to. During the process: firstly, themes emerging under each of the predetermined codes were indicated; secondly, quotes showing some interesting angles were gathered; thirdly, new themes not explored in the literature review were searched for. Afterward, the factors relevant to the high-skilled internal migrants interviewed were compared to the ones included in the literature review. Besides that, the activities executed by the municipalities were assessed and also merged with the literature. The similarities, differences, and contradictions were then discussed both in terms of high-skilled migrant and municipality considerations.

5. Analysis and discussion

5.1 Internal migrants

5.1.1 Common patterns

During the interviews, some common themes emerged in all SUAs among the factors that had been important for high-skilled internal migrants when choosing the destination area. Firstly, in all SUAs interviewees mentioned the closeness of nature as one of the factors that had influenced their decision. This goes in line with the concept of amenity migration, which implies that the urban-rural movement is initiated due to the willingness to be closer to nature (Abrams & Gosnell, 2011). The interviewees appreciate the closeness from two perspectives. First of all, the possibility to get close to nature in a few minutes serves as a recreational tool. Interviewees revealed that nature charges them up, helps to find inner peace and be in harmony with themselves:

“It [nature] has always been important to me [...]. It helps to connect to a world in which all the problems we encounter daily become insignificant in some way.” (C4, February 25, 2019)

Besides the fact that being close to nature just feels good, interviewees mentioned that the natural amenities in SUAs are better for doing sports and encourages to live a more active life. This finding strengthens the theme found by Rudzitis (1991) who revealed that the availability of outdoor activities is among the top five most important factors drawing his survey respondents to the rural areas. Our interviewees emphasized that the air is fresher, and it is easier to get to places with no cars around:

“When I went for a run in Riga (I lived in the center for the last few years) - I am running and it is hard because the air is polluted. When I go for a run in Preili - I have my own tracks in the forest and the park, just two minutes and I am in a nice place with no or few cars.” (P4, January 31, 2019)

What is more, similarly as in Rudzitis (1991) research, pace of life was another factor that dominated during the interviews. Even though this factor was primarily important only for a small portion of interviewees, everyone agreed that the pace of life has become much slower after the movement. Interviewees highlighted that the fact of everything being within easy reach helps to avoid the rush. The proximity aspect was especially appreciated by interviewees with children, highlighting the differences in the decision-making process of new families (Baily et al., 2004). One of the mothers told:

“Families with children in Riga understand very well what it means to carry a child from one extracurricular activity to another - to manage that, you have to be a full-time driver.” (C1, February 23, 2019)

Moreover, our interviewees confirmed the finding of Valentine (1997) that in the decision-making process of families with children the safety aspect plays an important role (as cited in Van Dam, Heins & Elbersen, 2002, p. 463). Irrespective of the SUA, interviewees with children revealed that it was important for them to ensure a safe environment for their children. Parents said that, in contrast to Riga, they are not afraid to let their children to play outside or to go to extracurricular activities alone:

“The level of security is incomparable. Not even because there are a lot of policemen here - but rather because everything is so small and so open. There is a feeling that everything is transparent!” (C3, February 23, 2019)

When asked about other factors, which were identified as pull factors in the literature, but were not initially touched upon by the interviewees, it turned out that some of those had even hindered rather than encouraged the movement. In all three SUAs the housing and employment were mentioned as obstacles.

Even though the early definition of rural gentrification state that the availability of cheaper housing is the cause of this movement (Little, 1987, as cited in Phillips, 1993, p.127), this was confirmed by only one of our interviewees. In all three SUAs, a lack of available living space was identified. Thus, even though it might be true that the housing is cheaper there (as pointed out by our interviewees in Preili and Kuldiga), it is extremely hard to find one in which to invest. Some interviewees revealed that they struggled for a significant time before finding where to live, while for others it was luck that they had acquaintances in the destination area who could help with the search of housing. One of the interviewees in Preili told:

“You have to be a local or have acquaintances to find a living space. Someone from another town may not even look at Preili because there is no place to live. Basically, I guess it [the availability of living space] is the basis that can move the “balance scale” in favor of the decision to move to Preili. Everything else settles down in the course of time.” (P3, January 28, 2019)

Regarding the employment, the situations described by our interviewees confirmed that the problems of regional inequality are indeed present in the SUAs under research (Rutkovska, 2018). Interviewees agreed that there is a lack of solid employment opportunities in the SUAs - wages are lower, while the growth opportunities are limited. In the case of Kuldiga, an interviewee revealed:

“If you have done something more than being a sales assistant... You don’t get any proper job openings here, you just don’t!” (K1, February 10, 2019)

In terms of the role the employment played in the decision-making process, two main patterns emerged. First, there were interviewees who moved to a particular SUA only when they knew that they will have a job there. In this sense, as noted by the interviewees and DIBP (2014), employment played a significant role in the decision-making process. However, taking into account the lack of solid vacancies, employment did not act as a pull factor. Rather, it was a precondition that had to be fulfilled in order to bring other significant pull factors in effect and to allow the move to take place. Secondly, there was a group of interviewees who had made a way to earn money themselves. Those were the self-employed interviewees: freelancers or people who had built their own business in the SUA. The existence of this group goes in line with the findings of Hoey (2006) who found that a significant number of migrants had founded their own enterprises at the destination area, emphasizing the importance of ensuring a supportive business environment there.

In terms of the income level, self-employed interviewees revealed that for them the pay does not depend on their living place. Others told that the income level has decreased after moving to SUAs. However, either the level of expenses had also decreased or other amenities that the small-town life offers offset the decrease in income. Thus, the quality of life for them has not deteriorated. None of the interviewees emphasized the economic motivation as something that made them move. This finding strengthens the evidence found by Rudzitis (1991) that the urban-rural movement cannot be described by the traditional migration theories, which imply that the destination providing the highest income is chosen.

There were also factors that none of the internal migrants mentioned as important when choosing the destination area: tolerance, technology, welcoming community, clear SUA identity. The importance of the tolerance and technology factor was denied by all the interviewees. These findings contradict Florida’s (2003) assertion that a place has to possess these two factors to attract the highly-educated migrants. However, it could be supported by Florida (2002) claiming that the ethnicity can induce differences among the preferences of the creative class.

