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Chapter 2

Theories of Migration

Migration is hardly ever a simple individual action in which a person decides to move in search of better life-chances, pulls up his or her roots in the place of origin and quickly becomes assimilated in a new country. Much more often migration and settlement are a long-drawn-out process that will be played out for the rest of the migrant's life, and affect subsequent generations too. Migration can even transcend death: members of some migrant groups arrange for their bodies to be taken back for burial in their native soil (see Tribalat, 1995: 109–11). Migration is often a collective action, arising out of social, economic and political change and affecting the whole society in both sending and receiving areas. Moreover, the experience of migration and of living in another country often leads to modification of the original plans, so that migrants' intentions at the time of departure are poor predictors of actual behaviour.

Conventional wisdom holds that migration is driven by geographical differences in income, employment and other opportunities. Although this sounds logical, it reflects a limited understanding of the causes of migration. Most migrants do not move from the poorest to the wealthiest countries. Wealthy, industrialized societies tend to experience simultaneous high immigration, substantial emigration and internal movement. The volume and complexity of migration often increases with development. This is because improved access to education and information, social capital and financial resources increases people's aspirations and capabilities to migrate, while improved transport and communication also facilitate movement.

At the same time, it would be naïve to deny that global inequalities in income, political freedom and quality of life play an important role in explaining migration. However, if it is true that both development and global inequality boost migration, how can we then explain that the volume of international migration as a percentage of the world population has remained remarkably stable at levels between 2 and 3 per cent over the past decades? Such paradoxes show that the relation between migration and broader processes of development and global change is an intrinsically complex one.

In order to achieve a better understanding of migration processes, this chapter reviews the basic insights offered by various migration theories on the causes of migration. This will help to understand the more descriptive accounts of migration, settlement and minority formation in later chapters. However, the reader may prefer to read those first and come back to the theory later.

Since the late nineteenth century, several theories have been developed in various social science disciplines, which aim at understanding the processes that drive migration. These theories differ with regard to their assumptions, thematic focus, and level of analysis, ranging from global accounts of shifting migration patterns to theories of migrant transnational identities. Often, theoretical and disciplinary divides are artificial. For instance, it does not seem very useful to develop separate theories for internal and international migration. Although international migration is more often (albeit not always) subject to control by states, both forms of migration are often driven by the same processes of social, economic and political change. In most countries internal migration is far larger than international. The two are often closely linked, and internal rural-urban migration may be a prelude to cross-border movement (King and Skeldon, 2010; Skeldon, 1997).

It is also debatable whether it is useful to develop separate theories for different categories of migrants, such as for 'forced' and 'voluntary' or for refugee, family or economic migration. Motives for migrating are often manifold. Migrants who primarily move for economic reasons may also flee political oppression. It is difficult to separate economic from social, cultural and political causes of migration. For instance, because of social inequality or oppression, certain disadvantaged ethnic or class groups in origin societies often have fewer opportunities to migrate internationally, which also disadvantages them economically.

To gain a deeper understanding of migration processes, it is important to see migration as an *intrinsic part* of broader processes of development, globalization and social transformation rather than 'a problem to be solved'. To do this, we need to redress the 'receiving-country bias' – the tendency of migration studies to focus on the consequences of immigration in wealthy, migrant-receiving societies, and to ignore the causes and consequences of migration in origin countries.

It is useful to make a basic distinction between theories on the *causes of migration processes*, and theories on the *impacts of migration for sending and receiving communities and societies* (compare Massey et al., 1998: 3). This chapter will focus on the first set of theories, while Chapter 3 will focus on the second set of theories.

Any migratory movement can be seen as the result of interacting macro- and micro-structures. Macro-structures refer to large-scale institutional factors, such as the political economy of the world market, interstate relationships, and efforts by the states of sending and receiving countries to control migration. Micro-structures embrace the practices, family ties and beliefs of the migrants themselves. These two levels are linked by a number of intermediate mechanisms, referred to as 'meso-structures': examples include migrant networks, immigrant communities, new business sectors catering to migrants and the 'migration industry' (see below). In looking at causes of migration, it is therefore useful to also make a distinction between theories on macro-level causes of migration and meso-level theories on the continuation of migration, which focus on

feedback mechanisms such as migrant networks to explain why migration can become a self-perpetuating process.

However, it is important to link theories on causes and consequences of migration in order to develop an understanding of migration as a dynamic process which is in constant interaction with broader change processes in destination and origin societies. In this book, we use the term 'migration studies' in the widest sense, to embrace both bodies of investigation.

Explaining the migratory process

The concept of the *migratory process* sums up the complex sets of factors and interactions which lead to migration and influence its course. Migration is a process which affects every dimension of social existence, and which develops its own complex 'internal' dynamics. The great majority of people in the world (around 97 per cent) are not classified as international migrants, yet their communities and way of life are often changed by migration. The changes are generally much bigger for the migrants themselves.

Research on migration is interdisciplinary: sociology, political science, history, economics, geography, demography, psychology, cultural studies and law are all relevant (Brettell and Hollifield, 2007). Within each discipline a variety of approaches exist, based on differences in theory and methods. For instance, researchers who base their work on quantitative analysis of large data-sets (such as censuses or surveys) will ask different questions and get different results from those who do qualitative studies of small groups. Those who examine the role of migrant labour within the world economy using historical and institutional approaches will again reach different conclusions. Each of these methods has its place, as long as it lays no claim to be the only correct one. As interest in migration research has grown in recent years, theoretical approaches have proliferated and interacted. This chapter will not review migration theories along disciplinary lines. This is done on purpose, because such distinctions are often artificial and can obstruct a more comprehensive understanding of migration processes. Different disciplines and theories provide different views on migration, which are more often complementary than mutually exclusive.

Migration theories can be grouped together into two main paradigms, following a more general division in social sciences between 'functionalist' and 'historical-structural' theories. Functionalist social theory tends to see society as a system, a collection of interdependent parts (individuals, actors), somehow analogous to the functioning of an organism, in which an inherent tendency toward equilibrium exists. Functionalist migration theory generally treats migration as a positive phenomenon serving the interests of most people and contributing to greater equality within and between societies.

Rooted in neo-Marxist political economy, historical-structural theories emphasize how social, economic, cultural and political structures constrain and direct the behaviour of individuals in ways that generally

do not lead to greater equilibrium, but rather reinforce such disequilibria. They argue that economic and political power is unequally distributed, and that cultural beliefs (such as religion and tradition) and social practices tend to reproduce such structural inequalities. They see migration as providing a cheap, exploitable labour force, which mainly serves the interests of the wealthy in receiving areas, causes a 'brain drain' in origin areas, and therefore reinforces social and geographical inequalities.

Functionalist theories: push-pull models and neoclassical theory

An early contribution to migration studies consisted of two articles by the nineteenth-century geographer Ravenstein (1885; 1889), in which he formulated his 'laws of migration'. Ravenstein saw migration as an inseparable part of development, and he asserted that the major causes of migration were economic. 'Gravity' models developed by geographers from the early twentieth century were derived from Newton's law of gravity and predict the volume of migration between places and countries on the basis of distance, population size and economic opportunities in destination and origin areas. Lee (1966) argued that migration decisions are determined by 'plus' and 'minus' factors in areas of origin and destination: intervening obstacles (such as distance, physical barriers, immigration laws, and so on); and personal factors.

These types of analytical frameworks are commonly referred to as 'push-pull' models (Passaris, 1989). Push-pull models identify economic, environmental, and demographic factors which are assumed to push people out of places of origin and pull them into destination places. 'Push factors' usually include population growth and population density, lack of economic opportunities and political repression, while 'pull factors' usually include demand for labour, availability of land, economic opportunities and political freedoms.

