

# Theories of Migration: Sociological and Conceptual Dilemmas

By Saleh I.A. Al-Khudairy<sup>1</sup>

## **ABSTRACT:**

The aim of this study is to introduce to the researchers' migration theories in a brief and modern form. As rates of migration are increasing all over the world for different reasons it became necessary to review critically the theories that dealt with such important social phenomenon. The study is an analytical and critical study adopted the documentary research methodology and the office work and content analysis as a tool to obtain information. The study discussed many aspects of sociological theories such as definitions, typologies, areas of strength and weakness and historical development. In this study theories of migration were classified into three main types: macro level theories, micro level theories, and the ones, which attempts to bridge the gap between these levels.

*Keywords: Migration, Migration theories, Macro Theories, Micro Theories, Typology.*

## **1. Introduction**

Mobility of the human being has been a significant phenomenon and part of our history from the earliest times of human societies (e.g. hunting-gathering societies) till today. In other words, the history of migration is as old as human history (Brettell & Hollifield, 2022., Manning & Trimmer, 2020).. Human population, whether individually or collectively, have moved from one place to another as a consequence of various reasons such as natural disasters, climatic changes, scarcity, population growth, wars, trade, economic, political and religious urges or oppressions and so forth (Cohen, 1996). Some would even argue that human nature is migratory as opposed to the view that it is sedentary. Although migration, whether internal or international, is not an invention of modern times, the volume and significance of the migratory movements have noticeably grown with industrialization, colonialism, and lately with the globalization of the world economic system and with the improvement of the transport and communication technology (Castles et al., 2014).

However, the systematic studies of the migratory movements have emerged in modern times (Greenwood & Hunt, 2003).. Reasons, patterns, and trends of migration, characteristics of migrants, migratory processes, and the impact of migration on both the sending and receiving areas, and the problems of immigrants become subjects of various academic disciplines including demography (Hanson et al., 2023), geography (Hasman & Křížková, 2023), history (Van Mol & de Valk, 2016), economics (OECD/ILO (2018), political science (de Haas et al., 2019), anthropology, and sociology (Horevitz, 2009., Scholten, 2022., Laubenthal, 2023).

The field of migration studies has remained a surprisingly under-theorized area of social

<sup>1</sup>College of Humanities and Social Sciences, King Saudi University, KSA.

inquiry. This is due to the fact that this field is scattered between different disciplines (Piguet, 2013, Scholten, 2022, Brettell & Hollifield, 2022). We can only develop a richer understanding of migration processes if we do not conceptually separate them from the complex processes of social change of which they are an integral part (de Haas, 2021, P.1) In order to differentiate the characteristics and reasons of migration and migrants, scholars of migration have developed certain typologies (Boucher, Gest, 2015., Skeldon, 1992) says, it is difficult to draw firm and clear boundaries between variety of types of migration and migrants. As Skeldon (2018) aptly puts it, typologies should be considered heuristic devices. They help us to identify what we are studying and what separates them from other categories in what ways. They are sort of classifications and without classifications scientific studies would not be possible.

Therefore, this article seeks to shed light on the most relevant typologies of migration and present a critical reading of these typologies. This reading will allow us to fill in the gaps between the different typologies.

This study tries to fulfil a number of objectives:

- First, it will offer a sociological and conceptual review of migration typologies that dealt with the phenomenon of human migration.
- It also introduces a critical assessment of migration theories in order to evaluate and interpret its relevance to the study of migration as a renewable phenomenon.
- Moreover, the study will try to outline the weakness of the current targeted theoretical approaches to gain a fuller understanding.
- Bridging the gap between macro and micro levels of analysis, such as macro level theories, structuralist theory, world system theory, push and pull theory social network theory, and migration systems theory.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

Research on migration has inherited the dilemmas bequeathed by the social sciences and in particular by sociology. There are three kinds of dilemmas in migration studies. Two of these dilemmas are reflections of sociology's basic dilemmas in migration studies such as structure/agent and macro/micro levels of analysis. In addition to these dilemmas, there is another dilemma, which is specific to migration studies: voluntary/involuntary migration (in other words 'pull-push' factors versus factors shaped by global economic and political structures).

The first dichotomy, namely structure/action dilemma, expresses the types of the explanation of a social act in respect of the role of the actor or structure as a determining factor. In relation to migration studies, the classic models of migration, which favour action, are based on the assumption that movement of population is driven by the rational choices of individuals who are attracted by social economic factors (Schmoll & Weber, 2023., Piguet, 2013). Whereas structuralist approach sees migration as a result of macro-economic processes that force individuals to migrate and reproduce inequalities within and among the different regions of the world (de Haas et al., 2019). From this aspect, migration does not lead to equilibrium but instead, it reproduces inequalities (Safi, 2020., Pilkington,

1997).

The second dilemma derives from the distinction of level of analysis in studying human action (Bircan et al., 2020). Over the last two decades, migration systems never disappeared of the theoretical framework of migration studies, but macro factors lost somehow the central place they had in the works of the pioneers. More attention was brought on personal characteristics, such as gender, age, or civil status, in the process of formation of the individual migration patterns (Méndez et al., 2020., Qamar, 2023) Although migration systems have provided one of the most useful frameworks to explain the main streams of human mobility, the importance attributed to macro and micro factors clearly evolved in the favour of the latter (Remund, 2010., Piguet, 2013., Klöcker&Daumann, 2022

Unlike the above two dilemmas, the third dilemma, namely the dilemma of voluntary/involuntary migration, is peculiar to migration studies and stems from the different positions taken in respect to the explanation of migratory (de Haas, 2021).

Indeed, the dilemma between voluntary and involuntary migration is a reflection of the dilemma between agent and structure in migration studies. Here, voluntary migration represents those migratory movements which are chosen as a result of free rational choices of individuals and involuntary migration represents those migratory movements as a result of structural forces (Bakewell, 2021., Piguet, 2018). Therefore, these two dilemmas can be seen as the same dilemma with two different forms of phrasings.