The situation was different with the other unimportant factors - welcoming community, clear SUA identity. Although none of those were critical in the decision-making process, contrasting the findings of several authors (Kotler, Haider, & Rein, as

cited in Zenker, 2009; Phillips, 1993), interviewees mentioned those as something that they perceived as a bonus when moving or something that they have started to appreciate after the movement.

5.1.2 Disparities

Even though there were quite a lot of commonalities among factors highlighted as important during the migration decision-making process, some distinctive patterns emerged in each of the SUAs. The following three sections present the discrepancies and peculiarities outlined by the interviewees in each of the SUAs.

5.1.2.1 Preili

Compared to other SUAs, three discrepancies were revealed by the internal migrants in Preili. First of all, all four interviewees had born in Preili and spent their childhood there. Following that, their decision to choose Preili as a destination area was strongly influenced by personal perceptions. Approving the importance of familiarity factor highlighted by Van Dam, Heins & Elbersen (2002), interviewees revealed that as they had spent their childhood there, they have an emotional bond with the place:

“[...] native place - this is the most important factor. Here are the memories; I have experienced positive events here and at the emotional level this region associates with something positive.” (P4, January 28, 2019)

Secondly, the closeness of family, thus, the fact that interviewee families live in Preili or somewhere close, was also mentioned as a decisive factor. To start, the closeness of family was appreciated due to the fact that it is possible for everyone within the family to help each other on a daily basis. Thus, our interviewees confirmed the importance of family support in the destination area emphasized by Lee & Sugiura (2018) and DIBP (2014). Other than that, approving the findings of Baily et al. (2004), this factor was also highlighted due to childcare considerations:

“In fact, I look more in perspective. When I have children - I don't want to be unable to go to a single event just because I don't have any relatives around.” (P2, January 26, 2019)

The third commonality concerns the factor, which, in contrast to the literature, was described as irrelevant by the interviewees. All four of them stressed that the availability of entertainment or cultural opportunities certainly was not something that attracted them to Preili, as there is a lack of that kind of opportunities there. They revealed that it is not something that bothers them significantly, highlighting a

distinction compared to the high-skilled migrants or creative class described by Florida (2003). They emphasized that the closeness of nature often offsets the lack of entertainment opportunities as they prefer to relax in the nature:

"[...] I better choose to go with my husband or a couple of friends to the lake or walk through the forest with my parents, and then sometimes go to some party, event. For me sitting at home or just going to cafes or theatre, well... [...]. Well, I guess it just doesn't give the feeling of relaxation." (P2, January 26, 2019)

5.1.2.2 Kuldiga

Differently from the two other cases, for the majority of migrants, Kuldiga was a destination choice due to housing considerations. When K5's family acknowledged the need to move to a bigger apartment, they realized that the housing prices in Riga are cosmic; thus, Kuldiga was a chance to satisfy the need for a new apartment in a cheaper way. That approves the primary definition of the rural gentrification still being relevant: one of the reasons for SUAs' attractiveness is the opportunity to acquire a property cheaper than in the big cities (Little, 1987, as cited in Phillips, 1993, p. 127). However, for other interviewees, the housing choice was related to the opportunity to inhabit an existing family property, which highlights another important implication of family connections in a destination (Lee & Sugiura, 2018).

Another peculiarity of Kuldiga indicated by the interviewees was the importance of the opportunity to shape the future of the town. For K4 the opportunity to get involved was one of the main reasons to choose Kuldiga as the destination. Be it the creation of a senior academy, renovation of the private property or opening cafes and restaurants, Phillips (1993) has argued that a possibility to get involved in the activities of the local community serves as an attraction for the migrants with preferences for a certain lifestyle. From the personal insights, K4 judges that the community is in fact actively involving in shaping the future of the town. He says the activity is induced by the open-minded and development-oriented municipality representatives and mayor:

"The behavior of the local society is a reflection of its leaders' activities!" (K4, February 14, 2019)

Contrary to K4, interviewees involved in entrepreneurship had started to appreciate the activity of the municipality after arriving. K1 and K5 were proactively approached by the representatives of Kuldiga business incubator with an encouragement to apply for the incubator's support to start a business. According to Hoey (2006),

migrants tend to change their area of occupation after moving with an aim to live in line with one's full potential. Taking into account that both, K1 and K5, had considered starting a business in Kuldiga at some point, it could be argued that by the proactive encouragement the business incubator was one of the initiators for the interviewees to actually start the entrepreneurship. As a result of these efforts, a chocolate production business was started by K5 and a bakery was opened by K1 in Kuldiga.

Besides the activity of the local community, several interviewees highlighted the special atmosphere of the town, which makes living in the area even more pleasant. That goes in line with the findings of Florida (2003), which stated that a spark of authenticity and uniqueness of an area is seen as a benefit in the eyes of high-skilled migrants. K5 said the historical vibe of the town makes you feel as a part of history. The slogan of the town goes perfectly in line with the feelings:

"The slogan of Kuldiga is "A town with a soul". But I don't mention it just because it is the official slogan... I really have this feeling that the town is breathing, it is alive and has a history in it." (K1, February 10, 2019)

5.1.2.3 Cesis

In comparison with Preili and Kuldiga, Cesis was the only place in which migrants mentioned the quality and accessibility of education among the most important factors in their decision-making. Bailey et al. (2004) stated that the willingness of parents to ensure the best educational possibilities for their children can trigger even long-distance migration. This finding was approved in our sample: for two interviewees the main reason to move to Cesis was the Cesis New Primary School. This school uses alternative education methods and children are the center of the education process:

"The thing I was looking for was someone who thinks about my child as a person, as an individual, not as one of 30 students in a mega-school with mega-class." (C3, February 23, 2019)