At first sight, the push-pull framework seems attractive because of its apparent ability to incorporate all major factors affecting migration decision-making (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998: 103). However, its value is limited and it can be misleading. It is a purely descriptive model in which factors assumed to play a role in migration are enumerated in a relative arbitrary manner, without specifying their role and interactions. As Skeldon put it:

The disadvantage with the push-pull model is that... it is never entirely clear how the various factors combine together to cause population movement. We are left with a list of factors, all of which can clearly contribute to migration, but which lack a framework to bring them together in an explanatory system... The push-pull theory is but a platitude at best. (Skeldon, 1990: 125-6)

Push-pull models have difficulties explaining return migration and the simultaneous occurrence of emigration and immigration. They are also deterministic in assuming that demographic, environmental and economic factors 'cause' migration, without taking account of the role of other factors. For instance, population growth or environmental degradation do not necessarily result in migration, because 'population pressure' can also encourage innovation, (such as the introduction of irrigation, terraces or fertilizers), enabling farmers to maintain or even increase productivity (cf. Boserup, 1965). Scarcity and impoverishment can actually *impede* long-distance migration if people cannot afford the costs and risk of migrating (Foresight, 2011; Henry *et al.*, 2004). As we will argue in Chapter 9, this is also why ideas that environmental degradation due to climate change will lead to mass migration can be very misleading.

Environmental or demographic factors should not be isolated from other social, economic, political, and institutional factors affecting people's living standards. For instance, while Eastern European countries have very low fertility and low or negative population growth, they have experienced large-scale emigration. At the same time, the Gulf countries have combined high fertility with low emigration and very high immigration. Improved education and media exposure may increase feelings of relative deprivation, and may give rise to higher aspirations and, therefore, *increased* migration, without any change in local opportunities. People may also be so poor or repressed that they are deprived of the capability to migrate. This partly explains why most migration is *not* from the poorest to the wealthiest countries, as predicted by push-pull models.

Neoclassical and human capital theories

Neoclassical migration theory is also based on the assumption that social forces tend towards equilibrium. Rooted in modernization theory (Rostow, 1960), it sees migration as a constituent or intrinsic part of the whole development process, by which surplus labour in the rural sector supplies the workforce for the urban industrial economy (Lewis, 1954; Todaro, 1969: 139). Neoclassical theory sees migration as a function of geographical differences in the supply and demand for labour. The resulting wage differentials encourage workers to move from low-wage, labour-surplus regions to high-wage, labour-scarce regions. At the micro-level, neoclassical theory views migrants as individual, rational actors, who decide to move on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation, maximizing their income. Migrants are expected to go where they can be the most productive and can earn the highest wages. In this context, Borjas (1989; 1990) developed the idea of an international immigration market, in which potential migrants base their choice of destination on individual, cost-benefit calculations.

At the macro-level, neoclassical theory views migration as a process which optimizes the allocation of production factors. Migration will make labour less scarce at the destination and scarcer at the sending end. Capital is expected to move in the opposite direction. This process will eventually result in convergence between wages (Harris and Todaro, 1970; Lewis, 1954; Ranis and Fei, 1961; Schiff, 1994; Todaro and Maruszko, 1987). In the long run, migration should therefore help to make wages and conditions in sending and receiving countries more equal, lowering the incentives for migrating.

Neoclassical migration theory was advanced by Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) to explain rural-urban migration in developing countries but has also been applied to international migration (cf. Borjas, 1989; Todaro and Maruszko, 1987). Harris and Todaro elaborated a model to explain rural-to-urban labour migration in developing countries despite rising unemployment in cities. They argued that, in order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to extend the wage differential approach by adjusting the 'expected' rural-urban income differential for the probability of finding an urban job (Todaro, 1969: 138). As long as income differences remain high enough to outweigh the risk of becoming unemployed, migration would continue (Todaro, 1969: 147). Later, this Harris-Todaro model was refined (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998: 97) to include other factors, such as the financial and social costs of migration.

An alternative, but complementary approach was proposed by Sjaastad (1962), who viewed migration as an investment that increases the productivity of 'human capital' – such as knowledge and skills. Human capital theory helps to explain the 'selectivity' of migration (the phenomenon that migrants tend to come from particularly sub-sections of populations), by pointing to the importance of the structure of labour markets, skills and income distributions in sending and receiving societies. People vary in terms of personal skills, knowledge, physical abilities, age and gender, so there will also be differences in the extent to which they can expect to gain from migrating. People decide to invest in migration, in the same way as they might invest in education, and they are expected to migrate if the additional lifetime benefits (primarily derived from higher wages) in the destination are greater than the costs incurred through migrating (Chiswick, 2000). Differences in such expected 'returns on investments' can partly explain why the young and the higher skilled tend to migrate more (Bauer and Zimmermann, 1998: 99).

Critique of neoclassical migration theory

Although neoclassical theory is valuable in understanding the selective nature of migration, it has been criticized because of the unrealistic nature of its central assumptions. The first assumption is that people are rational actors who maximize income or 'utility' based on a systematic comparison

of lifetime costs and benefits of remaining at home or moving to an infinite range of potential destinations. The second, related assumption is that potential migrants have perfect knowledge of wage levels and employment opportunities in destination regions. The third assumption is that (capital, insurance, and other) markets are perfect and accessible for the poor. Because these assumptions are unrealistic, neoclassical theories are often incapable of explaining real-life migration patterns, particularly if migration occurs in conditions of poverty and high constraints.

Neither push-pull nor neoclassical theories have much room for *human agency*, which is the limited, but real ability of human beings to make independent choices and to change structural conditions. They portray human beings as socially isolated individuals who passively and uniformly react to external factors, while people's aspiration and capability to migrate actually depends on factors such as age, gender, knowledge, social contacts, preferences, and perceptions of the outside world. These theories generally do not consider how migrants perceive their world and relate to their kin, friends, and community members. As far as they deal with structural factors, such as government policies or recruitment practices, at all, neoclassical approaches see them as distortions of perfect markets which affect migration costs rather than as migration drivers in their own right.

Structural constraints such as limited access to money, connections and information have proven to be crucial factors in determining actual migration decisions. Historians, anthropologists, sociologists and geographers have shown that migrants' behaviour is strongly influenced by historical experiences and connections such as colonial ties, as well as by family and community dynamics (Portes and Böröcz, 1989). This explains why real-life migration patterns often deviate enormously from neoclassical predictions. Instead of a random process, migration is a strongly patterned process because people's individual choices are constrained by structural factors such as social stratification, market access, power inequalities as well as cultural repertoires affecting their preferences.

Historical-structural theories

An alternative explanation of migration was provided in the 1970s and 1980s by what came to be called the *historical-structural approach*. Historical-structuralists interpret migration as one of the many manifestations of capitalist penetration and the unequal terms of trade between developed and underdeveloped countries (Massey *et al.*, 1998: 34–41). While neoclassical theories focus on migrations, which are seen as largely 'voluntary', like that from Europe to the USA before 1914, or within Europe, historical-structural accounts tend to focus on large-scale recruitment of labour, whether of indentured Indian workers by the British for the railways in East Africa, Turks and Moroccans for the factories and mines of Germany, France, Belgium and the Netherlands, or Mexicans for the

agribusiness of California. The availability and control of labour is both a legacy of colonialism and the result of war and international inequalities (cf. Cohen, 1987).

Historical-structuralists criticized neoclassical approaches by arguing that individuals do *not* have a free choice because they are fundamentally constrained by structural forces. Within this perspective, people are forced to move because traditional economic structures have been undermined as a result of their incorporation into the global political-economic system and concomitant processes such as mechanization of agriculture, concentration of landownership, increasing indebtedness and dispossession of smallholder peasants. Through these processes, rural populations become increasingly deprived of their traditional livelihoods, and these uprooted populations become part of the urban proletariat to the benefit of employers in urban areas and wealthy countries that rely on their cheap labour.

Historical-structural theory assumes that economic and political power is unequally distributed among wealthy and poor countries, that various classes and groups have highly unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to *reinforce* these inequalities. Within this context, historical-structural theory sees migration as a way of mobilizing cheap labour for capital, which primarily serves to boost profits and deprives origin areas of valuable labour and skills. In total opposition to neoclassical theory, migration is therefore seen as deepening uneven development, exploiting the resources of poor countries to make the rich even richer, leading to *increased* instead of less disequilibrium (Castles and Kosack, 1973; Cohen, 1987; Sassen, 1988).

The intellectual roots of such analyses lay in Marxist political economy – especially in *dependency theory*, which became influential in Latin America in the 1960s. This theory saw the underdevelopment of 'Third World' (developing) countries as a *result* of the exploitation of their resources (including labour) through colonialism, while in the postcolonial period dependency was being perpetuated by unfair terms of trade with powerful developed economies (Baack, 1993; Frank, 1969). Andre Gunder Frank (1966, 1969) argued that global capitalism contributed to the 'development of underdevelopment', so that migration is seen as one of the very *causes* of underdevelopment (see also Chapter 3 below).