Similar the dichotomy between macro and micro and structure and action can also be reduced to one, because of the fact that macro level analyses have a tendency to explain social actions in terms of the structural forces and micro level of analyses have a tendency to explain them in terms of action. In fact, there is no rule that all macro theories are essentially structuralist, for instance, classic works on migration such as Ravenstein's laws and Lee's theory of migration (Lee, 1966) are classified as macro theories by Richmond (1988). However, they are also considered to be the precedents of 'push-pull' theory, which emphasises the individual's role as a decision-maker (micro level) (Castles et al., 2014.). Bach and Schraml (1982), suggest that "'push-pull' theory is the more general conceptual umbrella for equilibrium theory. They also tell that it is possible to develop an equilibrium theory of migration, which is conceptualised entirely at a structural level of analysis

Unlike Wood 1982, who claims that the household as a unit of analysis can resolve the polarisation between two camps, Bach and Schraml claim that "Rather alternatives to decision making and individual calculations need to be constructed out of the principles of collective behaviour, people reacting to and dependent on other people" (Bach and Schraml 1982: p.125). Therefore, migration should be studied as a collective action, rather than seen as rational choices of individuals or as a result of structural economic pressures. Although Bach and Schraml claim that studying migration as a collective action would resolve the polarisation between the two scientific communities, they do not show how to study migration this way (migration as a collective action).

Similar to Bach and Schraml, this study assumes that overcoming the polarization between methodological individualism and holism is possible. The migrations systems theory could provide a theoretical and methodological solution to bridge this non-productive divide and address related theoretical dilemmas.

### 3. Methods

In order to examine this hypothesis, this study will review some of the definitions and typologies of migration followed by a review of the general theories related to migratory movements. These theories will be reviewed under the titles of macro level theories, micro level theories and bridging the gap between macro and micro level of analysis.

The study is an analytical and critical study adopted the documentary research methodology and the office work and content analysis as a tool to obtain information. In this study special concentration on documentary research is adopted as a technique used to investigate, describe and interpret the published materials on various issues of migration. It employs mainly the critical and analytical method as a methodology using the tool of content analysis of documentation to obtain its data through office work and literature review.

The related collected materials are not gathered to prove or disprove a certain theory, but rather to employ a debate, disciplinary arguments and use knowledge of the existing theoretical framework of the international migration theories such as definitions and typologies of migration.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Typologies based on the type of Migration

Fairchild (1936) classified migration into invasion, conquest, colonization, and immigration. These four types of migration are determined in terms of two axes: the level of culture between sending and receiving countries and the level of peacefulness of the migration. If the people of a low culture take over a land of a high culture (such as Visigoth sack of Rome), Fairchild calls this migration as invasion. If the people of higher culture take aggressive and take over a place, that is called conquest. If the well-established, progressive and physically vigorous states settles in newly discovered or thinly settled countries that is called colonization. Finally, if the migration is happening between two countries whose stage of civilizations are similar and the movement is peaceful, that is called immigration. According to Petersen (1958), this typology presents not only ethnocentrism but also lack of comprehensiveness. Fairchild's distinction between "high culture" and "low culture" as well as "well established, progressive and vigorous state" and "newly discovered or thinly settled counties" is both ethnocentrically biased and legitimises the colonization. It lacks comprehensiveness because it does not assume that people might migrate peacefully from so called "low culture" to "higher culture" as well as aggressive migration might happen between two high culture countries. Further, migration whether aggressive or peaceful, might also happen between two low culture countries.

Petersen develops more sophisticated typology than Fairchild. Firstly, he distinguishes two types of migration in terms of the function of the migration, not necessarily defined by the migrants but defined by the activating agent: *innovating* and *conservative*. *Innovating* migration are those where migrants migrate in order to achieve new life style. In other words, whether they are forced or impelled, as a result of the migration, migrants achieve new life styles. *Conservative* on the other hand are those where migrants migrate in order to resist

against changes in their life style. In other words, whether they are impelled or forced, as a result of the migration, their life style is protected Petersen (1958).

*Secondly, Petersen identifies five broad classes of migration in their relationships to four different migratory forces. These classes of migration are primitive, forced, impelled, free, and mass migration. Migratory forces are ecological push, migration policy, higher aspirations, and social momentum. Each of these migratory forces are defined by the relationships between nature and man, State (or equivalent) and man, man and his norms, and collective behaviour respectively. Petersen divides these broad classes of migration into two, depending on their types: innovating or conservative.*

Compared to Fairchild, Petersen's typology is much more refined, and comprehensive and analytical, but still bears some weaknesses. First of all, his concepts of *conservative* and *innovating* are not analytical concepts. It is difficult to claim some forms of migration do not bring changes in the life style of migrants whereas the others do. Besides, It is not comprehensive enough to cover the migrations caused by economical reasons such as labour migrations as well as it does not help to differentiate permanent migrations from temporary ones.

Another typology is developed by Skeldon in order to explain the migrations from the East and South East Asian region to US, Canada, Australia, Middle East, Japan etc. in last two decades. According to this typology, migration can be classified into five systems: The Settler migration system; The student migration system; The contract labour migration system; The skilled labour migration system; and Refugee movements" (Skeldon, 1992). Skeldon does not make a definition of these systems but instead analyses them with the examples from the East and the South East Asia to above mentioned countries of destination. Skeldon warns that these types of migration should not be thought as mutually exclusive. Student migration may turn into settler migration and the line between a "refugee" and an "economic migrant" is blurred through changes in the nature of asylum-seekers themselves and in shifts in international perceptions as to who refugees are (Skeldon, 1992). In another study Skeldon (2018) argues that human mobility is best conceived as a system that integrates internal and international migration within a single framework and that gives due account to tourism and its significant linkages with migration.