In addition to the quality of education, the uniqueness of the pervading atmosphere in the place is an overarching characteristic of Cesis, which was mentioned by all the migrants as important in the decision-making process. Similarly as in Kuldiga, the one-of-a-kind atmosphere of the place goes in line with Florida's (2003) findings of high-skilled people being drawn towards places that are authentic and unique. The unique feeling in Cesis is described from different perspectives. Firstly, the town has a historically romantic atmosphere, a special "sense of place":

“When you understand that the town has lived for 800 years, such a long time, it makes you feel safe, that everything is going to be alright! We have experienced problems - we will get through them! It is what Cesis can be built on. The soil is more prepared here - you put in the seed and things just happen better.” (C1, February 23, 2019)

The special atmosphere is embodied by the historical streets and architecture. These characteristics of Cesis make the town a positional good attracting migrants willing to live the idyllic lifestyle (Phillips, 1998). The second interpretation of the special atmosphere lies in the Latvianness of Cesis. None of the interviewees consider themselves nationalists; however, they revealed it is enjoyable to live in an environment where Latvian is overwhelmingly the main language, where it is spoken literary and correctly, and where people are proud of their nationality.

Another factor that emerged during the interviews was the availability and quality of cultural events. Some of the interviewees revealed that this factor was crucial in the decision-making process, while all of them claimed to appreciate the rich cultural life now when living in Cesis. As claimed by Florida (2003), rich cultural experiences are essential in the lives of high-skilled people; thus, the presence of Vidzeme concert hall and other events taking place in Cesis adds an aspect in terms of which Cesis complies with the definition of a creative center. Most of the interviewees are frequent visitors of Vidzeme concert hall “Cesis”. C3 appreciates the great artists performing there and the lower ticket prices of the events compared to Riga. C2 says the atmosphere of the events of Vidzeme concert hall is special:

“Here you can enjoy the events in a more authentic way, in a less artificial way. In Jurmala you could feel the fakeness, it was not natural and clean, someone just had paid the money [for the artist]... Here it happens in a pleasant way.” (C2, February 25, 2019)

Moreover, compared to other SUAs, Cesis’ interviewees highlighted the importance of talented and like-minded people around them. Some of the interviewees had thought about the presence of such people already before moving. C1’s acquaintances were living in Cesis before him, and it encouraged him to think that there will be some like-minded people around. C3 and C4 assumed that the existence and popularity of Cesis New Primary school implied the presence of parents with similar mindsets in Cesis. While C5 and C6 expected less social life at the beginning due to not knowing any people there, they rapidly formed connections by spending time in a local bar. According to Florida (2003), the abundance of people representing different

professional areas and mindsets, and the presence of vibrant places to meet enlarges the potential of a place to become a creative center attractive for the creative class.

5.2 Municipalities

5.2.1 Activities implemented for internal migrant attraction

When asked about activities implemented to attract internal migrants, municipalities provided similar views. First of all, similarly as outlined by Kumar (2018), municipalities see entrepreneurship as important in terms of internal migrant attraction. However, municipalities explain the importance through the fact that new enterprises will enlarge the number of vacancies in the region; thus, more employment opportunities will be available to attract more high-skilled migrants. Secondly, municipalities invest in the development of the overall environment in the SUA. Complying with the idea proposed by Robertson (2001), municipalities execute multiple separate activities that contribute to the creation of a more attractive environment. Besides that, in all the SUAs, some activities in line with creative-based strategies were spotted. Either executing these strategies consciously or not, in this way municipalities could encourage high-skilled migrant attraction.

Even though the overarching purposes are similar, the specific activities for internal migrant attraction executed by each of the SUAs differ. In the following section, the specific activities implemented by each of the SUAs are discussed.

5.2.1.1 Preili

In contrast to Cesis and Kuldiga, which have already defined their identities and started to enforce their future vision, Preili municipality revealed that they are just starting to shape their identity. Preili has chosen to build its uniqueness around the historical heritage of the Preili park. This goes in line with Selada et al. (2012) recommending exploiting the existing amenities to nurture the uniqueness of the place. Last year a lot of effort was put into creating a development plan for the complex of Preili manor and park to find the things that could make the place different from similar objects in other towns.

Preili municipality anticipates that this complex could perform two functions. Firstly, it will provide a place for entertainment for Preili inhabitants with bathing areas, active recreation zone, cafe, BMX track. All these activities contribute to developing the

overall environment in Preili, outlined as an important aspect in migrant attraction by Robertson (2001). Secondly, Preili municipality anticipates that it could become a tourism object (renovated castle, a chapel with a singing guide, etc.). As a result, it could facilitate the need for service businesses and encourage entrepreneurship, which, as said by Kumar (2018), could help to attract more internal migrants.

Besides the development of the park, Preili municipality has invested a lot in creating the SUA children-friendly. However, in contrast to Cesis and Kuldiga, there is a lack of cultural activities and entertainment opportunities available for adults. Several authors have highlighted the importance of these factors in the decision-making process of internal migrants (Florida, 2002; Rose, 1989, as cited in Phillips, 1993, p. 126). The importance was also recognized by the municipality representative who emphasized that this problem should be solved to facilitate the migration flows to Preili. Recently the process of developing a health complex with a pool has started, and Preili municipality aspires that this complex could enrich the lives of the middle generation.

5.2.1.2 Kuldiga

Kuldiga municipality has acknowledged that the regional specifics do not make the place suitable for big factories and production. Their advantage is the historical heritage of the town, which then the municipality exploits in different ways to encourage the flows of internal migrants.

Firstly, due to the historical heritage of the town, the municipality is attractive to tourists. That is why Kuldiga municipality perceives hospitality and catering industries as the main areas for entrepreneurship in the area. To attract clients for these industries and, thus, encourage entrepreneurship, Kuldiga municipality invests a lot in the maintenance of the old town as it is considered to be one of the main drivers of tourism. A special housing renovation policy is made for the area, providing an example of how to exploit the existing amenities to nurture the uniqueness of a place (Selada et al., 2011). The policy provides guidelines and financial support to the private housing owners with an aim to preserve the architectonic heritage of the old town. What is more, the municipality tries to ensure clientele for the tourism industry during the low season. They organize different events, craft markets and a restaurant week to attract more clients for the enterprises. This is another way how the municipality supports the local entrepreneurs, which is exactly what Haque (2001) suggests doing to encourage entrepreneurship in an area.