In the 1970s and 1980s, a more comprehensive *world systems theory* developed (Amin, 1974; Wallerstein, 1974; 1980; 1984). It focused on the way less developed 'peripheral' regions have been incorporated into a world economy controlled by 'core' capitalist nations. The incorporation of the peripheries into the capitalist economy and concomitant penetration of multinational corporations accelerated rural change and deprived peasants and rural workers, leading to poverty, rural-urban migration, rapid urbanization and the growth of informal economies.

Dependency and world systems theory were at first mainly concerned with internal migration (Massey *et al.*, 1998: 35), but from the mid-1970s, as the key role of migrant workers in wealthy economies became more

obvious, world systems theorists began to analyse international labour migration as one of the ways in which relations of domination were forged between the core economies of capitalism and its underdeveloped periphery. Migration was seen as reinforcing the effects of military hegemony and control of world trade and investment in keeping the 'Third World' dependent on the 'First'.

Globalization theory

Dependency and world systems theories can be seen as precursors of the globalization theories that emerged in the 1990s, which also stressed the need to understand migration as an intrinsic part of much broader relationships between societies. Although there are many definitions, one approach is to characterize globalization as 'the widening, deepening and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life' (Held *et al.*, 1999: 2). A key indicator of globalization is a rapid increase in *cross-border flows* of all sorts, starting with finance and trade, but also including democratic values, cultural and media products, and – most important in our context – people.

Globalization is often portrayed primarily as an *economic process* associated with the upsurge in foreign direct investment (FDI) and the liberalization and deregulation in cross-border flows of capital, technology and services, as well as the emergence of a new international division of labour (Petras and Veltmayer, 2000: 2). The concept of a scientific and technological revolution, led by computerization, is central to the idea that globalization is both new and inevitable.

However, globalization is not just about technological and economic change: it is also a *political process*, conceived in normative or ideological terms. Critics of globalization argue that it is not a unique new world order, but rather the latest phase in the evolution of the capitalist world economy, which, since the fifteenth century, has penetrated into every corner of the globe (cf. Petras and Veltmayer, 2000). The current globalization paradigm emerged in the context of neoliberal strategies – initiated in the 1980s by the Reagan administration in the USA and the Thatcher government in the UK – designed to roll back the welfare states and decrease government intervention in labour and capital markets. The opening of markets and transfer of industrial production to low-wage economies – like the *maquiladoras* of Mexico or the offshore production areas of South-East Asia – weakened the political left and trade unions in industrial countries and shored up authoritarian regimes in the South (cf. Froebel *et al.*, 1980). Thus far from weakening the nation-state, globalization is seen as a new form of imperialism, designed to reinforce the power of core Northern states, their ruling classes and multinational corporations whose interests they serve (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Petras and Veltmayer, 2000; Weiss, 1997).

Globalization is therefore also seen as an ideology about how the world should be reshaped – summed up in the ‘Washington consensus’ on the importance of market liberalization, privatization and deregulation (Gore, 2000; Stiglitz, 2002: 67). International institutions, especially the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the World Trade Organization (WTO) are seen as key instruments to impose this new neo-liberal economic world order, for instance through ‘structural adjustment programmes’.

Globalization has led to pervasive processes of *social transformation* all around the world. The idea of *transformation* implies a fundamental change in the way society is organized that goes beyond the continual, incremental processes of social change that are always at work (compare Polanyi, 1944; Polanyi, 2001). Globalization has uneven effects. Indeed, it can be seen as a process of inclusion of particular regions and social groups in world capitalist market relations, and of exclusion of others (Castells, 1996). Penetration of poor, weak economies by ‘northern’ investments and multinational corporations leads to economic restructuring, through which some groups of workers and producers are included in the new economy, while other groups find their livelihoods and workplaces destroyed and their qualifications devalued.

It is often thought that globalization has spurred migration as a consequence of revolutions in transport and communication technology. However, such improvements also increase the scope for trade, outsourcing of production, commuting and teleworking, and thus potentially replace some forms of migration (de Haas, 2009; Skeldon, 2012; Zelinsky, 1971). This may partly explain why the number of international migrants as a percentage of the world population has hardly changed since World War II (cf. Zlotnik, 1999), and why *non-migratory mobility* in the form of commuting, business trips and tourism has soared.

We need to seek the main migratory impacts of globalization in transformations in production structures, labour markets and social inequalities. Historically, such transformations have often started in agriculture. This was the case in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe, but also currently in many African, Asian and Latin American countries. For instance, in many developing countries, the post-1945 ‘green revolution’ involved the introduction of new strains of rice and other crops, which gave higher yields, but required big investments in fertilizers, insecticides and mechanization. This often led to a concentration of ownership in the hands of richer farmers. Poorer farmers lost their livelihoods and agricultural workers their employment, and often migrated into burgeoning cities like São Paulo, Shanghai, Calcutta or Jakarta. Although urban growth offers better livelihoods for some, others scrape a living through irregular and insecure work in the informal sector. Such conditions are powerful motivations to seek better livelihoods abroad. However, international migration is selective: only those with the financial capital and education to cover the high

costs of migrating and to be eligible for visas or with the social capital to link up with opportunities abroad can make the move.

Despite some claims about the erosion of the nation-state, *the national dimension remains vital to understand migration*. Nation-states remain the main location for policies on cross-border movements and non-migration policies such as citizenship, public order, labour markets, taxation, social welfare, health services and education, which have large, albeit predominantly indirect, effects on migration. States and interstate organizations (such as the EU) have set up differentiated migration regimes, which encourage the highly skilled to be mobile, while low-skilled workers and people fleeing persecution are often denied rights. Bauman argued that, in the globalized world, ‘mobility has become the most powerful and most coveted stratifying factor’. The riches are global, the misery is local (Bauman, 1998: 9 and 74). Control of migration and differential treatment of various categories of migrants have become the basis for a new type of transnational class structure. While immigration regimes fail to curb migration as long as labour demand persists, they lead to an increase in irregular migration and the increased vulnerability of migrants for exploitation on labour markets (Castles *et al.*, 2012).

Segmented labour market theory

Historical-structural theories view the *control and exploitation of labour* by states and corporations as vital to the survival of the capitalist system. While neoclassical and other ‘functionalist’ theories reduce state regulation to one of the ‘intermediate’ factors influencing migration costs, historical-structural theories see states, multinational corporations and employment agencies as key causes and drivers of migration processes.

Dual (or segmented) labour market theory helps to understand how the demand for high- and low-skilled immigrant labour is structurally embedded in modern capitalist economies. Piore (1979) argued that international migration is caused by structural demand within advanced economies for both highly skilled workers and lower-skilled manual workers to carry out production tasks (e.g., assembly line work or garment manufacture) and to staff service enterprises (catering, cleaning, care, etc.). This challenges the popular idea that wealthy nations only need high-skilled migrant workers. Changes in the economic and labour market structure of receiving countries drive the demand for particular labour skills. While demands of manufacturing industries in Europe and North America were met by inflows of manual workers until the early 1970s, the growing importance of the tertiary (service) sector has triggered a demand for both highly qualified and low-skilled workers over recent decades.

Through outsourcing, international corporations can move the production process to cheap labour. However, particularly in the service sectors as well as in construction, not all work processes can be outsourced.

Domestic supply for low-skilled labour has dramatically decreased because many women have entered the formal labour market and youngsters continue education for much longer, which explains why employers have increasingly relied on low-skilled migrant labour.

Dual labour market theory shows the importance of institutional factors as well as race and gender in bringing about labour market segmentation. A division into primary and secondary labour markets emerges (Piore, 1979), while the most dynamic 'global cities' are marked by economic polarization - a growing gulf between the highly paid core workers in finance, management and research, and the poorly paid workers who service their needs (Sassen, 2001). The workers in the primary labour market are positively selected on the basis of human capital, but also often through membership of the majority ethnic group, male gender and, in the case of migrants, regular legal status. Conversely, those in the secondary labour market are disadvantaged by lack of education and vocational training, as well as by gender, race, minority status and irregular legal status. The growth of the secondary sector has been reinforced through neoliberal reforms and the concomitant deregularization of labour markets.