Another typology of migration which is similar to that of Skeldon is given by Appleyard (1991): -permanent (settlers), including persons admitted under family reunion schemes; -temporary contract workers, normally semi-skilled or unskilled -temporary professional transients, professional or skilled workers who move from one country to another -clandestine or illegal workers whose entry may or may not be sanctioned by the receiving-country's government;-asylum seekers who cross borders and appeal for status on grounds of political discrimination; and-refugees as defined by the 1951 UN Convention.

There are other classifications of theories of migration. For instance, Bach and Schraml (1982) classify the migration theories as equilibrium theories versus historical-structuralists, and Chant and Radcliffe (1992) classify them as Neo-classical/equilibrium approaches versus Structuralist/Marxist approaches whereas. Shrestha (1987) calls the dilemma as conventional theories versus Neo-Marxist theories. Moreover, some scholars such as Abu-Lughod (1975), Zolberg (1989), and Morawska (1990) put them into categories of 'old' and 'new' paradigms or genres. The old paradigm refers to those theories including Ravenstein, Stouffer and Lee's theories, 'push and pull' approach, equilibrium

theory and the new paradigm refers to those theories including structuralist theories, world Systems theory, and migrations systems theory etc. As a conclusion we offer this summary table of the main typologies.

**Table 1:** Types of migration

Author	Petersen	Fierchild	Skeldon	Appleyard
Types of migration	Primitive	Conquest	Settler migration	Permenant
	<i>Forced</i>	Invasion	Student migration	Asylum seekers
	<i>Impelled</i>	Colonization	Contract labor migration	Tempurary contract workers
	<i>Free</i>	Migration	Skilled labor migration	Temporary professional transients, professional or skilled workers
	<i>Mass</i>	----	Refugee movements	Refugees as defined by UN

**4.2 Typologies based on the level of theoretical analysis**

**4.2.1 Classical Macro Level Theories**

In this section, the study will review theoretical approaches of Stouffer (1940, 1960) and Lee(1966), which focus on the macro level analysis of migratory movements. The reason this study classify them as classical macro theories is that they differ from the recent macro level theories of migration such as structuralism, world system theory etc. The main difference is the classical macro-level theories, following the theoretical tradition established by Ravenstein, are concerned with the macro level issues such as the volume of migration; flows and counter flows of migration; distance and the intervening obstacles of migration seeking regularities and rules. Although they are interested in these macro issues, they think of migratory decisions as the decisions of individuals. This idea separates them from the new macro level theories that consider the migration decisions as a result of structural, systemic forces.

Stouffer introduced the concept of ‘intervening opportunities’ and ‘competing migrants’. According to Stouffer’s concepts, the flow of migration is affected by the opportunities available in the destination place, intervening opportunities, and the number of competing migrants (Richmond 1969, p. 245). Stouffer’s model has been tested by some research with differing results (Raczynski, 2018., Wadycki, 1975).. Some research added some other variables such as socio-economic status to Stouffer’s model and found meaningful relations between the distance of the migration and socio-economic status (Jansen 1969).

Like Stouffer, Lee (1966) builds a theory based on Ravenstein’s laws of migration. However, compared to Ravenstein’s laws, Lee’s model is more refined and extended and his ‘middle principles’ are developed from testable hypotheses (Jackson, 1969; Richmond, 1988.,Zolberg, 1989; Appleyard, 1992).

In his classic article, “A Theory of Migration”, Lee (1966) covers the factors of migration, volume of migration, migratory stream and counterstream, and characteristics of migrants. Factors of migration include Factors associated with the area of origin; Factors associated with the area of destination; Intervening Obstacles; Personal Factors.

Furthermore, Lee postulates several hypotheses regarding the volume of migration, stream and counterstream of migration and the characteristics of the migrants. With these hypotheses, Lee links volume of migration to the diversity of areas and population, difficulty of surmounting the intervening obstacle, time and the progress. Stream and counterstream of migration depends on factors, intervening obstacles, and fluctuations in the economy. Characteristics of people in relation to responding to the positive and negative factors at the area of origin and destination as well as in relation to surmounting the difficulties of intervening obstacles are also factors affecting migration.

Although Ravenstein's laws and Stouffer's theory of intervening opportunities and Lee's theory of migration attempt to capture the migration phenomena at macro level, they allow explanations both at macro and micro level (Bach and Schraml, 1982; Richmond 1988; Zolberg 1989; Castles et al., 2014). Perhaps this is because, their approach of migration is based on viewing migration as an individual act. We can see this, particularly in Lee's attempt to define positive and negative factors, difficulty of intervening obstacles with the characteristics of migrants. Probably for this reason, some consider Lee's theory as a 'push-pull' theory, which is considered to be a micro-level theory (Bach and Schraml, 1982; Shrestha, 1987). Furthermore, 'push-pull' theory together with neo-classical equilibrium theory are usually called 'old', 'conventional', or 'classic' genre and follows the theoretical tradition established by Ravenstein, Stouffer, Lee and some others (Shrestha, 1987; Castle et al., 2014).

#### 4.2.2 Structuralist Theory

Structuralists theory concentrates on the social structures affecting migration. Hass wrote, historical-structuralists "postulate that economic and political power is unequally distributed among developed and underdeveloped countries, that people have unequal access to resources, and that capitalist expansion has the tendency to reinforce these inequalities. Instead of modernizing and gradually progressing towards economic development, underdeveloped countries are trapped by their disadvantaged position within the global geopolitical structure" (de Haas, 2007:15).

Unlike the classic genre, which perceives migration as relocation of individuals, structuralist theory approaches migration as a social act within the historical structure of the societies.