Additionally, the municipality gathers feedback from the entrepreneurs with regards to the activities and events the municipality organizes. Afterward the efforts are adjusted in line with the entrepreneurs' recommendations. This participative approach is another aspect that, according to Selada et al. (2012), can strengthen the success of the migrant attraction.

However, by implementing activities in the old town, Kuldiga municipality tries to attract not only tourists but also the creative class. As revealed by the municipality representative, Kuldiga aspires to become a creative cluster. To fulfill their vision, in addition to exploiting the existing amenities, Kuldiga municipality plans to develop facilities designed to meet the needs of the creative class, which is another factor that has proved to facilitate high-skilled internal migrant attraction (Selada et al., 2012). It is planned to develop a creative center in an old surgery complex and technological center for the local vocational school in another historical part of a hospital. All these activities go in line with the preconditions for establishing a creative center defined by Florida (2003) and, thus, strengthen Kuldiga's success in becoming the creative class cluster.

5.2.1.3 Cesis

Cesis municipality emphasized that none of their activities are specifically designed to attract new inhabitants. Their strategy is seemingly simple: every activity they implement has to nurture the vision "Cesis - an excellent place for living". This approach goes in line with the one outlined by Robertson (2001): it is important to invest in the development of the overall environment. However, Cesis municipality emphasized that these activities are aimed at improving the lives of different inhabitant profiles. An example is the concert hall in Cesis: initially, the locals were concerned that its main target audience would be sophisticated art lovers. However, the municipality has ensured the content suits the needs of various audiences.

In terms of support for entrepreneurship, one way Cesis is encouraging it is the following: in 2016 a co-working place and creative industry studio *Skola6* was opened in a historic school building. It serves as a meeting point for freelancers, as well as a production area for small-scale designers, artists, and others. Having an accessible place for creative working, and, even more, creating it in an authentic building highlights Cesis' efforts for high-skilled migrant attraction aligning with recommendations of Selada et al. (2012). Currently, all the working places in *Skola6* are already occupied and the municipality is looking for a new location to offer working space.

In terms of the creation of the sense of place, Cesis municipality emphasizes the need to inform the society about all the actions accomplished in the area. Haque (2001) agrees with the idea saying that communication of the uniqueness of a place helps in the attraction of citizens. Every small improvement made in Cesis is communicated in social media as “positive propaganda”. Whether it is as tiny as a new bench or as grand as an opening of a new sports center, the municipality thinks that spreading the word about all these events help in building a positive image of Cesis in the eyes of migrants choosing their destination and entrepreneurs looking for a place for their new business. The communication is carried out comprehensively by using three social media sites (Facebook, Twitter, and Draugiem.lv) to reach as wide audience as possible.

To decide what activities have to be prioritized, Cesis municipality uses the “participative” approach. Involving the citizens in the development of the area has been emphasized as important for citizen attraction in general (Haque, 2001), as well as in nurturing the creative-based high-skilled migrant attraction strategies (Selada et al., 2012). Even though the participative approach is also applied in other municipalities, the tool used by Cesis is unique: the municipality organizes local forums in each neighborhood of the town once in two years. The forum is a possibility for the locals to tell their concerns covering any topic related to the development of their living area to the municipality representatives directly. Afterward, the ideas gathered in the forums are discussed and part of those are included in the development plan.

5.2.2 The main challenges for all SUAs

The municipality activities described in the previous section are indeed a part of the strategies reported by the academics as important in terms of migrant attraction. However, there are some unresolved challenges that can reduce or even eliminate any effect of these strategies on migrant attraction. During the interviews, high-skilled internal migrants in all SUAs highlighted problems with employment and housing as the main obstacles that hinder flows of internal migrants to the SUAs. The municipality representatives interviewed were also aware of these problem areas. When asked about the solutions implemented, we found out that actions addressing these challenges differ among all three municipalities.

With regards to housing, Preili municipality revealed that a solution for the housing shortage is needed already now; however, they are not addressing it currently due to the unwillingness to distort the market. They guess the solution for this challenge

could be searched for in five to six years when the EU funding for the new planning period will be distributed. Meanwhile, Kuldīga and Cēsis municipalities are aiming to increase the apartment fund in the following years already. Kuldīga plans to either rent apartments from a private investor who has built a suitable property; or an institution led by the municipality, “Utility services of Kuldīga”, is going to build an apartment house. Besides similar considerations for building apartment houses, Cēsis municipality has created a platform in which they connect a person willing to rent a flat with a person who owns an apartment in the town. By acting as an intermediary, the municipality encourages the locals to rent out their property ensuring that the tenant will be reliable.

No specific themes with relation to migrant attraction and lack of housing were found in the literature; therefore, it is hard to evaluate the appropriateness of the activities executed. The lack of literature could be explained by the fact that the need for housing is the very basic need of a human being to be able to settle in a certain place; thus, it is more about the provision of basic infrastructure rather than migrant attraction.

The perception of the scope of the employment challenge differed among municipalities. Preiļi municipality revealed they considerably lack attractive job opportunities, but Kuldīga municipality stated that there are particular industries in which they lack professionals. Cēsis municipality claimed that job opportunities are not a problem and vacancies are available in various industries; however, internal migrants revealed that the wage level is considerably lower there if compared to Riga. While in general all the municipalities are addressing the employment considerations by encouraging entrepreneurship in each of the SUAs, the scope of activities differs in accordance with the municipality perceptions of the challenge. All the municipalities have a designated area for industrial development. These areas provide all the necessary utilities for production and welcome the entrepreneurs willing to build factories there. Preiļi rests heavily on the potential contribution of this area in workplace creation: they hope it will allow them to attract enterprises and create 75 new job opportunities. Meanwhile, as described in the previous section, Preiļi and Kuldīga are also trying to lure entrepreneurs in the areas by developing the tourism industry, which is supposed to encourage the creation of hotels and restaurants providing several workplaces in the area. Thus, Preiļi and Kuldīga focus on the creation of salaried vacancies. By developing the co-working places, Cēsis, however, puts more focus on attracting freelancers and small-scale creative entrepreneurs. That way, they support the

inhabitants willing to live in Cesis while maintaining their own desired income level regardless of wage level in the region.