Segmented labour market theory is also useful to understand how migration can continue even under circumstances of high unemployment, and how the irregular status of migrants may actually serve employers' interests, as it creates a vulnerable and usually docile workforce. In this perspective, public racism, xenophobic discourses by politicians and restrictive immigration policies not only fulfil a symbolic function (such as to rally voters), but actually serve to facilitate and legitimize exploitation of migrants on the labour market by depriving them of their basic rights.

Critique of historical-structural approaches

Historical-structural theories stress structural constraints and the limited extent to which migrants are free to make choices. This has led to the criticism that some historical-structural views largely rule out human agency by depicting migrants as victims of global capitalism who have no choice but to migrate in order to survive. Such deterministic views often do no justice to the diversity of migration and the fact that many people do make active choices and succeed in significantly improving their livelihoods through migrating. It would be just as unrealistic to depict all migrants as passive victims of capitalism as it would be to depict them as entirely rational and free actors who constantly make cost-benefit calculations. Nevertheless, several historical-structural accounts have paid attention to migrants' agency by emphasizing the role of migrant workers in trade unions and industrial disputes (Castles and Kosack, 1973; see Chapter 4; Lever-Tracy and Quinlan, 1988).

With their assumption of capitalism uprooting stable peasant societies, historical-structural views are often based on the 'myth of the immobile

peasant' (cf. Skeldon, 1997: 7-8) the implicit assumption that pre-modern societies consisted of isolated, stable, static, homogeneous peasant communities, in which migration was exceptional. Skeldon (1997: 32) pointed out that the whole idea that the Industrial Revolution uprooted peasants from their stable communities for the first time was based on a romanticized elitist view of peasant life. Historical research has shown that peasant societies were rather mobile (de Haan, 1999; Moch, 1992). Views that capitalism has 'uprooted' peasants and ruined egalitarian and self-sufficient communities also ignore that pre-modern societies were often characterized by high mortality, conflict, famines and epidemics as well as extreme inequalities, in which entire classes, castes, ethnic groups, women and slaves were often denied the most fundamental human freedoms.

For instance, Vecoli (1964) argued that the notion that southern Italian peasants (*contadini*) living in the USA were 'uprooted' from the Italian countryside was based on the myth of the Italian village as an harmonious social entity based on solidarity, communality, and neighbourliness. In reality, typical Italian peasants lived in dismal and highly exploitative conditions. For them, migration to the USA did provide unprecedented opportunities. In such cases, migration was an active choice and an opportunity to escape from the constraints put on them by 'traditional' societies. This makes it difficult to portray migrants unilaterally as victims of global capitalism.

Putting migrants first: agency, identity and the perpetuation of migration

Both neoclassical and historical-structural perspectives are too one-sided to understand adequately the complexity of migration. Neoclassical approaches neglect historical causes of movements and downplay the role of the state and structural constraints, while historical-structural approaches put too much emphasis on political and economic structures, and often see the interests of capital as all-determining. In fact, both approaches are deterministic in portraying human beings as rather passive. Since the 1980s, an increasing body of studies has highlighted the diversity of migration and stressed the role of migrants' agency by describing the various ways in which migrants try to actively and creatively overcome structural constraints such as immigration restrictions, social exclusion, racism and social insecurity. Most of these theories focus on the micro- and meso-level and are interested in what motivates people and social groups to migrate, how they perceive the world and how they shape their identity during the migration process. They also show how migrants' agency can create social structures, such as social networks, which can make migratory processes partly self-perpetuating.

New economics and household approaches

The *new economics of labour migration* (NELM) emerged as a critical response to neoclassical migration theory (Massey *et al.*, 1993). Stark (1978; 1991) argued that, in the context of migration in and from the developing world, migration decisions are often not made by isolated individuals, but usually by families or households. NELM highlights factors other than individual income maximization as influencing migration decision-making. First, this approach sees migration as *risk-sharing* behaviour of families or households. Such groups may decide that one or more of their members should migrate, *not primarily to get higher wages, but to diversify income sources in order to spread and minimize income risks* (Stark and Levhari, 1982), with the money remitted by migrants providing income insurance for households of origin. For instance, the addition of an extra source of income can make peasant households less vulnerable to environmental hazards such as droughts and floods (see also Chapter 9). This risk-spreading motive is a powerful explanation of the occurrence of migration *even in the absence of wage differentials*.

Second, NELM sees migration as a family or household strategy to provide resources for investment in economic activities, such as the family farm. NELM examines households in the context of the imperfect credit (capital) and risk (insurance) markets that prevail in most developing countries (Stark and Bloom, 1985; Stark and Levhari, 1982; Taylor, 1999; Taylor and Wyatt, 1996). Such markets are often not accessible for non-elite groups. In particular through remittances, households can overcome such market constraints by generating capital to invest in economic activities and improve their welfare (Stark, 1980). Third, NELM also sees migration as a response to *relative deprivation*, rather than *absolute poverty*, within migrant sending communities and societies. While the absolutely poor are often deprived of the capability to migrate over larger distances, the feeling of being less well-off than community members can be a powerful incentive to migrate in order to attain a higher socio-economic status.

With NELM, migration economists began to address questions of household composition traditionally posed by anthropologists and sociologists (Lucas and Stark, 1985: 901). NELM has strong parallels with so-called *livelihood approaches* which evolved from the late 1970s among geographers, anthropologists, and sociologists conducting micro-research in developing countries. They observed that the poor cannot be reduced to passive victims of global capitalist forces but exert human agency by trying to actively improve their livelihoods despite the difficult conditions they live in (Lieten and Nieuwenhuys, 1989).

This went along with the insight that – particularly in circumstances of uncertainty and economic hardship – people organize their livelihoods not individually but within wider social contexts. The household was often seen as the most appropriate unit of analysis, and migration as one of the main strategies households employ to diversify and secure their livelihoods

(McDowell and de Haan, 1997). Rather than a response to emergencies and crises, research showed that migration is often a pro-active, *deliberate* decision to improve livelihoods and to reduce fluctuations in rural family incomes by making them less dependent on climatic vagaries (de Haan *et al.*, 2000: 28; McDowell and de Haan, 1997: 18).

This shows that migration cannot be sufficiently explained by focusing on income differences alone. Household approaches show that factors such as social security, income risk and inequality, the chances of secure employment, access of the poor to credit, insurance and product markets, can also be important migration determinants. For instance, as Massey *et al.* (1987) point out, Mexican farmers may migrate to the USA because, even though they have sufficient land, they lack the capital to make it productive. Migration can then become a mechanism to maintain the productivity of their farms while working in the USA.

Household approaches seem particularly useful to explain migration in developing countries and also of disadvantaged social groups in wealthy countries, where the lack of social security and high income risks increase the importance of mutual help and risk sharing within families. They seem less relevant to explain migration of the high-skilled and the relatively well-off. Household models have been criticized because they tend to obscure intra-household inequalities and conflicts of interest along the lines of gender, generation, and age (de Haas and Fokkema, 2010). It is thus important not to lose sight of *intra-household power struggles*. For instance, instead of a move to help the family, migration can also be an individual strategy to escape from asphyxiating social control, abuse and oppression within families.

Network, transnationalism and migration systems theories

These approaches focus on the ties, networks and distinct identities that are forged between sending and receiving countries through constant flows of information, ideas, money, and goods. What unites these theories is that they analyse how migrants' *agency* creates social, economic and cultural structures at the micro- and meso-levels, and how this provides feedback mechanisms which tends to perpetuate migration processes. In this way, and through their individual and collective agency, migrants can actively challenge structural constraints such as poverty, social exclusion and government restrictions.

Migration network theory

Migration network theory explains how migrants create and maintain social ties with other migrants and with family and friends back home, and how this can lead to the emergence of social networks. Such networks

are meso-level social structures which tend to facilitate further migration. Factors such as warfare, colonialism, conquest, occupation, military service and labour recruitment, as well as shared culture, language and geographical proximity often play a crucial role in the *initiation* of migration processes (Massey *et al.*, 1998; Skeldon, 1997). However, once a critical number of migrants have settled at the destination, other forces come into play. The choices made by pioneer migrants or recruiters influence the location choices of subsequent migrants. Research on Mexican migrants in the 1970s showed that 90 per cent of those surveyed had obtained legal residence in the USA through family and employer connections (Portes and Bach, 1985).