The theories of migration that are based on structuralism emphasise reorganisation of labour as a result of the migratory act, which arises from uneven development (Chant and Radcliffe 1992., SchmollandWeber, 2023). In other words, it is not the individuals who are making free rational choices, but it is the structural process that manipulates, enforces, and predetermines the individuals rational choices (Kim et al.,2023).

Historical structuralist theory in migration studies developed as a response to the individualism of neo-classical equilibrium theory that is why structuralist theory emphasises "the large-scale, long-term transformations of the global-political economy that, by definition, disregards the individual or the event" (Bach and Schraml, 1982).

The idea of the world system is developed by Immanuel Wallerstein and followed by Frank (1992), Amin (1977). The common feature of the theoretical perspectives of these scholars is that social phenomena cannot be understood without understanding their relations to global economic systems or subsystems in a long-term historical change. Although starting

from 1970s, Wallerstein, Frank and Amin followed a similar theoretical path to explain the capitalist world system, during early 1990s, their paths are separated.

According to this, the phenomena of migration, like all other phenomena, should be studied in their relations to the global capitalist economic system. That is because, capitalism is not only the economic system of so called economically advanced capitalist countries, but it is the whole global system which divides the world as center (core), semi-periphery and periphery countries (Amin 1977). Since capitalism, for Wallerstein, is based on an axial division of labor involving integrated production process, we can say that according to the Wallerstein an approach, migration is a necessary dislocation of labour in the process of development and expansion of capitalism.

Massey and others tells that variety of sociologists, based on the work of Wallerstein, “linked migration not to the bifurcation of labor market within a particular national economies, but to the structure of the world market...In this scheme, the penetration of capitalist economic relations into peripheral, non-capitalist societies creates a mobile population that is prone to migrate abroad” (Massey et al., 1993 p. 194).

Similar to structuralist theory, there are merits in world-systems theory, which are hard to ignore. It allows to see linkages between source countries and destination countries, it helps us to understand long term migratory flows and counter flows, as well as it guides us to understand the common logic of globalizing world market. However, same merits form also the weakness of the theory that is, it is too abstract and by nature deals with long-term, large scale movements. In this instance, the individual is lost in such analysis.

Furthermore, structuralist theory reinstates the concepts of dependence and the global division of labor. Recent data from international economic and financial organizations undeniably illustrate the exponential trend in the wealth gap between rich and poor countries. However, it is now evident that migration constitutes an essential element of the global economy. Countries of origin increasingly benefit from additional remittances, and the return of skilled migrants. Countries of destination, in turn, benefit from a rejuvenation of their workforce, while migrants themselves gain new prospects by settling in another country. Migration serves as a mechanism for global wealth redistribution and plays a central role in both development and poverty reduction.

#### **4.2.3 Push-Pull Theory**

The push-pull model is based on the following hypothesis: migration is the result of a combination of a number of push factors in the country of origin that push people to move away, with a number of positive or pull factors that attract migrants to a host country. In reality there are several push factors including such things as economic, social and political hardship in poorer countries, political, religious, racial or ethnic discrimination, poor weather conditions, natural disasters, poor housing, transport, education, training, etc. pull factors include the comparative advantages of wealthier countries (Khalid &Urbański, 2021., Van Hear et al.,2018).

‘Push and pull’ factors are accounted as the motivations behind the migratory move. The classical version of ‘push-pull’ theory infers these motives from the comparisons and contrasts of the characteristics of the area of origin and destination and imputes them to the migrants. Taylor (1969) thinks that imputation of motives to the migrants constitutes a denial of differential perception and evaluation, and places an excessive emphasis on



purposive-rational behaviour.

Besides, individuals' decisions and actions are taken "as the outcomes of a rational economic calculation of the costs and benefits of migration" (Morawska 1990: p. 192., Aslany et al., 2021) This is where 'push-pull' theory is affiliated with neo-classical theories of labour market, and equilibrium theory (Richmond 1988., Castle et al.,2014., Portes,2016).

Furthermore, neo-classical equilibrium theory assumes that individual's main goal is to maximise utility. That is why, individuals search and compare, calculate and make rational choices among the alternative places of residence. (Massey et al. 1993.,Porumbescu, 2018). Mostly owing to the affiliation with neo-classical economics and equilibrium theory, 'push-pull' theory is criticised by many scholars. The main criticisms are that 'push-pull' theory is individualistic, ahistorical, simplistic, and uncritical (Portez and Borocz, 1989., Zolberg, 1989; Morawska, 1990; Chant and Radcliffe, 1992., Castle et al., 2014., Porumbescu, 2018). The critics view that 'push-pull' theory neglects the historical-structural links between countries, roles of government policies and international market economy. Moreover, the 'push and pull' theory fails to offer an explanation for disruptive factors in migration, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

Indeed, measures restricting internal and international travel due to COVID-19 were swiftly implemented worldwide, beginning in 2020. In this new context, the concept of the rationality of the migrant cannot be considered heuristic. It holds true only in the context of free trade and freedom of choice. Furthermore the 'push-pull' theory fails to address chain migration, explaining why Algerian migrants choose France, Moroccans opt for Belgium, Turks migrate to Germany, and Indians and Pakistanis favor England. Recently, citizens of French-speaking African countries have also shown a preference for settling in France or Belgium or Quebec Province.

Besides, 'push-pull' theory expects that people from countries with a high density of population should move to countries with a low density, but there are countries with high population density such as Germany and Holland, which receives high amount of immigrants. Furthermore, 'push-pull' theory reduces the complexity of decision making for migration into "a kind of mechanical balance of external and impersonal forces" through subsuming all motives under the assumption of the maximisation of want-satisfactions (Taylor 1969: p. 99).

According to the critics mentioned above, 'push-pull' theory is uncritical because it views migration from a functionalist point of view which admits that migration occurs because of disequilibrium between the sending and receiving countries in respect to the labor and capital market in which migration has an equalising function through balancing these markets.