5.3 Implications for the attraction of high-skilled internal migrants to SUAs

In the previous two sections, we have outlined the main results obtained during the interviews with high-skilled internal migrants and municipality representatives. Thus, answers to both research questions are provided. The following section is devoted to discuss the implications discovered when looking at the results in an interconnected manner. The aim of this section is to present the main findings in a way that could be helpful for municipalities when developing internal migrant attraction strategies.

During the interviews, a question of whether one would recommend their friends to move to a particular SUA was asked to all the interviewees. A common theme arose among the answers: interviewees revealed that before convincing anyone, they would think whether the small-town life as such is suitable for that particular person. It was emphasized that one should value calmness, healthiness, and familiarity to be able to appreciate the small-town life. Considering the claim of Haque (2001), these characteristics could serve as an identification of the audience that municipalities should target when developing tools for internal migrant attraction. However, slower pace of life, healthier environment, and smaller community is something that most of the SUAs can offer; it is not something that differentiates SUAs. Therefore, other factors that made the interviewees choose a particular SUA as a destination should be looked at.

After omitting the aspects serving just as a nice supplement for the destination area, three main factors triggering the movement to a particular SUA were detected - connection, uniqueness and authenticity, and presence of hubs. While discussing these three main factors, the emphasis is put on exploring what role municipalities can play in addressing these, and in that way influence the decision of a high-skilled migrant to choose their particular SUA as a destination area.

First of all, connection - emotional attachment to a place and closeness of family - in many cases prevailed as the most important pull factor. This factor facilitated the decision to move in two ways. Firstly, the connection per se was mentioned by the return migrants in Preili and Kuldiga as defining their choice to move back. In the case of Preili, this finding revealed that closeness of family and emotional connection with a place is something that can trigger high-skilled migration even when other factors mentioned in the literature as important are not satisfied (e.g. cultural activities,

entertainment opportunities, uniqueness and authenticity). Secondly, as cases in Cesis and Kuldīga showed, family is also a channel through which individuals can find out about life at a particular SUA. Interviewees revealed that after some time they had spent living in Cesis, their family members who initially were against the movement had changed their minds and decided to move closer to the family. These examples confirm that family connection is something that can make a person without previous links with the place to choose it as a destination area.

However, even though emotional connection and closeness of family in our research have emerged as being very influential factors, municipalities cannot directly address it. What municipalities can do and are already doing regarding this matter is to invest in the overall development of the SUA and make it a better place for living. This approach goes in line with Robertson's (2001) claim that municipalities should gradually build the unique sense of place. That way, the current inhabitants would become even more satisfied with life in the SUA, which, as a result of word of mouth, could encourage their family and friends to choose the SUA as a destination as well.

There are, however, factors that both were stated by the internal migrants as the most important pull factors and that municipalities can address. Uniqueness and authenticity were emphasized especially by the inhabitants of Kuldīga and Cesis. This factor was mentioned with regards to the historical heritage - architecture and the unique atmosphere of the places. Even though historical heritage as such is not something that the municipalities can create, they can, as argued by Selada et al. (2012), adjust their policies to preserve and sustain it. Preservation of the uniqueness induces pride in the citizens as well as nurtures the sense of place (Haque, 2001; Robertson, 2001). An example could be the case of Kuldīga where a special housing renovation policy is in place: when renovating houses in the old town one has to maintain the original architectonic features.

While the sense of history in an SUA is highly appreciated by the high-skilled migrants, they are also interested in the activities, platforms, and institutions present in the destination area. Cases in this research have proved that a certain hub present in the SUA can attract a specific audience of high-skilled migrants. For example, as revealed by the Cesis municipality representative, Cesis New School - an alternative educational institution - has been the main reason to move to Cesis for at least 50 families, two representatives of these families being in our interviewee sample. To some extent, the creation of such hubs and platforms can be encouraged and supported by the

municipality. Cesis municipality representative highlighted that similarly as in other SUAs their financial resources are limited. Despite that Cesis interviewees mentioned that the municipality “allow the ideas to happen” by supporting the initiators with non-financial resources. This approach goes in line with the one emphasized by Selada et al. (2012), that for new ideas to flourish, it is important that municipality leaders are open-minded and reduce to a minimum the bureaucratic constraints that one faces when implementing new initiatives. For instance, even though the municipality was not the initiator of the creation of Cesis New School, they supported the realization of the idea, and now it serves as an attraction for new inhabitants.

However, judging from the opinion of Cesis migrants, if the area would not have a good enough quality of life as well as some additional aspects such as cultural life, hubs alone would not have so much strength in attracting them to the area. Judging from the interviews, Kuldiga and Cesis inhabitants highly appreciate the presence of high-quality cultural happenings in their areas. The events are social and entertaining experiences that make their and their children lives rich and fulfilling. That approves Florida’s (2003) claims that high-skilled people value events inducing socializing and rich cultural experiences.

In the end, most of the interviewees revealed that in general the society’s perception of living in an SUA is rather associated with negativity, boredom, and despair. Thus, even if attractive projects are executed and hubs are created in an SUA, it will not serve as a hook for migrants in case of poor communication of the efforts and little information on the general quality of life in the SUA (Haque, 2001). While family and friends living in the area can act as an information channel for people with such connections, target audience with no acquaintances in there needs to be informed in other ways. For instance, Cesis approach of “positive propaganda” or communicating various development activities in social media is simple yet an effective way to build a positive appeal of the place for those with no existing bond with the area.

