Migration Conceptual Framework:
Why do people move to work in another place of country
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Introduction

We live in a world shaped by human migration. Every day, people make a decision to leave their hometown - or even their own country - and move elsewhere to work, study, retire, or reunite with their families. Migration has changed the demographic composition of towns, cities, and nations. Consider that in 1960 there were only 30 countries in the world that had at least a half million international migrants each. By 2005, the number of such countries doubled, bringing the total number of foreign-born residents globally to 191 million people Millions of others, known as internal migrants, migrated from one place to another within a single country. Although people migrate for many reasons, this module will focus primarily on one particular type of migration known as labor migration. In this Conceptual Framework, you will learn some of the concepts and theories that geographers use to examine patterns of labor migration at different geographical scales, preparing you to analyze how migration works and how different types of migration flows have changed over time.

Migration at Different Scales

To begin, let's introduce some terminology that will be useful for analyzing patterns of migration. Two concepts, emigration and immigration, are complementary processes that describe the movements of people over geographic space between two different countries or regions in any part of the world. It is important to remember that people emigrate from a particular country and immigrate to another country. Both emigration and immigration can refer to many different types of migrants. If you read books or visit websites related to migration you will probably find different methods of classifying migrants for economic and political reasons. For the purpose of this module, we will focus our discussion primarily on how these terms relate to labor migrations. It is useful to differentiate migrants on the basis of the (intended) length of their stay, as follows.

A. Long-term Migration

Examples of people in this category include:

1) Labor migrants. (These can be either high-skilled or low-skilled workers who seek permanent

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2) Professional, business or investor migrants. (e.g., Individuals in specific professions, or those who invest or establish businesses in a receiving country)

3) Forced migrants. (e.g., Political or religious refugees and asylum seekers)

B. Temporary Migration

Examples of people in this category include:

1) Labor migrants (e.g. Seasonal migrants, laborers on temporary working visas, or commuter migrants)

2) Professional and business migrants (e.g., Diplomats and other business migrants, religious migrants)

3) Student and scholar migrants (e.g., Degree-seeking students, short-term students, and exchange scholars)

Note that this classification scheme can be related either to international or internal flows of migrants. In this module, we focus on two scales. International flow means the movement of migrants from one country to another within a continent or to more distant countries. Internal flows refer to migration between areas or regions inside a single country.

Although refugees and other types of forced migrants have a different legal status compared to "normal" migrants, many of them eventually join the labor markets of the receiving countries. We therefore include them in our discussion of labor migration.

Migration Flows in the Globalized World

One of the important spatial flows shaping the global economy today is the migration of people at local, regional, territorial, and continental scales. Migration today is a strong expression of spatial flows, which gives not only life and energy to the dynamic global economy, but also to changes in demography, societies, and cultures.

The attraction of more economically developed places for migrants has always provided the incentives for some people to move. When people move to new places looking for a job or better economic conditions, they are considered to be labor migrants. Throughout history, labor migration has been an important type of flow, but it has acquired greater importance today because of the new dynamism of the global economy. Countries, transnational corporations, and international organizations have shaped a complex web of attractions that people follow. However, there are also regions and places from which people emigrate through multiple processes. Sometimes people migrate because of a lack of employment opportunities locally, a low quality of life or poor environmental conditions, or if they fear for their own personal security. Social and political convulsions, perhaps with cultural or religious overtones, are other factors that can cause people to move from one place to another place.

A globalizing world brings greater interaction among countries, regions, and institutions. Increasing and intensified labor migration is an important component of the globalization process, as some people migrate from city to city or emigrate from their home country to work in another country. However, labor migration also plants a seed for increasing inequalities between places and countries. The old expression of spatial movement of people has been transformed into new forms of migration flows, which bring opportunities and advantages but also risks and disadvantages

Theories of Migration

When investigating migration flows, researchers have discovered that the predisposition of young people to migrate could be consistently higher than other age groups when the area of origin is rural. This type of migration, from rural settlements to urban locations, is almost always permanent. It is frequently preceded by several rural-to-rural movements as a process of progressive adaptation to more complex social environments. Both stage and stepwise migration characterize the rural flows among several small towns (Muniz, 1981). Flows from urban to rural areas also exist; one example of this kind is known as "back-to-the-land movement" (Jacob, 1996, 1997; Halfacree, 2007), where urbanites decide to leave their congested places to reside in rural areas where they can have better quality of life. Such migration flows are found generally in more developed countries, while rural-to-urban flows are much more typical in less developed countries.