Furthermore, as opposed to the 'push-pull' theory which view migration as a positive function for the betterment of migrants, it can be said that migration reproduces inequality as well between the immigrants and nationals, considering the unequal opportunities for minorities in host countries. Therefore, migration can be seen from a different angle such as exploitation of foreign labor as Zolberg (1989) puts it.

#### **4.2.4 Social Network Theory (Chain Migration)**

Social network theory views migration either individual's or household's decision

process. However, according to Tilly (1991) units of migration are neither individuals nor households but sets of people linked by kinship, friendship or work experience. Social network theory takes our attention to role of kin, friends and family in migratory movements, especially in current migration flows, as well as the role of social networks in establishing and maintaining ethnic communities (Castle et al., 2014., Caarls et al., 2021). The theory of network emphasises the role of informal networks between migrants, non-migrants and former migrants before, during and after migration, as well as “the role of information, ‘cultural capital’ (Castle et al., 2014) and social capital (Haug, 2008).

According to Castle and Miller, Informal networks bind migrants with non-migrants and former migrants together. They call these bonds double-sided, because they link migrants with the people in the area of origin as well as with the people of host country and establish relationships of co-operation, competition and conflict. It is noted that although formal networks such as membership associations, ‘intermediaries’ like labour recruiters, immigration consultants, travel agents, smugglers and other forms are part of the immigrant networks, scholars pay more attention to informal (personal) networks (Boyd 1989).

Social network theory argues that migrant networks lower the costs and risks of migration and increase the expected net returns of immigrants. Thus, when it is established it increases the likelihood of international migration. In other words, once the migrant networks established, it will expand itself with new migrants who enter the network and each of new migrants will expand it more and will reach to other segments of sending country like chain. Thus, because of the migrant networks, international migration becomes self-perpetuating and self-sustaining movement (Tilly 1991; Massey et al 1993).

Besides social network theory has many insights to understand migratory moves before, during and after the move. It may not address the origin of particular migration, but it addresses the chain character of migration or the migration corridors after the networks established very well. For instance, the original reasons behind the migration from Mexico to USA, from Algeria to France, from India to Britain, from Turkey (Turkish Kurds) or also Syria after the civil war to Germany can be old colonial ties, global capitalist market relations, or labour recruitment.

Two reasons underscore the relevance of the theory of migration networks. Firstly, migration is increasingly influenced by social and cultural capital, highlighting the pivotal role of diasporas in establishing both formal and informal migration networks. Secondly, a notable trend in several American and European governments, exemplified by Trump's administration in the United States, and policies in France, Italy, Sweden, Hungary, and more recently in Slovakia in 2023, leans towards far-right migration policies. These policies not only foster the emergence of new social networks within migration but also solidify the roles of existing networks, irrespective of their legal status or formality.

However, once the avenue of migration opened by the frontiers, the social networks between migrants, non-migrants and former migrants play essential role in the development of migratory flows. Social network theory also allows to understand the problems of immigrants and the way they cope with them as well as formation of ethnicity, and reproduction of new ethnic identities. Another criticism, which apply to this theory, is about migrant selectivity. Although social network theory proposes that migration selectivity decreases as the network expands, but still it does not address why some

members of a family move and others stay. In addition to this, social network theory does not address the role of macro structures such as role of political and economic structures. However, it takes our attention to collective character of migration. In this sense, social network theory moves unit of analysis from individuals to family or other links. Therefore, it will help us to link micro level of analysis to more macro level analysis.

## 5. Bridging the Gap between Macro and Micro Level of Analysis :Migrations Systems Theory

The purpose of the theory of migratory systems is to bring together the different contributions of the disciplines to the study of the phenomenon. In fact, despite the complexity of migration, its analysis remains scattered between disparate disciplines (Sholten, 2022). The attempt to create a general theory of the phenomenon dates back to 1885 with Ravenstein (1885), yet the studies which followed him highlighted, as we have seen, certain factors and neglected other factors

Leaving aside the convergences and divergences between migration theories, and the attempts at conciliation between the different typologies (Bach and Schraml, 1982., Wood, 1982), the ideology of economism and utilitarianism constitutes the framework theories on migration.

Indeed, the predominance of economics as an explanatory factor of the phenomenon is explicitly expressed by Ravenstein (1885). Likewise, structuralist theory and world systems theory, although they belong to critical thinking, postulate that economic power unevenly distributed globally produces and reproduces the phenomenon of migration (de Haas, 2007., Massey et al., 1993)

The postulate of liberal theories on migration (e.g. the equilibrium theory, the push and pull theory) is that individuals expect from their choice to migrate a positive net return, generally monetary, calculate the costs and benefits of choosing the best place to reside where they can be most productive Porumbescu, (2018)

However migrations systems theory is not a separate theory but rather a synthesis of various theories of migration such as world-systems theory, social network theory, institutional theory, and the theory of cumulative causation (Massey et al. 1993). According to Massey and others, these theories suggest that migratory movements form some sort of stabilities and structures (called migrations systems) over times, which are subject to change.

These systems are characterized by relatively intense exchanges of goods, capital and people between some countries and less intense exchanges between others. These exchanges are not only explained by the economic, but also by the cultural. The migration of the Irish to America cannot be explained by economic factors but rather by religion (Protestantism). These exchanges take different directions, flows and counter-flows, between peripheral countries and central countries (Castle et al., 2014., Massey et al. 1993), between peripheral countries (south-south migrations), and between central countries (e.g., migrations between the USA and Canada or inter-European migrations)

Migrations systems theory aims to study all this flows and examine not only the migration of people but also the exchange of information, services, goods, ideas (Castle et al., 2014)andcultures. Since it examines state-to-state relations, cultural connections between

sending and receiving societies, as well as social networks among the migrants, non-migrants and former migrants, migrations systems theory approaches migration phenomenon as a result of interacting between macro and micro structures. However, as far as I understand from the literature of migration theories, macro structures is emphasised more than micro-structures in this theoretical approach.