While appealing environment, hubs, and culture are important aspects of high-skilled migrant lives, the strength of these aspects’ appeal is significantly diminished in case an SUA cannot offer any housing, an essential part of survival for any human being. Even though employment opportunities also lie in the category of essentials, this problem is not that crucial. Knowing that the telecommunications have reduced the need to be present in a workplace (Abrams & Gosnell, 2011), as well as hearing the experience of our interviewees working as freelancers, one can be attracted to a certain

area in which vacancies are not abundant. Thus, even though it is important to seek for solutions to tackle the lack of employment opportunities and to empower the uniqueness of an SUA, lack of housing is the first and foremost problem that has to be solved in order to sustain and increase any migration flows to the SUAs under research. While direct influence on the housing market is, in fact, limited, passive stance will not work: following Cesis and Kuldiga examples, it is needed to seek for ways how to encourage housing supply amplification indirectly.

6. Conclusions

Throughout the research, the main aim has been to determine: *What are the factors that attract high-skilled internal migrants to a certain Small Urban Area?* The information was gathered by performing sixteen in-depth semi-structured interviews with high-skilled internal migrants in three different SUAs: Preili, Kuldiga, and Cesis. Several factors - closeness of nature, availability of outdoor activities, slower pace of life - were named as important in the decision-making process by almost all the interviewees. However, these had been the factors that had attracted them to less urbanized areas in general. When asked about factors that triggered the move to a particular SUA, interviewees highlighted three main factors: connection with the place, uniqueness and authenticity, and presence of a certain hub.

To gain a broader understanding of the phenomenon researched and understand what role municipalities of SUAs had played in internal migrant attraction, the second RQ was defined as follows: *What are the activities currently implemented by the municipalities of Small Urban Areas to attract the internal migrants?* Interviews with three representatives (one in each municipality) highlighted that there are two overarching approaches similar across all municipalities. First of all, municipalities believe that one of the main problems hindering the high-skilled migration flows to their SUA is a lack of solid employment opportunities. The municipalities address this problem similarly: by trying to encourage entrepreneurship. The second tactic is aimed at developing the overall environment of the SUA and building a unique sense of place. The most common approach implemented by the municipalities is the exploitation of the existing amenities.

The broader aim of the paper was to help municipalities of SUAs in Latvia to attract high-skilled internal migrants. For this reason, after having found answers to both RQs, we looked at the results in an interconnected manner and tried to arrive at guidelines that could be useful for the municipalities in the process of developing internal migrant attraction strategies.

First of all, municipalities should invest in the overall development of the place. It could facilitate migration flows in two ways: [1] increase the satisfaction of the current inhabitants who could then spread the good word about the SUA; [2] facilitate return migration, as those currently living in another place could be attracted by the improved life quality. Secondly, municipalities should preserve the uniqueness and authenticity of the place. Thirdly, municipalities should be open to new initiatives and

reduce the bureaucratic burden that community activists face when implementing new ideas. The ideas realized can then serve as high-skilled internal migrant attractions. Fourthly, municipalities should invest in the development of cultural activities and entertainment opportunities in the SUA. A significant share of migrants outlined that even though these factors were not decisive, they were still considered in the decision-making process and in specific circumstances could play a decisive role. Finally, it is very important to actively communicate all the development activities executed in social media to build a positive image of the SUA. This is also a way how target audiences without a connection to the place can be reached.

7. Reference list

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8. Appendices

Appendix A. Countryside images, preferences, resources and constraints and migration behavior.

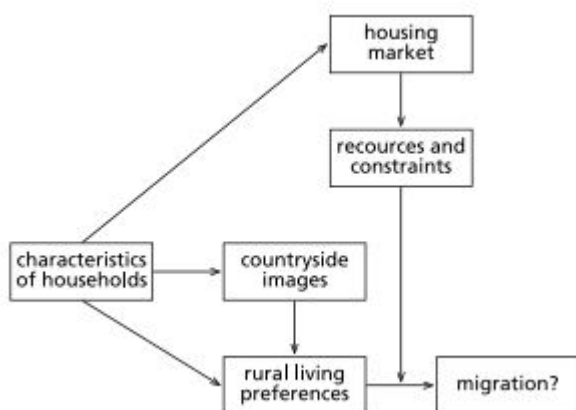


Figure A.1 Countryside images, preferences, resources and constraints and migration behavior (Van Dam, Heins & Elbersen, 2002).

Appendix B. Population changes in all three SUAs under consideration.

Age groups	2011	2016	2017	2018	change, %		
					2011/2018	2016/2017	2017/2018
0-14	962	879	887	887	-7.8%	0.9%	0.0%
15-24	1078	729	678	583	-45.9%	-7.0%	-14.0%
25-49	2457	2153	2069	2042	-16.9%	-3.9%	-1.3%
50-64	1564	1615	1637	1643	5.1%	1.4%	0.4%
At least 65	1212	1241	1239	1252	3.3%	-0.2%	1.0%
Total	7273	6617	6510	6407	-13.5%	-1.6%	-1.6%

Table B.1 Population changes in Preili. Source: Created by the authors using data from The Latvian Association of Local and Regional Governments [LPS], 2018.

Age groups	2011	2016	2017	2018	change, %		
					2011/2018	2016/2017	2017/2018
0-14	1846	1720	1667	1650	-10.6%	-3.1%	-1.0%
15-24	1639	1302	1187	1154	-29.6%	-8.8%	-2.8%
25-49	3845	3601	3509	3414	-11.2%	-2.6%	-2.7%
50-64	2184	2147	2119	2103	-3.7%	-1.3%	-0.8%

At least 65	2247	2219	2216	2246	0.0%	-0.1%	1.4%
Total	11761	10989	10698	10567	-11.3%	-2.6%	-1.2%

Table B.2 Population changes in Kuldīga. Source: Created by the authors using data from LPS, 2018.