The question of how far migrants can travel has been the focus of the classical migration studies since Ravenstein's Law of Migration, which recognized the relevance of distance as a factor of migration (Ravenstein 1885). One of the basic works on migration and distance investigates population movements from one city to another. George Zipf (1946) tried to explain urban-to-urban migration by the principle of least effort. According to Zipf's theory, the number of migrants from one city to another is a function of the distance separating the cities, since the effort and cost required to cover greater distances would increase with the distance traveled. Traditionally, geographers recognize that the "friction of distance" acts on human movements, meaning that the frequency of these movements decreases with increasing distance. This relationship is known as distance-decay or inverse-distance relationships.

Push and Pull Factors

Analyzing labor migration also requires us to consider factors other than distance. We need to also think about the geographical context of both the places where people leave and the places where people go.

Geographers summarize the motivations for migration by considering how the relationship between two points (origin and destination) are affected by push factors and pull factors. Push factors exist at the point of origin and act to trigger emigration; these include the lack of economic opportunities, religious

or political persecution, hazardous environmental conditions, and so on. Pull factors exist at the destination and include the availability of jobs, religious or political freedom, and the perception of a relatively benign environment. Pushes and pulls are complementary - that is, migration can only occur if the reason to emigrate (the push) is remedied by the corresponding pull at an attainable destination. In the context of labor migration, push factors are often characterized by the lack of job opportunities in sending areas or countries, and pull factors are the economic opportunities presented in receiving areas or countries.

The flow of migrants between two places may not totally develop if intervening obstacles exist between them. The number of migrants is directly proportional to the number of opportunities at a given place and inversely proportional to the number of intervening obstacles. (One may also think of intervening obstacles as intervening opportunities; that is, the presence of other places between an origin and destination point to which one could migrate.) Therefore, the volume of migration from one place to another is associated not only with the distance between places and number of people in the two places, but also with the number of opportunities or obstacles between each place. This is especially true in labor migration.

Figure-1 summarizes Lee's (1966) push-pull theory in graphic form. It shows possible migration between a place of origin and a place of destination, with positive and negative signs signify pull and push factors, respectively. Flows take place between two places, but there are intervening obstacles to these spatial movements. Although these obstacles are represented by "mountain" shapes, keep in mind that the obstacles need not be limited to physical barriers. Restrictive immigration laws, for example, can present a formidable barrier to prospective migrants. Note that both the origin and destination have pushes and pulls, reflecting the reality that any migrant must consider both the positives of staying and the negatives of moving, as well as their converses. The logic of the push-pull theory is that if the plusses (pulls) at the destination outweigh the plusses of staying at the origin, as shown below, them migration is likely to occur.
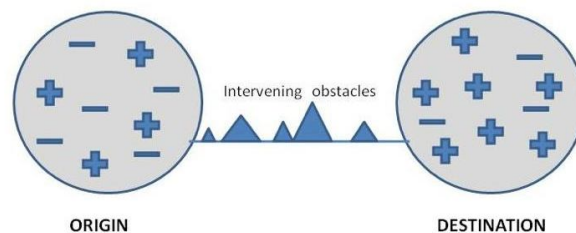

Figure 1. Lee's Push-Pull Theory (*Source*: Based on Lee, 1966)

Long-Distance Migration

There is also a temporal dimension to a migrant's perception of distance. Today, people tend to travel greater distances than in the past. This change has come about as a result of several factors, such as improved transportation modes and communication systems.

Distance perception by people is one of the issues which have been discussed in several studies (Haggett 1965; Lowrey 1970; Briggs 1973; Lewis 1982). One of the earliest studies on distance perception stated that purely physical distance does not adequately explain interaction intensity between places, and therefore should be replaced by a new concept related to functional distance (Hagerstrand 1957). Distance tolerance is perhaps a more realistic concept than distance perception, because it accounts for not only available infrastructure and conditions to move, but also an individual's interest in moving.

As noted earlier, classic studies on migration stated that most migration occurs over a short distance. The number of migrants arriving in a given location was thought to decrease as the distance required for travel to that location increased. However, most recent studies talk about long-distance movements to global cities and the "friction" of distance has been reduced to a minimum in those cases. Long-distance migration does not diffuse uniformly throughout the whole urban hierarchical system when migration develops globally. There is a stage migration that still goes on in the lower urban hierarchy. Migrants still tend to move from one small city to a larger one, being replaced by other migrants who follow those early migrants. However, there is an increasing number of migrants who move from small cities to large global cities, avoiding a great variety of intermediate urban sites.