Even though the emphasis is more on macro-structures, we can still say that migrations systems theory bridges the gap between macro and micro level of analysis through exercising different levels of the same phenomenon. The difficulty of using this theoretical approach, especially in single research projects, is obvious. In other words, migrations systems theory, as a theoretical framework, attempts to cover all aspects of a migration flow. However, this is a very ambitious task for individual researchers to manage.

## **6. Discussion**

Since the phenomenon of migration has many aspects and involves issues at different levels, many theoretical approaches in different disciplines have been developed in order to study migratory movements of people. Among these theoretical approaches, a major dichotomy, the dichotomy between macro and micro level of analysis is found very significant. In fact, this dichotomy is a significant problem not only in migration studies but also in social science. It is argued that although many scholars express the need for a general theoretical approach in migration studies, such a general theoretical approach does not seem quite possible without going beyond the macro/micro dilemma. Even though, there are some attempts to bridge the gap between macro and micro level of analysis, which we have found very useful, it is concluded that until social scientists find a way to bridge the gap between macro and micro level of analysis or go beyond this dilemma, scholars of migration will continue to produce knowledge emphasising the different aspects and level of migration phenomena.

Following the arguments regarding the above mentioned dichotomy, it is possible to classify the theories of migration into three: macro level theories, micro level theories, and the ones, which attempts to bridge the gap between these levels. Although there are many theories regarding migratory movements, only the dominant migration theories are reviewed here under the umbrellas of macro level, micro level, and bridging the gap. Macro level theories are structuralism and world system theory. These theories of migration are those that study the macro structures including the role of unequal economic development between the regions, the role of economic and political forces as well as the role of global capitalist market relations; the exchange of capital, labour, and commodity between countries. Although these theories aptly emphasise the structural, global economic and political reasons behind the migration phenomena, they neglect the individuals in migration studies.

As opposed to the macro level theories, micro level theories such as 'push-pull' approach and social network theory are concerned with micro aspects of migration including the decision making process of migrants, families or households. Although the classical versions of 'push-pull' approach is criticised by many scholars as being individualistic, ahistorical, simplistic and uncritical, newer versions of this approach tend to overcome these criticisms. It is argued that 'push-pull theory is general theoretical framework rather

than being a specific theory and it is possible to produce different levels of analysis within the 'push-pull' theoretical framework. Besides, social network theory which is classified here as a micro theory can also produce different levels of analysis such as micro level of analysis through studying the individuals; middle range analysis through studying households, kin, and friends; and macro level of analysis through studying collectivity among the migrants former migrants and non-migrants.

The migrations systems theory is a synthesis of various theories such institutional theory, world system theory, cumulative causation theory, and social network theory. Although it has a tendency to emphasise macro aspects of migration, it can bridge the gap between macro and micro levels of analysis through incorporating social networks with the structural factors. It aims to study the exchange of goods, capital, labour and information within a migration system. It also includes both sending and receiving countries in their analysis. This kind of theoretical approach seems holistic and a firm ground, however, it is not possible to apply such a theoretical perspectives in individual, time bounded researches.

The Migration Systems Theory constitutes a synthesis of various theories, including the institutional theory developed by Guilmoto (1998). It aligns with his approach, which views the system of rules, customs, and conventions within which migration is situated as an institution. According to this perspective, the logics guiding the different actors involved in the migratory relationship are inevitably shaped by this institution. Consequently, the institution significantly influences migratory flows and structures migratory systems at various levels. On the other hand, the theory of migratory systems incorporates the concept of global systems developed by Wallerstein (1991), treating them as expansive analytical frameworks encompassing these migratory systems. They play a role in reconfiguring global systems, albeit from a distinct perspective. Unlike Wallerstein's emphasis on domination and dependence between global systems, the migratory systems theory does not position this question as a central theme.

Moreover, the network approach has given rise to the notion of transnational networks, birthing a new field of research known as transnationalism (Vertovec, 2009). In this view of migration, we no longer speak of a permanent rupture but rather the maintenance of links between the environments of origin and residence. Migrant lives traverse national borders, bringing together two societies in a unified social field, constituting a distinct migratory system.

While the migratory systems theory tends to highlight macro aspects of migration, it effectively bridges the gap between macro and micro levels by integrating individual factors, social networks, and structural elements. Its goal is to study the exchange of goods, capital, work, and information within a migration system. This theoretical and methodological perspective aligns with recent studies on migration adopting Bourdieu's theory (Radogna, 2022). These studies propose that the migratory phenomenon results from complex relationships between individual habitus and a field representing a social structure with its own laws and issues (Radogna, 2022; Noble, 2013).

This holistic and robust theoretical approach can be applied to individual research, as seen in recent studies on immigrant habitus (Friedmann, 2017) or on social and cultural capital as a transnational issue for migrants (Erel, 2010; Kelly and Lusic, 2006). Such research,

inspired by the writings of Pierre Bourdieu, aligns with a perspective aiming to transcend the traditional divide between the micro and the macro, between the actor and the structure, which has dominated migration studies.

## 7. Implications and further research

The results of this study contribute to theoretical insights as it highlighted weaknesses of different migration typologies. Furthermore, they suggest a new research perspective. It has the merit of reconciling dichotomies and integrating typologies of migration. Therefore migration studies must forge theoretical avenues of research that go beyond the outdated divide between the micro and the macro.

- The theory of migratory systems proposes to integrate these two dimensions in order to understand the complexity of the phenomenon.

- Studies on migration are encouraged to take into consideration the relatively intense exchanges of goods, capital and people between some countries and less intense exchanges between others. This will make it possible to differentiate and compare migration systems at the diachronic and synchronic levels. It is in this sense that we suggest studying migration in the plural, that is to say all aspects of migratory flows

- The theory of migratory systems should open up research perspectives not only on south-north but also on north-south migration trends and horizontal migrations as well, in this case north-north and south-south. In fact, unlike so-called classic migration from poor countries to rich countries, other types of migration are understudied if not neglected by researchers.