Age groups	2011	2016	2017	2018	change, %		
					2011/2018	2016/2017	2017/2018
0-14	2631	2383	2425	2489	-5.4%	1.8%	2.6%
15-24	2395	1708	1600	1496	-37.5%	-6.3%	-6.5%
25-49	5577	4928	4851	4824	-13.5%	-1.6%	-0.6%
50-64	3135	3107	3045	3009	-4.0%	-2.0%	-1.2%
At least 65	3296	3261	3273	3255	-1.2%	0.4%	-0.5%
Total	16764	15387	15194	15073	-11.2%	-1.3%	-0.8%

Table B.3 Population changes in Cēsis. Source: Created by the authors using data from LPS, 2018.

Appendix C. Migration Balance in all three SUAs.

SUAs	Migration balance	
	2011-2018	2017-2018
Cēsis	-193	83
Kuldīga	-340	-23
Preiļi	-290	-22

Table C. 1 Migration balance. Source: Created by the authors using data from CSBL, 2018.

Appendix D. Decomposition of the original areas of settlement of internal migrants.

TOP 5	2011-2018				2017-2018			
	Moved to Cēsis		Left Cēsis		Moved to Cēsis		Left Cēsis	
	District/town	Count	District/town	Count	District/town	Count	District/town	Count
1	Rīga	334	Rīga	648	Priekule district	136	Rīga	177
2	Priekule district	292	Priekule district	305	Rīga	135	Priekule district	70
3	Amata district	236	Amata district	156	Amata district	77	Amata district	47

4	Rauna district	96	Pārgauja district	87	Pārgauja district	31	Valmiera	34
5	Pārgauja district	84	Valmiera	67	Vecpiebalga district	21	Pārgauja district	27

Table D.1 Decomposition of the original areas of settlement of in-migrants of Cesis.

Source: Created by the authors using data from CSBL, 2018.

TOP 5	2011-2018				2017-2018			
	Moved to Kuldīga		Left Kuldīga		Moved to Kuldīga		Left Kuldīga	
	District/town	Count	District/town	Count	District/town	Count	District/town	Count
1	Rīga	114	Rīga	302	Rīga	46	Rīga	67
2	Saldus district	51	Liepāja	70	Saldus district	16	Liepāja	23
3	Liepāja	34	Ventspils	56	Ventspils	11	Skrunda district	14
4	Ventspils district	34	Ventspils district	27	Alsunga district	10	Ventspils	10
5	Ventspils	26	Saldus district	23	Liepāja	<10	Mārupe district	<10

Table D.2 Decomposition of the original areas of settlement of in-migrants of

Kuldīga. Source: Created by the authors using data from CSBL, 2018.

TOP 5	2011-2018				2017-2018			
	Moved to Preiļi		Left Preiļi		Moved to Preiļi		Left Preiļi	
	District/town	Count	District/town	Count	District/town	Count	District/town	Count
1	Riebiņi district	102	Rīga	224	Riebiņi district	33	Rīga	52
2	Rīga	57	Riebiņi district	111	Rīga	23	Daugavpils	25
3	Vārkava district	34	Daugavpils	77	Vārkava district	18	Riebiņi district	22
4	Daugavpils	29	Vārkava district	37	Daugavpils	<10	Babīte district	<10
5	Līvāni district	29	Līvāni district	35	Līvāni district	<10	Vārkava district	<10

Table D.3 Decomposition of the original areas of settlement of in-migrants of

Preiļi. Source: Created by the authors using data from CSBL, 2018.

Appendix E. List of interviewees in each of the SUAs.

Interviewee	Job title	Birthplace	Previous place of residence	Migration date	Comments
P1	Pharmacist	Preiļi	5 years in Rīga	2018	Married, no kids

P2	Architect	Preiļi	3 years in Riga	2018	Married, no kids
P3	Head of department	Preiļi	4 years in Riga	2016	Married, no kids
P4	Ceramist	Preiļi	Riga	2018	In a relationship, no kids
P5	Head of Development Department				A representative of the municipality

Table E.1 A list of interviewees in Preiļi. Source: Created by the authors using information from the interviews.

Interviewee	Job title	Birthplace	Previous place of residence	Migration year	Comments
K1	Owner of a bakery	Kuldiga	6 years in Riga	2016	Has 2 children, expecting the 3 rd
K2	Project manager	Kuldiga	16 years in Riga	2014	Has a husband from India; has 3 children
K3	Spatial planner	Kuldiga	13 years in Jelgava	2017	Has a husband with no roots in Kuldiga; has 2 children
K4	Tourism, innovation, and social integration project manager	Kuldiga	1.5 years in Riga	2018	Had a house in Kuldiga

K5	Entrepreneur	Kuldiga	8 years in Riga	2018	Has a child
K6	Entrepreneur	Riga	The whole life in Riga	2014	Has children
K6	Head of Development Department				A representative of the municipality

Table E.2 A list of interviewees in Kuldiga. Source: Created by the authors using information from the interviews.

Interviewee	Job title	Birthplace	Previous place of residence	Migration date	Comments
C1	Professor, student, spatial planning consultant	Jelgava	8 years in Riga	2015	Married, no children
C2	Programmer	Jurmala	The whole life in Jurmala	2015	Married, no children
C3	Head teacher	Riga	The whole life in Riga	2016	Married, 3 children
C4	Producer	Riga	4 years in Valmiera	2015	Married, has children
C5	Journalist, archeologist	Valmiera	1 year in Valmiera	2018	Married, no children
C6	Marketing director	Riga	1 year in Valmiera	2018	Married, no children
C7	Public relations specialist at Cesis				A representative of the

	municipality				municipality
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Table E.3 A list of interviewees in Cesis. Source: Created by the authors using information from the interviews.

Appendix F. Interview guide for the interviews with internal migrants.

INTRODUCTION

- About us
- About the thesis
 - Research Question
 - Relevance
 - The aim of our paper
 - About respondents
- Technical details
 - Anonymity
 - Recording
 - Length of the interview

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- What year did you arrive in [SUA]?
- Before coming to [SUA], what was your hometown? How many years did you live there?
- Did you move alone or together with someone?
- What is your current occupation? Are you happy with it?
- What education do you have?
- How would you describe the public opinion about small-town life?
 - What is the prevalent image of [SUA] in the society?
- How would you describe small-town life compared to your life in the previous living location?