The idea that migration is a path-dependent process because interpersonal relations shape subsequent migration patterns is quite old (cf. Franz, 1939; Lee, 1966; Petersen, 1958). Earlier scholars used the concept of 'chain migration' (Kenny, 1962; Price, 1963). In the recent literature, the term 'network migration' has gradually replaced chain migration. Migrant networks can be defined as sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-migrants in origin and destination areas through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin (Massey *et al.*, 1993: 448). Migrant networks are a form of location-specific *social capital* that people draw upon to gain access to resources elsewhere (Massey *et al.*, 1998). Bourdieu (1979; translated in Bourdieu, 1985) defined social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to the possession of a *durable network* of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to *membership in a group*' (Bourdieu, 1985: 248, emphasis in original French version). Migrant networks tend to decrease the economic, social and psychological costs of migration. Migration can therefore be conceptualized as a diffusion process, in which

expanding networks cause the costs of movement to fall and the probability of migration to rise; these trends feed off one another, and over time migration spreads outward to encompass all segments of society. This feedback occurs because the networks are created by the act of migration itself ... Once the number of network connections in an origin area reach a critical level, migration becomes self-perpetuating because migration itself creates the social structure to sustain it (Massey, 1990: 8).

Thus, besides financial and human capital, social capital is a third resource affecting people's capability and aspiration to migrate. Already settled migrants often function as 'bridgeheads' (Böcker, 1994), reducing the risks and costs of subsequent migration and settlement by providing information, organizing travel, finding work and housing and assisting in adaptation to a new environment. Migrant groups develop their own social and economic infrastructure: places of worship, associations, shops, cafés,

professionals (such as lawyers and doctors), and other services. The formation of a migrant community at one destination therefore increases the likelihood of more migration to the same place.

Such social processes embrace non-migrants too: employers stimulate formal and informal recruitment and seek to retain capable workers. Certain individuals, groups or institutions take on the role of mediating between migrants and political or economic institutions. Krissman (2005) therefore argued that studies of migration networks should include the employers that demand new immigrant workers, as well as the smugglers and other actors that respond to this demand. A 'migration industry' emerges, consisting of employers, recruitment organizations, lawyers, agents, smugglers and other intermediaries (see Chapter 10) who have a strong interest in the continuation of migration. The cost and risk-reducing role of migration networks together with the emergence of a migration industry have often frustrated governments in their efforts to control migration (Castles, 2004a).

Transnational and diaspora theories

In recent decades a new body of theories on *transnationalism* and *transnational communities* has emerged, which argues that globalization has increased the ability of migrants to maintain network ties over long distances. Although rapid improvements in technologies of transport and communication have not necessarily increased migration, they have made it easier for migrants to foster close links with their societies of origin through (mobile) telephone, (satellite) television and the internet, and to remit money through globalized banking systems or informal channels. This has increased the ability of migrants to foster multiple identities, to travel back and forth, to relate to people, to work and to do business and politics simultaneously in distant places.

Debates on transnationalism were stimulated by the work of Basch *et al.* (1994), who argued that 'deterritorialized nation-states' were emerging, with important consequences for national identity and international politics. Portes defines transnational activities as 'those that take place on a recurrent basis across national borders and that require a regular and significant commitment of time by participants' (Portes, 1999: 464). Many researchers argue that globalization has led to a rapid proliferation of transnational communities (Vertovec, 1999: 447). Transnationalism can extend face-to-face communities based on kinship, neighbourhoods or workplaces into far-flung virtual communities, which communicate at a distance. Portes and his collaborators emphasize the significance of transnational business communities, but also note the importance of political and cultural communities. They distinguish between *transnationalism from above* – activities 'conducted by powerful institutional actors, such as multinational corporations and states' – and *transnationalism from below* – activities

'that are the result of grass-roots initiatives by immigrants and their home country counterparts' (Portes *et al.*, 1999: 221).

A much older term for transnational communities is *diaspora*. This concept goes back to ancient Greece: it meant 'scattering' and referred to city-state colonization practices. *Diaspora* is often used for peoples displaced or dispersed by force (e.g. the Jews; African slaves in the New World), but it has also been applied to certain trading groups such as Greeks in Western Asia and Africa, the Lebanese, or the Arab traders who brought Islam to South-East Asia, as well as to labour migrants (Indians in the British Empire; Italians in the USA; Maghrebis and Turks in Europe) (Cohen, 1997; Safran, 1991; Van Hear, 1998).

Although the term *diaspora* is now popularly used to denote almost any migrant community, researchers stress that *diaspora* communities have particular features which set them apart from other migrant communities. Cohen (1997) established a useful list, which include: dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions; the expansion from a homeland in pursuit of work or trade, or to further colonial ambitions; a collective memory, and myth about the homeland; a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time; and a sense of empathy and solidarity and the maintenance of 'transversal links' with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement.

Glick-Schiller (1999: 203) suggests the use of the term *transmigrant* to identify people who participate in transnational communities based on migration. Levitt and Glick-Schiller (2004: 1003) state that 'the lives of increasing numbers of individuals can no longer be understood by looking only at what goes on within national boundaries'. However, there is a danger of overstating this point. First of all, it would be misleading to think that past migrations could be entirely understood within the context of the state. Although modern technology may have increased its scope, transnationalism as such is anything but a new social phenomenon, as the historical cases of the Jewish and Armenian diasporas show.

Guarnizo *et al.* (2003: 1212) argue that the growing use of the term *transnational* has been accompanied by 'mounting theoretical ambiguity and analytical confusion'. Based on their survey of transnational political engagement among three Latin American immigrant groups (Colombians, Dominicans and Salvadorians) in four US metropolitan areas, Guarnizo *et al.* (2003) concluded that the number of immigrants regularly involved in cross-border political activism is relatively small. Their study also found that transnational political activity is far from being 'deterritorialized' or undermining the nation-state, and that there was no contradiction between transnational activism and participation of immigrants in the political institutions of the USA (Guarnizo *et al.*, 2003: 1239). Transnational political activities are generally not the refuge of the marginalized, but often include migrants with relatively high social status. This is an important observation, because politicians and academics often argue that transnational links can undermine integration in the receiving country.

Inflationary use of such terms as 'diasporas' and 'transnational communities' should be avoided. The majority of migrants probably do not fit the transnational pattern. Temporary labour migrants who sojourn abroad for a few years, send back remittances, communicate with their family at home and visit them occasionally are not necessarily 'transmigrants'. Nor are permanent migrants who leave forever, and retain only loose contact with their homeland.

Migration systems theory and cumulative causation

While migration network theories focus on the role of social capital, and transnational and diaspora theory on the role of identity formation, *migration systems theory* looks at how migration is intrinsically linked to other forms of exchange, notably flows of goods, ideas, and money; and how this changes the initial conditions under which migration takes place, both in origin and destination societies. *Migration systems theory* therefore allows us to deepen our understanding of how migration is embedded in broader processes of social transformation and development.

The geographer Mabogunje (1970), who pioneered migration systems theory, focused on the role of flows of information and new ideas (such as on the 'good life' and consumption patterns) in shaping migration systems. He stressed the importance of feedback mechanisms, through which information about the migrants' reception and progress at the destination is transmitted back to the place of origin. Favourable information would then encourage further migration and lead to situations of 'almost organized migratory flows from particular villages to particular cities.... In many North-African cities, for instance, it is not uncommon for an entire district or craft occupation in a city to be dominated by permanent migrants from one or two villages' (Mabogunje, 1970: 13). *Migration systems* link people, families, and communities over space. This encourages migration along certain spatial pathways, and discourages it along others. The end result is a set of relatively stable exchanges; yielding an identifiable geographical structure that persists across space and time' (Mabogunje, 1970: 12).

Information is not only *instrumental* in facilitating migration by increasing people's migratory *capabilities*, but new ideas and exposure to new life styles conveyed by migrants may also change people's cultural repertoires, preference and *aspirations*. Levitt (1998) coined the term *social remittances* to capture this flow of ideas, behavioural repertoires, identities and social capital from receiving to sending communities. The migration systems approach highlights the need to examine both ends of migration flows and to study all linkages between the places concerned – not just migration.