- Theories on migration still remain anchored in methodological nationalism to the detriment of a new paradigm more focused on the transnational and cosmopolitan dimension. Even if recent work has introduced the notion of globalization into migration theory, it still constitutes an “external” factor and does not in itself constitute a paradigmatic shift from the national to the global.

- Finally, the two approaches of political economy and cosmopolitanism must escape from the utilitarian straitjacket and be based on the nature of migration systems. In this new perspective proposed here, the theory of migratory systems, at the crossroads of micro theories and macro theories, would draw attention to the fact that if south-south, north-south, north-north migrations are little considered, is that they are intertwined in logics going beyond pure individualist rationalism or structuralist determinism.

## References

- Abu-Lughod, J. (1975). “Comments: The End of the Age of Innocence in Migration Theory”, in Brian M. Du Toit and Helen I. Safa (eds.) *Migration and Urbanization: Models and Adaptive Strategies*, The Hague, The Netherlands: Mouton Publishers.
- Amin. S. (1977). *Imperialism & Unequal Development*, New York et Londres, Monthly Review Press.
- Appleyard R. T. & International Organization for Migration. (1991). *International migration: challenge for the nineties*. IOM.

- Appleyard, R. T. (1992). Migration and development: a critical relationship. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 1(1), 1-18.
- Aslany, M; Carling, J; Mjelva, MB; Sommerfelt, T (2021) Systematic review of determinants of migration aspirations. QuantMig Project Deliverable D2.2. Southampton: University of Southampton.
- Bach, R. L., & Schraml, L. A. (1982). Migration, Crisis and Theoretical Conflict. *The International Migration Review*, 16(2), 320–341.
- Bakewell, O. (2021). Unsettling the boundaries between forced and voluntary migration". In Handbook on the Governance and Politics of Migration. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.124–136.
- Bircan, T., Purkayastha, D., Ahmad-Yar, A.W., Lotter, K., DelloIakono, C., Göler, D., Stanek, M., Yilmaz, S., Solano, G., & Ünver, Ö. (2020). Gaps in Migration Research. Review of migration theories and the quality and compatibility of migration data on the national and international level. (Deliverable n°2.1). Leuven: HumMingBird project 870661 – H2020.
- Boucher, A., & Gest, J. (2015). Migration studies at a crossroads: A critique of immigration regime typologies. *Migration Studies*, 3(2), 182-198.
- Cohen, R. (1996). "Introduction" In Robin Cohen. (ed.). *The Sociology of Migration*, Glos: Edward Elgar Publishing Limited.
- de Haas, H, ((2021) A theory of migration: the aspirations capabilities framework, *Comparative Migration Studies*, 9(8), 1-35
- De Haas, H. (2007). Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration. *Development and Change*, 38 (5), 819-841.
- De Haas, H., Czaika, M., Flahaux, M-L., Mahendra, E., Natter, K., Vezzoli,S., Villares-Varela, M. (2019). International Migration: Trends, Determinants, and Policy Effects. *Population and Development Review*, 45 (4),885-922.
- Erel, U. (2010). Migrating Cultural Capital: Bourdieu in Migration Studies. *Sociology*, 44(4), 642-660.
- Fairchild, H. P(1936). International Migration. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 188 (1), 290-296.
- Frank, A. G., & Gills, B. K. (1992). "The Five Thousand Year World System: An Interdisciplinary Introduction," *TheHumboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 18(1), 1-79.
- Friedmann, J. (2017). Place-making as project? Habitus and migration in transnational cities. In *Habitus: A sense of place* (pp. 331-349). Routledge.
- Guilmoto, C.Z (1998). Institutions and Migrations: Short- versus long term moves in rural West Africa, *Population Studies*, 52 (1), 85-103.
- Greenwood, M. J., & Hunt, G. L. (2003). The early history of migration research. *International Regional Science Review*, 26(1), 3-37.
- Hanson, G., Orrenius, P., &Zavodny, M. (2023). US Immigration from Latin America in Historical Perspective. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 37(1), 199-222.
- Hasman, J., & Křížková, I. (2023). Spatial incorporation of multiple immigrant groups in gateway cities: Comparative analysis of Sydney, Barcelona, and Prague. *International Migration Review*, 57(1), 128-159.
- Haug, S. (2008). Migration Networks and Migration Decision-Making. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Volume 34- Issue 4. 585-605.
- Horevitz, E (2009) Understanding the Anthropology of Immigration and Migration, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 19:6, 745-758.
- Jackson J.A. (1969). "Migration: Editorial Introduction" in J. A. Jackson (ed.). *Migration*, London: Cambridge University Press. 1-10.
- Jansen, C. J. (1969). "Some Sociological Aspects of Migration" in J. A. Jackson (ed.). *Migration*, London: Cambridge University Press.60-73.
- Kelly, P. & Lusic, T. (2006). Migration and the transnational habitus: evidence from Canada and the Philippines. *Environment and planning A*, 38 (5), 831-847.
- Kim, T., Autin, K. L., & Allan, B. A. (2023). An examination of psychology of working theory with immigrant workers in the United States. *Journal of Career Assessment*, 31(1), 190-206.
- Klöcker, J. A., &Daumann, F. (2022). What drives migration to Germany? A panel data analysis. *Research in Economics*. Available online 14 October 2022.
- Laubenthal, B. (2023). Introduction: Assimilation, integration or transnationalism? An overview of theories of migrant incorporation *International Migration*, 61 (1), 84-91.
- Lee, E. S. (1966). A theory of migration. *Demography*, 3(1), 47-57.

