

**TRANSMIC TRAINING SEMINAR**  
**Migration Theory – Introductory Seminar**  
**12-15 January 2015**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

In order to gain a theoretical and comprehensive understanding of human mobility, this introductory seminar aims to elaborate an understanding of migration as an intrinsic part of broader processes of development and social transformation instead of a problem to be ‘solved’ or ‘managed.’ This requires us to radically shift away from conventional “push-pull” models and to fundamentally rethink the nature and causes of human mobility. While the truism holds that most people migrate in search of better opportunities, conventional migration theories often fail to explain real-world migration patterns while rigid categories used by scholars and politicians tend to ignore migrants’ experiences and agency. Common ‘push-pull’ and neoclassical models are simplistic in their inability to explain why people tend to move between specific places, regions and countries or why ‘development’ is often associated to more, instead of less, migration.. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, several theories have evolved which either (1) explain the initiation or the ‘root causes’ of migration; (2) analyse the social and economic impacts of migration in receiving and sending societies; or (3) explain why, once started, migration processes tend to gain their own momentum – migration leading to more migration – through ‘internal dynamics’ such as migrant networks. These theories have largely been developed separately within the various disciplines of social sciences (sociology, economics, anthropology, geography, demography) and offer varying, often contradicting interpretations and understandings of migration.

## **2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this seminar is to introduce students into the main migration theories and their links to general social-scientific theory, which will help to improve their understanding of the nature, causes and consequences of migration processes. This will be done by reading and discussing key migration texts and overview publications. The conflicting assumptions and predictions of these theories will be discussed in order to analyse their strengths and weaknesses in the face of empirical evidence. The course will also address the scope to combine different theories on the (1) causes, (2) effects and the (3) continuation of migration into a more comprehensive theoretical perspective on migration. It will show how an improved theoretical understanding of migration challenges conventional (policy-driven) migration categories and distinctions, for instance between ‘internal’ and ‘international’ migration and ‘forced’ (political) and ‘voluntary’ (economic) migration, which often do not reflect migrants’ experiences and ignores their agency. An improved theoretical understanding of migration processes also enables a more realistic assessment of what migration policies can and cannot achieve.

### 3. FORMAT

The programme consists of four sessions spread over four days. There will be two sessions each day. The morning sessions will be devoted to lectures by the course leader. The afternoon sessions consist of group exercises and discussions. The group exercises require work in advance.

All sessions are structured as follows:

1. The lecturer will briefly introduce the theme and readings.
2. At the start of each session, some students will be asked to discuss the literature, consisting of a summary and analysis of the main points covered in each reading.
3. Group discussion around the questions belonging to each session.
  - All students are required to prepare responses to all questions, drawing on the literature and their own critical skills.
  - At the start of the discussion, students will be asked to present their answers on the questions.
  - Potentially, discussions are pursued in break-out groups to be reported in plenary session.
4. The second half of each session will consist of a lecture with room for questions and discussion.

It is *essential* that participants attend all sessions, read the literature, write down answers to the questions *before* each session and actively contribute to the discussions.

The general literature for this part consists of the following publications.

Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas, and Mark J. Miller. 2014 *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. Fifth revised and updated edition ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Press Ltd.,

Massey DS, Arango J, Hugo G, Kouaouci A, Pellegrino A, Taylor JE. 1993. Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review* 19:431-66

To get a general overview of debates and theories, **students are strongly encouraged to read Massey *et al.* (1993) and Castles *et al.* 2014 (chapters 1-3) before the course starts.** For each session, students will read specific sections of the above literature and additional journal articles.

## PROGRAMME

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### 1. MIGRATION THEORIES: UNDERSTANDING HUMAN MOBILITY (Monday 12 January 2015, 9.00-13.00)

#### *Topics*

- Why do we need theory? What is theory?
- The need to challenge conventional wisdoms on migration
- Trend, patterns and drivers of contemporary migration
- Definitions - Questioning conventional (legal) migration categories
- Why ‘push-pull’ is not a theory
- The role of agency and structure in migration processes
- Structuralist-functionalist-structuration paradigms in social theory
- The importance of distancing vis-a-vis policy objectives
- Critique on sedentarist and Eurocentric assumptions and Eurocentrism.
- Learning to see migration as an intrinsic part of development and social transformation

#### *Required readings:*

Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas, and Mark. J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 5th revised edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Press Ltd, **chapter 1, chapter 2, pages 25-28**

de Haas, Hein. 2005. "International migration, remittances and development: Myths and facts." *Third World Quarterly* 26 (8):1269-84.