Migrant Selectivity

The hypothesis presented by Todaro (1969) and Harris and Todaro (1970) related to rural-to-urban migration is an important model for migration analysis when people move from rural towns to urban sites. They hypothesize that individuals migrate to urban sectors with the objective of obtaining employment in the formal sector and that informal sector employment is a transitional phase during which migrants are looking for a more formal job. Their seminal work based on a model of interregional migration is characterized by a certain degree of selectivity (Harris and Todaro 1970). The Todaro model suggests that younger migrants increase the time period for expected income. Also, migrants with a higher level of education have a higher probability of obtaining formal employment. Married migrants are expected to have lower level of migration rates, because of the higher costs related to relocation of the whole family (Mincer 1978). Migration is essentially selective. Despite some exceptions, for example forced migration or movements to colonization projects, the vast majority of migration contain an element of migrant selectivity (also known as differentiation). In general, selectivity occurs because there are distinct

differences between the interests of the individuals who belong to various social groups. The most commonly examined personal differences are related to age, gender, level of education, socio-professional status, marital status, and housing situation (owner or renter of property). Consequently, such attitudinal differences are manifested in behavioral differences with respect to staying in or leaving the community (White and Woods 1980). Younger people, for example, are more likely to migrate than older persons. Figure 2 illustrates an important aspect of migrant selectivity, known as "chain migration" (Cox 1972). This refers to the subsequent migration of families and relatives, following the initial move by the first migrants from a community. As the graphic illustrates, as family or friends migrate, a network of information flows back to the point of origin, reducing the obstacles to migration for later migrants.
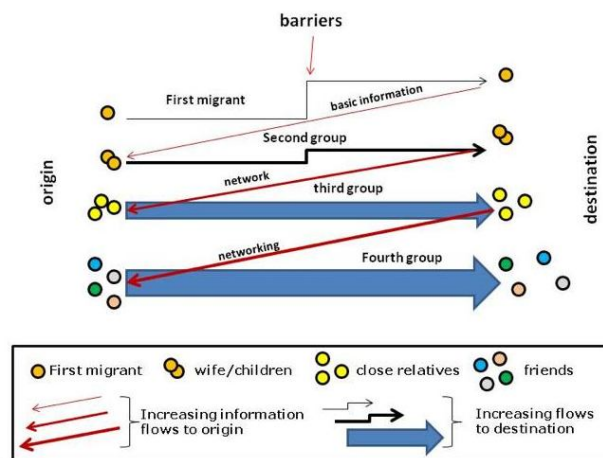

Figure 2. Chain Migration and Network Development
Source: Adapted from Muñiz (2006)

The movement of people is also a result of the degree of connectivity within a given system. Connections and subsequent interactions among centers imply specific complementarities. In other words, migration is more likely between two places that have existing connections between them than between places that are disconnected. Potential migrants are likely to value different attributes of places, to have different information available to them, and therefore to react in different manners. Today, information is widely available and updated through complex networks of professionals and organizations. New worldwide migrants rely on these complex networks, which are dynamic in essence, converting these networks into very sophisticated networking systems. Highly specialized professionals and workers are fed with information and move within these networks to satisfy transnational corporation demands in order to fulfill their activities in different regions of the world.

Critiques and New Directions

The classic theory of push-pull migration has been criticized as being "rationalist" for focusing only on individual choice based on economic rationales (e.g., where the cost of staying at the origin is less than the benefit of migrating). Contemporary scholarship on migration also examines societal opportunity structures and obstacles (a "structuralist" approach), gender differences, and the roles of intermediaries (such as agencies and organizations that help migrants) to the household or family as decision-making units (Brettell and Hollifield 2008). New theories on migration, especially pertaining to space-time relationships, have been developed and/or used by geographers. Of importance to this module is the transnationalism theory developed by anthropologists but used heavily among geographers and other social scientists (Hardwick 2008).

Transnationalism theory posits that contemporary immigrants maintain transnational connections to their countries of origin and beyond. These transnational connections are seen to have multiple dimensions and reflect complex migrant experiences in term of both "from the above" and "from below" perspectives. The former can be seen to apply to the "global trekking" behaviors of transnational corporate executives, and the latter more in terms of transnational activities among regular migrants, which are characterized by cross-border travel, communication, financial, and other linkages as a result of contemporary technological breakthroughs in communication and transportation (Beaverstock 2005; Clark 2005; Kelly and Lusis 2006; Snel *et al*. 2006; Sassen 2007; Yeoh *et al*. 2003). Conceptual analyses and empirical studies on the economic aspects of transnationalism have focused on transnational corporations, globetrotting transnational elites, and global family businesses, as well as cross-border economic activities such as remittances. Contemporary globalization trends further enable such transnational connections, as trans-national corporations play increasingly important roles in the world economy and migration flows.

Conclusion

In summary, boundaries between nation-states are undermined as the globalization of labor increasingly connects countries of varying levels of economic development. Migrants also move because they are looking for better educational opportunities for themselves and their offspring. Still others are forced migrants because of political unrest, war, polluted environments, or natural disasters in their places of origin, yet they nevertheless have an impact on the labor market. The geographic patterns formed by these migration flows have changed over time with the advent of new communication technologies and faster transportation systems around the world.

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