- Manning, P., & Trimmer, T. (2020). *Migration in World History* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Massey, D. S., Arango, J., Hugo, G., Kouaouci, A., Pellegrino, A., & Taylor, J. E. (1993). Theories of International Migration: A Review and Appraisal. *Population and Development Review*, 19(3), 431–466.
- Méndez, V., Alves, J. A., Dórisson, B., Marca, A., Gunnarsson, T. G., & Gill, J. A. (2020). Individual variation in migratory behavior in a subarctic partial migrant shorebird. *Behavioral Ecology*, 31(3), 672-679.
- Mimi Kim (2009). The Political Economy of Immigration and the Emergence of Transnationalism, *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 19(6), 675-689.
- Morawska, E.(2012). Cited in King, Russell, Theories and Typologies of Migration: An Overview and a Primer, Malmö Institute for Studies of Migration, Diversity and Welfare (MIM) Malmö University Malmö Sweden.
- Morawska, E. (1990). The Sociology and Historiography of Immigration. In: Yans-McLaughlin, V., Ed., *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology and Politics*, Oxford University Press, New York, 187-240.
- Noble, G. (2013). It is home but it is not home: habitus, field and the migrant. *Journal of sociology*, 49(2-3), 341-356.
- OECD/ILO (2018), *How Immigrants Contribute to Developing Countries' Economies*, OECD Publishing, Paris.
- Petersen, W. (1958). A General Typology of Migration. *American Sociological Review*, 23(3), 256–266.
- Piguet, E (2018). Theories of voluntary and forced migration. In book: *Routledge Handbook of Environmental Displacement and Migration*, Edited by Robert McLeman and François Gemenne. Routledge, London (pp.17-28).
- Piguet, É. (2013). Les théories des migrations. Synthèse de la prise de décision individuelle (Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 141-161). Université de Poitiers.
- Pilkington, H. (1997). *Migration, Displacement and Identity in Post-Soviet Russia* (1st ed.). Routledge. London.
- Portes, A. (2016). International migration and national development: from orthodox equilibrium to transnationalism. *Sociology of Development*, 2(2), 73-92.
- Porumbescu, A. (2018). Critical perspective on the neoclassical economics and labor migration theory, *Revista Universitară de Sociologie*, XIV (2):8-17.
- Qamar, A. H. (2023). Conceptualizing social resilience in the context of migrants' lived experiences. *Geoforum*, 139, 103680.
- Radogna, R. M. (2022). The concept of habitus in migration studies. A systematic literature review. *Sociologie Românească*, 20(1), 108-125.
- Raczynski, S.A. (2018). Influence of the gregarious instinct and individuals' behavior patterns on macro migrations: Simulation experiments. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 28, 204 - 220.
- Ravenstein E. G. (1885). The Laws of Migration. *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, 48 (2), 167-235.
- Remund, A. (2010). Refreshing the typology of migration systems. A Reformulation based on the case of early nineteenth-century Geneva. University of Geneva, Institut d'études démographiques et des parcours de vie.
- Richmond, A.H. (1988). Sociological theories of international migration: the case of Refugees. *Current Sociology*, 36(2), 7-25.
- Richmond, A. H. (1969). "Sociology of Migration in Industrial and Post-Industrial Societies," in J.A. Jackson (ed.) *Migration*, London: Cambridge University Press. 238-281.
- Safi, M. (2020). *Migration and Inequality*, Polity Press, 216p.
- Schmoll, C., & Weber, S. (2023). The Employment Relationship at the Junction between Migration Policies and Economic Policies. *Revue européenne des migrations internationales*, 37(1 et 2).
- Scholten, P. (2022). *Introduction to Migration Studies An Interactive Guide to the Literatures on Migration and Diversity*. Editor Peter Scholten. Springer.
- Shrestha, N. R. (1987). Institutional policies and migration behavior: A selective review. *World Development*, 15(3), 329-345.
- Skeldon, R. (1992). International Migration within and from the East and Southeast Asian Region: A Review Essay. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 1(1): 19–63.



- Skeldon, R. (2018). International migration, internal migration, mobility and urbanization: Towards more integrated approaches. *International Organization for Migration (IOM) Migration Research Series*, No. 53, 1-13.
- Stouffer, S. A. (1940). Intervening Opportunities: A Theory Relating Mobility and Distance. *American Sociological Review*, 5(6), 845–867.
- Stouffer, S.A. (1960). Intervening Opportunities and Competing Migrants. *Journal of Regional Science*, 2 (1), 1-26.
- Taylor R. C. (1969). "Migration and Motivation: A study of determinants and types," in J.A. Jackson *Migration*, London: Cambridge University Press. 99-133.
- Tilly, C. (1991). 'Transplanted Networks', in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin (ed.), *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics*. Oxford University Press. 79-95.
- Van Hear, N., Bakewell, O., Long, K. (2018). Push-pull plus: reconsidering the drivers of migration. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Volume 44, 2018 - Issue 6. 927-944.
- Van Mol, C., de Valk, H. (2016). Migration and Immigrants in Europe: A Historical and Demographic Perspective. In: Garcés-Masareñas, B., Penninx, R. (eds) *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*. IMISCOE Research Series. Springer, Cham.
- Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203927083>
- Wadycki, W. J. (1975). Stouffer's model of migration: A comparison of interstate and metropolitan flows. *Demography*, 12(1), 121–128.
- Wallerstein, I. (2011). *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century* (1st ed.). University of California Press.
- Wallerstein, I.M. (1991). World System versus World-Systems: A Critique. *Critique of Anthropology*, 11(2), 189 - 194.
- Wood, C. H. (1982). Equilibrium and historical-structural perspectives on migration. *International Migration Review*, 16(2), 298-319.
- Zolberg, A. R. (1989). The Next Waves: Migration Theory for a Changing World. *The International Migration Review*. 23(3): 403-430.