While Mabogunje focused on rural-urban migration within Africa, Krutz *et al.* (1992) and others applied this framework to international migration. International migration systems consist of countries – or rather

(NB)

places within different countries – that exchange relatively large numbers of migrants, and concomitant flows of goods, capital (remittances), ideas, and information (see also Fawcett, 1989; Gurak and Caces, 1992). Migration systems can be conceptualized at various levels of analysis. In the South Pacific, West Africa or the Southern Cone of Latin America we can identify regional migration systems (Kritz *et al.*, 1992). However, more distant regions may also be interlinked, such as the migration systems embracing the Caribbean, Western Europe and North America; or those linking Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, and Yemen to the Gulf countries.

The key implication of migration systems theory is that one form of exchange between countries or places, such as trade, is likely to engender other forms of exchange such as people, in both directions. Migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between countries based on colonization, political influence, trade, investment or cultural ties. Thus migration from Mexico originated in the south-westward expansion of the USA in the nineteenth century and the recruitment of Mexican workers by US employers in the twentieth century (Portes and Rumbaut, 2006: 354–5). Both the Korean and the Vietnamese migrations to the USA were consequences of US military involvement (Sassen, 1988: 6–9). The migrations from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh to Britain are linked to the British colonial presence on the Indian sub-continent. But it also works the other way around: large-scale migration between two countries tends to boost trade, capital flows, investment, travel and tourism between the same countries. This questions the popular assumption that migration can be reduced by increasing trade with origin countries, as both processes can actively reinforce each other.

In a seminal paper, Massey (1990) reintroduced Myrdal's (1957) concept of *cumulative causation* to express 'the idea that migration induces changes in social and economic structures that make additional migration likely' (Massey, 1990: 4–5). We can conceptualize such broader migration-affected changes in the communities and societies, which is their turn affect migration, as 'contextual feedback' mechanisms (de Haas, 2010b). The money remitted by migrants is a good example of such a contextual feedback mechanism. Remittances can increase income inequality in origin communities, which can subsequently increase feelings of relative deprivation and, hence, migration aspirations among non-migrants. Relative deprivation and migration-facilitating network effects often reinforce each other, while remittances may also be used to pay for new journeys. While pioneer migrants are often relatively well-off, such feedback mechanisms can make migration more accessible for poorer groups and lead to a diffusion of migration within and across communities (de Haas, 2010b; Jones, 1998b; Massey, 1990).

If migration becomes strongly associated with success, migrating can give rise to a 'culture of migration' in which migration becomes the norm and staying home is associated with failure (Massey *et al.*, 1993). Such migration-affected cultural change can further strengthen migration aspirations (de Haas, 2010b). Other examples of contextual feedback include the formation of immigrant-specific economic niches in destination countries

Table 2.1 Important feedback mechanisms perpetuating migration processes

Level	Domain		
	Social	Economic	Cultural
Intermediate (migrant group)	Migrant networks; 'Migration industry'	Remittance-financed migration	Transfers of migration-related ideas and information
Origin community (contextual)	Social stratification and relative deprivation	Income distribution, productivity and employment	Social remittances; culture of migration
Destination community (contextual)	Patterns of clustering, integration and assimilation	Demand for migrant labour generated by clusters of migrant businesses and sectors where immigrants concentrate	Transnational identities, demand for marriage partners from origin countries

Source: Adapted from de Haas (2010b).

which create a specialized demand for co-ethnic workers (e.g., Chinese cooks, Kosher or Halal butchers, musicians and clergymen). Table 2.1 summarizes the main contextual feedback mechanisms which have been identified in the literature; it shows the large extent to which social, economic and cultural transformation processes associated to migration are interrelated.

Understanding migration system breakdown

Theories on migrant networks, transnationalism, diasporas and migration systems are useful to understand the crucial role of migrants' agency in creating meso-level social, cultural and economic structures which tend to make migration processes self-sustaining. However, these theories also have a number of weaknesses. First, they cannot explain why most initial migration by pioneers does not lead to the formation of migration networks and migration systems (de Haas, 2010b). Through their exclusive focus on migration-facilitating mechanisms, they also have difficulties explaining the stagnation and weakening of migration systems over time. This is linked to their circular logic, according to which migration goes on *ad infinitum* (Böcker, 1994; de Haas, 2010b; Massey *et al.*, 1998). They do not specify under what general conditions migrant networks and migration systems weaken, or 'spontaneous' (pioneer) migration to new destinations occurs (de Haas, 2010b).

In order to understand these matters better, it is important to develop a more critical understanding of the role of social capital in migration processes (de Haas, 2010b). Portes (1998) criticized one-sided, positive interpretations of social capital by arguing that strong social capital can also have negative implications, such as exclusion of non-group members and other outsiders, excessive social and material claims on successful group members and freedom-restricting pressures for social conformity (Portes, 1998). These 'downsides' of social capital can be applied to understand non-formation and breakdown of migration networks. Tight networks may be extremely useful in facilitating migration of group members, but tend to exclude outsiders. Particular ethnic, religious or class groups can monopolize the access to migration opportunities, and this can explain the limited diffusion of migration within and across communities. Recent studies on Somali refugees and Moroccan migrants showed that constant claims by family and friend in origin communities on support by migrants can lead to social distancing and a declining appetite for network assistance (de Haas, 2010b; Lindley, 2012).

This may eventually lead to the breakdown of networks. Migration assistance does not automatically happen. After all, migrants have limited resources and might not always see the arrival of more immigrants as beneficial, particularly if they are perceived to compete for jobs, housing and other resources. This can explain why settled migrants can evolve from being 'bridgeheads' to 'gatekeepers', who are hesitant or outright reluctant to assist prospective migrants (Böcker, 1994; Collyer, 2005).

Migration transition theories

The danger of focusing on meso-level theories which explain the continuation of migration is to lose sight of how *macro-level* political and economic factors continue to affect migration processes. These include the structure of labour markets, inequality, interstate relationships and migration policies. Such macro-level factors (for instance, a worsening of economic conditions in destination countries) can be another reason why networks break down or migration diverts to new destinations. This highlights the need to connect theories focusing on agency and identities of migrant and the continuation of migration with macro-level theories on the structural causes of migration.

Despite their many differences, functionalist and historical-structural theories share the underlying assumption that migration is primarily an outgrowth of geographical inequalities. This assumption, which also predominates in the media and policy circles, informs the common idea that migration is a 'problem to be solved', and that this can be achieved by reducing inequality and stimulating development in origin societies. However, empirical observations have shown that development often increases emigration (cf. de Haas, 2010c; Skeldon, 1997; Tapinos, 1990). This is

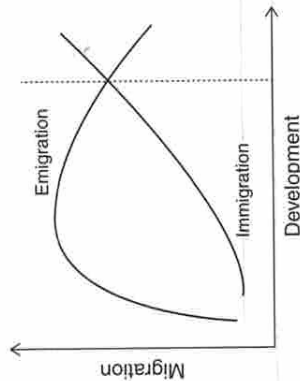
partly because people need resources to migrate. It is no coincidence that important emigration countries such as Mexico, Morocco and the Philippines are not amongst the poorest; and that emigrants from the poorest countries often come from relatively well-off families. The poorest usually only migrate if forced to by conflict or disasters, and then mainly move over short distances, while the extremely poor are often deprived of the capabilities to move at all. For instance, when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans in 2005, many of the (car-less) poor got trapped in the city.

A further explanation why development can lead to increased migration is provided by *migration transition theories*. These theories see migration as an *intrinsic* part of broader processes of development, social transformation and globalization. Transition theories conceptualize how the migration patterns tend to change over the course of development processes. In opposition to most other migration theories, they argue that development processes are generally associated with increasing levels of migration, but they also stress that this relation is complex and fundamentally *non-linear*. This idea was initially developed by Zelinsky (1971), who linked the several phases of the demographic transition (from high to low fertility and mortality) and concomitant development processes (which he called the 'vital transition') to distinctive phases in a 'mobility transition'. He argued that there has been a *general* expansion of individual mobility in modernizing societies, and that the specific character of migration processes changes over the course of this transition.