#### *Questions for discussion*

- (1) We know why people migrate. We don't need theories to understand that.
- (2) Migration is too complex and no general migration theory will therefore ever arise.
- (3) In relative terms, the volume of international migration has barely increased over the past 50 years. However, there is a widespread assumption that we live in an age of unprecedented migration. How can we explain this contradiction?
- (4) To what extent are conventional ways of categorising migrants (e.g., internal vs international migration; labour vs. family; forced vs. voluntary migration) useful to understand migration? What are potential problems?
- (5) To what extent can we analyse causes and consequences of migration separately?
- (6) To what extent should migration research be policy-relevant?

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#### *Additional literature*

Arango, J. 2000 'Explaining Migration: A Critical View' *International Social Science Journal* 52 (165), 283–296.

de Haas, H. (2014.). *Migration theory: Quo vadis?* IMI/DEMIG working paper no 100. Oxford, International Migration Institute, University of Oxford. <http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk/pdfs/wp/WP-100.pdf>

## 2. THE CAUSES AND CONTINUATION OF MIGRATION (Tuesday 13 January 2015, 9.00-13.00)

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### Topics

- Functionalist theory
- Neo-classical migration economics: macro and micro theory
- Human capital theory and migration selectivity
- Structuralist theory
- World systems, neo-Marxist and dependency theory
- Dual/Segmented labour market theory
- Neo-liberal globalisation and new international divisions of labour
- The continuation of migration
- Transnationalism and network theory
- Cumulative causation and migration system theory
- From bridgeheads to gatekeepers

### Required readings:

- Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas, and Mark. J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 5<sup>th</sup> revised edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Pres ltd, read **chapter 2, pages 28-46**
- Massey DS, Arango J, Hugo G, Kouaouci A, Pellegrino A, Taylor JE. 1993. Theories of international migration: A review and appraisal. *Population and Development Review* 19(3) 431-466

### Questions / statements for discussion

- (1) Which migration phenomena can and cannot be explained by neo-classical migration theory? (give examples)
- (2) How can historical-structural theories help to improve understanding migration patterns? (examples)
- (3) What do different theories predict about the effects of immigration restrictions on the trends and patterns of migration?
- (4) To what extent can we combine different migration theories?
- (5) Why do most initial migrations not evolve into the network-driven evolution of migration systems?
- (6) There are more net emigration countries now than in 1960. This shows the unrealistic nature of transition theories.

### Additional, recommended literature

- Collyer, Michael, 2005, 'When Do Social Networks Fail to Explain Migration?', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 31(4): 699-718.
- de Haas, H. (2010). "The internal dynamics of migration processes: A theoretical inquiry." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36(10): 1587-1617.
- Lee ES. 1966. A Theory of Migration. *Demography* 3:47-57
- Todaro MP. 1969. A model of labor migration and urban unemployment in less-developed countries. *American Economic Review* 59:138-48
- Sjaastad, A.H. 1962. "The Costs and Returns of Human Migration." *Journal of Political Economy* 70 (5):80-93.

### 3. MIGRATION AS DEVELOPMENT (Wednesday 14 January 2014, 9.00-13.00)

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#### *Topics*

- Relation between economic and demographic transitions and migration patterns and trends
- Poverty and migration revisited
- The hypothesis of the mobility transition
- Transition theories
- The migration hump
- The capabilities-aspirations framework
- Mobility as the capacity to choose where to live
- The nature and effectiveness of migration policies
- The crucial role of states and non-migration policies

#### *Required readings:*

Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas, and Mark. J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 5th revised edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Pres Ltd, **chapter 2, pages 46-54, chapters 10 and 14**.

Zelinsky, W. "The Hypothesis of the Mobility Transition." *Geographical Review* 61, no. 2 (1971): 219-49.

#### *Questions for discussion*

- (1) What are the main differences between transition and other theories on the causes of migration (discussed in session 2)?
- (2) According to transition theory, what is the predicted effect of development on immigration and emigration levels? Differentiate between countries with low, medium and high development levels.
- (3) What does transition theory predict for the future of migration from Morocco and Turkey to Europe; from Mexico to the US; and for migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe?
- (4) Why has world migration not slowed down while many states now *officially* aim to restrict immigration? Which theoretical insights can help us to understand this?
- (5) Why do migration policies often fail to meet their stated objectives?

All students are required to prepare responses to all questions, drawing on the literature and their own critical skills.