ABOUT DECISION TO MIGRATE

- What were the aspects/changes/circumstances that made you start thinking about migration?
 - How long did it before you in fact moved to the [SUA]?
- What were the aspects/changes/circumstances that encouraged you to make the final decision to migrate?
- When the decision to move was made, what were the next steps?
 - Sources of information.
 - Support.
- What were the obstacles that you had to overcome to be able to migrate?
- How did your friends and family react when they found out about the decision to move?

ABOUT THE AREA OF SETTLEMENT

- Was the intention primarily to move to a small town or to this particular [SUA]?

- Did you consider any other options for areas of settlement? Which ones and why?
- Why did you choose [SUA] as the destination?
 - What was the most important factor that made you choose [SUA] as the area of settlement?
 - What other factors influenced your decision?

FACTORS FRAMEWORK

The following part of the interview will focus on different factors mentioned in the literature that are said to play a role when choosing the area of settlement. Therefore, the main thing is to assess how important was the factor when choosing the destination.

While reviewing literature, we found out that another factor that can have an impact on the choice of the area of settlement is *[the factor]*.

- Did you think about this aspect before moving to [SUA]?
- How large impact did this factor have in the decision-making process? Why was it important?
- How would you evaluate the current situation regarding this factor in the [SUA]?

EMPLOYMENT

- Opportunity for safe, long-term, full time and well-paid employment
- Family member employment
- Changes in the level of income
- Business environment
- *Improvements*

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Housing (availability, pricing)
- Education (quality, availability, future considerations - *gymnasium / high school*)
- Entertainment opportunities (cafes, performance venues, bars)
- Outdoor activities
- Cultural activities
- *Improvements*

REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Scenery, natural amenities
- Clear SUA identity
- Opportunity to involve in creating the future of the SUA
- An open social climate / Welcoming community
- Talent
- Tolerance
- Technology
- Safety
- Uniqueness and authenticity
- *Improvements*

PERSONAL FACTORS

- Familiarity with the place
- Family connections

IMPROVEMENTS

- After moving to [SUA] how did your life changed?
 - Positive changes
 - Negative changes
- Is life at [SUA] as you imagined?
 - Positive surprises
 - Negative surprises
- What, in your opinion, should be improved to attract more high-skilled inhabitants to move to [SUA]?

CLOSING

- If you had to persuade your friend to move to [SUA], what arguments would you present?
 - What would be the things that you would try to hide?
- Would you advise your friends to move to [SUA]? Why or why not?

Appendix G. Sustainable development plan (2013-2030) long-term priorities of SUAs

SUA	Long-term priorities
Cesis	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Improvement of the quality of life, accessibility of social and health services;2) Development of education system of competitive quality;3) Ensuring environmental sustainability;4) Development of the identity of the town based on creative and cultural industries, as well as health-care tourism;5) Development of economics and entrepreneurship based on local natural and intellectual resources.
Kuldiga	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Development of the local society in terms of education, cultural and social life, access to the health and social services;2) Development of entrepreneurial environment to attract investment, create new employment opportunities and pursue agility of the entrepreneurs;3) Secure, easily accessible, clean environment usable for life, work, recreation, and creative activities.

Preili	<p>1) Improvement of life quality and society in terms of education, cultural and social life, access to recreational services;</p> <p>2) Development of infrastructure (heating, water, roads, etc.) and its accessibility;</p> <p>3) Development of environmentally friendly entrepreneurship, support for innovations.</p>
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Table G Long-term priorities of the SUAs. Source: Created by the authors using Cesis municipality, 2015, Kuldīga municipality, 2013, Preili municipality, 2013.

Appendix H. Interview guide for the interviews with representatives of destination municipalities

INTRODUCTION

- About us
- About the thesis
 - Research Question
 - Relevance
 - The aim of our paper
 - About respondents
- Technical details
 - Anonymity
 - Recording
 - Length of the interview

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- How would you describe the public opinion about small-town life?
- How would you describe the prevalent image of [SUA] in the society?
 - How is this image created?
 - Main arguments for choosing such an image
 - Communication channels
- What is special about [SUA], compared to other SUAs in Latvia?
- How would you describe the society of [SUA]?
 - How open is it to the newcomers, different minorities and nationalities?
- Please describe the situation in [SUA] with relation to the changes in the number of inhabitants.
 - What are the challenges met by the municipality because of that?
 - Do you think that the situation has improved in recent years?
 - If yes, what kind of people move to [SUA]?

ABOUT THE ACTIVITIES AND DEVELOPMENT PLANS

- What do you consider to be the most important factors affecting the decision of destination for the internal migrants?
 - How has the municipality addressed/planned to address these factors?

FRAMEWORK

The following part of the interview will focus on different factors mentioned in the literature, which are said to play a role when migrants are choosing the area of settlement. If strategic objectives relevant for any of the factors of the framework are included in the development plans of the SUA, those are included in the interview as an elaboration on the specific factor.

E.g., “We see that ... has been prioritized as a strategic goal of the SUA in your development plan. What activities have been done to achieve the objective?”

While reviewing literature, we found out that another factor that can have an impact on the choice of the area of settlement is [factor].

- How do you evaluate the situation in [SUA] with regards to this factor?
- How is the municipality addressing this factor?
- What should be improved with regards to this factor to attract more high-skilled migrants?

EMPLOYMENT

- Opportunity for safe, long-term, full time and well-paid employment
- Business environment
- *Improvements*

INFRASTRUCTURE

- Housing (availability, pricing)
- Education (quality, availability)
- Entertainment opportunities (cafes, performance venues, bars)
- Outdoor activities
- Cultural activities
- *Improvements*

REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

- Clear SUA identity
- Opportunity to involve in creating the future of the SUA
- An open social climate / Welcoming community
- Talent
- Tolerance
- Technology
- Safety
- Uniqueness and authenticity
- *Improvements*

CLOSING

- To conclude our conversation, what would be the main things to improve in [SUA] to attract more high-skilled migrants?
 - Future priorities