While pre-modern societies are characterized by limited circular migration, Zelinsky (1971) argued that all forms of internal and international mobility increase in early transitional societies due to population growth, a decline in rural employment and rapid economic and technological development. This was the case in early nineteenth-century Britain, just as it was in late nineteenth-century Japan, Korea in the 1970s and China in the 1980s and the 1990s. In late transitional societies, international emigration decreases with industrialization, declining population growth and rising wages, and falling rural-to-urban migration. As industrialization proceeds, labour supply declines and wage levels rise; as a result emigration falls and immigration increases (see Figure 2.1). In 'advanced societies' with low population growth, residential mobility, urban-to-urban migration and circular movements increase, and countries transform into net immigration countries.

Skeldon (1990; 1997) elaborated on and amended Zelinsky's seminal work and applied his model to actual patterns of migration at local, regional and global levels. The core of his argument was that

there is a relationship between the level of economic development, state formation and the patterns of population mobility. Very generally, we can say that where these are high, an integrated migration system exists consisting of global and local movements, whereas where they are low the migration systems are not integrated and mainly local. (Skeldon, 1997: 52)

Figure 2.1 *The migration transition*

Source: de Haas (2010c).

Skeldon also emphasized the vital role of state formation, for instance through processes of colonization and decolonization, in forging social, economic and political connections which tend to boost migration. He distinguished five global migration and development 'tiers': the old and new core countries (e.g., Western Europe, North America, Japan, South Korea) characterized by immigration; the 'expanding core' (e.g., Eastern China, Southern Africa, Eastern Europe) with high immigration and emigration as well as rural-to-urban migration; the so-called 'labour frontier' (e.g., Mexico, Morocco, Egypt, Turkey), which experience high emigration and rural-to-urban migration; and the 'resource niche' (e.g., many sub-Saharan countries, parts of Central Asia), with variable, weaker forms of migration and low international migration (Skeldon, 1997).

Skeldon emphasized the functional relations between adjacent migration and development tiers. For instance, the 'labour frontier' countries generating migration to the USA and EU tend to be middle-income, moderately developed countries such as Mexico, Turkey and Morocco. In such countries, rapid economic and demographic transitions coincide with a temporary surplus of young, often unemployed, adults who are often prone to migrate. Such countries are also better connected to wealthy countries in terms of infrastructure and flows of information, capital, goods and tourists. This combination of factors is likely to foster the emergence of migration systems between such societies.

Historical and contemporary experiences support the idea that countries go through such migration transitions as an intrinsic part of broader development processes. In their important study on European migration to North America between 1850 and 1913, Hatton and Williamson (1998), found support for the idea that development initially boosts migration. The relatively developed North-western European nations initially dominated migration to North America, with lesser developed Eastern and Southern European nations following suit only later. They found that migration was driven by the mass arrival of cohorts of young workers on the labour mar-

the facilitating role of migrant networks (see also Hatton and Williamson, 1998; Massey, 2000a).

More recently a study based on World Bank data confirmed that countries with medium levels of development generally have the highest emigration rates (de Haas, 2010c). Studies of migration flows from southern Europe between 1962 and 1988 (Faini and Venturini, 1994) and from Asia and Africa to Germany from 1981 to 1995 (Vogler and Rotte, 2000) showed that development loosens financial restrictions on migration.

Historical experiences support the idea that beyond a certain level of development, societies transform from net emigration into net immigration countries (Massey, 2000b). The migration transition of Southern European countries such as Spain and Italy (since the 1970s), Asian countries such as Malaysia, Taiwan, and South Korea (see DeWind *et al.*, 2012), and currently Turkey, Brazil and China seem to fit within this model.

The concept of migration transitions should be distinguished from the theory of the *migration hump*. Transition theory focuses on *long-term* associations between development and migration. The idea of the migration hump primarily refers to *short- to medium-term* hikes in emigration in the wake of trade reforms and other economic shocks, such as the post-communist reforms in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia. Within the context of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Martin (1993) and Martin and Taylor (1996) argued that adjustment to new economic market conditions is never instantaneous. While the negative impacts of liberalization (particularly on unemployment in previously protected sectors such as agriculture) are often immediate; the expansion of production even in sectors *potentially* favoured by trade reforms always takes time (Martin and Taylor, 1996: 52). So, we can expect more short-term migration even if the long-term effects of free trade would be beneficial.

The danger of transition theories is to think that development and demographic change *automatically* leads to certain migration outcomes or that migration transitions are *inevitable or irreversible*. Whether countries will transform from emigration into immigration countries depends on many factors such as political reform needed to create the conditions for sustained social and economic development (Castles and Delgado Wise, 2008; Nayar, 1994). Unequal terms of trade, higher productivity and economics of scale in wealthy countries may harm the competitiveness of poorer countries. Under such circumstances, liberalization can lead to further concentration of economic activities in wealthy countries along with sustained migration of labourers to support them. This may result in a 'migration plateau' of sustained out-migration (Martin and Taylor, 1996), which seems to be the case in countries such as Morocco, Egypt, and the Philippines. Migration transitions may also be reversed, if countries transform from net immigration into net emigration countries.

the twentieth century, and which seems to be happening in Ireland and southern Europe in response to the GEC.

Structure, capabilities, aspirations and migration

Transition theories argue that development *drives* migration and that developed societies generally experience higher levels of internal and international mobility. But transition theories are less strong in explaining why individual people would actually migrate more with increasing development. In order to reach a better understanding of how development processes affect people's propensity to migrate, it may be useful to conceptualize *individual migration* as a function of *capabilities* and *aspirations* to move (cf. Carling, 2002; de Haas, 2003).

Amartya Sen defined human *capability* as the ability of human beings to lead lives they have reason to value, and to enhance the substantive choices (or 'freedoms') they have (Sen, 1999). Sen's capabilities framework can be successfully applied to migration to develop a richer understanding of human mobility (de Haas, 2009). Income growth, improved education and access to information as well as improved communication and transport links increase people's capabilities to migrate over increasingly large distances. The same factors are also likely to increase awareness about lifestyles and opportunities elsewhere, which increase *aspirations* to migrate if local opportunities no longer match rising life aspirations. With development, both *capabilities* and *aspirations* to migrate can increase fast, explaining the paradox that 'take-off' development often coincides with 'take-off' emigration (de Haas, 2010c). While migration *capabilities* will further increase with development, we can expect that migration *aspirations* are likely to decrease beyond a certain level of development, particularly when opportunity gaps with destination countries decrease significantly.

There are other, structural reasons why migration and mobility in highly developed societies tend to remain high. Besides the expansion of transport and communication infrastructure, increasing levels of education and occupational specialization generate migration of people who seek to match their particular skills and preferences to particular jobs. The specialization and segmentation of labour markets typically increases with education and economic development, and migration therefore remains an essential mechanism to make demand meet supply both domestically and internationally. Obviously, this labour market complexity argument is related to several elements of *human capital theory*, *globalization theory* and *segmented labour market theory*. Such factors help to understand why high emigration and immigration remains a structural feature of developed countries and does not decrease as push-pull models, neoclassic and historical-structural theories predict.

Conceptualizing migration as a function of capabilities and aspirations to move within a given set of structural constraints may also help us to bridge certain distinctions between migration categories. An example is

the dichotomy between 'forced' and 'voluntary' migration. Rather than applying such dichotomous classifications, it seems more appropriate to conceive of a continuum running from low to high constraints under which migration occurs, in which all migrants have agency and deal with structural constraints, although to *highly varying degrees* (see de Haas, 2009).

From a capabilities perspective, the term 'forced migration' can therefore be an oxymoron, because people need to have a certain level of agency in order to move. In situations of violent conflict, economic crisis, environmental degradation or natural disaster, the most deprived are typically the ones 'forced to stay'. In the same vein, restrictive migration policies decrease capabilities to migrate among people who aspire to do so, and this can create situations of 'involuntary immobility' (Carling, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed the most important migration theories. One central argument is that we should conceptualize migration as an *intrinsic* part of broader processes of development, social transformation and globalization. Instead of reducing migration to more or less passive or predictable responses to poverty and spatial equilibria, as predicted by push-pull models, neoclassical and historical-structural theories, development processes tend to *drive migration* by increasing capabilities and aspirations to move.