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#### *Additional suggested publications for those interested in this topic*

- Carling, J. (2002). "Migration in the age of involuntary immobility: theoretical reflections and Cape Verdean experiences" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* **28**(1): 5-42.
- de Haas, H. (2007) 'Turning the tide? Why development will not stop migration', *Development and Change* 38(5): 819-841.
- Skeldon R. 1997. *Migration and development: A global perspective*. Essex: Longman
- Skeldon, R. (2012). "Migration Transitions Revisited: Their Continued Relevance for The Development of Migration Theory." *Population, Space and Place* **18**(2): 154-166.

#### 4. HOW MIGRATION TRANSFORMS SOCIETIES (Thursday 15 January 2015, 9.00-13.00)

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- From migration to settlement
- Incorporation and ethnic minority formation
- State, nation and citizenship
- The transformation of origin societies
- The migration and development pendulum: optimists vs pessimists
- Remittances, poverty, and inequality
- Social and political remittances
- Migration and development as a neoliberal delusion
- Migration and class
- Policy considerations

##### *Required readings:*

- Bakewell, Oliver. (2008). Keeping Them in Their Place: The ambivalent relationship between development and migration in Africa." *Third World Quarterly* 29(7): 1341-1358.
- Castles, Stephen, Hein de Haas, and Mark. J. Miller. 2014. *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*. 5<sup>th</sup> revised edition. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire and London: MacMillan Pres ltd, **chapter 4**
- Van Hear, N. (2014). "Reconsidering Migration and Class." *International Migration Review* 48: S100-S121.

##### *Questions for discussion*

- (1) Why does emigration and remittances seem more beneficial for 'development' in some than in other countries?
- (2) Why have remittances become so "popular" in policy and research?
- (3) Why do some migrants return, and others not? How do different theories interpret return migration? Is return an indication of success or failure?
- (4) Migrants' transnational engagement hinders integration in destination societies.
- (5) How do different modes of socio-cultural and economic integration of migrants in destination societies affect the developmental impacts of migration on origin countries?
- (6) What policies in origin and destination societies can enhance development impacts of migration?

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##### *Additional general reviews of development impacts of migration and remittances*

- Josh DeWind; Richard H. Adams, Jr.; Hein de Haas; Una Osili Ukonkwo (2009) Web Anthology on Migrant Remittances and Development: Research Perspectives. Published by SSRN (New York, US).  
[http://essays.ssrc.org/remittances\\_anthology/?page\\_id=3](http://essays.ssrc.org/remittances_anthology/?page_id=3) This is an online resource containing reviews on remittances and developments and a range of downloadable research papers.
- de Haas, H. (2010). "Migration and Development: A theoretical perspective." *International Migration Review* 44 (1): 227-264.
- Özden Ç, Schiff M, eds. 2005. *International migration, remittances, and the brain drain*. Washington DC: The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank
- Taylor JE. 1999. The new economics of labour migration and the role of remittances in the migration process. *International Migration* 37:63-88

## Web links

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### *Research centres and think tanks*

[www.imi.ox.ac.uk](http://www.imi.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.compas.ox.ac.uk](http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/migration/)  
[www.rsc.ox.ac.uk](http://www.rsc.ox.ac.uk)  
[www.migrationinformation.org](http://www.migrationinformation.org)  
[www.forcedmigration.org](http://www.forcedmigration.org)  
[www2.fmg.uva.nl/imes/](http://www2.fmg.uva.nl/imes/)  
<http://www.imiscoe.org/>  
[www.age-of-migration.com](http://www.age-of-migration.com) (various links)  
[www.carim.org](http://www.carim.org)  
[www.apmrn.usp.ac.fj](http://www.apmrn.usp.ac.fj)  
[www.queensu.ca/samp/](http://www.queensu.ca/samp/)  
<http://migration.org.za/>  
[www.cmsny.org](http://www.cmsny.org)  
<http://migration.ucdavis.edu/mn/>  
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/MSU/>  
<http://www.scalabrini.org/fcms/index.html>  
<http://www.aucegypt.edu/fmrs/index.html>  
<http://www.imis.uni-osnabrueck.de/english/index.htm>  
<http://www.mirem.eu/>  
<http://www.migration-population.ch/>

Students are encouraged to consult the 2009 Human Development Report, which is an accessible, comprehensive state-of-the-art overview of current knowledge about the reciprocal links between migration and development, which is available in many languages.

UNDP (2009) *Overcoming barriers: Human mobility and development*. Human Development Report 2009. New York: United Nations Development Programme. See <http://hdr.undp.org/en/content/human-development-report-2009>