THEORIES OF MIGRATION

ANTH 308/Migration and Human Adaptation

Readings

• Trager *Migration &Economy Introduction* (Pp. 1-48)
• Cohen & Sirkeci chapter 2.
Cohen & Sirkeci chapter 2

• Reality of migration growth is complex.
• Cannot assume that what works in Europe holds true in other parts of the world.
• The demographic structures and cultural practices of various countries & populations are not uniform.
• Economic practices vary from place to place and among the differing strata of a country.
• Mobility did not follow a single recipe.
• Two forces encouraged mobility through 19th and 20th centuries:
  1. Agriculture
  2. Industry

Cohen & Sirkeci chapter 2

• Great Depression (1929-1940) brought a lot of international movement to an abrupt end and forced many repatriations across the globe.
• Growing involvement of the state in migration increased as anti-immigrant sentiment built up during recession and depression.
• Internal mobility shifted from search for opportunity to attempt to escape from insecurity, disaster, danger.
• Forced migration:
  • refugees
  • asylum seekers
  • internally displaced peoples.

Men working in a field

Unemployed men line up for work

Unemployment in the Great Depression
Cohen & Sirkeci chapter 2

• Beginning in 1960s, rural to urban migration accelerated.
• International migration
  • from Third World to First.
  • From south to north.
  • From east to west.

Trager’s key arguments

1. “Migration” includes a variety of types of mobility that should be examined in combination with one another.
2. Theories of migration need to incorporate both macrolevel forces and microlevel institutions.
3. Migration is an ongoing process with continuing implications for those involved but also for the people to whom they (migrants) are connected.
Theories of Migration

- **Two main types of theories** have been used to explain migration:
  1) those emphasizing *macroeconomic forces*, especially labor markets.
     - Focus primarily on *causes* of migration, not consequences.
  2) those which focus on *individual decisions*
     - Presume that *individuals* migrate with expectation of doing better.

Middle level theories/models

- Dissatisfaction with both macro-level & individual approaches leads Trager & other anthropologists to suggest need to emphasize *intermediate levels of social organization*:
  - Family
  - Community
  - Network
Middle level theories/models

Research on intermediate levels of social organization has contributed to the analysis and understanding of the long term consequences of migration. Migration is not a single event, of one individual leaving a place and moving to another place. Rather, it involves ongoing connections that are formed and maintained among people located in a variety of places. Those ongoing relationships have consequences for those who move and for those who stay behind; they have implications for the home community and the destination community; they lead to the formation of social networks that span specific communities and societies. (Trager, page 19).

Linkages

- Relatively little attention paid to movement of citizens within their own countries except where urbanization is viewed as a serious problem.
- **Rural-urban migration** creates a system with links between city & country.
  - Particularly true in Africa.
- Multiple dimensions to **linkages**:
  - Social
  - Economic
  - Cultural
  - Political
- Same principle can also be applied to **transnational linkages**.
Remittances

- Money sent home by migrants.
- Occur in variety of ways
- Difficult to get accurate data.
  - Less information on internal migration than international.
- Remittances often not reported.
- Discussions usually focus on the impact of remittances.
- Debate about value of remittances in terms of development.
  - Do they tend to be used for productive investments?
  - Do they help equalize rural income distribution
  - Or do they contribute to greater inequality?

Top 20 Remittance-Receiving Countries by $ amount

Top 20 Remittance-Receiving Countries by % of GDP


Remittances

Types of remittance uses (Trager page 25, based on Connell & Conway 2000):
1. Family & dependent basic needs.
2. Savings strategy.
3. Human capital resource investments (e.g., education)
4. Location specific capital ventures (land, housing, business property).
5. Diversified micro-economic investments (e.g., shops, transport).
6. Community support, maintenance & sustenance.
7. Migration & remigration investments.
Remittances

- *Housing* is common way migrants demonstrate both their *success* & their *commitment* to remaining connected with their home area.
- Need to go beyond simple economics & recognize *symbolic value* of remittances.
- Consider them in cultural contexts that place high value on *reciprocal obligations*.

Multilocality & community

- Discussions of remittances & exchanges usually presume two things:
  1. That exchanges take place between a migrant & others in one other place – the “home”.
  2. That majority of exchanges take place between family or household members.
- Increasingly apparent that *connections are maintained with people in multiple locales & with people who are not only kin but with others of the same “community”*. 
Multilocality & community

• More efficient transportation & communication systems make it possible to move & communicate over great distances
• Multilocality will become the norm for increasing numbers of people.
• Trager – rather than become “rootless”, migrants are in some ways more “rooted” to those places from which they come.

Multilocality & community

• Research on international migration suggests formation of “transnational communities” in which individuals & groups constantly negotiate choices with regard to their participation in host societies, their relationships to their homelands, & their links to co-ethnics...
• Regardless of how migrants define their home communities, there are several ways in which they tend to engage with those communities.

• Two of major patterns are
  1. formation of organizations
  2. donations for the benefit of those at home
     (Trager pp. 29-30)