A second argument is that migration processes have internal dynamics based on social networks and other contextual feedback mechanisms, which often give migration processes their own momentum. These internal dynamics are a testimony to the *agency* of migrants, leading to the formation of immigrant communities in receiving countries, the emergence of international networks and the rise of new transnational identities, which facilitate reverse flows of money (financial remittances) and ideas (social remittances) to origin societies. By lowering social, economic and psychological costs and risks, such feedback mechanisms can facilitate more migration between particular places and countries. In this way, migrants are frequently able to defy and circumvent government restrictions, often making migration notoriously difficult for governments to control.

A third argument is that the acknowledgment of migrants' agency should not obscure the real constraints migrants face. While theories on networks, transnationalism, diasporas and migration systems help us to understand how migrants can actively overcome structural constraints, they cannot explain why not all migrants are eager to help others to come, how migrants can behave like *gatekeepers* instead of *bridgeheads* and why networks decline. It would also be naive to assume that migration continues irrespective of changes in macro-level conditions such as political transformation, economic growth or labour market dynamics. Examination of historical and contemporary migrations (see Chapters 4–8) shows that sending and receiving states continue to play a major role in initiating and shaping movements.

In their important survey of migration theories, Massey *et al.* (1993) argue that the various theories operate at different levels of analysis and focus on different aspects of migration, but that they all provide important insights into migration. However, this does not mean that all theories can be combined. For instance, neoclassical and historical-structural and neo-Marxist theories are based on different assumptions on what causes migration. However, insights from both theories can be useful to understand particular manifestations of migration occurring in particular contexts or at different levels of analysis.

For instance, while neoclassical theories seem useful to understand much migration of the highly educated within and among wealthy countries, historical-structural theory and the new economics of labour migration and livelihood approaches seem useful to understand migration taking place under conditions of poverty and oppression. It may be possible to perceive irregular migration between Mexico and the USA or between Morocco and the EU as part of a labour exploitation mechanism on the macro-structural level which mainly benefits employers, while at the same time acknowledging that, for the migrants themselves, it can be a rational strategy as remittances may enable them to significantly improve the living conditions of their families. This example shows that there is a danger in subscribing to one particular train of theoretical thought when we try to understand migration.

It is regularly argued that attempts at theorizing migration are futile because migration is such a diverse and complex process. This is not a very convincing argument, because, after all, almost all social processes are complex by nature. Complexity does not imply that there are no patterns and that no regularities can be discerned. One can even argue that migration is actually a strongly patterned process, with most people migrating along a select number of specific spatial pathways as a result of networks and other migration system dynamics.

The differing theoretical approaches lead to different ideas for migration policy. Neoclassical economists sometimes advocate 'open borders' and 'freedom of migration', believing that this will increase efficiency and lead to a global equalization of wage levels and opportunities in the long run. However, critics argue that immigration mainly serves the interest of capital by depressing wage levels – especially for low-skilled work – and undermining the bargaining power of trade unions. This is why left-wing parties and trade unions have historically opposed recruitment of guest workers and other low-skilled workers, or demanded safeguards, such as equal pay and conditions so as not to undermine the position of local workers. Historical-structural perspectives also argue that migration deprives poor countries of vital human resources through the *brain drain* (see Chapter 3). This is why, until recently, many developing countries have tried to limit or prevent emigration.

The new economics and livelihood approaches explain migration occurring within and from developing countries due to economic insecurity,

inequality (relative deprivation) and market failure. Within this perspective, policies concerned merely with controlling exit or entry are unlikely to succeed, but origin country governments could perhaps affect migration indirectly through progressive taxation and other policies decreasing income inequality and increasing the access of the poor to insurance, credit, public health, education, state pensions and other social benefits (see also Massey *et al.*, 1998: 27). As Kureková (2011) has shown for post-communist migration from Central and Eastern Europe, social spending and increased social security may reduce forms of migration that are primarily driven by inequality and livelihood insecurity.

Segmented labour market theory focuses on the demand-side, emphasizing that migration is driven by a demand for immigrant labour that is structurally embedded in modern capitalist economies. Strong employer demand for cheap migrant labour that is easy to control and exploit (such as irregular migrants) creates black markets for migrant labour and opportunities for smugglers and recruitment agents, which, in combination with the migration-facilitating role of networks, is likely to undermine restrictive immigration policies. Governments could counteract undocumented migration mainly through measures to increase labour market regulation, improve workers' protection and to remove incentives for employing irregular or temporary workers. However, this could render unviable important sectors of business, such as agriculture, food processing and labour-intensive services by pushing up labour costs.

While states do often play a key role in initiating migration processes, network, migration systems and segmented labour markets theories help to explain why migration processes tend to gain their own momentum, often frustrating states' efforts to control migration (see Chapter 10). This seems particularly true for liberal democracies, which have limited legal means to control migration, in particular of family migrants. World systems, globalization and, particularly, transition theories argue that social transformation and development processes drive migration, and that it is very difficult to significantly affect long-term migration trends, unless states and multinational organizations introduce rather radical changes in their political and economic systems. The key lesson is perhaps that while states are in many ways shaping migration processes, this influence is primarily felt through non-migration policies.

Guide to further reading

Some valuable overviews of migration theory are available: Massey *et al.* (1993; 1998) provide an important overview and discussion of most theories, while Brettell and Hollifield (2007) brings together contributions of several social scientific disciplines. Skeldon (1997) is an excellent introduction into the relation between migration and broader development

processes. Important collections on migration theory can be found in special issues of the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Castles *et al.*, 2010) and *Population, Space and Place* (Smith and King, 2012), and the *International Migration Review*.

Sassen (1988) gives an original perspective on the political economy of migration, while Borjas (1990; 2001) presents the neoclassical view. Krutz *et al.* (1992) is an excellent collection on migration systems theory. Good introductions to transnational communities include Basch *et al.* (1994), Cohen (1997), Portes *et al.* (1999), Vertovec (1999; 2004) and Faist (2000). Van Hear (1998) discusses transnational theory from the perspective of refugee movements. Amongst the many works on globalization and social transformation, the following are useful as introductions: Castells (1996; 1997; 1998), Held *et al.* (1999), Bauman (1998), Stiglitz (2002) and Cohen and Kennedy (2000).

Chapter 3

How Migration Transforms Societies

Migration raises high hopes and deep fears: hopes for the migrants themselves, for whom migration often embodies the promise of a better future. At the same time, migration can be a dangerous undertaking, and every year thousands die in attempts to cross borders. Family and friends are often left behind in uncertainty. If a migrant fails to find a job or is expelled, it can mean the loss of all family savings. However, if successful, migration can mean a stable source of family income, decent housing, the ability to cure an illness, resources to set up a business and the opportunity for children to study.

In receiving societies, migration is equally met with ambiguity. Settler societies, nascent empires and bustling economies have generally welcomed immigrants, as they fill labour shortages, boost population growth, and stimulate businesses and trade. However, particularly in times of economic crisis and conflict, immigrants are often the first to be blamed for problems, and face discrimination, racism and sometimes violence. This particularly applies to migrants who look, behave or believe differently than majority populations.

While Chapter 2 analysed how larger processes of development, social transformation and globalization affect migration, this chapter turns the analysis around and discusses how migration transforms societies of destination and origin. The first half focuses on processes of migrant settlement and incorporation, the formation of ethnic communities and minorities, and how this process transforms receiving societies. (However, the effects of immigration on labour forces and the economy are discussed in Chapter 11.) The second half of Chapter 3 focuses on the impacts of migration on development in origin societies. The two topics need to be linked with each other, because the relation between migration and broader change is a reciprocal one. Some of the theories discussed in Chapter 2 are therefore relevant here too.

Migration researchers have traditionally focused on the implications of migration for receiving societies. This 'receiving country bias' is unfortunate, because the impacts on origin societies are equally, if not more profound (Portes, 2010). There is also a need to shift away from views in which Western (or 'Northern') countries are automatically defined as receiving societies, and developing 'Southern' countries as sending or 'origin' countries. In reality, many countries both receive and send significant numbers of migrants. It is important to realize that many other countries, such as Argentina, Venezuela, Brazil, South Africa, Côte